



Original Research Article

Philippine schools overseas' capitalized strength: Phenomenological impact of proversified leadership

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Leading a highly diversified workforce is a major challenge administrators of Philippine Schools Overseas (PSO's) deal with as they strive to achieve organizational success and create competitive advantage in a world characterized by surprising and extensive changes. This qualitative study intends to capture the lived experiences of PSO administrators as they lead a unique and highly diversified work environment. Capitalizing on the power of phenomenology with an in-depth semi-structured interview as the primary data collection tool, this research probed into the proversified leadership experiences of a select group of school leaders to uncover the distinguishing effects of diversity among PSOs. A sample of 11 school administrators; 6 principals and 5 coordinators participated in the study. They represented the Philippine Schools Overseas (PSO's) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to include six countries particularly the State of Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Sultanate of Oman, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Libya. Notably, the phenomenological data analysis of the individual and collective leadership experiences of principals and coordinators revealed three elements of strength considered as PSO's capitalized strength. These capitalized strengths categorized as synergistic strength, chainergistic strength, and mutualistic strength enable PSO administrators and employees to fully embrace and effectively handle diversity in the school system.

Key words: Proversified leadership, synergistic strength, chainergistic strength, mutualistic strength, phenomenology, Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

INTRODUCTION

Modern day leaders live a complex and challenging life. They take responsibility over a demanding workplace, deal with diversified group of people, solve and resolve conflicts, work across organizational boundaries and bring about result and positive change in the organization among others. As today's society is becoming more and more diversified, leaders around the world face a common challenge of leading a highly diversified workforce.

Diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization encompassing race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background and more

(Greenberg as cited by Munjuri 2012). While workforce diversity is commonly associated with differences between and among people, Patrick and Kumar (2012) view the concept as a set of conscious practices that involve appreciating interdependence, practicing mutual respect, understanding diversity as both ways of being and of knowing, recognizing personal, cultural, and institutionalized discrimination as advantageous for some and disadvantageous for others, and building alliances across differences so that people can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination and reach their potential in order to maximize their contributions to the

organization's strategic goals and objectives.

Managing diversity surely is not an easy task. The responsibility of putting different pieces together to create a harmonious and coordinated whole calls not only for a highly skilled leader but also the employment of appropriate leadership style. Though diversity management has been explored and several literatures have been written on the evolution of managing diversity, literature on diversity management in educational institutions is not that rich and empirical research examining leadership in this context is scarce. While leadership development has been the focus of a great deal of research and leaders' training has been a significant practice in the corporate world, the employment of proverbsified leadership in managing diversity remains to be underexplored. This qualitative inquiry argues that the collective experiences of PSO administrators as proverbsified leaders are good sources of insights and reflections in understanding diversity management in a highly diversified learning environment.

Philippine Schools Overseas (PSOs); the educational institutions operating outside the Philippines which may be fully or partly owned by Filipinos or managed and operated by Filipinos, composed of leaders and administrators, faculty and staff, parents, and students coming from the different regions in the Philippines and from other countries as well, just like any other work organizations have their own share of issues related to inequality, social differences, and multiformity. Inspired by Graham's (1997) concept on *Proversity*; the energy that comes from seeing beyond the differences between and among people of different background and recognizing the common characteristics and interests they share, PSO administrators' Proverbsified Leadership serve as facility through which they manage diversity in their unique work environment.

This qualitative study is an attempt to capture and understand the essence of the lived experiences of a select group of Philippine Schools Overseas (PSO's) administrators as they lead highly diversified learning institutions. Through this phenomenological inquiry the researcher endeavors to explore the unique context through which PSO leaders handle diversity as proverbsified school administrators and to identify its impact in their leadership experiences as proverbsified leaders.

METHODS

Research Design

This qualitative study utilized phenomenological research approach as it sought to investigate and describe a phenomenon consciously experienced by the respondents. Phenomenological study according to Christensen et al. (2010) aims to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a person or a group of people around a specific phenomenon. Its focus is on

emergence (Hancock et al., 2007), thus, the research starts from a position where the researcher knows nothing about the concept under study so that all concepts truly emerge from the data. Likewise, this type of research does not start with a theory to test; theory is generated from empirical data (Woods, 2006). A small number of cases, could be less than 20, according to Crouch (2013) will facilitate the researcher's close association with the respondents, and enhance the validity of fine-grained, in-depth inquiry in naturalistic settings. Large samples as cited by Ngutu and Nyamongo (2015) can become unwieldy. Small samples, therefore, are considered in this research to uncover the deep understanding of the leadership practices of PSO administrators as they deal with diversity in their workplace.

Research Locus and Sample

Six school principals and five coordinators from six countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) namely: State of Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Sultanate of Oman, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and State of Libya served as respondents of this study. These Philippine School Overseas (PSO) administrators were selected through qualitative purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell and Plano, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Bernard, 2002; Patton, 2002) taking into consideration the following criteria: (a) respondents have served as school administrators for at least five years and (b) were employed in Philippine Schools Overseas when the study was conducted.

Of the six principals, two were doctors and the rest were master's degree holders. Similarly, all the coordinators were MA graduates aside from one who was a Bachelor Degree holder. All of them had served Philippine Schools Overseas as administrators for more than five years. Two of the respondents had worked as such for more than twenty years.

Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

To gain a deep and thorough understanding of the phenomenon under study, the researcher employed a two-layered approach to data gathering. The first part was the *robotfoto* (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002); a personal data sheet personally handed to the eleven respondents to gain personal and professional information about their career. The second was the actual in-depth interview using a twenty five item semi - structured interview guide questions. The researcher sought permit to conduct interviews and a letter of intent was sent to the target participants. With the permission and signed consent of the respondent, a one to two - hour audio and video taped interview was conducted employing a number of open ended questions based on the topic at hand. Information from interviews were recorded using audio-video tape and by making handwritten notes (Creswell, 2003; Bernard, 2002). The researcher observed the principle of voluntary

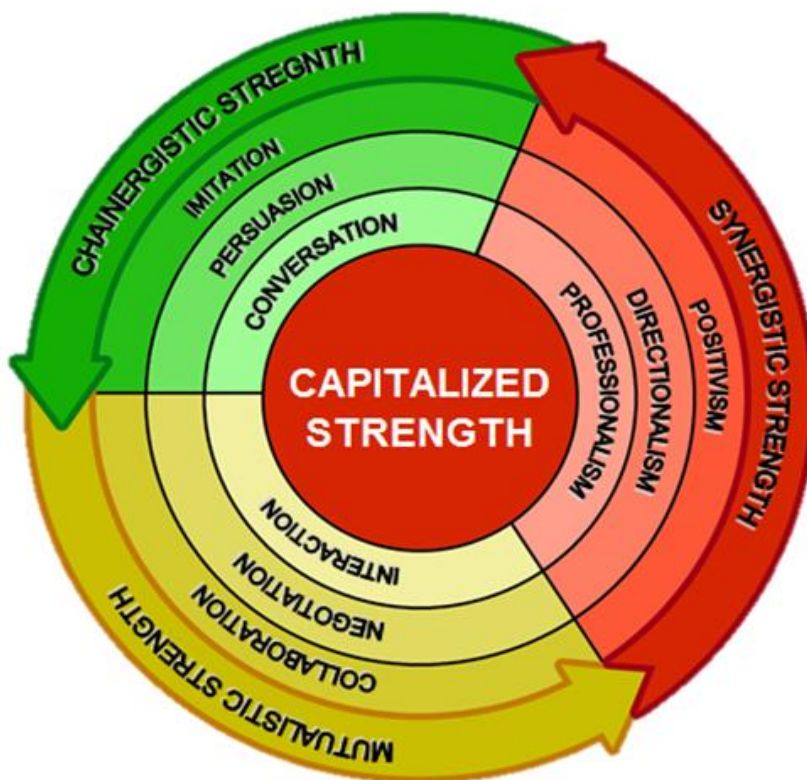


Figure 1: showing the various stages of capitalized strength

participation in the conduct of this study to ensure that the respondents participated in their own free will and were free from any form of coercion. They have been fully informed of the procedures of the research project and any potential risks associated with the study through a written consent form given to each one of them. Utmost confidentiality was observed in the treatment of responses.

Data Analysis

Colaizzi's process for phenomenological data analysis (Sanders, 2003; Speziale and Carpenter, 2007) was empirically observed in this research. Extended text of individually transcribed tape-recorded interview was read and re-read in order to obtain a general sense of the interviewees' idea or opinion. Small units called the meaning units were then identified and transformed from the language of the interviewees (emic) to the language of the researcher (etic). Formulated meanings were sorted into categories, clusters of themes, and themes via a *dendogram* (Acosta, 2010). Finally, a simulacrum was created to serve as visual representation of the findings. To ensure the trustworthiness and truthfulness of the data reported; being the bedrock of high quality qualitative research, emergent themes were subjected to triangulation and member checking procedures. Multiple analysts were requested to review the formulated themes to check on

selective perceptions and illuminate blind spots in the interpretive analysis (Cohen, 2006). Some of the results were returned to the participants to confirm particular aspects of data, assess adequacy or check for accuracy of information.

FINDINGS

Philippine Schools Overseas (PSO's) Capitalized Strength

Musing, verbalization, and articulation of the respondents reveal three elements of strength considered as capitalized strength the extent to which is that it categorically values the synergistic strength which is borne out of professionalism, directionalsim, and positivism. Chainergistic strength, on the other hand, is achieved through conversation, persuasion, and imitation while interaction, negotiation and collaboration characterize mutualistic strength(Figure 1).

Synergistic Strength

Successful organizations capitalize on their strength in the performance of their daily tasks, in the delivery of quality service, and in the maintenance of competitive advantage in

the global market. In dealing with diversity, Philippine Schools Overseas administrators operate in the context of professionalism, directionism and positivism. Employees act in synergy and magnify this synergistic strength as they deal with organizational concerns related to cross cultural differences. Cognizant of the situation, administrators boldly expressed how teachers practice professionalism:

"Teachers are very professional, so I believe these differences do not interfere too much with the operations of the school." (P3)

"It's not actually affecting to that extent of paralyzing an activity or a day's target because even if they are from different regions, they are able to settle their differences in a professional way." (C4)

Interestingly, PSO employees' conduct at work is guided by a sense of direction provided for by the leaders. Directionism creates a sense of commonality, enables the teachers to see things from a common perspective, and inspires them to work as one powered by a shared vision. Revelations of one PSO principal affirm the positive influence of directionism in this narration:

"After focusing the minds and hearts of the teachers to the direction of the school, regional differences are disregarded as they become eager to express differences in their work. With common direction, they disregard their own differences for the growth and development of the school." (P5)

The above musing describes how school administrators put the minds and hearts of their people in working order geared towards school advancement. Given proper advice, insight, and recommendation, employees express their differences productively in their work.

Completing Philippine Schools Overseas synergistic strength is the spirit of positivism which characterizes the general outlook of PSO employees towards cross cultural differences. As one coordinator conveyed, *"These differences do not actually interfere with the general operation of the school. The effect is more of positive, everything is positive." (C2)* Evidently, optimism focuses PSO employees' attention to the positive things in every situation and drives them to give their best in everything that they do. Relative to this, two administrators mused:

"I don't really see it as a big issue in the school as we try to respect each other." (C3)

"We do our best, in honing the skills of our students. Ruining other's name will not help you in achieving your goals. When you focus on what you have; the utmost development of your human resources, you can be successful." (P1)

It is interesting to note how positivism, directionism, and professionalism magnify the synergistic effect on the team focusing the members on their inner strength and driving them to work together for an enhanced result. Indeed, synergistic strength makes things possible and brings about positive outcome in an organization.

Chainergistic Strength

Reconciling differences and conflicts between and among

regional groups is a tough job for administrators. Likewise is the process of helping team members adapt to a culture totally different from theirs. PSO administrators face this challenge through the schools' chainergistic strength achieved through conversation, persuasion, and imitation.

Conversation can simply be described as an exchange of thoughts and information or a spontaneous communication between two or more people to serve a particular purpose such as to bring across understanding. As averred by one principal, *"Whenever there is an issue, we talk it over. Right there and then, we go to the office and discuss about the misunderstanding." (P3)* At some instance however, conversation does not simply happen. Conversation calls for readiness and openness from both parties specially when there are disagreements as expressed by one principal:

"I always tell them that if they disagree with my observation they can come to me as I am open to suggestions." (P1)

Clarifying issues and bridging the gaps cannot just happen through simple dialogues and discussions. Influencing people, that is, making individuals think and behave differently, calls for a leader's convincing power, the power of persuasion. The musing of one principal illustrates how a PSO administrator persuades. He narrated:

"I made it a point to remind them that we are rowing on the same boat; we have to paddle to the same direction, to set aside indifferences and try to promote the objectives, the vision mission, and goals of the school." (P3)

Relative to the use of conversation skills and persuasion power, is the administrators' commitment to making the law of imitation work positively in the organization. As one principal boldly expressed, *"As the head of the school, I show them what to do and what not to do." (P4)*

This is a declaration of the role leaders play as a prototype for their followers. They are bound to show their people the actions, behavior, and attitudes they expect from them for the reason that consciously or unconsciously, partially or holistically subordinates mimic their leaders. Cognizant of this, one administrator averred:

"I serve as an example. If they can see that I have the willingness to help and share they do the same." (P6)

Indeed, keeping the chainergistic strength of an organization calls for the proper use of conversation, persuasion and imitation. This entails the involvement of both leaders and subordinates being the set of individuals directly responsible for creating and maintaining strong organizational culture and sustainable success.

Mutualistic Strength

Cultural misunderstandings, if not avoided or properly handled, may result to organizational conflict. Hence, Philippine Schools Overseas depend on the institutions' mutualistic strength in addressing concerns which may morph into disagreements. Mutualistic strength characterized by a positive reciprocal relationship between

individuals is achieved through interaction, negotiation, and collaboration as exemplified in the PSO culture.

Undeniably, conflict is a part of organizational life. Hence, PSO administrators promote social interaction as an action response to perceived differences. Statements of two school principals, based on the findings of this study, revealed how they encourage proper expression, sharing, and discussion.

"If there are differences with regard to our thinking, we have to share our thoughts and consider what we really want to deliver." (P2)

"I find time to join in the gatherings of teachers, share jokes with them, and enrich their ideas about their teaching concerns. We discuss and express our ideas." (P5)

There are instances, however, that call for a more formal discussion or dialogue to resolve significant points of differences. The use of negotiation is almost always applicable as described by an administrator. She said, *"Whenever there is misunderstanding, I call the concerns in my office. We talk. I let both parties express themselves, their anger. I let them shout if needed. Then I help them recall their purpose of working abroad. I remind them of their responsibility to respect one another." (P1)* This is to ensure that parties will be able to reach a mutually beneficial outcome by trying to work out a solution to the problem, by facing each other in the presence of a third party or a mediator, a role more often than not played by a leader or an administrator. As one coordinator reiterated:

"I'll have to let them face each other. I'll have to let them talk about the issue. I listen to both sides and help sort things out with them." (C4)

Organizational conflicts in whatever form bring about negative outcome. Though not destructive at all times, conflicts that arise in any organization must be properly addressed. One effective way is by establishing and maintaining positive relationship in the workplace. Aside from clear expectations and open communication, positive workplace relationship can be fostered through teambuilding activities. When asked how this is done in Philippine Schools Overseas, two administrators boldly narrated:

"We equate success to the team's collaborative effort thus everyone is given proper acknowledgement." (P4)

"We always tell people that to be able to come up with something good for the group we have to work as a team. We make everybody feel welcome especially the newcomers." (C2)

The foregoing verbalizations illustrate how PSOs perceive teambuilding and positive work relationship in consonance with collaboration and team spirit. Administrators create a comfortable and fluid working relationship by welcoming and regarding every employee as an important part of the team and by attributing organizational success to the team's collaborative effort. Truly, PSO's mutualistic strength helps one and all in the school system evolve together in a manner that is beneficial to every individual, group or party, thus, creating a closer and stronger organizational relationship through the continuous effort of everyone to interact, negotiate, and collaborate.

DISCUSSION

While it is true that diversity in the workplace produces negative effects, it is likewise a reality that significant differences in the workforce yield positive results. The fascinating verbalizations, articulations, and musings of the school administrators of Philippine Schools Overseas revealed PSO's capitalized strength; an attribute that enables them to face, endure, and rise above the effects of diversity in the school system may it be about the administrators' style of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people; cross-cultural differences manifested in the attitude and behavior of people, communication issues and other cultural implications; the schools commercial value or quality; and its commitment to the production of overall positive impact in the society or corporate social responsibility. These capitalized strengths identified as synergistic, chainergistic and mutualistic are built upon and made visible through the practice of professionalism, directionalism, and positivism; conversation, persuasion, and imitation; and interaction, negotiation, and collaboration respectively.

Synergistic Strength

Synergy comes from the Greek word *synergos* meaning "working together" or literally "co-operating" (Peterson and Somit, 2017). It is the habit of creative cooperation; the collaboration or working together of two or more parts of a system or of diverse or disparate groups of people with varying viewpoints so that the combined effect is greater than the sum of the efforts of the parts for the achievement of a common goal (Schmidt 2006 as cited by Lovell 2012; Covey, 2008 and Rouse, 2006). Synergy is powerful, in the sense that it can create innovative solutions to problems that rarely would be conceived from one person. The power of synergy rests in the reality that when solving problems, groups are often smarter than the smartest people within them (Surowiecki, 2004, cited by Lovell 2012). This synergistic working relationship as cited by Conner (2011) is a powerful phenomenon to witness in action - people working together to consume the fewest resources possible to get the job done, while achieving a higher quantity and quality output than if they worked independently. It must be noted however, that synergy does not grant individuals or work teams immunity from stress. It provides the optimal use of resources necessary to react to stressful situations and cope with change sooner and more effectively.

Philippine Schools Overseas power of synergy called synergistic strength emanates first and foremost from the leaders, teachers and staff's act of professionalism; the way they conduct themselves at work. As explained by Whitehead (2015) for others, professionalism can simply mean an act of conducting oneself with responsibility, integrity, accountability, and excellence which in this sense can be also regarded as a soft skill; the ability to manage soft issues which is a challenge for modern leaders to

master. As a key soft skill, it is how one demonstrates and uses the soft skills of communication: listening, showing empathy, networking, self-confidence, and giving and receiving feedback. This goes without saying that true professionals possess excellent skills, respectable qualities, and good sense of judgment which enable them to perform their job well, promote harmonious relationship, and generate productivity. Hence, professionalism coupled with proper etiquette is a strong force that attracts unity and success in any kind of organization. Gluck (2015) pointed out that businesses without solid, professional leaders who have the ability to inspire others will likely succumb to eventual failure. Thus, leaders must possess strong ethics to go along with their passionate, energetic charisma; professional characteristics that must come together to motivate business teams to achieve success. Similarly, she added, all team members must project an air of professionalism while in the workplace to create a suitable place for all personalities. As findings revealed, PSO teachers' professionalism prevented diversity to get in the way of the school's daily operation. Misunderstanding and disputes are settled in a professional way, hence, establishing professional bonds and relationships and promoting effective school environment. PSO culture of professionalism should therefore be preserved and enhanced as it increases work quality and school productivity.

By and large, employees' behavior and conduct at work is influenced by the nature and direction of the institution. Certainly, all organizations exist for a reason; the so called purpose for organizational existence. This purpose is captured in every company's mission statement, in every school's mission-vision. Identification of organizational mission is the initial step in determining organizational direction which is vital in shaping the institution and in deciding where it must go. Barnat (2014) pointed out that mission and a sense of mission are important to business success because they help organizations to move in a united direction, make consistent decisions and strategies, and harness the skills and commitment of the work force. Kokemuller (2015) for his part expounded that a strategic direction includes the central forces that propel business toward its intended objectives. Vision, mission, strategies, tactics, and core values all contribute to the establishment of a strategic direction. An effective business leader refers to the elements of the strategic direction to generate synergy and positive morale in an organization. Interestingly, principals and coordinators uphold the value of directionality in the growth and development of Philippine Schools Overseas. As part of diversity management, school administrators, after focusing the mind and heart of their teachers to the direction of the school, allow their employees to constructively express their differences in the workplace by executing clearly defined strategies and adhering to the guidance and advice of their respective heads. This implies that when individuals and/or groups share the same desired outcome, their energies and actions can become powerfully focused

on the activities necessary to achieve that result. When a common goal is at the center of committed action, fewer resources are wasted on hidden agendas or activities inconsistent with realizing the goal (Conner, 2011). This likewise, confirms the essentiality of setting direction as a leadership function. Justification offered by Kokemuller (2015), highlighted strategic direction as one of the most important forces in a business as it establishes the structure for internal responsibilities that each department and worker takes on. A clear vision allows each worker to know the company's purpose and objectives. Strategies and tactics allow each worker to understand the part he plays in contributing to the achievement of the vision and objectives. It is tantamount to saying that every individual member of any organization needs to know the company's mission and direction for him to be able to function fully and well as a significant part of a greater whole expected to work together towards the attainment of a common goal. As Luccock in Conner (2011) cited "*No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it.*"

Needless to say, professionalism and directionality are insufficient to generate Philippine Schools Overseas synergistic strength. This power is not easy to develop and maintain considering PSOs diverse culture and the many school related problems causing imbalance in the system. Creating a truly synergistic environment as Deardorff and Williams (2006) opined requires a complex set of environmental and cultural factors as well as certain skills and competencies in the leaders and team members. This is where PSO's spirit of positivism comes in.

Positivism in today's fast paced world is associated with positive attitude. A positive attitude - optimism, expectancy, and enthusiasm according to James (2013) makes everything in business easier. It boosts people up when they are down and supercharges them when they are already "on a roll." It is being proactive (Covey, 2008) which means taking responsibility over one's own life. This connotes that human behavior is a function of his decisions not his condition. Siddiqui (2014) concurred to this as he emphasized the great value and importance of positive attitude in all walks of life as it does not only enrich one's experience of life, but also pave the way for self-development leading one towards attaining desired results.

PSO administrators' positivism enables them to look at the favorable side of an event and see the good in every situation. This is optimism, described by Lightman (2005) as the employment of a system of thinking, feeling and behaving that creates conditions for success; the attitude that allows optimists to recognize and redirect unproductive reactions, to think before acting, and to choose beneficial responses. Optimism equips them with a perspective that fosters personal accountability, innovative thinking, and appropriate risk-taking. Similarly, positive attitude motivates principals and coordinators to accept varying customs and practices and respect personality and individual differences. More so, positivism brings out the best in PSO employees when it comes to honing their students as they teach them the value of healthy

competition and fair play. By being positive they are able to handle their diverse components effectively to create a stronger, more flexible and adaptive schools ready to compete in the world market.

Undoubtedly, living a positive life and spreading positivity can take a lot of time and effort but doing so is nothing compared to the benefits they bring. If a manager holds positive attitude, as justified by Siddiqui (2014), he can not only get things done successfully, but also gain good reputation among his subordinates. It is owing to this approach, that the employees develop sense of satisfaction, zeal, and enthusiasm to put their earnest efforts constantly.

Synergistic strength developed and expressed through professionalism, directionism, and positivism exemplifies diversity's positive effect in an organization. Said influence cannot be underestimated in the context of leadership as it offers a recipe for successful management of diversity. As Covey (2008) emphasized synergy is the highest activity of life through which individuals create new, untapped alternatives - things that didn't yet exist, unleash people's greatest powers and make a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Chainergistic Strength

In similar vein, findings in this study disclosed interconnected actions undertaken by administrators as they deal with conflicts and other challenges brought about by diversity in the workplace. Conversation, persuasion, and imitation make up PSO's chainergistic strength. From the word chainergy; a combination of chain and energy; chainergistic strength is a powerful force earned and exercised through a series of connected links, each representing specific action in response to a given situation.

Communication plays a central role in handling conflict (McGuire, 2009). As stated by Krauss and Morsella (2017), when neighbors feud, lovers quarrel or nations war, the predictable remedy prescribed by the voices of reason is communication. Communications is important in solving conflicts as justified by Hener (2010) because it can increase understanding and reduce the risk of jumping to conclusions or making generalizations. It must be noted though, that while effective communication can mollify a potentially explosive conflict, a bad one can set it off. Poor and negative pattern of communication can lead to greater frustration and is very likely to exacerbate conflicts while good verbal and non-verbal communication characterized by appropriate eye contact and non-threatening actions coupled with a genuine desire to resolve a conflict through quality proposals makes conflict resolution successful (Switzer, 2014; Darrington and Brower 2012; and Krauss and Morsella, 2017).

Among the most effective forms of communication used in resolving conflicts are conversation and persuasion. Conversation is a spontaneous and less formal form of communication people enter into for purposes of pleasant engagement, friendly debate, information exchanges, and social interactions without which individuals and groups

cannot effectively exchange ideas, nor can they develop shared understandings (Hereford, 2015; Mazutis and Slawinski, 2007). Developing shared understanding; however, is not always an easy process in the same manner that conversation is not always pleasant. Certain situations such as delivering a difficult message, diffusing a tense situation, giving tough performance feedback, and or confronting insensitive behavior necessitate challenging conversation. Zigarmi (2010) believes that the fast-paced demands of today's workplace coupled with the extraordinarily intense environment people live in—politically and socially—make it increasingly important for managers to be able to effectively address sensitive subjects in the workplace. For this matter, effectivity must be coupled with urgency. As she explains,

"The longer the situation is left alone, the more both parties look for clues to prove their perceptions, to make themselves right. That only makes the conflict more challenging."

In view of this, PSO administrators' response to issues related to organizational conflict is immediate. Upon identification of sticky situation, an open dialogue is called for and a healthy discussion is facilitated to avoid emotional build up which may result to greater tension. Though disagreements are often resolved, revelations show that there are instances that call for prolonged discussion. Likewise, there are people who require greater influence for a change in attitude or behavior toward a certain issue. Hence, principals and coordinators make use of the power of persuasion.

Similarly, persuasion is a powerful force and a symbolic process of communication which influences daily human life and the society as a whole by convincing people to change their attitudes or behaviors regarding an issue through the transmission of a message in an atmosphere of free choice (Perloff as cited by Cherry 2018). Administrators of Philippine Schools Overseas for example, do this by making everyone realize that as a team they are in the same situation, going through the same risks, experiencing the same conditions, thus, faculty and staff must set aside indifferences and work together towards the realization of the schools mission-vision. Principals and coordinators here, make a conscious attempt to change the outlook, attitudes, beliefs, or behavior of their people through the transmission of some valuable message. Verbalizations in this study show that persuasion is an essential aspect of leadership and a useful mechanism for interpersonal relation; hence, leaders must continuously develop and practice their persuading skills.

Kanter as cited by Zidle (2011) enlisted four influencing and persuading technique leaders can adapt to have their ideas accepted and implemented. First is the power of presence; the act of showing up or simply being there – face-to-face with others. Second is the power of voice. Leaders must bear in mind that speaking up is more than making noise. It is being articulate; that is being able to put ideas into words that get people to listen and see one as a leader. As one moves into leadership, his technical or

business skills aren't enough thus, teaming up and building good relationships inside and outside the organization is important. This is the power of partnering. The last is the power of persistence. Leaders must remember that everything can look like a failure in the middle; nevertheless they should not give up. They should keep at it, make mid-course adjustments and surprise the naysayers. All successful people have dealt with self-doubt, but they keep on going. This goes without saying that a leader's personality, his communication and relational skills as well as his values and principles contribute to the strength of his persuading power thus must likewise be continuously honed for personal and organizational advantage.

The responsibility of leaders, however, is not merely about being present nor being articulate; it is not just about teaming up nor not giving up. A leader is expected to be the embodiment of the values and principles the organization stand for, giving the law of imitation a chance to work in the organization. Imitation as defined by Piana (2004) is the conscious or unconscious behavior of copying others. In the PSO leadership culture, imitation typifies the leader's role to serve as good example to others. School administrators show their subordinates what to do and what not to do for whatever good they see in them, their subordinates follow. This is what Daskal (2014) describes as leadership earned by demonstration of character that is worthy of imitation, emulation and inspiration. As supported by Buffett in Mindrum (2013) people learn to behave morally not just by knowing something but by imitating their superiors' behaviors. By practicing those behaviors they become habits. Over time, the habits turn into traits of excellence, morality, and personal power.

Truly, successful leaders understand the power of the "law of imitation." This law holds that leaders' actions, behaviors, and attitudes are replicated by their followers and that to make it work as a positive force in the organization, leaders must be the change they want to see in their organization (Nasim, 2015). As concluded by Daskal (2014), leadership is not patronage, power and position. It is about the service leaders give to show they care, the trust they bestow to show their integrity, the character they embody. It's more about reaching out instead of climbing up.

Mutualistic Strength

Consequently, people making up an organization build certain relationship as they come in contact with each other daily. Exploring the effects of diversity in the periphery of Philippine Schools Overseas, this study has interestingly revealed the existence of a positive reciprocal relationship between and among PSO employees characterizing the institution's mutualistic strength established through interaction, negotiation, and collaboration. Proper interaction, effective negotiation and creative collaboration prove to be vital in upholding PSOs team spirit and in minimizing inevitable misunderstanding in the school

system.

Organizational contexts such as organizational practices, culture, and leadership, shape patterns of social networks (Baker, 2000; Cross and Parker, 2004) and patterns of social interactions (Dutton, 2003), which, in turn, shape employee attitudes and behaviors. Social interaction as defined by Goffman in Moffitt (2015) is the process by which individuals act and react to those around them. It includes those acts people perform toward each other and the responses they give in return. Effective interaction in the workplace can simply be associated with the act of getting along with co-workers or being liked by others. According to Mickler (2015), however, effective interaction means achieving the intended goal of communication such as to get input, or to persuade a certain decision, or to gain commitment to a specific project - achieving that goal in such a way that does not aggravate people and cause them to shut down. This suggests the important role communication plays in the attainment of company objectives and in the building of corporate image. As emphasized by Ng (2014), successful communication within a workplace can determine whether a business, company, or individual is successful or not. If communication breaks down, things such as efficiency, requirements, and morale easily fail. Philippine Schools Overseas thus, encourage proper interaction by upholding freedom of expression, facilitating healthy exchange of ideas, and conducting open discussions. As the need arises, administrators act as mediators in a more formal discussion intended to resolve an issue or produce a settlement. This is negotiation; a discussion between two or more disputants who are trying to work out a solution to their problem; a process of communication in which the parties aim to "send a message" to the other side and influence each other (Maiese, 2003).

Inevitably, conflicts and disagreements arise in organizations composed of multicultural teams like Philippine Schools Overseas. As expounded by Pirzadeh (2014) they emerge as the differing needs, wants, aims and beliefs of people are brought together. Without negotiation, such conflicts may lead to argument and resentment resulting in one or all of the parties feeling dissatisfied. Hence, compromise or agreement must be reached taking into consideration the principle of fairness, mutual benefits, and good relationship. In order to make both parties happy with the result, negotiation should end in a win / win solution. To achieve the desired outcome, Spiers (2012) suggests five stages in the negotiation process to include preparation, position, discussion, compromise, and the agreement or the deal itself. Preparation may mean conducting research or gathering information and identifying when and where the meeting will take place. Each party starts by clearly and assertively stating a reasonable position without judgement or personal attack. Discussion proceeds in a reasonably amicable manner maintaining the element of flexibility until an agreement acceptable to both parties is reached. Pirzadeh (2014) reiterated that win-win outcome must be the ultimate goal

of every negotiation as this is usually the best result. This goes without saying that there is actually no better position in a negotiation but, there is a best solution. That is, whatever is acceptable to both parties; an agreement made perfectly to serve as employees' guide in their actions and decisions to work for the best interest of everybody thus, promoting respect and harmony in the workplace.

Indeed, a motivating work environment makes a difference in the life of employees. When the workplace promotes a sense of belongingness and creates a feeling of self-worth among employees they perform exceptionally well. According to Huppert (2017), studies show that feeling a sense of belonging in the workplace leads to more than just good vibes and friendships. It allows employees to feel like they can be their authentic selves without fear of different treatment and has a major impact on performance. It promotes involvement and engagement, thus, can serve as a powerful lever for leaders. When used properly according to Baldoni (2017), it elevates the nature of work with a sense of purpose that brings people together for a common cause. Hence, employees as emphasized by Thorpe (2015) should be reminded often that company growth is directly beneficial to them, and that their best work is needed for the said growth. Achievement of the highest level of motivation among employees requires a perception of teamwork and mutual benefits. These principles form the foundation for successful workplaces.

In the real sense, Philippine Schools Overseas are learning environments where motivation and engagement of employees are highly valued by school principals managing the schools. Principals and their team of coordinators in their capacity as school leaders establish and maintain positive relationship in the workplace by equating success to the team's collaborative effort acknowledging the contribution of every employee in the realization of an endeavor and the achievement of a certain goal. They capitalize on collaboration; a practice they find beneficial to both employees and the school. There is collaboration in the workplace as described by Hill (2015) when two or more people or groups work together through idea sharing and thinking to accomplish a common goal. It is simply teamwork taken to a higher level. Collaboration and team work create an environment that allows the collective knowledge, resources and skills of each team member to flourish. It increases profitability as organizations and businesses meet larger goals when collaboration is considered a priority (Brooks, 2015). To expound on the benefits of collaboration, Hill (2015) stated that when companies or departments collaborate, they are able to utilize the strengths and skills of everyone involved. As a result of sharing ideas and working together, they see how others think, negotiate and operate thus; giving employees a better understanding of how the company operates at a higher level. Collaborating in the workplace allows businesses to complete important projects and initiatives in a more efficient manner as they help employees feel good about what they do. Indeed, an organization builds a sense of team and magnifies

mutualistic strength when leaders acknowledge employees' effort and share company 'wins' with them.

CONCLUSION

Indeed the power of phenomenology cannot be underestimated nor neglected. Within this power of phenomenological revelations of the Lebenswelt of the respondents, diversity management is scaled in a different way or in a different perspective. From the mutual articulations and verbalizations of the participants, it was revealed that diversity management in the periphery of Philippine Schools Overseas is regarded as a capitalized strength. These capitalized strengths categorized as synergistic, chainergistic, and mutualistic strengths enable PSO administrators and employees to face, endure, and rise above the effects of diversity in the school system. Employees' professional conduct at work propelled by a strategic direction towards a common vision and powered by a positive spirit and action spell cooperation and success for the organization. Communication and other forms of interaction built on the foundation of trust earned through the application of the law of imitation undoubtedly result to team collaboration that is evident in employees' integrity, responsibility, and overall productivity. The whole idea may sound arbitrary but reality speaks of how Philippine Schools Overseas administrators unite and build their chainergistic strength capitalizing human strength, idealism, and belief displayed in a mutualistic manner.

PSO's capitalized strength resonates unity and oneness of people in the organization. It reverberates within the conscience of every individual claiming that in the test of time, when an organization is succumb to defeat, it must call its people to lock their feet on the ground of commitment, loyalty, and synergy so that their force may be stronger than the iron and fiercer than the pangs of discouragement. The interlocking strength of every member of the organization nurtures work relationship and contributes to the overall success of Philippine Schools Overseas.

Keeping and maintaining an inclusive and affirmative learning environment amidst diversity is a challenge school leaders need to embrace to be able to maintain organizational success and global competitiveness. PSO administrators and employees alike should continue to develop a culture of understanding and collegiality, sustain institutional peace and stability, and uphold their synergistic, chainergistic, and mutualistic strength to counteract the negative effect of diversity. All Philippine Schools Overseas Administrators should take a proactive move to discover, develop and practice their very own proverbs leadership skills in diversity management to dwell not only on cross-cultural differences but also consider cross-cultural similarities that unite people in the performance of their multi-faceted roles as managers of a school system composed of people having individual and cultural differences.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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