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## Exploring the Educational Advocacy of Graduate Students in Philippine Higher Education Institution

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**Abstract.** Every school needs an advocate leader who can influence others to address issues, concerns, and problems that affect education, its quality, access, and the welfare of the stakeholders, especially that of the learners. This leader needs to subscribe to the redefined roles and nature of leadership. Advocacy leadership challenges educational leaders to take a progressive stance on pressing educational issues and problems. The next in line leaders need to awaken in themselves a specific advocacy and tune-in to this new trend. With this, a qualitative inquiry explored the educational advocacies of twenty graduate students involved in focus group discussions and interviews. Using the thematic network as an analytical framework, the inquiry identified 46 keywords, 51 basic themes, and 6 organizing themes. Thus, a new thematic network of educational advocacies was generated. Learners' welfare was the most dominant educational advocacy of graduate students, while leadership and governance, professional development, culture and religion, safety and environmental protection, and community development were considered as developing and noteworthy advocacies. These educational advocacies were deemed interconnected and interdependent to each other. Also, the study comes up with relevant propositions, while it makes recommendations for further research and utilization of the new framework. The results have implications for revisiting the educational administration curriculum by mapping out the subjects that contribute to the development of educational advocacy.

**Keywords.** Welfare, advocacy, educational advocacy, advocacy leadership

### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, educational institutions need leaders who have the heart for people. These are individuals whose desires and actions are directed toward improving the condition of the organization and community at large. These leaders must be advocate of communal, societal, and educational issues, concerns, and problems that affect the majority and the marginalized. This compelling demand redefines the role of school leaders and the nature of leadership itself. Advocating in school is now a new demand where school heads are expected to take the role of advocates (Rodríguez et al., 2009; Anderson, 2009; Grant, 2013; Shields, 2012). Advocacy leadership challenges school leaders to find ways that assist in building an education worthy of its name (Apple, 2009). School leaders need to think of themselves as advocates and hold progressive views on issues of educational inequality and injustices (Scott, 2009). Some issues in schools are widening (Thomas et al., 2012) and are affecting the communities, especially

learners. “As the public education system becomes more diverse, voices of advocates who positively support students and optimize student outcomes are essential” (Brown, 2017, p. ii).

It might be too late for school heads to develop an advocacy when they are already in practice or towards the end of their career. Advocacy must begin among the next in line individuals. When in practice, they can champion influencing policy-makers, decision-makers, community leaders, and stakeholders for relevant reforms that respond to widening issues. Accordingly, the emerging trend in education is vital role that educators to play in advocacy (Roberts et al., 2012). However, teachers have been underutilized voices on how to improve the school (Flom, 2010). There has been an attempt to produce a model in which pre-service teachers can embrace an advocate role (Massengale et al., 2014). But the question is, who are advocacy leaders? Are pre-service teachers advocate? Can current school heads and next in line leaders be considered advocates? Anderson (2009) answers this in his work:

An advocacy leader believes in the basic principles of a high-quality and equitable public education for all children and is willing to take risks to make it happen. Advocacy leaders tend to be skilled at getting beneath the high-sounding rhetoric to the devil in the details. They are skeptical [of] nature. They know the difference between the trappings of democracy and the real thing. They refuse to collude in so-called collaborative teams or distributed leadership endeavors that are inauthentic. (p.14)

Before, advocates were identified after an organized association, society, or professional organization. The trend today is too different for as long as you have the advocacy, you can be called an advocate. For instance, Brown’s (2017) study, which involved five principals on how they characterized being advocates. The results yielded twelve themes that advocate encourages, care, confident, has heart, helps, guides, presents, communicates, listens, generous, personable, and resilient. Graduate students who possess these characteristics can be considered advocates (Roberts et al., 2012). As argued, “A key component of leadership is advocating for one’s profession” (McMahon et al., 2009, p.121).

The next in line leaders need to be involved in the process of suggesting and enacting measures. They are expected to realize the roles of program and project implementers in school. However, they can only act as deliberate advocates on something of educational value (Carpenter et al., 2014). Thus, graduate students as next in line leaders need to develop a meaningful advocacy. Without it, these individuals may be blind to issues and problems that need immediate intervention during their time. And so, “preparing educational leaders to accept this challenge necessitates both a close examination of personal beliefs coupled with a critical analysis of professional behavior” (Brown, 2011, p. 350).

Advocacy is an attempt to influence public policy and practice of the private and public sectors or any players of change in society. Besides, it is an act that enhances the power of an organization to influence other actors in the policymaking process (Casey et al., 2011; Kaplan, 2012). Advocacy is promoting, supporting, and recommending beneficial solutions to successfully address problems (Bohne, 2014). It is a set of activities that challenge social justice issues in an attempt to bring about social change (Donaldson, 2008; Mellinger, 2014). Furthermore, it is a means of providing a voice to marginalized persons, empowering these individuals, and improving their quality of lives as well (Almog-Bar et al., 2013). This is supported by a multi-case study, which reported that advocacy is plainly fighting for what was right and being a voice (Brown, 2017).

Educational advocacy may have different definitions and connotations. In a case study, it was described as providing support and assistance to professionals and others who assist foster students with their educational needs. It was acknowledged that there is a need for improved

educational advocacy (Loetzerich, 2017). The National Center for Youth Law and Foster Youth Education Initiative (2010) put it:

Educational advocacy refers to monitoring a child's educational progress and speaking up to ensure [that] she receives the educational opportunities she needs. This includes communicating with the school, monitoring the child's class schedule, enrolling the youth in necessary tutoring and mentoring programs, and ensuring [that] she receives the educational opportunities to which she is entitled. (p.6)

A decade and a half ago, there was a survey on educational advocacies, initiatives, resources, and needs among 71 leaders of professional organizations and associations. As found, there were a variety of on-going advocacy initiatives, and the identified needs were related to resources, collaboration, and an agreement on the importance of the profession (Myers et al., 2004). Massengale et al. (2014) used a mixed-methods study to explore pre-service teachers' experiences of learning advocacy to determine how individuals might take up a critical advocacy lens in their professional lives. The first study targeted the counseling profession, while the second involved college education students.

In the Philippines setting, there were very few studies have been conducted relevant to education advocacies. These were on environment and leadership empowerment among students (Ramirez, 2017), education for all (Hoop, 2009), child friendly schools (UNICEF, 2011, 2009), child-friendly school compliance (Zamora et al., 2018), and gender socialization (Women & Gender Institute, n. d.). None of these studies have dealt specifically with educational advocacies of school heads or of the next in line individuals in an educational setting. As a response, a study explores the educational advocacies of prospective and current school heads since there is no existing framework or advocacy model specific to their leadership roles. The existing one is the advocacy competency model of school counselors, which highlights collaboration with school groups, political and social actions to change the system, individual student empowerment, action to reduce achievement barriers, and media advocacy (Haskins et al., 2016-2017). Although to some extent, school heads and counselors share some leadership roles, the former have specific, unique, and encompassing functions. Massengale et al. (2014) proposed an advocacy development model. This model is a continuum of embracing advocacy that includes negotiating the process of an advocate, awareness of the benefits of advocacy, negotiating who benefits from advocacy, affective dimensions of advocacy, and barriers to becoming an advocate. However, this model was developed among pre-service teachers. Marbley et al. (2011) conducted a collective case study of school personnel focusing on multicultural social justice in a school setting. It involved female African-American school administrator, a female Hispanic school counselor, and a female Caucasian leadership development trainer to illustrate the importance of leadership and advocacy (Marbley et al., 2011). Although it provided insight into the struggles associated with social justice in the school system, it was never made a model or a conceptual framework.

Previous studies have extremely different parameters. Again, a new advocacy model or framework is necessary that can impact leadership, optimal outcomes of students, make vision clearer, improve teamwork, increase talent, and promote what is best for students (Brown, 2017). A study reported significant gains of advocacy in participants on increased understanding of social justice challenges relevant to the school setting; wanted to continue to self-educate and examine their own identity biases and perceptions, and they had many ideas for action (Marbley et al., 2011). The new framework is also beneficial in revisiting existing educational administration programs in the university and the entire country at large to ensure that the curriculum can prepare graduate students to become advocates themselves.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

The study explored the educational advocacies of graduate students enrolled in educational administration postgraduate degree programs at the College of Education, Bukidnon State University, Philippines. This was conducted to generate new information on problems, issues, and concerns that graduate students do care and how they advance the interest of the minorities and influence stakeholders to take part in addressing these issues, concerns, or problems. This inquiry aimed to identify the keywords, basic, and organizing themes and derive the thematic network of educational advocacies.

## **3. Methodology**

This study used a qualitative approach of research in achieving the central objective, which is to explore the educational advocacies of graduate students. It involved twelve individuals who were officially enrolled in the program Master of Arts in Education major in Educational Administration while another eight who were enrolled in Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration program. There were two males and ten females from the master's level and two from this group who are currently handling administrative positions as school heads. There were four males and four females from the doctorate level, and half of this group had been administrators. Of the twenty individuals, four were connected to higher education institutions, fifteen were employed in the Department of Education and one from a private high school. Before data collection, the necessary protocols were observed and approval was obtained while the clearance was secured from the Research Ethics Committee of this university. Twenty individuals were given formal invitations specifying the intent and extent of their participation. These individuals voluntarily participated, as evidenced in their signed consent forms, where they signified their acceptance. In collecting the data, it conducted three focus group discussions and three interviews. The first FGD involved five MAED students, while the second involved five PhD students. On the last FGD, there were seven MAED students were involved. It also conducted three face-to-face interviews with three PhD students who were not available on scheduled date for focus group discussion. The purpose was to gather extensive and relevant information on the advocacies of current and prospective educational leaders. Specifically, the researchers prepared a set of motive statements that answered the central question. These motives were validated by two senior faculty who were teaching in graduate programs.

The study utilized the step-by-step approach of qualitative data analysis developed by Akinyode et al. (2018) as the analytical framework. Its steps include data logging (audio recording), anecdotes (transcribing records), vignettes (identifying basic themes), data coding (organizing themes from basic themes), and thematic network (connecting basic and organizing themes to the global theme). In the last step, the study created the structure of the thematic network of the educational advocacies of 20 graduate students shown in a graphical presentation. This approach was founded on thematic networks developed by Attride-Stirling (2001) with the aim to understanding the topic of concern with transparency on how the process was done.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

After recording (step 1) the focus group discussion and interviews, records were transcribed (step 2). Keywords and basic themes or vignettes were identified (step 3). These vignettes were extracted from the transcripts that directly answered the problem. In this step, 46 keywords and 51 basic themes (see Table 1) which were clustered into 6 organizing themes (step 4, see Table 2). Nineteen of the basic themes (6-24) constituted the learners' welfare, while the other ten (42-51) were put together under leadership and governance. There were seven basic themes

(25-31) comprising professional development, while six (36-41) dubbed as culture and religion. Limitedly, five basic themes (1-5) comprised safety and environmental protection, while the last four basic themes (32-35) were grouped under community development. Reading was mentioned four times, while research was cited three times. These keywords were mentioned twice, such as innovative teaching, anti-bullying, inclusive education, culture, governance, and financial assistance.

#### 4.1. Learners' Welfare

Our public education system has become more diverse and advocates are needed who can positively support students and optimize student outcomes (Brown, 2017). Obviously, the most dominant educational advocacies of the graduate students were related to the welfare of the learners. Looking at the individual basic themes, the prevailing advocacies under this organizing theme are on literacy (BTs7, 8, 13, 21, and 24). Although numeracy was slightly cited (BT15), reading is at the heart of this welfare. Close to two decades, the Department of Education implemented the national reading program through DepEd Order (DO) No. 45, s. 2002 as the main thrust of the Basic Education curriculum to ensure that every child is a successful reader at the end of grade III. Every year, DepEd national issued a memorandum for the celebration of reading months normally in the month of October or November. However, the Philippines ranked last in the latest results of the 2018 Programme for International

**Table 1.** From Keywords to Basic Themes

No	Keywords	Basic Themes
1	Environmental care /Waste Segregation	We really have to take good care of the environment. Only few care of segregating the waste.
2	Depression	Many millennials are depressed, cannot sustain work, tolerate pain and do not have adults who can guide them. I listened unto them.
3	Single use plastic	I am member of a team for protected area management. I tried to prevent single use plastic.
4	Incorrect information	I would like to stop the spreading of wrong information.
5	ICT integration / Innovative Teaching	We implemented instructional innovations. I am conducting trainings on ICT in our LAC sessions.
6	Institutionalizing Research	I partner with someone from other division and we planned to institutionalized research especially action research.
7	Reading ability	I am advocating the improvement of reading level of children. I have a program with teachers- 1 hour and a half where grade 6 pupils teach lower grades. We have also small library inside the classrooms.
8	Ecumenism and Values Formation	We have mass in school and religious service for non-Catholics. I invited and encouraged other sects to provide pupils with catechesis and counseling.
9	Clean, peaceful and beautiful school	My focus is on school cleanliness. I encouraged my teachers to maintain peaceful, beautiful and clean school. I included parents and children on this.

No	Keywords	Basic Themes
10	ICT skills development of stakeholders.	We encouraged children, parents and stakeholders to join in sessions on learning ICT.
11	Reading ability	I encouraged teachers and parents to assist their children to learn to read. I even welcome tutorials.
12	Anti-Bullying	With the coordinator on bullying, we implement some strategies that prevent bullying among pupils.
13	Inclusive Education	I am advocating in our school the education for all. I constantly encouraged student-mothers to continue schooling and gave them considerations and those who are always absent. I encouraged them to go back to school especially those from low socio-economic status families.
14	Financial support	I tap stakeholders to donate cash for my students who need financial support.
15	Religious activity	I used to encourage my neighbors especially the youth to join religious activities.
16	Youth development	I encouraged the youth to participate in sports activities.
17	Participatory management	I am advocating participatory management in decision-making and implementation of plans.
18	Student-centered teaching	I am advocating a student-centered classroom where I try to deviate from pure lecture but on activity-based instruction.
19	Collaboration	I find it necessary for the community to work collaboratively and collectively in all activities, programs and projects to sustain organizational performance.
20	Independent decision-making	I emphasized to staff and school administrators in different centers to be independent in decision-making.
21	Workload/better Pay/innovative teaching	Faculty should have lesser workload, better pay, have the lee-way to be innovative.
22	parents' mindset and child-labor	I am convincing parents to support their children to be in school and not allow them to go to work for children's better and brighter future. I would prefer long and lasting or sustainable development of the families.
23	Lack of classrooms	I am very concerned about the lacked of classrooms and classes have big numbers.
24	Lack of equipment	We lacked equipment like computers since I am the ICT in-charge. We only have 15 units so far.
25	Lack of teachers/ class size	I have lots of coordinatorship and papers works and I usually left my pupils in class and I pity unto them.

No	Keywords	Basic Themes
26	Culture/Indigenous People	I have an advocacy related to culture. I will share information about culture particularly the ethnic groups in Bukidnon to present generation that we really have to value and respect these people because they are the foundation.
27	Research and culture	I have done research on culture of ethnic groups. I love these people.
28	Educating IPs	I have now a project on culture with the Matigsalog in Arakan, Cotabato. I motivate and teach them that they are not third class people.
29	Productivity/Contribution	My advocacy is to contribute in attaining the mission, vision of the university in producing critical, innovative, and service-oriented leaders.
30	Research / Professional life	I focus in research. This is least practiced (referring to her department) because they are afraid. We really need to discover something. It's a foundation of becoming good person and professional.
31	Research, curriculum, Instruction and governance	Research can enhance the content of education, instruction and it improves governance.
32	Slow and Non-Readers	We have slow and non-readers in school. I helped them improved. Now, as I am following them in Facebook, they are now making and posting poems.
33	SARDOs	I am advocate for at risk of dropping out. I have learners who do not like to go to school, don't have slippers and food to eat. No projects required, no bringing of health kit. But I bought them slippers for those who are always present. I treat and gave them tour for free. One group per month.
34	Inclusive education	I become more considerate with students especially in my subject, Math. I realized they will not learn Math their entire life. This was after two of my students did not graduate because of my subject.
35	SARDOs	I visited students at home so that they will go back to school.
36	Stakeholders' Support	I asked barangay officials to support students who cannot afford to pay their PTA and other needs. This was to decrease drop outs. This is to support education for all.
37	Learners with special needs	I have an advocacy for special children. I provided special instruction to learners with disabilities.
38	Anti-Bullying	I am an advocate anti-bullying among students. I myself experienced bullying from my colleagues.
39	School Governance and work relations	I am very much concerned on how the school is managed. Currently, we have lots of problems in school on teachers' relationship. Our principal is bias and is not open-minded. She favors only those her favorites.

No	Keywords	Basic Themes
40	Early pregnancy, behaviors and accommodation	I am concerned with early pregnancy. The main issue is the discipline among our female students who become pregnant. We cannot suspend them but accommodate because of the law.
41	Openness and public shaming	If I become an administrator, I would refrain scolding teachers publicly. I would be open to others' ideas.
42	Reading ability	From frustration level, I now focus on reading. It would be very hard for me if they cannot read.
43	Tree Planting	In the community, I am involved in tree planting.
44	Disaster risk reduction	I am dealing with the safety of everyone inside the school.
45	Financial assistance	I am supporting my learners, those who do not have fare I gave them money and I usually sponsored families and learners who cannot afford to pay for their responsibilities.
46	School supplies and financial assistance	Those who do not have pencils and notebooks I usually gave them. I also looked for sponsors and donors for them to buy for school supplies.
47	Reading, writing and arithmetic	I am advocating about reading, writing and arithmetic. I solicited for assistance from friends and former classmates and I reproduced reading materials for pupils.
48	Spirituality	I am more focused on the spiritual aspect of children. It became a part of my life to introduce Jesus Christ to children.
49	Right to education	I anchor my advocacy on education for all. Not everyone is given the right education. I emphasized the need for everyone to be educated. I am surrounded with neighbors who are deprived of education. I always feel the need to help them.
50	Financial literacy	I may not be good in financial literacy and cooperativism. Now, I am organizing our own cooperative in Kalasungay. This is the way I let them come in bigger community where education is free by giving them seminars on financial literacy
51	Modeling	I may not be good in financial literacy and cooperativism. Now, I am organizing our own cooperative in Kalasungay. This is the way I let them come in bigger community where education is free by giving them seminars on financial literacy. We need to keep on educating our teachers to be models of our youth like if we want our youth to be educated in financial literacy, then we need to be financial literature.

Student Assessment specifically on reading (OECD, 2019). This is one of the widening educational issues in the country, which needs more advocates. This prevalent advocacy seems inevitable since twelve of the participants are presently working in public elementary schools, where three of them were school heads. And it is so timely. In fact, they had localized school

or classroom-based activities aligned with the national reading program (e. g, empowering grade 6 pupils to help lower grades read; putting a library in the classroom; encouraging parents to tutor their children at home). With the cited policy, making learners successful readers has become a priority among these individuals. This advocacy may have been strongly influenced by existing policies and programs in the department.

Graduate students have cited that they advocate the education for all (EFA) and, in particular with inclusive education (BTs10, 17, and 18). This advocacy was done by encouraging both the learners and parents to go back to school when the former have successively been absent. Accordingly, they usually gave considerations, especially to learners who came from families with low socio-economic status. They understand that socio-economic status is a factor why learners cannot attend to classes regularly. In fact, they tapped local government units to support learners financially, especially those who cannot afford to pay for their PTA dues. This was done to prevent or lessen the drop-out rate. Moreover, one of the participants was a graduate of Special Education who cited that she constantly provided special instruction to her learners who had special needs and disabilities (BT18). Accordingly, this has been her commitment ever since she engaged in teaching. This practice is a manifestation of inclusive education in the classroom. Children with special needs need to be accommodated as among the mainstream learners.

Participants were also concerned with discipline-related advocacies (BTs9, 19, and 20). One school head was prompted by an issue with female students who experienced early pregnancies. These students became the talk in their place and his leadership was questioned by the community because of this perennial and re-occurring issue. Instead of pulling out these learners from school, he accommodated them. He provided them with value formation emphasizing discipline together with other young women in school to prevent more cases of early pregnancies. Because of this, it has become his advocacy to protect young women in school from the by-stander-predators who do not have work but are willing to victimize their female high school learners. Moreover, two of them mentioned that they have been doing a lot of activities within their respective schools towards anti-bullying. One of them had research related to anti-bullying law. As a school head, this initiative has become close to his heart. Out of his research, he crafted some measures and activities that prevent bullying inside or outside school. Another shared this advocacy of anti-bullying because she herself was a victim of it with her colleagues in their school. From being a victim, she became an advocate of anti-bullying.

Learners' welfare was also indicated as an educational advocacy through maintaining the home visitation (BT16), taking care of those learners who are at risk of dropping out (BT14), and convincing parents with their children who had been engaged in child labor to send back their children to school (BT12). They are trying to advance the interest of learners in cooperation with parents by educating that children would have a better and brighter future with education. In addition, they also invested financial resources, especially among those who cannot afford to have fare every day -they gave money. Those who cannot buy school supplies, and those who do not have slippers to wear and food to eat, they provided (BTs14, 22 & 23). They also tapped friends and former classmates to extend financial support to learners in need. One teacher has been practicing give learners a free tour. Every month, a group of learners is brought to a city where she exposed them. The only intention was to prevent pupils from dropping out and increase their motivation to go to school every day.

Lastly, one participant who was exposed to student affairs and services engaged in continuing support and care to depressed college students and professionals (BT6). Although she is not a psychology graduate or a registered Guidance Counselor, she took it as her

advocacy. She said, many millennials nowadays cannot sustain at work because they are depressed and need people who are willing to listen to them. The issues above that graduate students are advocating are some of the widening issues nowadays (Thomas et al., 2012). Teacher advocates are not intended to replace guidance counselors or therapists. Most of them supply the extra emotional support needed by students (Scardamaglia, 1993).

The Philippine Congress had institutionalized children's welfare in the following laws. Inclusive education was anchored on the Child and Youth Welfare Code, Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, Kindergarten Education Act, Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, Indigenous Peoples Rights, Special Protection of Children against Child Abuse, Neglect, Cruelty, Exploitation and Discrimination, Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, an Act Establishing an Open High School Systems in the Philippines, Domestic Workers Act or Batas Kasambahay, Anti-Bullying Act of 2012, Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict, and Emergency Relief and Protection for Children before, during, and after emergency situations. Moreover, the Department of Education issued orders in support of some policies above. These are on implementing rules and guidelines of anti-bullying (DO No. 55, s. 2013), national policy framework on learners and schools as zones of peace (DO No. 32, s. 2019), Policy on the Protection of Children in Armed Conflict (DO No. 57, s. 2017), DepEd Child Policy (DO No. 40, s. 2012), and the Declaration of Schools as Peace Zones (DO No. 44, s. 2005).

#### *4.2. Leadership and Governance*

Advocacy leadership dares school leaders to find means that builds education worthy of its name. These leaders need to reconsider themselves as advocates as they take a more progressive view on issues of educational inequality and injustices (Apple, 2009; Scott, 2009). Anderson (2009) describes advocacy leaders as someone who "believes in the basic principles of a high quality and equitable public education for all children and is willing to take risks to make it happen" (p. 14). Leadership and governance were the second most dominant educational advocacy of graduate students. This one is multidimensional. First, it has something to do with how a current leader leads people and staff and allows them for independent decisions. Second, it has something to do with the relationship between the school head and teachers. Lastly, it is inclusive of provisions that only management can provide (e.g. infrastructure, fixture, and other types of necessary provision). Participants have made these as their advocacies because they have problems and concerns along these areas in which they care a lot or they simply promote and call for better leadership and management.

One participant who is currently in a leadership position in the university has been advocating participatory management both in decision-making and in implementing plans (BT42). He also advocated an independent decision-making that he had mainstreamed up to the office staff level (BT44). The same participant emphasized to his subordinates the importance of collaboration within a community or organization. Members of the organization should work collectively in all activities, programs, and projects to maintain better organizational performance (BT43). Another participant who happened to be in leadership too shared that he was too concerned with how he could contribute to the attainment of the organization's mission and vision, particularly in producing critical, innovative, and service-oriented leaders (BT49). This particular dimension of the organizing theme would somehow corroborate what Anderson (2009) said that advocacy leaders who "tend to be skilled at getting beneath the high-sounding rhetoric to the devil in the details. They are skeptical by nature. They know the difference between the trappings of democracy and the real thing. They refuse to collude in so-called collaborative teams or distributed leadership endeavors that are inauthentic" (p.14).

For some of them, especially those who were involved in first focus group discussion, care so much about the relationship between the school head and teachers or among teachers themselves (BTs50 & 51). These participants are currently suffering from a non-conducive work environment and work relations. One expressed that their school has a lot of problems related to relationships (e.g. they have biased and closed-minded school heads, school heads with favorite teachers, and fragmented faculty). One participant vehemently expressed that when she becomes a school head one day, she will not scold her teachers in public. She was referring to her personal experience with her principal for being scolded in front of her pupils. On governance, a participant has been advocating lesser workloads, better pay, and lee-ways to become innovative teachers (BT45). Another recalled that she had lot of coordinatorship roles and paper works. For this, she felt pity to her pupils for she was most of the time leaving them with activities in the classroom, and instruction was affected. According to her, this would degrade quality teaching and learning (BT48). Some of them are advocates against the lack of classrooms, big classes (BT46), and lack of equipment, especially ICT (BT47). These concerns can only be acted upon by top officials. This confirms the results of a survey on educational advocacies that identified needs were related to resources (Myers et al., 2004).

This advocacy shares to how advocacy leadership was introduced with its major tenets, such as student advocacy, authenticity, reflective learning, collaborative decision-making, intended change, and the utilization of power and politics (Anderson, 2009; Shields, 2011; Grant, 2013). The purpose of advocacy leadership is to enabling of fundamental changes that may disrupt the status quo, transcend the current way of thinking and way of working in a school or community (Anderson, 2009). Previous research revealed that principals use vision, intentional strategies of expectation, modeling, decision-making processes, reflection, authentic conversation, and stories to facilitate change (Grant, 2013). Further, advocacy leaders usually focus on the interests of others and the promotion of policy (Malen, 1995). They view themselves as part of the problems, issues, and concerns that advocate children. Their first loyalty is to children and the making of equitable education and society at large (Anderson, 2009; Shields, 2012; Grant, 2013).

#### *4.3. Culture and Religion*

This fourth organizing theme was derived from three PhD students. One of them is currently in dissertation writing. Accordingly, she advocated culture by educating the younger generations about the ethnic groups in the province. Further, she said that these people need to be respected and valued. She even extends her advocacy outside the province of Bukidnon by implementing a project with an ethnic group in Arakan, Cotabato province. In it, she is raising the awareness of IPs that they are not third-class people (BTs38, 40, and 41). In addition, this graduate student has been promoting to children or youth on how Jesus Christ is known to the young generations (BT39). She said, she was too concerned on developing the spiritual aspects of the children.

Another PhD student and currently a school head in public elementary school shared her advocacy relevant to ecumenism. She recalled that she welcomes different religions or sects in school. In fact, they are regularly celebrating Masses with Catholics and religious services with non-Catholic groups. She invited them to give counseling, value education, and catechesis. She advocated the complementary roles of these groups for the holistic development of pupils (BT36). Lastly, one PhD student shared how she influenced the youth in their place. As among them, she takes responsibility for bringing them to the Church and becoming active in different religious activities (BT37). This is quite unique since her advocacy is promoted outside the school.

#### *4.4. Professional Development*

To keep excellent professional performance, graduate students must assume a personal responsibility for their own performance, growth, and development (Hanif et al., 2011). This organizing theme is the third most dominant educational advocacy of the graduate students. Brown (2017) emphasized the need for a new framework of educational advocacy that can impact leadership, which can result in optimal outcomes of students, makes vision clearer, improves teamwork, increases talent, and promotes what is best for students.

At the classroom level, one shared the importance of advocating a student-centered instruction and activity-based teaching and learning processes (BT28). This teacher calls of getting rid from the traditional ways of teaching. He emphasized the value of empowering students beginning in the classroom. In support, one participant advocates the importance of instructional innovations. In fact, he has been conducting trainings on ICT to influence others to adopt the integration of technology in instruction (BT26). A study concluded that teachers have to use both student-centered and teacher-centered approaches appropriately depending on the materials under discussion (Emaliana, 2017). However, some studies have claimed that student-centered teaching provides opportunities for students to develop analytical, problem-solving, and deep learning skills (Indrianti, 2012; Lestari et al., 2009). In it, teachers have a critical role to facilitating learning rather than instructing students to learn (Roberto & Madrigal, 2019). There was one highlighted the need of becoming a model to learners in embracing lifelong learning mindset (BT31).

One graduate student shared his strong call to avoid the propagation of wrong and fake information (BT25). This is so dear in his heart and he wants people to stop it verbally or via social media. He has observed this among colleagues in school that many of them accordingly have obtained incorrect notions resulting in malpractice that affects education. In an article, it was reported that fake news has many faces in which digital influencers, bloggers, and fake account operators weaponized social media to sow distrust (Ong et al., 2019). Three basic themes (BTs27, 29, and 30) indicate a strong advocacy for research. One participant was active in research from institutional to international levels. He said, he started collaborating with other divisions to institutionalize research and make it a part of their culture. Ault et al. (2018) call this move as identifying allies and working with others. Others call it building collaborative relationships with partners in the community (ASCA, 2010; Grothaus et al., 2011).

A female graduate student shared that it is research can make us a good person and professional. An experienced participant mentioned that only research can enhance the content of education, instruction, and governance. Research is at the heart of professional development. Bohne (2014) argued that advocacy is promoting, supporting, and recommending beneficial solutions to successfully address problems. To realize this, it is research which can bring advocates to greater heights when they offer solutions based on scientific evidence.

#### *4.5. Safety and Environmental Protection*

This organizing theme describes the advocacy of four graduate students. The first one was a doctorate student and an active member of an institute that advocated better management of protected areas. She mentioned that we need to take care of our environment and properly segregate our garbage. Personally, she avoided single-use plastic. With this, she tries to influence others, including her friends, to do the same (BTs1 & 2). One public elementary school head and at the same time a doctorate student has been advocating school's cleanliness. He said, he emphasized to teachers, parents, and pupils to maintain clean, peaceful, and beautiful school (BT3). This has been the focus of his school leadership and management. With this advocacy, he tries to influence stakeholders to value safety in school. An MA student has

been advocating continuing tree planting. This is very common an ordinary yet not many responded to this on-going call (BT4). Another was sharing that he was in an advocacy for the safety of everyone in school. Currently, he is in charge of disaster and risk reduction management. With this responsibility, he started to promote and maintain everyone's safety on the daily basis (BT5). DepED –Valenzuela (2019) issued a Division Memorandum to strengthen its advocacy on Eco-Friendly and Go-Green Practices. This was pursuant to DO No. 52, s. 2011 entitled "Strengthening Environmental Education in Public and Private Schools", pursuant further to R. A. No. 9512-an Act to Promote Environmental Education and other purposes. These policies may have influenced these graduate students to embrace environmental protection.

#### *4.6. Community Development*

Community development is another developing advocacy of the educational administration students. This theme was derived from the three graduate students. One of them shared that he had been involving the community, parents with their children to avail the ICT training that their school has been offering. Originally, it was intended for his teachers after they were given a set of computer units by DepEd national. Later on, they realized that they needed to transfer the skills to empower the community especially their stakeholders (BT32). One of them is an active coach. It has been his advocacy to

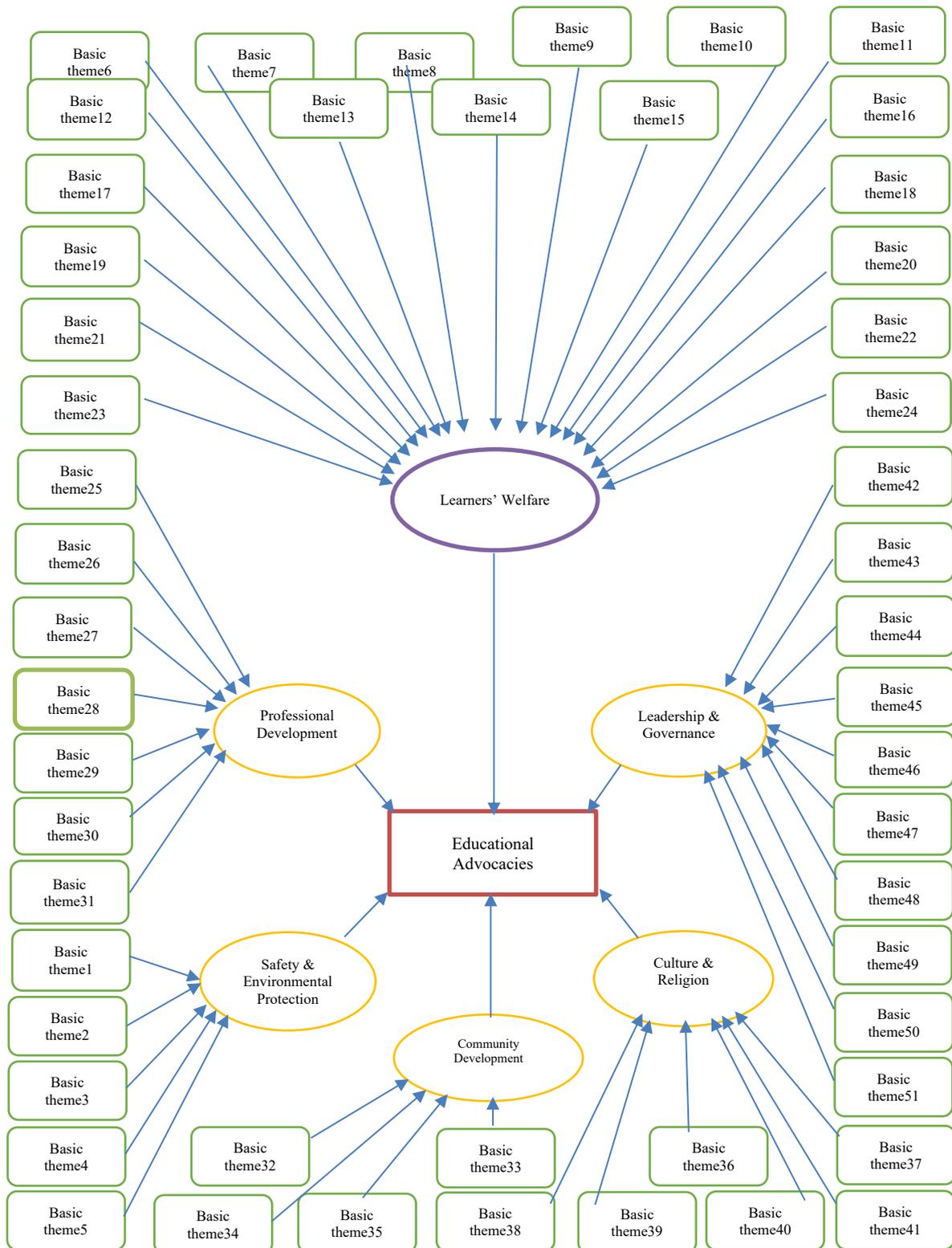


Figure 1. Thematic Network of Educational Advocacies

encourage youth to engage in sports activities and development. For years, he has been doing this within the school, but this time he extends assistance for training the youth in their community, especially those who have passion in sports (BT33). The next one has championed

the education for all principles since he has been surrounded by neighbors who were deprived of education. He believes that every person deserves quality education. Most of his neighbors are indigenous people. One aspect that he has been advocating is on financial literacy. He acknowledged he was not good at it, but he felt that the community needs it the most. In fact, he put up or establish a cooperative within that community and continuously educate them on how to manage their money (BTs34 & 35). In this, he promotes cooperatives in the community.

## 5. General Statement

This inquiry generalized that graduate students have developed, have been taking actions and promoting a wide range of educational advocacies in their respective schools and communities. The thematic network in figure 1 shows that the most dominant advocacies were learners' welfare. It was generalized further that participants have a high regard towards their learners in promoting and advocating basic literacy, resolving untimely pregnancy, caring for depressed, promoting value formation through ecumenical complementation, raising awareness of bullying behaviors, advancing youth development and social engagement, extending financial assistance to learners, and taking actions that promote inclusive education. The same figure shows leadership and governance, professional development, culture and religion, safety and environmental protection, and community development as developing but noteworthy educational advocacies. This implies that issues, problems, and concerns related to these areas or organized themes are also dear and have educational value (Carpener & Brewer, 2014) to graduate students of the Bukidnon State University. These results have implications for revisiting the educational administration curriculum by mapping out the subjects that may contribute to the development of educational advocacy.

This study recommended (1) that there would be equal representations from the basic education and from the higher education institutions for the next study. This is to come with a more balanced framework of educational advocacies that is generalizable to both levels of educational institutions; (2) conduct a multi-case study tracing the participants of this study and on how far they achieved their respective educational advocacies and estimate the impact they have contributed; (3) It is recommended that this new framework of educational advocacies be tested and subjected to construct validation using structural equation modeling or at least exploratory factor analysis. For this, the proponents need to develop items or scales equally represented by each organizing theme. This is to finalize whether these six organizing themes of the framework can obtain goodness of fit when tested in a bigger sample and be considered dimensions of educational advocacies; (4) To future researchers, the outputs of this inquiry may be used in their studies as theoretical frameworks and literature; and (5) conduct curriculum mapping of educational administration programs to identify subjects or courses that may contribute to the development of advocacy leadership.

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