

The Journey of an Accredited Mercy School Vis-a-Vis the Philippine Catholic Schools Standards

Ruby Ann Calud Juance

Dean, College, Fatima College of Camiguin, Inc.

Abstract

The Philippine Catholic schools in contemporary times are confronted with challenges like decline of enrollment, migration of teachers, fast rate of turn-over among administrators which threatened their viability and long-term sustainability, in which Holy Cross High School (HCHS), an accredited school administered by the Religious Sisters of Mercy in Camp Phillips, Bukidnon, faced the same reality. This sequential explanatory research investigated the school's level of standards based on the implementation of the Philippine Catholic Schools Standards (PCSS) for Basic Education along each of the domains of Catholic Identity and Mission, Leadership and Governance, Learner Development, Learning Environment and Operational Vitality. The study consisted of forty-eight (48) respondents who answered the survey questionnaires and after having the result conducted the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) consisted of eleven (11) employees of HCHS. Analyzed data showed that the school's level of standards based on PCSS along each domain was all fully met. The domain with the highest mean was Learner Development while the domain with the lowest mean was Leadership and Governance. In the FGD, this confirmed the results of the survey. Learner Development had the highest mean because the holistic development of learners due to the curriculum offered. In Leadership and Governance, it was found out that administrators were only assigned for a maximum of five years, and they differ in their leadership style, priorities and personalities which greatly affect the school's growth; and the school limits its resources for its personnel use. Thus, these findings will be of help to the administrators to plan for the betterment of the school anchored on its vision, mission and goals and become relevant and responsive to the needs of community it serves.

INTRODUCTION

Catholic schools are continually striving to be relevant, responsive and effective in terms of its learners' development, through an environment conducive for learning, visionary leaders who manage the school operations considering both the human and material resources of the school towards its fulfillment of the vision, mission, goals and objectives, and in living its core values as a manifestation of its Catholic Identity and Mission. In contemporary times, Catholic schools are confronted with lot of challenges. To mention a few, there is the decline of enrollment in some of the mission schools, the migration of both teachers and students to government schools which threatened their viability and long-term sustainability. Schools administered by the Religious Sisters of Mercy are not an exemption for they also faced the same reality. They are also striving to meet the ideals of the Philippine Catholic Schools Standards (PCSS). In the case of Holy Cross High School (HCHS), an accredited mercy school in Camp Phillips, Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, one of the schools in Mindanao, that the RSM administers, despite

the fact of its being accredited, there is still a need to evaluate the school's journey towards PCSS. This research investigated the extent of school implementation of the PCSS based on the school's operations.

Statement of the problem

This study aims the following: (1) the Mercy school's level of standards based on its implementation of the PCSS along each of the following domains (1.1) Catholic Identity and Mission (1.2) Leadership and Governance (1.3) Learner Development (1.4) Learning Environment (1.5) Operational Vitality; (2) the Mercy school journey into its PCSS status level in terms of the domains (2.1) Catholic Identity and Mission (2.2) Leadership and Governance (2.3) Learner Development (2.4) Learning Environment (2.5) Operational Vitality

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the mixed methods using both the quantitative and qualitative data to give a holistic view of the Mercy school. The sequential explanatory design was used which employed the mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative techniques in gathering data. In the quantitative part of gathering data, the complete enumeration of administrators, faculty and staff was employed while the qualitative part, twenty percent or one-fifth of each of the stratum was taken as participants in the focus group discussion (FGD). The strata are the group of administrators, teachers and staff of HCHS. The purposive sampling for each stratum was used to represent each stratum of administrators, teachers and staff. The data gathering procedure started with the researcher's securing permit from all persons involved, the Superior General of the congregation, the school heads, the administrators, teachers and staff, Executive Director of CEAP and conducted pilot testing and validation of instruments. The quantitative data were gathered first, analyzed; then followed by the qualitative data, analyzed; then the interpretation of the entire analysis that builds on the results of the initial quantitative results.

RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Every Catholic school has its unique charism and mission and it is clearly stated in the vision and mission statements. Catholic identity and values of Cabrini University, for instance, is the "education of the heart," which is centered in Christ and ever mindful of the dignity and contribution of each person in the school community through a collaborative process. Their core values exist as a standard for all activities and as a hallmark for all future development (Cabrini University, 2019). It is also found in the research study of Trollinger (2019) that religious charisms are essential to institutional identity. Catholic schools shifted their practices and discourse to align and realign with their religious mission.

According to Beare, Caldwell, and Millikan (2018) in their book, *Creating an Excellent School: Some New Management Techniques*, excellence depends on good management and the three crucial areas of leadership are culture, structure and public accountability. It also emphasizes that at the heart of outstanding schooling are visionary leadership, clear sense of purpose, and flexible support structures.

School leaders can direct or redirect for the best learning environment for the learning community members, the administrators, faculty, staff and students. This is a call of the governing body to observe sound management principles. They should practice justice and compassion in caring for the personnel, transparency and accountability in handling finances, ecological sensitivity in enhancing and maintaining its facilities, and a culture of quality for institutional advancement (CEAP, 2016). This is a call of a leader for a renewed society through transformational leadership being the servant leader of the school. Hence, there is also a need to assess the school for the improvement of its management system.

Cassano, et al (2019) investigated the evolution of national evaluation system of schools as an important tool for management and for school quality improvement. It revealed that there is a wide diffusion of evaluation and thus, the development of a school management culture to improve the quality of the system and students’ performance.

Several studies were conducted on how schools attain effectiveness and sustainability. Using assessment tool, the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NSBECS), users report that this is a vital framework for assessing and improving Catholic school effectiveness, and generally calling Catholic schools to greater excellence (Ozar, et al, 2019).

Bual, et al (2019) in their assessment of the quality of Catholic Education in a Diocesan school which used the PCSS, the study revealed that the Diocesan school adheres to the quality standards for Catholic education but needs to continually improve to meet the highest possible standards. Learning environment was rated highest while leadership and governance rated lowest among the five domains. Madrigal, et al (2019) used PCSS to evaluate the quality of Recoletos Education in Negros Island, the study showed that the level of quality of Catholic education in Recollect schools exceeds the standards as shown by the benchmarks.

DATA ANALYSIS

For data analysis, for the quantitative part, descriptive statistics was used. It involved finding the mean or the average of the data gathered for the benchmarks, standards and the domains. For qualitative data, thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used, the six steps data analysis which includes familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing up.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Question No. 1 What is the Mercy school’s level of standards based on its implementation of the PCSS along each of the following domains (1.1) Catholic Identity and Mission? (1.2) Leadership and Governance? (1.3) Learner Development? (1.4) Learning Environment? and (1.5) Operational Vitality?

Summary of the Five Domains of Philippine Catholic Schools Standards

Domain	Mean	Confidence Interval	Interpretation
1. Catholic Identity and Mission	3.11	2.98-3.24	Fully Meets the Standards of the Domain
2. Leadership and Governance	3.07	2.92-3.22	Fully Meets the Standards of the Domain
3. Learner Development	3.20	3.08-3.32	Fully Meets the Standards of the Domain
4. Learning Environment	3.14	3.02-3.26	Fully Meets the Standards of the Domain
5. Operational Vitality	3.09	2.95-3.23	Fully Meets the Standards of the Domain

The results of the survey in the school's level of standards based on the implementation of the PCSS along with the domains Catholic Identity and Mission, Leadership and Governance, Learner Development, Learning Environment, and Operational Vitality were all fully meet. The domain with the highest mean is Learner Development and the domain with the lowest mean is Leadership and Governance.

Question No. 2. How did the Mercy school journey into its PCSS status level in terms of the domains (1.1) Catholic Identity and Mission? (1.2) Leadership and Governance? (1.3) Learner Development? (1.4) Learning Environment? and (1.5) Operational Vitality?

In the domain, Catholic Identity and mission, the school is committed to the building of a civilization of love and this exceeds the standard because faith formation is central to the school's curriculum, governance, environment and partnership with stakeholders. In the interview among selected employees, it was mentioned that the curriculum is aligned with the vision and mission and the integration of the core and gospel values which are integral to the human development of the person. The teachers and staff were also provided with an environment that is conducive to learning. The stakeholders, parents, alumni were very supportive and the school had a good network and linkages to agencies, companies, institutions, families and individuals. The standard with the lowest mean is standard 4, the school provides few programs and activities that enable the poor to become active participants in their educative process and rarely engaged in sustainable program that uplift the quality of life. In the FGD, it was mentioned that the school limits its resources for employees' cash advances.

In the domain, Leadership and Governance, the standards with the highest mean are standards 6 and 7 that is the school is governed and administered in accordance with relevant government policies within the framework of Gospel values and teaching of the church. In the FGD, the employees are satisfied with the prompt payment of their salaries and benefits. The school develops and empowers its personnel to become professional and morally upright individuals. In the interview, the school did not lack any initiative to make its personnel well-equipped through its development plan that provides holistic spiritual formation, wellness program, trainings, seminars, workshops, team building activities, recreation and relaxation, educational tours both local and international. The standard with the lowest mean is standard 5, since leaders of the school are assigned only for a maximum of five years, and they differ in their leadership styles, priorities and personalities that greatly affect the growth of the school according to the employees during the interview.

In the domain, Learner Development, the school ensures the integral formation of the human person through a relevant, robust and rigorous curriculum inspired by the Gospel values. In the FGD, it was said that what makes their Catholic school Catholic is their curriculum. The curriculum provides the holistic development that exceeds the minimum requirements of the Department of Education through their elective subjects that developed them to become life-long learners. The school provides relevant and meaningful teaching and learning experiences. In the FGD, teachers provided their students with hands on activities and allow them to learn from their experiences.

In the domain, Learning Environment, the school creates a culture conducive to spiritual growth and life-long learning. In the FGD, they said that the school community members respect individual differences, make themselves available to those who need their help, conduct religious activities for spiritual growth, provided the state-of-the-art facilities for students' growth and development. The school provides enriching encounters with people of diverse cultures, beliefs and values, cultivating among the learners a deep sense of respect, inclusiveness and appreciation for varied world view. In the

FGD, it was said that the school provides an enriching encounter with people of diverse culture, beliefs and values by the work immersion program and the conduct of career orientation.

In the domain, Operational Vitality, the school established responsible linkages and networks with groups, institutions, individuals for its sustainability and the advancement of the vision and mission. In the FGD, it was said that the school has many benefactors of the scholarship programs and parents are supportive to the school. The school has good linkages with the association of parents and teachers, retired employees, alumni, other private schools in the region, local government unit, and other private and government agencies. The school fully met this standard because it effectively and efficiently directs its resources in the spirit of stewardship to ensure the school's sustainability and continuous improvement. The school has the yearly budget to allocate its resources to what is needed in school and budget performance is also monitored so the school will not exceed in its allocated budget to ensure that the school has the resources to use.

REFERENCES

1. Ainsworth, J. (2013). *Sociology of Education: An A to Z Guide*. SAGE Publication, Inc.
2. Belmonte, A. & Cranston, N. (2013). The Religious Dimension of Lay Leadership in Catholic Schools: Preserving Catholic Culture in an Era of Change. *Journal of Catholic Education* Vol. 12, Issue 3. <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce/vol12/iss3/10/>
3. Beare, H., Caldwell, B.J., and Millikan, R.H. (2018). *Creating an Excellent School: Some New Management Techniques*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351041546>
4. Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). How to use Thematic Analysis.
5. Bual, J.M. and Madrigal, D.V. (2019). The Quality of Catholic Education in a Diocesan School Relative to the Philippine Catholic School Standards [researchgate.net/publication/332103674_The_Quality_of_Catholic_Education_in_a_Diocesan_School_Relative_to_the_Philippine_Catholic_School_Standards](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332103674_The_Quality_of_Catholic_Education_in_a_Diocesan_School_Relative_to_the_Philippine_Catholic_School_Standards).
6. Cambrini University. (2019). Catholic Identity and Values.
7. Carrier, L. (2017). *Keeping the Leadership in Instructional Leadership: Developing your Practice*. Routledge an Imprint of the Taylor and Francis Group.
8. Cassano, R., Costa, V., Fornasari, T. (2019). *An Effective National Evaluation System of Schools for Sustainable Development: A Comparative European Analysis*.
9. Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines CEAP. (2017). *About Us*.
10. Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines CEAP. (2016). *Philippine Catholic Schools Standards for Basic Education*. Phoenix Publishing House, Inc.
11. Caufield, J. (2022). How to Do Thematic Analysis/ A Step – by – Step Guide and Examples. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>
12. Coll, R. (2015). *Catholic religious education in Scotland: Bridging the gap between teacher education and curriculum delivery*.
13. Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
14. Davis, R.A. and Franchi, L. (2013). A Catholic curriculum for the twenty first century? *Journal on International Studies in Catholic Education*, Vol. 5, 2013 Issue. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19422539.2012.754587?src=recsys>
15. Eryilmaz, M. (2015). The Effectiveness of Blended Learning Environments.

16. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (CIER)*, 8(4), 251–256.
<https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v8i4.9433>
17. Gleeson, J. (2015). Critical challenges and dilemmas for Catholic Education Leadership Internationally. *Journal on International Studies in Catholic Education*, Vol.7, 2015, Issue 2, Taylor & Francis Online.
18. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19422539.2015.1072955>
19. Groome, T. (2014). Catholic education: from and for faith. *Journal on International Studies in Catholic Education*, Vol. 6, 2014, Issue 2. Taylor & Francis Online.
20. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19422539.2014.929802> Hagan, D.C. (2014). *Catholic school faculty meetings: A case study linking Catholic identity, school improvement, and teacher engagement*.
21. digitalcommons.wku.edu/diss/58/
22. Hoy, W. and Miskel, C. (2013). *Educational Administration: the research and practice*.
23. Mc Graw – Hill
24. King, F. (2016). Teacher professional development to support teacher professional learning: Systemic Factors from Irish case studies
25. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13664530.2016.1161661>
26. Kolb, D.A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*.
27. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235701029_Experiential_Learning_Experience_As_The_Source_Of_Learning_And_Development
28. Krebbs, M.J. (2000). Values infusion: A systematic response to Catholic identity. *Journal to Catholic Education*, Vol.3, Issue3.
29. Lipsitz, J. (2019). *Successful Schools for Young Adolescents*.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351318327>
30. Madrigal, D.V. and Oracion, E.G. (2019). The Quality of Recoletos Education in Negros Island in the Realm of the Philippine Catholic School Standards.
31. [Researchgate.net/publication/333717981_The_Quality_of_Recoletos_Education_in_Negros_Island_in_the_Realm_of_the_Philippine_Catholic_School_Standards](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333717981_The_Quality_of_Recoletos_Education_in_Negros_Island_in_the_Realm_of_the_Philippine_Catholic_School_Standards) Manning, P. (2018). Disintegrating Worldviews and the Future of Catholic Education: Addressing the Deep Roots of Catholic Disaffiliation. *Journal of Catholic Education*, Vol.21, Issue 2.
32. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1182424.pdf>
33. Ozar, L., Weitzel – O’Neill, P., Barton, T., Calteaux, E., Hunter, C.J., Yi, S. (2019).
34. *Making a Difference: The Promise of Catholic School Standards*.
35. Stufflebeam, D.(2003). The CIPP Model of evaluation. In T. Kellaghan, D. Stufflebeam & L. Wingate (Eds.) Springer international handbook of education: International handbook of educational evaluation.
36. Stumpfegger, E. (2017). Trustworthiness of Research.
37. <https://www.munich-business-school.de/insights/en/2017/trustworthiness-of-research/>
38. Trollinger, D.N. (2019). *Identity, Mission, and Markets: A Multiple – Case Study on Select Catholic High Schools in the United States*.
39. Vatican Press (2022). Instruction of the Congregation for Catholic Education, “The identity of the Catholic school for a culture of dialogue.”
40. press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/03/29/220329c.html