Ready or Not: The Experiences of Novice Academic Heads in School Leadership

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Abstract. The decision to accept a leadership role will always require reflection and discernment. The power, authority, privileges, and benefits attached to it are enticing, but the duties and responsibilities make a person step back and think about it. When no one else is qualified to lead, tenure and performance become the bases of appointment. Despite lacking the required credentials, particularly educational qualifications, one receives the promotion as academic head because he/she is the most senior among the teachers. This study aims to explore and find out the experiences of novice academic heads in leading and managing their teachers. It identified the challenges and struggles, including their learning experiences and realizations as new academic heads. Using the phenomenological method, seven new learning area heads (less than two years of experience) from a private sectarian school in the National Capital Region, Philippines were observed for six months and interviewed separately. The study found out that the novice academic heads considered paperwork, culture, processes and procedures, expectations of superiors, and supervision of teacher as primary challenges. To handle these challenges, they regularly consulted their supervisors and their former academic leaders mentored some of them. They also engaged themselves in professional and personal development to enhance their leadership competence. Having a succession plan will integrate the induction, leadership, and mentoring programs for future academic heads.

Keywords: educational leadership; novice academic heads; leadership training; readiness of academic heads

1. Introduction

"The greatest leaders are the reluctant ones who lead because they realize that no one else seems willing to step up." These words of Orrin Woodward, a leadership expert, and speaker, and a successful entrepreneur, speak about the truth in taking leadership roles. Some rank-and-file employees will undoubtedly doubt their capability to lead a group of people and an organization. There are reluctant leaders in different organizations either in business or education. These are individuals who can lead, but they choose not to lead because they do not see themselves in a leadership situation. In most cases, the decision to lead is in their subconscious (Winston, 2017).

The decision to accept a leadership role will always require reflection and discernment. The power, authority, privileges, and benefits attached to it are enticing but the duties and responsibilities make a person step back and think about it. When no one else is qualified to lead, tenure and performance become the bases of promotion. Despite lacking the required credentials, particularly educational qualifications, one gets the promotion because he/she is the most senior among the teachers. In most cases, that leaves him/her with no other choice but to accept the offer. Some are even being forced to take leadership responsibilities because there are no other qualified candidates. Seniority is a traditional basis of appointment because it seems that most tenured may be the best choice.

Schools can be vulnerable to this, particularly the private schools due to the exodus of teachers to public schools where career opportunities and salaries are better. Commissioner for Higher Education (CHED) Chairman De Vera underscored this point and said that one of the issues encountered by private colleges and universities today is the migration of their excellent faculty to state colleges and universities. The reason is the inability to pay them higher salaries. In the last two years, this had been a serious concern as reported to CHED. The state colleges and universities have created new faculty items, and the Department of Education (DepEd) opened teacher items since the implementation of K-12. Because of this, many teachers are transferring to government educational institutions. There is a significant number of teachers who have transferred, and are moving to the public schools (Manila Bulletin, 2018).

DepEd Secretary Briones also pointed out the migration of private school students and teachers to the public schools. Initially, the phenomenon was only of students due to various reasons. Lately, private school teachers are transferring to public schools because of higher salaries and other benefits (Manila Bulletin, 2018). With this reality, tenured teachers in private schools decrease due to retirement and preference for a better opportunity in other educational institutions. A significant number of new teachers are hired yearly, including those who have not taken the licensure examination for teachers. When few tenured teachers are left, the bench for leadership candidates become shallow. There will be few or no other candidates for the supervisory position except the most senior. The most senior may have been with the school for only three or four years, but he/she may receive an offer to become an academic leader. Some may have been with the

school for ten years but never had the chance to take leadership roles. Just to fill the vacancy, he/she will be forced to accept the appointment despite lacking the needed qualifications, particularly educational qualifications, and experience. In those few years as a faculty member in the institution, it is doubtful that he/she was prepared for future leadership roles. When the term of office of the current academic heads ended, only a few have the required tenure and educational qualifications. Worst, there were no qualified teachers who can be the next academic head. In school year 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, there were nine teachers appointed as academic heads. Two are former academic heads while seven are novice academic heads. Having nine newly academic heads in the high school department in the last two years can be considered an unusual reality most especially since there was no change in the higher leadership.

With the given circumstances, the study aims to explore and find out the experiences of novice academic heads in leading and managing their teachers. It identified the challenges and struggles, including their learning experiences and realizations as new academic heads. From the data gathered, it will provide a basis for school administration in creating a program that will prepare and develop teachers for leadership roles in the future.

The following are the research questions for this study :
1. What are the challenges that novice academic heads encountered in leading the teachers?
2. How did the novice academic heads handle the leadership challenges and responsibilities?
3. What kind of preparation and training on leadership that novice academic heads need?

2. Literature Review

Challenges of Novice Academic Heads
After obtaining their license to teach, teachers set their sight on a career in education and may end becoming an educational leader. Transitioning from classroom teaching to school leadership tasks is usually not an easy process. Though many, particularly those who are not in the field of education will think that it is a natural progression for teachers to become academic leaders, researches show that novice academic heads face many challenges in the transition. Classroom teaching and school leadership are two different but complementary domains in education. A classroom teacher who is offered a leadership role may not immediately accept the appointment due to various reasons.

Being an unattractive job, teachers hesitate to take school leadership roles. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries are facing a less number of applications for principal positions. There are countries finding difficulty in having suitable candidates. The number of applicants has considerably declined over the years. Researches indicate that negative images attached to the position, particularly overburdened roles, working conditions,

inadequate salaries, and rewards, including lack of preparation and training are the top reasons for becoming uninterested to apply. In several countries, assistant principals and teachers don't show interest to a higher leadership position due to small additional reward that is not commensurate with the workload and duties. The younger generation of school leaders show a lack of interest in the principalship because of increased stress and work overload (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2011).

Promotion to leadership positions are always accompanied by challenges, including issues. A novice educational leader will encounter challenges in the transition. Any transition may be smooth or challenging that can be attributed to different factors. The factors that contributed to difficult transitions included strained interpersonal relations, poor plant maintenance, and lack of teacher support and buy-in. Factors contributing to smooth transitions included cooperative staff, working systems already in place at the schools, and familiarity with the system. The new principals reported several challenges while in their new roles, ranging from teacher lateness to student misbehavior. However, the two challenges that emerged as most significant were interpersonal relations and plant maintenance. The other relatively significant challenge reported was a lack of teacher buy-in for the vision of the respective principals (Van Jaarsveld, Mentz & Challens, 2015).

Another study revealed another challenge, particularly in rural district schools which is on culture. Some participants struggled with the specific context of the rural school. This challenge entails more preparation since many participants had no experience in a rural setting. Unaware of the culture and characteristics of the rural school, including stakeholders who have a sense of ownership in the school, novice principals had to contend with the community. Such challenges could have been avoided if they have a clearer understanding of rural education (Edwards, 2016). In the Philippines, personal challenges are encountered by novice school heads who are members of religious congregations. They are appointed as principals out of obedience from their superiors even without knowledge and experience in managing schools. During their three-year term, they enroll in graduate school for a degree in educational leadership to equip themselves with theories (De Guzman, 2007). As they juggle school leadership tasks and graduate studies, many are not able to complete their master's degree. There is pressure to qualify themselves since they lacked the required educational qualifications particularly a master's degree. Due to the duties and responsibilities of being a school head, they are not able to earn the degree. In a teacher university that offers educational leadership and management in the graduate school, the number of graduates continue to be few. It was concluded that graduate students need more commitment and grit to complete their graduate studies (Zulieta, Sudarsana, Arrieta & Ancho, 2020). In another study, it showed how principals face the gaps between theory, policy, and practice but there are few kinds of research conducted on these dynamics. Ethical leadership is emphasized in leadership training in the Philippines due to the presence of corruption and nepotism in its culture. The preparation for the challenges that principals will face should include sensitivity to the culture (Sutherland & Brooks, 2013).

A study on novice rural principals revealed that eight themes emerged on the challenges they encountered namely supervision of staff, sense of isolation, work-life balance, the role of the superintendent, changing school boards, legacy of the predecessor, demands of the community, and board succession planning. Five of the eight themes are already found in the literature related to this study. These eight themes all impacted on the novice rural principals and their sense of success or failure in those critical first two years of the principalship. To the novice principals, no challenge was considered a big obstacle. However, when multiple challenges pile up, they are overwhelmed by the volume of work. Some participants felt supported because of the mentors and effective networking. Unfortunately, others felt that they were alone in dealing with the demands of their new responsibility (Edwards, 2016). Another study found out that novice principals were "shocked" as they transitioned into their new roles. The sense of bigger responsibility was tremendous and contributed to the other problems in being a principal namely task volume, diversity, and unpredictability. The "shock" and conditions to the transition either lessened or made the level of practice problems they faced (Spillane & Lee, 2013).

Despite the challenges they encountered, novice academic heads found ways to handle the issues. A study revealed that school headteachers experienced loneliness and isolation, particularly during the first month of their appointment. However, they managed their isolation through various approaches like having informal discussions with teachers to get to know them more. Moreover, the academic heads shared experiences and created an open environment for interaction with their teachers (Tahir, Thakib, Hamzah, Said & Musah, 2016).

The challenges encountered by novice academic leaders appear to be very overwhelming and difficult, but manageable if the proper preparations are provided. Researches revealed that novice academic leaders suggested programs that will assist future academic administrators before assuming the new role.

Preparing for the Leadership Challenge
School leadership is a challenging and demanding academic work that requires serious preparation. Novice and experienced academic leaders identified the challenges, and proposed programs to address them. To prepare for these challenges, become more confident in taking the new task, leadership training should be provided to novice academic leaders. Getting the right people for the principalship matters, including how they are trained for the position. New principals had acknowledged their lack of formal preparation but coped through in-service training and learnings from experience. Due to minimal preparation they received, the more they became apprehensive in assuming the new role (Thody, Papanaoum, Johansson & Pashiardis, 2007).

Quality school leadership is what every educational institution desire, particularly as it looks forward to the challenges of leadership. It is essential for school improvement as the leadership workforce is aging and close to retirement. With this concern, many schools in different countries provide leadership training for novice academic leaders, but they are optional. Such programs will assist in

shaping initial school leadership practices and create networks where leaders can share their concerns. Moreover, it should provide an understanding and balance between theoretical and practical knowledge, including self-study (Schleicher, 2012).

Based on experience, new principals are left to sink or swim in their new tasks. In most cases, they are presumed to be prepared to have completed their graduate studies or a university training program. They get a few directions, insincere encouragement, or sporadic practical tip. However, this kind of attitude is changing because of the realization of having a shortage of high-quality school leaders. In recruiting promising school leaders, nurturing comes after their recruitment (Lashway, 2003).

The area that some participants struggled with and believed more preparation should be done was the specific context of the rural school. Many participants had no experience in a rural setting, either as a student themselves or as a teacher. They were unaware of the unique culture and characteristics of the rural school, including the sense of ownership parents, had towards the school, the role and status long-serving staff members had in the school and with the parents, and the seemingly blurred line between school and community. The mistakes or challenges some of the participants faced could have been avoided with a more detailed understanding of rural education (Edwards, 2016).

Whether in an urban or rural area, the dynamics of school leadership change. School leadership continues to evolve. The idea of growing school leadership entails that tasks in the school, including the qualities required to do them effectively are clear and understood. In every school, there is a variety of level of leadership that involves different degrees of complexity and accountability. Learning area head, discipline coordinator, headteacher, and assistant principal are some of the different levels of school leadership (West-Burnham, 2004). Adapting to the dynamics of school leadership today, academic heads suggested solutions to the challenges they encountered to prepare future academic leaders in handling similar issues. Four major solutions are recommended to overcome isolation in the leadership task namely continuous discussions with other teachers, attitude change among novice headteachers, establishing a network with other academic heads, and strengthening teamwork. The ability to adapt oneself to their fellow teachers will assist in the performance of one's duties. Notably, communication with the other members of the school community, particularly the academic heads, teachers, and non-teaching is important to ensure the effective dissemination of information. Through formal and informal meetings, novice academic heads can interact, exchange ideas, give comments, and recommendations leading to the development of the school community (Tahir, Thakib, Hamzah, Said & Musah, 2016).

Researches on leadership succession and preparation often mention the importance of mentorship. Every incoming academic leader needs mentorship from senior academic heads, particularly in the beginning years. They need support and guidance from experienced academic leaders, specifically in

developing required skills like effective communication with teachers, time management, and supervision of instruction to become effective academic leaders. Hence, preparing new academic leaders like principals becomes an integral component of effective school systems. Effective and well-prepared mentoring programs, which provide an appropriate match between mentors and mentees, are essential to assist new principals, and other academic heads (Gumus 2019).

It cannot be assumed that newly appointed academic leaders or principals have all the skills and competencies to lead their schools successfully. The job is considered lonely and intimidating, but it can be resolved through an effective mentoring program. Having competent and experienced mentors will guide the new academic heads employing structured, reflective activities and experiences. (Holloway, 2004). This is evident when new headteachers validated that mentoring had enhanced significantly their professional values as middle school managers. Through this, a culture of knowledge sharing was born that gave them more confidence and improved their practical knowledge on educational leadership (Tahir, Haruzuan, Said, Daud, Vazhathodi & Khan, 2015).

The provision of effective mentoring programs is supported by the study of the Southern Regional Education Board in Atlanta, USA. It was explained that mentoring programs give initial credentialing to aspiring principals by asking them to demonstrate mastery of competencies before credible mentors. However, reality shows that many new academic leaders are left to "learn on the job." They plan and design programs without the guidance of their successful peers. Considering the increasing amount of accountability, the training for principals or any academic leader should not be a "sink-or-swim" approach. Preparing future or new academic leaders is not about cutting corners, but a tedious process to enable them to grow. Quality school leaders result in quality schools. They work hard to get the job done and lead the school to its vision. Poorly prepared school leaders remain in the system and hinder the growth of the school. Hence, the mentoring program must be a rigorous and challenging internship supervised by experts in educational leadership (Board, S. R. E. 2009).

Aside from mentorship, senior and novice school leaders propose an induction program for newly appointed academic heads. Different forms of induction programs are provided by the United States, Australia, Hungary, and Denmark to ensure the readiness of the incoming academic leaders. Only 18% of academic leaders felt prepared when they assumed office.

Succession Planning
In the past, succession planning was not given much attention for leaders just looked for a replacement to vacant supervisory positions. With the emerging discussions, researches, and theories on leadership, succession planning started to gain ground and taken seriously by organizational leaders. Seeing its value, it is introduced as a significant plan that will impact leadership sustainability and realization of the vision of the organization. With the traditional perception that leaders will stay in power until they retire beginning to diminish rapidly, the term

of office for leadership positions is being observed. It is now becoming part of the organizational culture where change is expected and a new set of leaders will come.

One of the specific practices that organizations and management development professionals must execute to effectively build their leadership pipeline is to establish a supportive organizational culture through active CEO and senior management participation in development programs and performance appraisal and reward systems that reinforce managerial engagement (Groves, 2007). Succession management requires substantial ongoing organizational commitment across all levels of the business implementation. A key component for effectiveness was identified as having support for the process not only at the highest levels but also down the line. In particular, senior management must be prepared to provide support and development opportunities for staff identified as high potential (Taylor & McGraw, 2004). For advancement leaders to think strategically about career pathing and succession planning, they must start by building the base of internal talent. Developing a culture within an advancement division that nurtures the individual contributor as much as it values future managers is a critical step. If there is a culture of leadership development, employees may opt to commit and reciprocate the organization (Croteau & Wolk, 2010).

From these researches, it suggests that incoming academic leaders will face various challenges, but they can be handled given the essential preparation and training. The development of the educational institution mainly depends on the quality of school leaders. Therefore, the competence and relational skills of academic leaders should be developed through the leadership preparation programs of the school.

3. Methodology
The method used in this study is phenomenology. It is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). In the last two years, seven new learning area heads from a private sectarian school in the National Capital Region, Philippines were observed for six months and interviewed separately. Three have been with the school for three or four years while four for at least eight years. The researchers were participant- observers and one of them is a member of the management team. The participants are not under the supervision of the researchers.

Experts in educational management and school administrators validate the research questions. The following items were asked: (1) When the appointment as a learning area head was offered to you, did you immediately accept it? Why? (2) Were you prepared to be the learning area head when you were appointed? Why? (3) What were the challenges that you encountered in your first year as an academic head? How did you manage or handle the challenges? (4) Based on your

experience, what preparation and training should be given to the new learning heads before and after their appointment?

Coding was used to analyze the data were analyzed by coding. In coding, the researcher organizes data collected into segments and assigns a word or phrase to them as labels (Creswell, 2014). Before the study, the researchers sought permission from the school administrators and the participants. The participation of the seven new learning area heads was voluntary, and their responses will not affect their status or performance. No name would be mentioned including the school where the study was conducted.

4. Results and Discussion

If teaching entails a four-year college education, including pre-service training, it is also important that teachers who are future academic heads must be prepared for school leadership responsibilities. Their experiences and performance are basic premises for more serious roles, but there are significant preparations needed for supervisory positions. The discussions that follow are presented based on the research problems.

1. What are the challenges that novice academic heads encountered in leading the teachers?

When the seven novice academic heads were asked if they were prepared for the supervisory responsibility, no one said that he/she was ready for the new educational role. One participant received the information that he/she would be the next academic head after two academic years. However, he/she was surprised that the appointment came a year earlier. He/She accepted the position but not without any doubts about his/her competence. Another participant said that he/she was ready but not without serious doubts considering that he/she is the most senior in the group of teachers. However, the other five participants said that they were reluctant to accept the appointment because they were not prepared for such a role. They felt that they did not have time to be ready because the offer came too soon. But two participants said that he/she eventually accepted it because he/she considered it as a challenge. One of the participants shared:

> *"It happened when the principal summoned me to his office sometime March or April of 2019. I did not have any idea that the appointment would be offered to me. Honestly, I was quite hesitant, for I was not prepared for it. I felt that I have focused my training in developing my skills to be a subject and content expert."* P5 Q1 A1

Their reluctance to accept the appointment may be attributed to the demographics shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of the participants

	Age	Years of Teaching Experience	Tenure in the school	Educational Qualifications
Participant 1	25	5	5 (second most senior)	Master's degree (on-going)
Participant 2	28	4	4 (third most senior)	Master's degree (on-going)
Participant 3	26	5	5 (most senior)	Master's degree (on-going)
Participant 4	41	17	11 (most senior)	Master's degree (on-going)
Participant 5	32	8	5 (most senior)	Master's degree (on-going)
Participant 6	43	18	6 (most senior)	Master's degree (on-going)
Participant 7	37	16	11 (most senior)	Master's degree (completed)

Four of the participants are relatively young in terms of age, experience, and tenure in the institution. Six of the participants believed that seniority played a significant factor in their appointment. One participant pointed out that:

> "I was appointed because there were no other tenured teachers to lead the area. Practically, all teachers in the area are probationary." P6 Q1 A1

Promotion based on seniority is an old-fashioned way of promoting employees which may not necessarily mean loyalty or excellent performance. But some organizations still consider this as an important criterion for promotion or appointment. Seniority-based promotion may be outmoded but it is perceived to be a fair basis than merit-based systems. While understanding that seniority systems contribute to organizational justice is important, without the ability to evaluate employees who have specific knowledge, achievements, and abilities, the organization is simply required to take the next most senior person. Although perceived as fair among employees, it poses organizational and management challenges (Carter, 2017). Ironically, competency is found to be the predictor variable that contributes to the highest variation score in occupational stress. Organizations are advised to use competency as the first consideration for promotion criteria. At the same time, other criteria must be seriously looked into such as leadership, performance, and seniority. Seniority should be given the least consideration because it has a weak relationship with organizational performance (Yaw, 2017).

These factors might be considered affecting the novice academic heads particularly in their first year of supervisory work. Based on observation, the participants showed enthusiasm in their new responsibility but were tentative in their actions. They are very careful in dealing with the teachers under their supervision. During management team meetings, they were attentively listening in the discussion and clarifying essential matters. They also appeared anxious about pressing issues and concerns because they have to figure out how to handle

them. In terms of dealing with the teachers, they were more careful, particularly in responding to their comments. They said that in most cases, they do not respond immediately to their questions unless there is a clear directive from the administration. Despite being reluctant to accept the appointment, the participants eventually assumed the position and encountered the challenges as new academic heads that are found in Table 2.

Table 2. Challenges in the first year as academic head

Main Challenges	Specific Challenges
Paperwork	No evident turnover of documents
	Knowledge on how to do paper works
Culture	Working habits of the teachers
	Attitude of teachers
Processes and Procedures	Knowledge about policies and procedures
Expectations of Superiors	Fulfilling duties and responsibilities as academic head
	Meeting expectations of superiors
Supervising Teachers	Handling teacher's behaviors and attitudes

Paperwork
The four participants shared that this is the first challenge that they have encountered. Being teachers with no leadership experience and have not been prepared for the position, they had a difficult time adjusting to the paperwork that the work requires. They have been overwhelmed by the volume of documents to be reviewed and prepared. One of the participants said:

> *"I feel prepared for the responsibilities, but I'm not quite competent in creating documents."* P1 Q2 A2

The issue on paperwork was also the finding of in their study on novice school leaders. Considered as the most significant challenge and category that came out in the study, paperwork refers to the writing of reports and documentation. Making the job more stressful, the information had to be managed rapidly like communication, documentation, and electronic reports. (Beam, Claxton & Smith, 2016). In their study, paperwork refers to desk work done by academic heads which include forms, paper records, documentation, and other electronic records. The meaning of paperwork is similar to the responses of the participants.

Culture
Over time, people in the organization develop habits that most of the time become the norm. When a new leader comes in, they find it difficult to change, even the practices are bad. A new leader will deal with this kind of challenge as he/she begins fulfilling that role. Two participants shared that they replaced academic heads who have been in the institution for more than thirty (30) years and as academic heads for more than six (6) years. As young and new leaders of the area, that is a daunting task that they have to face. One participant shared that two teachers in the area were his/her former teachers whom he/she considered as his role models. He/She added that alone is already a challenge. The two participants explained further that these former academic heads had established specific procedures and relationships that are considered to be the culture of the area. An

article explains organizational culture as an observable, consistent patterns of behavior. In the words of the great philosopher Aristotle "We are what we repeatedly do." This opinion hoists habits or repeated behavior as the center of culture and reduces people's beliefs, feelings, or ideas. One's attention is focused on the influences that form the behavior in organizations. It highlights some important questions about culture on structure, processes, and incentives, including culture as simply behavioral outputs (Watkins, 2013). As a challenge, one participant said:

> "I consider the habit of the area as a challenge. It is difficult to break the practices created by the previous learning area head. I chose to change the bad habit of the faculty one at a time." P1 Q2 A2

To be able to create change in a school environment, the new academic head should be able to earn the trust and confidence of the teachers. To build the school as an educational community that enables individual human development through cooperation and inclusion, trust should be the main foundation. Trust is one of the essential values in educational leadership that gives confidence and establishes a stronghold for safe development (Dorczak, 2014).

Processes and Procedures
In any leadership transition, the turnover of responsibilities is essential. The participants unanimously experienced difficulty in adjusting to the new responsibility because of the absence of orientation on their new responsibility. The appointment came a few months before they assumed responsibility as an academic head. A participant shared that:

> "It would be the decision-making process. That was the time when we purchased new computer units and fabricated computer tables. Since I don't have a background on how to deal with the suppliers and the materials needed, it was not easy for me to deal with those situations."
> P3 Q2 A2

Another participant said:

> "There are a lot of learning area head tasks that I am not aware of before, that if the training was given ahead of time, the adjustment would be much easier. However, as time pass by, step by step, I learned to adapt to the said position and somehow, impose an authority in our area."
> P2 Q2 A2

A research study revealed similar results on the absence of orientation and other similar activities for incoming learning area heads. The participants shared that there was no mentoring, orientation, clear transition, and turnover of responsibilities that made it difficult for them as new academic heads to adjust to their new responsibility. They had to find their way and learn from experience to become confident academic heads. It is recommended that an induction program might be provided for incoming and newly appointed academic leaders which includes leadership training, mentoring, transition protocols, orientation, and turnover (Arrieta, 2020).

Expectations of Superiors

When new appointments are out, there are expectations from teachers and more particularly the immediate superiors who recommended and appointed them. There are also expectations to bring about change and improvement in the area. The participants felt that they have to live with the manageable expectations from all teachers and academic leaders. One participant shared:

> *"As a new learning area head, there are many expectations, particularly in changes in practices and outputs of the area at the end of the school year."* P4 Q2 A2

Newly appointed academic heads are expected from them by their immediate heads. Learning area heads are identified as middle leaders and curriculum leaders. Hence, they are expected to perform tasks such as planning learning programs, leading in curriculum development, maintaining policies and procedures, and meeting the quality assurance and compliance requirements (Basset, 2016).

Supervising Teachers

Handling student's behavior is different from supervising teachers. Novice academic heads consider managing teachers a challenge because they have different mindsets, attitudes, and behavior. They are in search of the appropriate strategy in leading them most especially that the teachers. A participant shared:

> *"Handling fellow teachers is both an objective and a personal business, to me. Perhaps, one needs to be holistically grown to lessen the hassle of guiding and leading people of the same profession, with utmost professionalism and empathy at the same time."* P7 Q3 A3

As instructional leaders, academic heads should be able to direct and influence the teachers to become better educators. They are expected to create a school climate that will nurture teachers and recognize them as potential leaders. (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2014). It is also part of their responsibility to develop and nurture relationships with their teachers and to deal constructively with conflicts. Moreover, they are expected to develop their subordinates' competencies and enhance performance by panning effective development activities. However, it remains a challenge as the new academic heads find the right approach in dealing with different teachers with different personalities and needs. They have to read books and articles about managing and communicating with subordinates and be mentored by experienced school leaders.

2. How did the novice academic heads handle the leadership challenges and responsibilities?

Handling leadership challenges bring out the best in every newly appointed academic head. He/She has to find ways to deal with them. The seven participants shared that they regularly consult their former academic head and immediate superior for guidance and assistance. Some past academic heads took the initiative to mentor them, which they appreciate. A participant said:

> "Whenever there are learning area head tasks that I am not aware of doing, it's a good thing that my former area head is willing to help me and give me advice on what to do in particular situations. His vast experience in

different positions that he gained throughout his career helped me in terms of my decision-making." P2 Q3 A3

Another participant said:
"In decision-making, I am thankful for the cooperation and understanding of my previous academic head. He was always there to answer my queries." P3 Q3 A3

Based on observation, the seven participants often ask clarificatory questions during the management meeting. They listen attentively in the discussions, particularly to senior academic heads. Likewise, they regularly ask their immediate head for advice and guidance, most especially on area issues and concerns. Some said that they received mentorship from their former academic leaders and other academic heads who are always available to listen and give suggestions. Having supportive academic leaders and senior teachers is very helpful in carrying out their tasks as new academic heads.

Ironically, a study revealed that one out of five novice school heads shared that support from superiors was lacking. Though they wanted to seek guidance from academic authorities, they opted not to seek help for it might be taken as a sign of weakness. Moreover, asking for assistance might put their appointment at risk. It was explicitly indicated that novice academic leaders need guidance from their supervisors. During the focus group discussion, they expressed their strategies in handling the challenges, but the support came more from informal than formal sources. Instead of being supported through the prescriptive procedures, they did their reflective processes (Beam, Claxton & Smith, 2016).

Other new academic heads decided to engage in professional development by taking graduate studies and reading books on educational leadership. Having no preparation for the leadership role, they have to study and lead their teachers at the same time. One participant said:
"Another way to manage the challenge is by keeping myself abreast of the different pedagogy that is suited as a learning area head." P6 Q3 A3

Another participant shared:
"The first remarkable challenge is finding the right approach to dealing with different teachers with different personalities and needs. I read books and articles about managing and communicating with subordinates and the like." P5 Q3 A3

Leadership requires adaptability and flexibility. The challenge is to be able to relate with others more meaningfully adapt their styles to changing circumstances and highlights the need for leadership development that enhances flexibility in leadership styles and strategies. Hence, the leadership training of future leaders should be relevant and responsive to the signs of the times. Unfortunately, leaders have been assigned to a position that they have not been prepared for (Hallinger, 2011). What these new academic heads are doing insofar as developing their leadership competencies is the right thing to do. But this should have been

provided to them before the appointment. Taking professional development as a personal endeavor is a great start to become an effective leader.

3. What kind of preparation and training on leadership that novice academic heads need?

All participants emphasized the importance of preparation before any promotion of teachers to an academic head position. Having been in the classroom for several years does not prepare a teacher completely for supervisory responsibilities for that is a different area in education. Certainly, experiences in classroom teaching will help, but a future school leader should undergo leadership training and may include on-the-job training. Young educators and academic leaders are facing incomparable challenges. They have to deal with accountability for student performance, providing for different student populations, parents doubting public education, implementing intricate policies on special education, and other things that are too many to mention. Yet, these young educators and leaders, who are highly motivated, still need to acquire the skills that come basically from experience (Rooney, 2008).

The participants presented their suggestions on how future academic heads can be prepared based on their experiences and the challenges they encountered in their first year as an academic head. Table 3 shows the challenges and the programs that will prepare future academic leaders for leadership responsibility.

Table 3. Programs Addressing the Challenges of Novice Academic Heads

Programs	Challenges
Induction Program	Paperwork
• Turnover of documents	Processes and Procedures
• Orientation	
Mentoring	Culture
	Processes and Procedures
Leadership Training	Expectations of Superiors
	Culture
Succession Planning	Readiness of academic heads
	Supervision of Teachers

Induction Program

Proper turnover of responsibilities, most especially the documents is essential between the outgoing and incoming heads. This point is the concern of all participants for there was no proper orientation and transition from one academic head to another. Incoming academic leaders have to be provided sufficient time to prepare for the new task. There should also be an orientation on their duties and responsibilities including the policies and procedures. The induction program that the administration can create will assist incoming heads in becoming competent and people-centered leaders. One participant suggested:

> *"Proper turnover of documents and other related files is very much important. Leadership and management training/workshop and proper orientation of the responsibilities."* P4 Q4 A4

The importance of mentoring and induction is included in The Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI). KELI is a partnership of government agencies and professional organizations that provides induction and mentoring to new academic leaders in the state of Kansas, USA. In building leaders in their district, KELI, as a state model, makes support available to new school principals and assistant principals by assigning senior and skilled principals in the mentoring and induction programs (Liang & Augustine-Shaw, 2016). In a study about succession planning, the importance of the induction program as an important undertaking of administration for new academic leaders came out. Furthermore, it pointed out that with the absence of an induction program, leadership training, mentoring, transition protocols, orientation, and turnover to incoming and newly appointed academic heads should be provided (Arrieta, 2020).

Mentoring
Though a mentoring may be included in the induction program, the participants unanimously suggested that new academic heads should be mentored before and after the appointment, particularly in the first year. One participant shared that he was fortunate to be mentored by his former head, who happens to be his former teacher. He was very grateful for he learned a lot from him. However, mentoring should be true to all. It can only happen if there is a mentoring program for all incoming and new academic heads. Based on observation, particularly during and after management team meetings, the new academic leaders sought clarification on the matters discussed. When asked about what they conferred with the senior academic leaders, they confirmed and sought advice on specific agenda in the meeting before communicating the information to the teachers.

As a preparatory program for novice school heads, this is observed by a significant number of educational institutions. Education leaders provide mentoring and coaching which are considered professional development practices. Such practice involves a professional education leader guiding a new academic leader in a mutually enriching engagement that fosters learning and development. The established relationship is based on mutual trust, openness, and respect (Liang et al., 2016). Similarly, a study found out that it is better to have candidates for leadership positions coached long before their official appointment. Through mentoring, a supportive relationship will be established that will prove helpful during the induction years, particularly with a mentor (Beam, Claxton & Smith, 2016).

Leadership Training
Frequently, teachers are perceived to be leaders, but not all teachers have leadership competencies and skills. In leading an academic area, it will require not only teaching experience but also preparation for supervisory roles. The transition from leading students to leading teachers is not like transferring from one class to another. Therefore, leadership training for incoming and new academic heads is imperative to be able to manage the teachers and perform one's role as an academic head more effectively. A participant stated:

> *"Leadership and management training/workshop and proper orientation of the responsibilities are needed so that new heads will not be at a lost."*
> P2 Q4 A4

Successful school leadership in Singapore, they found out that principals train potential teachers to be future school heads. In their leadership succession plans, there were conscious efforts by the principals in building the leadership capacity of their teachers (Wang, Gurr & Drysdale, 2015). The principals provided various opportunities to middle managers, particularly in taking more work responsibilities for them to have more exposure to lead. The absence of a training and development program for future leaders will make them ill-prepared for the duties. In another study, the training and development of future school leaders were found to be very essential. The findings pointed out that a critical component of succession management and planning is the development of aspiring leaders. Hence, future leaders may not be able to do their tasks effectively if they will not be subjected to appropriate, reflective, and meaningful training and development (Zepeda, Bengtson & Parylo, 2011).

School leadership training and preparation should include the development of knowledge and competence of 21st-century educational leaders. The Competency Framework for Southeast Asian School Heads (2014) developed by SEAMEO INNOTECH identifies strategic thinking and innovation, instructional leadership, personal excellence, stakeholders' engagement, and managerial leadership as essential domains in developing today's future leaders. Effective principals and middle academic supervisors enhance the creation of a school environment conducive to learning and enhancing a synergy in the school community. As an instructional leader, the principal must be able to observe and analyze instruction with precision focusing on the 21st-century skills of teachers. He/She must be able to define clear steps for improving what they observe and analyze. Collaborative analysis of practice should become a central part of leadership towards developing a school culture that promotes personal and professional relationships and promotes learners' culture of hard work, responsibility, and success (Llagas, Corpuz & Bilbao, 2016).

In terms of readiness for leadership roles, taking graduate studies help in enhancing leadership competencies. Future leaders who had taken graduate-level courses in educational administration showed more readiness to address problems of practice than those who have not taken graduate-level courses in educational administration. Also, current leaders who have served as assistant heads showed more readiness to address problems of practice that those who have not served as assistant heads. A key recommendation was that the Ghana Education Service should consider including in the requirement to become a high school head a graduate-level courses in educational administration and experience as assistant head. (Amakyi, 2017). The present system of promotion does not favor the appointment of prepared school leaders. It found out that there is a need for leadership preparation as a prerequisite for participants in the application for academic headships, and also for those who are already holding a leadership position (Delgado, 2015).

Succession Planning
The leadership pipeline of every school must be filled with future leaders who have been identified based on the educational qualifications, experience, and performance. When the term of office ends, the succeeding academic head is prepared and confident to take the leadership responsibility. Therefore, the school must have a succession plan. It is inevitable for business and school organizations to have succession planning for the realization of its vision mission. Experts have come up with definitions of succession planning and the emphasis zeroes in on leadership sustainability. An American expert on human resource management said that succession planning is a systematic approach to ensuring leadership continuity within an organization by recruiting or encouraging individual employee growth and development (Haroski, 2012).

A participant suggested:
> *"The school must have a succession plan, so prospect or promising teachers would be properly groomed by their immediate heads before their appointment. The school must also let the teachers know about this plan, so they would be able to prepare themselves by aligning their training or any professional development plan with the path the school or administrators/school heads want them to take."* P5 Q4 A4

Another participant said:
> *"There must be a succession plan, and also an orientation with regards to the different paper works that a learning area head will face along the way."* P6 Q4 A4

Succession planning must be done and implemented in schools as an organization. Each school must have a succession plan for sustainability and continuity. School systems cannot leave leadership development to chance. There must be leadership development plans in schools with specific and interrelated components (Hall, 2008). However, several studies revealed that it is not given priority. Traditional policies are not anymore helpful in preparing school administrators due to the changing educational environment that they face. An important method in investing in human capital is through the development of a succession plan which will build a list of qualified candidates for leadership positions as the district anticipates the need before it becomes urgent. It also found out that every district must be fully invested in developing and supporting school leaders to avoid discontinuity and disruption including burnout and frustration (Hanover Research, 2014).

5. Conclusions
The study found out that the novice academic heads considered paperwork, culture, processes and procedures, and expectations of superiors as primary challenges. To handle these challenges, they regularly consulted their superiors, and their former academic heads mentored some of them. During meetings, they clarified the information, issues, and concerns so that it will be accurate when they communicate them to their teachers. With all these challenges and experiences, they suggested that incoming and new academic heads be provided with

leadership training, orientation, and mentoring for them to carry out their duties and responsibilities more effectively. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that novice heads who are ill-equipped with the needed leadership training and preparation found it challenging to perform their supervisory duties and responsibilities. Also, orientation on duties and responsibilities, including policies and procedures for incoming and new academic heads is necessary for a better transition from classroom teacher to an academic leader. These programs can be put into one program – a succession plan. It is also worthy to note that knowledge and competence in preparing reports and documents are essential for academic heads. Novice heads that get support from their immediate head and fellow academic leaders need mentoring before and during the first year as academic head, and personal and professional relationship with the teachers is a primary concern of academic leaders when they assume office.

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