PORTRAIT OF THE OPERATIONS OF HIGHPERFORMING PHILIPPINE PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REGION VII: THE PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES

Research Article

Portrait of the Operations of High-Performing Philippine Public Secondary Schools in the Department of Education Region VII: the Principals' Perspectives

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Abstract

This research explores the operational characteristics of high-performing public secondary schools in Region VII as perceived by their respective school principals, encompassing Bohol, Tagbilaran City, Cebu City, Mandaue City, Siquijor, and Dumaguete City divisions for School Years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022. The study delves into the practices and actions contributing to their success, focusing on organizational, instructional, professional, and community participation. The study assesses the principals' perceived level of practice in instructional leadership, learning environment, human resource management, parent and community involvement, school leadership, management, and operation, plus factors. Additionally, actions implemented by school principals are explored to identify strategies distinguishing these schools in areas of access, quality, and governance. The findings reveal a very high level of practice across evaluated dimensions, with particular emphasis on instructional leadership, learning environment, and community participation. Principals strategically employ academic monitoring, tutorial initiatives, and proactive home visitation to enhance academic performance and ensure inclusivity. The study recommends focusing on specific leadership practices proven to enhance instruction and student accomplishment, including vision-building, personnel development, organizational redesign, and efficient management of the teaching and learning process. Additionally, a proposed program is suggested to enhance institutional performance across schools.

Keywords: Learning Environment, Community Participation, Instructional Leadership, School Management, School Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a cornerstone for individual growth and societal advancement. Governments across the globe prioritize strengthening educational systems to foster well-rounded, productive citizens who contribute to global development. The pursuit of high-performing schools, therefore, requires a well-coordinated framework where school leaders and educators collaborate to establish best practices, elevate teaching quality, and create supportive learning environments. As Pabalan and Pabalan (2020) noted, effective school leadership is central to encouraging and refining instructional practices, which are key indicators of school success. In high-performing schools, administrators actively engage in instructional planning, school visibility, and environmental improvements, directly impacting learning outcomes. This emphasis on school culture and the attributes that define effective schools highlights the link between leadership practices and school performance.

The Philippine education sector, however, faces various challenges, as outlined in the Basic Education Report 2023. Issues such as facility shortages, declining enrollment, and insufficient learning outcomes have emerged as barriers to high performance. Despite the similar structural oversight by the Department of Education (DepEd), a noticeable divide persists between high-performing and low performing schools. High-performing institutions, often identified through student achievements in standardized assessments and retention rates, offer valuable lessons for other schools aiming to improve. However, the underlying factors influencing these performance disparities remain complex, posing difficulties for policymakers and educational leaders in crafting effective strategies for advancement.

In recent analyses, Parojenog and Pabalan (2024) emphasize the challenges in the Philippine education system, as highlighted by international assessments such as the OECD's 2018 PISA report. The study on public education standards in Bohol reveals that Filipino students face significant barriers due to insufficient public investment, resulting in poor learning outcomes and limited resources; the insights gathered from school administrators in this region offer a unique perspective on the factors that impact educational quality and highlight areas for improvement.

This study seeks to capture a comprehensive view of high-performing public secondary schools in Region VII, as observed by their principals. Focusing on operational practices aims to reveal the specific actions, systems, and cultural aspects that drive success in these schools. Anchored on Elger's Theory of Performance (2007), cited by Shepherd (2016), this

Research Article

research examines essential characteristics such as identity, knowledge, context, and personal attributes that influence performance quality. The Theory of Performance asserts that while some performance related factors remain fixed, others can be targeted and refined to enhance overall outcomes. Additionally, the Accountability Theory of Lerner and Tetlock (1999), cited by Usman (2015), and the Organizational Theory of Burns and Stalker (1968), cited by Rutledge et al. (2015), provide insights into how structured systems, responsibilities, and accountability measures impact the effectiveness of school leadership.

In high-performing schools, administrators and educators adhere to DepEd's performance standards, such as those in the Office Performance Commitment and Review Form (OPCRF), based on DepEd Order No. 2, s. 2015. This form establishes a clear roadmap for instructional leadership, learning environments, community engagement, and school administration. This framework supports the pursuit of excellence, serving as a barometer for evaluating school and educator performance. Additionally, Deming's Quality Management Theory (1980), cited by Rungtusanatham, Ogden, and Wu (2003), demonstrates how continuous improvement and quality-centric practices contribute to meeting the expectations of students, parents, and the community.

Moreover, studies by Shannon and Bylsma (2007), cited by Waheed et al. (2020), and Rutledge et al. (2015) highlight that high-performing schools often share characteristics such as strong leadership, high expectations, collaborative environments, and aligned curricula. Cooper et al. (2016) further emphasize the role of inviting climates, supportive relationships, and a commitment to lifelong learning as integral to school success. Research by Daing and Mustapha (2023) reveals that administrators' leadership qualities, teachers' instructional effectiveness, and a culture of continuous improvement are pivotal factors in promoting high performance.

The organizational dynamics in high performing schools are structured to support effective management of resources, collaboration, and adaptation to meet educational goals. According to Rungtusanatham, Ogden, and Wu (2003), the quality management approach fosters environments that challenge students and educators toward sustained improvement. Additionally, Haramain (2018) identifies that person-related, school-related, and community-related factors significantly contribute to

high teacher performance, which is essential in sustaining high school standards. Examining the best public high schools in Region VII complements earlier research on raising the standard of education. The study underlines the need of managers scheduling their courses, planning home visits, and keeping an eye on the children's conduct. From what Eliaga et al. (2024) found about self-evaluation and student-centered practices, these procedures help youngsters to perform effectively and feel like they belong. The demand on classroom leadership shows the direction toward better student learning. Gerodias (2024) argue that teachers should be more independent. This is backed by principals trying to improve their approach to instruction. Studies have demonstrated that preventive, regulated strategies help youngsters learn, which fits well with observing their classroom performance. Teaching leadership offers teachers the tools to provide exceptional lessons and help students in their development by means of intentional changes. Any plan meant to enhance a school should start with this basic element. It is very clear from Cariaga, Sabidalas, and Dagunan (2024) that the study is highly focused on the interactions between parents and society. Every result highlights how important it is for businesses and educational institutions to collaborate to guarantee that everyone may show up for lectures. By way of regular home visits and community service, running the school and ensuring that children perform well should include parents and other powerful people. This goal fits what Gerodias (2024) and Cariaga (2023) found about changing things and empowering teachers. The paper advises using programs encouraging diversity, coaching, and student accomplishment monitoring. Claims Mabborang et al. (2024) and Cariaga, Pospos, and Dagunan (2024), technology-driven education and tailored learning programs could assist to solve the discrepancies in quality and access. Approaches focused on inclusion should be the primary choice to guarantee that every kid, from whatever socioeconomic level, gets a solid education. These might call for courses and local activities. We used family stories and self-evaluation statistics from 2024 by Cariaga et al. to direct school development targets. These results assist to support the program's aim of raising the operational standards of institutions. This unity revolves around fact-based strategies working together to improve knowledge using evidence. Of the spheres of leadership and business theory, excellent practices in both areas are found in good planning and competent management. Under a participatory government, the community aids in planning based on research. If we want to see things becoming better, schools should design one curriculum incorporating career

Florenda L. Racaza

development, community service, and education. Another study looking at the top universities in Region VII backs up what this poll shows. Including everyone, doing community service, and setting an example will let other organizations copy what works. Strong leadership, community participation, and innovative ideas produced by educational institutions might allow them to enhance access, quality, and government. This implies that in the classroom every youngster may do better. Through an analysis of principals' perspectives, this research aims to illuminate best practices and provide actionable insights for improving educational standards across all public schools. By examining the practices of high-performing schools, this study offers a framework for informed decision-making, supporting efforts to create high-quality, equitable, and responsive education systems that meet the evolving needs of society.

Research Questions

The study aimed to portray the operational dynamics of high-performing public secondary schools from the viewpoints of their principals across the divisions of Bohol, Tagbilaran City, Cebu City, Mandaue City, Siquijor, and Dumaguete City for the School Year 2021-2022.
Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:
1. What are the perceived levels of practice in organizational, instructional, professional, and community participation that the secondary school principals ascribed to their success in terms of:
1.1. instructional leadership;
1.2. learning environment;
1.3. human resource management and development;
1.4. parent's involvement and community practices;
1.5. school leadership, management, and operation; and
1.6. plus factors?
2. What strategies are the school principals implementing to make their school stand out in access, quality, and governance?
3. What programs may be proposed for schools to increase their institutional performance?

METHODOLOGY
Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was used to gather quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research questions. It focused on the organizational, instructional, professional, development, and community engagement practices of the identified school principals of high-performing public secondary schools to develop a deep and descriptive portrait of the

practices in those schools that are likely to contribute to their school's success. Finally, the data was analyzed to identify standard practices in these successful schools.

Research Environment and Research Participants

The research environment of the study included the identified public secondary schools that fall under the Top 3 High Performing Secondary Schools Category as reflected in the OPCRF of schools in the divisions of Bohol, Tagbilaran City, Mandaue City, Siquijor and Dumaguete City of Negros Oriental. The data for the list of schools was sought from each division's division offices covering the SYs 2019-2022. Bohol and Tagbilaran City divisions are characterized by a solid commitment to providing accessible and quality education to its residents. Dumaguete, being a university town, is a popular educational destination due to the presence of major universities. Cebu City and Mandaue Cities are regarded as the regional centers for education in Visayas overall, and they are committed to quality assurance and industry-relevant school offerings. Siquijor, too, has established itself in a good position in support of the thrust of the Department of Education.

Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire was used in the study to collect the necessary data. As the cornerstone and starting point for developing a Proposed Institutional Management and Development Plan for schools, it concentrated on portraying the successful practices of the high-performing secondary schools in Region VII. It comprises two main parts specifically designed to fully record secondary school principals' perspectives and practical knowledge about their administrative and leadership roles.

The first part aims to assess principals' perceived levels of practice in organizational, professional, instructional, and community involvement in instructional leadership. Principals are expected to evaluate how well they have led their schools overall and in terms of operations and leadership, as well as how well they have managed their human resources, encouraged community and family involvement, and created an ideal learning environment. A standardized survey form modified from the OPCRF facilitates this assessment. It allows principals to customize the degree to which they apply these practices to promote good performance in their schools.

Florenda L. Racaza

Research Article

The subsequent element explores the operational tactics utilized by principals in crucial domains like curriculum creation, guaranteeing educational accessibility, upholding quality control protocols, and governance procedures. The open-ended essay-style question elicits specific perspectives from principals, facilitating a nuanced examination of their strategies and difficulties in these critical areas.

Data Analysis

The study employed quantitative and qualitative measures to provide a comprehensive description of the operations of selected high-performing public secondary schools in Region VII. Thus, statistical and qualitative procedures were utilized to analyze and interpret the data collected in this research. The following are the statistical treatments that were used in achieving the research objectives: The weighted mean was used to determine the extent to which the practices set forth by DepEd for school administrators to implement. After getting the mean, the researcher interpreted the results using the following scales:

S c a l e	Description
3.25 – 4.00	Very Great Extent
2.50 – 3.24	Great Extent
1.75 – 2.49	Moderate Extent
1.00 – 1.74	Not Done

Thematic analysis was the qualitative method to interpret the rich interview data, employing manual transcription to transcribe the spoken words into written text. In this process, the responses provided by the principals during the interviews were carefully selected and combined, with emphasis placed on identifying similarities in their ideas. These merged responses were then organized into distinct descriptions and themes that encapsulated the essence of their viewpoints. The resulting themes were compiled, tabulated, and assessed in alignment with the problem statement, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the data and facilitating more profound insights into the research objectives.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher sought approval from the Region VII Schools Division Superintendents of the targeted divisions before initiating the survey. Subsequently, formal authorization was requested from the relevant Public School District Supervisors (PSDSs) of the respective schools through a formal letter. Permission to participate as participants in the study was also requested from the identified public secondary school

principals. The study's objectives were elucidated to the school heads or principals of the selected institutions, and informed consent forms were provided. The questionnaire was personally distributed to the school principals with the consent of the PSDSs, and face-to-face interviews were conducted accordingly. The researcher also guaranteed that the questionnaire was well-read, understood, and filled out accurately by the participants, so the participants were given extra explanations to ensure that they understood and provided proper responses to the best of their abilities. To ensure that the same number of questionnaires were retrieved and to avoid bias, each participant was given a maximum of twenty (20) minutes to answer the survey questionnaire and the interview questions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues during the study were addressed by securing permits and having the research action concept presented and approved through a directive from the division superintendents of the selected secondary schools. The participants were informed of the purpose and procedures of this research, and they were invited to respond in their own volition. They were told that they may reject participation to preserve their rights. The researcher expressly indicated in the letter to participants that participation is strictly voluntary and that declining participation will not have any negative consequences. The participant's personal information was handled with the strictest confidence, and the researcher conducted the interview with the utmost care and took the participants' privacy, time, and comfort into account.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the school principals' responses, which were summarized using frequencies and percentages for categorical data and descriptive statistics (mean and weighted mean) for quantitative data. Content analysis was applied to qualitative data, and responses were organized according to themes. Discussion notes from transcriptions were woven into the form of narratives.

Table 1. Level of practice in terms of Instructional Leadership

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP	Mean (μ)	Qualitative Description
As a school principal, I		
1. work closely with teachers to increase student achievement	3.35	Very Great Extent
2. listen attentively to teachers' and students' needs	3.21	Great Extent
3. initiate development of teachers' skills and abilities	3.40	Very Great Extent

4. set high standards for all students aligned with the curriculum	3.20	Great Extent
5. implement remediation plans in areas most in need of intervention	3.23	Great Extent
Weighted Mean	3.28	Very Great Extent

Legend:

S c a l e	Description
3.25 – 4.00	Very Great Extent
2.50 – 3.24	Great Extent
1.75 – 2.49	Moderate Extent
1.00 – 1.74	Not Done

It is shown in Table 1 that the level of practice in organizational, instructional, professional, and community participation in terms of instructional leadership is practiced to a very great extent (μ = 3.28). The school principals-initiated development of the teachers' skills and abilities is practiced to a great extent (μ =3.40), exceeding the overall mean value. At the same time, the practices with the lowest mean score set high standards for all students aligned with the curriculum practiced to a great extent (μ = 3.20). However, such a slightly lower mean score signals a potential area for further attention and refinement in instructional leadership practices. Overall, school principals have practiced instructional leadership to a very great extent. Meanwhile, other dimensions, such as listening attentively to teachers' and students' needs, setting high standards for all students aligned with the curriculum, and implementing remediation plans in areas most in need of intervention, are still practiced but only to a great extent. This implies that school principals have embraced instructional leadership practices in their daily work to improve self-quality from various aspects, particularly in teaching, to contribute to student learning and academic achievement. The results recognize the role of managerial abilities in promoting school performance, as Magulod (2017) noted. Principals' activities in instructional leadership demonstrate how important it is for them to be resource managers and encourage collaboration among stakeholders to achieve high performance. This reflects the dynamic nature of instructional leadership, requiring ongoing assessment and adaptation to address the evolving needs of students and teachers effectively. Furthermore, it is also noteworthy that the study's results emphasize the relationship between principal leadership and teachers' effectiveness, highlighting the significance of assessing instructional leadership abilities, as highlighted by Daing and Mustapha (2023). This underscores that instructional leadership influences student outcomes and teaching methods.

Table 2. Level of practice in terms of Learning Environment

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	Mean (μ)	Qualitative Description
As a school principal, I...		

1. adopt a child-friendly and inclusive learning atmosphere	3.50	Very Great Extent
2. provide needed support to slow learners	3.19	Great Extent
3. set a clear standard for students' behavior and task	3.22	Great Extent
4. make assessment goals and targets clear	3.31	Very Great Extent
5. incorporate technology into the classroom instruction	3.42	Very Great Extent
Weighted Mean	3.32	Very Great Extent

As can be inferred in Table 2, the level of practice in organizational, instructional, professional, and community participation in the learning environment is being practiced to a great extent. It is found that providing needed support to slow learners is practiced to a great extent with the lowest mean score of 3.19, while the practice with the highest mean score of 3.50 is adopting a child-friendly and inclusive learning atmosphere. This signifies that the inspiration of the principal's learning leadership creates a climate that encourages an optimal learning process and increases student achievement. Using this stage, the school principal can build substantial collaboration that uses all the school's components to achieve maximum student learning outcomes.

The results are consistent with the study by Shannon and Bylsma (2007), which shows secondary school administrators' reported levels of practice in building a conducive learning environment. Explicit norms and expectations for behavior and academic duties, supportive connections between students and staff, and an inclusive environment that promotes learning are characteristics of this setting.

Table 3. Level of practice in terms of Human Resource Management and Development

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT	Mean (μ)	Qualitative Description
As a school principal, I...		
1. communicate openly to all teachers and other personnel	3.45	Very Great Extent
2. provide security and support to teachers	3.21	Great Extent
3. organize training and development of teachers	3.20	Great Extent
4. provide solutions to issues among teachers and students	3.29	Very Great Extent
5. resolve conflict among teachers and other employees	3.61	Very Great Extent
Weighted Mean	3.35	Very Great Extent

Table 3 shows how school principals highly value sound human resource management. Practices such as settling conflicts among staff members obtained the highest mean score of 3.61, indicating extensive adoption. However, arranging teacher training and development scored lower (3.20), indicating a high level of practice. Despite the variances in scores, the overall trend shows a steady commitment to Human Resource Management and Development methods. This holistic strategy demonstrates principals' commitment to building a helpful and efficient school climate, contributing to overall achievement.

The results shown strongly align with Daing and Mustapha's (2023) research, stressing the importance of principals' roles in supporting, encouraging communication, and resolving staff issues. Principals who actively engage in these techniques help their teachers' professional development and well-being, which improves teacher effectiveness and overall school success.

Table 4. Level of practice in terms of Parents' Involvement and Community Partnership

PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP	Mean (μ)	Qualitative Description
As a school principal, I...		
1. create a school welcoming climate	3.26	Very Great Extent
2. establish an effective school-to-home communication	3.28	Very Great Extent
3. communicate the learners' progress regularly	3.20	Great Extent
4. provide a platform for open dialogue with stakeholders	3.19	Great Extent
5. build positive relationships with parents and other stakeholders	3.68	Very Great Extent
Weighted Mean	3.32	Very Great Extent

Table 4 shows how much priority school principals focus on developing excellent relationships with parents and stakeholders, as shown by the highest mean score of 3.68. Conversely, creating a forum for open conversation with stakeholders is the least practiced element, with a mean score of 3.19. Nonetheless, the weighted mean of 3.32 demonstrates that school principals' initiatives to engage parents and community partners are regularly and prominently implemented.

The results align with Cooper et al.'s (2016) research, emphasizing the importance of positive relationships with parents and stakeholders for successful schools. Principals' practices, including creating a welcoming environment, effective communication, regular updates, open dialogue, and stakeholder relationships, closely mirror the research's characteristics.

Table 5. Level of practice in terms of School Leadership, Management, and Operation

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION	Mean (μ)	Qualitative Description
As a school principal, I ...		
1. establish clear school goals	3.46	Very Great Extent
2. lead by example as a role model	3.31	Very Great Extent
3. provide positive feedback about performance	3.36	Very Great Extent
4. engage in honest and open communication	3.25	Very Great Extent
5. practice transparency in decision-making and school concerns	3.56	Very Great Extent
Weighted Mean	3.38	Very Great Extent

The results highlight school administrators' commendable leadership, management, and operational skills. The mean score of 3.56 is particularly

noteworthy, which reflects their intense dedication to transparency in decision-making and resolving school difficulties. This demonstrates high execution in creating open and honest communication channels within the school community. Principals' emphasis on honest decision-making and open communication emphasizes cultivating a culture of openness inside schools, which is critical for creating trust, collaboration, and overall success in the educational community.

Furthermore, the weighted average of 3.38 reflects principals' commitment to excellent school leadership, management, and operations. This regular and widespread practice not only displays school administrators' high levels of competence and dedication but also emphasizes the critical role of strong leadership in building a positive educational environment. Principals set a standard for excellence within the school community by emphasizing transparency, accountability, and effective communication, resulting in improved student outcomes and overall school success.

The findings in Table 6 are consistent with Shannon and Bylsma's (2007) research of characteristics identified in high-performing schools, highlighting numerous significant characteristics found in high-performing schools, including strong school leadership and management. This shows the principals' behaviors, such as setting clear school goals, leading by example, providing positive feedback, engaging in open communication, and adopting transparency in decision-making.

Table 6. Level of practice in terms of Plus Factor

PLUS FACTORS	Mean (μ)	Qualitative Description
As a school principal, I ...		
1. practice an extraordinary level of achievement in terms of quality, time, technical skills and initiative	3.23	Great Extent
2. improve instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost	3.26	Very Great Extent
3. manage people, data, and processes to foster school improvement	3.21	Great Extent
4. model the way and cultivate leadership in others	3.21	Great Extent
5. establish means of communication among teachers, students, and stakeholders	3.33	Very Great Extent
Weighted Mean	3.24	Very Great Extent

Table 6 shows that school principals are consistently committed to various aspects of Plus Factors, with mean scores ranging from 3.21 to 3.33, indicating practices carried out from a "Great Extent" to a "Very Great Extent." The highest mean score of 3.33, attributed to establishing means of communication, suggests a strong emphasis on facilitating effective interaction among stakeholders. In contrast, the lowest mean scores of 3.21, linked with

managing people, data, and processes and modeling leadership, indicate areas that may require additional focus or improvement.

These indicate a significant commitment to promoting school development in various dimensions. The relatively high mean scores across all criteria indicate that administrators comprehensively address various aspects of school leadership. The constant scoring pattern demonstrates a balanced effort to improve all parts of school operations and culture, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to school management.

Table 6 shows an excellent commitment to performance, instructional development, and effective management, which mirrors the traits noted in Shannon and Bylsma's (2007) study, as highlighted by Waheed et al. 2020. These characteristics include strong leadership, high expectations for all students, collaborative practices, and creating a conducive learning environment.

Furthermore, the strategies outlined in Table 7, in which principals demonstrate expertise in managing people, data, and processes to achieve school improvement, are also consistent with Valenzuela and Bienvenida's (2021) research emphasizing the critical significance of managerial expertise in improving school effectiveness, notably in people management, safety measures, and resource allocation. It is also important to note that these data findings are related to the study of Daing and Mustapha (2023), which reflects the importance of instructional leadership in improving teacher effectiveness and student results, consistent with the characteristics described in Table 7, which principals serve as role models for leadership, provide constructive criticism to encourage teacher growth and prioritize instructional enhancement.

Strategies Towards Access, Quality, and Governance

In this section, the researcher used participant narratives to identify the general strategies employed by the principals and the particular steps taken to accomplish them. These naturally emerged as a result of reflective exercises and iterative data analysis. Coding and refining the participants' responses were part of the analysis process until critical strategies and categories were found. The researcher also ensured that these fairly reflected the viewpoints of every participant. Table 7 reflects the strategies implemented by school principals to enhance access, quality, and governance.

Table 7. **Strategies implemented by school principals to enhance access, quality, and governance**

Strategies	Categories
Academic support	Academic Monitoring, Tutoring, Conducting Home Visitation
Leadership Engagement Tactics	Sharing Responsibilities, Leading by Example, Maintaining High School Standards
Community Collaboration	Collaborating with Parents, Alumni, Community, LGUs, and NGOs, Communicating with Stakeholders, Open Communication Channels, Establishing Mutual Trust and Cooperation, Implementing Student Support Programs
Positive Learning environment	Building Rapport, Making a Child-friendly Learning Atmosphere, Making an Environment Conducive to Learning
Innovative teaching and learning methods	Integrating Technology to Lessons, School Reports, and Activities
Teacher Support	Training for Teachers, Monitoring and Observation of Teachers, Giving Technical Assistance
Continuous improvement	Conducting Regular Evaluation and Assessment, Counteractive Measures

The participant's narratives indicate the wide range of strategies and practices they used to support academic success and create a positive learning environment, which they attribute to the high performance of their schools. They believe these strategies have been applied in their schools to improve governance, access, and quality, emphasizing the active participation of educators, parents, community members, and other stakeholders. These strategies cover an extensive spectrum: academic support, leadership engagement tactics, community collaboration, a positive learning environment, innovative teaching and learning methods, teacher support, and continuous improvement.

Academic support is a joint strategy school administrators use, emphasizing the need to evaluate students' academic performance and assist struggling learners routinely. Home visitations and tutorials were identified as practical approaches to address learning gaps and guarantee that all students have a chance to succeed. One participant emphasized this by noting, "We initiate tutorials during break time or home-based modular to allow the student to catch up on lessons and qualify for the next level of education," while another participant also said, "We encourage students to attend training or review opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills and aim high with their academic performance." This represents the importance of personalized support mechanisms in addressing the diverse needs of students and promoting academic success. Focusing on customized interventions like this indicates the necessity of proactive student support methods to ensure every learner is included.

Sharing responsibilities among school staff and stakeholders is common among the participants and vital to coordinating school governance. One participant accounted for the significant impact of

sharing responsibilities and concerted action as an essential factor in strengthening the value of a participative platform. Another participant stressed, "There is empowerment of the teachers, parents, and community as partners with strong support to enhance school performance." Another participant cited the importance of leading by example and being able to communicate openly. "It is impressive when a school promotes the culture of excellence to maintain a high standard of learning aligned with the curriculum and the achievement of the organizational structure." This represents the significance of shared and collaborative commitment among the school leaders and stakeholders by leading by example and ensuring every move is within the bounds of the school standard. It is also apparent that one of the school governance strategies is prioritizing community collaboration. Collaboration with parents, alums, local government units (LGUs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) facilitates idea-sharing, problem-solving, and goal-setting. One of the most essential things that can be done to improve student performance is to encourage parents to monitor their children's progress actively. In order to improve educational outcomes and encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility among stakeholders, strong partnerships with the larger community are crucial. One participant emphasized this by saying, "Good collaboration is when there is open communication of said groups that can share ideas, suggestions, or a solution to a problem with transparency in decision-making and set a common goal."

The participants also emphasized the importance of creating a positive learning environment to increase student engagement and well-being. Principals and teachers collaborate extensively to ensure the school environment is conducive to learning, fostering close relationships with students, teachers, and parents. One school principal remarked, "It provides a welcoming climate and a child-friendly learning atmosphere," while another participant highlighted, "To maintain close relationships with students, teachers, and parents and always have time to listen to their needs and find solutions to any problem." This emphasis on building supportive relationships contributes to student wellbeing and engagement in the learning process. Nurturing relationships within the school environment suggests a need for a holistic approach to education that prioritizes not only academic achievement but also social and emotional well-being.

Another strategy generated from the participant's answers to the interview emphasizes adaptability in innovative teaching and learning methods, reflecting more significant trends in pedagogical innovation and educational technology integration. Supporting educators' and students' ongoing progress is crucial for keeping up with changing trends and meeting learners' evolving requirements, implying the importance of staying responsive to educational advancements. A participant stressed this significance by saying, "In the modern era of modernization, high technology is inevitable. It is therefore advisable to be innovative and adopt new technology." Schools must embrace innovation and leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences, ensuring that education remains relevant and engaging in a rapidly changing world. Supporting teacher growth and development through professional development opportunities has also emerged as an essential strategy. One school principal said, "Administrators should encourage teachers to participate in seminars and workshops on developing their professional skills and instructional methods." Another participant also emphasized leading by example for her co-teachers, students, and the community at all times and must be able to establish trust and close relationships among them. Encouraging teachers to participate in seminars and workshops on professional skills and instructional methods fosters continuous improvement and effective teaching practices, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes. This denotes the importance of investing in teacher development to enhance instructional quality and promote student achievement.

Furthermore, participants emphasized the importance of continuous improvement. One participant stated, "Regular evaluation and assessment are vital to gauge our effectiveness and identify areas where we can improve." They emphasize the importance of providing necessary support to students facing academic challenges, such as remediation opportunities to help them improve their grades and academic performance. This dedication to continual evaluation and targeted help demonstrates a proactive approach to ensuring student success and building a supportive learning environment. Participants noted the need for constant monitoring and assessment to facilitate continued improvement. One participant stated, "Regular evaluation and assessment are vital to gauge our effectiveness and identify areas where we can improve." They also stressed the necessity of giving necessary remediation services to learners to enhance their grades and academic performance. This signifies the importance of data-driven decision-making in education, which shows that schools must regularly assess their practices and make adjustments based on evidence of effectiveness.

These participant narratives shed light on school administrators' diverse approaches to improving educational access, quality, and governance. These imply a need for collaborative partnerships between schools, parents, communities, and other organizations, with a focus on open communication and shared decision-making. Furthermore, creating a nurturing and inclusive learning environment demonstrates a commitment to student well-being and participation. Understanding the need for adaptability and creativity in teaching methods represents a response to current pedagogical trends and technology breakthroughs, aiming to meet learners' shifting requirements. Focusing on professional development for educators demonstrates a commitment to continuous growth and improvement. Collectively, these accounts present a picture of active and dynamic leadership and concerted attempts to create supportive and dynamic educational environments suited to learners' success. By embracing these strategies, school principals perceived themselves to be effectively enhancing access, quality, and governance, ultimately fostering a culture of excellence and success within their institutions.

The results of this study correspond with several related studies on the variables influencing high performing schools, including Cooper et al. (2016), discerning those caring relationships between teachers and students are given priority, and academic excellence is the main focus of high-performing schools. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) also listed important traits of high-achieving schools, such as solid community and family involvement, coordinated curriculum and assessments, and effective leadership. These characteristics act as standards for assessing student performance in the classroom and directing efforts to enhance it.

Findings

The results of the study enabled the researcher to arrive at the following findings:

1.   The secondary school principals consistently rated their perceived levels of practice in organizational, instructional, professional, and community participation as being carried out to a "Very Great Extent." The principals' perceived levels of practice in specific areas attributed to their success are listed below:

1.1   **Instructional Leadership.** Principals engage in instructional leadership practices to a "Very Great Extent," demonstrating a strong commitment to teacher development and student achievement. While most practices, like skill development for teachers, score highly, setting high standards aligned with the curriculum scores slightly lower, suggesting this area could benefit from further enhancement.

1.2   **Learning Environment.** Principals maintain high standards in creating inclusive and engaging learning environments. They prioritize child friendly settings and technology integration, enhancing student engagement. Support for slow learners, though practiced to a "Great Extent," reveals a possible area for increased focus and resources.

1.3   **Human Resource Management and Development.** Principals exhibit strong human resource practices, with conflict resolution scoring exceptionally high. Professional development for teachers, while valued, falls within the "Great Extent" range, indicating that additional growth opportunities could further strengthen teacher effectiveness.

1.4   **Parent's Involvement and Community Practices.** Principals actively foster strong relationships with parents and community stakeholders to a "Very Great Extent." Open dialogue with stakeholders, however, scores slightly lower, signaling that enhancing communication practices could deepen community engagement.

1.5   **School Leadership, Management, and Operation.** Principals demonstrate high proficiency in school leadership, emphasizing transparency in decision-making, which fosters trust and effective relationships. This commitment to open communication builds a collaborative school culture conducive to success.

1.6   **Plus Factors.** Principals are dedicated to supplementary leadership practices, especially in maintaining effective communication among teachers, students, and stakeholders. Managing people, data, and processes is practiced to a "Great Extent," suggesting focused improvements in these areas could enhance operational efficiency.

2.   Principals implement various strategies to enhance access, quality, and governance, effectively addressing diverse needs within their schools. To support academic achievement, they employ routine monitoring, tutoring, and home visitations, closing learning gaps and ensuring that every student has access to necessary educational resources. Leadership engagement strategies focus on collaborative governance, where responsibilities are shared, and

Florenda L. Racaza

principals act as role models, establishing a standard of excellence and fostering a commitment to high performance. Community collaboration is also a priority, with principals building strong partnerships with parents, alumni, local government units (LGUs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), creating a robust support and accountability network.

Principals work to create a positive learning environment by fostering a welcoming, child-friendly atmosphere that enhances student engagement and well-being. They further promote quality education through innovative teaching and learning practices, incorporating technology into lessons and activities to stay aligned with modern educational advancements. Supporting teachers is another crucial focus, with professional development opportunities, training sessions, and regular feedback to improve instructional effectiveness. Lastly, principals emphasize continuous improvement by conducting regular assessments, enabling ongoing growth, and targeted interventions to maintain high educational standards. Collectively, these strategies ensure that access, quality, and governance are consistently upheld in their schools, creating a supportive and dynamic educational environment.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the multifaceted leadership roles of school principals in high-performing public secondary schools. The findings reveal that principals consistently engage in critical practices across instructional leadership, learning environment management, human resource development, community involvement, school leadership, and other factors. Principals exhibit a "Very Great Extent" commitment to instructional leadership, emphasizing skill development and student achievement. Additionally, they foster inclusive and technologically supported learning environments, which facilitate student engagement and provide essential support for slow learners. Human resource management practices reflect principals' prioritization of open communication, conflict resolution, and professional growth, enhancing teacher morale and effectiveness. Community engagement is also a cornerstone of their approach, with principals establishing solid relationships with parents and stakeholders, which promotes collaborative support for students. School leadership practices are further marked by transparency in decision-making and accountability, which fosters trust within the school community.

Principals employ strategies for enhancing access, quality, and governance, including academic support, leadership engagement, community collaboration, and a commitment to continuous improvement. These strategies underscore the proactive measures principals take to ensure their schools meet the needs of all students while adapting to pedagogical trends and technological advancements.

The Study's findings align with existing literature on high-performing schools, emphasizing the critical impact of instructional leadership, effective management, and community involvement in fostering academic success. By embracing these practices and continuously assessing their effectiveness, school principals contribute significantly to creating supportive, dynamic, and successful educational environments. Through these efforts, they can uphold and enhance a culture of excellence, furthering their schools' access, quality, and governance achievements.

Recommendations

Based on the Study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested further to enhance the effectiveness of school principals' leadership practices and support high-performing school environments:

1. **Strength Curriculum Alignment**
   Principals should prioritize aligning instructional leadership with high academic standards across all subjects. Regular review and updates to curriculum standards and additional teacher training will ensure that high expectations are consistently practiced.

2. **Enhance Support for Slow Learners**
   Schools should allocate resources to strengthen remediation programs for slow learners. Principals can establish structured intervention plans and offer professional development on differentiated instruction to support diverse student needs better.

3. **Expand Teacher Development Initiatives**
   Investing in ongoing professional development through workshops, collaborative teaching practices, and advanced instructional strategies will empower teachers and improve instructional quality, ultimately benefiting student outcomes.

4. **Foster Open Dialogue with Stakeholders**
   Principals should implement structured platforms like forums and feedback sessions to engage parents, community members, and stakeholders in open dialogue. This will create a sense of shared responsibility and strengthen

Florenda L. Racaza

community collaboration in the school's mission.

5. **Promote Technological Integration in Classrooms** To support modern learning, principals should continue prioritizing technology integration by investing in digital tools and teacher training. This will enable more engaging, relevant, and future-ready student learning experiences.

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