



MENTORSHIP NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS DIVISION IN NUEVA ECIJA

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra28275>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra28275

ABSTRACT

The increasing complexity of educational leadership tasks poses significant challenges for educational leaders, particularly in public schools where administrative responsibilities are intensified by limited manpower and resources. In the Philippine public school system, newly appointed educational leaders face increasing instructional, managerial, and administrative demands. This study examined the mentorship needs and challenges of educational leaders as a basis for developing a localized mentorship policy framework. The study employed a mixed-methods research design grounded in empowering leadership and communities of practice. It was conducted in three School Divisions in Nueva Ecija, namely the Schools Division of Cabanatuan City, the Schools Division of San Jose City, and the Schools Division of Science City of Muñoz. Quantitative data were gathered through a structured survey administered to educational leaders with less than five years of leadership experience, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews to explain and enrich the quantitative results. Descriptive statistical analysis and thematic analysis were used for data interpretation. Results indicated that mentorship was rated as highly needed in all major leadership domains, particularly in instructional leadership, school management and operations, stakeholder engagement, decision-making, and emotional and professional support. Mentoring related to leadership confidence, problem-solving, and role clarity was likewise assessed as highly needed. Conversely, key constraints, including the absence of a formal mentoring program, limited availability of trained mentors, time constraints, and heavy administrative workload, were perceived as challenging. Qualitative findings corroborated these results by revealing that mentoring support was largely informal, inconsistent, and highly dependent on peer relationships rather than institutional systems. The study concludes that the high level of mentorship needs and the highly challenging nature of existing support mechanisms highlight the urgency of establishing a structured, sustained, and context-responsive mentorship system. Based on the findings, a localized mentorship policy framework is proposed to strengthen leadership competence, professional growth, and leadership sustainability among educational leaders.

KEYWORDS: Educational leaders, mentorship, mentorship needs, challenges of educational leaders, professional identity

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership plays a critical role in ensuring the effective functioning of schools; however, the Philippine public school system continues to experience a shortage of qualified school heads. Many schools operate without formally designated principals, requiring head teachers or teachers-in-charge to assume leadership responsibilities despite limited preparation, insufficient training, and inadequate institutional support. This condition creates a strong need for organized leadership development and mentoring systems, particularly for newly appointed educational leaders.

In Nueva Ecija, selected Schools Divisions such as Cabanatuan City, San Jose City, and Science City of Muñoz continue to encounter difficulties in appointing and supporting adequately prepared school heads. Existing evidence shows that leadership effectiveness in these contexts depends not only on technical competence but also on supervisory, interpersonal, and professional capabilities. At the same time, the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads emphasize leadership domains that require technical support, emotional resilience, collaborative practice, and professional identity development.

Despite the recognized importance of mentorship in strengthening leadership capacity, mentoring practices in the Philippine context remain largely informal, inconsistent, and insufficiently institutionalized, especially for newly appointed or acting school heads. Given these conditions, the study examined the mentorship needs and challenges of educational leaders in selected Schools Divisions in Nueva Ecija in order to develop a localized and context-responsive mentorship policy framework.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How may the profile of the educational leaders be described in terms of age, sex, civil status, years in a leadership position, type of appointment, relevant training attended, and highest educational attainment?
2. How may the mentorship need of educational leaders be described in terms of technical support, emotional support, and professional identity development?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the educational leaders' profile and their mentorship needs?
4. How may the challenges of educational leaders be qualitatively described?
5. What mentorship plan may be suggested based on the findings of the study to lessen the experienced challenges of the educational leaders and to empower them?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design. The quantitative phase was used to determine the profile of educational leaders and assess their mentorship needs, while the qualitative phase was conducted to explain and enrich the quantitative results by exploring the actual challenges encountered by the participants in the performance of their leadership roles.



The study was conducted in the Schools Division of Cabanatuan City, the Schools Division of San Jose City, and the Schools Division of Science City of Muñoz in Nueva Ecija. The respondents included Teachers-in-Charge, Head Teachers, Assistant Principals, and newly appointed School Principals in public elementary and secondary schools who had less than five years of leadership experience.

Quantitative data were gathered through a researcher-made survey questionnaire designed to assess mentorship needs in the areas of technical support, emotional support, and professional identity development. The instrument underwent content validation and pilot testing prior to administration. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with selected participants to gain deeper insights into the challenges they experienced as educational leaders.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and ranking were used to describe the respondents' profile and mentorship needs. Statistical tests were also employed to determine the relationship between selected profile variables and mentorship needs. For the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and meanings from the responses of the participants. Ethical standards in data gathering, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were observed throughout the conduct of the study.

RESULTS

The findings showed that the respondents represented newly appointed educational leaders from the three selected Schools Divisions in Nueva Ecija. Their profile was described in terms of age, sex, civil status, years in leadership position, type of appointment, relevant training attended, and highest educational attainment.

In the quantitative phase, educational leaders rated mentorship as highly needed in the three major domains of technical support, emotional support, and professional identity development. High mentorship needs were particularly evident in areas related to instructional leadership, school management and operations, stakeholder engagement, decision-making, leadership confidence, role clarity, and problem-solving. These results indicate that newly appointed educational leaders require structured and sustained support as they transition into school leadership roles.

The study also examined the relationship between the educational leaders' profile and their mentorship needs. In addition, the qualitative findings described the challenges experienced by the participants, which included insufficient formal support systems, limited access to trained mentors, role overload, time constraints, leadership stress, and the need for clearer institutional guidance. The themes derived from the qualitative data reinforced the quantitative result that mentorship is not only desirable but necessary for educational leaders in transition.

Based on the integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings, the study developed a proposed mentorship plan intended to strengthen technical competence, emotional resilience, and professional identity development among educational leaders.

DISCUSSION

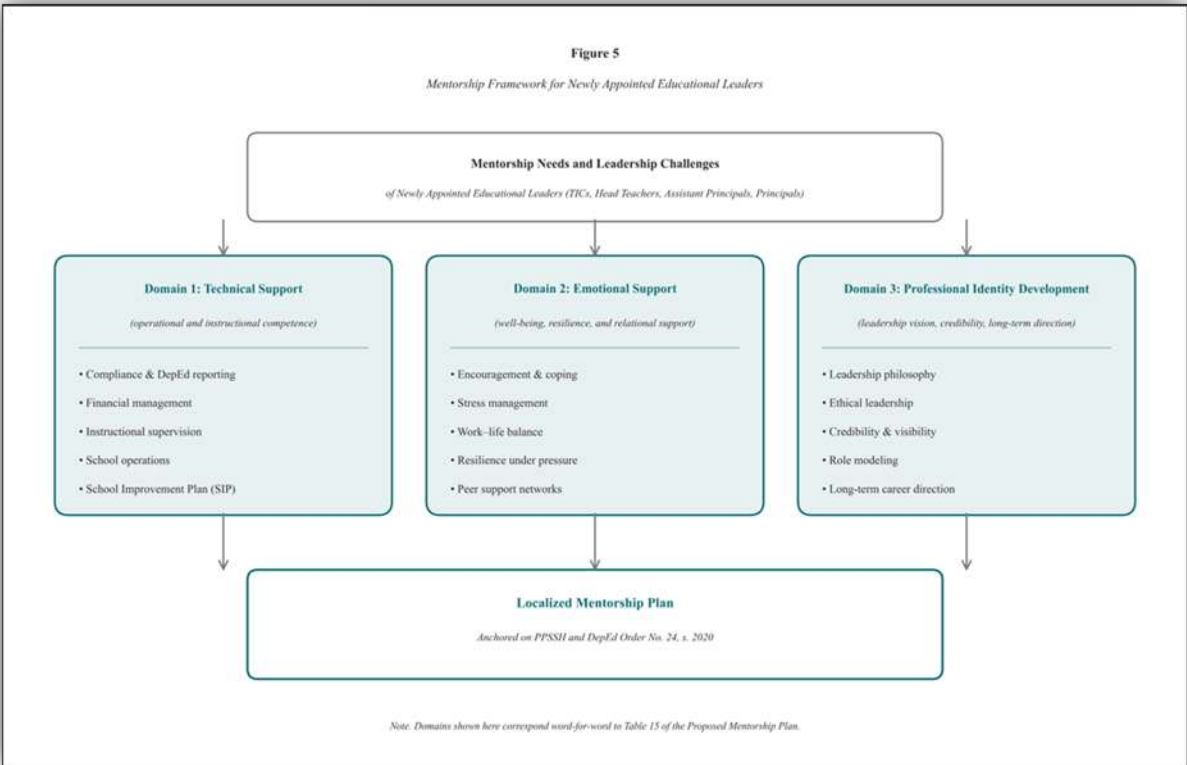
The findings suggest that the transition from teaching or mid-level school responsibilities into educational leadership is not merely a change in designation but a complex professional shift that requires organized support. Newly appointed educational leaders must simultaneously manage technical responsibilities, relational demands, emotional pressures, and identity formation, often without the benefit of a formal mentoring structure.

The high ratings in technical, emotional, and professional identity support indicate that mentorship should be understood as a holistic developmental intervention rather than a limited orientation activity. Educational leaders need guidance not only in school management, compliance, and decision-making but also in stress management, confidence building, reflective practice, and the formation of a stable leadership identity.

The qualitative results further reveal that existing mentoring arrangements are often informal and dependent on peer goodwill instead of institutional design. This condition can leave newly appointed leaders vulnerable to isolation, uncertainty, and inconsistent support. For this reason, the proposed mentorship policy framework presented as Figure 5, responds to an urgent need for a formal, structured, and context-sensitive leadership support system that can be adopted by Schools Divisions and aligned with leadership development standards in the Philippine public school system.



Figure 5
Educational Leadership: Aligning Educational Leaders' Challenges



CONCLUSION

The study concludes that educational leaders in the selected Schools Divisions in Nueva Ecija require substantial mentorship support in the areas of technical competence, emotional support, and professional identity development. These findings indicate that the transition into educational leadership is marked by complex responsibilities that many newly appointed or early-career leaders are not yet fully prepared to manage independently.

The study further concludes that leadership challenges are shaped by heavy compliance demands, unclear procedural expectations, workload imbalance, emotional strain, and the limited availability of formal mentoring mechanisms. Although some forms of support are present in practice, they are largely informal, uneven, and insufficient to address the developmental needs of educational leaders in a systematic manner.

Taken together, the findings affirm that effective school leadership development requires a structured, sustained, and context-responsive mentorship system. The proposed localized mentorship policy framework is therefore a necessary intervention to strengthen leadership capability, reinforce professional growth, and support the long-term effectiveness of educational leaders in the public school system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that Schools Division Offices institutionalize a structured and sustainable mentorship program for newly appointed educational leaders, particularly Teachers-in-Charge, Head Teachers, Assistant Principals, and newly appointed School Principals. The program should provide systematic support in technical leadership functions, emotional resilience, and professional identity development to help leaders adjust effectively to the demands of their positions.

School Governance and Operations Division personnel and other responsible units may use the proposed mentorship policy framework as a guide in designing induction activities, coaching sessions, peer support mechanisms, and follow-through mentoring processes aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads. Formal mentor assignment, regular mentoring schedules, and contextualized learning support should be established to reduce dependence on informal and inconsistent support systems.

Educational leaders should also be encouraged to participate in continuous professional development activities that strengthen school management, instructional leadership, decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and reflective leadership practice. In addition, future researchers may conduct follow-up studies on the implementation and effectiveness of the proposed mentorship framework in other divisions or educational settings and may further examine additional variables related to leadership development and mentoring outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researchers express profound gratitude to all individuals and institutions whose invaluable support and contributions made the completion of this study possible. Heartfelt thanks are first offered to the Almighty God for the wisdom, strength, and perseverance bestowed throughout this academic endeavor. The researcher likewise sincerely acknowledges Dr. Reynaldo A. Cabual, dissertation adviser, for his expert guidance, scholarly mentoring, and unwavering support, which greatly enriched the development and completion of the study.



Special appreciation is extended to Dr. Christopher Vergara, Method Specialist, and Dr. Luijim Jose, Content Editor, for their valuable insights, technical expertise, and constructive suggestions that strengthened the methodological rigor and content quality of the research. Grateful acknowledgment is also given to the Schools Division Offices of Cabanatuan City, San Jose City, and Science City of Muñoz, along with all concerned administrators and officials, for granting the approval and support necessary for the conduct of the study. Special thanks are further conveyed to the respondents, whose cooperation and willingness to share their experiences served as the foundation of this research.

The researcher also expresses appreciation to colleagues, mentors, and educational leaders for their moral support, encouragement, and professional insights throughout the research process. Finally, the deepest gratitude is reserved for the researcher's family and loved ones for their constant love, prayers, patience, and understanding, which served as a source of strength during the most challenging moments of this academic journey.

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