
Diocesan School Administrators' Leadership Practices, Teachers' Morale, Job Satisfaction, and Productivity: Basis for the Retooling Program

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Abstract — The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between the leadership practices of diocesan school administrators and the morale, job satisfaction, and productivity of faculty members to develop a program and support system for diocesan schools in the province of Zamboanga del Norte for the academic year 2022–2023. The study was conducted using a quantitative-correlational survey design and included 155 teachers, 26 deans/principals, and eight administrators from the Diocese of Zamboanga del Norte. Two survey instruments, the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire (PTO), were used to collect data on the leadership practices of diocesan school administrators and the morale, job satisfaction, and productivity of faculty members. The study found that the leadership practices of diocesan school administrators were satisfactory, and the morale, job satisfaction, and productivity of faculty members were high. The Weighted Average Mean was used to determine responses on the leadership practices of administrators, faculty members' morale, job satisfaction, and productivity in diocesan schools, while the Spearman Rho Correlation Coefficient was used to establish a significant correlation between school administrators' leadership styles and faculty members' morale, job satisfaction, and productivity. Overall, this research provides valuable insights into the factors that influence the morale, job satisfaction, and productivity of faculty members in diocesan schools. These findings could be useful in developing effective strategies for enhancing the quality

of education in these schools. The study indicate that diocesan school administrators can improve the morale, job satisfaction, and productivity of faculty members by adopting effective leadership practices that promote a positive work environment.

Keywords: leadership practices; morale; job satisfaction; productivity; diocesan school

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is essential for the promotion of excellence in both public and private educational institutions (Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013). In order to maintain a culture of excellence, Diocesan school administrators must play an important role in terms of the challenges which they face when serving as religious leader (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013; Rieckhoff, 2014; Hunt et al., 2004). In addition to their responsibilities as educators and managers

For over a century, Church documents have emphasized the importance of Catholic education and its leaders (Cirigliano, 2017; Vatican II, 1965a). Hence, administrators in Catholic education must be well-prepared in both secular and religious knowledge to effectively address contemporary challenges, especially as they are considered key leaders who significantly impact school cultures and learning environments (Bulach, Boothe, & Pickett, 2006; Bogler, 2005). Similarly, leadership styles such as situational, transactional, transformational, distributed, participative, and instructional greatly influence the school environment (Daughtery, Kelley, & Thornton, 2005). Thus, the changing landscape requires administrators to reassess and adapt their leadership styles to secure and retain highly qualified teachers (Mead & Rotherham, 2003).

Furthermore, research underscores the critical role of school principals' leadership styles in affecting morale and job satisfaction (New York State Education Department, 2004; Ingersoll, 2003). Black (2001) highlights the significance of administrators in defining instructional programs, promoting a positive climate, and collaborating with teachers, thereby impacting teacher morale. Also, Gorton, Alston, and Snowden (2007) stress the capacity of the administrator to lead as it is crucial for school success and morale.

Alternatively, teacher job satisfaction is vital for overall school success, with teachers playing a substantial role in student achievement (Hongying, 2007); Saravia-Shore, 2008). It is therefore important to highlight that the relationship between school administrators and teachers significantly influences the school environment and teacher job satisfaction (Bogler, 1999; 2002).

In the province of Zamboanga del Norte, where there are only a few diocesan schools, little or no study has yet been conducted to determine the leadership styles of its administrators and their effects on teachers' morale, job satisfaction, and productivity. The diocesan schools are flourishing, but much has to be learned to better understand the programs, projects, and activities of the school implemented under the defined curriculum and instructional leadership, and in essence to come up with a better developmental plan to sustain the school and community needs. There is a need to define the specific task of each employee in the organizational management as work descriptions tend to overlap due to staff shortages.

Despite extensive research on leadership and Catholic education, there is a scarcity of studies that specifically investigate the essential leadership practices for diocesan school administrators to achieve success in the 21st century. Hence, this study would like to explore the leadership styles of diocesan school administrators in their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders in relation to teachers' morale, job satisfaction, and productivity so that it can serve as a basis in the retooling program for the school's success. Thus, the current research is conducted on the premise that the leadership styles of diocesan school administrators in Zamboanga del Norte contribute to the morale, job satisfaction, and productivity of its faculty and staff.

Literature Review

All educational leaders face significant challenges on a daily basis, moreover, Catholic educators were faced with more additional challenges than those in the public sectors. This is due to the increased job responsibilities placed on them and the fact that they do not receive any federal funding and have very limited resources. For Catholic education to survive, competent and capable school leaders must be identified and placed in school leadership positions. The current research

on diocesan school leadership is very limited, yet extremely necessary to ensure the sustainability of diocesan schools.

Throughout history, the role of diocesan school administrators has continuously evolved. Early principals held varied position depending on the school system, with some managing minor operational task while others undertook complex managerial duties (Rousmaniere, 2007). A significant responsibility of diocesan administrators is to uphold the Catholic identity of their schools, as instructed by the by Catholic Church (Congregation for Catholic Education [CCE], 1977, 1988). This requires them to act as spiritual leaders, ensuring their decisions and actions reflect Catholic faith and doctrine. An effective spiritual leader demonstrates flexibility in integrating these values into teaching and learning (Sergiovanni, 1995) and fosters evangelization by reinforcing the belief that God empowers and loves the world (Nicolas, 2013).

Catholic school administrators must balance managerial, instructional, and spiritual leadership roles, with spiritual leadership permeating all aspects of their work (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013). The school is foremost a faith community, and principal's role is ministerial, setting them apart from public school counterparts. Religious leadership responsibilities include making church documents accessible, promoting spiritual development, leading prayers, creating an environment favorable to religious education, integrating gospel values into curricula, and serving the parish and civic community (Sergiovanni, 2006).

Effective school management is inseparable from educational leadership, which requires principals to be actively engaged in teaching and learning processes daily. Successful educational leaders support teacher growth by providing professional development opportunities, feedback, and collaboration time (Blase & Blasé, 2000; Marks & Printy, 2003). They must ensure teachers have training, resources, and clear instructional goals to maximize student achievement (Lunenburg, 2013). As accountability standards tighten, principals' responsibilities expand beyond management to encompass leadership for student success and teacher performance (Kafka, 2009; Lynch, 2012).

Leadership theories provide frameworks for understanding how school leaders perform their roles. The Great Man and Trait Theories propose that leadership qualities such as charisma, intelligence, and courage are innate (Schultz, 2001; Cragg & Spurgeon, 2007). Situational

Leadership emphasizes adaptability, suggesting that leadership emerges from specific contexts and circumstances (Lippitt, 1969; Cragg & Spurgeon, 2007). Transactional Leadership focuses on exchange of rewards for duties performed but lacks motivation for deeper commitment (Leithwood & Janzi, 1999; Griffith, 2004). Conversely, Transformational Leadership inspires higher performance and commitment by motivating and valuing staff contributions (Ediger, 2009; Sagnak, 2010). Servant Leadership prioritizes serving others' needs first, strengthening community and personal growth (Spears, 1998), while Distributed Leadership encourages shared responsibility and leadership among multiple individuals within a network (Spillane, 2005; Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry, Meurs, 2009).

II. METHODOLOGY

Person involved in the survey questionnaires was the farmer himself to gather all the necessary information. Four (4) groupings were surveyed, namely: Members of the five Agrarian Reform Beneficiary Organizations who ventured in the cacao production under the DAR-Kennemer production and purchase agreement; farmers-cooperators who availed the Plant Now, Pay Later scheme of the DA – Philippine Rural Development Project in partnership with the three Multi-purpose Cooperatives – a Credit Cooperatives (PIMCO, POEMCO & FACOMA); Local Government Unit farmer – beneficiaries who participated in the cacao dispersal program, and the independent – self-financed cacao farmers.

A sample of 314 respondents from 1,149 was determined using Slovic's formula selected from the 12 component municipalities and one city which are currently concentrating on cacao farming and production as identified by the Department of Agrarian Reform through its Agrarian Reform Beneficiary Organizations (ARBOs), Provincial Rural Development Project (PIMCO, POEMCO & FACOMA), the Local Government Units with its Cacao Production Dispersal Program, and the Department of Trade & Industry who serves as the monitoring agency for the cacao production and processing in the Province for the independent cacao producers. The selection of the farmers was based on the following criteria: (a) must belong to any of the four groups of respondents included in the study; (b) availability of the farmer during the conduct of fieldwork; and (c) permission from the farmer to be included in the study. The farmers were

randomly selected from the list provided by the Municipal Agrarian Reform Office for the Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries, Municipal Agriculture Office for the Local Government Unit's beneficiaries, Department of Trade and Industry for the independent cacao farmers, and for the Philippine Rural Development Project, the list of beneficiaries were provided by the three Multipurpose Cooperatives involved in the project implementation, namely PIMCO, POEMCO and FACOMA. Of the 314 copies of survey questionnaires, only 306 were usable, as the eight (8) others remained for the most part unanswered.

Printed questionnaires were the main data collection tool, supplemented by interviews with respondents. The questionnaire was pilot-tested on 43 cacao farmers who were beneficiaries from the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), LGU cacao dispersal program, and independent farmers. A value of 0.888 Cronbach's Alpha using the Siegle reliability calculator was obtained which is within the range of good reliability.

A Likert modified scaling type was used in this study to survey the perception of the farmers on the

relative degree of importance on the various farming activities – profitability, labor, production, investment and management - by asking the levels of opportunities or risks from a series of statements. This approach assumes some underlying subjective dimension such as the “degree of importance”. Respondents were given the prospect to select from the four items in a choice set that maximize the difference between them on an underlying scale of significance.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Cacao Business in Zamboanga del Norte

The study profiled 306 cacao farms in the province. Most (72.22%) were owned by the respondents and located in barangays with clay loam soil, which is suitable for cacao. This indicates that farmers' are guided and aware of the soil requirement for cacao cultivation. Farms sizes were predominantly small, with a mean of 1.86 hectares. As mentioned in the Philippine 2017-2022 Philippine Cacao Industry Roadmap, 90% of existing farms devoted to cacao cultivation are practically small in terms of land size. This ownership profile holds true even in the

global scenario where most cacao farms are also small, ranging from 1-3 hectares (Bureau of Plant Industry, 2016). Planting density averaged 703 trees per hectare, thereby exceeding the PCA recommendation of 600. The cacao tree – which produces the cocoa bean – is fragile, capable of growing only in a narrow band 15 degrees north or south of the equator.

As with other “orchard” crops, cocoa farming requires time, with cacao trees yielding their first pods approximately two to three years after planting (International Cocoa Initiatives). However, the farmer-respondents planted the Philippines cacao clone varieties that can start to flower before it reaches 2 years from planting such as the NSIC-Cc-99-01 (ICS 40) which generally start to flower at the age of 17.63 months, which fruiting follows at 19.63 months, while NSIC Cc-99-05 (BR 25) first flowering starts at 16.12 months and fruiting follows at 17.70 months. Whereas NSIC Cc-99-06 (K1) start to flower at 23.20 months and bears fruit at 25.10 months and NSIC Cc-99-07 (K2) start to flower at 21.10 months and bears fruit at 24.12 months (Department of Agriculture). Despite planting these high-yielding varieties, and having mostly mature trees (3-4 years old at most), only 14.71% were fully productive, the remainder were still flowering. These are partly attributed to the non-application of the farm inputs on the specified frequency due to the delays in the releasing of fertilizers, pesticides and other farm inputs to the program beneficiaries.

Cocoa farmers’ investment decision in cocoa farming in the cocoa value chain is an essential factor

towards the development of the cocoa sector (Segun, 2016). Comparable to cultivating fruit bearing trees and other high value crops, the possibilities of high yields and income from cocoa is generally anchored on the amount of investment from land preparation to harvesting (A Primer on PEF’s Priority Commodities: Industry Study on Cacao). In the Province, most farmers (64.38%) invested an averaged of ₱100,000 per hectare, yet 63.07% earned less than ₱100,000 annually from the sales of cacao beans, while DTI estimates that the projected gross annual income of beyond ₱100, 000.00 is expected only in the seventh year onwards. The province very minimal farm output from 2016 to 2020 was not enough to supply the local grinding demands. The average selling price of dried and wet cacao beans was within ₱88.00 to ₱95.00 per kilogram and 30.00 to 32.00 per kilogram respectively; and 49.02% of the farmer-respondents sold their produce directly to wholesalers, such as Kennermer Foods International Inc., who served as consolidators of cacao

products. It must be noted that the Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Organizations (ARBOs) were under a loan grant with the Land bank of the Philippines payable in 5 years after the release of the grant. The grants were computed based on per hectare of land cultivated with cacao. Also, Piñan-PiMCO and Polanco-POEMCO cacao projects were likewise funded by the same lending institution but on different financing scheme since the loan was made by the Cooperative itself. The amount in turn was being loaned to its members who will venture into cacao production under the Philippine Rural Development Project.

Farmers Perceptions on the Opportunities and Risk Relative to Cacao Farming Business in the Province of Zamboanga del Norte

**TABLE 1
 OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS OF CACAO FARMING BUSINESS AS PERCEIVED
 BY THE RESPONDENTS IN THE AREA OF PROFITABILITY**

Profitability	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Highly suitable for intercropping and other mixed farming system for sufficient earnings for the next 10 years.	3.774	Certainly an opportunity
Huge local market demand and higher local & international market prices.	3.771	Certainly an opportunity
Best cacao seeds acquired to increase income.	3.699	Certainly an opportunity
Increased dollar earnings through exports.	3.6895	Certainly an opportunity
High income crop if productive capacity is attained.	3.6536	Certainly an opportunity
Offering of tax incentives by Philippine government	3.650	Certainly an opportunity
Expenses reduction made.	3.4150	Certainly an opportunity
Procurement of cheaper farm machineries	3.2843	Certainly an opportunity
Availability of marcotted seedlings	3.00	Probably an opportunity
High prices of fertilizers	1.8627	Probably a risk
Average Weighted Mean	3.37991	Certainly an opportunity

Table 1 show that respondents viewed most aspects of cacao farming as opportunities (weighted mean 3.2843 - 3.774), with the suitability for intercropping and long-term earnings (3.774) and future market demand (3.771) rated highest. Whereas, high fertilizer prices (1.8627) were seen as a risk. The availability of marcotted seedlings was considered a probable opportunity (3.00). Overall, farmers perceived cacao farming as profitable (weighted mean 3.37991), citing high market demand and intercropping potential. The present finding is supported in the study of Obiri, Bright, McDonald, Anglaaere, & Cobbina (2017) which state that cocoa production is

profitable and there is a corresponding improvement in the rural livelihood as well as enhanced farm sustainability. Likewise, the present finding is corroborated by Matissek, et al. (2012) whose study revealed that sustainability standards are increasingly being applied in cocoa production, as demand for raw cocoa will continue to rise - training, improved production methods, rising productivity and promotion of diversification guarantee that cocoa of a consistently high quality and in quantities to meet market needs is offered by farmers, thus securing their long-term livelihoods.

TABLE 2
OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS OF CACAO FARMING BUSINESS AS PERCEIVED
BY THE RESPONDENTS IN THE AREA OF LABOR

Labor Resources	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Family/cooperative members are actively involved in the practical work on the farm.	3.706	Certainly an opportunity
Farmers and hired labor should undergo proper trainings.	3.702	certainly an opportunity
Projects are being set up to try out better farming methods.	3.539	Certainly an opportunity
Farmers should learn how to take care of the hand pumps for watering and other machineries.	3.523	Certainly an opportunity
Farmers in the Zambo. Norte have little trouble finding affordable hired cacao farm labor	2.92	Probably an opportunity
Farmers in the Zambo. Norte have little trouble finding reliable hired farm labor to work in the cacao plantation.	2.320	Probably a risk
Hired farm labor has limited technical knowledge and skills to improve cocoa cultivation systems and practices.	1.895	Probably a risk
Dwindling interest of young farmers in engaging cocoa production.	2.180	Probably a risk
Families are large because these farmers need children to help them in the fields.	2.163	Probably a risk
Average Weighted Mean	2.883	Probably an opportunity

Regarding labor (Table 2), respondents’ rated family/cooperative involvement highest (mean 3.706), highlighting the family-oriented nature of farming and reduced labor costs. Training for farmers and hired labor (3.702) and testing improved farming methods (3.539) also scored well. Conversely, limited skills of hired labor (1.895), declining youth interest (2.180), and reliance on large families for farm labor (2.163) were perceived as risk. The result is concomitant with the findings of Feder (2016) who posited that despite of the increased scale in farm management, in many advanced countries the family remains the main source of farm labor. Hired labor supervision costs tend to favor family farming as the equilibrium institution.

TABLE 3
OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS OF CACAO FARMING BUSINESS AS PERCEIVED
BY THE RESPONDENTS IN THE AREA OF PRODUCTION

Production	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Government renders various support services to upgrade & expand cocoa farming system.	3.703	Certainly an opportunity
Good agro-climatic endowment	3.719	Certainly an opportunity
Availability of areas for expansion under mono-cropping or intercropping for production expansion	3.673	Certainly an opportunity
Limited access to sources of planting and grafting materials.	1.967	Probably a risk
Availability of high yielding clones in the country.	3.284	Probably an opportunity
Substitution of low quality cocoa butter with vegetable oils in some applications	1.886	Probably a risk
Non-perishable after processing	3.585	Certainly an opportunity
Limited access to technology and post harvesting facilities.	1.892	Probably a risk
Prevalence of pests and diseases.	1.588	Probably a risk
Average Weighted Mean	2.81	Probably an opportunity

Regarding cacao production (table 3), respondents identified favorable climate (3.719), government support (3.703), land availability for expansion (3.673), and the non-perishable nature of processed beans (3.585), as significant opportunities. High-yielding clones were also seen as probable opportunity (3.284). On the contrary, limited access to planting materials (1.967), technology/post-harvest facilities (1.892), cocoa butter substitution (1.886), and pest/disease prevalence (1.588) were considered risks. Overall, cacao production was viewed as probable opportunity (mean 2.81). Lima, Almeida, ob Nout, & Zwietering (2011) posited that the quality of commercial cocoa beans primarily relies on the combination of factors that include the type of planting material, the agricultural practices, and the post-harvest processing such as the fermentation of the cocoa beans which is still considered the most relevant aspect since the process is considered as the precursors which the cocoa flavor arise.

TABLE 4
OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS OF CACAO FARMING BUSINESS AS PERCEIVED
BY THE RESPONDENTS IN THE AREA OF CAPITALIZATION

Capitalization/Investment	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Expected returns of cacao farming can be attained	3.784	certainly an opportunity
Government provides efficient support to cacao farmers.	3.549	certainly an opportunity
Farmers/cooperative has sufficient funds from Government	3.556	certainly an opportunity
Limited credit facilities.	2.199	probably a risk
High prices of fertilizers.	1.598	probably a risk
Under-investment and gaps in financing growth and scale	1.450	certainly a risk
Lending institutions not accustomed to seasonal cash flows.	1.225	certainly a risk
Transportation facilities must be provided.	3.611	certainly an opportunity
Disbursed borrowers lack financial management skills and knowledge.	1.360	certainly a risk
Average Weighted Mean	2.23	Probably a risk

Concerning investment (table 4), respondents viewed potential returns through proper planning and investment (3.784), transportation access (3.611), and government funding (3.556) as significant opportunities. Conversely, lenders’ unfamiliarity with seasonal farming cash flows (1.225), farmers’ limited financial management skills (1.360), and underinvestment leading to value chain inefficiencies (1.450) were seen as major risk. Extending credit to farmers’ boosts farm growth and household incomes, as farm income primarily supports families (Dabone, Osei, & Petershie, 2014). Also, sustainable cocoa production significantly impacts farmers’ lives, particularly smallholder farmers with limited resources (Houston & Wyer, 2012), besides public-private partnerships are improving sustainable cocoa farming and farmer livelihoods. However, Asamoah & Amoah (2015) asserted that rural farmers struggle to access credit due to low incomes and limited savings. Thus, microfinance schemes, with their peer support and group guarantees, offer a solution by mobilizing savings and fostering a repayment solution.

TABLE 5
OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS OF CACAO FARMING BUSINESS AS PERCEIVED
BY THE RESPONDENTS IN THE AREA OF MANAGEMENT

Farm Management	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Poor market access and fragmented linkages	1.604	Probably a risk
Secured coordination among market, farmers, and other support services.	3.438	Probably an opportunity
Internationally recognized cocoa bean quality standards	2.026	Probably a risk
Limited business or marketing skills.	1.716	Probably a risk
Inadequate Research & Development and extension services.	1.712	Probably a risk
Limited measures to counteract climate or disaster risks.	1.559	Probably a risk
Knowledge on for technician/supervisor on management functions – planning, organizing, leading and controlling.	3.709	certainly an opportunity
Provision of water reservoir in case of drought.	3.484	probably an opportunity
Cacao farm to be free from any farm animals.	3.202	probably an opportunity
Average weighted mean	2.494	probably a risk

In table 5, respondents identified several opportunities in cacao farming management, such as skilled technicians (3.709), water reservoirs (3.484), coordinated market access (3.438), and pest control (3.202). Conversely, perceived risks, included limited disaster mitigation (1.559), poor market access (1.604), insufficient business skills (1.716), inadequate R&D/extension (1.712), and unforced quality standards (2.026). Overall, farm management was perceived as a probable risk (weighted mean 2.494). Baloyi (2010) claimed that smallholder farmers faced marketing challenges due to limited access to production resources (land, water, infrastructure, labor, capital and management) and agricultural support services. These therefore restricts their participation in high value-market markets, with most sales occurring locally, or at the farm gate. Also, lack of access to markets and market information further disadvantages the farmers, leading to reliance on subsistence farming and reduced bargaining power (Magesa, Michael, & Ko, 2014). Thus, improved access to resources and market information is crucial for smallholder cacao farmers to thrive.

TABLE 6
TEST OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS OF THE CACAO FARMING BUSINESS AS PERCEIVED BY THE RESPONDENTS

Descriptors	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Profitability	2.13200E2	129.16037	40.84409	120.80424	305.59576	5.220	9	.001	Has significant difference
Labor Resources	9.30000E1	179.48746	59.82915	-44.96628	230.96628	1.554	8	.159	No significant difference
Production	7.18889E1	221.73771	73.91257	-98.55380	242.33158	.973	8	.359	No significant difference
Investment	-5.22222	267.08415	89.02805	-210.52128	200.07683	-.059	8	.955	No significant difference
Farm Management	-2.11111	227.83352	75.94451	-177.23945	173.01723	-.028	8	.979	No significant difference

As reflected in Table 6, the t-statistics is lower than the specified alpha level of .05, thus, there is a statistically significant difference between opportunities and risks associated with cacao farming business in terms of profitability. On the contrary, all the four variables' computed two-tailed p-values are greater than the specified alpha level of .05, thus, there is no statistically significant difference between opportunities and risks associated with cacao farming business in terms of labor resources, production, investment and farm management as perceived by the respondents.

IV. CONCLUSION

Engagement in agri-business encompasses opportunities and risks associated with investment, labor, production, profitability and farm management. Based on the findings of the study, opportunities for cacao farming business in Zamboanga del Norte outweigh its risks.

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