

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR OF TOP PERFORMING TEACHERS OF SAN PEDRO COLLEGE, DAVAO CITY

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Abstract

This study sought to find the leadership behavior of the top ten performing teachers from three departments of San Pedro College. The leadership behavior was classified into in-class and out-of-class behavior and personal attributes and further subclassified into human skills, technical skills, and conceptual skills. Data collected were from teachers, peers, administrators, and students. The study shows that the top performing teachers act as leaders whether in school or out of school. Teachers can be viewed as leaders inside the classroom and to be effective, teachers must be leaders. It is vital then that the school administrators may consider the leadership characteristics to be a potential model of teaching.

Introduction

One of the most important aspects of any learning experience of the student is the effectiveness of the teachers. An effective teacher provides information to students in a way that is clear, understandable, and motivating. However, teachers are confronted with the difficult question on what constitutes effective learning behavior (Benson, Schroeder, Lantz, & Bird, n.d.).

With increasing pressure being asserted on college faculty by Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to advance professionally by at least finishing a master's degree through CHED's Memo no.30 s. 2001 and by Republic Act 9173, also known as the Philippine Nursing Act of 2002, which assumes that content mastery will insure good teaching (Arreola, 2000), the time is right to begin efforts to identify the effective teachers and behaviors, which are differentiated as being more effective.

However, as practiced today, the identification and evaluation of effective teaching is too quantitative and not qualitative enough. Furthermore, the majority of previous research on teaching effectiveness has utilized quantitative surveys to assess effective professional instruction. One limitation of this approach is that surveys targeting specific behaviors tend to restrict the creativity of the respondents, by simply being asked to rate teachers based on a predetermined set of factors and often not permitted the opportunity to provide personal perception or elaborate on responses (Benson, et.al, n.d). Thus, a more qualitative identification of characteristics constituting a profile of an effective teacher is needed.

One perspective of effective teaching is that it is a form of leadership. Teachers were viewed as leaders. A few specific leadership roles were identified including self-improvement and development of other teachers—specifically as master teacher or mentor, student advocate, and action researcher. Teaching itself as a form of leadership within the classroom, however, was rarer in education and leadership literature. But there

are few exceptions with studies revealing that teachers who are encouraged to be leaders tend to induce high achievement among students (as cited in Drury, 2005).

Literature on education and leadership found several indicators of similar leadership constructs when viewing teacher behaviors. When teaching and leadership concepts are combined it can be known that leadership is what effective teachers do within their classrooms when they influence a passion for the subject matter, initiate structure in areas of professional competence, guide group discussion, persuade peer tutoring to occur, design and motivate action-learning processes, clarify goals or learning objectives, encourage individual persistence, exhibit consideration for students in a variety of interpersonal behaviors, and in many other ways that facilitate learning outcomes among the students (Drury, 2005).

Teachers must be leaders to be effective in the classroom (as cited in Drury, 2005). Considering this philosophy, the study assumes that effective teachers manifest leadership behaviors. A teacher as a leader of learning shows leadership behaviors as they deal with students. Most teachers as leaders want to do what it takes to achieve desired results and the result is learning. Therefore, teachers who are result-oriented leaders will want to remove any barriers to learning that exist, and enhance the opportunities for learning, which are available. Others are effective as servant leaders. Teachers who act as such are good at seeing their role not as experts who know all answers, but rather as helpers with a solid understanding of the subject matter who instill in students a sense of inquisitiveness and desire for learning (as cited in Drury, 2005).

Problem and Methods

This study was designed to profile the effective teacher in San Pedro College, Davao City by identifying distinctive leadership behavior and characteristics. Specifically, its objectives were: 1) to determine the high performing group based on the existing performance evaluation criteria; 2) to identify leadership behaviors within the classroom which distinguish effective teachers who most respond to the existing performance evaluation criteria for faculty of the school; 3) to identify out-of-class characteristics associated with teachers who respond most like established criteria for an effective teacher; and 4) to identify personal attributes of effective professors who respond most like to the performance evaluation criteria for teachers.

Ten teachers from three departments, who were identified as top 10 during School Year 2003-2004 to 2005-2006 based on the average performance ratings, participated in the study. The performance evaluation results from the Human Resource Development Office were the basis in identifying these teachers.

A purposive sampling of students ($n=20$), colleagues ($n=20$), coordinators and department heads ($n=4$), who have known the identified teachers were chosen to participate in the study.

A qualitative study was designed to achieve the research objectives. Qualitative research methodologies were used, which include in-depth interviews with the selected teachers, as well as with colleagues and peers and with the coordinators and department heads of the identified teachers, focus group discussion among students, and classroom observations to obtain data on the actual leadership behaviors of the teachers.

The responses were recorded using a handheld tape recorder and were later transcribed and were subjected to qualitative analysis. Data were coded and categorized to yield the common leadership behaviors within the classroom, the characteristics outside class, and the personal attributes that characterize the high performing teachers.

The qualitative analysis from the interviews and focus group discussion identified several meanings for the in-class characteristics or leadership behaviors, characteristics outside class and personal attributes of the high performing teachers. These characteristics were then grouped according to leadership categories namely, human, technical, and conceptual skills, based on a study made by Guglielmino in 1979 (as cited in De Leon, 1993) on the skills and characteristics displayed by middle level to upper level executives. The conceptual skills include thinking or cognitive skills, such as making decisions, identifying opportunities, innovating for the good of the organization, understanding and monitoring the environment, and structuring the organization. The human skills are interpersonal skills in relating with clients, speaking effectively, handling problems and grievances, leading and motivating others, and negotiating and controlling change. The technical skills refer to skills related to the procedures of completing duties and tasks like writing a program, preparing an analysis, and searching for information.

A model of qualitative analysis developed by Goetz and LeCompte (1981) was used to interpret the data. This model employs a four-step process to analyze subject responses. First, meaning units were developed from the responses. Meaning units are simply important words or phrases that are chosen to be further examined. Second, the meaning units were grouped together under several categories that evolved from the selected meaning units. Third, the categories were again linked under major subheadings to form a pyramid structure. Fourth, the significance of the relationships that emerged was considered. The results were then compared to the findings of the previous research.

Results and Discussion

The average rating of the performance evaluation results of the top ten performing teachers is 89.4, with a mean age of 40.5 years old. Three of the ten teachers are males, while the rest are females. The average number of years of service in the school is 12.5 years.

Based on the in-depth interviews, the in-class characteristics of high performing teachers include giving consideration and being accommodating to students, establishing good relationships, enforcing discipline, displaying humor, being reflective and facilitative, and showing concern for the welfare of the students. The most important characteristic for the teachers is showing consideration for student behavior, such as noise, problems with attendance, inappropriate attitudes, or even nonverbal behaviors that reflect boredom or exhaustion. Accommodating students who have difficulties in understanding the lessons is also an important behavior in the classroom. The second major human skill of high performing teachers when inside the classroom is the ability to establish good relationships with students by being friendly and responsive. Interest or concern for students is manifested by knowing, familiarizing, and recognizing the

students individually. The teachers also show openness and nonthreatening attitudes, one of which is looking at students as peers, children, or siblings. Limits and boundaries are still set while building positive relations with students. Another in-class characteristic is enforcing appropriate discipline in a humane and gentle manner. It appears that the teachers possess a good sense of humor and found this characteristic effective inside the classroom. Humor is seen as helpful in building a positive atmosphere in class. It is also used in drawing the attention of the students and even in dealing with difficult behaviors.

High-performing teachers also believe that being reflective before acting or responding to the behaviors of the students should be done to gain insights on the experiences. This is usually done by reflecting on a particular behavior and how this behavior influences the students. Moreover, these teachers are likely to be facilitative in the approach in dealing with the thoughts and behaviors of the students by giving encouragement to express ideas and questions. The concern and sensitivity to the welfare of the students is manifested by giving much importance to the needs of the students.

The department heads of the high-performing teachers have similar perceptions on effective teaching behavior, as displayed by the selected teachers. There are four in-class characteristics identified by the superiors, these include establishing good relations with students, setting boundaries with the relationship, promoting appropriate discipline, and using facilitative approaches. The department heads observed that high-performing teachers can establish good rapport and relationship with students. It is believed that effective teachers can strike a balance between relationships with students and executing authority. Moreover, department heads observe that these teachers enforce appropriate discipline by inclining towards facilitative approaches in dealing with inappropriate behavior.

The peers also consider effective teaching strategies as the most significant in-class technical skill. A closely identified skill is the clear and comprehensive presentation of lesson by the teachers to ensure understanding. The teachers also display creativity and innovation in teaching styles, which result in students' positive attitudes towards learning.

The high-performing teachers show positive human skills towards others whether inside or outside the classroom. These teachers can easily develop personal relations with students, more likely to give consideration and accommodation to different behaviors of students, even reaching out to struggling learners. A facilitative style is used in dealing with students, making teachers naturally funny whenever humor is infused or introduced in the classroom. The teachers also show respect and concern for the welfare and needs of the students. Good relations are also developed with colleagues. Personal attributes, such as commitment to work, good sense of humor, pleasant and desirable characteristics, leadership qualities, and high level of self-awareness have contributed to the in-class and out-of-class interpersonal skills of the teachers.

Most teachers make use of effective teaching strategies, such as allowing students to engage into collaborative, or cooperative, experiential, insightful or reflective, fun and stimulating learning activities. In other words, the learning approaches utilized are mostly inductive and helpful in maximizing the learning of the students. Classes are usually conducted with an organized or systematic presentation and activities. One teacher usually starts the class by checking the attendance of the students, and then initiates the interaction by asking about a previous subject or experiences. If a positive interaction is

reciprocated, the recalling of previous topics discussed in class comes in. Then the discussion of the topic continues. Towards the end of the class, an evaluation is given to students in the form of a quiz. Another teacher shares that during discussion or presentation, questions form part of the discussion or interaction, synthesized into three, namely, preparation, presentation, and interaction.

Some teachers start the class with a prayer, followed by checking of attendance according to the seat plan of the students. After the checking of attendance, the outline of the topics is written on the board, mentioning the objectives to the class afterwards. Then a quiz is given to students every meeting. During lecture, the students are aware that a recitation or a quiz would be given on the next meeting. The teacher finds this strategy helpful because it serves as a guide to the direction of the class discussion.

High-performing teachers ensure objective grading or evaluation in assessing the performance of the students. Most teachers give clear allocation of the percentage as far as grades are concerned, and whenever the students or the parents ask for reasons of failure in the class, the process is presented and the system is explained to justify the grade or the rating. One teacher shares that accommodation is given to students who have low grades, except for those below 70.

High-performing teachers also set clear expectations to students as to the kind of interaction inside the classroom, the quality of instruction, and the desirable behaviors for learning. Specifically, a teacher mentioned that inside the classroom, there is a student-teacher relationship, without implying strictness. Teachers give appropriate delineation on when to be serious and when to be easygoing. Moreover, high-performing teachers plan or ensure instruction by carefully designing the lessons of the subjects taught. These teachers have a very high sense of preparation, especially in lesson designing, which suggests that an effective teacher plans or ensures the teaching style or mode of instruction.

It is also said that the teaching styles depend on the students. An eclectic approach and Multiple Intelligence, as well as assessment methods are used for the participative students. High-performing teachers make use of different effective methods of assessing the learning outcomes of the students, such as quizzes, exams, laboratory outputs, case study defenses, and the like. Furthermore, these teachers take time to check the attendance of the students, having a system or a classroom structure of monitoring tardiness and absences, which contributes order to the class.

High-performing teachers give students enough time to respond to questions posed as part of checking the extent of understanding of students on the discussed topic. Teachers ensure that the students understand the lesson. Whenever necessary, teachers discuss the topic again when students say the topic is difficult until the students understand the lesson.

Effective classroom management skills are identified by the immediate superiors as another essential in-class human skill of high-performing teachers. Most of the selected teachers are observed to have good management skills.

According to peers and other respondents, in-class characteristics of high-performing teachers, particularly on human skills, are good relations with students, facilitative approaches, consideration behaviors, showing of humor, and student-centered attitudes. High-performing teachers develop good relations with students. This is manifested by establishing rapport with students, leveling off or understanding the point

of the students during interaction (especially that students are different from each other), knowing how to adjust to the different personalities of the students, and even getting familiar with the commonly used language or jargon of the students, to name a few. Furthermore, possessing classroom management skills is also considered helpful in maximizing the learning time inside the class. The teacher is strict and enforces discipline inside the classroom, but students consider it as part of the student-teacher relationship.

Similarly, students also observe that high-performing teachers make use of effective teaching strategies. Teachers follow a systematic structure or order in meeting the learning objectives for the class, utilizing clear, valid, and fair evaluation of the performance of the students, as well as giving incentives and encouragement for students to perform better in the subject.

High-performing teachers agree that for conceptual skills, holding on a certain philosophy of teaching is a very important in-class characteristic of effective teaching. This is manifested by being conscious of what to teach to students, believing in the development of the higher-order thinking skills, critical thinking, and values or character formation as goals of learning. Moreover, department heads consider knowledge and mastery of the subject matter as an important characteristic of high-performing teachers.

These teachers also exhibit teaching competencies that are effective inside the classroom, such as using teaching strategies and learning structures, and technical skills that are useful in accomplishing teaching tasks and duties.

Another component of effective teaching considered is the out-of-class characteristics, the behaviors of the teachers outside the classroom. These characteristics are grouped into leadership categories, namely, human skills and technical skills. High-performing teachers establish good relations with students even outside the classroom by listening and responding to the concerns of students. The department heads observe that the teachers display positive human skills in relating with students outside the class. The accessibility of the teachers towards students is observed by peers and colleagues. Students consider these teachers friendly and approachable outside of class. Another out-of-class characteristic is the efficiency with time, usually spending it by accomplishing duties and keeping up with the latest developments in the field of specialization.

Personal attributes of the teachers help develop the sense of responsibility and efficiency, which allow teachers to facilitate and manage class well and perform other expected functions. The high performing teachers tend to anchor teaching abilities and approaches in dealing with students on a certain philosophy in teaching. These teachers have a good grasp on what to give to students in terms of knowledge towards the subject taught in class, with perspectives firmly grounded towards commitment to work, particularly to the field of teaching.

The personal attributes of the teachers are grouped into leading categories, namely, human skills, technical skills, and conceptual skills. All respondents considered high-performing teachers to be strongly committed to relationship with students, colleagues, and family. The teachers identified sense of humor as one of the prominent attributes from other teachers, as well as pleasant disposition and spontaneity and grace in expressing ideas.

Peers observed that high-performing teachers manifest desirable or positive characteristics, particularly effective emotional management skills, such as showing temperance and patience to students and to other people.

High-performing teachers identified personal strengths and weaknesses as a teacher and as a person. Peers also perceive that the teachers are aware of their personal attributes.

It is interesting to note that the department heads and peers of the teachers identified that these teachers possess leadership qualities and have had leadership positions at present and in the past. Peers observe that these teachers are expressive and spontaneous. Some of the teachers also displayed other attitudes like being calm and patient. This is sometimes, however, perceived as being less assertive or less expressive.

The technical skills of high-performing teachers include the sense of responsibility and efficiency. The sense of responsibility is seen in the teachers' ability to accomplish any given task. Likewise, the teachers are both efficient with time inside and outside the classroom.

Most of the teachers agree on the philosophy of teaching that effective teachers should not intimidate students but instead establish good and friendly relations. This perspective is anchored on their personal experiences having teachers left both positive and negative memories in them. Having these experiences serve as their inspiration or models of teaching.

Inspired by the philosophy in teaching, teachers display commitment to teaching and to the institution. Other respondents considered commitment to work and to teaching, in particular, as remarkable personal attributes of the teachers. Teachers experience fulfillment in teaching from the positive feedback of the students as well as from their effective learning experiences introduced. Some found satisfaction from students still acknowledging them even after graduating from the institution.

Although most of these characteristics obtained from the interviewees and focus group participants were mostly positive, certain limitations of high-performing teachers were identified. The assertive and expressive attitudes are perceived by peers and students to the extent it becomes apparently inappropriate to the situation. On the other hand, the calm, patient, and understanding traits are considered to be passive attitudes. The strong commitment to profession, such as being a workaholic, for instance, limits leisure time, or recreational and social activities. Being accommodating to students and peers may promote dependency. These weaknesses suggest that the leadership behaviors of the teachers can be effective only when a balance of the skills is attained.

However, it is good to point out that even if the teachers are able to establish friendships with students, the boundary between professors and students is still emphasized. Teachers are able to maintain objectivity as far as evaluation is concerned.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that the behaviors of high-performing teachers, whether inside or outside the classroom, suggest that these teachers truly act as leaders who manifest that human, technical and conceptual skills. Leadership is demonstrated when positive human or interpersonal skills are used in dealing with students and colleagues and when exercising necessary and sufficient competence in handling classes. Personal attributes imply that the teachers are also leaders, showing commitment to people and to work.

It is recommended that these characteristics be considered part of a potential system or model of teaching. The findings may be used essentially to inform the present and future college educators of the characteristics that are considered as helpful and essential in instructional delivery inside the classroom and in the learning experiences of students. It is vital that school administrators consider these characteristics in faculty selection, evaluation, and during the faculty training and development sessions. Furthermore, the reported information supplements the existing studies on effective teaching behaviors, yet may spark off new patterns and themes that could help advance studies, especially on the perspective that teaching can be viewed as a form of leadership.

Future researches may consider identifying further the characteristics of an effective teacher based on the perceptions of students, since this study utilized a limited sample of students. Other researches may include examining the effective characteristics across various levels and disciplines. Open-ended questions or in-depth interviews may be continued or the Delphi technique or other qualitative research methodologies may be used.

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