

THE FILIPINO CHILD LEADERSHIP THEORY

*Juzy Laygo-Saguil

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Corresponding Author: Juzy Laygo Saguil; Email: saguil.jl@pnu.edu.ph; doi:10.46360/cosmos.ahe.xxxxxxx

Abstract

Background and Objective: Developing leadership skills in the early years remain an abstract concept in the Philippine classroom setting. With the wide application of collaborative and cooperative learning in school settings, it becomes increasingly important to understand the mechanisms by which children develop the skills and knowledge to work productively with others. Research ensures the possibility of the development of leadership qualities of students by creating different opportunities at schools, thus paper offers a framework on how early childhood classroom teachers could recognize child leadership.

Methods and Findings: The primary aim of this paper is to share valuable literature on young Filipino children's emerging leadership skills. Focus Group Discussion was conducted to ten (10) private school teachers to gather initial information on teacher's perception of child leadership. Prevalent child leadership characteristics that emerged are sought out by peers; responsible; empathetic; communicates well; and collaborative. From the descriptors, the Filipino Child Leadership Theory* was created. The theory was designed to fill the gap in the literature on the importance of recognizing and enhancing leadership skills among Filipino young children.

Conclusion: The Filipino Child Leadership Theory would be beneficial in the identification and enhancement of emerging leadership traits among young children in the classroom setting. The theory validates the teacher's child leadership recognition and perception.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Leadership Qualities, Young Children, Kindergarten Teachers, Leadership Theory, Focus Group Discussion.

Introduction

The Department of Education (DepEd) believes that Kindergarten is the transition period from informal to formal literacy in which positive experiences must be nurtured to ascertain school readiness. As stated in the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide (2012), extensive research has shown that this is the period of greatest growth and development, during which the brain continuously develops most rapidly and almost at its fullest [1]. Thus, it is also the stage when leadership skills and abilities must be nurtured and enhanced.

Developing leadership skills in the early years remain an abstract concept in the Philippine classroom setting as some educators believe that learners in this stage are too young to acquire these skills. However, research shows that the development of leadership skills is more favorable in childhood. It is believed that young children can master the skills while having the time of their life. Researchers have observed leadership behavior in young children and suggested that these leadership behaviors be encouraged in early childhood classrooms. The act of teaching young children leadership skills at school builds a foundation that will serve them throughout their lives.

Moreover, since research shares that leadership could be taught, even to preschoolers or younger

children, and instruction should begin in the early years [2]. It is increasingly being seen as a responsibility of Early Childhood Education teachers. Teachers are considered the most important actors that can create the opportunities in the development of the leadership qualities of children who spend most of their time at schools. Although early-childhood teachers are expected to encourage the positive social/emotional growth of their young students, they may not find it easy to distinguish the qualities of emerging leadership skills because some teachers may not have been trained to recognize these skills. Still, educators are puzzled on what makes a Filipino child leader, and how do the Kindergarten teachers perceive leadership among young children.

Since there is current emphasis on 21st century skills, which include personal as well as academic knowledge which will allow for a foundation of performance and moral character to be set prior to entrance into elementary school, it is just right to discover the possibility of enhancing leadership skills among young children which is beneficial to the domain of early childhood education. With the wide application of collaborative and cooperative learning in school settings, it becomes increasingly important to understand the mechanisms by which children develop the skills and knowledge to work productively with others, and whether the skills and

*Faculty of Education and Sciences (FES), Philippine Normal University Faculty, School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), Philippine Women's University & Head, Elementary Department, Philippine Pasay Chung Hua Academy, Philippines.

knowledge are generalizable over a range of situations. Moreover, the researcher believed that growth of positive social-leadership traits in young children might be encouraged through the identification of classroom activities that will enhance the teaching skills of Filipino preschool teachers, and therefore, the delivery of quality education in the Kindergarten level.

Hence, the Filipino Child Leadership Theory was created. It is with great hope that the theory will be useful for the preschool teachers. Teachers need to realize how important it is to teach and encourage young learners' emerging leadership skills so that young learners will continue practicing them and noticing them; and teachers must be aware that they have a strong influence on young learners. This would guide the teachers to become aware of early childhood leadership behaviors which would help them to identify, support, and encourage these behaviors. The theory would offer teachers a broader and deeper understanding of their students' well-being. This will also provide the teachers support on how to better equip themselves with basic skills to better address the children's needs and guide them to develop holistically. It is also the hope of this theory to guide Early Childhood Education teachers on the possibility of encouraging positive child leadership development in the classroom setting.

A. Theory on Progressive Education

This study is anchored on the principle of Progressive Education, espoused by John Dewey (1897) and others, that education must prepare students for active participation in a democratic, global society. Thus, the focus is on raising critical thinkers and inquirers who are active rather than passive learners. The teacher's job is to nurture and support children's innate curiosity and desire to learn, fostering internal motivation rather than reliance on external rewards. Strong emphasis of the theory is on problem solving and critical thinking; group work and development of social skills; understanding and action as the goals of learning; collaborative and cooperative learning projects. Emphasis is also given on lifelong learning, experiential learning; social skills and education for social responsibility and democracy.

Research Methodology

1 Research Design

The researcher employed descriptive research design in gathering the necessary information in the study. The descriptive survey was used to determine the perception of Early Childhood Education teachers on child leadership. The research focuses on identifying and enhancing the leadership competencies among Filipino Kindergarten children.

2 Respondents of the Study

Using convenient sampling method, ten (10) private school teachers in Pasay City, Philippines were purposively selected. Nine or ninety percent of the teachers who participated in are female, and 1 (10% of them is male. The average age of the teachers is 33 years.

3 Research Instrument

Focus Group Discussion was employed for the data collection. Both pre-prepared questions and follow-up questions were asked in this approach. These questions focused on the teachers' perceptions of leadership and the identification of leadership qualities in young children. It also included questions asking the teachers to cite scenarios where leadership skills are displayed in an early childhood classroom

4 Data Collection Procedure

Both pre-prepared and follow-up questions focused on the teachers' perceptions of leadership and the identification of leadership qualities in young children were designed for the Focus Group Discussion. The participants were also asked to cite scenarios where leadership skills are displayed in an early childhood classroom.

Experts' recommendations for analyzing qualitative data were considered. First, the researcher, read and reread the data [3]. Next, she recorded all open-ended responses from the and made a table, listing all the descriptions. Then she looked for patterns and themes within the responses, highlighted similar themes for each answer, and made analytical notes. The data from the teachers were separately coded by the researcher. While coding was performed, the process was carried out by examining whether the data expressed in words, sentences and paragraphs were collected within a certain conceptual framework which consisted of carefully selected items from the literature regarding leadership qualities of young children. The list of the codes obtained after all data were encoded in this way was carefully analyzed by the researcher.

The researcher categorized the participants' description of child leadership based from the list of descriptors of most prevalent child leadership characteristics collated from the different literatures [4]. Then, themes were created by considering the similarities and differences of the codes obtained. At the third stage, the obtained themes were defined and edited by making them comprehensible. Finally, comments regarding the edited themes were made and the conclusions were achieved. The validation experts analyzed the data, checked the themes extracted from the codes, and evaluated and categorized the leadership descriptors. The top five

(5) descriptors were the bases for the creation of The Filipino Child Leadership Theory*

5 Ethical Consideration

Ethical guidelines were followed for the whole research period. The researcher submitted the study for review and approval of the Ethics Review Board of the university. It followed the National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research 2017 prepared by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board.

Results and Discussion

1 The Filipino Child Leadership Model

The model illustrates the interconnections of the five leadership characteristics which the Filipino child leader should possess as perceived by the Kindergarten teachers.

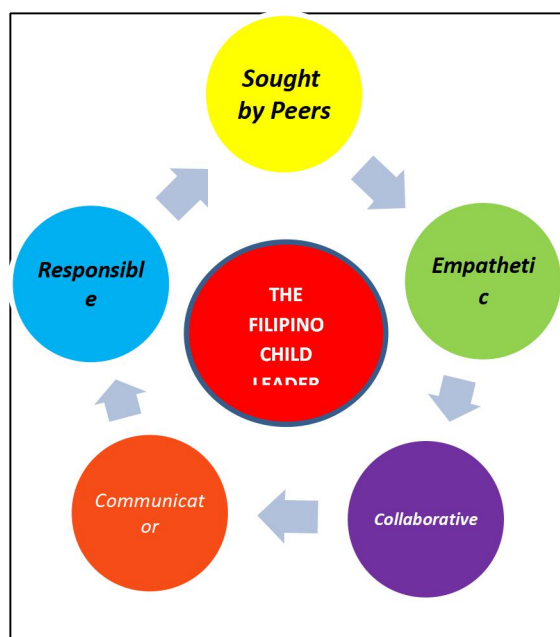


Figure 1: The Filipino Child Leadership Model

2 The Filipino Child Leadership Theory

The Filipino Child Leadership Theory explains the top five distinct characteristics that a Filipino child leader possesses. The core of the model which signifies the Filipino child leader is represented by the color **red**. The color red is energizing and it provokes the emotions and motivates us to take an action. The red color expresses pioneer spirit and leadership qualities, and promotes ambition and determination. The cycle represents a continuing sequence of stages which shows that the descriptors have the same level of importance.

A Filipino child leader who is Sought out by peers is perceived to be chosen always by others to lead the group and to take charge of a situation. He is

always imitated by peers, works well and influences others. This is represented by the color **yellow**. The color yellow is related to learning. It is a color that resonates with the left (or logical) side of the brain, where it stimulates our mentality and perception. The color yellow inspires thought and curiosity and it is creative from a mental point of view – the color gives new ideas. The yellow color helps us find new ways of doing things.

Constant leader-follower interaction produces affection, professional respect, and loyalty to the leader. Findings in the study reveal that the better the quality of relationship between leader and members, the greater their willingness to go beyond the call of duty and engage in behaviors that will promote the welfare of the group [5]. Members who have good relationships with their leaders are more willing to help peers and tend to stay longer with the group.

Another distinct characteristic of a Filipino child leader is **displaying responsibility** at all times. A child leader makes his own decisions, solves problems creatively and readily accepts responsibility. This is represented by the color **blue**. The blue color is reliable and responsible and radiates security and trust. The color blue can take control and do the right thing in difficult situations. The blue color needs order and planning in its life, including the way it lives and works.

The activities of solving a current problem, planning an activity, setting up a team, completing homework, doing a time planning, publishing a newspaper at school and making free speech to express their own opinions that can be performed during a course in line with the context of the course ensure the development of leadership qualities [6].

Being **empathetic** is a distinct characteristic of a Filipino child leader. He is not only smart but he also has concern for others. A child leader gets along well with others and is respectful and not offensive to others. This is characterized by the color **green**. The color green is full of balance and harmony. From a color psychology perspective, it's the color green, that puts heart and emotions in balance, and equals head and heart. The green color is an emotionally positive color, which gives us the ability to love and care for ourselves and others unconditionally. The color green has a strong sense of right and wrong, and a good judgment.

This is supported by a study which surfaced the desired and ideal characteristics of the Filipino leader. It revealed that the respondents preferred a leader who is person-focused and group-centered, but also knowledgeable [5]. Respondents want a

leader who is “makatao” - *someone who is easy to talk to, listens with understanding and compassion, and cares about the others’ welfare*. If the leader is “makatao”, the group members are more likely to feel more affection and warmth toward this leader. The leader is then able to bring people to work together as a team and get more positive results for the group.

Having good **communication and reasoning skills** is another characteristic of a Filipino child leader. He expresses his ideas confidently and makes good choices and opinions. He gives valuable suggestions and does follow given instructions. This is pictured by the color **orange**. The color orange relates to social communication and it encourages two-way conversation. It is a warm and welcoming color that is both physically and mentally stimulating. It makes people think as well as speak. The color orange is optimistic and uplifting – it lifts our spirits. It adds spontaneity and a positive way of looking at life.

Filipinos perceived communication and interpersonal skills as crucial. These are referred to as an art because a leader should be able to adjust to different personalities, know how to bring out the best in people and advance their growth, and be able to deliver more than what is required given limited resources

Being collaborative and cooperative signifies a Filipino child leader. He responds and adapts well to different situations. He works well independently or with others collaboratively. This is represented by the color **purple**. Purple ensures harmony of the mind and the emotions and contributes to mental balance and stability, peace of mind, a connection between the spiritual and physical world, and between thought and action. It inspires unconditional and selfless love and promotes sensitivity and compassion.

Leadership in the Philippines is an art of building relationships with people with whom leaders work. The Filipinos are believed to be relational people and they value relationships so much [7]. This explains why Filipinos always look for belongingness in the organization. Once they feel that they belong, they give their utmost cooperation and loyalty to achieve organizational goals.

Conclusion

By using an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design to uncover the kindergarten teachers’ perception of leadership in young children, The Filipino Child Leadership Theory* was unveiled. The strength of the mixed methods approach allowed for a deep dive into understanding the lived experiences of the

kindergarten teachers via qualitative method, while using the results of the qualitative analysis accurately measured the teachers’ perception on child leadership.

Recommendation

The training of teachers should be organized to include how to teach and support a learner’s leadership skills. The Department of Education could develop training manuals and teacher-training programs that motivate teachers how important it is to teach, encourage and support learners to develop leadership skills at an early stage.

Additional research studies examining teachers’ training and the effect it has on the recognition and support of learners’ leadership would be appropriate.

A similar study among the private school Kindergarten teachers or the public - school Kindergarten teachers as respondents could be employed to compare their perception of child leadership to that of the Child Development Center teachers.

Curriculum planners should include activities and programs intended for the development of leadership skills among young children.

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Conflicts of Interest Disclosure

The author hereby declares there are no significant financial, professional, or personal interests that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

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