LEADERSHIP IN YOUNG FILIPINO CHILDREN SURVEY (LYFCS)

*Juzy Laygo-Saguil

Abstract

Background and Objective: Leadership development among young children has remain an abstract concept in traditional school setting, especially in the Early Childhood Education centers. Teachers are lacking a clear definition of who a child leader is. Research on the aspect of leadership focusing on Filipino children is scanty. In addition, little material is available to teachers’ perception on leadership among Filipino preschool children. There is no existing instrument focusing on leadership in young children in the Philippines. This study will explore the Early Childhood Education teachers’ perception on child leadership and the development of a survey instrument to validate the teachers’ child leadership recognition.

Methods and Findings: Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Research (MMR) Design was selected in order to broadly explore and analyze the Kindergarten teachers’ perception on child leadership. Focus Group Discussion was first conducted with ten (10) private school teachers for the qualitative part of the study. The top five (5) leadership descriptors that emerged are: sought out by peers; responsible; empathetic; communicates well; and collaborative. The twenty-five (25) items of the Leadership in Young Filipino Children Survey (LYFCS)* was prepared according to the results obtained from the FGD, and was assessed using a Likert-type response format. Ninety-five (95) Child Development Center teachers, selected through purposive sampling technique, participated in the quantitative part.

Conclusion: By using an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design to uncover the kindergarten teachers’ perception of leadership in young children, the tool Leadership in Young Filipino Children Survey (LYFCS)* was unveiled.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Leadership Development, Young Filipino Children, Early Childhood Education Teachers, Survey.

Introduction

Leadership has been called an essential component in social interaction and is an important social behavior in children. 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. Researchers have agreed that leadership in young children means influencing others to a common goal or decision and it is a valuable skill that needs to be learned and taught. It follows that early-childhood education is a prime setting to study emerging social skills and leadership traits in order to explore ways to help young children gain the social and emotional competence necessary for lifelong success.

Leadership skills can be taught and instruction should begin in the early years[1]. The social aspects of leadership are becoming increasingly important and should be included in the early childhood curriculum. Leadership is everyone’s responsibility, but individuals who have leadership potential do not simply become leaders overnight [2]. It is up to existing leaders to train the next generation, showing them how to guide a group of people toward a specific vision or goal. Teachers can model and teach the skills that will equip young learners to lead themselves and others in this hyper-competitive world, because the path to leadership among young learners is in their teachers’ hands at school [3]. If young learners did not have skills in leadership or followership, the teacher could work to promote effective social skills that might help guide the learners toward effective leadership [4]. Researchers have agreed that leadership in young children means influencing others to a common goal or decision and it is a valuable skill that needs to be learned and taught. It follows that early-childhood education is a prime setting to study emerging social skills and leadership traits in order to explore ways to help young children gain the social and emotional competence necessary for lifelong success. Just as children learn other important skills, children can learn and build on these leadership skills through their experiences. It is believed that social and emotional readiness as expressed through positive and successful leadership skills can be taught most effectively when children are very young.

*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.
Although early-childhood teachers are expected to encourage the positive social/emotional growth of their young students, there are not many formal programs available that focus on developing such traits. Preschool teachers 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. However, research on the aspect of leadership focusing on young children is scanty. Despite the extensive research about leadership, there is not much research addressing leadership in young children[4]. Much of the research regarding leadership is focused on or structured around business leaders or executives. More specifically, little material is available to teachers’ perception on leadership in young children.

Knowing that very young children may be capable of developing good leadership habits at such an early age, this researcher became motivated to explore more and observe emerging leadership abilities in young children, more specifically among Filipino preschool children. Also, there is no existing instrument focusing on leadership in young children in the Philippines. These prompts the researcher to delve into this type of research.

In the Philippines, studies on leadership focusing on young children is scanty, hence, the purpose of this research is to explore how early childhood classroom teachers recognize leadership and how they could enhance the leadership skills in young Filipino children in early childhood settings.

Being one of the pioneers in exploring leadership in young children in the Philippines, this study aimed at offering researchers and educators further understanding about the applicability of leadership to children, and how it could be nurtured in a developmentally appropriate manner, through the leadership scale developed in this study. Moreover, this study also aimed to contribute additional literature in developing leadership skills among Filipino young children.

As such, through the development of the Leadership in Young Filipino Children Survey*(LYFCS) to rate the leadership potential of Kindergarten pupils, based on the perceptions of the teachers, it is hoped that this study will aid in enhancing the teaching and learning process leading to the development of 21st century learners who possess leadership skills that would enable them to be adaptive, collaborative and globally competitive.

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 preschoolers' leadership skills which is beneficial to the domain of early 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 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.

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

Methodology

An Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Research (MMR) Design was selected in order to broadly explore and analyze the Kindergarten teachers’ perception on child leadership. This utilized descriptive research design using both qualitative and quantitative data.

Qualitative Data Collection

Focus Group Discussion was employed for qualitative data collection. Using convenient sampling method, ten (10) private school teachers 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.

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

The data from the teacher participants 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.

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.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument
The concepts of credibility and transferability are used instead of internal and external validity, and the concepts of consistency and verifiability are used instead of internal and external reliability in qualitative studies [5].

The researcher used direct quotations in accordance with the nature of the data to ensure transferability. To ensure consistency, external researchers who were expert in the field were consulted for verifiability. The experts analyzed the data, checked the themes extracted from the codes, and evaluated and confirmed leadership descriptors. The written data for content analysis was prepared by transcribing them from audio into text form and was divided into coding units guided by the qualitative questions of the study. A reading and re-reading of the FGD transcripts were done to identify the themes and their interconnection [6].

Thus, the top five (5) child leadership descriptors were defined: Sought out by peers, Responsible, Empathetic, Good communicator and Collaborative.

![Figure 1: Child Leadership Characteristics](image)

A. Quantitative Data Collection
The findings obtained from the Focus Group Discussion conducted with the teachers, were the primary basis used in formulating the questionnaire for the quantitative part of the study. The questionnaire was then checked and reviewed by expert validators. Thus, the Leadership in Young Filipino Children Survey*(LYFCS) was created.

B. Linking of the Two Strands of Data
The linking of data happened at the design-level with the use of a sequential design, where the results from the first phase of the research which was the Focus Group Discussion were used to build the second stage of the research design, which was the development of Leadership In Young Filipino Children Survey* (LYFCS).

The quantitative approach provides data that can be measured on the dimension of how well teachers recognize leadership in young children. The qualitative approach provides teachers of early childhood education an opportunity to describe and identify child leadership qualities and characteristics.

Then, the questionnaire which was prepared according to the results obtained from the discussion, was distributed to a larger group of teachers.

Results and Discussion
Leadership in Young Filipino Children Survey* (LYFCS) This instrument was designed to measure
Kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of leadership in young children. It is a survey that lists research-based leadership characteristics derived from Focus Group Discussion and from several sources that identify leadership skills or abilities.

The twenty-five (25) items of the Leadership in Young Children Survey (LYCS) were assessed using a Likert-type response format. There are four response choices that are given weight from 1 to 4. The kindergarten teachers indicated the degree to which leadership characteristics are observed and provided a perceived teacher rating of almost always, quite often, not very often, and never. The perceived observation rating scores and point values are the following: almost always = 4 points, quite often = 3 points, not very often = 2 points, and never = 1 point. Table 1 shows the interpretation of scores on Leadership in Young Filipino Children Survey* (LYFCS).

**Table 1: Interpretation of Scores**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANGE</th>
<th>INTERPRETATION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00 – 1.75</td>
<td>High potential leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.76 – 2.50</td>
<td>Potential leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.51 – 3.25</td>
<td>Moderate potential leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.26 – 4.00</td>
<td>Low potential leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**LEADERSHIP in YOUNG FILIPINO CHILDREN SURVEY (LYFCS)* (Saguil, 2019)**
Please check the appropriate box of the leadership skill observed among young children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Not very often</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Almost always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Not very often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Quite often</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Not very often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Never</td>
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**Leadership Descriptor:**

A. Sought out by peers

1. can be a model of appropriate behavior or skills for other children
2. can look after the group/class when the teacher is not around
3. can influence his/her classmates to do tasks well
4. is trusted and followed by classmates
5. is well – liked by others to take charge of a situation in class

**Leadership Descriptor:**

B. Responsible/accepts & carries out responsibilities

1. does assigned tasks well
2. can solve simple problems
3. can follow given instructions
4. is organized in school materials and activities
5. can make good decisions / choices

**Leadership Descriptor:**

C. Empathetic/sensitive to feelings of others

1. displays balanced cognitive and affective skills
2. is sensitive to feelings of others
3. trusts classmates/groupmates
4. works well with classmates
5. not “bossy: but can delegate tasks

**Leadership Descriptor:**

D. Communicates well verbally

1. can express self / has good communication skills
2. displays confidence when telling messages/answering questions
3. is interactive and participative
4. can relay instructions to his/her classmates
5. can voice out without fear to the teacher the situation in class

**Leadership Descriptor:**

E. Collaborative and cooperative

1. can express self / has good communication skills
2. displays confidence when telling messages/answering questions
3. is interactive and participative
4. can relay instructions to his/her classmates
5. can voice out without fear to the teacher the situation in class
The instrument was then pilot tested. Of the one hundred five (105) teachers, ninety-five (95 or 90%) Kindergarten teachers from selected Child Development Centers in Pasay City, Philippines participated in the survey. It was verified using Cronbach’s Alpha. The result was 0.9674 which means that the instrument is acceptable and ready for use. Collecting data with this survey instrument allowed the researcher to discover how the teachers describe child leadership as well as determine how well the teachers recognize leadership behaviors in young children.

Conclusion and Recommendation

By using an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design to uncover the kindergarten teachers’ perception of leadership in young children, 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 to build a survey instrument to more accurately measure the teachers’ perception on child leadership.

Since this study is exploratory in nature, it is highly suggested that 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 be employed to compare teachers’ perception of child leadership to that of the Child Development Center teachers.

Parallel studies on the elementary, Junior High School and Senior High School teachers on their perception of child leadership would be contributory in the field of research.

Gathering of norms and creation of rubrics on Leadership in Young Filipino Children Survey (LYFCS) be employed to further validate the result.

Future researchers develop a leadership framework/matrix for young children to aid the enhancement of leadership programs.

Further studies employing Factor Analysis on the instrument to corroborate the result would be supplementary in the available literature on child leadership.

Further studies utilizing available softwares on qualitative analysis of data is highly recommended.

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References