Phronetic Leadership Contextualized in Higher Education: The Case of Ifugao State University, Philippines

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Abstract

Wise, or phronetic leadership (PL), which is embedded in the socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (SECI) model, contributes greatly to the achievement of organizational goals. This case study contextualized PL at Ifugao State University (IFSU) and aimed to create a PL framework for Administrative Council (ADCO) officials and student leaders. The main participants were the ADCO members of IFSU who traveled from Ifugao to Central Luzon State University (CLSU). The ADCO members of CLSU served as counterparts to the ADCO officials of IFSU for the creation of a university-wide PL framework. For the students' PL framework, the participants consisted of student leaders, advisers, and the Department of Student Services and Development (DSSD) director. Focused group discussions and interviews were undertaken to collect data. The data gathered were analyzed, explained, translated, and processed. As a result, a PL framework for the administrative council members was created. The framework illustrates how the SECI model guides university officials in carrying out their responsibilities. A PL framework for student leaders that describes how the students can successfully apply the SECI model was also crafted. The findings show that PL is applicable in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Phronesis, practical leaders, SECI model, tacit and explicit knowledge

Article history: Received 7 March 2024, Revised 9 October 2024, Accepted 6 November 2024

1. Introduction

The influence of educational leadership is most profound when it directly addresses the learning requirements of students and aligns with desired educational outcomes. Leaders in higher education undertake various roles and responsibilities [1]. Working with others is the very essence of leadership [2]. The servant leadership approach adopted can result in employee satisfaction within academic settings, hence, encouragement from leaders correlates with enhanced performance and increased employee retention [3]. The study and implementation of leadership styles play a significant role in shaping the success of schools. The research concludes that when educational leadership fails, the targets set for the organization will likely fail [4].

The application of indigenous phronetic leadership (PL) was exemplified in the Philippines by Elorde P. Anniban. His practice of PL spearheaded transformative reforms in collaboration with the government of Santa Marcela in the Province of Apayao. A pivotal outcome of this leadership approach was the construction of a dam, stemming from innovative ideas generated during informal discussions with local farmers. These dialogues proved instrumental in addressing issues such as low rice production and poverty within the municipality [5]. Building upon groundwork in PL, the same researcher inquiry extended to contextualize application at Ifugao State University (IFSU), a

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government higher education institution in the Philippines.

It is recommended that higher education researchers explore leadership management in education from the perspective of phronesis [6]. IFSU lacked studies on PL and a guiding PL framework for its implementation when the study was conducted. Recognizing the significance of investigating PL, this research endeavor has the potential to establish this framework and offer further practical implications for IFSU. Moreover, the insights gleaned from this study could be applied across other State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), enhancing leadership practices within the broader educational landscape.

Leaders in higher education are confronted with a diverse array of problems that demand a new breed of leaders who can explore the challenges and envision innovative solutions toward transformative change. Developing leaders is important, but those participating in leadership development programs are usually existing leaders and new candidates. Not all leadership programs include mentoring and coaching to intensify leadership development [7]. Organizations must consider the scenarios where leaders will perform their roles and responsibilities. This will enable them to plan appropriate strategies and techniques for leadership development, evaluation, and promotion [8]. Higher education leaders also face challenges and issues involving the ability to respond to change, strategic leadership, flexibility, creativity, managing resources, and good working relationships [9]. This is similar to Estonia and Finland, where similar concerns were identified among school leaders, such as professional development, curriculum alignment, and community engagement [10].

Phronesis, or practical wisdom, which is drawn from Aristotle's virtue ethics, is vital in leadership. It points out the dual nature of humanity, recognizing that individuals possess both rational and irrational tendencies [11]. The revival of phronesis and moral education has positioned them at the forefront contemporary educational research [12]. Phronetic Leaders have six abilities [13]: 1. Wise leaders possess the ability to discern goodness, signifying that phronetic leaders consistently prioritize actions aligned with ethical principles, moral discernment, and a

commitment to excellence while maintaining a visionary outlook. Practicing standards and establishing trust in leadership improves the performance and satisfaction of employees [14]. Leaders must simplify information and enable group members to understand the vision and plans of the organization [15]. Promoting ownership of the vision within the academe is very significant [16]. 2. Wise leaders can grasp the essence. This entails practical wisdom that enables leaders to anticipate future scenarios, envision the broader context, and determine strategies to achieve the organizational vision. 3. Wise leaders cultivate shared contexts. This is made possible by facilitating opportunities for executives, managers, and colleagues to learn collaboratively, starting from interactions in their spaces or "ba." For leaders to better relate with others, it is fundamental for them to realize that leading is a continuous iourney that requires self-reflection. They must realize how one's behavior affects others while committing positive change [17]. 4. Wise leaders communicate the essence in a manner where the majority if not all of the stakeholders can understand the message. They actively engage in conversations with a diverse range of individuals, not just a select few, demonstrating intense commitment to effective communication. The communication skills of leaders are essential for inspiring employees to find fulfillment in their work while simultaneously driving toward organizational objectives [18]. 5. Wise leaders exercise political power by unifying people and motivating them into action. They understand not only the conditions but also the thoughts and emotions of others as they exercise political judgment. They are capable of navigating conflicts adeptly and excel in negotiating resolutions that benefit all parties involved. 6. Wise leaders cultivate practical wisdom by empowering and nurturing the development of other leaders. Distributed phronesis through coaching or mentorship and apprenticeship will empower institutions and communities to maintain responsiveness in all situations. The principles of PL are integrated into the socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (SECI) model, enhancing organizational learning and adaptability.

There are two types of knowledge: tacit and

explicit [19]. Tacit knowledge encompasses personal experiences and observations that defy quantification due to their context-specific nature. Tacit knowledge is analog, in contrast to explicit knowledge which leans towards digitization and digitalization. However, both and tacit explicit knowledge remain underutilized. Consequently, leaders strongly urged to maximize the generation and open sharing of ideas, while utilizing all types of knowledge to create environments both healthy and stakeholder-centered [20].

Patterns in creating organizational knowledge through the SECI model [21] have been observed. The initial phase, known as socialization or the "Originating Ba," involves the transfer of tacit knowledge from one individual to another. At this stage, knowledge remains implicit, as individuals engage in observations, learn from mentors and peers, and share their thoughts, experiences, and emotions.

The second phase is known as externalization or the "Interacting Ba," which denotes movement from tacit to explicit knowledge. It comprises choosing people with

the requisite knowledge and expertise for a particular program or project team. The formulation of committee members and task forces is necessary in executing plans. Through meetings, dialogues, and interactions, tacit ideas are articulated and transformed into explicit ones.

The third phase is the "Cyber Ba," or the combination phase. Explicit ideas formed in the interacting "Ba" are combined with existing knowledge and skills with the use of information technology.

The fourth phase is internalization, or the "Exercising Ba," which represents the translation of explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge. This stage involves training programs and workshops aimed at continuous self-improvement. The program or project derived from previous stages is put into practice, typically on-site. The four phases must be carried out to achieve successful knowledge creation and conversion within and across the organization. The SECI model is illustrated in Figure 1.

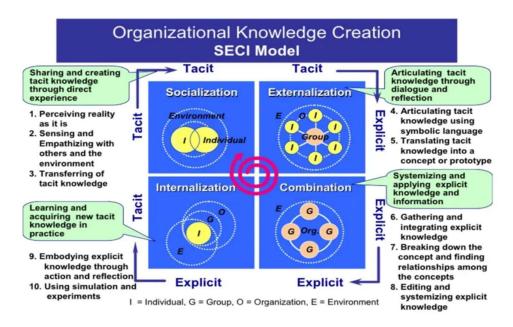


Figure 1. The SECI Model (Nonaka, 2010)

The study aimed at contextualizing PL at IFSU. It specifically sought to create a PL framework for middle and top management, or the

Administrative Council (ADCO) leaders of the university and a PL framework for student leaders.

2. Methodology

The research herein comprises a qualitative case study conducted at IFSU. Established in 1920, IFSU is a government university located in Ifugao, Philippines, and is known worldwide. In total, there are six campuses with more than 11, 000 students and 800 employees. The leadership of IFSU is composed of ADCO officials. To implement this effort, IFSU partnered with another SUC, Central Luzon State University (CLSU). A tertiary-level science institution located in Nueva Ecija, CLSU is a shining example of a university dedicated to excellence. The partnership was implemented because the ADCO members of this partner SUC play an enormous role in the co-creation of knowledge and ideas concerning how ADCO officials carry out leadership functions.

Focused group discussions (FGD) and interviews were carried out with participants, all of whom responded favorably to letters of invitation. The first group of participants was composed of 79 student leaders, six student leader advisers, and the Director for Student Services and Development. The second group included 62 IFSU school officials and 28 CLSU administrators. Each group had a separate schedule for the FGDs and workshops. The two groups were subdivided into smaller groups during the guided discussions. Stakeholderdriven data were carefully recorded verbatim, manually coded, and read over and over to ensure accuracy. Keywords and phrases were color-coded and categorized. When the themes were identified, comparative analysis and evaluation of the findings were undertaken [22]. Triangulation was utilized to validate the information gathered through the FGDs and interviews. Informed by the data, the preliminary framework was presented to the participants for feedback. This interactive process was crucial as it ensured that the framework resonated with the aspirations of the leaders. The feedback of the participants was thus incorporated. In addition, participants were asked to explain their responses, and they were ultimately shown the output of the finalized discussions and interviews. Thematic analysis was carried out to analyze the data.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. PL framework for ADCO leaders at IFSU.

The ideas shared by the ADCO officials of both IFSU and CLSU and the researcher during the FGDs and interviews were used to develop a framework following the SECI model (Figure 2).

The PL leadership approach is closely aligned with Nonaka's SECI model where informal discussions take place within designated spaces known as "Ba" [23]. The approaches were founded on practical wisdom rather than the standards of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education are more effective in Hull College, England [24].

The researcher, trained and skilled in PL, served as the facilitator in eliciting the experiences, perceptions, opinions, knowledge, and recommendations from the participants. The data derived from the FGDs were enriched through the interviews. Coding was utilized to safeguard the confidentiality of the interviewed ADCO member participants. The first participant was designated ADCO 1 or A1, with each subsequent participant increasing in number.

Socialization

When asked how the ADCO officials observe or describe the socialization phase, A1 responded, "The ADCO and other stakeholders talk together informally in their offices, canteen, while walking or riding together, and anywhere they meet." Additionally, A2 expressed, "The designated officials also share how they feel, their experiences, and how they handle events and frustrations." A3 made it clear that "involving others and showing respect for their colleagues must be given careful attention by the ADCO officials."

Externalization

Regarding externalization, A1 noted, "What was articulated during the informal conversations should not be ignored but presented in meetings for more stakeholders to be involved." Participant A2 added, "During meetings, ADCO members are encouraged to speak their minds, ask questions to clarify matters, and encourage critical thinking."

Finally, participant A3 expressed that "the use of data in decision-making is important."

Combination

Participant A1's insight regarding the combination phase is for the ADCO members to "make plans as a team or family." According

to Participant A2, while the ADCO works as a group, "they have to think of new ways on how to improve systems and processes." Participant A3 added, "With the rapid changes brought about by technology including artificial intelligence, these disruptions are to be used properly."

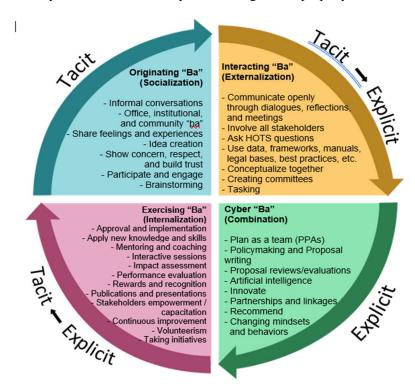


Figure 2. Phronetic Leadership framework for ADCO officials

Internalization

The first ADCO participant explained that the internalization phase is critical. According to A1, "It is imperative that plans be implemented and monitored. Many plans and projects fail because there is a lack of monitoring and evaluation thus this part mustn't be missed." A2 voiced, "Performance assessment is an integral part of any organization or project and those who excel in their performances deserve to be recognized and rewarded." A3 stated, "Human resources or those implementing the plans should be continuously empowered and capacitated. The cycle of empowerment is a nonstop process."

The PL framework for ADCO members presented in Figure 2 was derived from the data gathered. It describes how the SECI Model could be applied by the ADCO in IFSU or even

other SUCs if applicable. In the Socialization phase, the ADCO officials interact with their officemates, colleagues, parents, students, industry partners, and other stakeholders in their "ba" spaces. Each participant actively contributes to the conversation, building mutual respect, understanding, openness, and trust among one another.

The insights shared by stakeholders were translated into explicit ideas during the externalization phase through dialogues, reflections, and meetings. The ADCO takes proactive steps on administrative matters and forwards the same recommendations to the Board of Regents (BOR). Regular meetings are conducted, active participation, and task forces and committees are created. Additionally, relevant data, legal foundations, frameworks, and existing information serve as valuable

references for the conceptualization of proposals or programs and projects.

The ADCO and stakeholders collaboratively plan, revise, and use technology and artificial intelligence, craft policies, and guidelines, and recommend them for appropriate action to the BOR. Establishing linkages and partnerships with local and international communities is essential for realizing plans.

In the internalization phase, Programs, and Activities (PPAs) are implemented, applying newly acquired knowledge and skills. Regular performance evaluations, capacitation, and monitoring and evaluation are conducted. Volunteerism and taking initiative are imperative in serving the stakeholders.

3.2. PL Framework for Student Leaders

Leadership among students is a critical skill both personal and professional achievements. At both the University of Alabama and Hull College in England, they have practiced PL. The University of Alabama describes PL as ethical leadership [25]. At IFSU, the PL framework for student leaders was formulated based on the data and from the analysis drawn through FGDs and interviews from the student leaders, advisers, and the director of the Department of Student Services and Development (DSSD). Students interviewed were coded as S1, S2, S3, and S4.

Socialization

S1 described this phase as "the time for students to say hello and start communicating their ideas with their friends or classmates." Moreover, S2 feels that socialization enables students to visit school officials as a group. S3 mentions that socialization allows leaders to show respect to one another "Recognizing God's presence through prayers is a good way of starting any conversation, whether informal or formal" (S4). According to the participants they usually share their "ba" sessions in the corridors, canteen, kiosks, churches, or other communal spaces.

Externalization

Information concerning externalization includes S1 feeling the importance of meetings, while dialogues are important for S2, and involving others is important for S3. S4

mentioned, "Consultations with advisers or school officials will help them improve their plans or projects." S3 noted, "It is crucially important to use student manuals or memoranda from authorities as bases of actions and plans." In addition, S1 continued by saying that in the externalization phase, "Working together in teams will be very helpful."

Combination

When the student leaders were asked how they describe the combination phase, S1 expressed that they come together to make plans. S2 exclaimed the importance of "Organizing the plans or activities by indicating them through a calendar." S3 said, "We prepare proposals and package them, and S4 mentioned that they seek funding, or raise funds to finance projects (S4).

Internalization

According to S1, the participant verbalized that "Any plans or projects cannot be implemented without the approval of concerned university officials therefore, we can only implement something provided it is approved." "During the implementation, there will always be coordination between those in charge and other offices" (S2). "If there are enough funds, student organizations can sponsor projects. "It is still necessary to seek the approval of authorities before the implementation of any plan" (S3). "We are students, and I strongly support the spirit of volunteerism because we can always share our time and talents" (S4).

Grounded on the data gathered, the PL framework for student leaders was created. During the socialization phase, student leaders actively engage with various stakeholders resulting in networking, relationship-building, and collaboration. In the "ba" spaces, they engage in open and empathetic discussions, sharing ideas and experiences on diverse topics. Ideas are exchanged during visits, courtesy calls, and interviews. Praying is a fundamental mode of conversation with the Creator and it is also in their spiritual formation activities they deliberate on ideas collectively. Through these interactions, mutual respect and trust are built among students.

The tacit ideas shared by student leaders undergo refinement into explicit concepts through meetings and dialogues with stakeholders. As young leaders, seeking

guidance and advice from advisers, deans, and other stakeholders is imperative. Referring to legal documents or policies and guidelines will likewise improve their decisions and actions. Continuous coordination and working by teams are ways of helping leaders to address conflicts, and improve performance.

Once student leaders have reached a consensus on projects or activities, they start to plan together and decide on their calendar of activities in the combination phase. It is a must for them to demonstrate innovation in developing policies, guidelines, and activity proposals that effectively address student needs. Student leaders are entrusted with managing financial resources allocated to them

and sourcing out funds for the benefit of students. Adapting to changes and having a positive mindset as students will help them execute their plans and achieve their end goals.

In the internalization phase, student leaders execute the plans, projects, or proposals they have advocated for. To ensure successful implementation, they must actively monitor and evaluate these initiatives, maintaining ongoing coordination with school officials and relevant authorities. Student leaders may choose to sponsor student or community activities in alignment with their plans. They may also publish their work to disseminate their achievements and integrate volunteerism as a regular activity.

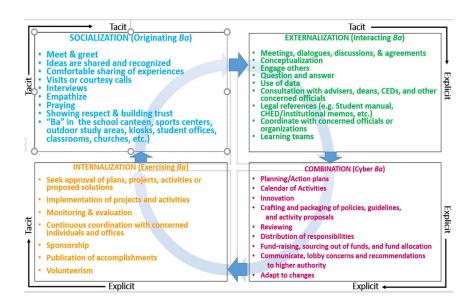


Figure 3. Phronetic Leadership Framework for Student Leaders

4. Conclusion

The application of phronesis in leadership, decision-making, and adherence to ethical standards has significantly contributed to the improvement of educational performance and outcomes. Practical or wise leaders in higher education recognize the significance of tacit explicit knowledge. Co-creating knowledge begins with valuing incorporating ideas from various sources, rather than solely relying on the leader's perspective. Combining the insights and vast information from academic and non-academic stakeholders forwards the formation of new organizational knowledge. The PL frameworks for key officials, student leaders, and instruction were developed, through the tacit ideas of the university students, officials, faculty representatives, experts, colleagues, and the researcher.

The practice of PL in higher education benefits both students and employees by instilling sound judgment, upholding ethical standards, mobilizing people to take initiative, translating ideas into action, and encouraging others toward continuous improvement. By cultivating practical wisdom in students, PL

equips them with the skills necessary to excel academically and thrive in their future careers. Likewise, employees are inspired and take initiative in the performance of their responsibilities. All these contribute to the attainment of the organization's vision, mission, goals, and objectives. It is likewise expected that IFSU and other HEIs practicing PL through the SECI model will be exemplars of excellence as they prioritize human-centric approaches and fulfill their mandated functions.

For future research, it is recommended that investigations look into how or to what extent PL is being practiced in organizations in addition to other topics related to PL.

Acknowledgments

I sincerely express my deep gratitude to the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), Ifugao State University (IFSU), Central Luzon State University (CLSU), ADCO members of IFSU and CLSU, IFSU student leaders, Dr. Julieta Fulgado, and my family. I am passionately advancing phronetic leadership for organizational success and continuous improvement.

Funding

This research was funded by the Ifugao State University, Philippines.

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