On Becoming Student Leaders the First Time:
The Transition Experiences of Neophyte Student Officers

Philip Jay P. Leaño[1], Noli F. Villareal[2], Wilter C. Friales[2]

[1]*Student, Notre Dame of Marbel University*
[2]*Student, Notre Dame of Marbel University*
[3]*Professor, Notre Dame of Marbel University*

Abstract: The study aims to gain insights into the transition experience of neophyte students from being non-officers into being an officer at Notre Dame of Marbel University. In this study, five (5) participants underwent an in-depth interview about their transition experience. The research design that was utilized for this study was a Qualitative Design with a Phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, it's being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. Using thematic analysis, the researchers transcribed the interview recordings and used the strategy of clustering themes to easily group answers that are similar to each other. Through this, a general theme and a minor theme were generated out of all the participant's answers. The essence of the phenomenon, insights, and implications were also added to further explain the transition process.

As a result, themes were taken and the researchers found out that the transition experience of neophyte officers revolved around being able to uncover the potential to become leaders.

Keywords: Transition, Neophytes, Leadership, Student Officers

Introduction

The beginning starts with an end. Transition is a phenomenon that is experienced by any man that undergoes change and develops a certain experience in dealing with the "gap" from being on a certain point going towards another point. This phenomenon is usually meaningful when the experiences came from those who actually started out raw and transitioned into becoming something that is different. According to Bridges (2007), a transition has three phases. This includes the Ending (Losing and letting go), the Neutral Zone, and the New Beginning. In the context of student leadership, transition plays a major role in creating and honing experiences for the officers. The curiosity arises as to why veteran leaders always start out as leaders and neophyte leaders always start out as neophytes. Through this study, the researchers gained insights into what really is the transition experience of NDMU college student officers while looking at the lens of Bridges. We seek to understand the things they have let go, the things they have experienced and their new beginning.

Leadership, as experienced by student officers in Notre Dame of Marbel University (NDMU), undergoes a series of formation programs that foster and promote the development of each student. These formation programs are intended for their academic competence, leadership skills, and citizenship in general. With this, the institution now becomes a place for leaders to grow holistically. But even with the presence of these programs, there are instances where leaders are deemed effective because of their character, personality, and traits as a person.

In the context of the Notre Dame of Marbel University, while there are also identified student leaders, a lesser number taking the role of an officer occurs nearly every year. According to the study of Mandi et, al. (2023), after the academic year 2017-2018, the Supreme Student Government organization positions at Notre Dame of Marbel University have never been completely filled until the academic year 2022-2023. Because of this, most officers are repeated, and the same student is taking the role of being an officer more which leads to a lesser number of new officers every year.

Review of Related Literature

Transition

Transition refers to a process of change or movement from one state, condition, or situation to another. It involves a shift or transition period where individuals or systems undergo adjustments, adaptations, or transformations to adapt to new circumstances or environments. As Kralik & Loon (2006) stated, transition refers to the manner in which individuals react and adjust to changes that occur gradually. It involves the process of adapting to new situations or circumstances, incorporating the impact of a change event into their lives. Transition is a concept that is important to people; however, to further develop understanding, research

must extend beyond single events or single responses. Longitudinal comparative and longitudinal cross-sectional inquiries are required to further develop the concept (Kralik & Loon 2006).

The transition as defined in this study draws out the same context as the transformative study on the academic library and uses the Bridges Transition Theory Model. The model presents the three phases of transition which is the "Letting Go", "Neutral Zone" and "A New Beginning". This model is used as the main context for the study and these transition phases will further explain what makes up the phenomenon of transition as experienced by neophyte student officers. The existence of this model on the academic library presented became vital due to its opportunity to show the progress from one point to another. Using this model, the idea of "letting go" is being done first, because transitioning into something requires leaving the previous state. The next is the "neutral zone" which means a person is starting to accept that anytime a certain transition effect will occur and by making oneself "neutral", they are ready to embrace these changes. And after that, going through the "New Beginning" means that neutrality has changed into something different and has really made the transition from being at one point to another.

Leadership
Commonly, one might say that leadership involves guiding and motivating a group or individual toward a specific objective. Leaders inspire and encourage others to take the necessary actions to achieve success. To become a successful leader, it is important to acquire and develop the skills required for effective leadership. As Hunt (2004) demonstrated, leadership is a complex concept that is influenced by various factors. These factors include the context of history, different perspectives from stakeholders, and the level of analysis. They all play a role in shaping our understanding of leadership.

A study by Kaiser et al., (2012) stated that psychological theories define leadership as a social process where leaders employ interpersonal behaviors to inspire and motivate followers to actively contribute toward achieving group goals. In essence, leaders use their influence to encourage others to participate and work together towards a common objective.

Student Leadership
Student leadership, a concept entrenched in educational and community contexts, denotes the pivotal role undertaken by students who wield influence, motivation, and guidance toward achieving specific objectives. Crucially, student leaders typically ascend to their roles through election or appointment, committing to serve in their capacities for a minimum of one academic year. This definition, as elucidated by Dempster & Lizzio (2007), underscores the enduring fascination surrounding young individuals' capacity for leadership across school and community spheres.

Practicing Student Leadership and its Effectiveness
The effectiveness of practicing student leadership has been studied by various researchers to provide proper support to its existence but it always ends up as essential most of the time. One study tends to review the effective practice in student leadership that provides an overview of broad policy and theoretical approaches in relation to student leadership and includes an evidence review of effective leadership policy and practice. There is a need for greater consensus about the purposes and outcomes for which student voice, participation, and leadership are fostered.

Transition Experience
According to DeVilbiss (2014), the purpose of qualitative phenomenology was to understand the transition experience of traditional-age, first-time, full-time, conditionally-admitted students, attending a mid-sized, four-year public university in the Southeastern region of the United States through the lens of Schlossberg's transition theory. Schlossberg's transition theory (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012) as the theoretical framework and the phenomenological data collection and analysis process presented by Moustakas (1994), six themes characterized participants' transition experiences: (a) increasing independence, (b) intensifying demands and difficulty, (c) learning what works and what doesn't, (d) leaving loved ones behind but keeping some in one's life, (e) uncovering support, and (f) finding one's place.

A university setting, like Notre Dame of Marbel University, with its diverse array of extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations, serves as an ideal environment for students to hone their leadership skills (Wurr & Hamilton, 2012). These opportunities provide fertile ground for students to not only apply theoretical concepts but also to learn from their successes and failures in real-life leadership situations.Moreover, the college experience offers a unique period of independence and self-discovery, during which undergraduate students can explore and develop their personal leadership styles (Forbes, 2014). By actively participating in campus organizations, community service initiatives, and leadership development programs, students can gain

valuable insights into their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth as leaders.Incorporating practical leadership experiences into the undergraduate curriculum empowers students to become effective leaders who can make meaningful contributions to their communities and society at large. By fostering a culture of experiential learning and hands-on practice, universities can prepare students to navigate the complexities of the modern world with confidence and competence. Through intentional and immersive leadership development initiatives, students emerge as empowered leaders ready to effect positive change in their respective fields and beyond.

Leadership styles in dealing with transition

The different leadership styles have their own distinct characteristics in handling change. Autocratic leaders might think that transition is just a phase to further expand their influence because they see it as a stepping stone while other leadership style does not. A study The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: An Analysis of the Differential Effects of Leadership Types concludes that comparisons between transformational and instructional leadership and between the five leadership dimensions suggested that the more leaders focus their relationships, their work, and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes. The article concludes with a discussion of the need for leadership research and practices to be more closely linked to the evidence on effective teaching and effective teacher learning. Such alignment could increase the impact of school leadership on student outcomes even further. (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe 2008).

In the transition context, integrating these leadership styles also makes a different approach to how a student-officer handles the phenomenon of transition. In the context of transitions, the integration of various leadership styles significantly influences how student-officers navigate and manage the complexities inherent in periods of change. As highlighted by a study conducted by Lee (2017), the working environment plays a pivotal role in shaping the ease or difficulty of a leader's transition into a new role or setting. The adaptability and effectiveness of a leader in a new environment are profoundly impacted by the congruence between their leadership style and the demands of the situation.

For student-officers undergoing transitions, such as transitioning from academic to leadership roles within an educational institution, the challenges can be multifaceted. These transitions often entail assuming new responsibilities, managing diverse teams, and adapting to dynamic organizational dynamics—all of which require a nuanced leadership approach. Lee's findings suggest that the adoption of appropriate leadership styles can help mitigate the adverse effects of workplace changes. By proactively identifying and addressing challenges associated with transition, leaders can foster a positive organizational climate conducive to growth, innovation, and resilience.

The Impact of School Transition on Student Academic Performance

Scholars agree that students have the ability to regulate their learning and motivation, which have a direct impact on students' ability to enjoy school, engage with learning, and succeed academically (Wolters 2003). One critical stage of education that deserves great attention is the transition especially during the schools' lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Galton, Gray, Ruddock 2000).In a study by Uka and Uka (2020), during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, self-reported information was gathered from a group of 80 students in the sixth and seventh grades, ranging from 12 to 14 years old. The findings suggested that students generally managed the transition well, particularly when they received assistance from both their parents and teachers. Subsequently, correlation analysis revealed significant associations between the students' views on their shift from primary to secondary school, their ability to regulate their own learning, and their level of motivation.

Theoretical Framework

Bridges' Model highlights three stages of transition that people go through when they are faced with change. These are:

Ending, Losing, and Letting Go.

Transition starts with an ending. This is paradoxical but true. This first phase of transition begins when people identify what they are losing and learn how to manage these losses. They determine what is over and being left behind, and what they will keep. These may include relationships, processes, team members or locations.

The Neutral Zone.

The second step of transition comes after letting go: the neutral zone. People go through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new is not fully operational. It is when the critical psychological realignments and repatternings take place. It is the very core of the transition process. This is the time between the old reality and sense of identity and the new one. People are creating new processes and learning what their new roles will be. They are in flux and may feel confusion and distress. The neutral zone is the seedbed for new beginnings.

The New Beginning.

Beginnings involve new understandings, values and attitudes. Beginnings are marked by a release of energy in a new direction – they are an expression of a fresh identity. Well-managed transitions allow people to establish new roles with an understanding of their purpose, the part they play, and how to contribute and participate most effectively. As a result, they feel reoriented and renewed.Bridges says that people will go through each stage at their own pace. For example, those who are comfortable with the change will likely move ahead to stage three quickly, while others will linger at stages one or two.

This framework is being used because the flow of transition is from being a non-officer to being an officer with the phenomenon in between. This phenomenon of transition is also experienced through the three stages in order, making the framework follow a single flow of the process.

In the study, this theory is essential to draw the data and information from the participants with their transition experience. Whether there is really the presence of the mentioned stages in one's experience of transition specifically, from being a non-officer into being an officer for the first time. This theory will now tell whether the three (3) stages are normally existing in one's self as they transition or shift from one point to another.

Statement of the Problem

The study gained insights into the transition experience of neophyte students from being non-officers into being an officer at Notre Dame of Marbel University. Specifically, it answered the following questions:
1. How do neophytes become officers?
2. How does the transition experience of neophytes be described?
3. What meaning is drawn by neophytes on their transition experience?

Method

Research Design

The research design that was utilized for this study was qualitative method with a Phenomenological design. Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, it is being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. This design was able to draw out the information needed from the participants in relation to their experiences of transition which is why phenomenological design is the appropriate study to use in this particular research.

Setting

The study took place at the Notre Dame of Marbel University (NDMU), Koronadal City, South Cotabato. NDMU is an institution that has a good record of leadership accomplishments, particularly in the region. NDMU is composed of fifty-four (54) active clubs and organizations that show the institution's capacity to build student leaders.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were composed of five (5) neophyte college student leaders that are selected through, a certain criteria. First, they are bona fide college students of Notre Dame of Marbel University. They have never experienced being a student officer until senior high school. They have not experienced any positions as an officer even outside the school setting.They are an elected officer in any recognized organization in Notre Dame of Marbel University and they have served at least one (1) year in that particular organization. Although participants can be officers and can be in any elected position, those holding major offices are highly prioritized. The participants shared their experience on the phenomenon of transition as experienced through the lens of being a student leader.

Research Instrument

The instrument used was a semi-structured interview guide based on the given statement of the problem with the approval of the research adviser and panelist. It contained questions related to the phenomenon of

transition and the theory of Bridges. Using this instrument, the researchers were able to draw out answers from the participant's narratives and collected data until the theme was visible. Follow-up questions were also asked in cases of needing more accurate information from the participants.

Data Gathering Procedure
The researchers used the following procedure to obtain the data necessary for the research:The researchers secured a copy of the approved permission letter to conduct the study. Then, an informed consent was constructed for the participants.The participants were chosen using the inclusion criteria presented. The researcher oriented them about informed consent and scheduled an in-depth interview.During the interview, the researcher asked permission from the participants to allow documentation procedure such as taking photos, videos, and voice records. The participants were also informed that they have the right to reschedule or cancel the interview. The participants were thanked accordingly right after and explained that the data gathered will solely be used for the use of the study.The researchers proceeded from participant to participant in doing the interview and a dry run was conducted before the actual interview. After the interview, the researcher collected all the documented data and sorted out the needed and significant ones needed for the study.

Data Analysis
This study used Thematic Analysis. The researchers considered the procedure prescribed by Moustakas (1994). Analyzing and organizing phenomenological data is also derived from the modification of the methods of analysis as suggested by Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975). Each of the steps is presented in the appropriate order of analysis.This is one of the most commonly used data analysis methods when it comes to transcribing in-depth interviews. The significant statements and themes were used to write a description of what the participants had experienced based on the phenomenon (textual description). They were used to write a description of the setting or context that influenced how the participants had experienced the phenomenon, called the imaginative variation or structural description that was introduced by Moustakas (1994).

Using the structural and textual description, the researcher then wrote a composite meaning that presents the 'significance' of the phenomenon. Primarily, these passages focused on the common experience of the participants in the study. From there, themes are drawn from each of the responses.

Ethical Considerations:
The conduct of this study had undergone the review of the University's Ethics Review Board and was approved and recommended for conduct. The following are the ethical aspects to consider before, during, and after the conduct of the study as recommended by the board; To ensure voluntary participation, the researchers informed the participants about the objectives of the study. The researchers explained to them the goal of the study and assured them that this study is purely voluntary. For informed consent, the researcher gave the participants a document that lists the whole summary and the objectives of the study, and what is expected from them during the interview. This study is purely voluntary and the participants can withdraw anytime they feel discomfort, psychologically or physically harming them or causing a hindrance, and if they no longer wish to partake in the study. This will ensure that the participants are not forced to participate in this research and their withdrawal will not affect the study.For confidentiality, the researchers ensured the participants that the data gathered for this study will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed in any way. The data gathered will be only for research purposes only and in terms of their identity, they were classified and identified by using codes.

Results and Discussion
SOP 1: On how do neophytes become officers?

1. Uncovering the potential leadership of the neophyte officers
The first theme that answers the question how do neophytes become officers is focused on uncovering the potential of the student officers. These potentials were uncovered because of the existing trust and the idea that they are reliable among the eyes of their peers. Emerging minor themes include being nominated and elected for the position because they were seen to have the potential to lead and with that, started to socialize and interact with others. Being nominated and elected for the positions is a significant aspect of how neophytes become officers. This process reflects a collective recognition and endorsement of their leadership potential by their peers. They are given peer recognition where neophytes are being seen as individuals with valuable qualities and capabilities.

"I realized nga, people bala di ka mana inominate kung if they don't see the potential in you…" (P2)
(I realized that, people will not nominate you if they don't see the potential in you)

This peer recognition is a powerful indicator of their potential to lead effectively within the community. This is also a validation of leadership skills. When their peers cast their votes in favor of a neophyte, they are essentially expressing their confidence in that individual's ability to fulfill the responsibilities of an officer. Neophytes become officers because they have earned the support and endorsement of their peers through their actions, character, and demonstrated leadership potential. The nomination and election process serve as a pivotal mechanism through which neophytes transition into officers, reflecting the collective trust, validation, and empowerment bestowed upon them by their peers.

> *"... tung pag push man samga friends ko nga kaya mo man, go lang. arang gusto moitry kay may mgatao ga believe saimonga kaya mo." (P4)(...when my friends encouraged me because I can, I wanted to try because there is someone who believes that you can)*

The participants became officers because they interacted well with others. When neophytes actively engage with others in their community, they become more visible and known to their peers. Socializing allows them to showcase their personality, skills, and qualities, giving others a chance to observe and recognize their leadership potential. Social interaction fosters the formation of meaningful relationships. Neophytes who take the initiative to connect with their peers build trust and rapport over time. These relationships serve as a foundation for support and endorsement when it comes to nominating and electing officers. Through this, the study can imply that one of the main reasons why neophytes become officers is through uncovering their leadership potential.

2. Realizing the necessity to continue the process of having new officers

The categorized data are centralized to the common theme which is that most of the students became officers because they were either nominated or elected or became a successor for the previous officers. Nomination and election are undoubtedly literal reasons why someone ends up in a position. These are the 'processes' that need to be undergone in order to officially embrace the idea of becoming an officer. Once a community has established a culture of leadership and active participation, there is a natural inclination to sustain that momentum. Choosing new officers ensures that there is a continuous flow of leadership within the community, preventing stagnation and maintaining progress.Continuously rotating officers allows for ongoing leadership development within the community. Each new set of officers represents an opportunity for individuals to step into leadership roles, gain valuable experience, and grow as leaders. By providing opportunities for leadership at all levels, the community cultivates a set of skilled and capable leaders for the future.

> *"...tung gibuslan ko ang previous officers sa isa ka club didto gid nag start..." (P5)*
> *(...it started when I replaced the previous officer)*

In any community or organization, there are certain roles and responsibilities that need to be fulfilled for the group to function effectively. When individuals recognize that there is a need for leadership and that no one else is stepping up to fulfill that need, they may feel a sense of duty or obligation to take on the role themselves. This sense of duty stems from a desire to contribute to the greater good and ensure the well-being of the community as a whole. Some individuals may realize that they possess the necessary skills, qualities, and vision to effectively lead their peers. Whether it is their ability to communicate effectively, problem-solve, or inspire others, they recognize that they have something valuable to offer in a leadership capacity. This self-awareness and confidence in their own leadership potential motivate them to step forward and take on the role of an officer.According to the participants, they are acknowledging the fact that the role and position needs to be continued by someone in order for the organization to move forward. This is because necessity is seen as a trigger for their actions into becoming an officer. Realizing these necessities then, is a vital reason as to why these neophytes became officers.

3. Responding to the call to be an officer

For some participants, they have started becoming an officer because the role was considered as a call that needs to be responded to. These challenges now and their ability to accept became the reason why they ended up in the position. It becomes their trigger to continue taking the role because the idea that the challenge is still there and is still in need to be conquered. Accepting the risks and taking them on are reasons as well why most neophytes experience the role of becoming a student officer.

"gidawat ko siya kay I take it as a challenge para mas ma develop pa ang skills ko kag I take ko siya para maging experience man for future…" (P2)
(I accepted it because I take it as a challenge to develop my skills and to have an experience in the future)

Accepting the challenge of leadership allows individuals to push themselves outside of their comfort zones and have their personal growth. By stepping into a position of responsibility, they test their abilities, expand their skills, and develop new competencies, ultimately proving to themselves that they are capable of taking on significant challenges.Some individuals are driven by an internal desire to challenge themselves and push their own limits. The call of leadership presents an opportunity for them to channel their ambition, drive, and determination into a concrete goal, motivating them to strive for excellence and prove their potential to themselves and others.

Being called upon by peers to assume a leadership position creates a sense of responsibility and obligation to fulfill their expectations. Individuals may feel a duty to respond to the needs and wishes of their peers, especially if they believe they have the qualities and capabilities to effectively lead and serve the community.Responding to the call of leadership from peers reflects a genuine desire to serve and support the needs of the community. Individuals who accept this call understand that leadership is not about personal gain but about making a positive impact and contributing to the well-being of others. This altruistic motivation drives them to step forward and take on the role of an officer.

SOP 2: On how the transition experience of neophytes be described.

1. Participants' feelings when they are starting to become officers
In this table, the participants and their feelings became the best way to describe their experience of transition. Most of the participants felt overwhelmed due to either the number of tasks or the number of responsibilities that they were given in a particular organization. Others are feeling pressured due to the sense of trust and the expectations of the members of the organization. This pressure also comes with their perspective on how they should function as an officer. The sense of authority was also visible to some participants because of the title being given to them. For some, they had the chance to feel adjustments in their usual routine, their attitude towards work, and how they socialize or interact with others. Therefore, the participants' experience of transition can be described through their feelings while they are in the process.

"…Feel ko mas napressured ko kagna worry gid ko samga responsibilities kay datidawbalewala lang…"
(I felt that I am pressured and worried because of the responsibilities that are not there before)

Neophyte student officers are overwhelmed by the sudden shift in responsibilities, expectations, and the demands of their new role. There is pressure as well to perform in their role, deliver on responsibilities, and achieve goals set by their organization or team. This is also due to the expectations that the students or their constituents have for them. As participants overcome challenges and obstacles along their journey, they may experience a sense of empowerment. They realize their capacity to effect change, influence outcomes, and lead others, which can be incredibly empowering and fulfilling. Leadership roles or simply being an officer are inherently challenging, and successfully navigating obstacles and setbacks builds resilience and a deep sense of accomplishment. Neophyte officers learn to overcome adversity, adapt to changing circumstances, and find creative solutions, all of which contribute to a feeling of personal achievement.

In undergoing the process of transition, the feelings that they have is something that can describe their experience. These non-officers that eventually became officers shared this particular set of emotions that they felt and these can be used now as one way to describe their transition experience in general.

2. Participants learned behaviors when they started the role of being an officer
Apart from having feelings as an experience to the transition process, other participants described their transition phase by their learned behaviors. The participants discovered their ability to adapt to the task and even formulate new ways to deal with them. Others became interactive since it was necessary to be able to complete a certain task. Managing the time also became a primary behavior of most participants that has been learned recently upon accepting the role of being an officer. These learned behaviors are the result of the given title, responsibility, and even tasks to the officers. Through this, the feeling of transition of the neophytes can be described through their learned behavior.

When transitioning into a student officer role, neophytes are suddenly faced with additional responsibilities beyond their academic commitments. They have to balance officer duties such as attending meetings, organizing events, communicating with team members, and representing their organization. This increase in responsibilities necessitates better time management to juggle various tasks efficiently.

> *"...di mopagubrahon ang bagaynga mag damonga mag damonga mag sampaw ang imongaubrakag di mosiyaubrahonngasabaysabaydaw..."*
> *(Do not engage tasks to the point that they overlap each other, do not take it all at a time)*

Aside from this, Neophyte college student officers start by gaining a clear understanding of their role expectations. They learn about the responsibilities, tasks, and objectives associated with their position within the student organization. This understanding helps them align their actions and efforts accordingly. Transitioning into a student officer role often involves navigating change and uncertainty. Neophytes learn to embrace new challenges and adapt to evolving circumstances. They develop resilience and flexibility to respond effectively to unexpected situations and overcome obstacles.Aside from this, socialization as a learned experience also played a vital role in describing their experience of transition. Socializing as a student officer often requires stepping out of one's comfort zone and interacting with diverse individuals. Neophytes gradually build confidence in their social abilities through practice and positive experiences. As they gain confidence, they become more comfortable engaging with others in various settings.

SOP 3 on what meaning is drawn by the neophytes in their transition experience. These themes emerged from the significant statements of the respondents.

1. Transition is about uncovering potential

Participants are starting to realize that they have the potential to start with and these potentials are being uncovered because they have been elected to the position. These potentials are revealed by the process of transition that they had experienced and the potential to lead and the potential to take responsibility for the tasks that are given to them by their peers and members of the organization. Even their personalities experienced a certain change and a progressive character development is also present. These uncovered potentials now became the drawn meaning from their experience of transition.

> *"...transition for me is a new beginning, a challenge, and a new opportunity for me to try new things..."*

For neophytes, taking on a student officer role marks the beginning of a new chapter in their academic journey. It represents a shift from being a regular member to assuming leadership responsibilities within the organization. This transition signifies a step forward in their personal and professional development. The transition process encourages neophytes to embrace change and explore new possibilities. They learn to adapt to unfamiliar situations, navigate challenges, and discover their potential as emerging leaders. This mindset of openness and exploration signifies a new beginning filled with opportunities for growth and self-discovery.

The transition process of neophytes as they assume their role as student officers acts as a catalyst to unlock their potential by providing opportunities for leadership development, skill acquisition, confidence building, mentorship, and the cultivation of a growth mindset. Through this transformative experience, neophytes discover their capabilities, expand their horizons, and embark on a journey of personal and professional fulfillment.The transition process fosters a growth mindset among neophytes, encouraging them to embrace continuous learning and improvement. They adopt a proactive approach to self-development, seeking feedback, and actively pursuing growth opportunities. This mindset shift propels neophytes forward, unlocking their potential to innovate, adapt, and achieve their goals.

Through the process of transition, these discoveries led to the meaning that the participants had drawn from their experiences. Character development has also been an experience that most of the participants had. The neophytes were able to understand that unlocking these potentials is part of the process that they have undergone and pushed them to be more active, more participative, and more ready to fulfill their role as college student officers.

2. Transitioning into being an officer is about responding to the obligations

Transition, as described by the participants, is being able to respond to the obligations that came along with the new role that they have taken. It means that tasks and responsibilities became their driving factor to accept the role of becoming a student officer. The participants are now starting to accept their new role and the responsibilities that come with it. Participants have learned that having added responsibilities are part of

transitioning from being a non-officer into being an officer. Although obligations and responsibilities are expected from an officer, the process of transition is what made the participants understand it further. Through this, responding to an obligation became the meaning of that transition experience for them.

> *"...ang transition during a regular student to becoming a student leader is a add up or responsibility saimo…"*
> *(The transition from being a regular student to being a student leader is an added responsibility to you)*

The transition process involves individuals realizing the added obligations and tasks associated with their new role as student officers. This realization brings challenges but also opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and meaningful contribution to their organization. Neophytes learn to navigate these obligations, manage their responsibilities effectively, and embrace the rewarding aspects of their role as they progress through the transition period.

Transitioning officers are also accountable to the organization or team they represent. They recognize that their actions and decisions impact the group's reputation, cohesion, and effectiveness. This accountability motivates them to act with integrity, professionalism, and commitment in carrying out their responsibilities.As part of the transition process, officers develop a sense of responsibility towards their team members. They understand the importance of collaboration, communication, and mutual support in achieving collective goals. Transitioning officers actively contribute to team dynamics, foster a positive work environment, and offer assistance to fellow members when needed.

Responding to these obligations and understanding the accountability and responsibility that comes with the leadership position, is one of the drawn meanings of the neophytes in their transition experience. In the process of transitioning into college student officers, they realize that these things require their response. Transition for them then, is about being able to fulfill this call to respond.

Essence

The beginning starts with an end. Although endings are usually considered pessimistic because of its nature and necessity to bid farewell, it leaves a beautiful mark towards the neophytes. For them, ending their previous state as a non-officer is the beginning of becoming something better. It is about acquiring and gaining something for their over-all development. As a common idea as it may seem, insects were once enclosed in a 'cocoon' before acquiring the state of being a creature that they are now. Normally, we appreciate their current state and not the time when they are a tiny little *pupa*. Even in butterflies, we appreciate the color of their wings but often forget their color when they are in the *larva* stage of their development.

For neophyte college student officers, the transition marks a period of discovery and exploration of their leadership potential. They may begin to recognize and cultivate their innate abilities to lead, whether through formal positions or informal roles within their communities. Transitioning into officer roles entails navigating a host of new responsibilities and expectations. Like an insect, there is a lesser amount of people who care about their transition process than those who appreciate or criticize the state that they are right now. While they are trying to leave their previous life as non-officers, there are experiences that they consider necessary in shifting to be an officer. The transition period provides opportunities for neophytes to forge meaningful evaluations within themselves. Transitioning into officer roles is inherently a journey of growth and learning. Neophytes embrace new experiences, acquire new knowledge and skills, and broaden their perspectives through exposure to diverse ideas and perspectives.

Understanding their current state is understanding the things that they have gone through. Its essence can be realized if we have an in-depth understanding of the things they have let go, the attitudes they have ended and the character that they are currently embracing. The transition experience for this neophyte is an essential part of growth wherein they have acquired and unlocked the things they have not realized before. When something, or even someone undergoes a certain process, it is essential to understand their experiences while doing so. Because at the end of the day, it is not all about the way we see them, but the way they see themselves before becoming what they are now.

Insights

Becoming something that has never been a part of your character or identity has always been a challenging task to take because of the unfamiliarity that comes with it. It is comparable to sailing the seas without the knowledge of how to navigate the waves, read the direction of the wind, or even use a compass. But through and by this study, there are people, especially in the field of leadership that although considered neophyte, allowed their potential to be uncovered through the process of transition.

Transition is a phenomenon that needs to be understood especially in the context of neophyte student officers. In this study, the transition seems to be the catalyst to uncover the potential that is already residing in the participants. Transitioning into being an officer then, is not about learning after being elected but rather uncovering the dormant attributes and the capacity and passion for leading.

The beginning indeed starts with an end. Bridges stated that there are three stages of Transition; First is Ending, Losing, and Letting Go which talks about the things you have left to start anew. Second, the neutral zone talks about the experiences of transition, and lastly, the new beginning which includes the realizations. In this study, ending the stage of being unable to harness the potential among students became the first step to becoming a student officer. There is indeed a potential that resides between each individual who becomes a student officer for the first time. These potentials are uncovered by the phenomenon of transition. Because in their process of transitioning into being an officer, the trust and responsibilities brought upon by their peers became the factor that they discover the potential that is within them. Transition then, is an experience of uncovering or unlocking the potential of the neophyte officers.

If these potentials are already residing within the neophytes, and a push or trigger from their peers or the circumstances can unlock them, then focusing on development initiatives can contribute to their acceptance of these potentials. By providing them a platform to understand their current state and the possibilities that they can conquer through the testimonies of those who came before them, these neophytes can transition into a better version of themselves and experience the 'new beginning, that Bridges and the community as a whole has envisioned.

Implications

Transition as experienced by neophyte college student officers are a testimony as to what the phenomenon can do to the students who are yet to discover their potential to become leaders. The existing student officers and leaders of the university once experienced this kind of phenomenon and were able to nurture and develop to reach what they have now. Using this phenomenon as a basis, students that are interested in discovering their own potential may try to get themselves involved in the field of student leadership. The community, especially those who are having leadership as their core in terms of developing the youth must consider these results as a guide on how to better view those who are starting out as leaders. This implies that the support of the peers and influence of the previous officers in their position is essential in molding and shaping the transition experience of the neophyte student officers. Ending their previous behaviors, characters and attitudes while beginning to accept the new responsibility as an officer makes them able to experience transition to the fullest.

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