The Mediating Effect of Communication Drivers and the Relationship between Task Performance and Attitude toward Change

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Abstract: The authors assessed the mediating effect of communication drivers on the relationship between task performance and attitude towards change of public elementary school heads. The subjects of the study were the public elementary school heads evaluated by 391 teachers from the 10 divisions of Davao Region, Philippines. The number of samples was determined through Slovin’s formula. Moreover, descriptive statistics, regression and Sobel z-test were the statistics used. The data indicated a strong association between the two variables. Further studies were warranted.

Keywords: educational management, mediating effect, task performance, attitude toward change

1. Introduction

DepEd Region XI, has stepped up its efforts to decentralize education management (DepEd Order No. 230 s. 1999) through the implementation of School-Based Management. But then, the schools are still fronting many educational problems. Attitude towards change appears as one of the most prevalent factors in individual resistance to process change (Neiva & Paz, 2005). The low task performing school heads and the negative attitude towards change have been one of the habitual problems in the different educational sectors (Janton, 2009).

School leaders can make a difference or transformation (Hoy & Miskel, 2010; Fullan, 2007). For that reason school heads are the main core factor in implementing school change and innovation (Leithwood & Janzi, 2005; Lewis, 2011). Generally, the starring role of school heads as instructional leaders and as agents of change should have a positive attitude to embrace changes in order to move with the existing global changes as elaborated by Hallinger (2005; Howard, 2006; Huy, 2010; Khalid & Rashid, 2011). Thus, the above declarations emphasize that a worthy and good predictor of task performance is having an optimistic attitude towards change as revealed by (Abdullah & Kassim, 2011; Igaro, 2013). Furthermore, it is essential also for school leaders to create authentic support to inclusive education (Invine, Lupart, Loreman & McGhie, 2010; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

Amidst the above cited problems, and with the interest of the researchers, it is shows that it is very important to investigate whether some relations already observed are in fact happening to school heads in the elementary school heads in Davao region have a positive attitude towards change. As pronounced by (Fullan, 2007; Kirch, Chelliah & Parry, 2011) the school is the main instrument as change agent to implement innovations and sustainability efforts of those innovations require educators and administrators to go with the change process. So it is proper and essential to measure the level of attitude of school heads based on affective, behavioral and cognitive attitudes as cited by (Spaulding, 2008; Peters, 2009; Agoot, 2015).

Cognizant of the importance with the studies of (Worrell, 2008; Horng, Klasik, & Leob, 2010) on attitude of school heads towards change, the researchers made an extensive review of related literature for possible variables associated with it. Task performance and attitude toward change was the variables considered to be relevant. It is supported by (Pickens, 2005; Bulach, Lunenburge & Potter, 2008; Hall & Hord, 2011; Gempes, 2014, Macabiog, 2015). when they posited that school heads have complex tasks or multifarious tasks to be performed. It represents a holistic construct compost of more interdependent and symbiotic task performance of a leader as hypothesized by (Harison & Killion, 2007; Ninan, 2008; Zhou, Dovidio & Wang, 2013).

It is very important to investigate the attitude of school heads toward change to contribute to their readiness and acceptance of the outcome of change (Worrell, 2009). In relation to the above statement (Aizen, 2005; Ninan, 2008; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011) added that educators are agents of change, and change is natural and cannot be controlled thus: it occurs when there is an educational, economic and technological development. Based on these considerations, attitude towards change is carried out in order to accomplish a goal or task (Roach, 2009; Messmann and Mulder, 2012; Tulo and Gempes, 2016).

Another variable heightening the interest of the researcher is communication drivers. (Frahm & Brown (2007; Murphy, 2015) quantified that communication can play a vital role in refining employee-employer relationship in any organization. As pronounced by (Elving, 2005; Alien, James & Gamlen,
2007) creating a school community through communication builds trust and self-confidence as well as increases commitment and readiness or eagerness for school heads to have a positive attitude to embrace changes (Hargie & Tourish, 2009; Muskan, 2011).

Several studies have been conducted regarding attitude towards change like that of Clark, Martorell, and Rockoff, (2009); Abdullah and Kassim, (2011); Pazzibugan, (2013). However, the researcher have not come across a study which examines the mediating effect of communication drivers on the relationship between task performance and attitude towards change of school heads conducted in the Philippines particularly in Davao Region. Therefore, this research intends to fill the gap and to investigate if the association between two variables may be mediated or affected by another variable; hence, the researcher opted to delve on the study as a contribution to generation of new knowledge.

2. Literature Review

One of the most important human activities of school heads is managing people in doing their respective tasks (Lohrey, 2009). Task management has been an essential tool to ensure the coordination of individual efforts for quality performance in the organization (EdSource, 2008; Rich, 2014; Macabiog, 2015). As mentioned by (Zhou, Lu, & Jiang, 2005; Harris, Horng & Loeb, 2010; Stewart 2014) that school head has varied responsibilities from championing the school’s vision to supervising, often in the rush of managing so many tasks to focus on providing instructional leadership. Meeting expectation and to improve task performance becomes necessary for innovation development if some tasks are delegated (Gempes, 2014; Muller, Hervic & Petrovic, 2009). The Path-Goal Theory of Leadership which was developed by House (1989) stated that task performance is contingent of the attitude of a leader and the subordinates to adopt change.

Consequently, the success and failure of educational innovations is strongly relate to school heads attitude towards change (Ryan, 2010). It is important that the school heads are not only having innovative ideas but they also have positive attitude to implement change (Pashardi, 2009; Long-Crowel, 2013; Gempes, 2014)). The statement of ( Roach and Salisbury, 2006; Wa-Mabaleka, 2015) challenge school heads to take timeline to resolve problems regarding change. Several authors emphasized the importance of school heads leadership in affecting and bringing about change. School heads of initiator type were more often successful in establishing school changes (Bartlette, Weisentein, Roach Salisbury, 2006; Himanen, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2007; Engle, Oswald & Forlin, 2008).

More recently, attitude towards change is a psychological construct. It is a mental entity that inhered in, or characterizes the person (Fullan, 2006; Zempyles & Barker, 2007; Spillance, Haluession, & Diamond, 2008). This change comes in part as a response to twin realizations of school heads (Fullan, 2007; LaPointi, 2007; Lopez, 2011). It has also been called a “hypothetical construct”, a concept that cannot be observed directly but can only be inferred from people’s actions ( Zimmerman, 2006; Gomez & Jackson, 2014). Attitudes towards change are never directly observed, but unless they are admitted, through inference, as real and substantial ingredients in human nature and more stable as time goes by in order to understand the concept (Albarracin, Johnson & Zanna, 2005; Maio & Haddock, 2010).

Educational reform all over the world is increasingly curriculum-based as mounting pressures and demands for change tend to target and focus on both the structures and the very content of school curricula. It usually appears at the announcement of the change and is present during the implementation phase or even after the establishment phase (Connoly, 2008; Goley, 2013).

Furthermore, Day and Gu (2007; Rice, 2010; Knapp, et al. 2010) cited that with distributed leadership, the school head’s attitude towards change and their readiness to become active partners are considered a critical success factor. The success and failure of education are strongly related to the school heads motivation and capacity (Shipston & Frymire, 2006; Gevers & Peeters, 2009; Stewart, 2014). It is important that the school head, not only have innovative ideas but they also have a good understanding of the change process (Pashardi, 2009; Mcleod, 2009). The story of Jonathan Livingston by Richard (2013) tells how to follow our hearts and not be afraid to make our own rules to become unique from the rest of the crowd. This emphasized the peculiar nature of every individual (Lapointe, 2007; Ubben, Hughes & Norris, 2011). It tells us to believe in what we are capable of doing change and show that we can do it. It inspired us to follow our passion even if others including our family do not believe we can do it ( Wagner, 2008; Harris, Horng & Loeb, 2010; Hall & Hord, 2011; Lewis, 2011). The above statements summarized by (Avery McKay & Wilson, 2007) when they
posed that education, is like a medicine, it is frequently changing.

On the other hand, (Simon, 2006; Omrecen, 2008; Gehle, 2013) cited that communication drivers is viewed as an exchange of ideas, messages and information by speech, signal, writing and behavior or process of transforming messages from a sender to the recipient. As pointed by (Lenget & Taft, 1989; Obijiofor, et at. 2005) that communication drivers can bring about change in the organizations and make people more competitive and generate growth. Rastrick and Corner (2010) and Finnigan, (2013) mentioned that the current use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in many organizations causes some forms of attitudinal change in way people live and work. Communication as drivers leads to a better relationship and trust (Robinson & Stubberud, 2009; Rastrick & Corner, 2010). Having online presence is a driver for adopting Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Forbes, 2010). It provides opportunity for an organization to manipulate, deliver, and transmit information via the internet simply describe ICT as working with computers. It has identified the key drivers for ICT adoption in any organizations: is to save time and reduce cost, easily process and store information, quick response time to clientelees, increase flexibility and reduction in delivering time and processing (Suh, 2007; Copland, 2009; Apulu & Latham, 2011; Stansbury, 2012).

Finally, as pronounced by (Monrreale & Pearson, 2008; McQuail, 2010) that communication as drivers is the mediation of social and cultural change and development. Information Communication Technology (ICT) offers promising opportunities to organization in order to meet the challenges of an ever changing environment (Simon, 2006; Klenk & Gordon, 2010; McQuial, 2010). According to Trybus (2011) the quality can range from low to high, depending on how much effort school heads put into the process of building quality relationship and the attitude towards change. The quality level of a relationship contributes to the quality of task performance (Bateman & Snell, 2007; Clark, Martorell & Rockoff, 2009; Augustine, et al. 2009) and organizational commitment in an organization (Bernaldez & Gempes, 2016). The leader- employee relationships with effective communications develop over time are perceived as more effective (Hogg, & Vaughan, 2005).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study used the non-experimental quantitative design utilizing descriptive correlational technique. This is the appropriate design to be used to establish norms and standards based on a wide class survey. It is used to determine the relationship between task performance and attitude towards change of public elementary school heads as well as the mediating effect of communication drivers on the relationship between task performance and attitude towards change of public elementary school heads.

A descriptive method of research is a fact-finding study of Gehle (2013), with an adequate and accurate interpretation of the findings. Moreover, it describes with emphasis what actually exists such as current condition, practices, situations, or any phenomenon. Likewise, the correlational method of Gempes (2014) endeavors to determine the significance of relationship between variables of this study.

Specifically, the current study has found that communication drivers are positive and significant mediators of task performance and attitude towards change of school heads which was statistically elaborated by Baron and Kenny (1996) in their mediation guidelines.

3.2 Population and Sample

The study was conducted in Region XI. The respondents of the study were the elementary school teachers for the school year 2014-2015 from the 10 school divisions in Region XI, namely: Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental, Mati City, Digos City, Davao City, Panabo City, and Tagum City.

From 17,324 total elementary teacher populations in Region XI, a sample of 391 was determined using Slovin’s formula. Then, stratified random sampling was utilized to determine the number of samples per divisions. There were 61 or 16 percent in Comval, 35 or 9 percent in Davao del Norte, 74 or 19 percent in Davao del Sur 24 or 6 percent in Davao Oriental, 39 or 10 percent in Mati City, 16 or 4 percent in Digos City, 102 or 26 percent in Davao City, 16 or 4 percent Panabo City, in Tagum City and IGACOS. The 391 samples were distributed to each division through stratified sampling technique.

3.3 Research Instrument

This study utilized three instruments. The first was adopted and modified from the standardized questionnaire of Schreerens (2007), to measure the extent of task performance of public elementary school heads. The second set of instrument measures the level of attitude towards change of public elementary school heads and was adopted from standardized questionnaire from Spaulding (2008). It was composed of three indicators such as affectively-based attitude, behaviorally-based attitude, and cognitively-based attitude. The third set dealt with communication drivers. The standardized questionnaire was adopted from Mecklenburg (2012). It aimed to measure the level of communication drivers practiced by public elementary school heads.

3.4 Statistical Tools

For comprehensive interpretation and analysis of data, the following statistical treatments were utilized.

**Mean.** This statistical tool was used to determine the level of task performance and attitude toward change of school heads and the level of communication drivers practiced by school heads in public elementary school in Davao region.

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**3.5 Objectives**

The main thrust of this study is to find out the mediating effect of communication drivers on the relationship between task performance and attitude toward change of school heads.

**3.6 Hypothesis**

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1) There is no significant relationship between task performance and attitude toward change, between task performance and communication drivers and between communication drivers and attitude toward change.

2) Communication drivers have no significant mediating effect on the relationship between task performance and attitude toward change.

**4. Results**

Presented in Table 1 are the results of test of pairing between variables involved in the study. The overall result of task performance and attitude toward change had a p-value of .000 with .951 correlation coefficient. The data showed that independent variable is positively correlated as graphically presented by (Jose, 2003).

Correspondingly, the two variables being paired are the communication drivers attitude towards change with a correlation coefficient result of .391 bearing the same p-value of .000, also positively associated. It meant that overall result reflected that communication drivers and attitude towards change are confidently correlated. Conversely, communication drivers were determined most importantly through good communication (Klenk & Gordon, 2010).

Furthermore, the processing requirements are much accorded to the ability of information and communication received. Likewise, it helps to disclose possible ways in which task performance and communication drivers were very much correlated as postulated by Simons (2006). The result of pairing of communication drivers and attitude towards change received the R-value is .391 with the p-value of .000, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between communication drivers and attitude toward change is highly rejected.

This signified that the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between task performance and attitude toward change, task performance and communication drivers, communication drivers and attitude towards change was highly rejected.

![Medgraph showing the variables of the study](image.png)

The steps mentioned below (paths a, b, and c) are significant; hence, further mediation analysis through medgraph is warranted, involving the Sobel Z-Test to assess the significance of mediation effect. If the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable becomes non-significant at the final step in the analysis, full mediation

**Table 1: Correlation Between Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Decision on Ho</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task Performance and Attitude Toward Change</td>
<td>.951*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task performance and Communication Drivers</td>
<td>.891*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Drivers and Attitude Towards Change</td>
<td>.391*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
will be achieved. It signifies that all of the effects are mediated by the mediating variable (Jose, 2003).

Therefore, if the regression coefficient is substantially reduced at the final step but remains significant, only partial mediation is obtained. It means part of the independent variable is mediated by the moderating variable but other parts are either direct or mediated by other variables not included in the model. In this particular case, the effect of the independent variable on dependent variable is significantly lessened after controlling communication drivers as statistically mentioned by (Baron & Kenny, 1998).

Furthermore, the result of the mediation computation is shown in Figure 3. The sobel z-value of 13.486713 yielded a p-value less than .001 hence significant but only partial mediation occurred. The association between task performance independent variable and attitude toward change has been significantly reduced by the inclusion of the mediating variable which is communication drivers. It could be seen in the graph that .951 is reduced to .592 in the subsequent regression. The 95% confidence interval conclusively tells that significant mediation has occurred (Jose, 2003).

Evidently, it yielded a small standard error (se) of .017 obtained by subtracting the lower limit (.343) from the upper limit (.460) and dividing the difference with 3.92 (constant). The small standard error (se) measures the precision of the estimate of the coefficient. The smaller the standard error, the more precise the estimate. The effect size (.377) measures how much of the effect of task performance on the attitude towards can be attributed to the indirect path independent variable to moderating variable and to dependent variable. The total effect (.951) is the raw correlation between task performances and attitude towards change. The direct effect (.592) is the size of the Correlation between task performance and attitude toward change with communication drivers included in the regression.

The indirect effect is the amount of the original correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable that now goes through the mediator to the dependent variable (a*b) where “a” refers to the path between independent and moderating variable and “b” refers to the path between the mediating variable and dependent variable.

The ratio index is computed by dividing the indirect effect by the total effect, in this case .359 by .951=38%. It seems that about 38% of the total effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable goes through the mediating variable, and about 62% of the total effect is either direct or mediated by other variables not included in the model.

5. Discussion and Findings

The mediation results of the study indicate that communication drivers reinforce the significant relationship between task performance and attitude towards change of school heads. This result from the significant partial mediation of communication drivers in the relationship between task performance and attitude towards change and meet mediation guidelines (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

The result is supported by Khalid & Rashid (2011) who pronounced that communication drivers have something to do with the attitude of school heads towards change. Additionally, school heads should be positive to adopt change in order to remain competitive. Accordingly, Frahm and Brown (2007) specified that effective communication is very important factor as motivator for change. Communication and attitude toward change is a focus on the field that is very imperative to develop for school heads in order to become positive thinkers. Communication is a major driver for quality performance and innovation. Through communication as confirmed (Khalid & Rashid, 2011) more data are being generated which help school heads to have greater accuracy.

Clearly, employees who are well communicated to and are highly motivated are more likely to have high levels of task performance and can also be catalysts for change (Trybus, 2011). These employees are visionaries who are never content with status quo but rather always looking for a change for a better to the best.

Additionally, Rice (2010) mentioned that school heads who take the catalyst role feel secure in their own work and have a strong commitment to continual improvement. The statement was toughly supported by Zimmerman (2006), postulated that school heads must create a fundamental transformation in the school culture and becomes the leader of "culture of change" and must determine their readiness for change.

Evidently, literature presented has facilitated the researcher’s realization that the task performance of school heads has a great contribution in the attitude towards change of school heads. Furthermore, the significant relationship of variables supported by the Path-Goal of Leadership developed by House, (1996).

The Media Richness Theory of Taft (1999) and the articulation of Rastrick and Corner (2010), espoused in this study. The finding of this study negates the Path-Goal Theory of leadership of House (1996) which states that task performance is contingent of the attitude of a leader towards change and leaders’ attitude are flexible to change.

Positively, task performance affects communication media as scrutinized by Lengel and Taft (1989). It proposes that task performance will be improved when information processing requirements are matched to the ability to convey richness information in communication. Rastrick and Corner (2010), posited that communication in many organizations causes some forms of attitudinal changes in way people live and work.

On the other hand, the level of attitude towards change of school heads is positive. This indicates that the attitude towards change of public elementary school heads is manifested by their interest in effecting change at all times. This shows that elementary school heads in Region XI are courageously taking risks as change agent and they work with
their teachers harmoniously in exploring the process of change. Moreover, the level of communication drivers practiced by elementary school heads is at the high level. This implies that communication drivers practiced by public elementary school heads are manifested at all times. This further signifies that school heads communicate effectively and regularly the important issues and concerns from available source in a timely manner.

Evidently, the findings explicitly confirmed 3.89 extensive result this denotes a strong theoretical association between variables. Furthermore, the result of the study indicates that communication drivers reinforced the significant relationship of task performance and attitude towards change of school heads. This resulted from the significant partial mediation of communication drivers in the relationship between variables.

The relationship between task performance and communication drivers is strongly supported by Media Richness Theory which was developed by (Lengel & Taft, 1999), which focused on how task performance affects communication media. Furthermore, communication drivers is significantly mediator of task performance and attitude towards change of school heads, this was underscored in the propositions of (Rastrick & Corner, 2010) which pronounces that current use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in many organizations causes some forms of attitudinal change in way people live and work. The study further reveals that communication drivers partially mediated the relationship between task performance and attitude towards change but have a positive links to attitude towards change.

Based on the foregoing findings and conclusions, a number of recommendations are offered. The high level of task performance of school heads suggest that concern DepEd officials may formulate life-long-training initiative program that require school heads to plan, carry out, and summarize and review their professional development, the quality management processes, specifically emphasizing school management and supervision for their sustainability of extensive results.

Lastly, the result also suggests that the school heads and teachers have to imibe the concept of organizational commitment, self-development and values and its various components. The tasks of handling context of change in an organization would be very easy if the institutional leadership policy is well driven by good communication throughout the learning organization (Gempes, 2014).

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