

Choosing the Qualities of Student Leaders: A Matching of Student Voting Preference and Election Results as a Basis for Policy Formulation

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Abstract – *The qualities of student-leaders in the 21st century cannot be underrated. The ability to influence individuals in the context of boundless territories and worldwide integration is of paramount importance to education. Research has revealed that the crux of student leadership in this century is on achieving the right pace and qualities in the changing landscape of borderless society. Choosing the qualities of leaders helps the administrators and students come up with a collaborative policy formulation in the attainment of institutional mission and goals. The research utilized the mixed methods using the qualitative key informant interview, focus group discussions, and researcher's experience to choose the qualities of student leaders among the students of City College of Calamba. The perceptions of student council leaders from the different schools of Calamba were also surveyed. The student voting preference was matched with the results of Student Council election. The results obtained were recorded and compared to the results of the interview from the experts in the field of educational leadership.*

Keywords – *student-leaders, perception, leadership, policy*

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership for the 21st century is an inseparable component of the holistic development of students. The idea of serving the constituents cannot be rated as a less important parameter in determining the academic excellence of students. Acting as a student-leader in an academic institution involved the entire praxis of being a student. The practices and activities being done by student-leaders are actually manifestations of the students' selected field of academic discipline.

The abundance of leadership theories (Rice, 2011) in many books and other publications does not manifest a concise description of leadership qualities, more so, of the native Filipino qualities of student-leaders. The perceptions of the qualities of student-leaders based on the voters criterion and candidates in a student-election remain particularly elusive due to mismatch of orientation and philosophies in life.

For this century, the need for collaboration and collective relationship among the student-leaders, students, and administrators must be enhanced in order to facilitate change and create a global understanding for better learning and proactive education. Leadership activities manifested by student-leaders must be centered on communal participation of the group rather

than on the individual work of a single leader (Mullen, 2010).

At any rate, even with the collective leadership of the students, there is a need to enhance or even develop the potentials of the individual leaders so that they can give more to the organization which is really important especially when the student-leader is leading hundreds or thousands of students in an academic institution. Even in educational leadership, the individual dispositions which are the foundations of leadership skills, characteristics, and abilities are given attention. The assessment and development of core beliefs, attitudes, and values are said to have an important role in leadership effectiveness (Allen et al., 2014).

In the context of qualities possessed by student-leaders, the administrators of every educational institution especially those offices handling student affairs services must always be mindful on how to develop the potentials of their student-leaders. Being at the forefront of student engagement, the programs and policies of student affairs must be aligned not only in the realm of the regular programs of the institution but also with the present and unending evolution of needs, strengths, and weaknesses of student-leaders. More than ever before, the offices of student affairs must respond

to those pressing needs and issues to assist other stakeholders like teachers in the formulation of policies and activities in targeting the best environment for students (Pomerantz, 2006).

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research presents the qualities of student-leaders as matched to the perceptions of voters, student-leaders, and experts in the field of educational leadership. The results of the study shall then be utilized in determining the policies in terms of programs and activities of the Office of Student Affairs of the City College of Calamba in developing the qualities of its student-leaders.

III. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The idea of leadership qualities can be traced back from the different theories of leadership. Some of those theories are anchored on the personality of individual leaders while some considered leadership as a thematic approach in dealing with subordinates. Other theories suggest that leadership traits may differ based from the situation that arose in the environment while others would contend that reward and punishment obliged a person to lead expectedly. These theories would sometimes harmonize with other theories while some considered these as sources of debates among scholar individuals. The study will focus on some of the following most influential theories of leadership:

Contingency Theory. This theory emphasizes that one can improve the organization by replacing the leader to fit a particular event or scenario or changing the scenario or event in order to fit the leader (Fiedler, 1967 as cited in Christie & Bob, 2001). The organization like the Student Council may be developed depending on the leader or the environment. Changing one of them to fit the other may bring success to the Student Council.

Exchange Theory. This theory states that social behaviour is based on the rewards and costs that affect relationships (Blau, 1964; Ritzer, 1988 as cited in Wettersten, 1994). The quality of relationship of two persons including between a leader and a subordinate can be determined by what they give and what they take.

Trait Theory. This theory focuses on the individual traits of the leader and not on the followers and the situation. As a more straightforward theory, this approach posits that certain set of traits must be possessed by the leader which are considered to be of

crucial importance to effective leadership (Germain, 2008).

The qualities that must be possessed by the student-leaders are important in the regular performance of their basic duties and responsibilities. Absence of important qualities may lead to the deterioration of the organization.

IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The design of the study utilized the mixed method of descriptive research using the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Participants

Participants were grouped into 3 sets of respondents. The first group of respondents were the student-voters during the last Student Council election for SY 2014-2015 comprising about 311 students from different courses of the college namely the Bachelor in Secondary Education, Bachelor in Elementary Education, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, and Bachelor of Science in Accountancy.

The second set of respondents was the 10 Student Council Officers of the college for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Auditor, and 5 PROs.

The third set of respondents was Student Council officers of selected schools from Calamba City and some officers of the Student Council from the University of the Philippines Los Baños, Laguna.

Instrument

The data gathering instrument was a self-made questionnaire to gather information on the perceptions of the three sets of respondents on the qualities of student-leaders collected from the election results and survey. The self-made questionnaire was based from the interpretation of the Student Manual of the college, references from the DIY Committee Guide, Survey on Youth Perceptions of Elections and Good Governance undertaken by the Communication Foundation for Asia, and article from Emeagwali (2011).

For the qualitative interpretation, the researcher utilized the interview protocol in soliciting information from the respondents as well as from the experts in the field.

To ensure its validity, the researcher validated the questionnaire from the expert in the field of education

and through the assistance of a statistician. Interviews were also done by the researcher to determine the need for further improvement and modification of the instrument.

Procedures

The researcher distributed the questionnaires among the respondents and conducted interviews with some persons involved in handling student organizations and activities. Through the permission of the Division Head, the researcher was able to conduct interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher assured the confidentiality of the data gathered in the study.

Data Analysis

The gathered data were tallied, tabulated, encoded, and analyzed using the following statistical tools:

1. Average Composite Rank was used to in order to determine the average ranks of qualities perceived by the respondents per position in the Student Council. The combined composite ranks were then used in order to the find the average rank of the three sets of respondents.
2. One-Way ANOVA was used in order to compare the means of the three sets of respondents using the F-distribution

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following tables reflected the perceptions of the three sets of respondents based from the ranking of qualities. The different positions that were given the set of qualities were tabulated and analyzed for better appreciation. Below are the summary results of the questionnaire:

Table1. Description of Student Leaders’ Quality for President Position in SSC

Descriptions	Group A		Group B		Group C		Combined	
	ACR*	Final Rank	ACR*	Rank	ACR*	Rank	ACR*	Rank
<i>The President should</i>								
a. exercise good communication skills	3.54	5	4.00	4	2.75	2	3.43	3
b. have a vision for the students	3.14	4	3.00	3	4.25	4	3.46	4
c. be dedicated in his duties and responsibilities	2.54	1	1.00	1	1.50	1	1.68	1
d. be fair in making decisions	2.65	2	2.00	2	4.25	4	2.97	2
e. possess openness that would enable him/her to listen to new ideas	3.12	3	5.00	5	4.25	4	4.12	5

* Average Composite Rank, SSC-Supreme Student Council

Table 1 suggests that for the position of President, all the three sets of respondents agreed that the most important quality for the President is that he/she must be dedicated in his duties and responsibilities. The least important qualities as implied is openness.

In one of the document articles of Hyde as published by Gary North (2006), in explaining the mechanics of the proliferation of Communism in the previous decades, he explained that commitment in an organization can be expounded more when the organization demands a bigger commitment. “When organizations make minimal demands on their

members, they would get minimal commitment. When they make big demands, they get big commitment.” Based from this article, it can be well interpreted that the perceptions of the three sets of respondents posit that dedication which is tantamount commitment is the most important thing in the organization to work. This quality should be exemplified by the President of the organization since he/she is considered to be the head and the direction-setter of the organization.

This is also supported by the coded responses of some of the respondents as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Coded Responses of the Respondents on the Qualities of President for Student Council Position

CODES/CATEGORIES	TRANSCRIPTION
Commitment and Dedication	<i>They must be committed and dedicated</i>
Dedication in the Organization	<i>Must be dedicated in the organization</i>
Active part of student movement	<i>Must be active part of student movement with dedication and commitment</i>
Commitment and dedication for student rights	<i>Must be committed and dedicated in serving the student rights</i>
Dedication in duties	<i>Kailangan ay may dedikasyon sa Gawain</i>
Person of Integrity	<i>Must be a person of integrity</i>

Based on responses from the respondents, most of the item/categories pertaining to Presidential qualifications are deemed to be related to dedication and commitment. The chat to respondents also supports dedication and commitment as the main basis of voting their candidate for the Student Council Election. It was revealed that the college deserves a Student Council President who has a sense of direction bound by commitment and dedication. Due to numerous academic and non-academic activities of the college, coupled by academic requirements and scholastic pressures, it is quite difficult to find a student who will be devoted to become a President both managing his/her individual

academic performance and effectuating leadership for the welfare of the students.

Karns and McGee (2011) in their journal abstract article, "Everyday Heroes", mentioned that "heroes are everywhere in education." Those who are in charge of creating learning organizations through their efforts, commitment, and dedication are really worth telling. The Academy for Educational Development (2011) also illustrated some stories of dedication of some young people in constructing positive learning environment for student engagement.

Indeed, dedication and commitment proved to be a baseline quality that must be characterized by the President of the Council.

Table 3. Description of Student Leaders' Quality for Vice President Position in SSC

<i>Descriptions The Vice President should</i>	Group A		Group B		Group C		Combined	
	ACR	Final Rank	ACR	Rank	ACR	Rank	ACR	Rank
a. exercise good communication skills	3.63	5	4.00	4	3.75	5	3.79	5
b. have good understanding about the nature of different organizations in the campus	2.84	2	5.00	5	3.00	3	3.61	4
c. be dedicated in his duties and responsibilities	2.30	1	1.00	1	2.25	1	1.85	1
d. be flexible	3.35	4	3.00	3	2.75	2	3.03	3
e. possess openness that would enable him/her to listen to new ideas	2.88	3	2.00	2	3.25	4	2.71	2

The table showed congruity between the quality choices of respondents being dedicated to the duties and responsibilities as the most important quality. Respondents agreed that the responsibilities of the Vice President should also be of the same quality as the

President since the former position acted as a replacement of the President in case of replacement through resignation, death, disqualification, and/or impeachment. This can also be gleaned from the responses in table 4.

Table 4. Coded Responses of the Respondents on the Qualities of Vice President for Student Council Position

CODES/CATEGORIES	TRANSCRIPTION
Commitment and Dedication	<i>They must be committed and dedicated</i>
Spare tire of the President	<i>He/She must be a good spare tire for the President</i>
Possess same qualifications	<i>Must possess same qualifications as the President</i>
Qualities of the President	<i>Must maintain all the qualities of the President</i>
Sharing of the same characteristics	<i>Since he/she is the Vice President, they must share same characteristics</i>
Assist the President	<i>Should do the best to assist the President</i>

Based from the coded responses, the qualifications of the Vice President must be in harmony with the

qualifications of the President. Most of the respondents agreed that since the Vice President shares the same

features as of the President, they must be able to share the same qualities. In this case, the respondents also posit that dedication to duties is considered to be the most important quality.

Experience (*as Director of OSA and Student Council adviser for around eight years*) has shown that the duty of the Vice President is of paramount importance to the Student Council. Being equally committed and dedicated to his/her duty is an important task especially when the President cannot effectively perform his duty or has lost the commitment and dedication to the job. The Vice President as the alter ego of the President should complement the President in

times of weakness like when the President has experienced emotional and social downturn.

The Student Manual (2006) of the college stated that the Vice President should perform other duties and responsibilities as directed or advised by the President. In the normal course of Student Council's operation, it is the Vice President who is acting as the Chairman of the Council of Student Leaders (CSL), the confederation of all heads/presidents of all recognized student organizations of the college. As Vice President, he/she also acts as the President or Head of the CSL performing delegative and supervisory functions. As such, commitment and dedication is also a primary concern quality for the position of the Vice President.

Table 5. Description of Student Leaders' Quality for Secretary Position in SSC

<i>Descriptions The Secretary must be</i>	Group A		Group B		Group C		Combined	
	ACR	Final Rank	ACR	Rank	ACR	Rank	ACR	Rank
a. Organized	2.54	1	3.00	3	1.75	1	2.43	2
b. good in written skills	3.79	5	1.00	1	4.75	5	3.18	3
c. responsible in keeping the minutes of meetings	2.75	2	2.00	2	2.25	2	2.33	1
d. objective in making correspondence and minutes of meetings	3.03	4	5.00	5	2.50	3	3.51	4
e. punctual in doing his/her assigned tasks	2.90	3	4.00	4	3.75	4	3.55	5

Table 5 suggests that for the position of Secretary, all the respondents agreed that the most important quality is to be responsible in keeping the minutes of the meeting. Referring to the Student Manual (2006) of the college, it was laid down that the main duty and responsibility of the Secretary is to keep the record of

the meetings of the Council. It is in this concept that the perception of the Student Council officer, voters, other officers from other schools view this quality as the foremost quality that a Secretary must be able to possess.

Table 6. Coded Responses of the Respondents on the Qualities of Secretary for Student Council Position

CODES/CATEGORIES	TRANSCRIPTION
Record Management	<i>The Secretary must be good in record management especially minutes of meetings</i>
Responsible for minutes of meetings	<i>He/She must be responsible for minutes of meetings</i>
Recording the minutes of meeting	<i>Must be good in recording the minutes of meeting</i>
Ability to record minutes of meeting	<i>The best quality should be related to his/her ability to record the minutes of meetings well</i>
Preparing minutes of meeting	<i>Be good in preparing minutes of meeting</i>
Present the minutes of meeting	<i>Present the minutes of meeting well</i>

Most of the coded responses of the respondents are aligned with the quality pertaining to record

management, recording of the minutes of meetings, preparing, and presenting the minutes of meeting. All of

those responses are in consonance with the perceived most important quality which is to keep the record of the meetings of the Council.

Chat and experience confirm that most often than not, the Secretary plays a vital role in the documentation of the minutes of the meeting as compared to other special roles given to him/her by the President or by the Council itself. The record of all the meetings of the Council is kept with the Secretary. The

success of the Journal of Accomplishment published by the Student Council and the Office of Student Affairs every year depends on the quality of the Secretary to record the minutes of the meeting as accurately as possible. Some voters perceived that the Secretary whom they will vote is the one who can really conserve or keep the records of the meetings of the Council for they will be able to publicly the things being done by the Student Council during their meetings.

Table 7. Description of Student Leaders' Quality for Treasurer Position in SSC

<i>Descriptions The Treasurer must be</i>	Group A		Group B		Group C		Combined	
	ACR	Final Rank	ACR	Rank	ACR	Rank	ACR	Rank
a. be capable of handling figures and cash	3.08	3	4.00	4	2.50	2	3.19	4
b. have a methodological way of thinking	3.35	4	2.00	2	3.75	4	3.03	3
c. have experience in financial control and budgeting	2.87	2	3.00	3	3.00	3	2.96	2
d. be trustworthy and honest	2.01	1	5.00	5	1.75	1	2.92	1
e. be willing to explain figures if asked	3.68	5	1.00	1	4.00	5	2.89	5

Table 7 suggests that the most important quality for the position of Treasurer according to the respondents, is the quality of being trustworthy and honest. It is of this perception that a person of integrity with high moral values is considered as the best quality being perceived for this position.

Competencies regarding numbers are only next qualities being considered by the respondents. Regardless of the course being taken up by the student, whether the course is related to numbers, (ie. BS Accountancy or BSE major in Math), what was perceived is the ability of the candidate/officer to become trustworthy and honest. Students are looking

for someone whom they can entrust their money. For instance in the City College, the Student Fund collected from each student by the Student Council every semester amounting to P50.00 is entrusted to the Treasurer of the Council. With this, students perceived that regardless of the capability (*but without necessarily disregarding it*) of the Treasurer, what was the most important factor is that the Treasurer will become honest and trustworthy in the faithful disposition of the fund.

This perception is supported by the coded responses of the respondents as shown by table 8.

Table 8. Some of the Coded Responses of the Respondents on the Qualities of Treasurer for Student Council Position

CODES/CATEGORIES	TRANSCRIPTION
Transparent in handling funds	<i>He/She must be transparent in handling the funds</i>
Honest in making financial statements	<i>The Treasurer must be honest in making financial statements</i>
Sense of honesty	<i>The position of Treasurer must be with sense of honesty</i>
Integrity and honesty	<i>The best quality has something to do with integrity and honesty</i>
Truthful in handling funds	<i>Be truthful in handling the funds</i>
Honest and truthful	<i>Must be honest and truthful</i>

Table 8 shows the responses of some respondents pertaining to the qualities of the Treasurer position. They mentioned that for this position, the council officer must be transparent in handling funds, honest in making financial statements, with sense of honesty and integrity, and truthful. All of these points to the most important quality which is trustworthy and honest.

Glaser and Bingham (2009) pointed out that one behaviour being valued by students that increased their sense of connectedness with one another is honesty. As Treasurer, he/she is a student-leader bound by moral obligations to faithfully perform his duty and responsibility in making sure that all his/her financial activities are deemed to be honest and trustworthy.

Table 9. Description of Student Leaders' Quality for Auditor Position in SSC

<i>Descriptions</i> <i>The Auditor must</i>	Group A		Group B		Group C		Combined	
	ACR	Final Rank	ACR	Rank	ACR	Final Rank	ACR	Rank
have a methodological way of thinking	3.40	5	3.00	3	4.25	5	3.55	4
have experience in financial control and budgeting	2.92	3	2.00	2	2.50	2	2.47	2
have background in Accounting	3.02	4	5.00	5	3.00	3	3.67	5
be able to identify and analyze financial risks	2.80	1	4.00	4	3.50	4	3.43	3
be impartial in dealing with funds and with the Treasurer	2.88	2	1.00	1	1.75	1	1.88	1

* *Average Composite Rank*

Table 9 shows that the most important quality for the position of Auditor based from the respondents is the quality of being impartial in dealing with funds and with the Treasurer. In an article written by Anderson (2012), he mentioned that being an Auditor is beyond learning the debits and credits. It also involves solid ethical foundation alongside with sound technical ability. An Auditor must be able to avoid any temptation to let errors or fraud things to pass.

Being impartial with funds and with the Treasurer has something to do with how an Auditor must be able to give an honest auditing activity of the funds handled by the Treasurer. Errors, if committed by the Treasurer, must be revealed in order to make the financial statement more sound and transparent. This ability requires excellent interpersonal relationship with the Treasurer and other officers of the Council.

Table 10. Coded Responses of the Respondents on the Qualities of Auditor for Student Council Position

CODES/CATEGORIES	TRANSCRIPTION
Honest	<i>The Auditor must be honest just like the Treasurer.</i>
Impartial in dealing with Treasurer	<i>The Auditor must be impartial in dealing with the Treasurer</i>
Handle funds openly	<i>He/She should handle the funds openly and with transparency</i>
Openness and Transparency	<i>The Auditor must audit the funds with openness and transparency</i>
Free from internal influence	<i>Must be free from internal influence</i>
With sense of fairness	<i>Should be a good Auditor with sense of fairness</i>

Based from the coded responses, the Auditor must be honest, impartial in dealing with Treasurer, must handle funds openly, be free from internal influence, and with sense of fairness. All of these responses point to the quality of the Auditor to be impartial in dealing with funds and with the Treasurer.

Table 11. Description of Student Leaders' Quality for PRO* Position in SSC

<i>Descriptions The PRO must be</i>	Group A		Group B		Group C		Combined	
	ACR	Final Rank	ACR	Rank	ACR	Rank	ACR	Rank
a. have good interpersonal relationship with others.	2.37	1	2.00	1	2.25	1.5	2.21	1
b. be hardworking	2.74	3	2.67	2.5	3.00	3	2.80	3
c. have good communication skills for information dissemination	2.46	2	2.67	2.5	2.25	1.5	2.46	2
d. possess pleasing personality	3.57	4	3.00	4	3.25	4	3.27	4
e. have experience in public speaking	3.86	5	4.67	5	4.25	5	4.26	5

* PRO- Public Relations Officer

Table 11 revealed that the most important quality for the position of PRO based from the perceptions of respondents is good interpersonal relationship with others. The Student Manual (2006) of the college places the importance of PRO as the information disseminator of all the information pertaining to all the projects, programs, and activities of the Student Council. It is in this context that the PRO must be able to handle feelings and emotions properly in order to have meaningful relationship with their constituents. This is supported by the Exchange

Theory which states that a long lasting relationship can be quite reciprocated by what we give and what we take. Based from the personal experience of the researcher, the inability of a PRO to have good interpersonal relationship with other students has a rippling effect to the entire Student Council for it failed to substantiate and properly inform its constituents about the current programs and activities of the group. The disconnection between the Student Council and the students become so glaring due to this failure.

Table 12. Coded Responses of the Respondents on the Qualities of PRO for Student Council Position

CODES/CATEGORIES	TRANSCRIPTION
Connect with his subordinates	<i>The PRO must be able to connect with his subordinates.</i>
Friendly	<i>The PRO should be friendly.</i>
Jolly and humorous to the students	<i>The PRO must possess the qualities of being jolly and humorous to the students.</i>
Share good relationships	<i>The PRO must be able to share good relationships with his members.</i>
Good relationship skills	<i>The PRO must possess good relationship skills.</i>
Respectful to his clients	<i>The PRO must be respectful to his clients.</i>

The coded responses indicate that the PRO must be able to connect with his subordinates, should be friendly, must possess the qualities of being jolly and humorous to the students, must be able to share good relationships with his members, and must be respectful to his clients. The mentioned responses support the quantitative findings that the most important quality for the position of PRO is that he/she must have good interpersonal relationship with others. Interviewed

respondents mentioned that while experience in public speaking is also a quality that must be possessed by the PRO, it is a must that he/she must be able to connect with the students in such a way that he/she would use words and speeches that would not be alien or intimidating with the students. A good rapport with students is the most important quality that a PRO must possess.

Table 13. Differences of Perceptions Among the Respondents on the Different Qualities of Student-Leaders for the Different Positions of the Student Council*

	Critical Value	F-ratio	Decision	Interpretation
All positions for the Student Council	3.89	1	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

*based from the actual summary of sources of variations between groups and within groups at $P>0.05$

It can be seen from table 13 that there are no significant differences of perceptions among the respondents in terms of their assessment of qualities for all the positions of the Student Council.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Choosing the qualities of student-leaders is of paramount importance in formulating policies for student affairs. The different positions of the Council starting from the President up to the PROs were subjected to respondents' perceptions on the best qualities that they should possess. For the positions of President and Vice President, the most important quality is dedication and commitment. The Secretary, on the other hand, must be responsible in keeping the minutes of the meeting of the Student Council. The Treasurer's most important quality is being trustworthy and honest. In the same vein, the Auditor of the Council must be impartial and dealing with the funds and with the Treasurer, and lastly, the PRO must be able to have good interpersonal relationship with others.

There were no significant differences of perceptions among the respondents based on statistical analysis. This means that the student-voters' perceptions have no difference with the perceptions of the incumbent Student Council officers which are considered to be the results of the recently concluded Student Council election.

From the mentioned qualities of student-leaders, the Office of Student Affairs should be able to come up with policies that would suit up to the resultant qualities. From the different theoretical perspectives, the administrators should be able to come up with a training program that would enhance and develop the different qualities of student-leaders. Regular meetings and exposures should be done to help the officers in reflecting their strengths and weaknesses for a better Student Council. Participation in different seminars and conferences shall be of great significance in enhancing the needs of the student-leaders for better student engagement and leadership.

The administrators of the college should be able to support student developmental programs in order to

attain its vision, mission, and goals of quality and holistic education for students.

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