

Pedagogical Leadership Skills of School Heads across Kinder Teachers Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Pedagogical leadership is vital for school leaders, particularly in kindergarten settings. This study investigated the school head's pedagogical leadership skills in addressing the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers. The study's main objective is to determine the level of pedagogical leadership skills of school heads in addressing the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers. The study adopted quantitative research design and utilized a descriptive method to collect data. Data was collected through an online survey questionnaire given to all kindergarten teachers in Santa Maria to Kalayaan sub-office. The data collected was analyzed using statistical methods to identify the different aspects of pedagogical leadership and the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers. This analysis provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of school heads' leadership skills in addressing these challenges. The findings of the study provided valuable insights for school leaders, policymakers, and educational institutions in developing effective strategies for enhancing pedagogical leadership skills among school heads that can contribute to improving the quality of education and addressing the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers.

Keywords – Challenges, Kindergarten teacher, Pedagogical leadership, School heads,

INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical leadership is vital for school heads, particularly in kindergarten settings. It has shifted away from traditional administrative roles (Kilag & Sasan, 2023) and sprung from distributed, participatory, and situated leadership styles (Caingcoy, 2022). This change emphasizes the importance of school leaders not only in managing administrative tasks but also in actively participating in pedagogical practices to support effective teaching and learning in kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers play a critical role in laying the foundational skills and knowledge that prepare children for formal schooling (DO no. 47, s 2016). Given the significance of this preparatory stage, the support provided by school leaders to kindergarten teachers in addressing challenges becomes increasingly vital.

The field of early childhood education has seen a surge in research focusing on pedagogical leadership. Notable studies by Fonsen et al. (2020), Heikka et al. (2019), and Martinez et al. (2018) contribute to this growing body of literature. These studies explore various aspects of pedagogical leadership within early childhood education settings, shedding light on its significance and impact. Additionally, recent research has expanded the scope of inquiry to explore emerging trends, challenges, and effective strategies associated with pedagogical leadership in this critical stage of education.

In the Philippines, there is a limited body of research on leadership within kindergarten and early childhood education (Escalona, 2022). School heads who are responsible for overseeing kindergarten education programs and supervising kindergarten teachers, play an important role. They are responsible for creating a positive and supportive learning environment for both educators and students. By utilizing their pedagogical leadership skills, school heads can address different challenges that kindergarten teachers encounter in their daily work.

This study tried to investigate the gap in the pedagogical leadership skills of school heads in addressing the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers. The primary objective of this study is to determine the level of

pedagogical leadership skills of school heads in addressing the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers.

Kindergarten Education in the Philippines

The education system in the Philippines particularly in kindergarten, has undergone significant changes and developments over the years. The passing of Republic Act No. 10533 also known as the Enhance Basic Education Act have included a one (1) year kindergarten education for all 5-year-old children in the country. Kindergarten program was later intensified through the passing of Republic Act 10157 in 2012 otherwise known as the Kindergarten Education Act, which outlines the core mission of kindergarten education, aiming to ensure equal access to mandatory and compulsory kindergarten education for all children. The goal is to effectively foster a wholistic development to adequately prepare them for formal schooling. This underscores the integral role of kindergarten within the basic education system. While Republic Act 10157 does not specify the qualifications required for school heads overseeing kindergarten education the level of their professional quality is related to the quality of the kindergarten (Sun, 2020).

Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education

In 2016, the Department of Education issued DepEd Order No. 47 s. 2016, providing guidelines for the operation and management of kindergarten programs nationwide. This order covers aspects such as instruction, assessment, learning resources, instructional materials, learning environment, and monitoring and evaluation. Alvarado and Lopez (2020), emphasize the importance of using this order as a benchmark to encourage administrators to continually improve all facets of the program.

The policy also stipulates that school heads must undergo sufficient training to ensure professional competence and possess the necessary attributes to effectively oversee, supervise, and administer the kindergarten education program. This encompasses proficiency in instructional development and management including mastery of the kindergarten curriculum guide with recommended pedagogical approaches. School heads should be adept at transmitting these skills during supervision to support teachers' growth and development in the educational process. Leaders require strong educational knowledge to be able to interpret the curriculum and lead its realization in the changing work environment Ahtiainen et al. (2021).

Pedagogical leadership in the Kindergarten Context

Pedagogical leadership plays a pivotal role in ensuring high-quality pedagogy in early childhood education as highlighted by Fonsen and Vlasov (2017) and Soukanen (2019). It is essential for creating an environment that fosters effective teaching and learning, supports professional development of educators, and enhances the overall quality of the program.

What are the pedagogical leadership skills that school leaders must have to address the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers? Kilag et al. (2024) emphasize the significance of effective communication skills for leaders in nurturing relationships. Effective communication between school leaders and kindergarten teachers is essential in addressing the challenges they face. By improving their communication skills, school leaders can create a supportive and collaborative environment that empowers teachers to take initiative and overcome challenges in the classroom.

Effective communication between school leaders and kindergarten teachers is essential in addressing the challenges they face. By improving their communication skills, school leaders can create a supportive and collaborative environment that empowers teachers to take initiative and overcome challenges in the classroom. Some strategies that school leaders can use to enhance their communication skills include: 1. Establishing regular and open lines of communication with kindergarten teachers, including scheduled meetings and check-ins, to ensure that their needs and concerns are heard and addressed. This involve establishing collaboration between parents and kindergarten learners, ensuring timely and promptly communication, and addressing any concerns and difficulties. School leaders should prioritize understanding the needs of children within the kindergarten environment and the different factors that may affect teaching early reading skills. They should effectively communicate with kindergarten teachers so they can give them the necessary support, resources, and guidance to navigate the challenges that they may have encountered.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was centered around exploring, understanding, and enhancing the role of pedagogical leadership in addressing the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers. The study aims to identify successful leadership practices that can be implemented by school heads to address the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The researchers utilized a descriptive research method in this study, which involved collecting data to provide a comprehensive description of the current conditions without making any judgments or interpretations. Descriptive research according to Creswell & Creswell (2017) defines it as a detailed description of the characteristics of the phenomenon or group and the relationship between variables.

Participants/Respondents

The researchers considered all the kindergarten teachers in Cluster 4 Santa Maria to Kalayaan Sub-office as respondents of the study. Total enumeration was used to ensure that every individual was accounted for and included in the study.

Instrumentation

The researchers used an online questionnaire derived from the related literature collected where validators' suggestions were integrated. The survey questionnaire was divided into three parts that correspond to the objectives of the study. The first part contains the respondent's profile that includes email address, and years of teaching experience, the second part is the level of pedagogical leadership skills of the school heads in terms of communication, relationship management, clarity and conflict resolution, the third part is about level of difficulty of kindergarten teachers of pedagogical leadership skills of school heads with respect to omnibus policy, kindergarten curriculum, teaching methodologies and kinder teachers' needs.

The study utilized an online questionnaire developed by the researchers. This questionnaire underwent validation by experts and was pilot tested with 30 respondents. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, demonstrating excellent consistency across all questions with the various themes.

Data Collection Procedure

The researchers started with a comprehensive literature review to understand the scholarly work on pedagogical leadership and its impact on addressing challenges faced by kindergarten teachers. Following the literature review, a survey questionnaire was developed to gather quantitative data from the kindergarten teachers regarding their perceptions of the pedagogical leadership skills of their school heads. The questionnaire was designed to measure the pedagogical leadership skills of school heads in terms of communication, relationship management, clarity, and conflict resolution.

The data collected from the respondents was analysed using statistical methods to comprehensively describe the level of pedagogical leadership of school heads across kindergarten challenges.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers adhered to the ethical standards outlined in the school's research manual. Throughout this work, the researchers rigorously addressed formal communication phases from an ethical perspective.

No question can criticize the pedagogical leadership skills of school heads across kinder teachers' challenges because the study's goal was to examine the leadership skills of the school heads.

In addition, the researcher did not identify the names of the participants.

The respondents gave their consent to the researcher. Finally, the researcher confirmed and assured the researchers that the given answers in the questionnaire checklist were fully based on the replies of the respondents. To guarantee the validity and reliability of the study, their responses were complete and contained no omissions, changes, or new words or phrases.

Data Analysis

To describe the pedagogical leadership skills of school heads, the level of difficulty of kindergarten teachers on pedagogical leadership skills of school heads, and the level of pedagogical leadership strategies of school heads across kinder teacher's challenges, mean was used. To describe the test on correlation between the level of pedagogical leadership skills of the school heads and the level of difficulty of kindergarten teachers in the pedagogical leadership skills of school heads, between the level of pedagogical strategies and the level of pedagogical leadership of school heads across kinder teachers' challenges, and between the level of pedagogical strategies and the level of difficulty of kindergarten teachers on the pedagogical skills of school heads, Pearson r was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Level of Pedagogical Leadership Skills of the School Heads Across Kinder Teachers' Challenges

Table 1 shows that terms of Communication, the results indicate that school heads demonstrate strong skills in effectively communicating the school's vision, providing clear instructions and expectations, disseminating important information, and engaging with parents. The overall mean score of 4.84 for communication was high, indicating excellence in this aspect of pedagogical leadership.

Table 1. The Level of Pedagogical Leadership Skills of School Heads across the Kinder Teachers' Challenges

Variable	Mean	VI	Rank
Communication	4.84	Excellent	3
Relationship Management	4.94	Excellent	1
Clarity	4.86	Excellent	2
Resolution	4.76	Excellent	4
Overall Mean	4.85	Excellent	

Regarding Relationship Management, school heads were found to excel in building strong relationships with kindergarten teachers, fostering a collaborative and supportive culture, and addressing conflicts constructively. The overall mean score of 4.94 for relationship management was also high, indicating effective leadership in promoting positive relationships among stakeholders.

In terms of Clarity, school heads exhibited strong abilities in articulating goals and objectives, providing clear feedback, defining teaching practices, and understanding kindergarten-specific challenges. The overall mean score of 4.86 for clarity was high, indicating excellence in providing clear guidance and direction to kindergarten teachers.

In Resolution, school heads demonstrated effective skills in addressing conflicts in a timely and fair manner, implementing strategies to prevent and manage conflicts, and supporting teachers in finding constructive solutions. The overall mean score of 4.76 for resolution was high, indicating proficiency in resolving challenges within the kindergarten setting.

The composite mean score of 4.85 indicates an overall high level of pedagogical leadership skills demonstrated

by school heads across kindergarten teachers' challenges.

The findings of the study align closely with the emphasis placed by Kilag et al. (2024) on the significance of effective communication skills for leaders in nurturing relationships. Effective communication between school leaders and kindergarten teachers is indeed essential in addressing the challenges they face, as demonstrated by the high ratings in the Communication and Relationship Management variables of the study.

The Level of Difficulty of Kindergarten Teachers on Pedagogical Leadership Skills of School Heads

The data on table 2 shows that, terms of Omnibus Policy, kindergarten teachers perceived a slightly difficult level of difficulty, indicating some challenges in understanding and implementing policy directives. However, overall, school heads were perceived to possess adequate skills in policy implementation.

Table 2. The Level of Difficulty of Kindergarten Teachers on Pedagogical Leadership Skills of School Heads

Variable	Mean	VI	Rank
Omnibus Policy	2.10	Slightly Difficult	4
Kinder Curriculum	2.15	Slightly Difficult	3
Teaching Methodologies	2.37	Slightly Difficult	1
Teacher's Needs	2.23	Slightly Difficult	2
Overall Mean	2.21	Slightly Difficult	

Regarding the Kindergarten Curriculum, kindergarten teachers also perceived a slightly difficult level of difficulty, particularly in areas such as monitoring classroom time blocks and providing necessary instructional materials. While there are areas for improvement, school heads were generally perceived to demonstrate competence in supporting curriculum implementation.

In Teaching Methodologies, kindergarten teachers perceived a slightly difficult level of difficulty, particularly in integrating recommended teaching methodologies and strategies into the classroom. However, school heads were perceived to possess skills in guiding teachers and providing support for effective teaching practices.

In addressing Kindergarten Teachers' Needs, kindergarten teachers perceived a slightly difficult level of difficulty, particularly in promoting a healthy work environment and being supported in addressing professional needs. Nevertheless, school heads were generally perceived to possess skills in supporting teacher well-being and advocating for kindergarten education.

These findings have several implications for practice and policy in kindergarten education. Firstly, they highlight the importance of ongoing support and professional development for school heads to enhance their pedagogical leadership skills in various areas. Secondly, they underscore the need for proactive support and advocacy from school heads to address the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers, particularly in implementing policies, curriculum, and teaching methodologies. Thirdly, they emphasize the significance of fostering a positive and supportive work environment for kindergarten teachers to thrive professionally.

The findings regarding the level of difficulty experienced by kindergarten teachers on school heads' pedagogical leadership skills across various domains align closely with the recommendations put forth by Sinha et al. (2017) who emphasized that the pedagogical leadership of teachers must also complement the participative and training dimensions with some professional practice, based on the understanding and acknowledgement of the role played by every member of the educational community, together with their particular needs and priorities.

The perceived difficulty in addressing kindergarten teachers' needs emphasizes the necessity for school heads to understand and acknowledge the specific needs and priorities of teachers. School heads should actively

support teacher well-being, advocate for the importance of kindergarten education, and promote collaboration among teachers to address their professional needs effectively.

The Level of Pedagogical Leadership Strategies of School Heads across Kindergarten Teachers' Challenges

Table 3. The Level of Pedagogical Leadership Strategies of School Heads across Kindergarten Teachers' Challenges

Statements	Mean	VI	Rank
Statement 1	4.84	Strongly Agree	3
Statement 2	4.81	Strongly Agree	4.5
Statement 3	4.86	Strongly Agree	2
Statement 4	4.73	Strongly Agree	6
Statement 5	4.89	Strongly Agree	1
Statement 6	4.81	Strongly Agree	4.5
Overall Mean	4.82	Strongly Agree	

The findings indicate that kindergarten teachers highly value the pedagogical leadership strategies implemented by school heads to address their challenges. The high mean scores across all statements suggest that kindergarten teachers perceive school heads as effective leaders who prioritize professional development, communication, collaboration, and support for curriculum implementation.

The statement with the highest mean score (4.89) pertains to providing ongoing mentorship and coaching opportunities for kindergarten teachers. This indicates that teachers highly value opportunities for professional growth and development, viewing mentorship and coaching as essential components of effective leadership.

Similarly, statements related to implementing regular professional development workshops (4.84) and developing clear policies for curriculum implementation (4.86) received high mean scores, highlighting the importance of continuous learning and clarity in guiding teachers' practices.

While the mean score for fostering a collaborative and supportive school culture (4.73) was slightly lower compared to other statements, it still reflects a strong endorsement of school heads' efforts to create a positive working environment that values teachers' contributions and encourages teamwork and innovation.

The overall mean score of 4.82 indicates a consistent pattern of strong agreement among kindergarten teachers regarding the effectiveness of school heads' pedagogical leadership strategies. These findings suggest that school heads play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment that supports kindergarten teachers in their professional growth and enhances the quality of education provided to students.

The findings of this study regarding kindergarten teachers' positive perception of school heads' pedagogical leadership strategies resonate with the roles emphasized by Aquino et al. (2021). Aquino et al. underscored the multifaceted roles of school heads as directors, planners, and judgment-makers. The high mean scores across various aspects of leadership strategies, such as implementing professional development workshops, establishing clear communication channels, and fostering a collaborative school culture, reflect school heads' effectiveness in fulfilling these roles.

In line with Aquino et al.'s assertion that a trustworthy school head utilizes collaboration as a working technique, the findings suggest that school heads are successful in promoting collaboration among kindergarten teachers. By establishing teams and smaller units of team members to examine proposals or tactics, school heads facilitate open dialogue, teamwork, and innovation, as evidenced by the high mean scores

for fostering a collaborative and supportive school culture and providing ongoing mentorship and coaching opportunities.

Significant Relationship between the Level of Pedagogical Leadership Skills of the School Heads and the Level of Difficulty of Kindergarten Teachers in the Pedagogical Leadership Skills of School Heads

Table 4. Significant Relationship between the Level of Pedagogical Leadership Skills of the School Heads and the Level of Difficulty of Kindergarten Teachers in the Pedagogical Leadership Skills of School Heads

		Omnibus Policy	Kindergarten Curriculum	Teaching Methodologies	Kindergarten Teachers Needs
Communication	Pearson Correlation	-0.080	0.028	-0.138	-0.028
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.428	0.784	0.171	0.781
	N	100	100	100	100
Relationship Management	Pearson Correlation	-0.067	-0.131	-0.079	-0.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.509	0.195	0.433	0.309
	N	100	100	100	100
Clarity	Pearson Correlation	-0.040	-0.110	-0.015	-0.016
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.693	0.276	0.880	0.871
	N	100	100	100	100
Resolution	Pearson Correlation	-.338**	-0.085	-0.094	-0.073
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.400	0.352	0.472
	N	100	100	100	100

The table shows that in terms of Communication, there was no significant correlation between school heads' leadership skills and teachers' perceived difficulty in implementing policies related to Omnibus Policy, Kindergarten Curriculum, Teaching Methodologies, or addressing Kindergarten Teachers' Needs. This suggests that the effectiveness of school heads' communication strategies may not significantly influence teachers' perceived difficulty in these areas.

Similarly, for Relationship Management and Clarity, the correlation coefficients were generally weak and non-significant across all domains assessed. This indicates that school heads' leadership skills in managing relationships and providing clarity in policies and procedures may not have a significant impact on teachers' perceived difficulty in these areas.

However, in the domain of Resolution, there was a significant negative correlation between school heads' leadership skills and teachers' perceived difficulty in addressing conflicts related to Omnibus Policy. This suggests that school heads who demonstrate stronger leadership skills in conflict resolution may contribute to reducing teachers' perceived difficulty in implementing policies related to stronger leadership skills in conflict resolution may contribute to reducing teachers' perceived difficulty in implementing policies related to Omnibus Policy.

Overall, while there were some significant correlations observed in the domain of Resolution, the findings suggest that the relationship between school heads' pedagogical leadership skills and teachers' perceived difficulty varies across different domains and may not be consistent across all areas assessed.

Significant Relationship between the Level of Pedagogical Strategies and the Level of Pedagogical Leadership Skills of the School Heads

The results revealed strong and significant positive correlations between the level of pedagogical strategies and the level of pedagogical leadership of school heads across all domains assessed. Specifically, in the domains of Communication, Relationship Management, Clarity, and Resolution, positive relationships were found, indicating that as the level of pedagogical strategies employed by school heads increases, so does their level of pedagogical leadership in various aspects.

Table 5. Significant Relationship between the Level of Pedagogical Strategies and the Level of Pedagogical Leadership Skills of the School Heads

Variables	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Communication	.987	.000
Relationship Management	.251	.012
Clarity	.210	.036
Resolution	.299	.003

The results highlight the significance of integrating pedagogical skills into leadership training programs for school heads. By equipping school heads with effective pedagogical strategies, schools can enhance their leadership capacity to support kindergarten teachers and create a positive and conducive learning environment for students.

Significant Relationship between the Level of Pedagogical Strategies and the Level of Difficulty of Kindergarten Teachers on the Pedagogical Skills of School Heads

Table 6. Significant Relationship between the Level of Pedagogical Strategies and the Level of Difficulty of Kindergarten Teachers on the Pedagogical Skills of School Heads

Variables	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Omnibus Policy	-0.054	0.593
Kindergarten Curriculum	0.049	0.629
Teaching Methodologies	-0.123	0.224
Kindergarten Teachers' Needs	-0.011	0.916

The results revealed predominantly weak and non-significant correlations between the level of pedagogical strategies and the level of difficulty experienced by kindergarten teachers across all domains assessed. Specifically, in the domains of Omnibus Policy ($r = -0.054$, $sig = 0.593$), Kindergarten Curriculum ($r = 0.049$, $sig = 0.629$), and Kindergarten Teachers' Needs ($r = -0.011$, $sig = 0.916$), the correlation coefficients were negligible, indicating a lack of meaningful relationship between pedagogical strategies and teachers' perceived difficulty in these areas. Similarly, in the domain of Teaching Methodologies ($r = -0.123$, $sig = 0.224$), the correlation coefficient was weak, although slightly negative, suggesting a minimal inverse relationship between pedagogical strategies and teachers' perceived difficulty, which was not statistically significant.

The results underscore the complexity of factors influencing teachers' experiences and perceptions of difficulty in relation to school heads' pedagogical skills.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study demonstrates that school heads exhibit exemplary pedagogical leadership skills in addressing

kindergarten teachers' diverse challenges. Effective communication, relationship management, clarity, and timely resolution are central to their success—essential components of leadership within the kindergarten context.

Kindergarten teachers generally perceive school heads' pedagogical leadership strategies positively, with high levels of agreement across various assessed dimensions. These findings emphasize the critical role of effective leadership in resolving teachers' challenges and fostering a supportive, collaborative school culture. While significant correlations were observed in the domain of conflict resolution, the overall results suggest that the interplay between leadership strategies and teacher challenges is nuanced and may vary across different domains.

Interestingly, the study found no significant relationship between the level of pedagogical strategies employed and the degree of difficulty experienced by kindergarten teachers regarding school heads' pedagogical leadership. Though weak correlations were observed in some areas, they were not statistically significant, indicating that pedagogical strategies may not serve as strong predictors of teachers' perceived difficulties in these domains.

Despite these findings, the study highlights the importance of cultivating a supportive and collaborative environment where conflicts are addressed constructively, goals are clearly articulated, and relationships are nurtured. This reinforces the need for proactive leadership practices that enhance school climate and teacher satisfaction.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relied solely on self-reported data from kindergarten teachers, which may introduce bias and affect the reliability of the findings. Second, the research was conducted within a specific context, limiting the generalizability of the results to other settings. Finally, the study focused exclusively on the perspectives of kindergarten teachers, thereby excluding the insights of other key stakeholders, such as parents and school administrators.

Recommendations

To address these challenges and enhance pedagogical leadership, several recommendations are proposed. Schools should invest in targeted training programs to strengthen school heads' leadership skills, emphasizing effective communication, conflict resolution, and relationship management. Additionally, fostering collaboration among teachers, school heads, parents, and administrators can improve curriculum implementation and teaching practices, ultimately leading to better student outcomes. Establishing clear communication channels, such as regular surveys or suggestion boxes, is crucial to providing kindergarten teachers with opportunities to express their concerns and ensuring that school heads remain informed and responsive. Furthermore, school heads should develop and implement clear, actionable protocols for resolving conflicts. Training in conflict management techniques and mediation processes will help maintain a positive and professional work environment.

Future Research Directions

Future research could benefit from exploring the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, such as parents, administrators, and other community members, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of pedagogical leadership. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess the long-term effects of school heads' leadership on teacher satisfaction and student outcomes. Finally, employing qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, could provide deeper insights into the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers and their support needs, complementing the findings from quantitative research.

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