

## *Curriculum Leadership Practices of Administrators in Ateneo De Manila University*

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research were to understand the curriculum leadership practices of administrators in Ateneo De Manila University, Philippines by which there actual leadership practices were observed and analyzed. This is based on the interview gathered, pertinent curriculum data reviewed and actual curriculum transactions of the respondents. The research is a qualitative case study. The Interviews were conducted face to face, and then transcribed. The findings from this study describe practices used for actual administration of a university in its curriculum related developments. Administrators recognize that their curriculum leadership practices would help them establish curriculum patterns related endeavors of the university especially in the review of the university core- curriculum. As administrators continue to face challenges associated with providing adequate curriculum leadership practices for future curriculum leaders, building capacities with teaching and administrative curriculum leaders are recommended, so that a continuum of curriculum leadership supports could be provided to meet the diverse curricular needs of the university. Given the complexity of curriculum leadership practices, identification of a singular comprehensive analysis of actual leadership practices is not reasonable but should be done in a variety of ways and methods.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Core Curriculum

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## **Introduction**

This modern time is characterized by different changes and demands that administrators are to become leaders of continuous curriculum development. This constant reviewing of the curriculum in the changing society is important to education today and its future for the students and the community it belongs to.

The primary concern of administrators as educational program leaders is no longer what is used to be that of overwhelming institutional problems and generating support for and assistance with instructional improvement. It should be concerned with how to get the faculty, staff and the community to change and to influence the direction of leadership change. The current pressures, demands and issues in Philippine education system like the K to 12 educational reforms is more complex than in many other countries. Today, all schools are under the jurisdiction of the government that advocates the educational concepts of democracy. The administrator's effective leadership is a key that opens the said kind of working atmosphere. What our teachers teach, and what our students learn is heavily influenced by the school administrators' curriculum leadership practices.

## **Methodology**

This study is a qualitative approach. In general, qualitative research methods are especially useful in discovering the meaning that people give to events they experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The purpose of this study was to discover the meaning that administrators give to the their collection, analysis and use of curriculum related data to improve the overall curriculum standards of the school.

For the current study, I explored participants' experiences by asking the following *what* questions: (a) To what extent do administrators have access to curriculum related data that inform their decisions on how to improve the over all curriculum success of the school? (b) To what extent do administrators use curriculum data to improve success in school? (c) What do administrators perceive it would take to enhance the effectiveness of their current efforts to improve the curriculum standards of the school?

Qualitative research methods used in this study included: purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, and systematic and concurrent data collection and data analysis procedures. This study, based in the constructivist paradigm, used a case study approach to explain the curriculum leadership practices of administrators' perceptions and experiences with understanding curriculum as an important component of the overall leadership framework of managing the university. This chapter describes the research paradigm, approach, and design used to achieve the purpose of the study.

A qualitative approach is most appropriate for this study because it fosters a better understanding of the curriculum leadership experiences of the participants (administrators) and their own understandings of how they collect, navigate, and work with curriculum related matters. This study allows participants the opportunity to articulate the ways they collect and analyze the university curriculum as to its processes and future. The use of rich, critical description provides in-depth, detailed

accounts of the participants' experiences. The essential elements of a qualitative research process are generally defined as including epistemology, a theoretical perspective, and methodology (Crotty, 1998). This chapter defines and discusses each of these components in relation to this study.

## **Research Findings**

The results of this qualitative semi-structured research dealt on the curriculum leadership practices of administrators. Through this section, the results are important, to look into the curriculum leadership practices of administrators in Ateneo De Manila University. Relevant themes regarding the problem are presented followed by narrative discussion.

**Theme# 1 – Curriculum Profile** defined as Curriculum leaders will have an understanding of the university core curriculum processes (standards, essential skills, and essential knowledge) as he/she transitions from one leadership role as a teacher and administrator.

The Administrators as key curriculum leaders can sympathize with the frustration like what athletes feel when their coaches call play after play but never manage to call the play that will help the athletes get the ball into the end zone. Likewise, administrators as curriculum leaders often are expected to make reform efforts work after the important decisions are made by curriculum “experts.” But it seems with the vast years of curriculum exposure to the university they have been molded to become experts.

An Institution's curriculum development transcends beyond curriculum leadership practices of their leaders. This is not to say that curriculum background as to educational degree are not essential to an administrator's success toward Curriculum Leadership practices, but it contributes easier in understanding the processes and procedures of curriculum. Administrators as Curriculum Leaders does not need to be curriculum experts, but they do need to lead their schools with full knowledge of the university Core Curriculum processes, the new assessments tied to those standards, and the rigor embedded in both as presented by the three respondents.

**Theme # 2 – Curriculum** defined as the concept of Curriculum is dynamic as to the experiences and changes that occur in a university, its narrow-sense, it is viewed as a listing of courses to be taught. In a broader sense, it refers to the total learning experiences of a person not only in schools but in society as well.

This definition of curriculum leads us to view that discipline and influence of a university defines the meaning of a curriculum. This is evident in the Ateneo de Manila University educational system as made mentioned the respondent: “That is why the origin of the Jesuit curriculum from the Ratio Studiorum, a document that was created for the need to have a system of education. This document was fundamental in giving structure to the Jesuits and making their educational system, as a system, possibly the greatest in the history of the world. Its colleges, universities, and high schools spread throughout the world. The document is not a theoretical treatise on education; it is a practical code for establishing and conducting schools. It sets up the framework, gives statements of the educational aims and definitive

arrangements of classes, schedules, and syllabi, with detailed attention to pedagogical methods and, critically, the formation of teachers. It is a plan of studies and a structured plan that determines what will be taught, when and how will it be taught". Curriculum has been defined as chunks of knowledge and competencies called the core as it includes Humanities, Sciences, Languages and many more.

**Theme # 3 – Leadership** defined as the focusing both on what is being learned (the curriculum) and how it is taught (the instruction). Being the administrator, one is responsible for making sure that the university has a quality curriculum and that it is implemented effectively.

Respondent put emphasis: "Setting things right and preparing the school to make sure it is ready to move forward and definitely a lot more than just management". Leadership is seen as the balancing of the present and future curriculum endeavors as mentioned by their current underpinning of the curricular changes brought about by the K to 12 educational reforms and the Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN) 2015 integration. Leadership in the minds of the administrators means the shaping of the values and standards of the university.

**Theme # 4 – Leadership Style** defined as the ways and methods through which a person influences his or her subordinates as well as followers. It is also the way a person represents a style for his being a curriculum leader.

Empowering leadership has very high values for individuals and their opinions. That's why they encourage critical thinking and in turn get blessed with highly innovative, motivated followers. They understand that they are most effective when their followers are the most empowered. This way their goal becomes finding the perfect spot for every individual's gift and talent-mix, celebrating great ideas and honoring excellent workers.

The qualities required to show curriculum leadership can be demonstrated by all types of people in many different ways and as we have seen with many differing styles. They can all be equally effective in performing a curriculum leadership role. However, to be successful, especially over the longer term, people need to understand their style of leadership and how this may impact on others as given by the three respondents.

**Theme # 5 – Curriculum Leadership** defined as the role an administrator plays in helping enable the university to achieve its goals and vision as well as referring to all the experiences that learners go through in a program of education. It pushes a person to exercise functions that enable the achievement of one's goal to provide quality education to the learners

The Role and Functions of an Administrator as a Curriculum leader is that one needs to know how the curriculum design informs instructional design. Glatthorn (1997) provides us with essential functions of curriculum leadership carried out at both the school and classroom levels. Curriculum leadership functions at the school level to: Develop the school's vision of quality curriculum. One respondent put emphasis on this: It should remain relevant in the global larger scheme of the Loyola Schools.

**Theme # 6 – Vision** sets out what the university wants to accomplish, and should inspire members of the community. It can be described as to how things would be different as a result of the university's activities, how it wants to be seen by others, describe objectives that are achievable in the near future. It helps establish the unique contribution that the university makes to society as well as a memorable way to describe the university's reason for being.

Communicating ones vision to others in very important as curriculum leaders because no one can decide to follow them until they know what direction they are headed in. If your vision is one that touches a chord with many people and if you can communicate it well, people will join you in reaching towards your goals.

As a curriculum leader, one should be communicating his vision all the time as exemplified by the three respondents. The community sees curriculum leaders as inspiring and keeping them on the right track. The more curriculum leaders are enthusiastic and clear about where they are going, the more likely it will be that they will follow their leader.

**Theme # 7 - Guiding Principles** are the very foundation of every curriculum leader in an organization of which defines what is truly important for its success. It also serves as a template for building and growing an organization.

The core curriculum, the prime tool of development through which the university spirit of excellence and service are expressed and delivered on to students Through this, students are brought to appreciate the key ideas and systems of analysis of the fields that contain their academic origin, as well as the range and extensiveness of human knowledge. It emphasizes unity among different disciplines by communicating how they are related to each other and how they bring unique viewpoints to the same issue or problem. The core curriculum mirrors the universal goal of developing men and women who are academically competent as well as deeply rooted in values. Guiding principles create a university culture where everyone understands what's important. In the case of the respondents, it's the core curriculum that defines the wholeness of the university.

**Theme # 8 - Systems, Structures, Resources and Processes** provides guidance to all administrators as curriculum leaders by laying out the official reporting relationships that govern the workflow of the organization. It is the formal outline of an organization's structure makes it easier the transformation of the organization's curriculum, as well, providing a flexible and ready means for development. Without systems, structures, resources and processes the university community may find it difficult to know who they officially report to in different situations, and it may become unclear exactly who has the final responsibility for what.

Curriculum Leadership and community issues turn out to be much more important than we may have realized. On the surface, everyone talks about the importance of the community and curriculum leadership but too often, administrators puts this on the back burner when the heats on to deliver results or meet the guidance. Structure is strategy.

Systems, Structures, Resources and Processes are linked with each other. A decision to change one requires an all out effort to change the other. But that structural change must be well thought out and based on a thorough cause and effect analysis. A Curriculum Leader does not just change a structure to change it. One has to make sure the changes will support that strategy. At the same time, you do not just implement a better leadership and engagement approach in a company or alter the organizational chart without evaluating how that is going to effect the firms ability to carry out its current strategies.

**Theme # 9 - Research, Teaching and Community Service:** The Curriculum leader role as a faculty and member of a university whose role generally encompasses three areas of responsibility: Teaching, Research, and Service. Curriculum leader spends in each area varies generally by institution type and more specifically from institution to institution.

The university has clearly stated missions supporting community-university engagement and calling for broad conceptions of scholarship; yet these are often juxtaposed with very traditional ways of viewing the curriculum leader role. As expressed by respondents in the study, the research university culture directs curriculum leaders to focus on progressive means and outlets for research, teaching and community service. However, the respondents view that when they have been involved in the community through their teaching, research, and service, they have been highly productive as curriculum leaders.

**Theme # 10 – Changes** is the application of a structured process and set of tools for leading curriculum innovations to achieve a desired outcome. It emphasizes the “people side” of it and targets curriculum leadership within all levels of a university including administrators, faculty, staff, students and other members of the community. When changes are done well, the community feels engaged in the change process and work collectively towards a common objective, realizing benefits and delivering results.

The challenge for many organizations is finding or building sufficient quantities of Curriculum Leaders open for changes and then giving them the time required to effectively undertake the role.

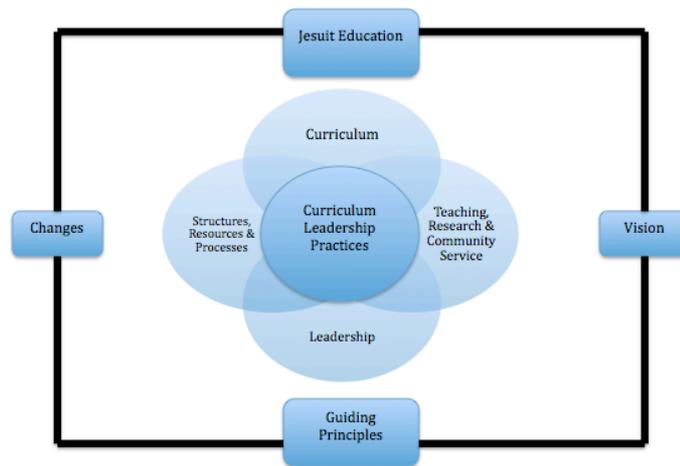


Figure 1: Emerging Conceptual Framework of the Study

### Discussion and Conclusion

The result of the study along with related literatures show the curriculum leadership practices of the administrators in Ateneo De Manila University goes beyond the walls of the institution. All stakeholders are involved as to actual curriculum leadership practices. Stakeholders include two bodies namely first the internal stakeholders which composes of the administrators, faculty members, curriculum leaders, staff, students and parents. The second are the external stakeholders including different government educational agencies, the corporate and private institutions as well as foreign related educational bodies.

Curriculum Leadership practices of administrators would help the university to establish patterns of behavior among the community throughout the curriculum development processes undertaken. The aim for university administrators should be to use research-based curriculum leadership strategies, practices, and programs that have proven successful when they plan interventions and programmatic changes for the university curriculum.

The data collected from the interviews in this case study have generated numerous topics for discussion, including the use leadership styles of administrators in character education programs and/or school wide leadership development programs—which include protocols to administer, supervise, model, and implement consistently the core curriculum initiatives designed to improve the over all learning outcomes for all students.

The results of this study suggest that emerging themes extracted from the university administrator’s curriculum leadership practices is that having consistent data collection and analysis of curriculum leadership practices will lead to improvements of the over all curriculum development processes of the university.

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