Unveiling Excellence: An Appreciative Inquiry with Performing Secondary Schools in Region IV-A CALABARZON

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ABSTRACT

The full implementation of the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) in the Philippines has significantly heightened the motivation among Department of Education (DepEd) employees to achieve high-quality school performance for 21st-century students. This study sought to uncover the most effective leadership styles and techniques contributing to high performance by examining the insights, experiences, and factors shared by successful secondary school administrators. Using a descriptive-qualitative methodology (DQM) based on the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) 4-D cycle, the study evaluated five purposefully selected secondary schools in Region IV-A CALABARZON. Relevant data were acquired using structured interviews, focus group discussions, on-site observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was used, which included data familiarization, coding, and theme development. The study found that high-performing schools excelled in financial stewardship, process efficiency, leadership, and learning and growth. Key contributing factors include assertive leadership styles, innovation, explicit direction, and humane approaches; high-point experiences such as shared responsibility, community responsiveness, passion for teaching, and specialized curricula; and alternative and innovative techniques. The schools' best practices were determined to be important in promoting learners' holistic development, with both mental and physical well-being.

Keywords: Best practices, leadership style, benchmarking, excellence, quality education

Context and Rationale

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping the future of nations, with schools serving as the foundation for academic, social, and personal growth. In the Philippines, Region IV-A CALABARZON stands out for its vibrant educational landscape, housing numerous performing secondary schools that consistently demonstrate excellence. This study seeks to explore and highlight the factors contributing to the success of these institutions. Through the lens of Appreciative Inquiry, the study aims to focus on strengths, achievements, and best practices, fostering a positive approach to understanding how these schools excel. By examining these high-performing schools, this inquiry provides insights that can inspire continuous improvement in the education sector across the region and beyond.

As one of the largest and most dynamic regions in the Philippines, Region IV-A CALABARZON reflect both the challenges and opportunities present in the country's broader educational system. Home to diverse communities and numerous schools, it serves as a hub for educational development and innovation. Within this context, certain secondary schools have consistently demonstrated excellence in student performance, teacher quality, and overall school management. These schools not only serve their communities but also act as role models for other educational institutions in the region and beyond.

While some secondary schools in Region IV-A CALABARZON achieved great success, many others continue to suffer with low student performance, insufficient resources, and variable educational outcomes. The specific challenge addressed by this research is the need for a better understanding of the elements that contribute to the region's high-performing schools' long-term success. The goal is to determine how these schools succeed in the face of common systemic difficulties, and how their strategies may be adopted or duplicated by other schools. According to Berkessel (2014), this strategy focuses on determining the most effective human experiences that

are important to the national economy and ecosystem. This scenario emphasizes the importance of education in creating societies and promoting human progress.

Across the globe, there is a growing realization that high-quality education is not just a right, but also an essential instrument for encouraging creativity, economic development, and social advancement. This perspective reflects a global viewpoint based on Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which prioritizes identifying strengths and successes over just solving problems. AI is increasingly used in school reform, where a strength-based approach is seen as vital to realizing institutional potential. Cooperrider, Stavros, and Whitney (2008) propose a positivist strategy to establish a sense of camaraderie and social life among organizational members via Appreciative Inquiry. According to them, Appreciative Inquiry may consider human systems as mysteries that must be solved to help others live better lives. It makes use of the "what" and "how well the participants have done things" that have resulted in their organization's ability to obtain the necessary information. The global education reform movement emphasizes the importance of localized excellence that may be duplicated or adapted in larger contexts to enhance educational systems around the world.

This study corresponds with the Philippines' growing emphasis on improving educational quality across all regions. At the local level, there is a rising realization of the necessity of discovering and replicating best practices from high-performing schools to solve long-standing difficulties in the education system, such as resource disparities, high dropout rates, and the need for better student outcomes. This emphasis on best practices reflects a broader commitment to improving equity and effectiveness in education across the country. Local educators and politicians feel that by highlighting the success stories of high-performing secondary schools, these approaches can be used to improve education quality in other provinces and towns.

In terms of legality, the study can be based on various important Philippine laws and policies that encourage quality education and school performance improvement. Among these laws is Republic Act No. 9155 (2001) which governs basic education. This law decentralizes educational governance and allows schools to take the initiative in promoting and ensuring quality education. It highlights the importance of school-based management and the continual development of educational institutions, making secondary school excellence a crucial objective.

Another law is Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013), which establishes a framework for increasing the quality of basic education in the Philippines via the K-12 system. It entails the carrying out of standards that prioritize academic performance and learners' overall development, which is consistent with CALABARZON's pursuit of high-performing schools.

Furthermore, the Philippine Constitution, Article XIV, Section 1 ensures every Filipino's right to quality education at all levels and requires the state to take reasonable efforts to make education available to everyone. The investigation into high-performing schools bolsters this constitutional requirement by finding variables that lead to educational performance and ensuring that these best practices can be replicated in other schools. Such legal frameworks provide the foundation for assessing and enhancing the performance of secondary schools, as they align with the goals of promoting quality education and continuous improvement in school systems.

Such initiative is noteworthy in addresses a gap with other educational research by emphasizing strengths rather than weaknesses. Appreciative Inquiry, as a research method, is well-suited to investigating what works in high-performing schools and how these successful practices might inspire others. By identifying the beneficial characteristics of these schools, the research can help to build a more sustainable and successful educational system in Region IV-A CALABARZON, potentially serving as a model for the entire country.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has been actively promoting programs that emphasize school-based management, leadership development, and student-centered learning approaches, all of which can be examined through Appreciative Inquiry. These initiatives are essential in supporting the pursuit of educational excellence and align with DepEd's objectives of fostering continuous improvement in schools, as outlined in the Basic Education Development Plan 2030. From a broader perspective, this study, which focuses on identifying and enhancing characteristics of excellence and success, serves as a model for educational innovation not only in

the Philippines but also globally. In regions where discovering and scaling effective educational practices is vital to advancing education, this investigation aims to identify and share best practices from expert administrators. By doing so, it seeks to create a framework that can help underperforming schools improve by recognizing and applying the traits of exceptional leadership (Wieczoreck, 2017).

The Appreciative Inquiry technique would assess the school's achievements, such as student performance, teacher quality, community participation, and extracurricular success, to determine what contributes to its excellence. Some schools represent high-performing characteristics such as leadership, innovative teaching approaches, and good school-community relationships but there are still other aspects that needs improvement. By focusing on its strengths, this inquiry can shed light on how the school navigates challenges and maximizes resources, contributing to the larger goal of improving education across Region IV-A CALABARZON. Motivated by this objective, the researcher aims to emphasize the factors, insights, and perspectives that contribute to the success of school administrators (Li-Bugg 2011).

In keeping with this objective, the school's position is expected to highlight not just its current strengths but also its potential areas for growth, acting as a model for other schools which are attempting to emulate its performance. Therefore, this study aims to investigate, identify, and comprehend the primary factors that contribute to the success and high performance of selected secondary schools in the region. The study's use of Appreciative Inquiry attempts to shift the focus away from problem solving and toward appreciating and learning from the strengths, best practices, and successful techniques of high-performing secondary schools in Region IV-A CALABARZON, which serve as the foundation for the proposed Lucsuhin National High School Performance Model.

Specifically, this paper sought answers on the following questions:

1. What are the schools' performances in terms of:

   a) financial stewardship;

   b) process efficiency; and,

   c) leadership, learning and growth?

2. What leadership styles and strategies contributed to the exemplary performance of these schools?

3. What are the high point experiences of the participants that facilitate success of the schools' performance?

4. What alternative and innovative approaches can sustain the success of these respective schools?

5. Based on the results, what school performance model can be designed to increase the achievement of other schools?

RESEARCH METHODS

A descriptive-qualitative methodology (DQM) based on the AI 4-D cycle is used to analyze the performance of five secondary schools in Region IV-A CALABARZON. This DQM philosophical research includes coding and thematic analysis of data obtained from participants' storytelling during structured interviews and FGDs, with on-site observation, field notes, and documentary analysis serving as triangulation. This extensive study validated its fundamental assumption of seeking, valuing, and magnifying variables, insights, and views that have been shown helpful by some school administrators in developing their organizations, particularly at the regional and national levels (Cooperrider, Stavros, & Whitney, 2008).

The participants in this extensive investigation were five selected secondary schools in Region IV-A CALABARZON that met the performance drivers of good governance in educational management of DepEd Order No. 033. 2014. The following secondary schools were chosen: Trece Martires City National High School (TMCNHS), Francisco M. Felix Memorial National High School (FMFMNHS), Batong Malake

National High School (BMNHS), Luis Palad Integrated High School (LPIHS), and Balayan National High School (BNHS). These schools were recognized for their consistency and outstanding performance in financial management, procedural efficiency, leadership, learning, and development. They were named the top-performing schools on the DepEd website for the 2017-2018 school year.

Population and Sampling

The participants in this AI study were five purposefully selected performing secondary schools from Region IV-A CALABARZON provinces such as Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon, as listed on DepEd 4-A Regional Memorandum (RM)-06-17.500 s. 2017. Following the preliminary selection, the school's performance was certified by their respective Schools Division Superintendents. The schools included Trece Martires City National High School (TMCNHS) in Cavite, Francisco M. Felix Memorial National High School (FMFMNHS) in Cainta, Rizal, Batong Malake National High School (BMNHS) in Los Baños, Laguna, Luis Palad Integrated High School (LPIHS) in Tayabas City, Quezon, and Balayan National High School (BNHS) in Balayan, Batangas.

However, five of them were unavailable during the actual AI learning activity due to time constraints and other legitimate reasons. The actual population was 50, or 91%, based on the purposive sampling technique used to gather specific information for this research.

Table 1 displays the study's expected population, which consists of five principals and fifty internal stakeholder representatives. They are prominent teachers, office staff, parents, and students from the top-performing secondary schools in Region IV-A CALABARZON.

Table1. The study's Population

Secondary Schools	Principals	Stakeholder-Representatives	Total Expected Participants	Total Actual Participants	%
	Expected	Expected			
TMCNHS	1	6	7	6	86%
FMFMNHS	1	10	11	9	82%
LPIHS	1	14	15	14	93%
BMNHS	1	6	7	6	86%
BNHS	1	14	15	15	100%
Total	5	50	55	50	91%

To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, each was assigned a code and pseudonym, safeguarding their identity as internal stakeholder representatives of their respective schools. These identifiers were used to uphold the ethical standards of anonymity and confidentiality, as outlined in the informed consent agreements during the structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The participants came from educational institutions with a long-standing tradition of scientifically shaping young individuals. Despite disparities in core values, teaching methods, and interventions, the schools demonstrated comparable levels of academic success, were further detailed in the following sections.

Table2. Participants' Codes and Pseudonyms

Codes	Pseudonyms	Particular Descriptions
P1	Mr. Indigo	School Head
P2	Mr. Turquoise	School Head

P3	Mr. Garnet	School Head
P4	Ms. Fuchsia	School Head
P5	Mr. Bloodstone	School Head
P6	Alejo	Mathematics teacher; school research coordinator
P7	Alma	EMIS coordinator
P8	Benjo	Key teacher; Brigada Eskwela coordinator
P9	Betty	Master Teacher; CIP coordinator
P10	Candy	Head Teacher, Mathematics Department
P11	Ulalia	Student representative, Mathematics wizard
P12	Vera	Student representative, Best SIP winner
P13	Carl	Former PTA President; Parent Representative
P14	Celeste	Science teacher; Trainer for individual category
P15	Dante	AP teacher; Trainer for individual category
P16	Danish	Head Teacher, TLE Department
P17	Ericka	Head Teacher, Mathematics Department
P18	Faith	Brigada Eskwela Co-coordinator
P19	Franchesca	Special Class Adviser
P20	Earl	Master Teacher, Araling Panlipunan
P21	Gladys	Brigada Eskuwela coordinator
P22	Ferrari	Head Teacher, Science Department
P23	Oscar	Student Supreme Government President
P24	Peter	Student-representative, History quiz bee champion
P25	Hannah	Senior high school coordinator
P26	Ingrid	English Teacher, SBM Coordinator
P27	Gary	Head Teacher, MAPEH Department
P28	Jasmine	Guidance Coordinator
P29	Joan	Head Teacher, English Department
P30	Anthony	Student-representative, Orator champion
P31	Xyril	Student representative, future actress
P32	Karen	AP teacher; Brigada Eskwela coordinator
P33	Letty	Head Teacher, Science Department
P34	Maxine	Head Teacher, Filipino Department
P35	Niña	Head Teacher, EsP Department

P36	Olivia	Head Teacher, TLE Department
P37	Phem	Head Teacher, Science Department
P38	Quenery	Head Teacher, Filipino Department
P39	Kim	Head Teacher, Mathematics Department
P40	Rica	Head Teacher, MAPEH Department
P41	Lance	Head Teacher, English Department; Journalist
P42	Manuel	SBM coordinator
P43	Christian	Student representative, future scientist
P44	Wency	Student representative, Athletic winner
P45	Noriel	Head Teacher, Science Teacher
P46	Sylvia	Araling Panlipunan Head Teacher
P47	Thalia	Head Teacher, Science Department
P48	Paul	SBM coordinator, Mathematics Teacher
P49	Benhur	Student representative, Bodily Kinesthetics winner
P50	Yen	Student representative, future filmmaker

The prior agreement on informed consent properly addressed any ethical considerations impacting the participants. No participant was permitted to participate in the AI learning process of the structured interview and FGD without prior personal or parental consent for minors. Thus, the participants' responses were all kept strictly confidential. The "no right or wrong" responses were communicated, and authors and sources in the linked literature were thoroughly mentioned. Most crucially, the data presented in the preceding discussion were derived from actual structured interviews and FGDs conducted using the AI-4D cycle.

Analysis of Data Using Appreciative Inquiry

The data analysis approach for this AI comprehensive study was carried out before, during, and after each site visit (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Interviews, FGD transcripts, on-site observations, documentation analysis, and field notes were evaluated inductively and deductively utilizing the basic qualitative data analysis procedure (Patton, 1990). Data from interviews and focus group discussions were the primary sources of information, while on-site observations, field notes, and other sources validated the findings and acted as triangulation to assess the validity and reliability of all obtained material. This study used no statistical treatments.

An AI 4-D model and thematic analysis were employed to collect qualitative data. A pre-designed plot or priori code was used in the interpretation process. During the full analysis of data, marginal comments were encoded in Microsoft Excel (2010) for sorting and analysis. Data encoding remained open to any new or unexpected ideas that arose during the process (Gibbs, 2009). Thus, data coding and thematic analysis showed best practices, school leadership styles, and potential organizational development plans, whilst documentary analysis and on-site observation gave detailed information regarding school performance.

After sorting the data, all related codes were clustered, and the basic codes were collapsed to allow for a more detailed and intelligible interpretation. Themes and categories were created as a way of integrating, expounding, and updating existing codes. The analysis's topics were presented logically in tables and charts, together with associated explanations, to serve as evidence for the designed school performance model (Stake 1995). Thematic analysis, as employed in this study, aimed to find patterns of meaning in the data through processes such as data familiarization, data coding, theme development, and revision.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following segment presents the findings of the study, addressing the research questions posed. It includes a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the data collected through structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), on-site observations, and documentary analysis, utilizing an AI-driven approach for data processing and interpretation.

Problem 1. What are the schools' performances in terms of:

    a) financial stewardship;

    b) process efficiency; and,

    c) leadership, learning and growth?

Implementing best practices in fulfilling school tasks is crucial for achieving positive outcomes. According to Mintrom (2014), fostering cultures of excellence in educational institutions requires a consistent focus on practice and training. A strong leader must cultivate an ideal mindset among their constituents, aligning everyone within the school organization towards meaningful educational achievements.

The following table shows the emerging themes regarding schools' performance in financial stewardship highlighting accountability, oversight of expenditures, and transparency as key factors contributing to success. For a deeper analysis, each theme was categorized based on the assessment tool of RPMS guidelines such as *good, better, or best*. The findings suggest that the participating schools demonstrate adherence to national government guidelines and principles regarding fiscal management.

Table3. The Schools' Performance in Terms of Financial Stewardship

Theme	Sub-themes	Category
⸱ Accountability	The bookkeeper prepared financial statements annually	Best
	The actual expenditures were compared with the budget in reasonable frequency and explanation for significant variations	Best
⸱ Oversight of expenditures	The school MOOE's for the fiscal year (FY) 2016 and 2017 had exhibited efficiency ratings of 95% and above in liquidation	Best
⸱ Transparency	Reports of expenditures were properly posted on the school transparency board and web site	Best

Table 3 reveals that the participating schools demonstrate strong performance in financial stewardship, achieving the Best category, based on participant responses and data gathered through AI learning activities, on-site observations, and documentary analysis. Key themes emerging from this analysis include accountability, oversight of expenditures, and transparency.

Accountability. Participants emphasized the importance of diligent attention and meticulous record-keeping in managing school finances. Regular comparison of actual expenditures with the budget, along with explanations for significant variations, is a common practice. This commitment to accountability fosters a sense of responsibility and helps avoid overwhelming workloads (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013).

Oversight of Expenditures. Participants effectively manage expenditure oversight, as evidenced by the high liquidation efficiency ratings for Schools' Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) for fiscal years 2016 and 2017, averaging 95%. The TMCNHS bookkeeper highlighted strict adherence to office rules and procedures to maintain a positive impression with the Division Office. Similarly, the disbursing officer consistently submits vouchers and receipts on time.

Transparency. Schools demonstrate transparency by prominently displaying expenditure reports on their transparency boards and websites. This readily accessible information provides stakeholders with clear insights into school events and transactions. Ms. Fuchsia emphasized the positive impact of transparency on external stakeholders, fostering trust and encouraging continued support.

Overall Assessment. The results indicate that the participating schools excel in financial stewardship, with accountability, oversight of expenditures, and transparency playing crucial roles in building trust and support among stakeholders. This strong foundation enables schools to thrive and develop effectively.

Process Efficiency. Analysis of process efficiency highlights accuracy and timeliness as key contributing factors to success. The findings suggest that schools consistently comply with document submission requirements, ensuring accuracy and timely delivery.

Table 4. The Schools' Performance in Terms of Process Efficiency

Themes	Sub-themes	Category
☞ Accuracy	The Office followed a standard operating procedure for collecting information and preparation of school budgets	Best
	School budget included the physical and financial targets	Best
	Promptness and accuracy on submission of necessary documents were reflected on the book of accounts	Best
☞ Timeliness	Submission of reports was done on or before the 5th day of the following month	Best

Table 4 indicates that the schools achieved outstanding performance ratings of 5.00 with a category of "Best" in process efficiency, as reflected in the themes and descriptions from participants. Accuracy was a key factor among primary participants, as demonstrated through documentary analysis. The school bookkeeper and disbursing officer consistently submitted the required documents promptly to the Division Office for evaluation, adhering to established standard operating procedures for submitting financial reports, including both physical and financial budgets.

Timeliness was cultivated as a habit and discipline among the bookkeepers at these high-performing schools, who diligently completed their tasks on or before the 5th day of each month to avoid unnecessary stress related to deadlines. For the TMCNHS bookkeeper, the commitment to working overtime, even without compensation—was motivated by a desire to maintain the school's reputable image. This dedication to promptness and accuracy was evident in the school's financial and physical records. Documentary analysis revealed that the financial records of the schools had consistently met the key performance indicators over the past two years.

The findings highlight that the schools' performance in terms of process efficiency was rated as exceptional, with participants demonstrating their effectiveness in submitting essential documents for the liquidation of the school's Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) and other necessary documentation. The schools clearly recognized high achievement as an integral part of their system, as the staff were trained to consistently strive for excellence.

Table 5. The Schools' Performance in Terms of Leadership, Learning and Growth

Themes	Sub-themes	Category
☞ Safety measures	Cleanliness and orderliness had gone throughout the day	Best

	The school issued a student handbook for safety and holistic development of the learners	Best
	The school was a "closed campus" during school hours for students' safety	Best
	The security guard checked and logged relevant details of the incoming visitor/s	Best
	Surveillance cameras were evenly deployed on strategic places of the school campus	Best
✎ Tracking of Learners' performance	School records satisfied the general level of key performance indicators for the past two (2) years	Best
✎ Pursuit of excellence	The school was recognized as Best Brigada Eskuwela Implementer or its teaching/non-teaching staff received at least two (2) meritorious recognitions from any DepEd accredited award-giving body or organization for the past two (2) years	Best
	The school's Office Performance Commitment Rating Form garnered from "Very Satisfactory" or 3.500 - 4.499 to "Outstanding" or 4.500-5.000 mean ranges for the last two years	Best
	Students exhibited courtesy and proper discipline at all time	Best
✎ Safety measures	Cleanliness and orderliness had gone throughout the day	Best

Table 5 reveals that the participating schools demonstrate strong performance in leadership, learning, and growth, achieving an overall rating of 4.87 based on participant responses and data gathered through AI learning activities, on-site observations, and documentary analysis. Key themes emerging from this analysis include safety measures, tracking of learners' performance, and pursuit of excellence.

Safety Measures. Schools prioritize student safety through comprehensive measures including security checks for visitors, strategically placed surveillance cameras, and maintaining a clean and orderly campus throughout the day. Notably, all schools operate as "closed campuses" during school hours. These safety policies, outlined in the student handbook (as exemplified by FMFMNHS), are communicated to students and parents during the first quarter student assembly.

Tracking of Learners' Performance. Participants recognize the crucial importance of tracking learner performance. School records consistently meet or exceed key performance indicators (KPIs) over the past two years, including participation, repetition, dropout, cohort survival, transition, retention, graduation, and promotion rates. This meticulous tracking is particularly important given the diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic challenges faced by many students. School leaders demonstrate awareness of learners' holistic progress, both within the school and in the surrounding community.

Pursuit of Excellence. Participants consistently strive for excellence, expressing a strong commitment to achieving worthwhile accomplishments for the school. They derive great satisfaction from bringing honor and prestige to their institutions. This dedication has been recognized through numerous awards and accolades, including Hall of Famer, Best Brigada Eskuwela Implementer (TMCNHS), and Best SBM Implementer (FMFMNHS, LPIHS, & BNHS). The school awarded Best Brigada Eskuwela Implementer received additional recognition for their exceptional achievements (DepEd Order No. 53, s. 2017).

Overall assessment reveals that the participating schools excel in financial stewardship, process efficiency, leadership, learning, and growth, and they were categorized as Best in their performances. Their strong

characteristics demonstrated a commitment to create a safe, supportive, and high-achieving environment for students.

Problem 2. What leadership styles and strategies contributed to the exemplary performance of these schools?

Schools, like sailboats, encounter unique challenges and opportunities. These can range from academic performance gaps to student well-being concerns, staff shortages, or budget constraints. Just as a sailor adjusts their sails and course to navigate changing winds, school leader-participants in this study were able to identify and address specific needs and issues within their school community. The succeeding information reflects a comprehensive presentation of how collaboration, stakeholder engagement, innovative strategies, and recognition systems contribute to effective school reform and improved educational outcomes. These themes are consistent with contemporary research advocating for collaborative practices as fundamental to successful educational leadership. The key themes and their corresponding statements are presented in this table:

Table 6. The leadership styles and strategies contributed to the exemplary performance of these schools

Themes	Sub-themes	Data Extracts
Professional Development and Empowerment	Encouragement for Graduate Studies	The key participants have encouraged teachers to take graduate or post graduate degree/seminars or professional trainings for promotion purposes
	Empowerment of Teachers	kept smart, creative and hardworking faculty
Collaborative Culture	Collaboration Among Faculty	inculcated the value of individual contribution for the school improvement
	Constructive Criticism	guided the teachers towards a meaningful teaching and learning
		provided constructive criticisms among the teaching staff
Community Engagement	Strong Community Ties	established a strong tie with the community to support the SIP
	Involvement of External Stakeholders	enforced the external stakeholders in school projects
Classroom Environment	Conducive Learning Spaces	kept a well conducive to learning classrooms
		admitted ownership of the students' future
Recognition and Accountability	Tracking Performance for Recognition	empowered potential teachers and apply the basic theories and knowledge on instructional leadership
	Merit/Demerit System	given respect for the teachers' diversity of culture and religion
Respect for Diversity	Cultural Sensitivity	considered the teachers' specialization in giving the loads or assignments
Strategic Assignment Distribution	Specialization Consideration	identified the teachers' skills and potentials in giving special assignments

Leadership by Example	Leading by Example	encouraged the subordinates by leading as good example
		strengthened collaboration among the school leader, office personnel and teaching staff
		conducted research to solve the needs or concern of all departments
		tracked on everybody's excellent performance for recognition
		intensified the merit or demerit system with dedicated and hardworking teachers or the students; Applied varied strategies to convince all members for compliance

Table 6 highlights provided various themes and interpretations related to effective school improvement strategies. Here's a structured analysis based on the themes identified in the responses:

These leadership styles encompass a comprehensive approach to management, involving planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. During the planning phase, principals prioritized the selection of highly qualified teaching and non-teaching personnel to effectively manage the school's technological and financial resources. These key personnel were assigned leadership responsibilities based on their individual strengths and capabilities. Their roles included conceptualizing and communicating school projects to all stakeholders, fostering a sense of collective responsibility in achieving organizational goals (Northouse, 2007).

The participating leaders demonstrated a deep understanding of human emotions and effectively engaged their staff, fostering a positive and productive work environment. They exhibited sensitivity to individual differences and behaviors, identifying areas for development and growth within their teams (Gray, 2009; Longhurst, 2014). Through their leadership, these administrators successfully influenced the character and skills of their staff, ultimately achieving desirable outcomes for their respective organizations (Murphy, 2015; Vohra, 2014; Cornali, 2012; Bolden, 2011).

Professional Development and Empowerment

Encouragement for Graduate Studies emphasized on teachers pursuing graduate or postgraduate degrees aligns with the theme of Quality Teaching and Learning, which underscores the importance of professional development for educators to enhance their instructional practices (P1). Additionally, empowering potential teachers to apply basic theories on instructional leadership reflects a commitment to Effective Leadership and the cultivation of a supportive educational environment that fosters teacher growth (P2).

Collaborative Culture

Collaboration Among Faculty maintains a smart, creative, and hardworking faculty indicates a focus on Clear and Collaborative Relationships, essential for fostering a positive school culture where collaboration is prioritized (P14). Providing constructive feedback among teaching staff promotes a culture of continuous improvement, which is critical for effective school management and leadership (P4).

Community Engagement

Strong Community Ties. Establishing strong ties with the community to support the School Improvement Plan (SIP) emphasizes the role of external stakeholders in educational success, reflecting the theme of Support for Systemwide Improvement (P1 and P2). Hence, Involvement of External Stakeholders allowed the participation of external stakeholders in school projects illustrates a proactive approach to engaging broader community resources in support of educational initiatives (P3).

Classroom Environment

Conducive Learning Spaces provides well-conducive classrooms which is vital for effective teaching and learning, aligning with the theme of maintaining high expectations for student engagement (P5).

Recognition and Accountability

Tracking Performance for Recognition. Monitoring everyone's performance for recognition reinforces accountability among staff, which is crucial for fostering a culture of excellence within schools (P23).

Merit/Demerit System: Intensifying the merit or demerit system reflects an effort to motivate both teachers and students, thereby enhancing overall school performance through structured accountability measures (P6).

Respect for Diversity

Cultural Sensitivity. Giving respect for teachers' diverse cultures and religions aligns with inclusive educational practices, which are essential for creating an equitable learning environment (P45).

Strategic Assignment Distribution

Specialization Consideration. Considering teachers' specializations when assigning workloads ensures that assignments are aligned with individual strengths, promoting effective instructional practices and enhancing overall school effectiveness (P12).

Leadership by Example encouraged the participants' subordinates through exemplary leadership fosters trust and motivates staff, which is essential for effective school leadership.

These themes collectively underscore the interconnectedness of leadership, professional development, community engagement, and recognition in driving school improvement efforts. Each element contributes to creating an environment conducive to learning and growth, ultimately aiming to enhance student outcomes across various educational contexts.

Problem 3. What are the high point experiences of the participants that facilitate success of the schools' performance?

For experienced leaders, professional trainings are insufficient to achieve high-quality performance; they must be supplemented with strategic drivers to increase workforce productivity. According to the participants, their most memorable experiences occurred when they used a blend of many techniques rather than a single leadership style to ensure the schools' success. Polterovich (2017) linked cooperation with team members to altruism in a deeper sense. In this view, accountable members of the group help others without expecting anything in return. He identified this type of collaboration as one of the most effective ways to improve school performance.

Table7. The High Point Experiences of the Participants that Facilitated the Schools' Success

Themes	Data Extracts
Supportive Environment	*"We have very supportive stakeholders. Lalo na ang aming munisipyo especially our honorable mayor is very supportive."* ""Ofcourse little by little, I noticed the support of our stakeholders."
Recognition and Motivation	*"We see to it na nabibigyan namin ng recognition ang mga nagpapakita ng maayos na performance especially the teachers and the students."* "I initiate the tasks by giving my best efforts to all undertakings for the school."
Problem-	*"Ang tinitingnan ko sa aking pamamahala ay ang tamang solusyon sa mga problema,*

Solving Approach	*iyon siguro ang isa sa aking strength although stressfull.”*
	“Before I expect development, I make sure that our classrooms are well-conducive to learning.”
Community Engagement	*“I am good at tapping with the community to get their support with us.”*
	“I am so proud to be a part of this highly progressive school because of highly dedicated and hardworking people.”

Table 7 displays the themes and verbatim statements of the participants' high-point experiences that contributed to their school's performance. The responses reveal numerous significant themes and interpretations on school improvement and educational approaches. These include shared responsibilities, responsive communities, a love and passion for teaching, and the implementation of personalized curricula. Their highpoint experiences offer some insight into educational leaders' experiences and views, with a particular emphasis on teamwork, personal growth, and the importance of a conducive learning environment. To elaborate on their responses, the following structured analysis is provided:

Supportive Environment

P1 emphasized the importance of community support in fostering a positive educational environment. The principal recognizes that backing from local government officials, particularly the mayor, plays a crucial role in the school's success. This statement was supported by P2 *as he* reflected a gradual but significant realization of stakeholder engagement. The principal's acknowledgment suggests that consistent support from various community members contributes to the school's achievements, reinforcing the theme of collaborative effort.

Recognition and Motivation

“We see to it na nabibigyan namin ng recognition ang mga nagpapakita ng maayos na performance especially the teachers and the students,” P1 mentioned. This highlights the theme of recognition as a motivational tool. By publicly acknowledging accomplishments, the school fosters an environment where both teachers and students feel valued, which can lead to enhanced performance. Accordingly, P5 stated that “I initiate the tasks by giving my best efforts to all undertakings for the school.” This statement underscores leadership by example. The principal's commitment to excellence not only sets a standard but also inspires others to strive for their best, thus creating a culture of motivation and achievement.

Problem-Solving Approach

P4 revealed that leaders must have a proactive problem-solving mindset. The principal's focus on finding solutions rather than assigning blame reflects a constructive approach to challenges within the school environment. Such statement was supported by P4, indicating a foundational belief in creating an optimal learning environment as essential for academic success. The emphasis on physical facilities aligns with the theme of prioritizing student welfare and effective learning conditions.

The participants' responses revealed several key themes that shaped their peak experiences within the educational context. Through careful analysis of their verbatim quotes, underlying patterns emerged, offering valuable insights into the factors that stimulated these positive experiences. The interpretation of these themes provides a deeper understanding of the elements that contribute to meaningful and impactful educational moments, enriching the overall perspective on the learning environment and its influence on student development.

Problem 4. What alternative and innovative approaches can sustain the success of these respective schools?

Teachers in public schools have long been expected to provide high-quality instruction to students born in the twenty-first century who have been exposed to digital tools. They might currently study and understand several areas of information that are taught in classrooms using only the most recent technology. This method of learning has been shown to be more beneficial than learning inside classrooms, which are supplied with obsolete literature and dilapidated laboratory equipment.

Table 8. The alternative and innovative approaches that sustain the success of the performing secondary schools

Themes	Sub-themes	Data Extracts
Demand for Modern Resources	Laboratory Tools and Equipment	The participants wish to - be provided with enough laboratory tools and equipment for the students' pieces of training
	Modern Classrooms and Laboratories	have classrooms equipped with modern and high technologies for better learning
Infrastructure and Connectivity	Rapid Internet and ICT Facilities:	be installed with rapid internet or ICT facilities for office transactions like submission of documents or evaluation
		promote the use of modern or ICT facilities instead of obsolete text books
		have classrooms equipped with modern and high technologies for better learning
		have more classrooms and laboratory rooms for remedial and reinforcement classes
Holistic Education Approach	Service and Community-Based Learning	promote service learning/community-based learning; engage students in immersion
	Strengthening Holistic Development	strengthen holistic development or values re-orientation for the students
Academic Support and Professional Development	Reinforcement of Reading Lessons	reinforce reading lessons in all tool subjects
	Professional Training for Teachers	keep well educated Filipinos to make a better society
		have supplemental or professional trainings, so as to have high calibrated teachers and increase the academic performance
Community and Social Responsibility	Unity and Harmony in the Organization	engage teachers in massive training in the use of modern technologies
	Equal Opportunities for All	provide sufficient toilets and wash area for the teachers and students
Health and Well-being	Sufficient Toilets and Wash Areas	maintain unity and harmony in the organization
		practice equal opportunities to all, regardless of gender and employment status

Table 8 reveals the themes and statements about the alternative and innovative approaches that can guide the participants in further development of their respective schools. Such themes emerged during the AI learning process. In their discussion, they confirmed that educators must not stop looking for a better way to improve their particular school organizations. The responses provided several key themes and interpretations related to educational needs and aspirations within a school context. Here's a structured analysis based on the identified themes:

Demand for Modern Resources

Laboratory Tools and Equipment. The desire for adequate laboratory tools and equipment emphasizes the theme of Resource Accessibility, highlighting the need for practical resources to enhance student training and learning experiences.

Modern Classroom Technologies. The call for classrooms equipped with modern technologies indicates a commitment to Innovative Learning Environments, where technology plays a crucial role in facilitating effective teaching and engaging students.

Gladys conformed with the idea of having a well sophisticated instructional facilities in the public schools as it would provide the opportunity to uphold 21st century and globally competitive teachers. Letty wished to have modernized classrooms for the welfare of her students:

"I am hoping that the improvement of the physical plant and facilities will boom in order to have rooms that are conducive to the continuous learning process of the 21st century learners, so the school can produce Filipino citizens who will be the "hope of the nation.""

Infrastructure and Connectivity

Rapid Internet and ICT Facilities. The need for reliable internet and ICT facilities underscores the importance of Digital Infrastructure, which is essential for efficient administrative processes and access to online educational resources.

Additional Classrooms and Laboratories. Requests for more classrooms and laboratories reflect a focus on Capacity Building, ensuring that educational institutions can accommodate diverse learning needs, including remedial and reinforcement classes.

ICT and laboratory tools appeared to be the highest demand of the participants during the dream phase of the AI learning activity, 50% of them expressed their aspirations to have modern facilities in office transactions particularly in the submission of documents or reports. In the same way, the classrooms must also be equipped with modern and high technologies for better learning.

Rica expressed her strong intention to promote the use of modern or ICT facilities instead of obsolete text books, so as to meet the changing demands of the society. In her suggestions, she said: *"Eliminate Obsolete books and promote the use of ICT in teaching and learning for the 21st century learners."*

When this happens, the school would not only be a performing school in the division but also in the region or even so in the national level. If the teachers achieved high qualifications, then it will earn trust from its stakeholders and all the more, they will be encouraged to have their sons or daughters' study in this school.

The utilization of modern instructional facilities in the classroom commonly attracts the attention of both the learners and the teachers and create a more meaningful learning experiences that would apparently come up with a better academic performance.

Holistic Education Approach

Service Learning/Community-Based Learning. Promoting service learning highlights the theme of Experiential Learning, where students engage in real-world applications of their knowledge, fostering both academic and social growth. The participants expressed a desire to encourage the use of service-learning or community-based learning curricula in schools. They believed that teaching utilizing indigenous resources would improve learning outcomes.

Strengthening Holistic Development. The emphasis on holistic development or values re-orientation signifies a commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals, aligning with the theme of Character Education. The FGD members, Letty, Olivia, and Kim, underlined that such objectives would only be attainable if school-

community links were developed.

Carl, FGD participant, noted that learners are naturally decent individuals, but they require extra care due to the influences of society.

Sana po ay pagsikapan ng mga guro na matuto ang mga mag-aaral, hindi lamang sa kanilang asignatura kundi maging ang tama at magandang asal. Hindi po ako pabor sa pagmamarka sa mga bata kahit matagal nang hindi pumapasok ng klase dahil ho ito ang nagbibigay ng dahilan sa ibang mga bata na magpabaya. Ito ho ang gusto kong mai-apply sa sistema ng edukasyon ngayon para ang mga bata ho ay makadama ng kahalagahan ng kanilang pagsisikap. Ipatupad ang tamang disiplina at huwag ipapasa kahit hindi nagpapakaayos sa pag-aaral.

According to him, studying was more about fostering Filipino values in a youngster to help him become a better person than collecting basic subject knowledge. Furthermore, he opposed the idea of mass promotion in basic education since he believed that a few students need extra help and intervention before they can learn.

A student's enthusiasm to study and develop their intrinsic skills can be heightened if the resources, facilities, and atmosphere encourage such growth on the side of the students. Additional facilities, important government support for programs that promote greater learning, and improved linkages with stakeholders will make the process of developing learners' MI easier and faster.

Academic Support and Professional Development

Reinforcement of Reading Lessons. The focus on reinforcing reading across subjects reflects an understanding of the foundational role literacy plays in overall academic success, emphasizing the theme of Literacy Development.

Class and function rooms were mentioned as the second request by FGD participants. They desired to have adequate laboratory tools and equipment for the students' training and development. They argued that school officials should prioritize the renovation of physical plant and infrastructure before expecting a progressive academic environment. If they were more fortunate, they wished to have more classrooms and laboratory facilities for remedial and reinforcing classes, to construct a multi-purpose hall for trainings and culminating activities, and to provide a working library and other instructional materials for teachers.

Professional Training for Teachers. The desire for supplemental or professional training indicates an investment in Teacher Development, recognizing that well-trained educators are critical to improving academic performance.
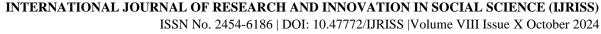
I am still waiting for more donations from our successful alumni, PTA's and other good samaritans to fulfill more projects in our school. I am dreaming of functional laboratories in science, journalism and speech. Likewise, I dream of teachers who are all master's degree holders with national and international trainings. In upholding degree holder faculty, this school would produce highly competent students, equipped with much needed skills for the combat of national and global economic challenges

Community and Social Responsibility

Unity and Harmony in the Organization. Maintaining unity within the organization speaks to the theme of Collaborative Culture, which is essential for fostering a positive school environment.

Equal Opportunities for All. Advocating for equal opportunities regardless of gender or employment status highlights a commitment to Equity and Inclusion, ensuring that all individuals have access to the same educational benefits.

I have a big dream for this school. I wish to make our students freely use and benefit the educational laboratories like speech, journalism, science, mathematics clinic and well-ventilated gymnasium. I also dream to have air-conditioned classrooms with free access to digital technology for our students. It is hoped that

through the Continuous Improvement (CI) programs, this school will have a sustainable development.

Health and Well-being

Sufficient Toilets and Wash Areas. The need for adequate sanitation facilities underscores the importance of Health and Safety Standards within educational environments, which are crucial for both student and staff well-being. Healthcare facilities were evenly recognized as significant to the participants. They wanted to offer youngsters with wash places, toilets, and an adequate water supply to make their surroundings more convenient. For many years, providing decent healthcare facilities for students was the least priority in most public schools, as Candy wished:

Sana naman po ay makasama ang wishes naming ito para sa mga recommendations ninyo, ho? Ang next wish ko po ay more toilets para sa aming estudyante. Kasi ang iba pong toilets dito, napakabilis nasira like sa JICA na ilang months lamang na functional. Sa ngayon ginagamitan muna namin ng coding system and proper monitoring ang mga bata like issuance of ID for the use of CR ang class president po ang nag-aadminister nito. Nababawasan po ang mahihilig lumabas ng rooms like going to the toilet and canteen. Idagdag pa po sa wish ko ang drinking and wash station. Kulang na kulang po kami ng facilities para sa mga basic needs ng mga bata.

The researcher emphasized Candy's heartfelt plea for improved facilities in public schools, which will be included in the study's recommendations. She, like many educators, believes that enhanced resources would allow them to better support and provide comfort to their students. Despite their patience, the participants expressed a persistent hope for the continued development of school infrastructure and equipment, particularly in public schools where such improvements are most needed for their school.

The themes collectively illustrate a comprehensive vision for educational improvement, emphasizing modern resources, infrastructure, holistic development, professional growth, community engagement, equity, and health standards. Each aspect contributes to creating an effective learning environment that supports both educators and students in achieving their fullest potential.

Problem 5. Based on the results, what school performance model can be designed to increase the performances of other schools?

The proposed model for school performance was based on research into the factors, insights, and leadership styles or techniques used by the purposefully chosen performing secondary schools in Region IV-A CALABARZON. Such standards produced the best training, which resulted in their best overall performance.

Excellence in school performance is based on the following factors: instructional innovation, human resource development, and enhancing community partnerships. Furthermore, excellent practices enabled schools to innovate more and educate children holistically, resulting in a healthy body and mind. Advocates of knowledge believe that schools must have a leader who is approachable, effective, and imaginative in order to obtain a better result.

As an attempt to improve the efficiency of teachers and staff at Lucsuhin National High School, the following complete school performance model is recommended, based on modern research into effective educational practices. This model combines many factors to address the needs and dreams mentioned in the responses.

Proposed School Performance Model

"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out," says an American poet named Robert Collier. Such a line could be related with the excellent performances of the selected secondary schools in Region IV-A CALABARZON, which can serve as a model for other schools in providing the best education to their students. These schools supplied an optimal but necessary criterion for all schools' academic achievement. This criterion might be considered a standard for giving the finest instruction, which appears to result in the best overall performance of other institutions.

This model is anchored on educational development goals and global sustainable development to enhance knowledge and human development in the Philippines (Cabalfin & Yap, 2008). The framework implies that education plays a vital part in the "economic growth and development of the country." According to the notion, educated individuals are more conscious of proper spending, creating money, and managing the country's natural resources. As a result, a school leader must accept the challenge of accepting change across the entire system in order to contribute to the country's economic progress.

Adopting this comprehensive school performance model can enhance the efficiency of teachers and personnel while fostering an environment that prioritizes student success and holistic development.

Table 9. The proposed comprehensive performance model for Lucsuhin National High School through Illuminating Pathways to Success (LNHS-IPS)

Key Result Area	Target Facilities	Approaches	Course of Action
Resource Accessibility	Modern Tools and Technologies	Ensure classrooms are equipped with modern technologies and sufficient laboratory tools. This aligns with the need for enhanced learning experiences and supports the theme of Resource Accessibility	Form a dedicated school improvement team that includes teachers, administrators, parents, and community members
	ICT Facilities	Install rapid internet and ICT facilities to facilitate efficient communication and administrative processes, which is critical for improving overall school operations	
Professional Development	Ongoing Training Programs	Implement regular professional development sessions focusing on modern teaching methodologies and technology integration. This supports the goal of having high-caliber teachers and enhances academic performance.	
	Collaborative Learning Communities	Foster collaborative environments where teachers can share best practices and engage in peer observations, promoting a culture of continuous improvement	
Holistic Education Approach	Service Learning Initiatives	Promote service learning and community-based projects that engage students in real-world applications of their education, thereby enhancing their social responsibility and practical skills.	Conduct regular assessments of progress towards goals set within the model
	Focus on Emotional and Social Development	Strengthen programs that address students' emotional, social, and intellectual needs, ensuring a well-rounded educational experience	
Data-Driven Decision Making	Performance Indicators Monitoring	Establish a framework for monitoring key performance indicators such as academic achievement, growth gaps, and postsecondary readiness. This data-driven approach will help identify areas for improvement	
	Regular Feedback Mechanisms	Create systems for providing feedback to both teachers and students based on performance data, fostering accountability and encouraging	

		continuous improvement	
Inclusive Culture	Promote Equity	Ensure equal opportunities for all students and staff regardless of gender or employment status. This commitment to equity will foster a more inclusive school environment	
	Community Engagement	Strengthen ties with stakeholders to ensure their support for school initiatives, which is crucial for creating a positive school culture	
Infrastructure Improvement	Facility Upgrades	Invest in upgrading school facilities to provide a conducive learning environment, including adequate sanitation facilities for students and staff	Adjust strategies based on feedback from stakeholders to ensure responsiveness to the evolving needs of the school community
	pace for Remedial Classes	Increase the number of classrooms and laboratories to accommodate remedial classes, ensuring that all students receive the support they need to succeed academically	

Implications

This study emphasizes the importance of perseverance in achieving achievement and encourages people to keep working hard even when faced with setbacks. Based on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's comments, the following implications are formed:

1. The findings suggest that persistence in pursuing goals can significantly increase the likelihood of achieving success. Individuals who continue to work hard and remain dedicated are more likely to see positive outcomes.

2. Just as "knocking" at the gate represents effort, the study implies that clear and persistent communication can lead to breakthroughs in various situations, whether personal or professional.

3. The metaphor of waking someone up at the gate highlights the idea that consistent effort can create opportunities that may not have been previously recognized or acted upon.

4. The study encourages individuals to maintain their efforts despite challenges, as success may be just beyond the point of initial struggle.

5. The implications align with the concept of a growth mindset, suggesting that individuals who believe in their ability to improve through effort and persistence are more likely to achieve their goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After going through the implications supported by the findings of the study, the researcher hereby presents the following recommendations:

1. School leaders should balance innovative and effective leadership in areas like financial management, process efficiency, and staff development to achieve top ratings.

2. School leaders should use different leadership styles and strategies based on the needs and diversity of the school to encourage staff to give their best efforts.

3. Educators should study the strengths of high-performing schools highlighted in this study to improve

and develop their own school systems.

4. Schools should consider using AI to drive change and enhance learning, as it provides valuable information and new methods for learning.

5. Public secondary schools are encouraged to adopt the suggested performance model to improve their productivity and results.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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