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## Research Article

# ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES AMONG ARCHDIOCESAN COMMISSION ON EDUCATION (ACE) SCHOOLS: BASIS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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### ABSTRACT

This study explored the organizational management challenges encountered by the Archdiocesan Commission on Education (ACE) schools in Misamis Occidental. The findings served as the foundation for a proposed improvement plan for the School Year 2024–2025. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, specifically a phenomenological design, the study aimed to gain in-depth insights into the lived experiences of school administrators managing ACE schools. Thematic analysis, guided by Moustakas' method, was employed to analyze the data. Results revealed that school administrators face significant challenges in areas such as strategic planning, professional development, and resource allocation. These difficulties are primarily influenced by shifting educational policies, limited resources, and varying levels of stakeholder engagement. Despite these constraints, administrators have adopted adaptive and collaborative strategies, including inclusive planning, targeted training programs, and resource optimization to sustain school operations and address institutional demands. The study highlights the critical role of responsive leadership, ongoing capacity-building, and strategic resource management in enhancing organizational effectiveness and promoting long-term educational advancement.

**Keywords:** *Capacity-Building, Educational Leadership, Organizational Management, Phenomenological Study, Strategic Planning*

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## Introduction

Organizations worldwide continue to face complex management challenges, particularly during periods of crisis and institutional change. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed organizational weaknesses while also emphasizing the importance of adaptable leadership, strategic planning, and effective management practices in maintaining institutional stability (Bijani et al., 2021). Studies further reveal that inadequate organizational support contributes to employee stress, low morale, and increased turnover, making employee engagement, continuous training, and motivation essential for sustaining productivity and institutional effectiveness (Saukko et al., 2020; Cavallone & Palumbo, 2021). Leadership, organizational culture, and collaborative relationships therefore play vital roles in ensuring institutional resilience, employee well-being, and the successful achievement of organizational goals.

In the educational sector, Catholic schools under the Archdiocesan Commission on Education (ACE) in Misamis Occidental experience additional challenges related to financial limitations, declining enrollment, and the continuous demand for quality improvement. Effective implementation planning has become an important concern because educational institutions must align their faith-based mission with sustainable administrative systems and modern educational standards. Although studies such as Banusing and Bual (2020) emphasize the importance of organized strategic planning in Catholic education, limited research has examined how Philippine Catholic schools specifically implement management practices that ensure institutional sustainability while preserving their religious identity and commitment to educational excellence.

Teacher professional development also remains a critical component in strengthening Catholic educational institutions. The rapid evolution of pedagogical approaches and educational technologies requires schools to continuously enhance teacher competencies through structured training, mentorship, and leadership development programs. Research suggests that professional development significantly improves instructional quality and student outcomes (Jamil & Hamzah, 2019), yet there is limited empirical evidence regarding how ACE Schools systematically allocate resources for teacher capacity-building initiatives. Strengthening teacher development programs is therefore essential to maintaining instructional relevance and supporting long-term educational effectiveness within Catholic institutions.

Another major concern affecting ACE Schools is the efficient allocation and management of institutional resources. Financial constraints, rising operational costs, and the decline in religious vocations create substantial difficulties in sustaining school operations and maintaining educational quality. Total Quality Management (TQM) principles highlight the importance of stakeholder collaboration, continuous improvement, and strategic resource management in addressing these challenges (Rosinawati et al., 2021). Through collaborative leadership and shared responsibility among administrators, teachers, parents, and the community, Catholic schools can strengthen institutional performance while remaining aligned with national educational goals and faith-based values.

Despite existing studies on educational leadership and Catholic school management, significant gaps remain in understanding how implementation planning, teacher professional development, and resource allocation contribute to the sustainability of ACE Schools in the Philippines. Previous research has largely focused on broader educational contexts and has not fully examined the unique challenges faced by provincial Catholic schools in balancing faith-based missions with contemporary administrative demands. This study therefore seeks to investigate the management strategies employed by ACE Schools in the province to promote sustainable administration while preserving Catholic educational values. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of organizational management in faith-based institutions and provide practical recommendations for policy development and institutional improvement.

## Methods

This study utilized a qualitative research design employing a phenomenological approach to explore the organizational management challenges encountered by Archdiocesan Commission on Education (ACE) schools in Misamis Occidental. The research focused on understanding the lived experiences of school administrators and key personnel in managing issues related to leadership, financial sustainability, strategic planning, professional development, and resource allocation within Catholic educational institutions. Selected elementary and secondary ACE schools served as the research environment, with twelve purposively chosen participants, including administrators and school personnel who possessed direct involvement in institutional management

and decision-making. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews guided by validated open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed insights and experiences from participants. The research instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing to ensure reliability and accuracy, achieving a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.800, which indicated high reliability. Data collection followed strict ethical procedures, including securing permissions from relevant authorities, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and complying with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis guided by Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological approach, enabling the researcher to identify recurring themes and deeper meanings from the participants' narratives. The findings of the study are expected to contribute valuable insights into improving leadership practices, institutional sustainability, and policy development in Catholic schools.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Challenges Encountered by School Administrators and Directors**

The findings revealed that school administrators in Archdiocesan Commission on Education (ACE) Schools experienced major challenges in strategic planning, professional development, and resource allocation. These difficulties affected institutional effectiveness, staff performance, and the sustainability of school programs. Administrators highlighted issues such as lack of stakeholder alignment, resistance to change, policy shifts, limited participation in planning, and the challenge of balancing urgent concerns with long-term goals. One participant shared that gaining staff buy-in was difficult because teachers had different expectations of new leadership, resulting in slower implementation of school initiatives. These findings support Delgado (2022) and Fullan (2014), who emphasized that effective strategic planning requires collaboration, stakeholder commitment, and adaptive leadership.

Professional development also emerged as a significant challenge. Participants reported inconsistent teacher motivation, lack of engagement in continuous learning, overloaded schedules, and limited access to quality training. Some teachers viewed professional development merely as an obligation, while others struggled to adapt to new teaching approaches. School administrators also observed skills gaps among newly hired teachers, particularly in classroom instruction and professional attitude. These findings align with Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985), which highlights the importance of motivation, competence, and institutional support in professional growth. The study suggests that teacher development programs should be personalized, practical, and sustained through mentoring and collaborative learning opportunities.

Resource allocation was another major concern among participants. Financial limitations, declining enrollment, insufficient operational funds, and competing institutional priorities affected the implementation of school programs and services. Administrators explained that schools often struggled to provide instructional materials, facility repairs, and teacher development simultaneously because of limited budgets. The absence of stable funding sources forced schools to rely heavily on tuition fees and external support. Despite these constraints, school leaders demonstrated resilience through innovation, collaboration, and strategic budgeting. These findings support Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), which explains that organizations must effectively manage scarce resources and external partnerships to maintain stability and sustainability.

### **Strategies Employed by School Administrators and Directors**

Despite the challenges encountered, school administrators implemented responsive and innovative leadership strategies to sustain school operations and improve institutional performance. In strategic planning, administrators promoted collaborative and inclusive approaches such as vision alignment workshops, participative leadership, and regular planning sessions to strengthen stakeholder engagement and shared accountability. Flexible and data-driven planning practices also enabled schools to respond effectively to changing policies and community needs. These practices support Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006), which emphasizes collaboration, empowerment, and shared vision in organizational leadership.

In professional development, administrators adopted personalized and targeted training programs based on teachers' specific needs and career stages. Schools maximized available resources through mentoring, peer-learning sessions, in-campus training, and online webinars. Flexible scheduling and partnerships with external organizations further strengthened teacher development efforts. Meanwhile, administrators addressed financial challenges through strategic budgeting, resource prioritization, and partnerships with local stakeholders and

organizations. Resource-saving innovations such as peer-led initiatives, recycling instructional materials, and maximizing internal expertise allowed schools to sustain essential educational services despite limited funds. These findings demonstrate that adaptive leadership, collaboration, and innovation remain essential in sustaining Catholic educational institutions amid organizational and financial challenges.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the study revealed that school administrators in ACE schools face significant challenges in strategic planning, professional development, and resource allocation, largely due to shifting policies, limited resources, and varying levels of stakeholder engagement. Despite these constraints, administrators employed adaptive and collaborative strategies, such as inclusive planning, targeted training, and resource optimization, to navigate institutional demands and sustain school operations. These findings underscore the importance of responsive leadership, continuous capacity-building, and strategic resource management in enhancing organizational effectiveness and ensuring long-term educational improvement.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and educational stakeholders strengthen collaborative and quality-driven practices to improve the sustainability and effectiveness of Catholic educational institutions. Teachers are encouraged to actively participate in continuous professional development and adopt Total Quality Management (TQM) principles to enhance instructional quality and contribute to school improvement initiatives. School leaders should implement inclusive and data-driven planning frameworks, strengthen adaptive leadership practices, and foster innovation to address challenges in strategic planning, professional development, and resource allocation. Policymakers and educational authorities are likewise encouraged to provide stronger financial and technical support for Catholic schools through responsive policies and quality management systems. Stakeholders, including parents and community partners, should actively engage in collaborative governance and shared decision-making to strengthen institutional accountability and mission alignment. Furthermore, educational institutions outside the ACE system may adopt the study's findings and TQM-based practices to improve organizational performance and stakeholder engagement. Future researchers are also encouraged to explore the long-term effects of TQM practices on educational outcomes, teacher development, and institutional sustainability across diverse educational contexts.

## **Conflict of Interests**

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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