



RESEARCH ARTICLE

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION: ENSURING QUALITY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the concept of strategic investment in education, which has been very essential in providing a quality education to every student. This study examines the budget allocation and its relationship to school performance at Leonard Wood Elementary School (LWES) during the school year 2024-2025. This research utilized a mixed-method design, gathering data on budget allocation and school performance using measurable and numerical data. Statistical analysis was used to determine the relationship between budget allocation and performance. An interpretive approach was used to develop a plan, incorporating stakeholder input. The sample population consists of five teachers, one principal and two administrative officers as the respondents for this study. A purposive sampling was then used to identify these respondents. The result of the findings implies that most of the respondents believed that MOOE funds are insufficient for school operations, leading to underfunding of programs and delays in repairs, with varying efficiency ratings for utilization of facility maintenance, teaching materials, and repairs. The result of the study would be a great help to Leonard Wood Elementary School in addressing resource allocation and utilization issues through strategic planning, training, and technology, despite insufficient MOOE funds and advocating for external funding.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is recognized as a fundamental aspect of social and economic progress. It not only improves individual skills but also aids in the overall advancement of societies by encouraging innovation, decreasing inequality, and fostering social unity. Attaining quality education demands significant and strategic investment, which involves more than just allocating resources; it requires meticulous planning, execution, and assessment of educational initiatives and systems. This research examines the idea of strategic investment in education, emphasizing its importance in providing quality education for every learner. Strategic investment in education is the deliberate allocation of financial, human, and infrastructural resources to achieve maximum educational outcomes. Indeed, Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) argue that the quality of education, measured through cognitive skills and competencies, is a stronger predictor of economic growth than a simple increase in access to schooling.

This requires us to prioritize investments in teacher training, curriculum development, and educational technology to enhance the learning experience and outcomes. Additionally, the UNESCO report of 2023 has stressed that SDG 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education, cannot be accomplished until annual spending on education by low-income countries is doubled by 2030. This necessitates not only increased funding but also effective strategies for optimizing resource allocation, especially in underdeveloped education systems. Research shows that strategic investments play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of education. For example, a study by Darling-Hammond (2017) indicates that nations that focus on investing in teacher training—through professional development, attractive salaries, and ongoing support—routinely achieve better student outcomes. According to Levin, 2021, importance of funding for early childhood education; pointing out its lasting positive effects on cognitive growth and reduction of social inequality. In addition, besides implementation of educational technologies that are supported by specific investments, it has been proven to be helpful in closing learning gaps. A meta-analysis conducted by Tamim et al. (2018) showed that classrooms that incorporate technology

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significantly boost student engagement and achievement, especially in underserved areas. Nevertheless, the success of such initiatives relies on their relevance to local needs and contexts, which demands careful strategic planning. While the benefits of an investment in education are plenty, several challenges face effective implementation. Foremost among these barriers include limited public budgets, conflicting national priorities, and ineffectiveness in the management of resources. In a good number of low- and middle-income countries, salary allocations make up most parts of the education budget. This leaves little or nothing for infrastructural development and even innovative programs (World Bank, 2022). Besides that, weak monitoring and evaluation frameworks lead to inefficient resource use, further lowering the effectiveness of resources.

Statement of the Problem: This research assessed the status of resource allocation of Leonard Wood Elementary, North District, Division of Mandaue City, Cebu during the School Year 2024-2025 as basis for an action plan.

- What are the critical factors that affect the distribution of funds and resources in school?
- What is the impact of resource allocation differences on the quality of education and student performance?
- What is perceived on the resource allocation by the administrators?
- Based on the findings, what action plan can be designed?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective resource allocation is vital for ensuring equitable access to quality education and improving student performance. The World Bank (2018) emphasizes that education serves as a critical driver of human capital development and long-term socio-economic progress. To achieve equitable distribution of resources, investments in education must address key areas such as teacher development, infrastructure, and curriculum innovation, all of which play a significant role in fostering student achievement and addressing disparities in school funding. Teacher development is one of the most critical factors influencing resource allocation and its impact on educational outcomes. According to the OECD (2018), teacher quality is directly linked to student success, highlighting the importance of well-designed professional development programs. Darling-Hammond (2000) supports this, emphasizing that well-prepared teachers are better equipped to deliver effective instruction and create supportive learning environments. Prioritizing resources for teacher training ensures that all educators have access to opportunities for continuous growth, thereby addressing both instructional quality and equity in resource distribution. Another significant area for resource investment is educational infrastructure and technology. Burchinal et al. (2011) point out that the provision of adequate physical resources, such as classrooms and facilities, along with the integration of digital tools, can significantly enhance learning experiences. Fullan (2016) adds that modernizing curricula to incorporate technology not only improves access to learning resources but also prepares students for future challenges by developing critical thinking and employability skills. Resource allocation in these areas is especially critical in addressing disparities between schools in urban and rural areas. Despite the importance of strategic investments, challenges persist in

ensuring equitable resource allocation. UNESCO (2015) highlights funding gaps and socio-economic disparities as key barriers that exacerbate inequities in education. Similarly, Pritchett (2013) identifies weak governance and bureaucratic inefficiencies as major obstacles to the effective use of resources, often resulting in underfunding of priority areas. Addressing these issues requires transparent and accountable governance to ensure that resources are allocated based on identified needs and utilized efficiently. Evidence from successful education systems demonstrates the importance of equitable and strategic resource allocation. Finland, as noted by Sahlberg (2011), has achieved educational excellence through a strong emphasis on equity, high-quality teacher training, and decentralized decision-making. Likewise, Tan and Chua (2015) highlight Singapore's focus on curriculum innovation and continuous teacher development, which has resulted in consistently high educational performance. These examples underscore the need for targeted investments that align with a clear understanding of local needs and priorities.

In summary, addressing the critical factors that affect resource allocation in schools requires a focus on teacher development, infrastructure improvement, and governance reform. By prioritizing equitable distribution of resources and ensuring transparency in their utilization, education systems can mitigate disparities, improve student performance, and enhance the overall quality of education. These efforts are essential for addressing the impact of resource allocation differences and responding to the perceptions of school administrators, paving the way for effective action planning.

METHODOLOGY

This section covers how the data were gathered, the specific procedures involved, the study locale, the recruitment process of the participants, research instruments and the statistical treatment. This research used the mixed-method design; It was categorized in gathering data on budget allocation and school performance involving measurable and numerical data, making these suitable for quantitative analysis. It is also aligned to determine the relationship between budget allocation and school performance will likely involve statistical analysis. On the other hand, identifying the criteria for budget allocation may involve analyzing policy documents, and developing a plan based on findings requires an interpretive approach, incorporating stakeholder input, which aligns with qualitative methods which are qualitative in nature. Purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives, was employed to identify five teachers, one principal and 2 administrative officers as the respondents for this study. This method ensures that the participants have the requisite knowledge and experience to provide valuable insights into the research topic. The researchers conducted the study in Leonard Wood Elementary School North District, Division of Mandaue City. The School is located at Sitio San Jose in Barangay Jagobiao, Mandaue City along with Eversely Hospital. It is a 5.2 km. from Centro Mandaue City, and it is accessible for transportation by jeepneys, tricycle and "habal- habal". Two elementary schools are situated to it, one from the public and the other one from the private school. There is also a secondary school located at 2.3 km from it. At present, there is a shortage of classrooms, even the school has a newly built four-storey- 8 classroom building. The seats are also enough for the pupils

with the ratio of 1:2 for the desks. Books before were used in pairs due to insufficient supply for some subject areas, however this time there are learning resources utilized like modules and teacher made interactive supplemental learning materials. Toilets are present from each classroom for the pupils to use. One room is used as ICT laboratory room at the same time Library, and one room for the LRMSD and Grade III-Classroom. The school is run by a school head with 27 teachers and 3 Non-Teaching Personnel. Two Master Teacher 1, Twenty Teacher 3, Two Teacher 2, Three Teacher 1, One Administrative Officer II and 2 Administrative Aid III. The school uses the result of E-SAT in identifying teachers' strengths and weaknesses and provides In-Service Trainings twice a year to address the needs of the teachers. The school needs to improve the following as its prior improvement areas: the low MPS of the school, presence of beginning readers, presence of wasted and severely wasted learners, inadequate school materials and equipment, facilities for relevant school ancillary services, extra co-curricular activities have insufficient numbers of group handwashing facilities, improvement of the *gulayan sa paaralan*, improvement and maintenance of the school learning environment and physical facilities, unavailability of water supply for the newly constructed buildings. The allocation of school MOOE for the calendar year is insufficient to cater the school repairs and needs of the teachers to provide and deliver quality teaching and learning for learners. To address the areas that need improvement, they also have school links with parents and some external stakeholders. They also have strong partnership with LGU, the Barangay Council headed by Brgy. Capt. Marydith Merino who had helped a lot in the school program and projects. The school received awards and recognitions from School Year 2020-2021, and 2022-2023, these are the following: Most Outstanding Program Implementer (Brigada Eskwela Division and Regional Level), Most Outstanding Program Implementer (SBFP Division and Regional Level), Child Friendly Division Level, Most Outstanding Program Implementer (Gulayan sa Paaralan Division and Regional Level), Baseball Champion Division and Regional Level, 2nd Place Folk Dance Division Level.

One of the missions of Leonard Wood Elementary School is to produce quality learners who are committed and responsible in their tasks and competent both in academic and extra-curricular activities. The school staff, community and stakeholders are working collaboratively for the sustainability of the school's exemplary performance that makes Leonard Wood Elementary School as one of the best schools in Mandaue City Division that can provide positive and conducive learning environment for the school children. There was one instrument used in this study. A questionnaire used to describe the critical factors and the perceptions of the different school personnel dealing with the budget allocation for the school.

Data Gathering Procedure: The following procedures were followed in the gathering of data. The transmittal Letter was respectfully forwarded to the school head to ask permission to participate in the conduct of the questionnaire within the school. The result was consolidated by the researchers to identify the various areas allocated a budget. This data will then be analyzed to determine the school's prioritization. Subsequently, the researchers examined the relationship between the school's budget allocation and its performance.

The following were the data analysis used in the study First is the Percentages. This was utilized to allow the researchers to determine the proportion of the budget allocated to specific areas (access, quality, governance) in relation to the total budget. This makes comparisons easier and more meaningful. Second is the Average Mean. This was utilized in identifying the central tendency of budget allocation within a category, especially if there are multiple schools or time periods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Summarizing the gathered data, as to the *perception of MOOE* in Leonard Wood Elementary School, the principal, one (1) of the two (2) administrative staff, and teachers I to V noted that based on their experience and knowledge, MOOE allocation is *not enough* to meet the school's operational needs. Yet, the other administrative staff stated that the allocation of MOOE is *enough*. Additionally, all the respondents agreed that the primary expenses covered by LWES MOOE budget allocation are maintenance of facilities, purchase of teaching and learning materials, training and development programs for teachers, and repair. MOOE budget allocation of LWES was rated as *very efficient* by one (1) administrative staff, and teacher II. *Efficient* were the rates from the school principal, other administrative staff, and teacher I. Lastly, *neutral* were the rates given by teachers III to V when it came to the efficiency of the *utilization of MOOE* of the school in the current school year.

Further, one administrative staff noted that *there were no challenges*. However, the rest revealed that *there are challenges* that the school faced in utilizing MOOE funds as inadequate allocation and complex administrative processes. Teacher IV added a lack of transparency in fund disbursement in this aspect. *There are also activities or programs* in the school that are underfunded due to insufficient MOOE. Moreover, teacher II added that there were delays in doing repairs due to a lack of funds. *On the impact on education quality* of the current MOOE allocation of LWES, the school principal, teachers I and II responded *positively*; *neutral* for one of the administrative staff; *very positively* for the other administrative staff, teacher III, *negatively* for teachers IV and V. All henceforth marked that the lack of sufficient MOOE funds affects the following aspects in the school like classroom maintenance and repairs, teacher training and professional development, and student support programs.

Henceforward, the data revealed that *critical factors* affect the distribution of the LWES MOOE budget. There was an inadequate allocation. The data stresses a consistent concern among school staff that the MOOE budget does not suffice for the needs of the school. This means that the funding level can be the main factor in this inadequate distribution. There was a complex administrative process also that pointed to bureaucratic obstacles which can complicate the distribution of MOOE funds. Lack of transparency was known as one of the critical factors. The lack of transparency in MOOE fund expenses, as mentioned by Teacher IV, additionally emphasizes the need for transparent and open communication on how the fund is being used. Prioritization is another critical factor. Though the respondents approve that maintenance, learning materials, teacher training, and repairs are necessary, the data doesn't show a clear procedure for prioritizing these needs when resources are not enough. As to *the impact of*

resource allocation differences on the quality of education and student performance, there was a negative impact. Teachers IV and V's responses signify a negative impact on education quality due to inadequate MOOE budget. They explicitly underline the negative effects on the maintenance of the classroom, teacher development, and programs for student support. There were also mixed perceptions. Although the principal, Teachers I and II give a positive or neutral impact, the negative perceptions of Teachers IV and V imply an inequality in the perceived efficacy of MOOE fund allocation. The gathered data revealed also that it impacted learning. The inadequate allocation for maintenance, student support, and teacher training programs had effects on the environment of learning and learner opportunities for improvement. This may lead to a diminishing performance of the learners and affect the quality of education.

Additionally, the perception of the administrators on the resource allocation of LWES presented mixed opinions. The data collected showed that there was a division among administrators' perceptions. One administrative staff member believed that the fund was inadequate while the others believed that it was enough. There were also different perceptions of efficiency as one administrative staff member regarded the MOOE allocation as very efficient, but the other evaluated it as efficient. This indicates a variation in how each administrator perceives the efficiency of the MOOE allocation process. Administrators furthermore perceived challenges. Most administrators found challenges in utilizing MOOE fund allocation, particularly the inadequate distribution and complex administrative processes is a concern.

FINDINGS

Based on the gathered data, the critical factors affecting the distribution of funds and resources in Leonard Wood Elementary School include inadequate allocation, complex administrative processes, and a lack of transparency in fund disbursement. These factors limit the school's ability to fully address its operational needs and efficiently allocate resources. Inadequate funding emerged as a consistent concern among respondents, with insufficient budgets affecting essential areas such as facility maintenance, procurement of teaching materials, and teacher training programs. Additionally, bureaucratic obstacles complicate the distribution process, while the lack of transparency, as highlighted by Teacher IV, emphasizes the need for open communication on how funds are utilized. The differences in resource allocation negatively impact the quality of education and student performance. Teachers IV and V underscored the detrimental effects of insufficient MOOE funds on classroom maintenance, teacher development, and student support programs, which, in turn, hinder the learning environment and learner outcomes. Although some respondents, such as the principal and Teachers I and II, viewed the impact positively or neutrally, the negative experiences of other respondents reveal inequities in resource utilization and its effectiveness in improving educational outcomes. The perceptions of administrators regarding resource allocation were mixed. One administrative staff member perceived the MOOE allocation as very efficient, while the other viewed it as efficient. Furthermore, there was disagreement on whether the allocation was adequate to meet the school's needs. These contrasting perceptions highlight differences in how administrators experience and evaluate the efficiency and sufficiency of MOOE utilization, suggesting a

need for improved alignment and collaborative efforts in managing resources. In conclusion, the study highlights that inadequate funding, administrative challenges, and lack of transparency are significant factors affecting the distribution and utilization of MOOE in Leonard Wood Elementary School. These issues negatively influence the quality of education, with specific impacts on classroom maintenance, teacher development, and student support programs, ultimately diminishing learning outcomes. Mixed perceptions among administrators further emphasize the need for enhanced coordination, transparent processes, and systematic prioritization to optimize resource allocation and ensure equitable distribution. Reforms in policy and administrative processes are essential to address these challenges and improve the school's ability to deliver high-quality education.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, addressing the challenges of resource allocation at Leonard Wood Elementary School is essential to improving equitable access to quality education. While some administrators view the current allocation as sufficient, others highlight concerns about inadequacies and difficulties in utilizing MOOE funds effectively. The mixed impact on education quality underscores the need for targeted interventions. Recommendations include increasing and prioritizing funding to address critical needs, streamlining administrative processes to simplify fund utilization, and fostering transparency and accountability through regular financial reporting and stakeholder engagement. Additionally, involving teachers, parents, and community members in decision-making processes can help identify priorities and enhance resource management. By addressing these issues, the school can optimize resource distribution and create a more supportive environment for both students and staff.

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