Change in Management: A Case Study of Leader in the Pandemic

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Abstract

This case study focuses on investigating the drastic change brought about by the recent COVID pandemic on a school leader from Davao del Norte. Purposive sampling was used to determine the participant which include the criteria of a school leader and has been active in the service at present. This study utilized a qualitative research design using a case study method through the use of validated interview guide. It was found out that flexibility and adaptability and creating a relative strategic plan are the recorded themes as observed. In addition, complacency and mismanagement and innovation and creativity are the relevant responses generated for the study. Such case was observed as unique and justifiable to the experiences of the identified participant. Moreover, the results comply with the queries of the researcher on how managers manage to survive amidst the existence of the global pandemic which challenged the arena of educational management and the organization .

Keywords: change management; educational management; case study; Philippines

1. Introduction

The only thing that is constant in society is change. Change is inevitable. It happens instantly and does not take notice when it arrives. The recent COVID pandemic has challenged all sectors of the community. As this pandemic gradually reshapes education, it is relevant to know the adaptive approaches and preparations of managers. Studying the concern mentioned, brings positive ideas in the field of leadership and management specially in finding out adaptive ways in blending with uncertain challenges brought about by changes (Bagwell, 2020).

Research finding about school leadership and management in Australia revealed that during the pandemic school leaders are navigating the following insights: accountability and autonomy; equity and excellence; the individual and the collective; well-being; and workload (Netolicky, 2020). The research was able to explore the experiences that describes how school leaders lead accordingly, during the recent pandemic. The impact of the sudden change of situation challenges the abilities of managers in effectively bringing the organization to adapt to change. Headteachers in UK as reflected on the study of Beauchamp, et.al (2021) discuss the importance of their role especially in delegating perspectives that would be beneficial for the organization. The ability to grasp a different perspective of power and authority and the need to formulate adaptive strategies that help cope up with external pressures and situational ambiguity that constantly changes overnight. The need to establish new communication systems and strategies further strengthens the adaptability of a manager despite uncertainties (Ahstrom et.al, 2020).

We live in a constantly changing society. Our beliefs have growth into innovation and has partly diverted into knowledge and discovery. In the field of education, change is part of coping up with the increasing demands of the community and the generation. We may have many definitions to use to simplify the word change, but the concept itself cannot be easily fathom. *Change* is defined in the dictionary as replacing something else that is better, transforming, or substitute. It is also the adoption of an innovation of which the goal is to improve through alterations (Carlopio, 1998). Derived from the trends of research today is the concern of studying about how managers survive and adapt to the rapid change brought about the pandemic. Effective leadership is the best way to face change (Mancha, 2021). Finding out the best leadership practice during pandemic vary from managers even in organizations. Disregarding the issue that is confronted by these managers lead to downfalls in an organization, worst may result to closure of industries like schools. Managers during this trying time need to be resilient as they led their schools towards a period of unpredictable stage of management. This crisis is considered as an adaptive challenge that means new learning is required to make desired and well-planned changes so that an organization will survive (Khalaf, 2021). In this pandemic situation, several problems have emerged creating impacts to management stability as well as the responsive abilities of leaders. As stipulated by Kramer (2018),

this crisis emphasizes the feeling of uncertainty. Uncertainty management is the process by which people find meanings to understand the situation, specifically when it is unpredictable, unusual, unexpected. With this, individuals make a way to create a possible actions and solutions that is responsive to the situation. Uncertainty is not viewed as negative but rather an opportunity to become more creative and adaptive. It helps the organization to strive even more to lessen the problem, be proactive, and be ready for more challenges. Moreover, the key to becoming adaptive is uncertainty. The theory adaptive management focuses its discussion on the evaluations that should be taken to assess the whole scenario of the organization and by thorough analysis, plans and decisions are created to generate flexible strategies (Garmestani & Allen, 2015). The institution itself, as a product of its flexibilities evolves into an organizational structure that is adaptive while adjusting and learning to the updates to become strengthened and resilient.

Every organization has a dream of developing itself. School and education leaders seek organizational development for growth and stability. The practice of organizational development contains wide applicability in many forms like activities in the organization and structural assessments in a community (Cummings & Worley, 2014). The changing world has challenged the organization in different ways. Accordingly, change that happen in the organization can be distinguished and address properly through careful planning and evaluations. Organization development directs in bringing planned change in carrying out the effectiveness and capability of change. *Planned Change* is an effort planned and a process of preparing the organization for new visions and practices in order to realize sustainable goals and to achieve concrete strategic objectives (Talim, 2012).

1.1 Research Objectives

Moreover, this study is interested in understanding the case that emerged as a response to the crisis prevalent in the community. The abrupt changes and the coping strategies will align the queries of the researcher on defining the literatures related to the present study. It is the interest of the researcher to contribute to the body of knowledge especially in expanding the literatures. Generally, this case study aims to identify how managers prepare and adapt change in the organization amid pandemic. Specifically, this study is directed towards answering the following questions:

1. How do managers prepare the organization to cope with the sudden change due to pandemic?
2. How do these preparations help the organization in coping up with changes due to pandemic?
3. What are the challenges encountered by the managers in preparing the organization for the change during pandemic?
4. How do these experiences of managers develop the support to make change happen in an organization during pandemic?

2. Method

This qualitative study will gather the description of the situation on how a leader prepares and adapts change in the organization during pandemic. Specifically, this case study will focused on a leader situated in an elementary school of Davao del Norte. The information gathered from the participant through an interview will reflect the case they have portrayed in the situation of pandemic (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Case study shall be implemented on this study to investigate the phenomenon and find answers on how they were able to explore the whole scenario through detailed examination (Heale & Twycross, 2018). In addition, this study aims to collect and analyze the complex issue this case contains.

3. Results and Discussions

Based on the questions asked to the participant for this case study, several ideas have been generated for further discussion to completely describe the case of managers on the present context of pandemic.

3.1 Flexibility and Adaptability

As mentioned by the school head, flexibility has been one of the cores that they have practiced on the middle of management uncertainty. The existence of structured management particularly on a centralized community, such as the DepEd, challenged the traditional flow of management cycle. The situation that has brought the school community created initiatives that helped the realization of school management even beyond physical presence of the people (Kalina, 2020). Although this situation has been new to the school head, she made sure that everyone, altogether, shall go through the process of assuming new systems that will lead to adaptability. Policies and procedures with its strict compliance have been structured to align with the current situation. This strategy helped the school community slowly bounce back to being productive. The difficult situation of relatively analyzing policies and procedures have been critical for the school head since most of those are equally important

to abide. With this problem, it was realized that policies and procedures must have the quality of being flexible and adaptive to management, so that when uncertainty comes, the difficulty of finding the relevance of such would be lessen.

3.2 Creating a Relevant Strategic Plan

Strategic planning is a usual process to undertake for managers, most specially in navigating and analyzing the environmental condition of a school. In this case, the school head assures to immediately create strategic plans to cope with the challenges brought about by the pandemic (Josan, 2020). This action contains the preparedness plan that will contain the necessary details to discuss with the teachers so that they will also know how to be more relevant to management. Moreover, the importance of aligning the policies and procedures in the situation lead to updating the documents to make it more contextualized according to the situation (Hallahan, 2020). Even in the presence of multiple changes in management, the manager assures that this shall be part of the strategic plan to address the gaps that hinder school management. Plan has been less rigid but more adaptive of which gives a relief and adjustment to both the school leader and the teachers.

3.3 Complacency and Mismanagement

The existence of uncertainty and slow deliberation of directives from the top management of DepEd lead to leadership challenges. It has been difficult for the school leader to put on hold on its leadership values while not exercising its autonomy to practice as they are only following the actions that shall be delivered to them. Because of this, the school leader has been complacent with her managerial abilities amidst the sudden change that the pandemic has brought. Complacent with the situation that is uncertain resulting to managerial decisions that are not appropriate, thus putting at risk the health condition of the teachers. The pandemic has clear manifestations of danger to the health of community, and it has also affected the decision-making of the school leader. For most of instances, decisions made by the school leader is not fixed and constant since it is subject to many changes that could happen all the time (Cloud, 2010). With this, school leader feels the lack of interest and lack of motivation to strive harder and deliver the adjustment that she needs to cope with the uncertain situation. The quality of management of the school has been put at risk.

3.4 Innovation and Creativity

Although the sudden change brought by pandemic particularly resulted into both positive and negative. School leader has defined the importance of instilling the values of being innovative and creative not just in management but also on all initiatives and actions taken by the school (Khamis et al., 2021). Promoting these values helped both the school leader and its constituents adapt to change. The importance of planned changes has significantly contributed to the ability of the school workers to adapt to change, creating actions that are flexible. This pandemic had challenged the abilities of the people more than just leadership and management. The requirement to adapt and be flexible roots to looking at the capabilities of the leader to innovate solutions through connecting with others to discuss and to brainstorm opportunities that will address the weakness of an organization. The existence of the problematic situation forced the workers to become more innovative in terms of coping and finding solutions in relevance to the needs of the organization (Weiss & Li, 2020). Sense of urgency was established; therefore, the organization finds its ways on creating actions that will generate better outcomes even in the worst of the situation (Huang & Huang, 2020).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In the middle of uncertainties, it is normal for people to divert life into something adaptable. During this crisis, in the perspective of a school head, several actions were done, contributing into the betterment of the organization. This case study has proven that leaders can swiftly adapt to the changing situation and make use of the opportunities and advantages the organization has. As such, the ability to connect with people and bring them towards adaptability is a big contribution towards achieving better management. Although challenges are paired with this emerging problem, school head cannot deny the fact on how this situation affects the leadership and management abilities, most specially, if the organization is part of a more structured system of management such as DepEd. It affected the decision-making process and hindered the capacity of the head to exercise autonomy, resulting to mismanagement. Amongst all the testimony gathered, school head, still progress with the idea of enthusiasm and positivity towards uncertain conditions. This is clearly a manifestation of how reality exists in this kind of environment which requires every leader to be more ready and adaptive efficiently. Based

on this study conducted, the researcher would like to list the following recommendations which could be a room for further advancement of this study.

1. Policies and procedures made by the organization must comply to the current situation and as such must be made flexible and adaptive.

2. School leaders should create strategic plans that directly address the problems of the school. It would be good to conduct a situational analysis like the SWOT analysis.

3. The school itself should focus on retraining the teachers to the polices and procedures to further understand these concepts.

4. Schools should learn to be more proactive, preventive, and responsive through creating planned changes that reflects a smooth transition.

5. Further analysis relating to this case study must also be considered for further analysis and results that might differ from this study   .

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