

The Quality of Catholic Education in a Diocesan School Relative to the Philippine Catholic School Standards

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ABSTRACT

Evangelization is the primary purpose of Catholic education. However, due to the depreciation of moral values brought about by secularism and globalization, the identity and mission of Catholic schools are compromised. Thus, this paper primarily intended to assess the level of quality of Catholic education in a Diocesan School in accordance to the five domains of the Philippine Catholic Schools Standards (PCSS). A quantitative study was used through a standardized survey questionnaire to gather data from 337 respondents—administrators, teachers, non-teaching personnel, students, and parents of the school. Using descriptive and inferential data analyses, the results revealed that the Diocesan school adheres to the quality standards for Catholic education but needs to continuously improve to meet the highest possible standards. Of the five (5) domains, learning environment was rated high by respondents while leadership and governance ranked low. Moreover, the study showed that parents have significantly higher assessment compared to other respondents in terms of assessing the quality Catholic education of the institute. The findings further affirmed the important role that administrators play in the effective management of school to achieve quality Catholic education and to ensure operational vitality in responding to its evangelical mission. Hence, the active involvement of the members of the school community to this effect.

Keywords: Catholic Education, Educational Management, Descriptive-Comparative, Diocesan School, Philippine Catholic School Standards

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1.0. Introduction

The primary purpose of Catholic education is evangelization (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education [SCCE], 1977; Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines [CBCP], 1992). Accordingly, Catholic schools are evangelical centers (SCCE, 1977) whose mission is to proclaim the Good News of salvation to the world for the conversion of humanity and the transformation of the society (Paul VI, 1975). Given this context, Catholic education aims to provide an integral human formation and faith education of persons (Cornelio, 2018) with emphasis on the religious and values education in its curricular and co-curricular programs in accordance to the principles of the Catholic faith (Beal et al., 2000). By doing so, all members of the Catholic schools, especially students, acquire a systematic understanding of Christian faith and life (CBCP, 1992).

However, given the strong influence of the secularism (Ozar & Weitzel- O'Neill, 2013) which slowly depreciates the quality of Catholic education (CBCP, Pastoral Letter on the Era of New Evangelization, 2012), the Catholic identity and mission of education in Catholic schools may have been affected, if not altered by it in the present-day. In addition, the instrumentalization of Catholic education, religious diversification, and emergence of creative Catholics are contemporary social contexts that pose great challenge to the relevance of religious education in Catholic schools (Cornelio, 2018). To address the challenges of quality Catholic education, the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) has developed the Philippine Catholic School Standards (PCSS) to help Catholic schools evaluate, improve, and sustain quality Catholic education in response to the evangelical mission and the needs of the 21st century education.

Administered by a religious congregation, the diocesan school offers a Catholic education that focuses on the integral formation of students so that they may become faithful, morally upright, and servant-oriented citizens and leaders of the Church and society. Nevertheless, it needs assessment of its operation and practices in order to be responsive to the growing demands and competencies of the 21st century teaching and learning while remaining faithful to its religious calling. To achieve this, the diocesan school works in collaboration with all its stakeholders in assessing and ensuring the quality and sustainability of the Catholic education it offers.

Thus, the study primarily intended to determine the quality of Catholic education in a Diocesan school in accordance to the five domains of the PCSS, namely: Catholic identity and mission, leadership and governance, learner development, learning environment, and operational vitality as assessed by school's stakeholders. Also, it investigated whether a significant difference exists in the assessment of stakeholders on the quality of Catholic education. The findings of this study were used as baseline data in designing a strategic plan for the continuous improvement of the school.

2.0. Framework of the Study

This study is anchored on the Philippine Catholic School Standards (CEAP, 2016) as its framework. As an assessment tool, PCSS provides the context and measures which can assist Catholic schools in the Philippines to revisit and re-examine their institutional practices for continuous improvement. The goal is to determine the level of the quality

of Catholic education in Catholic schools in the light of their Catholic identity and mission.

Moreover, PCSS defines the eight characteristics which make up an excellent Catholic school. Accordingly, Catholic schools must: a.) be centered in the person and message of Christ; b.) actively participate in the evangelizing mission of the Catholic church; c.) be animated by the spirit of communion; d.) be established as an ecclesial institution; e.) be known for its culture of excellence; f.) be committed to the integral formation of the human person; g.) engage in the service of the church and the society with preferential option for the poor ; and h.) promote dialogue on faith, life and culture (CEAP, 2016).

Furthermore, PCSS presents 5 important domains which focus on the different areas of operation of the Catholic school: a.) Catholic identity and mission, b.) leadership and governance, c.) learner development, d.) learning environment, and e.) operational vitality. Each domain is measured by sets of 15 standards, 62 benchmarks, and rubrics. The fifteen (15) standards are ideal competencies and expectations which the Catholic schools must meet and practice to achieve its excellence and effectiveness (CEAP, 2016). Under each standard, the benchmarks prescribe what a Catholic school can do to achieve these standards. Likewise, the rubrics for assessing the Catholic school present four levels of attainment in ascending order: 1 - initially meets benchmark, 2 - partially meets benchmark, 3 - fully meets benchmark, and 4 - exceeds benchmark (CEAP, 2016).

Viewed from the perspective of Total Quality Management (TQM) to which this study is also anchored, PCSS set the quality standards to ensure quality Catholic education in Catholic schools. However, this quality standard can only be achieved when all systems and procedures in Catholic schools are put into operation and ensured that they are efficiently and effectively operational (Sallis, 2014) with end of satisfying the demands of the stakeholders (Ejili, 2014; Ross, 2017; Ali, 2017). Consequently, school executives are expected to plan, monitor, assure, and improve the quality standards and products in meeting these expectations (Antonaros, 2010; Sallis, 2014; Goetsch & Davis, 2014). Though this big task is based on the skills of the school executives (Antonaros, 2010; Goetsch & Davis, 2014; Mosadeghrad, 2014), collaboration of all members of the school is critically important to successfully create this culture of quality (Sallis, 2014; Ali, 2017; Ross, 2017). In this context, PCSS as a quality assurance management process primarily intends to establish and sustain the culture of quality of Catholic education in all Catholic schools in the Philippines.

In relation to collaboration, the stakeholder theory of Freeman (2004) states that the primary role of managers is to mobilize and motivate the people to collaborate for the fulfillment of the organizational goals (Minoja, 2012; Emerson et al., 2011; Fontaine et al., 2006). Moreover, it is also their role to secure not only the interests and benefits of the organization but also of the stakeholders who take part in the attainment of these goals (Freeman, 2004; Minoja, 2012; Fassin, 2009; Fontaine et al., 2006; Emerson et al., 2011; Harrison et al., 2015). Hence, the overall success of ensuring the culture of quality of education in Catholic school depends not only on the role played by the school administrators but from the collaboration of all stakeholders (Minoja, 2012).

3.0. Methods

The study utilized the quantitative research design using the descriptive-comparative approach. The design was employed to statistically describe and analyze the assessment of the stakeholders on the quality of Catholic education in the diocesan school using the domains of the PCSS instrument.

The respondents of the study were the whole administrators, teachers, non-teaching personnel, parent-officers, and college students of a diocesan school in Antique. For high school students, they were determined using a stratified random sampling. Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Variable	n	%
Sex		
Male	138	40.90
Female	199	59.10
Designation		
Administration	4	1.20
Teachers	32	9.50
Non-teaching Personnel	15	4.50
Students	269	79.80
Parents	17	5.00
Total	337	100.0

The data were gathered using the standardized PCSS questionnaire. Permission was obtained from the Executive Director of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) to use the instrument. The respondents assessed the quality of the school's Catholic education in terms of the five domains, namely: Catholic identity and mission, leadership and governance, learner development, learning environment, and operational vitality. The domains were assessed using sets of 15 standards, 62 benchmarks, and rubrics with the following scoring levels: 1-initially meets benchmark, 2-partially meets benchmark, 3-fully meets benchmark, and 4-exceeds benchmark.

The descriptive and inferential analyses were utilized in the data analysis using appropriate statistical tools. The mean was used to determine the level of the assessment of stakeholders on the quality of Catholic education in the diocesan school using the domains of the PCSS when they were taken as a whole and when stakeholders were grouped according to administrators, teachers, non-teaching personnel, students, and parent-officers. Meanwhile, Kruskal Wallis was utilized through Dunn's test to determine the significant difference in the assessments of stakeholders on the quality of Catholic education in the diocesan school when stakeholders were grouped according to designations.

4.0. Results and Discussion

Level of Quality of Catholic Education

Tables 2 and 3 present the level of the quality of education in the diocesan school in the PCSS. The level of quality as a whole ($M=2.91$, $SD=0.40$) “fully meets benchmark”. Comparably, all domains “fully meet benchmark” with learning environment ($M=2.97$, $SD=0.44$) as the highest and leadership and governance ($M=2.86$, $SD=0.50$) as the lowest. In terms of designation, administrators rated “partially meets benchmark” in leadership and governance ($M=2.45$, $SD=0.13$), learner development ($M=2.29$, $SD=0.32$), learning environment ($M=2.35$, $SD=0.53$), operational vitality ($M=2.28$, $SD=0.58$); while Catholic identity and mission was rated “fully meets benchmark” ($M=2.57$, $SD=0.17$). On the other hand, teachers, non-teaching personnel, students, and parents rated all domains “fully meets benchmark.”

Table 2A. Level of Quality of Education in a Diocesan School

Variable	Philippine Catholic School Standards			Catholic Identity and Mission			Leadership and Governance		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
<i>Sex</i>									
Male (n=138)	2.89	0.43	FMB	2.87	0.43	FMB	2.85	0.52	FMB
Female (n=199)	2.93	0.38	FMB	2.90	0.40	FMB	2.87	0.49	FMB
<i>Designation</i>									
Administrators (n=4)	2.40	0.32	PMB	2.57	0.17	FMB	2.45	0.13	PMB
Teachers (n=32)	2.81	0.40	FMB	2.73	0.40	FMB	2.72	0.44	FMB
Non-teaching Personnel (n=15)	2.74	0.30	FMB	2.79	0.35	FMB	2.63	0.53	FMB
Students (n=269)	2.92	0.39	FMB	2.90	0.40	FMB	2.88	0.50	FMB
Parents (n=17)	3.24	0.38	FMB	3.15	0.48	FMB	3.26	0.34	FMB
As a whole (n=337)	2.91	0.40	FMB	2.89	0.41	FMB	2.86	0.50	FMB

Note: IMB = Initially Meets Benchmark, PMB = Partially Meets Benchmark, FMB = Fully Meets Benchmark, and EB = Exceeds Benchmark

Table 2B. Level of Quality Education in a Diocesan School

Variable	Learner Development			Learning Environment			Operation Vitality		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
<i>Sex</i>									
Male (n=138)	2.93	0.46	FMB	2.92	0.46	FMB	2.85	0.47	FMB
Female (n=199)	2.99	0.45	FMB	3.00	0.43	FMB	2.88	0.45	FMB
<i>Designation</i>									
Administrators (n=4)	2.29	0.32	PMB	2.35	0.53	PMB	2.28	0.58	PMB
Teachers (n=32)	2.78	0.46	FMB	2.98	0.45	FMB	2.85	0.44	FMB
Non-teaching Personnel (n=15)	2.75	0.31	FMB	2.87	0.32	FMB	2.61	0.38	FMB
Students (n=269)	2.99	0.45	FMB	2.96	0.43	FMB	2.86	0.44	FMB
Parents (n=17)	3.19	0.38	FMB	3.31	0.44	FMB	3.35	0.46	FMB
As a whole (n=337)	2.96	0.45	FMB	2.97	0.44	FMB	2.87	0.46	FMB

Note: IMB = Initially Meets Benchmark, PMB = Partially Meets Benchmark, FMB = Fully Meets Benchmark, and EB = Exceeds Benchmark

As a whole, the findings of the study revealed that the diocesan school “fully meets benchmark” the PCSS Standards which indicates adherence to the quality standards of a Catholic school. PCSS stipulates that a Catholic school is excellent when its educational objectives, curricula, and programs conform to the teachings of Christ and the Catholic church. Moreover, the school executives exercise their leadership and governance in the form of ministry by observing the principles of collegiality, co-responsibility, and subsidiarity. By observing these principles, school executives actively support the well-being and development of teachers, empower them to take initiative in the mission, create a conducive faith learning environment, and involve all stakeholders for the integral formation of the learners and in sustaining the school’s operation (CEAP, 2016).

However, the diocesan school needs to improve more in the different domains to meet the highest possible standards to become an excellent and effective Catholic school. In the context of TQM theory, Sallis (2014) argued that quality is absolute and must reach the highest possible standards set for it. Probably, the reasons why the assessment did not meet the highest quality standards despite the high result of learning environment in the school might be that communication, consultation, and coordination among leaders and members are not extensively practiced. Aside from this, it could be possible that the educational objectives, curriculum, and programs of the school are not properly aligned with the teachings and values of Christ and the principles of the Catholic church (CEAP, 2016).

On the other hand, Hobbie et al. (2010) perceived that if administrators promote collegial relationship, they enable teachers to persistently collaborate with them for the success of the school. Also, the studies of Quinn (2010), Ozar (2013), and Zommers (2009) affirmed that inclusive leadership elicits positive relationship among school members to participate in Catholic education. In fact, Salagean et al. (2013) asserted the importance of extending the power of decision to all employees to achieve quality management. Added to this, leadership must be shared according to TQM because regardless of status or role each personnel plays in school, everyone is a manager of his or her own responsibilities (Sallis, 2014). Cho (2011) and Convey (2012) confirmed that educational objectives, values, formations, and curricula rooted in the Catholic teachings impact Catholic identity and commitment of the personnel to collaborate in the attainment of the success of Catholic education.

Regarding domains, the diocesan school has “fully met the benchmark” set in the PCSS with learning environment as the highest and leadership and governance as the lowest. According to PCSS and as affirmed by the study of Teague (2013), an excellent Catholic school creates a conducive faith environment with adequate facilities that are safe and functional to help the members of the school community engage and grow in the culture of faith. By engaging and growing in faith, administrators, personnel, and parents serve as models and examples to learners (CEAP, 2016). In fact, the studies of Przygocki (2004) and Convey (2014) affirm the essentials of faith community, culture and religious environment in the assurance of Catholic identity, teachers’ commitment and satisfaction, and the success of operation in general.

On the other hand, leadership and governance got lowest among the five domains. This indicates that the diocesan school needs to strengthen its leadership and

governance to continuously and effectively operate. In the context of PCSS, an excellent and effective Catholic school is governed and administered by school executives who fully understand the primary purpose of Catholic education, exercise servant leadership and extensively undergo formation programs for the realization of the school's educational objectives and mission. By doing so, they exert effort to develop, empower, motivate, and inspire stakeholders to help the school in achieving its educational objectives and mission as affirmed by several studies (Imhangbe, 2012; Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2013; Zamora, 2013; Knowles, 2014; Morten & Lawler, 2016; Spesia, 2016; Valadez, 2013; Annicchiarico, 2013; Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Cardarelli, 2014; Durow et al., 2004).

Meanwhile, the findings of this study proved both the stakeholder theory and TQM on the vital importance of leadership and governance in the organization's success (Fontaine et al., 2006; Mosadeghrad, 2014; Goetsch & Davis, 2014). In fact, the study conducted by Ray-Timoney (2015) confirmed that when governance and leadership are high, all other domains are also high.

Accordingly, to meet the highest quality standards of the PCSS, school leaders of a diocesan school are expected to understand and embody the school's vision and mission in their conduct, undergo further studies and attend formation conferences which will help them perform their duties and responsibilities as Catholic school leaders (Morten & Lawler, 2016; PCSS, 2016; Spesia, 2016; Garcia-Huidobro, 2017; Henk et al., 2013; Williby, 2004; Maney et al., 2017; Lucillo, 2009; Sak-Colareza & Hammami, 2017).

On the other hand, the domain of Catholic identity and mission was rated by all stakeholders "fully meets benchmark." The result indicates that the diocesan school's educational objectives, curricula, programs, and governance are aligned to the teachings of Christ and the Catholic Church. To do this, members of the school community must have a shared understanding of its educational objectives, roles, and mission (CEAP, 2016). In fact, the findings of the studies of Brasco (2008) and Garcia-Huidobro (2017) affirms the necessity of shared vision or common understanding of the school's mission to successfully attain the goal of the Catholic school.

Also, in order for the Catholic school to strengthen its faith formation, religion must be the core of curriculum and be integrated with all subjects (Costello et al., 2008; Swallow, 2015). Besides, both Cho (2011) and Convey (2012) argued the critical need for religion to be the center of the formation to promote and support the school's Catholic identity and mission.

Moreover, the mean result of learner development indicates that the curriculum of the diocesan school promotes the integral formation of the learners. Respectively, PCSS stipulates that for the Catholic schools to become effective and excellent, its curriculum must align with the educational objectives of the school and must ensure the competence of its academic personnel to effectively model learners to grow in their own faith as supported by the studies of Imhangbe (2012) and Henk et al. (2013).

Furthermore, the low mean result of operational vitality manifests the need for all stakeholders including alumni and community sectors to collaborate to ensure the school's sustainability of operation. In PCSS, an excellent Catholic school endeavors to provide formation for the school community to plan on how to effectively sustain the school to continuously operate. Consequently, for the diocesan school to survive,

the participation of the school members together with the alumni and other agencies is essentially needed as supported by the studies of Knowles (2014) and Ray-Timoney (2015).

Difference in the stakeholder's assessment on quality of Catholic education

Kruskal Wallis was used to determine the significant difference in the stakeholders' assessment on the quality of Catholic education in the diocesan school when they were grouped according to designation. There was a significant difference in the stakeholders' assessment on the quality of Catholic education in the diocesan school in terms of Catholic identity and mission [H(4)=15.261, p=0.004], leadership and governance [H(4)=19.887, p=0.001], learner development [H(4)=21.024, p=0.000], learning environment [H(4)=14.790, p=0.005], operational vitality [H(4)=22.910, p=0.000], and PCSS [H(4)=19.914, p=0.001] in general when they were grouped according to designation.

Post hoc test using Dunn's test revealed that parents' assessment is significantly higher than the other stakeholders in the areas of Catholic mission and identity, leadership and governance, learner development, learning environment, and operational vitality. This indicates that parents seem to be more satisfied with the quality Catholic education offered in the diocesan school. Also, despite their indirect involvement in the operation of the school, they trust the quality of education of the Catholic school in terms of resources, environment, quality of teaching, leadership, and formation of their children compared to the kind of education public schools provide (Litton, et al., 2010; Thornton, 2010). PCSS stresses the necessity for these parents to collaborate with all other stakeholders in the school to help learners achieve the curriculum goals and objectives. Litton et al. (2010) pointed out that parents play a vital role in both the formation of the learners and at the same time in the sustainability of the school's operation. For this reason, the school should exert effort to satisfy them as partners and beneficiaries of the services of the Catholic schools to address their needs and sustain their interest and stake in the school (Shaheen et al., 2016). In the view of stakeholder theory, indeed, the satisfaction of customers is critical to ensure their interest in the organization (Antonaros, 2010; Sallis, 2014; Bibu & Saris, 2017).

On the other hand, administrators gave significantly lower level of assessment compared to other stakeholders. The result showed that administrators seem to be less satisfied with the quality of Catholic education that the diocesan school provides. According to the study of Amanchukwu and Ololube (2015), one of the educational management roles of administrators is to effectively keep accurate custody and protect all institutional files of the school. This implies that administrators rated convincingly low because they have the direct access to the school records and information on the status of the school among other members of the school community, providing themselves with concrete idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the operation of the school and the quality of Catholic education it offers. Another reason why administrators gave significantly lower rate compared to other stakeholders is the different reforms being made in the school which pressure the administrators as the school's executives to be accountable whether the school meets the standards, framework, curriculum, and forms of assessment as confirmed by the findings of Marks and Printy (2003).

Implication

Generally, PCSS instrument helps to assess the practices and performance of the Catholic schools. Moreover, when these practices and performance are assessed, Catholic schools can identify means and ways to improve the school to effectively respond to their mission of evangelization. Hence, when the school faithfully responds to this evangelical mission alongside with academic excellence, Catholic schools are guaranteed of the quality of its Catholic education.

At the organizational level, the school and its community extensively improve all domains of the Catholic schools when they are able to exhaust all their means. Thus, when all domains function effectively, the Catholic school can meet the highest possible standards set by PCSS. Consequently, when the school can meet these standards, everyone in the school is empowered to fulfill this indispensable mission of evangelization. Also, strong alignment of all its educational objectives, processes, and curricula to the principles and doctrines of the Catholic Church is essential. Likewise, when all programs and activities of the school are in accord with the pastoral directions and works of the church, both the church and the school fulfill the critical mission of evangelization.

At the individual level, the embodiment of the administrators of the school's vision, mission, core values, and objectives is necessary for the operation of the Catholic schools. Accordingly, when administrators conduct themselves following the school's educational objectives, they can perform their essential roles and functions in the school's operation in the ministry of servant leadership. Henceforth, when administrators practice their responsibilities as servant leaders, the full operation of all domains becomes outstanding.

Also, the results express the importance of shared understanding in the attainment of quality Catholic education. When all have the same understanding of this fundamental reason, everyone in the school is empowered to collaborate in building a strong Catholic learning environment and culture. So, when everyone is willing to participate in creating this climate in the school, the members of the school community can model each other in the growth and maturity of their faith.

5.0. Conclusions

The level of quality of Catholic education in the diocesan school in the light of the PCSS as a whole "fully meets benchmark" with learning environment as the highest and leadership and governance as the lowest. When stakeholders were grouped according to designation, there was a significant difference in the assessment of the quality of Catholic education in the diocesan school. Parents rated significantly higher while administrators rated significantly lower.

The diocesan Catholic schools fulfill the quality of its Catholic education when it is able to meet the highest quality standards of the PCSS. Moreover, these schools exert effort to comply with these standards to improve all domains of school's operation to effectively respond to its primary purpose of evangelization. For this reason, strong alignment of school's educational objectives, practices, formations, and curricula to the principles and directions of the Catholic Church is essential. Correspondingly, the role of administrators as servant leaders who embody and exemplify the Catholic

school's vision and mission is vital to perform this strong alignment and to empower all stakeholders to collaborate and support them in fulfilling the educational apostolate and sustainable operation of the Catholic school.

It is recommended, therefore, that the administrators of the school undergo further studies to hone their leadership and governance skills to effectively and efficiently manage the operation of the Catholic school in fulfilment of its curricular and evangelical mission. Likewise, professional and faith development opportunities must be provided to teachers to competently and religiously deliver quality Catholic education. Also, the school must sustain conducive learning environment to continuously develop the faith, skills, and potentials of the students towards integral Christian formation. In addition, parents' active involvement in the programs and activities of the school must be encouraged to ensure their continued patronage. Further, an assessment is recommended for future research on the quality of Catholic education in all diocesan and religious Catholic schools in the diocese. A devised comprehensive strategic plan which will address the five domains of PCSS for the school's continuous improvement is also in order.

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