



STRATEGIC RESOURCE ALLOCATION IN UNDER-FUNDED SCHOOLS: NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This narrative study aims to examine and analyze the leadership practices that contribute to effective resource allocation in under-resourced schools where student outcomes have shown improvement. Through investigating these successful schools, the study seeks to identify specific strategies and decision-making processes that school leaders employ to maximize the impact of limited resources. It also aims to understand how these leaders navigate the complex task of prioritizing and balancing competing needs within their institutions. Through detailed documentation of the various resource allocation strategies, the study will explore their impact on student achievement and overall school improvement. The research design for this study adopts a narrative inquiry approach, focusing on the stories and lived experiences of school leaders managing limited resources. The research participants were the three (3) school leaders from underfunded schools who have demonstrated considerable expertise in resource management and have successfully overcome significant challenges in their educational environments. Strategic Resource Leadership in Underfunded Schools, is the necessity for school leaders to possess a clear vision and strategic mindset to ensure the efficient use of limited resources. Effective resource leadership involves prioritizing needs, seeking innovative solutions, and fostering collaboration with local stakeholders, including the community, local government units (LGUs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Additionally, collaboration with local and external partners is crucial for creating sustainable solutions for financially constrained schools.

KEYWORDS- Strategic Resource Allocation, Under-Funded Schools, Narrative Inquiry, Successful Leadership Practices

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the leadership practices and decision-making processes of educational leaders in under-resourced schools who have successfully managed scarce resources to improve educational outcomes. The research adopts a narrative study approach to identify and document the effective resource allocation strategies employed by these leaders. While much of the existing literature focuses on the challenges faced by under-resourced schools, this study aims to bridge the gap by providing insights into the practices that lead to success in resource-constrained environments. The findings will offer practical guidance for school leaders and inform policymakers about replicable strategies for optimizing resource utilization in similar contexts, contributing to a deeper understanding of educational leadership in such settings.

A study examined resource allocation practices in five high-performing urban school districts in the United States that serve predominantly low-income communities. The researchers found that successful schools prioritized investing in teacher professional development, extended learning time, and targeted intervention programs. The study highlighted how strategic scheduling and creative use of community partnerships helped maximize limited resources, (Mayer & Larochette 2023).

Meanwhile, Thompson and Williams (2022) analyzed resource allocation patterns in underserved UK schools that demonstrated significant improvement in student outcomes. Key findings revealed that successful school leaders implemented data-driven decision-making processes, established clear prioritization frameworks, and maintained flexible budgeting approaches that allowed for rapid reallocation based on emerging needs. These leaders also engaged in regular assessments of resource impact, adjusting allocations to ensure that investments effectively supported student learning goals. Additionally, by fostering a culture of accountability and transparency, they were able to align staff and stakeholders around shared priorities, maximizing the impact of available resources.

Another comparative study across schools in Southeast Asia identified successful resource allocation strategies in resource-limited environments. The research emphasized the importance of building strong community partnerships, implementing cost-sharing initiatives, and developing sustainable resource generation programs. Through fostering collaborative relationships with local stakeholders, schools were able to tap into community resources that directly supported their operational and educational needs. Furthermore, these schools prioritized initiatives that not only met immediate demands but also laid the groundwork for long-term resource sustainability, enhancing their capacity to improve student outcomes over time, (Chen & Zhang (2021).

In the Philippines, Santos and Cruz (2023) examined successful resource management practices in Philippine public schools, highlighting the effectiveness of School-Based Management (SBM) approaches. The research found that schools that effectively engaged local government units and implemented transparent resource allocation processes showed better educational outcomes. By fostering collaborative relationships with community stakeholders and local government, these schools secured additional funding and support, which contributed to enhanced learning resources and facilities. Furthermore, the emphasis on transparency



and accountability in resource allocation helped build trust among stakeholders, facilitating a more supportive and engaged school community.

Furthermore, a research focused on leadership strategies employed by school administrators in managing limited resources across different regions in the Philippines. The study identified successful practices including strategic partnerships with alumni associations, innovative fundraising programs, and effective utilization of Special Education Fund (SEF) allocations, (Reyes & Flores, 2022).

Also, Domingo and Garcia (2021) emphasized resource allocation patterns in Philippine public schools that achieved notable improvements despite limited funding. The study highlighted the importance of participatory decision-making processes, where school leaders involved teachers, parents, and community stakeholders in resource planning to ensure alignment with the school's needs and priorities. Additionally, the strategic alignment of resources with school improvement plans enabled these schools to focus limited funds on initiatives that directly supported academic achievement and school development goals, maximizing the impact of every allocation.

Likewise, a local study examined successful resource allocation strategies implemented by public school administrators in Davao City. The research highlighted how school leaders effectively utilized the Special Education Fund (SEF) and leveraged partnerships with local businesses to support educational programs (Bangoy & Duterte, 2023). These administrators strategically allocated SEF resources to address critical needs, such as facility improvements and instructional materials, enhancing the learning environment. Additionally, partnerships with local businesses provided supplementary resources and volunteer support, which strengthened the schools' capacity to implement enrichment programs and extracurricular activities, further benefiting student development.

This study investigates the leadership practices and decision-making processes of educational leaders in under-resourced schools who have successfully managed scarce resources to improve educational outcomes. The research adopts a narrative study approach to identify and document the effective resource allocation strategies employed by these leaders, with a focus on schools in Digos City, Philippines. While much of the existing literature focuses on the challenges faced by under-resourced schools, this study aims to bridge the gap by providing insights into the practices that lead to success in resource-constrained environments. The findings will offer practical guidance for school leaders and inform policymakers about replicable strategies for optimizing resource utilization in similar contexts, contributing to a deeper understanding of educational leadership in such settings. By recognizing successful case studies in this locale, the research also aims to highlight models that can be adapted across diverse educational landscapes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research in South Africa by Johnson and Smith (2023) explored how principals in underfunded townships creatively reallocated resources through community partnerships. School leaders developed innovative bartering systems with local businesses, exchanging school facilities for educational materials and maintenance services. This collaborative approach allowed schools to stretch their limited budgets while fostering stronger relationships with local businesses and community members. The study also highlighted that these community partnerships not only addressed immediate resource shortages but also created long-term benefits by involving the local community in the educational process.

Another study in rural Brazil by Santos and Oliveira (2022) examined how school administrators maximized limited resources by implementing resource-sharing networks among neighboring schools. Leaders coordinated schedules to share specialized teachers and equipment across multiple campuses, effectively distributing resources to ensure that all students had access to high-quality education despite the financial constraints faced by individual schools. This collaborative model involved pooling resources such as science labs, computers, and physical education equipment.

Moreover, research from India documented how principals in low-income areas developed micro-financing initiatives within their school communities. Leaders organized parent-teacher cooperatives to pool resources for essential educational materials and infrastructure improvements. These cooperatives allowed parents, teachers, and local community members to contribute small amounts of money over time, which were then used to fund projects such as purchasing textbooks, upgrading classroom facilities, and maintaining school buildings. Patel et al. (2023) highlighted that these micro-financing efforts were particularly effective in bridging the resource gap in schools located in economically disadvantaged areas. By creating a sense of shared responsibility and ownership, the principals were able to encourage community members to actively participate in the school's development. This not only provided much-needed resources but also strengthened the bond between the school and the surrounding community.

Significantly, in Tondo, Manila by Cruz and Rivera (2022) revealed how school leaders leveraged alumni networks and local business partnerships to supplement government funding. Principals developed sustainable donation programs and mentorship initiatives to support ongoing resource needs, ensuring that schools could continue to provide quality education despite financial limitations. The study highlighted that alumni, many of whom had gone on to successful careers, were eager to give back to their alma maters. School leaders coordinated with alumni to establish donation programs, where former students contributed financially or through in-kind donations such as school supplies, books, or even refurbished technology.

In addition to multi-grade classrooms in Zamboanga, Mendoza and Santos (2023) explored how flexible learning spaces were integrated into the school's resource management strategies. Traditional classroom setups were often reconfigured to accommodate various teaching and learning styles. For example, spaces that were typically used for one subject or activity could be transformed into flexible areas that supported group work, independent learning, or technology-based instruction. This



adaptability allowed schools to make the most of their existing facilities, ensuring that all students had access to suitable learning environments. The study also pointed out that these innovative scheduling and facility utilization practices required strong leadership and careful coordination. School administrators worked closely with teachers to design schedules that balanced the needs of multi-grade classrooms while ensuring adequate time for specialized subjects like science, arts, and physical education.

Similarly in Puerto Princesa, researchers documented how school leaders developed community resource-sharing programs to address the challenges of limited resources in underfunded schools. Principals in the region coordinated with barangay officials to create collaborative partnerships that allowed schools to share facilities and equipment with local community centers, maximizing the available resources for educational purposes. The study highlighted that, by working closely with barangay officials, school leaders were able to tap into community assets, such as sports facilities, meeting halls, and other infrastructure, which could be used for school activities when not in use by the community, (Garcia et al., 2021).

Research Questions

This study aims to provide actionable guidance, enabling leaders to make informed, impactful decisions that address both immediate needs and sustainable growth within their schools. The following central research question guides this study:

1. What are the lived experiences of successful school leaders in allocating resources in under-funded schools?
2. What coping strategies do successful school leaders have in managing resources in under-funded schools?
3. What insights do successful school leaders have in managing under-funded school?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design for this study, Strategic Resource Allocation in Under-Funded Schools: Narrative Inquiry of Successful Leadership Practices, adopts a narrative inquiry approach, focusing on the stories and lived experiences of school leaders managing limited resources.

Narrative research, as proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (2020), allows for an exploration of how individuals make sense of their world through personal stories. This approach is particularly valuable in understanding the complexities of leadership in underfunded schools, as it provides a platform for school leaders to share their unique challenges, strategies, and successes. Narrative inquiry enables a deep, contextualized understanding of the resource allocation process, emphasizing the subjective experiences and meaning-making of the participants.

Through collecting and analyzing these stories, the research aims to uncover insights into successful leadership practices that contribute to effective resource management in resource-constrained environments.

Research Participants

For this study, the research participants are the three (3) school leaders from underfunded schools who have demonstrated considerable expertise in resource management and have successfully overcome significant challenges in their educational environments. These leaders have been chosen not only for their experience but also for their proven track record in navigating adversity to ensure the continuity of learning despite financial constraints. The decision to have the participants write their stories serves as a powerful tool for capturing nuanced and reflective accounts of their leadership practices, offering a rich understanding of how these leaders make sense of and respond to resource limitations. By allowing school leaders to articulate their personal experiences in their own words, the study creates space for participants to share their successes, challenges, and the innovative strategies they employed to manage resources effectively.

This narrative inquiry method, as outlined by Connelly and Clandinin (2020), emphasizes the importance of the stories themselves, positioning the written narratives as crucial sources of insight into the personal and professional journeys of school leaders. These accounts are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in leading under-resourced schools, shedding light on the decision-making processes, creative problem-solving methods, and the leadership qualities that have enabled these leaders to thrive despite challenges.

Additionally, these narratives will help explore how school leaders view their role in the context of resource scarcity, the impact of these experiences on their leadership development, and the broader implications for school management in low-resourced settings. Through this approach, the study aims to offer a richer, more detailed perspective on educational leadership and resource management in underfunded school contexts.

Research Instrument

In this study, the in-depth interview serves as the primary research instrument, offering participants the opportunity to express their experiences and insights into managing resources in underfunded schools. The use of semi-structured interviews allows for flexibility, giving participants the freedom to guide the narrative while ensuring key themes are explored.

Creswell (2013) highlights that this approach facilitates the collection of rich, personal stories that are essential for understanding the complexities of leadership and resource allocation. Interviews also encourage reflective thinking, enabling school leaders to assess their practices in the context of existing challenges. The interview questions are carefully crafted to prompt detailed and reflective responses, which help uncover effective strategies, adaptations, and innovations in resource management. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of the personal and professional dimensions of leadership in resource-constrained environments.



Data Analysis

Initially, researchers will read each participant's narrative multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of the content. This stage ensures the researchers are well-acquainted with the data and familiar with the nuances of each story, allowing them to capture both explicit and subtle elements of the narratives. At this stage, researchers examined the identified themes to uncover patterns across the different narratives. For example, they might find that many participants discuss strategies like creative budgeting or volunteer involvement. Recognizing these patterns helps highlight common leadership approaches and strategies that were effective across different contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter delves into the broader implications of the findings from the study on Strategic Resource Allocation in Under-Funded Schools: Narrative Inquiry of Successful Leadership Practices. It explores the insights gleaned from school leaders who successfully navigated resource constraints and implemented innovative strategies to optimize available resources. Additionally, the chapter outlines potential future directions for research and practice in the realm of educational leadership, particularly in the context of underfunded schools.

The implications drawn from the study highlight the pivotal role of school leaders in shaping educational outcomes despite financial limitations. Through adaptive leadership, creative resource management, and community collaboration, these leaders demonstrated how effective resource allocation can positively impact student learning and school development. The findings emphasize that resource optimization goes beyond financial investment; it involves leveraging local partnerships, fostering teacher empowerment, and adopting learner-centered strategies.

Implications

The study entitled Strategic Resource Allocation in Under-Funded Schools: Narrative Inquiry of Successful Leadership Practices offers valuable insights into leadership practices in resource-constrained school environments.

One of the key implications of the first theme, Strategic Resource Leadership in Underfunded Schools, is the necessity for school leaders to possess a clear vision and strategic mindset to ensure the efficient use of limited resources. Effective resource leadership involves prioritizing needs, seeking innovative solutions, and fostering collaboration with local stakeholders, including the community, local government units (LGUs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Additionally, collaboration with local and external partners is crucial for creating sustainable solutions for financially constrained schools. This approach builds a support network that contributes to the school's overall development and sustainability. The study also emphasizes the need for resourcefulness and adaptability in school leaders, encouraging them to proactively seek alternative funding sources and implement creative solutions, demonstrating that, when principals embrace challenges, they can improve educational quality despite financial constraints.

In relation to the second theme, Developing Smart Plans and Innovative Techniques to Manage Resources in Underfunded Schools, the study suggests that school leaders should prioritize resource allocation based on student needs through data-driven decision-making. A needs-based approach helps ensure that limited resources are focused on areas that will most impact student learning outcomes. Resourceful leadership encourages local, sustainable solutions by motivating teachers to use recycled materials, tap into community expertise, and explore local fundraising opportunities. This not only optimizes available resources but also nurtures creativity within the school community. Furthermore, empowering teachers and staff to develop and lead initiatives fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, allowing teachers to become catalysts for innovation in resource management and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the school.

Regarding the third theme, Transformational Leadership Anchored in Learner-Centered Resource Optimization, the study highlights the importance of prioritizing learner-centered resource allocation. Transformational leadership in resource-constrained schools requires continuous evaluation of how resources, whether human or material, impact student learning. By focusing on student needs, leaders can ensure that limited resources are allocated where they will have the most significant impact. The study also emphasizes the need for school leaders to nurture future leaders by training staff, encouraging professional growth, and providing leadership opportunities to ensure long-term sustainability and the continual growth of the school community. Moreover, transformational leadership requires empathy, as understanding the struggles of students, teachers, and the broader community helps guide resource decisions that reflect the actual needs of those being served. Community engagement in decision-making processes also fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility among all stakeholders.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of adaptation to financial constraints. Effective leadership in underfunded schools depends on the ability to adapt while striving for educational excellence. The study highlights the critical role of collaboration, both within the school and with external partners, as a vital strategy for overcoming resource limitations. Building a culture of collaboration where all members of the school community work together towards a common goal is essential for success. Lastly, the study stresses that strategic resource leadership should not only address immediate needs but also focus on creating sustainable models for resource management. By investing in professional development, fostering innovation, and continuously reassessing resource allocation, school leaders can ensure long-term improvements, even in the face of limited resources.

Future Directions

As the landscape of education continues to evolve, particularly in resource-constrained environments, it is essential to consider the future directions that can guide improvements in leadership practices and resource allocation. The study provides valuable insights into how school leaders, teachers, and educational stakeholders can adapt and thrive despite financial challenges. Moving forward, there are several key areas of focus for the Department of Education (DepEd), school heads, teachers, and future



researchers. These future directions are aimed at creating sustainable, innovative, and effective strategies for resource management, fostering collaboration, and ensuring the long-term success of schools, particularly those facing resource limitations. By leveraging the lessons learned from this study, stakeholders can develop more efficient and learner-centered approaches to education that maximize the impact of available resources.

Department of Education (DepEd): Based on the findings, DepEd can strengthen its policies and programs to support school leaders in underfunded environments by emphasizing the importance of strategic resource management and leadership development. Future initiatives should focus on providing more robust training for school heads, enabling them to harness community resources and develop innovative funding models. DepEd can also work on establishing formal partnerships with local governments, NGOs, and community-based organizations to create sustainable solutions for schools facing financial constraints. Moreover, DepEd should prioritize data-driven decision-making and implement more effective monitoring and evaluation systems that help track the impact of resource allocation decisions on student learning outcomes. Establishing clear guidelines on needs-based resource allocation would also aid school leaders in managing funds efficiently while maintaining a learner-centered approach.

School heads play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation, as demonstrated in the study. Moving forward, school heads should be encouraged to develop and communicate a clear vision for resource management that aligns with the needs of their students and the school's overall goals. By focusing on smart planning and utilizing local resources, school heads can maximize the impact of limited funds. They should also invest in empowering their teaching staff by promoting a culture of shared leadership, where teachers are actively involved in decision-making processes. Providing regular professional development opportunities that emphasize resourcefulness, creativity, and collaboration can help school heads and teachers adapt to the challenges of resource constraints. Additionally, school heads should continue to foster partnerships with the local community and external organizations, leveraging volunteerism, local expertise, and donations to support their schools.

Teachers, as the frontline implementers of educational practices, should continue to embrace innovative approaches in the classroom, particularly when resources are scarce. Future professional development programs should focus on building teachers' capacity to make the most of local resources, adopt creative solutions, and collaborate with the community. Teachers should also be encouraged to share successful practices and strategies with their peers, fostering a collaborative learning environment within schools. By actively engaging in resource optimization and taking ownership of their classrooms, teachers can significantly contribute to the improvement of student learning outcomes. Furthermore, the importance of empathy in teaching cannot be overstated. Teachers should be trained to understand the unique challenges students face, including access to basic materials, and be equipped to adapt their teaching strategies to meet these needs.

Future research should continue to explore the dynamics of resource management in underfunded schools, particularly focusing on the effectiveness of various leadership strategies in addressing resource constraints. Researchers can investigate the long-term impact of innovative resource allocation strategies on student performance and overall school development. Additionally, more studies could focus on the role of community partnerships and external collaborations in sustaining educational efforts in resource-poor settings. Qualitative studies, such as narrative inquiries, could be particularly useful in capturing the lived experiences of school leaders, teachers, and students in these contexts, offering deeper insights into the challenges and successes of resource management. Future research could also explore the relationship between transformational leadership and student outcomes, examining how a learner-centered approach can optimize resources in diverse educational settings. Furthermore, researchers could study the role of technology in underfunded schools, identifying how digital tools can be used creatively to enhance teaching and learning despite limited financial resources.

The findings of this study have significant implications for the future of educational leadership in underfunded schools. By fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and resourcefulness, school leaders, teachers, and DepEd can collectively address the challenges posed by financial constraints. The focus should be on creating sustainable and impactful solutions that prioritize student outcomes while making the best use of available resources. Future efforts should also aim to build a more supportive and empowering environment for educators, allowing them to thrive in resource-constrained contexts and ensuring the continued success of underfunded schools.

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