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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Leadership, School Culture and Academic Management in a Public National High School at Mayoyao National High School

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Abstract

School leadership plays a critical role in shaping school culture and strengthening academic management, particularly in public national high schools operating within complex and resource-constrained environments. This study examined the leadership practices, school culture, and academic management processes at Mayoyao National High School. Using a qualitative case study design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with school administrators and teachers, classroom observations, and document analysis of academic plans and supervisory records. Thematic analysis revealed three interrelated domains: leadership practices that emphasize instructional and relational leadership, school culture characterized by collaboration and shared accountability, and academic management systems focused on curriculum alignment, monitoring of learner performance, and teacher support. Findings indicate that effective leadership fosters a positive school culture that supports coherent academic management and instructional improvement. The study underscores the importance of leadership that integrates instructional focus, cultural responsiveness, and systematic academic management to enhance teaching and learning in public secondary schools.

Keywords: school leadership, school culture, academic management, public national high school, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

School leadership is widely recognized as a central factor influencing school culture, academic management, and learner outcomes. In public national high schools, school leaders are expected to perform multiple roles, including instructional leadership, organizational management, and community engagement. These roles are particularly significant in rural and semi-rural contexts, where schools face challenges related to limited resources, diverse learner needs, and increasing accountability demands.

School culture defined as the shared values, norms, beliefs, and practices that shape daily life in schools plays a mediating role between leadership and instructional outcomes. Research suggests that positive school cultures characterized by trust, collaboration, and shared goals are associated with improved teaching quality and student achievement (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Academic management, on the other hand, involves the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to ensure alignment with educational standards and learner needs.

In the Philippine secondary education context, school heads are guided by national leadership standards and policies that emphasize instructional leadership, teacher development, and learner-centered management. However, empirical studies examining how leadership, school culture, and academic management interact in public national high schools particularly in provincial settings remain limited. Understanding these relationships is essential for strengthening leadership practices and improving academic outcomes.

This study addresses this gap by examining leadership practices, school culture, and academic management at Mayoyao National High School. It seeks to provide context-specific insights into how school leaders shape organizational culture and manage academic processes to support teaching and learning.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to:

1. Examine leadership practices implemented at Mayoyao National High School.
2. Describe the prevailing school culture as influenced by leadership practices.
3. Analyze academic management processes related to curriculum implementation, instructional supervision, and learner performance monitoring.
4. Explore the interrelationship between leadership, school culture, and academic management in a public national high school context.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative case study design was employed to provide an in-depth understanding of leadership, school culture, and academic management within a single public national high school. This design enabled detailed examination of leadership practices and their influence on organizational and instructional processes.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at Mayoyao National High School, a public secondary school serving a diverse learner population. Participants included the school head, master teacher, and ten secondary school teachers selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in instructional and academic management activities.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews focused on leadership practices, decision-making processes, school culture, and academic management strategies. Classroom observations examined instructional practices and leadership presence. Documents such as the Annual Implementation Plan, School Improvement Plan, departmental action plans, and academic monitoring records were analyzed to triangulate findings.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. Codes were generated from transcripts and observation notes, then organized into themes reflecting leadership practices, cultural dynamics, and academic management processes. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation and member checking.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Analysis of interview data, classroom observations, and document reviews yielded three major thematic domains: leadership practices, school culture, and academic management processes. These themes illustrate how leadership influences organizational culture and how both shape academic management in a public national high school context.

Theme 1: Leadership Practices that Shape School Direction

The findings reveal that the school head emphasized **instructional leadership** as a central responsibility, consistently prioritizing curriculum implementation, classroom supervision, and the monitoring of learner performance. Teachers reported that regular instructional meetings, departmental consultations, and academic reviews provided clear direction regarding instructional expectations and learning goals. These forums were used to discuss curriculum standards, align lesson objectives, and analyze learner performance, enabling teachers to adjust instructional strategies accordingly.

"Malinaw sa amin na priority ang teaching and learning." (Teacher 3)

Classroom observations further indicated that the school head maintained a visible instructional presence through classroom visits and post-observation conferences, reinforcing the importance of effective teaching practices. Teachers noted that this instructional focus created a shared understanding of quality instruction and reinforced accountability across departments.

Leadership practices were also characterized by openness, approachability, and shared decision-making. Teachers were encouraged to contribute ideas during planning sessions, raise concerns related to instruction, and participate in problem-solving discussions. This inclusive leadership approach empowered teachers and strengthened their commitment to school initiatives.

These findings align with research highlighting instructional and relational leadership as key drivers of teaching effectiveness and school improvement. Hallinger (2011) emphasizes that school leaders who prioritize teaching and learning, monitor instructional practices, and engage teachers in instructional dialogue positively influence classroom practice. Similarly, Robinson et al. (2008) found that leadership practices directly related to instruction have the strongest impact

on student outcomes. By combining instructional focus with relational leadership, the school head effectively shaped the school's academic direction.

Theme 2: School Culture of Collaboration and Shared Accountability

Participants consistently described a school culture grounded in collaboration, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for learner outcomes. Teachers reported strong collegial relationships supported by regular departmental meetings, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and informal peer interactions. These collaborative spaces enabled teachers to exchange instructional strategies, discuss learner challenges, and support one another professionally.

"May bayanihan sa school tulungan talaga." (Teacher 7)

Such a culture fostered professional trust and openness, reducing resistance to instructional changes and encouraging experimentation with new teaching approaches. Teachers expressed greater willingness to align their practices with school-wide goals because decisions were collectively discussed and supported.

A positive school culture plays a critical role in sustaining instructional improvement. Deal and Peterson (2016) argue that cultures characterized by trust and collaboration promote collective commitment to teaching and learning. Leithwood et al. (2020) further emphasize that shared accountability and collective efficacy are particularly important in enhancing instructional practices and learner achievement. The findings suggest that leadership practices at the school helped cultivate a collaborative culture that supported continuous instructional improvement.

Theme 3: Academic Management for Instructional Coherence

Academic management practices at the school focused on ensuring instructional coherence through curriculum alignment, instructional supervision, and data-informed decision-making. The school head and department heads regularly reviewed lesson plans, classroom assessments, and learner performance data to identify learning gaps and plan targeted instructional interventions. *"Tinitingnan namin ang performance para alam kung saan tutulong."* (Department Head)

Teachers reported that academic management processes helped maintain consistency across subject areas and grade levels by aligning instructional objectives, teaching strategies, and assessment practices. Monitoring systems were used not only for accountability but also as tools for instructional support and improvement.

Effective academic management ensures alignment between curriculum, instruction, and assessment, which is essential for coherent teaching and learning. Fullan (2014) emphasizes that leaders who systematically manage academic processes create conditions for sustained instructional improvement. The findings indicate that academic management at the school functioned as a supportive mechanism that reinforced instructional goals and facilitated informed decision-making.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the results demonstrate that leadership practices, school culture, and academic management processes are deeply interconnected. Instructional and relational leadership practices shaped a collaborative school culture, which in turn supported effective academic management and instructional coherence. These findings highlight the importance of integrated leadership approaches in strengthening teaching and learning in public national high schools.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that leadership, school culture, and academic management are deeply interconnected at Mayoyao National High School, functioning as mutually reinforcing elements rather than isolated components of school effectiveness. Instructional and collaborative leadership practices established by the school head shaped a positive and supportive school culture characterized by trust, collegiality, and shared responsibility for learner outcomes. This positive culture, in turn, created favorable conditions for the effective implementation of academic management processes such as curriculum alignment, instructional supervision, and learner performance monitoring. As teachers operated within an environment that valued open communication and collective problem-solving, academic management systems were perceived not as mechanisms of control but as tools for instructional support and improvement.

This reciprocal relationship suggests that leadership effectiveness in public secondary schools extends beyond formal authority and positional power. Rather, it involves the capacity of school leaders to influence shared values, norms, and professional practices that guide everyday teaching and learning. By modeling instructional focus, approachability, and collaborative decision-making, the school head was able to cultivate a culture where teachers felt empowered to participate actively in academic planning and reflective practice. Such leadership practices helped align individual teacher efforts with school-wide instructional goals, reinforcing coherence across departments and grade levels.

Consistent with leadership literature, the study highlights that an explicit instructional focus, relational trust, and systematic academic management are particularly critical in public secondary schools facing contextual challenges such as limited resources, diverse learner needs, and increasing accountability demands. When leadership fosters collaboration and shared accountability, teachers are more likely to engage in reflective dialogue, examine learner performance data, and adjust instructional strategies to improve learning outcomes. This alignment of leadership, culture, and academic management strengthens instructional capacity and supports continuous improvement, underscoring the central role of leadership in shaping sustainable and effective teaching and learning environments.

CONCLUSION

Leadership at Mayoyao National High School plays a pivotal role in shaping school culture and strengthening academic management by setting a clear instructional direction and fostering a climate of collaboration and accountability. Through consistent instructional leadership, the school head prioritizes teaching and learning as the core mission of the school, ensuring that curriculum implementation, classroom practices, and learner performance are regularly monitored and aligned with academic goals. These practices signal to teachers that instructional quality is a shared responsibility, reinforcing professional standards and coherence across departments and grade levels.

Collaborative leadership practices further contribute to a positive organizational culture by encouraging open communication, shared decision-making, and collective problem-solving. When teachers are actively involved in planning and reflective discussions, they develop a stronger sense of ownership over instructional initiatives and are more committed to school-wide goals. This collaborative culture supports academic management processes by making systems for supervision, assessment review, and instructional planning more transparent and supportive rather than compliance-driven. As a result, academic management functions not merely as an administrative requirement but as a meaningful framework for improving teaching and learning. Systematic monitoring of teaching and learning through classroom observations, lesson plan

reviews, and analysis of learner performance data strengthens the connection between leadership and academic outcomes. Such monitoring enables timely feedback, targeted instructional interventions, and informed decision-making, all of which contribute to continuous instructional improvement. Strengthening leadership capacity and refining academic management systems can further enhance instructional quality and learner outcomes in public national high schools by ensuring that leadership practices, school culture, and academic processes remain aligned, responsive, and focused on sustained educational improvement.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

School leaders should continue to integrate strong instructional leadership with intentional culture-building practices that promote trust, collaboration, and shared accountability among teachers and staff. By consistently prioritizing teaching and learning while modeling openness, respect, and inclusivity, school heads can reinforce a professional culture where educators feel valued and empowered to contribute to school improvement. Such integration ensures that instructional goals are not pursued in isolation but are supported by shared values and norms that encourage collective responsibility for learner success.

Professional development programs should be designed to strengthen school heads' capacity to manage academic systems effectively while simultaneously nurturing a positive school culture. Training initiatives may focus on instructional supervision, data-informed decision-making, curriculum alignment, and feedback practices, as well as on relational leadership skills such as communication, conflict resolution, and collaborative problem-solving. Sustained and context-sensitive professional learning opportunities can equip school leaders with the skills necessary to balance managerial responsibilities with instructional and cultural leadership, particularly in public national high schools facing complex contextual challenges.

Future research is recommended to employ mixed-methods or comparative research designs to further examine the relationships among leadership practices, school culture, and academic management across multiple public national high schools. Mixed-methods studies combining quantitative measures of leadership, culture, and academic outcomes with qualitative insights from teachers and school leaders could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact. Comparative studies across different school contexts may also identify leadership practices and academic management strategies that are most effective in promoting instructional quality and learner achievement, thereby informing policy and practice at broader levels.

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