



## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND PRACTICES AMONG PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN A DIVISION

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### Abstract:

By means of a descriptive-cross-sectional research design, this work unravels the organizational culture and behavior of public elementary schools under the Schools Division of Zambales, Philippines. These data were gathered from a survey of 234 elementary school principals and subjected to trend detection and improvement suggestions by means of statistical analysis. Based on the findings, the majority of the participating principals were in charge of small schools with 1–20 teachers, 1–3 non-teaching personnel, and an enrollment of 100–500 pupils. Among the areas of organizational culture that were possible to promote the shared values; leadership, communication, collaboration, organizational climate, recognition, and employee satisfaction were some of the aspects identified in the study as the characteristics of a stronger culture. Moreover, it referred to how top-tier officials are instrumental in setting up a clean practice culture through the promotion of ethical behavior, transparency, accountability, and responsible decision-making. The research also showcased differences in culture and procedural matters in the educational institutions when the size of the teaching, non-teaching staff, and student body were used as criteria for school grouping. Recognizing the different characteristics of the schools, the need for management strategies tailored to each individual school's uniqueness is clear. In order to close the discovered gaps, a capacity building plan was introduced to cover such activities as continuous evaluation, constructive feedback, wellness programs, and the promotion of a collaborative learning culture. The program also addressed the issues of efficient onboarding processes, conflict management, work-life balance, recognition of accomplishments, and shared decision-making. In essence, this research is a showcase of how the Zambales public elementary schools can become a more conducive and productive environment for students and personnel through the prioritization and implementation of changes in organizational culture and practices.

**Keywords:** Organizational Culture, Practices, Elementary Schools, Zambales, Philippines.

## INTRODUCTION

New research consistently points to the fact that leadership is a major factor that determines the quality of education all over the globe. Leithwood and Louis (2019) as well as the OECD (2020) agree that good school leadership has a direct influence on student learning and is very effective in achieving educational excellence. Also, UNESCO-IIEP-IWGE (2019) points to the necessity of the role of leadership in creating a continuous learning environment. Further to these, Bolívar et al. (2019) and Hargreaves and Fullan (2020) add that the energizing leadership creates the need and the opportunities for professional learning and practice change that is, in turn, impacting the school organizational culture as well as raising school performance at a worldwide level.

The connection between the motivation of teachers and the way of leadership is especially clear in the case of transformational leadership that is implementing the positive and empowering atmosphere of the school. In Kwan's (2019) point of view, transformational leaders do not only motivate but also engage teachers actively in the process of achieving common educational goals, which, consequently, leads to stronger motivation and better performance. Dumay and Galand (2012) add such leaders develop collaboration, promote responsibility, and evoke a feeling of commitment towards common social ideals amongst the members of the group. The ideas of Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2019) about distributed leadership, and those of Pont, Nusche, and Moorman (2018) referring to leadership methods that may help change institutional culture and teacher engagement complement



each other well. Based on the above-mentioned, the question of how the two factors interact in the Philippine educational setting has thus far been given very little consideration.

Concerning the Philippine educational setting, previous research predominantly highlights the importance of leadership in determining teacher performance as well as student outcomes. However, the influence that leadership has on organizational culture and school practices through and beyond education is largely overlooked. This research endeavours to bridge this divide by studying how leadership affects organizational culture and performance in public elementary schools in Zambales. The research is mainly concentrated on the management of schools. The first chapter is about the work performance of teachers and the impact of their performance on student achievement. Apart from this, the document deeply outlines the activities and the thought processes of leadership practice, school processes, and decision-making systems, which together represent a proposal of research-based ideas to be used as a guide in the mentioned areas of concern. The survey's commitment to improving educational leadership is mirrored in its development in this field, particularly by the implementation of school-based academic improvement strategies in public elementary schools in Zambales.

## FRAMEWORK

One of the essential things that had to take place in order to change the view of the school leader's role as just supervision, was the assessment that had to be conducted on the administration of the school, which is also the leader's role. The usage of innovation and practicable instructional materials for the enhancement of classroom learning is now being implemented through the leader's decision. Even if the instructional leadership is mostly indirect, it should be recognized that it is a considerable factor that assists the teachers in utilizing new methods of instruction that will result in the increase of student learning outcomes. As Eyal and Roth (2011) express it, the proper leadership behavior such as letting teachers take part in decision-making and creating a respectful, trusting, and collaborating atmosphere which among other things makes teachers empowered and also gives them the feeling of being in control in their professional duties, leads to the empowerment and confidence of the teachers in their professional roles. The process of educational leadership research, as reflected in the development of the field, was the concern of Hallinger, Lee, and Szeto (2013), who did the "topographical analysis" of leadership themes in the 8 most influential educational journals surveyed from 1995 to 2012. Their discoveries implicitly referred to the main focus areas deserving leaders' attention: behaviors definition and comprehension, evaluation, and understanding of their causes, and outcomes. This study revealed the school leadership practices depend heavily on the organizational and cultural contexts within the Hong Kong education system. Dimock and Walker (2005) also pointed out that Chinese culture has a strong influence on the characteristics and behaviors of school leaders, while Walker and Ko (2011) connected administrative practices with culturally based leadership patterns. Recent research is still very much concerned with the input of teacher leaders in the lauding of school culture. Sulaiman et al. (2024) found that teacher leadership not only permits but also fosters co-operation in schools, which in turn has a positive effect on student performance. Moreover, Sands et al. (2025) discovered that there is a direct link between the setting up of teacher leadership posts in schools and the quality of schools because the leader-teacher who is at the forefront of the reforms and loyal to the cause creates an environment where education can flourish. Sharpe and Gopinathan (2000) were also able to identify the factors of culture that heavily influence principals' leadership styles, as the same factors that change school dynamics and student outcomes. Cheong (1986) vehemently supported that involvement in decision-making at the school-wide level is the main factor in loyalty to organizational change, while Lim (2006) discovered that some principals might be hesitant to let go





of some duties as they may see it as a loss of control and accountability. Principals still play a part in ensuring that teachers have access to quality professional development. Ng et al. (2015) and Chew and Andrews (2010) stated that competent principals create an atmosphere in which teachers are encouraged to be pedagogic leaders who are engaged in activities that are in line with school mission and goals. Koh et al. (1995) demonstrated that principals contribute to learning outcomes not directly but through their impact on teachers' instructional styles and classroom practices. Moreover, Ong and Dimmock (2013) unveiled that the Singaporean principals reinterpret the Ministry of Education directives that meet the needs of the weakest students in a manner that exemplifies the care ethic which is at the very core of effective school leadership. The holding up of leadership research as the topmost priority in the offerings of the training programs for educational leaders is a clear indicator of Singapore's pledge to developing contemplative and responsive educational leaders. It is hard to disagree with the idea expressed by Nguyen et al. (2020) that instructional leadership certainly, be it formal or informal, is very effective in teacher competencies and school performance. Correspondingly, Walker et al. (2013) narrated the redefinition of school leadership under Singapore's "Teach Less, Learn More" (TLLM) concept where leadership was to focus on learner-centered instructional design that was characterized by creativity, innovation, and adaptability - indicating the global movement towards transformative and adaptive leader models.

One of the most recognized frameworks in the area of organizational behavior is Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (2018) which aims to depict the changes in a company's and leadership's behavior resulting from cultural characteristics. The common values prevailing in a company and a community reflect the changes in the leadership styles, communication, collaboration, professional growth, recognition, and flexibility with change, to name a few, which are among the parameters described by the theory. Moreover, it declares that cultural understanding is a necessary condition for the successful handling of different educational situations. While the Hofstede model still holds true, the persistent requirement for the adaptation of organizational behavior research to educational realities has become a norm.

Organizational culture has been the main factor that determines the degree of institutions' effectiveness irrespective of the disciplines. Lunenburg (2011) treated organizational culture as a system of shared beliefs, values, and norms that guide the behavior of members. He also identified values, communication patterns, and symbolic figures as the major components of culture in his article. Soyombo (2023) said that the cooperation between school administration and government-supported in-service training was the main factor of teacher effectiveness at primary schools. George and Desmidt (2016) committed more to the claim, saying that organizational culture was the core of strategic decision-making; therefore, the knowledge of managers on the local situation was the key to efficient management of public institutions in their study setting. In a similar vein, Maryati, Fitria, and Rohana (2020) revealed that the teachers' performance depends to a great extent on the principals' leadership styles as well as on the school organizational culture in elementary schools.

The point that leadership is the bedrock of educational outcomes is clearly underscored by these researches together. Leadership is very much teacher motivation, the quality of instruction, and student achievement through the most direct and indirect ways. Besides, the cultural and contextual factors determine the extent to which leadership practices can be found in schools, and as a consequence, they have to come up with the appropriate policy of cultural sensitivity and adaptability. The notion of the effective principals that they have to push for collaboration, strongly support teacher development and cultivate positive organizational culture that is conducive both for the well-being of staff and student academic progress is often heard. Therefore, educational challenges that are



constantly emerging can only be addressed through investment in leadership development and consistently doing research in the area of organizational behavior which is, in turn, the only way leadership in the various educational environments can be made relevant.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined and analyzed the organizational culture and practices among public elementary schools in the Division of Zambales. Using these data, the study proposed a capacity-building plan for public elementary schools.

The study specifically tackled the following queries:

1. What is the school's in terms of:
  - 1.1 Number of teachers;
  - 1.2 Number of non-teaching staff; and
  - 1.3 Number of enrollees?
2. How do the school heads perceive the present organizational culture of public elementary schools in terms of:
  - 2.1 Shared values and beliefs;
  - 2.2 Leadership and decision-making;
  - 2.3 Communication and collaboration;
  - 2.4 Organizational climate;
  - 2.5 Professional development and learning;
  - 2.7 Recognition and rewards;
  - 2.7 Organizational adaptability and change; and
  - 2.8 Employee satisfaction and engagement?
3. How do the school heads perceive the existing practices in public schools in terms of:
  - 3.1 Governance;
  - 3.2 Leadership, and
  - 3.3 Organization?
4. Are there significant variations in organizational culture among schools when grouped according to school profile?
5. When grouped according to school profile, are there significant variations in organizational practices?
6. Based on the evidence, how can the findings be used in formulating the Capacity-Building Plan for Public Elementary Schools?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Simanullang et al. (2024) carried out a study that describes significant events and conditions as they exist in the present employing a descriptive research approach using a cross-sectional design. The same way, Nielsen et al. (2025) acknowledged the strength of cross-sectional research in the efficient identification of existing patterns and relationships among variables. However, they highlighted that the method does not allow for causal inferences. This restriction supports the suitability of the design for studies that aim at describing relationships rather than changing the cause-effect ones. Here, survey methods were used in the current study to collect data on perceptions of school culture and practices in the DepEd Zambales of elementary school principals. The implementation of a structured survey framework not only allowed for a systematic evaluation of the



organizational dimensions in their current state but also provided factual clues that led the capacity-building plan's formulation to overcome the recognized difficulties.

## **Research Site**

The research was done in Zambales province, which is located in the Central Luzon area of the Philippines. Zambales is a mostly agricultural province that has a population of around 650,000 people. The investigation concentrated on the public schools of the district that offers elementary education from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and are the first institutions where the study of organizational culture and educational system practices is conducted.

## **Participants**

The group involved in this research was the elementary school heads of public schools administrated by the Department of Education (DepEd) Zambales. To guarantee a fair representation of the schools from different districts and different school sizes, the stratified random sampling method was employed. The specifications for the stratification were the number of teachers, the number of non-teaching personnel, and student enrollment which allowed the research to represent the variety of the organizational context in the province. The amount of sample was decided through statistical computation to confirm that it is both representative of the targeted population and enough to yield dependable and valid results.

## **Instrumentation**

This research was supported by the use of two primary instruments. The first was a comprehensive review of the literature obtained from really good academic sources such as ERIC that was made with the purpose of defining the main themes, identifying gaps in the research, and naming theoretical- organizational culture and practices perspectives. The notions of this review constituted the basis of the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research. The second was the designing of a structured survey questionnaire which was mainly based on the insights gained from the literature review for the assessment of principals' views of leadership, collaboration, communication, and decision-making in schools. The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale for the collection of measurable data and was distributed online with easy-to-understand instructions and follow-up reminders that aimed at ensuring that the answers provided were complete, accurate, and reliable.

## **Data Collection**

One of the essential things that had to take place in order to change the view of the school leader's role as just supervision, was the assessment that had to be conducted on the administration of the school, which is also the leader's role. The usage of innovation and practicable instructional materials for the enhancement of classroom learning is now being implemented through the leader's decision. Even if the instructional leadership is mostly indirect, it should be recognized that it is a considerable factor that assists the teachers in utilizing new methods of instruction that will result in the increase of student learning outcomes.

## **Data Analysis**

The survey data has been processed through statistical methods in order to reveal the present patterns and trends of the culture and practices of organizations in public elementary schools. This study mainly dwelled on the divergences that were identified between different school sizes and demographic characteristics, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the peculiar challenges and opportunities in the educational context of Zambales. The assessments have opened the door to





presenting a data-driven guide for facilitating the policy, leadership practice, and organizational development in public elementary schools of the province.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the essential things that had to take place in order to change the view of the school leader's role as just supervision, was the assessment that had to be conducted on the administration of the school, which is also the leader's role. The usage of innovation and practicable instructional materials for the enhancement of classroom learning is now being implemented through the leader's decision. Even if the instructional leadership is mostly indirect, it should be recognized that it is a considerable factor that assists the teachers in utilizing new methods of instruction that will result in the increase of student learning outcomes.

Key Findings: School Demographics

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Indicator	Findings
Number of Teachers	Over 90% of schools had 1–20 teachers, highlighting the prevalence of small-sized schools.
Non-Teaching Staff	Most schools lacked adequate non-teaching personnel, relying heavily on teachers for administrative tasks.
Student Enrollment	Enrollment ranged widely, with most schools hosting between 100–500 students.

These demographic trends underscore resource allocation, staffing, and operational efficiency challenges. They also suggest areas for targeted interventions, such as optimizing teacher-to-student ratios and expanding administrative support.

### Organizational Culture

Dimension	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
Shared Values and Beliefs	Commitment to continuous learning and growth	Difficulty aligning organizational and individual values.
Leadership and Decision-Making	Clear vision and direction	Lack of employee involvement in decision-making.
Communication and Collaboration	Opportunities for networking and knowledge exchange	There is a need for more transparent and open communication channels.
Professional Development	Positive reception of professional development initiatives	Insufficient feedback on career advancement.



Recognition and Rewards	Recognition systems appreciated	Room for improving inclusivity and equitable acknowledgment of efforts.
Employee Satisfaction	High levels of dedication and commitment	Need for enhanced well-being and overall job satisfaction.

These findings highlight the importance of fostering a supportive organizational culture prioritizing collaboration, inclusivity, and employee well-being.

### Organizational Practices

Dimension	Strengths	Challenges
Governance	Commitment to equitable education	Lack of transparency in resource allocation.
Leadership	Promotion of equity, cultural responsiveness, and inclusivity	Difficulty in data-driven decision-making and navigating policy environments.
Organization	Strong stakeholder engagement and integration of technology	Addressing diversity-related challenges and improving resource management.

Schools demonstrated strengths in promoting equity and inclusivity but face challenges in implementing data-driven strategies and managing diversity effectively.

### Variations by School Profile

Organizational culture and practices varied significantly depending on teacher numbers, non-teaching staff, and student enrollment. These disparities reflect the unique needs of different schools and emphasize the importance of tailoring leadership strategies to school-specific contexts.

### Capacity-Building Plan

To address identified challenges, the study proposed a **Capacity-Building Plan** that includes:

- **Regular Assessments and Feedback Mechanisms:** Encouraging continuous improvement.
- **Wellness Programs:** Enhancing employee satisfaction and engagement.
- **Collaborative Decision-Making:** Empowering employees and fostering ownership.
- **Learning Culture:** Promoting professional growth and innovation.

## CONCLUSION

The research ended by stating that, in most dimensions, the culture of the organization in public elementary schools in Zambales must be developed and improved. An investigation has revealed a set of organizational features that are a must for creating a productive and happy learning environment. These issues involve school values and beliefs, leadership and decision-making, communication and collaboration, the climate of the organization, recognition and rewards along with employee satisfaction and engagement. Findings revealed that the discrepancies of work culture and practices were highly correlated with the number of teachers, non-teaching staff, and students enrolled. Here, it was shown how the size of the school and the staff composition had an impact on internal processes and the way that professionals interacted with each other. The research emphasized the importance of governance processes as a means of ethical behavior, transparency, accountability, and sound decision-



making - all characteristics necessary for the historical legacy and the institution's survival. Moreover, the differences in leadership and governance systems were the main cause of concern in both small and large schools as well as in schools with different staff types. These outcomes imply that management strategies must be situation-specific and adaptable to the resolution of business challenges. The research eloquently propelled a very organized and carefully planned capacity growth approach based on the findings presented. The plan is the organization's culture and performance improvement initiative besides the latter's fortification. The plan comprises of regular evaluations of progress, establishing effective communication channels, and conducting employee health and wellness programs. The initiative further asserts that organizations should make the most of the phenomenon of learning and professional development that is brought about by a well-structured orientation program for newcomers as well as continuous training for current employees. Indeed, the feeling of camaraderie among staff members who have been successful in on-the-job training will become even more apparent as they collaborate for decision-making and conflict resolution, which is now their regular activity. Work-life balance programs can also be valuable instruments in obtaining job satisfaction which in turn leads to employee retention. Besides, the way that rewards and recognition and the decision-making process were handled had a great impact on the team as they felt like owning their work, getting empowered, and engaged more. School leaders along with the Department of Education officials can utilize these very particular initiatives for the creation of a more open, friendly, and effective work culture. Ultimately, these steps will upgrade teachers' professional competence, facilitate better performances from students, and turn Zambales public primary schools into greener and more nurturing places for learning.

## TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Public elementary schools in Zambales will have their professional culture and practices reinforced through a comprehensive capacity-building program. The educational program is expected to concentrate on the areas of shared values, leadership, decision-making, communication, and employee happiness. Accountability, good conduct, transparency, and institutional sustainability are only a few of ideals that will be promoted through strategic planning. Annual revisions and updates will be made to the general structure. Specific to this activity, regular assessment, feedback mechanisms, wellness programs, and continuous professional development will be some of the undertakings that will be put in place within the next three months and then quarterly, progress will be made available for review. Further, as a new employee, the onboarding process will certainly be a lot of help to you in ensuring that you become an integral part of the organization with ease. Besides this, staff members will be educated on the use of the structured conflict resolution protocol, thus, during the same period. Furthermore, the realization of the benefits of a harmonious work-life balance will be the concern of the programs to be implemented by the staff. Recognition together with empowerment shall be the hallmarks of the program. The program will consist of monthly recognition events that will be held to recognize the employees' achievements, while quarterly empowerment interventions will be instrumental in building participatory decision-making among the organization members and encouraging the continuous increase of the culture of shared responsibility. It is very essential that a dependable monitoring and evaluation system be put in place to be able to keep up with the various programs implementation, measuring their results and creating a space for continuous improvement. Such a system is also to be used in every six-month advancement reports, which are supposed to serve





as an instrument to measure the effectiveness of the work done, areas for improvement, and, above all, to assure the achievement of the organization's goals and vision.

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**Columban College The Journal** (*CC The Journal*)  
Volume 13 (June 2024) ISSN 1655-3713  
<https://doi.org/10.69502/cmiz2606>  
A Multidisciplinary Research Review produced by  
**CCI-RIKDO**-Research Innovation and Knowledge  
Development Office

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