
Managerial Skills of Basic Education School Administrators: Career Plateaued Vs. Non-Plateaued

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Abstract – The emerging development in education brought about by new thrusts, legislation, policies, and program causes increasing pressures on the part of school administrators to manage well their respective schools. Such pressures call upon every administrator the enhancement of managerial skills towards the attainment of his/her school's goals and objectives. While there exists a plethora of literature on the factors that influence managerial skills, varied constructs are emerging that need attention in research relative to management such as career plateaus or career stagnation which might either intensify or impair the management skills of school heads. This study, therefore, was carried out to explore the relationship of career plateaus to the managerial skills of public-school administrators in the Division of Romblon – MIMAROPA region Philippines. A validated questionnaire which measured the school heads' level of managerial skills and their level of career plateau was employed and administered through a survey method to 220 school heads within the division. Data analysis yielded the following major findings: Most of the public-school administrators are objectively not yet plateaued and consider themselves to be in a lower level of subjective career plateau. Based on their mean score, school heads who are objectively non-plateaued tend to have better managerial skills than those who are plateaued. Position and subjective career plateaus are found to be a determinative factor in the managerial skills of school heads whose careers have not yet been objectively plateaued. Further research nevertheless is encouraged to understand more the concept of career plateau and its role in other managerial skill dimensions of those school heads whose careers are already plateaued objectively.

Keywords – Career Plateau, Objective Career Plateau, Subjective Career Plateau, Managerial Skills and Public School Heads.

I. INTRODUCTION

Management is part of relatively important and basic privileges in an uncertain competitive environment of organizations. Effective and efficient management assures achievement of the organization to access strategy and goal. Managerial skills are one of the reasons in consecutive organizational successes.

Managerial skills are an important component of the educational leader. Educational leaders must be aware and practice the parlance of leadership in school administration which includes: (1) you must know your actions, (2) know your people, (3) know their problems, and (4) solve their problems. This also should be followed by the function of management in school administration such as planning, organizing, directing, supervising, coordinating, providing leadership, recording, and reporting, and promoting friendly school community relationships.

Experiences in educational management tend to point out that every school manager has legal, social, and moral accountabilities, which are inherent in the position. First, as a school manager, there is the accountability to oneself as a person and as a professional. The school manager must use his managerial position constructively and extend every possible assistance to people, accomplish goals, and utilize resources. Second, the manager has people within the organization other than his immediate superiors to whom he is responsible. There is accountability to peers, to

supervisors who assist in performing the managerial job, and the entire organization for quality performance. The third is the accountability to the community and a system of laws and generally accepted social norms and customs. The school head is accountable for the use of social power to accomplish work according to sets of standards. Realizing the importance of school heads in the attainment of educational goals, any problem that might be encountered in the educational system may be directly or indirectly linked to his ability to manage.

The Joint Congressional Report on Education contained in Making Education Work identified some major problems in our present educational system. The problem that the Department of Education has been attempting to resolve through the years includes the decreasing level of performance of elementary school children and high school students in practically all subjects, especially in mathematics, science, and reading. Also, the congressional report also noted two major reasons for the decline of quality education in the Philippines which are: we are not investing enough in our education system, and *our education establishment is poorly managed* (Bauzon, 2006).

In the light of the data in achievement test result and poor management of schools, it appears that the school heads should intensify the supervision of instruction to the teaching of these subjects to improve the competency level of pupils and students and at the same time improve their management skills. They must employ effective quality instructional supervision to make their teachers more competent in teaching these subjects while looking for effective ways to manage their respective schools. All these require management skills to elevate the educational system to a level of the very effective organizational system.

The evolvement of new thrusts, legislation, policies, and programs in education causes increased pressure on the part of school administrators in the organization and management of their respective schools. Such pressure calls upon every administrator the enhancement of managerial skills toward the attainment of the goals and objectives brought about by emerging development in education. In this light, it seems that the administrator has no other alternative but to transform the school into an effective agent of change, thereby making the leader the manager of organizational effectiveness. (Mei-Liang Chen, n.d). This transformation calls for the application of skills which according to Schermerhorn (2000), constitute a critical factor that influences successful implementation of school programs. It is, therefore, the school head's prime duty to fulfill administrative roles in planning, organizing, directing and controlling the efforts of the school to attain organizational effectiveness.

As a school manager, a school head may be called a productive leader when one lives up to the expectation of the public regarding efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of operation. As a manager, every school head is answerable for his job behavior, for prudent utilization of school resources, and above all, for effective and economical delivery of educational services.

All these are contemporary issues and concerns that every school administrator cannot take lightly as they are very issues that would affect curriculum and instruction, administration and supervision, and research and evaluation to name a few. If taken with urgent concern, they are very issues that would necessitate exercise of management skills required in the administration and supervision of the school system.

Becoming an effective school administrator, however, does not take place overnight. It is sometimes associated with various factors and challenges such as length of experience, age, and professional development that may serve

as opportunities or even hindrances to hone one's management skills. A number of these factors had been the subject of numerous studies. However, other factors that play a significant role in the managerial skills of school administrators have not yet been given emphasis. One of these is the career plateau.

As defined by Stoner and Freeman (1989), career plateau is the point in a career where the likelihood of additional hierarchical promotion is very low. The term has a negative connotation because it seems to imply that the individual is no longer promotable because of lack of ability or some other flaw. Reaching a career plateau is a normal organizational occurrence. It happens to just about everyone even highly successful managers eventually reach these. Career plateau can be classified into two categories namely Objective Plateau and Subjective Plateau. Objective Career Plateau refers to structural and observable aspects and is associated with the time spent in the current position (Tremblay, M. and Roger, A. 1993). Subjective Career Plateau refers to the feeling of having been in one's level for too long and of having reached a dead end in one's progress" (Tremblay, M. and Roger, A.1993).

Some studies have examined the consequences associated with career plateauing. Although not all studies have found negative outcomes associated with plateauing, there is considerable evidence indicating that plateauing is related to unfavorable job attitudes and behaviors" (Allen, T.D. et al., 1998, p.159). The study of Greenhaus. J. et al., (2000, p.223), pointed out that ultimately, plateaued employees may exhibit deteriorated performance and cause a decline in the performance of their department and overall organization.

Experiencing career plateau is one of those factors which tend to affect employee performance (Patterson, Sutton and Schuttenburg, 1987).

The current management set up in the DepEd today is interesting considering that it comprises of both young and senior school administrators with some of them having no or little experience in administrative management at all. Some are even serving for several years now and experiencing career plateau either objectively or subjectively hence this study was conducted.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES/QUESTIONS

The study aims to determine the managerial skills of the basic education school administrators and examine the role of career plateau in their managerial skills. Specifically, the researchers sought to answers the following questions:

1. Do managerial skills of basic education school administrators vary when they are grouped according to their career plateau?
2. How does subjective career plateau influence the managerial skills of the school administrators?
3. Do certain variables such as the personal profile and the level of subjective plateau significantly determine the managerial skills of objectively plateaued and non-plateaued public-school administrators?

III. METHODOLOGY

The study made use of the descriptive-correlation design employing the survey method in gathering the needed data. Through the survey, characteristics of the respondents regarding their profile, career plateau status both objective

and subjective, and their managerial skills were determined. A correlation was explored between career plateau and managerial skills.

Sampling

There are around 300 public school administrators in the Division of Romblon. Out of these number, 220 participated in the survey or about 73% which is already a good sample for the study.

Respondents of the Study

The participants of the study are the school administrators within the Division of Romblon mainly coming from the public schools in the basic education institutions. Most of them (58%) are females, and 42% are males. Majority of them are married (87%), and in their middle age (31-45). Only 4% have Ph.D. units, 4% are master degree holder, and the rest have units in Master program. About 48% occupy head teacher position with only .05% having a principal four position which is considered to be the highest position as a public-school administrator. A greater percentage of them (64.5%) have served less than ten years being an administrator. Regarding their career plateau status, 65.5% said that they are objectively plateaued which means that they have been in their current position for almost five years with only 34.5% of them saying that they are not yet objectively plateaued as they have been promoted for within five years. Regarding subjective plateau, those school administrators who are objectively plateau have a higher level of subjective career plateau compared to those who are non-plateau.

Research Instrument

To determine the needed information from the respondents which include their career plateau status either objective or subjective and their managerial skills, a questionnaire was devised. For their objective career plateau status, the question asked is whether they have been promoted for the last five years or not. This is based from Tremblay, M. and Roger, A. (1993) that objective career plateau is associated with the time spent in the position. If they have not been promoted for the last five years that means the school head has experienced objective plateaus. The organization or company set this form of career plateau wherein the opportunity for upward mobility of career is not possible due to unavailability of the position/item, or it might be that the administrator does not possess the necessary qualifications. The subjective career plateau on the other hand was determined through five statements which allowed the respondent to evaluate himself/herself if he is experiencing subjective career plateau based on his/her perception. The questionnaire for this type of career plateau was adopted from the study of Galhena (2008). The statements are assessed based on a 4-point Likert scale. The last part of the instrument deals with managerial skills of the respondents composed of six factors namely monitoring, planning, delegating task, staff development, conflict resolution, and providing feedback with a total of 32 items. These managerial skills are based on Henry Fayol's administrative tasks. All the items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale. It has undergone a validity test thru an assessment of three individuals with management expertise both in the profession and in practice.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Frequency count and percentage were employed to describe the profile of the respondents while the weighted arithmetic mean was used to calculate the

mean score for the perception of the respondents’ subjective career plateau and managerial skills. The t-test for independent sample was used to examine the differences in the managerial skills of the administrators when grouped according to their objective career plateau status. The t-test showed who among the groups have a higher level of managerial skills. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Regression analysis, on the other hand, were utilized to examine the relationship between subjective career plateau and the respondents’ managerial skills and which among the variables can predict the respondents’ managerial skills.

IV. RESULTS

Career Plateau Status of the Respondents Regarding Objective Plateau and Subjective Plateau

Shown in table 1 is the career plateau status of the public-school administrators about objective type of career plateau. The organization/institution sets this type of career plateau wherein the employee cannot be promoted because of unavailability of the item/position or because he/she of fell short of the qualification standard. The employee does not control the reason for career stagnation or career movement.

Out of 220 public school administrators, 65.5% of them are objectively non-plateaued which means that they have not been stagnant in their present position for the last five years. The remaining 34.5% said that they have been staying in their present position for more than five years which put their career in an objective plateau.

Based on the data, most of the public school administrators in the Division of Romblon have a career which is not yet plateaued. This means that career progression of school heads in the Department of Education - Division of Romblon is still productive.

Table 1. Total no. of respondents grouped according to whether they are objectively plateaued or not

Status	F	%
Objectively Plateaued	76	34.5
Objectively non- plateaued	144	65.5
Total	220	100.0

Subjective Career Plateau Status of both Objectively Plateaued and Non-plateaued School Heads

While objective career plateau is usually institution-determined, subjective career plateau is commonly employee-determined. The two types of career plateau may or may not complement each other. One may have experienced that his/her career is objectively plateaued but still may or may not believe that he/she has still opportunity to move higher or be promoted in the institution.

The assumption that the two types of plateaus may complement each other is supported by the data in table 2 as those whose careers are objectively plateaued tend to perceive that they have little opportunity to be promoted (WM = 2.61) indicative of high level of plateau.

On the other hand, those who are not yet objectively plateaued tend to manifest high hope to get ahead or be promoted in their organization (WM = 2.67) denoting lower career plateau. The findings suggest that employees whose careers are objectively plateaued may also show signs of career plateau subjectively.

Table 2. Subjective career plateau status of both objectively plateaued and non-plateaued school heads

Statements	Plateaued		Non-plateaued	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
I believe that I have been in the same level for much too long	2.93	Agree	2.30	Disagree
I believe that I am not getting ahead in the organization	2.71	Agree	2.39	Disagree
I believe that my promotion opportunities have been limited in my organization	2.61	Agree	2.40	Disagree
I do not expect to move higher in my company.	2.47	Disagree	2.12	Disagree
I have limited opportunity to learn and grow a lot in my current position.	2.30	Disagree	2.15	Disagree
Grand Mean	2.61	High	2.27	Low

Level of managerial skills of objective career plateaued and non- plateaued public-school administrators

This study investigated the managerial skills of both objectively plateaued and non-plateaued school heads. Seen in table 3 is the result of the survey along with the six (6) dimensions of managerial skills namely: monitoring, planning, delegating tasks, staff development, conflict resolution, and providing feedback. These skills are vital in the organizational success.

A closer look into the table would reveal the topmost skill of the objectively plateaued public-school administrators which are monitoring and delegating tasks with composite means of 3.57 and 3.55 respectively described to be excellent. The rest of the skills garnered only mean scores of very satisfactory level with conflict resolution skills receiving the lowest weighted mean score of 3.39. It can be inferred that this skill is somewhat challenging while monitoring and delegating tasks appear to be uncomplicated skills. These topmost skills are also found to be true to those objectively non-plateaued school administrators with delegating tasks emerging to be the topmost skill (WM = 3.64) followed by monitoring (WM = 3.63). It is also clear from the data that the objectively non-plateaued school heads possess the most numbered managerial skills found to be excellent namely: delegating tasks (WM = 3.64), monitoring (WM = 3.63), and staff development compared to those who are objectively plateaued who excelled only in two dimensions.

Further, objectively non-plateaued school heads exhibited higher composite mean scores in all managerial skill dimensions and the overall grand mean with a difference of .06. This suggests that objectively non-plateaued school heads showed better managerial skills than those who are objectively plateaued. As to whether the mean difference is significant or not, table 3 provides the analysis.

Table 3. Level of managerial skills of objectively career plateaued and non- plateaued public school administrators.

Managerial skill dimensions	Plateaued		Non-plateaued	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Monitoring	3.57	Excellent	3.63	Excellent
Planning	3.41	Very Satisfactory	3.49	Very Satisfactory
Delegating tasks	3.55	Excellent	3.64	Excellent

Managerial skill dimensions	Plateaued		Non-plateaued	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Staff Development	3.50	Very Satisfactory	3.55	Excellent
Conflict resolution	3.39	Very Satisfactory	3.44	Very Satisfactory
Providing feedback	3.41	Very Satisfactory	3.44	Very Satisfactory
Grand Mean	3.47	Very Satisfactory	3.53	Excellent

Difference in the Management Skills of Objectively Career Plateaued and Non-plateaued Public-school Administrators

Displayed in table 4 is the t-test results in the management skills of objective career plateaued and non-plateaued public-school administrators.

While the managerial skills of objectively plateaued and objectively non-plateaued school heads appear to have difference based on their mean scores, the t-Test for equality of means shows no significant difference in all the skill dimension. This is reflected in the result of the probability values in each managerial skill dimension which is higher than the alpha value set a .05 level of significance. This denotes that although the mean scores of objectively non-plateaued school heads are higher than those who are objectively plateaued, both their skills are still almost the same. This means that the managerial skills of the objectively plateaued although a little lower are still comparable with those who are objectively non-plateaued.

Table 4. Difference in the management skills of career plateaued and non-plateaued public school administrators

Dimensions	Objective Career plateaued	N	Mean	Mean Difference	Df	t	Sig. (2 tailed)
Monitoring	Plateaued	76	3.5763	.05563	218	1.061	.290
	Non-plateaued	144	3.6319				
Planning	Plateaued	76	3.4184	.07950	218	1.392	.165
	Non-plateaued	144	3.4979				
Delegating Tasks	Plateaued	76	3.5474	.09569	218	1.823	.070
	Non-plateaued	144	3.6431				
Staff Development	Plateaued	76	3.5000	.05556	218	.469	.640
	Non-plateaued	144	3.5556				
Conflict Resolution	Plateaued	76	3.3921	.04678	218	.851	.461
	Non-plateaued	144	3.4389				
Providing Feedback	Plateaued	76	3.4105	.03114	218	.579	.563
	Non-plateaued	144	3.4417				

$P > .05$

Relationship between Subjective Career Plateaus and Management Skills of the Objectively Plateaued and Non-plateaued Public-school Administrators

In table 5, the Pearson’s correlation between subjective career plateau and management skills of the objectively plateaued public-school administrators is presented.

Based on the resulting probability values which are higher than the alpha value at .05 level of significance, the subjective career plateau did not emerge to have a significant relationship to any management skills dimension. This means that the management skills of the public-school administrators are not dependent on their level of subjective career plateau.

In the same table, the Pearson’s correlation between subjective career plateau and management skills of the objectively non-plateaued public-school administrators is also shown. Based on the resulting probability values, subjective career plateau flagged a significant relationship to four management skill dimensions namely: Monitoring, Planning, Delegating tasks and Staff development considering that it produced p values (.002, .024, .001 and .043) less than .01 to .05 level of significance. This means that the above- mentioned management skill dimensions of the public-school administrators are dependent on their subjective career plateau

Table 5. Relationship between subjective career plateau and management skills of the objectively plateaued and non-plateaued public -school administrators

Dependent Variable Managerial Skills	Independent Variable Subjective Career Plateau			
	N = 76		N = 144	
	Objectively Plateaued		Objectively Non-plateaued	
	Pearson’s Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson’s Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Monitoring	-.094 ^{NS}	.420	-.257 ^{**}	.002
Planning	-.144 ^{NS}	.215	-.187 [*]	.024
Delegating tasks	-.069 ^{NS}	.555	-.264 ^{**}	.001
Staff Development	-.069 ^{NS}	.556	-.169 [*]	.043
Conflict resolution	-.062 ^{NS}	.595	-.109 ^{NS}	.194
Providing feedback	-.130 ^{NS}	.263	-.003 ^{NS}	.975

NS = Not Significant

** = Significant at .01

* = Significant at .05

Determinants of Managerial Skills of Objectively Plateaued and Non-plateaued Public-school Administrators

In table 6, two regression model is shown that displays the predictors or the independent variables highlighted in two (2) major factors such as demographics, and subjective career plateau as well as the dependent variable which is the managerial skills of both the objectively plateaued and non-plateaued school heads.

Model 1 produced an r value of .44 which is the degree or relationship generated by all the combined predictors about management skills. The model also produced an r² of .19 which is the total variance generated by all the

predictors entered in the model. This indicates that the combined predictors can produce 12% variance in the model and the remaining 88% variance can be attributed to variables not included in the study. The ANOVA result is not significant at .05. This model, however, won't work as it did not produce enough variance than would be expected by chance. It can be seen from the table that only one factor emerged to be a significant predictor in the management skills of the objectively plateaued public-school administrators which is monthly salary with probability value less than .05. This suggests that salary can be a determinative variable in enhancing the management skills of school heads who are objectively plateaued.

In the same table, a similar regression model (model 2) was shown for the managerial skills of objectively non-plateaued school heads. Having entered the same independent variables as predictors in the model, two major factors emerged to have contributed significantly to the managerial skills of the non-plateaued school heads namely: position and level of subjective career plateau with Beta values of .21 and .20 respectively. The two variables flagged significant probability values less than the alpha level set at .05. The result suggests that the higher the position they occupy and the more they perceive their career plateau to be subjectively low meaning that they still have high hopes to be promoted, the better their managerial skills.

Table 6. Regression result for managerial skills of the objectively plateaued and non-public school administrators

Predictors	Plateaued (model 1)		Non-plateaued (model 2)	
	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient
	Beta	Sig	Beta	Sig
Demographic Profile				
Age	-.072	.600	.014	.882
Sex	.178	.151	-.056	.513
Civil status	.012	.926	.045	.597
Educational attainment	-.146	.263	.035	.697
Position	-.143	.268	-.211	.014
Length of service as administrator	.012	.922	-.088	.322
Monthly salary	.368	.012	.199	.069
Eligibility	-.151	.271	.009	.931
No. of trainings related to management	.170	.158	-.069	.426
Subjective career plateau	.114	.339	-.209	.017

V. DISCUSSION

This study intends to determine the role played by career plateau in the managerial skills of public-school administrators. Career plateau as used in this study is categorized into two which are objective and subjective with the former being institution-determined and the latter being personally-determined. The result appears to be interesting as it showed that managerial skills of the school administrators either plateaued or non-plateaued are almost the same with the non-plateaued showing a slight edge over the plateaued ones. The correlation test likewise failed to establish the significant relationship between subjective career plateau and the managerial skills of those objectively plateaued much more subjective career plateau did not emerge to be a determinative variable in the managerial skills of school

heads who are already plateaued. It showed that, regardless of their high level of subjective career plateau status, their managerial skills remain to be the same which is very satisfactory and is comparable still to those whose careers are not yet objectively plateaued. The reasons for their very satisfactory managerial performance can be attributed to other factors not covered in this study, or at least their organizational commitment and dedication to public service may have played a mediating role in their very satisfactory managerial skills. These findings couldn't support the study of Greenhaus (2000) who pointed out that ultimately, plateaued employees may exhibit deteriorated performance and cause a decline in the performance of their department and overall organization. On the other hand, the study may be an encouragement to those school administrators who are already objectively plateaued as their managerial skill are almost equal with those not yet objectively plateaued giving an implication that regardless of their being objectively plateaued, their organization can expect better performance from them when it comes to management.

Meanwhile, for those who are objectively non-plateaued, the correlation test produced P-value that flagged significant relationship between the subjective career plateau and their managerial skills which denotes that, the lower their subjective career plateau, the better would be their managerial skill. It was also found out in this study that lower subjective career plateau is a determinative variable in the managerial skills for those who are not yet objectively plateaued. The findings strengthen the study of Patterson (1987) that career plateau is one of those factors which tend to affect employee performance either positively or negatively. This is true to the present investigation wherein the managerial skills of those school administrators whose careers are not yet plateaued tend to show better managerial skills when they perceived that they still could be promoted. The hope that they would still have a chance to advance their career makes them do and perform better in their job. These findings support the Expectancy Model of management developed by Vroom (1964) who explained that a person would put forth a higher level of effort if they believe their efforts will result in higher performance and thus better rewards.

VI. CONCLUSION

School administrators who are objectively plateaued may still exhibit very satisfactory managerial skills just like those who are not yet plateaued. Their managerial performance is not affected by their high-level subjective career plateau status which means that, even if their chance to be promoted is already slim, they are still able to perform well their managerial tasks.

For those administrators who are not yet plateaued, however, subjective career plateau tends to influence and is even determines their managerial skills. This means that the more they think, that they have a chance or opportunity to be promoted, the better their managerial skills would be.

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AUTHORS PROFILE

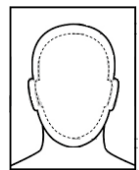


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