Revista Colombiana de Educación N. 96, 2025
ISSN: 0120-3916 - e-ISSN: 2323-0134
DOI: https://doi.org//10.17227/rce.num96-20453
Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Colombia

Best Practices and Quality Assurance among Education Service Contracting Secondary Schools in the Philippines

Recibido: 10/12/2023
Evaluado: 23/07/2024
Publicado: 01/07/2025

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Abstract

Using a survey research design, this study determined the best practices for school certification and identified areas for improvement among Education Service Contracting (ESC)-participating schools in the core and support areas. It also examined the extent of compliance with Department of Education (DepEd) minimum standards and the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC) certification requirements among ESC-participating schools in San Pablo City, Laguna, Philippines. Findings revealed that the schools' best practices are reflected in their extent of compliance with the certification standards in the areas of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, as well as School Philosophy, Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives, as assessed by the Certification Assessment Instrument (CAI) for e-Recertification. The CAI aspects of schools that require improvement to provide quality assurance are the School Budget and Finance, Physical Plant and Instructional Facilities, and Academic Support and Student Development Services. This information would benefit the School Quality Assurance Team/PEAC by providing a better understanding of how they can help private educational institutions maintain quality assurance and ensure recertification in the country. By enhancing the overall quality of education, school certification helps create an environment that nurtures the intellectual and holistic development of students, preparing them for a successful future.

Keywords

best practices for school certification; education service contracting; quality assurance recertification

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Melhores práticas e garantia de qualidade nas escolas secundárias do programa de contratação de serviços educacionais nas Filipinas

Resumo

Utilizando uma abordagem de pesquisa por levantamento, este estudo determinou as melhores práticas para a certificação escolar e identificou áreas de melhoria nas escolas participantes do Programa de Contratação de Serviços Educacionais (ESC, na sigla em inglês) nas áreas principais e de apoio. Também examinou o grau de conformidade com os padrões mínimos do Departamento de Educação (DepEd) e os requisitos de certificação do Comitê de Assistência à Educação Privada (PEAC) entre as escolas participantes do ESC em San Pablo City, Laguna, Filipinas. Os resultados revelaram que as melhores práticas das escolas estão refletidas no grau de conformidade com os padrões de certificação nas áreas de Currículo, Avaliação e Instrução, bem como na Filosofia Escolar, Visão, Missão, Metas e Objetivos, conforme avaliado pelo Instrumento de Avaliação para Certificação (CAI) para a e-Recertificação. Os aspectos do CAI que exigem melhorias para garantir a qualidade incluem Orçamento e Finanças Escolares, Instalações Físicas e Instrucionais, e Serviços de Apoio Acadêmico e Desenvolvimento Estudantil. Essas informações beneficiariam a Equipe de Garantia de Qualidade Escolar/PEAC ao oferecer uma melhor compreensão de como podem ajudar as instituições educacionais privadas a manter a garantia de qualidade e assegurar a recertificação no país. Ao aprimorar a qualidade geral da educação, a certificação escolar ajuda a criar um ambiente que promove o desenvolvimento intelectual e holístico dos estudantes, preparando-os para um futuro bem-sucedido.

Palavras-chave

melhores práticas para certificação escolar; contratação de serviços educacionais; recertificação de garantia de qualidade

Mejores prácticas y garantía de calidad en escuelas secundarias del programa de contratación de servicios educativos en Filipinas

Resumen

Utilizando un diseño de investigación por encuesta, este estudio determinó las mejores prácticas para la certificación escolar e identificó áreas de mejora en las escuelas participantes del Programa de Contratación de Servicios Educativos (ESC, por sus siglas en inglés) en las áreas principales y de apoyo. También examinó el grado de cumplimiento de las normas mínimas del Departamento de Educación (DepEd) y los requisitos de certificación del Comité de Asistencia para la Educación Privada (PEAC) entre las escuelas participantes del ESC en San Pablo City, Laguna, Filipinas. Los hallazgos revelaron que las mejores prácticas de las escuelas se reflejan en su grado de cumplimiento con los estándares de certificación en las áreas de Currículo, Evaluación e Instrucción, así como en Filosofía Escolar, Visión, Misión, Metas y Objetivos, según lo evaluado por el Instrumento de Evaluación para la Certificación (CAI) para la e-Recertificación. Los aspectos del CAI que requieren mejoras para garantizar la calidad incluyen el Presupuesto y Finanzas Escolares, Instalaciones Físicas e Instruccionales, y Servicios de Apoyo Académico y Desarrollo Estudiantil. Esta información beneficiaría al Equipo de Garantía de Calidad Escolar/PEAC al proporcionar una mejor comprensión de cómo pueden ayudar a las instituciones educativas privadas a mantener la garantía de calidad y asegurar la recertificación en el país. Al mejorar la calidad general de la educación, la certificación escolar crea un ambiente que fomenta el desarrollo intelectual y holístico de los estudiantes, preparándolos para un futuro exitoso.

Palabras clave

mejores prácticas para la certificación escolar; contratación de servicios educativos; recertificación de garantía de calidad

Para citar este artículo:

Luis, C. & Ortega-Dela Cruz, R. A. (2025). Best Practices and Quality Assurance among Education Service Contracting Secondary Schools in the Philippines, *Revista Colombiana de Educación*, (96), e20453, https://doi.org//10.17227/rce.num96-20453

Introduction

Public and private schools play complementary roles in the educational system, a fact that the Philippine government acknowledges. Complementarity is exemplified by state-funded public schools and private educational institutions collaborating to provide educational services (Tabora, 2014). Ideally, both public and private schools would treat each other as equals, sharing resources and capabilities on mutually agreed-upon terms to achieve the shared goal of promoting education as a fundamental human right and providing the best education possible in the Philippines. To fulfill these complementary roles, the government has established public-private partnership education programs that require quality assurance certification and recertification. One of these is the Education Service Contracting (ESC) program.

The Department of Education's (DepEd) ESC program is one of the world's largest public-private partnership initiatives in the Philippine education (Saguin, 2019). ESC began as a pilot program in 1982 and was later expanded and enacted into law in 1989 as Philippine Republic Act (RA) 6728, or the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE). With the passage of Republic Act 8545 in 1988, GASTPE was expanded to broaden its scope. Aside from ESC, GASTPE also includes Teachers' Salary Subsidy (TSS), an in-service (INSET) fund for teachers from private high schools, Tuition Fee Supplement (TFS), and research. A Senior High School Voucher Program (SHS VP) was also introduced as a core component of GASTPE in 2013 through RA 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act (Saguin, 2019). The program improves school quality, decreases congestion in public high schools, assures the financial sustainability of private secondary schools, manages overall public secondary education expenditures, and encourages households to invest in education (Ferrer, 2019).

Furthermore, the ESC program promotes the efficiency of the mixed public-private national education system choice, which may lead to greater individual well-being by empowering and enabling students/parents, and diversity of providers. This diversity may lead to greater competition, which, if managed well, may lead to efficiency improvements. Every high school student grantee in the National Capital Region (NCR) receives PhP 13,000 per year, while those in Highly Urbanized Cities (HUCs) outside of the NCR receive PhP 11,000 each, and those in other locations receive PhP 9,000 each. The scope of the program has steadily expanded. The ESC subsidies totaled PhP 9.33 billion. Currently, the ESC government program is only available to Junior High School students (Private Education Assistance Committee, 2022). However, the House Committee on Basic Education and Culture has formed a Technical Working Group (TWG) to draft legislation expanding government

assistance to include preschool and elementary students in private schools (Begas, 2022).

The primary ESC implementing agency is the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC). The Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE), a permanent trust fund established in 1968 to finance private education assistance programs, is administered by PEAC. DepEd provides annual funding and oversees the ESC by establishing general policies and specific guidelines. A yearly renewed memorandum of understanding governs the relationship between DepEd and PEAC. All program costs are covered by DepEd, including an administrative service fee for PEAC's program management. The Secretary of Education chairs the PEAC, which includes members of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and representatives from private school and university associations. While DepEd sets the policies, PEAC carries out the bulk of program implementation, including certification and recertification of eligible private high schools, determination of slots per school, and collating and forwarding billing statements of schools to DepEd. Participating schools must provide an academically rigorous JHS education to ESC student grantees in an environment of values, trust, and loyalty (Private Education Assistance Committee, 2020).

Certification and *recertification* are two of the most valuable components of the ESC program, as they ensure that participating schools meet the minimum standards, follow the rules, and meet the criteria established by the DepEd for junior high schools (Private Education Assistance Committee, 2019). These processes serve as a mechanism for increased public accountability, reassuring parents, and the general public that the school is committed to providing a safe and enriching learning environment while remaining efficient and effective. The certifiers, who recommend additional school improvement measures, validate the school's quality (Aguilos, 2015; Luis & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2024). PEAC certifiers continuously validate the quality assurance of the ESC- participating schools. Quality assurance, quality assessment, and world rankings have become increasingly competitively and global concerns, prompting higher education institutions to review their aims, objectives, academic practices, target students, and scholars (Aburizaizah, 2022). Meemar (2018, as cited in Aburizaizah, 2022), illustrated that the Ministry of Education (MOE) sets several standards for the educational system and is responsible for providing overall supervision and administration of all educational processes. Furthermore, quality assurance ensures that the process and practice of school assessments adhere to the established standards and procedures, resulting in improved student performance (Luis & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2024).

Both external and internal evaluations of schools use the same quality standards and indicators, which are communicated to stakeholders. This approach encourages

state and national planning, training, and policy development in the country (Atanda & Olaifa, 2022). Quality assurance raises standards and expectations, leading to positive outcomes for students, and should be integrated into daily school operations. It contributes to nation-building, adaptation to the rapidly changing educational landscape, workforce demands, ASEAN integration 2015, compliance with laws, directives, and issuances, the unabated proliferation of private schools, assurance of ESC slot allocation, and, ultimately, school survival (Aguilos, 2015).

ESC-participating schools undergo recertification despite ongoing difficulties and pressures. An ESC school can assess its strengths and areas for improvement as a learning environment using the 2018 Certification Assessment Instrument (CAI). Through various area committees, the school rates itself using the CAI standards outlined in several areas. The CAI self-ratings require participation from all parties involved.

Due to various factors and challenges, some ESC-participating private high schools that applied for recertification did not attain certified status following recertification process. These factors include a lack of funding, unsupportive top management, inexperienced middle management, a lack of stakeholder ownership, government directives such as taxation, restrictions on tuition increases, rapid teacher turnover, teacher quality, and student profiles, including low academic achievement, disruptive behavior, lack of interest, media influence, lack of parental involvement in school initiatives, and potential conflicts of interest between some LGUs and school advocacy (Aguilos, 2015).

Schools that were not awarded the certified status have not met the required minimum standards set by the DepEd and PEAC certifiers. According to Ferrer (Private Education Assistance Committee, 2022), 1,376 schools underwent e-Recertification (a remote mode of recertification implemented in response tothe Covid-19 global pandemic) in 2020-2021. Of these schools, 638 (46.36%) were awarded Certified Status, 355 (25.08%) Substantial Compliance Status, 220 (15.99%) Partial Compliance Status, and 163 (11.85%) Other Status.

Junior high schools that failed recertification must prepare for a recertification revisit within one school year. Schools that fail the recertification revisit twice are terminated from the ESC program and may only graduate their remaining ESC grantees (Private Education Assistance Committee, 2022).

With this pressing concern and the gap in knowledge about ways of dealing with this issue, this study aimed to assess the best practices implemented by administrators, JHS faculty, and non-academic staff to ensure the recertification of ESC-participating schools.

The findings, which demonstrate the level of implementation of the recertification process, would benefit the School Quality Assurance Team/PEAC by providing a better

understanding of how they can help private educational institutions maintain quality assurance and ensure recertification. ESC-participating schools will also gain feasible improvements in their learning and teaching practices to comply with DepEd standards and PEAC certification requirements. Likewise, non-ESC private schools or private schools not included in the ESC program may be encouraged to undergo the certification process to avail themselves of government assistance for students who want to enroll in private schools. The ESC is an arrangement whereby the DepEd enters into contracts with private schools to cover the tuition of students who enroll under this program.

The researcher looks forward to a post-pandemic Philippine education system, having adapted during the pandemic in terms of organizational strengthening and maintaining continuity in both strategic goals and day-to-day operations of private schools. Specifically, this study (i) determined the best practices and aspects for improvement of the ESC-participating schools in the core areas such as the school philosophy, vision, mission, goals and objectives, curriculum, assessment, and instruction, instructional leadership, faculty, administration and governance as well as the support areas such as the academic support and student development services, physical plant and instructional support facilities, school budget and finances, institutional planning and development; and (ii) examined the extent of compliance with DepEd minimum standards and PEAC certification requirements among ESC-participating schools in those areas.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study used a survey research design to determine the relationship between the best practices for school certification and quality assurance of selected ESC-participating schools and the PEAC e-Recertification process. Survey research is a quantitative research method used for collecting data from a set of respondents. It employs a list of questions to gather information about a group of people (Nardi, 2018). In this study, a survey questionnaire with a rating scale was administered to the respondents. Best practices for school certification were measured by the evaluation of junior high school faculty, non- academic staff, and school administrators. Quality assurance was measured by the level of compliance of the ESC-participating schools with DepEd minimum standards and ESC certification requirements.

Subject of the Study

The study was conducted in San Pablo City, Laguna, Philippines. The target was 40 faculty members, non-academic staff, and administrators working in ESC-participating private schools with complete basic education programs from preschool to senior high school. ESC-participating school 1 was represented by 12 respondents, ESC-participating school 2 by 1 respondent, ESC-participating school 3 by 19 respondents, and ESC-participating school 4 by 8 respondents. These schools have satisfactorily met the minimum standards and requirements for the junior high school program. They have undergone e-Recertification by the PEAC for ESC for the GASTPE Program during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher focused on these schools because of their e-Recertification timetable during the Covid-19 pandemic. The reference years, 2020 and 2021, were used because ESC e-Recertification began during these years to be attuned to the new normal. Furthermore, these schools have been in operation for 10 or more years and provide a comprehensive basic education program. Purposeful sampling was used in this study since the researcher aims to explore the ESC certification activity and best practices of the selected ESC participating schools in San Pablo City, Laguna, Philippines. These schools were chosen since they have direct knowledge and understanding of the e-Recertification process of the PEAC.

Instrumentation

For the first objective, a checklist on best practices and areas for improvement in compliance with the CAI areas was provided to determine the best practices and areas for improvement of ESC-participating schools in the nine areas: school philosophy, vision, mission, goals and objectives; curriculum, assessment, and instruction; instructional leadership; faculty; administration and governance; academic support and student development services; physical plant and instructional support facilities; school budget and finances; institutional planning and development.

For the second objective, questions were presented using a four- and five-point Likert scale. Bhandari and Nikolopoulou (2023) explained that Likert scale is used to analyze people's opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. In survey research, Likert scales are popular because they make it simple to operationalize personality traits or perceptions. Indicators ranging from 1-4 (4 for high, 3 for moderate, 2 for low, and 1 for non-compliant) were provided to determine the extent of compliance of the ESC-participating schools with the Certification Standards based on nine CAI- areas. Indicators ranging from 1-5 (1 for “Wait until you are told”, 2 for “Ask what to do”, 3 for “Recommend, then take action”, 4 for “Act, then inform promptly”, and 5 for “Act

independently, report periodically") were used to the perceived level of initiative on the PEAC e-Recertification among JHS heads, faculty, non-academic staff, and administrators.

To validate the instruments, the researcher consulted administrators and teachers who are experts and part of the recertification process. The researcher developed a draft of the e-survey questionnaire, ensuring the questions were simple and easy to grasp. After validation and adjustments, the final versions of the questionnaires were sent to the school owners of the four ESC-selected participating schools for their faculty, staff, and administrators to complete. The e-survey questionnaires reflected the content areas for the CAI, which was used as the actual instrument for the certification and recertification processes.

Ethical Considerations

This study involved human respondents for data collection. In line with this, the researcher followed research ethics guidelines, which included the following:

- A consent form was provided to all the prospected respondents before the actual data collection. The form outlined the study's scope, how the data will be used, and how it will stored after the study.
- Respondents were free to accept or decline the invitation to participate.
- The anonymity of the respondents was ensured.
- The results of the study were shared with the respondents.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as frequency and percentage, were used to analyze the results from the checklist on CAI areas, which determined the best practices and areas for improvement of each ESC-participating school.

For the Likert scale questions, responses on a scale of one to four were analyzed to determine the extent of compliance of ESC-participating schools with DepEd and ESC certification standards. The scale of one to five was used to determine the perceived level of initiative regarding the PEAC e-Recertification among JHS heads, teaching personnel, administrators, and non-teaching personnel.

Results

Best practices for school certification and aspects for improvement of the ESC-participating schools

Figure 1 shows the different areas of the CAI for e-Recertification where the schools implemented best practices to provide quality assurance. Out of 40 respondents, 35 indicated that curriculum, assessment, and instruction received the most effort (87.5%), followed by 34 responses indicating school philosophy, vision, mission, goals, and objectives as a priority (85%). The area that received the least effort, with only 11 respondents (27.5%), was administration and governance, followed by school budget and finance, with 13 respondents (32.5%).

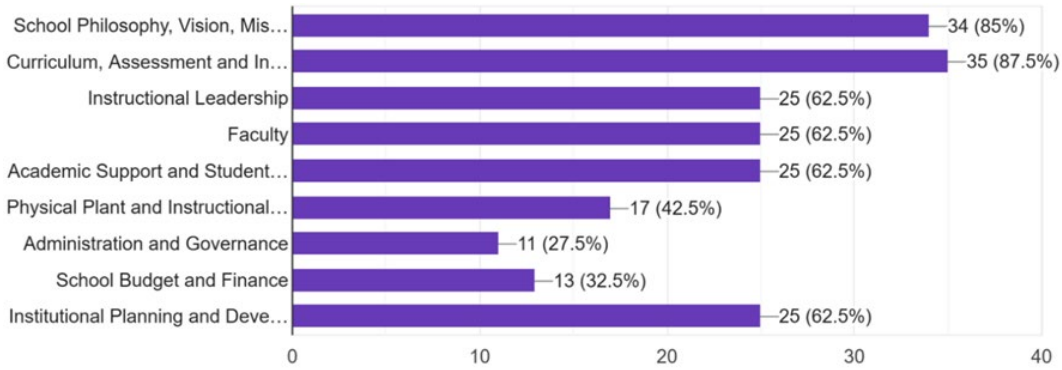

Figure 1.
CAI Areas Where the Schools Exerted Their Best to Provide Quality Assurance

Thirty-five respondents exerted their best effort in the areas of curriculum, assessment, and instruction, with the following distribution:

ESC-participating school 1	10 respondents
ESC-participating school 2	1 respondent
ESC-participating school 3	17 respondents
ESC-participating school 4	7 respondents
Total	35 respondents

Thirty-four respondents indicated school philosophy, vision, mission, goals, and objectives with the following distribution:

ESC-participating school 1	6 respondents
ESC-participating school 2	1 respondent
ESC-participating school 3	19 respondents
ESC-participating school 4	8 respondents
Total	34 respondents

Figure 2 displays the respondents' perceptions on the different aspects of the CAI for e-Recertification where the schools need improvement to provide quality assurance. Based on the graph, School Budget and Finance is the highest picked aspect with 24 respondents (60%), followed by 18 with Physical Plant and Instructional Support Facilities (45%), and 16 with Academic Support and Student Development Services (40%). Most respondents are satisfied with the areas School PVMGO, with only 5 respondents (12.5%) indicating it as needing improvement, followed by Instructional Leadership picked by 7 respondents (17.5%).

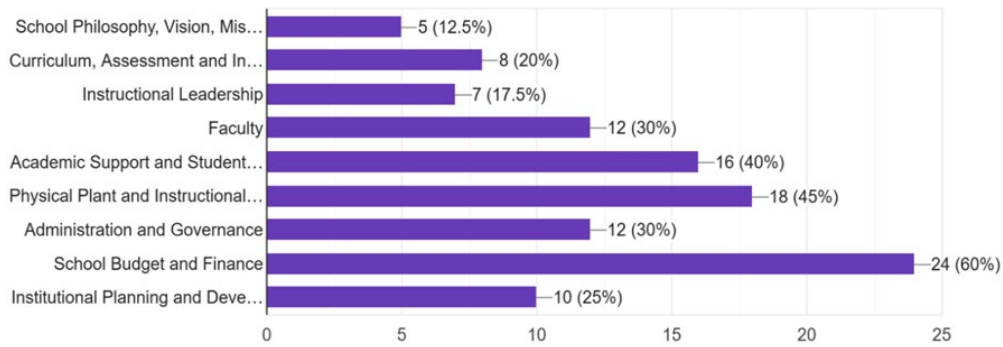

Figure 2.
Aspect in the CAI where the School Needs Improvement to Provide Quality Assurance

According to the data, most institutions had concerns about school budget and finance, physical plant and instructional facilities, and academic support and student services as potential barriers to achieving quality assurance.

Twenty-four respondents chose school budget and finance as the area that needs the most improvement, with the following distribution of respondents:

ESC-participating school 1	7 respondents
ESC-participating school 2	1 respondent
ESC-participating school 3	10 respondents
ESC-participating school 4	6 respondents
Total	24 respondents

Eighteen respondents chose the area physical plant and instructional facilities as an area for improvement, with the following distribution:

ESC-participating school 1	6 respondents
ESC-participating school 2	1 respondent
ESC-participating school 3	9 respondents
ESC-participating school 4	2 respondents
Total	18 respondents

Sixteen respondents picked academic support and students services as the area needing further improvement for quality assurance, with the following distribution:

ESC-participating school 1	5 respondents
ESC-participating school 2	0 respondents
ESC-participating school 3	9 respondents
ESC-participating school 4	2 respondents
Total	16 respondents

Figure 3 shows the best practices of each school in accordance with the CAI areas in terms of philosophy, vision, mission, goals, and objectives. According to the graph, "PVMGO statement" was selected by 90% respondents, while “calendar of activities” and “minutes of PVMGO meetings” were both selected by 87.5%. In contrast, "school catalog/prospectus" was selected by70%, and “learning plans” by 72.5%. This suggests that the participants consider the school's PVMGO Statement, Calendar of Activities, and Minutes of PVMGO Meetings to be their best practices, whereas only a small portion consider the School’s Catalog and Prospectus, and Learning Plans as their best practices.

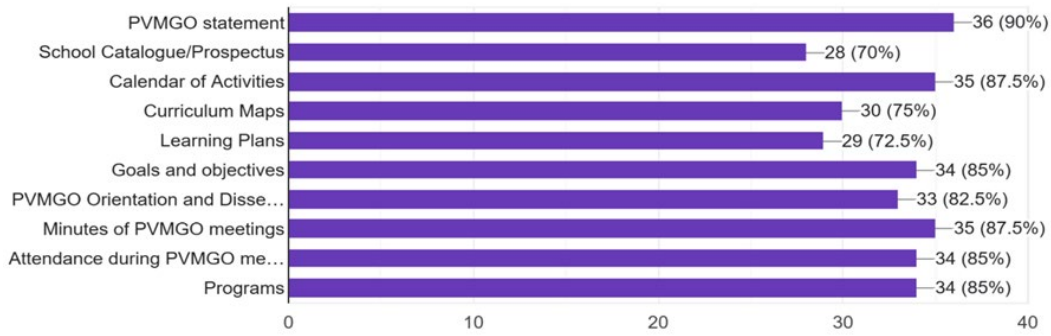

Figure 3.
Best Practices in Compliance with the Area of PVMGO

Figure 4 shows the best practices of each school in accordance with the CAI areas—specifically, in terms of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Based on the graph, "Curriculum Map for All Subject Areas and All Grade Levels" got the highest percentage at 95%, followed by “Sample Learning Plans” with 92.5%. In contrast, "Intervention Program for Students with Learning Difficulties" got the lowest percentage of 65%, followed by “Video of Learning Encounteres” and “Subject Department Reports”, both of which received 70%.

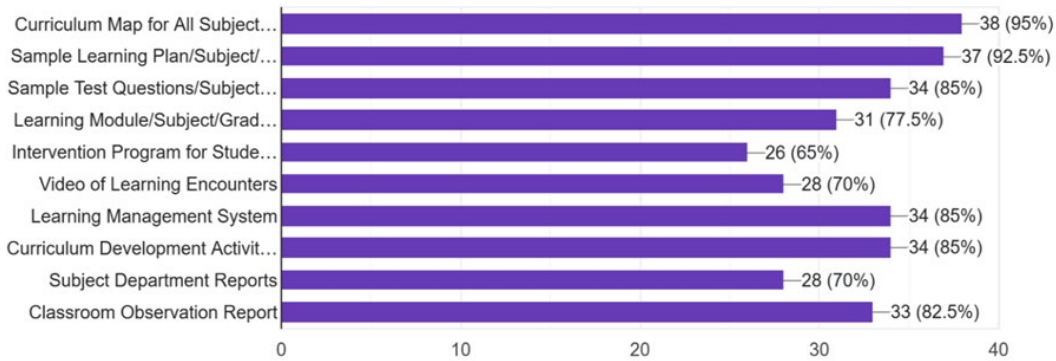

Figure 4.
Best Practices in Compliance with the Area of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction

Figure 5 shows the best practices of each school in accordance with the CAI areas—specifically, in terms of instructional leadership. Based on the graph, "Instructional Leaders' Development Program" had the highest percentage at 82.5%, followed by “Sample Classroom Observation Report” with 80%. The lowest percentage was for "Annual Interview of Principal" which received 55%.

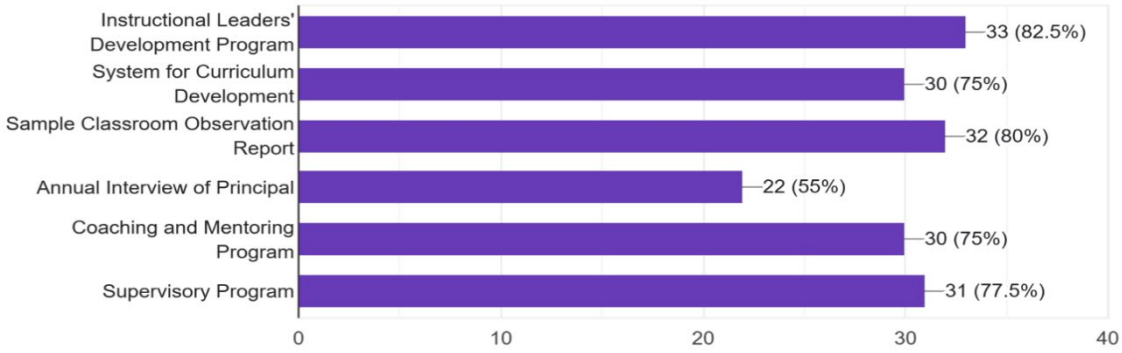

Figure 5.
Best Practices in Compliance with the Area of Instructional Leadership

Figure 6 shows the best practices for certification of each school in accordance with the CAI areas—specifically, in terms of faculty. Based on the graph, "Scanned Copies of Faculty PRC Licenses" has the highest percentage at 92.5%, while "Clinical Supervision Plan" has the lowest percentage at 45%, followed by "Promotion Policies," at 57.5%.

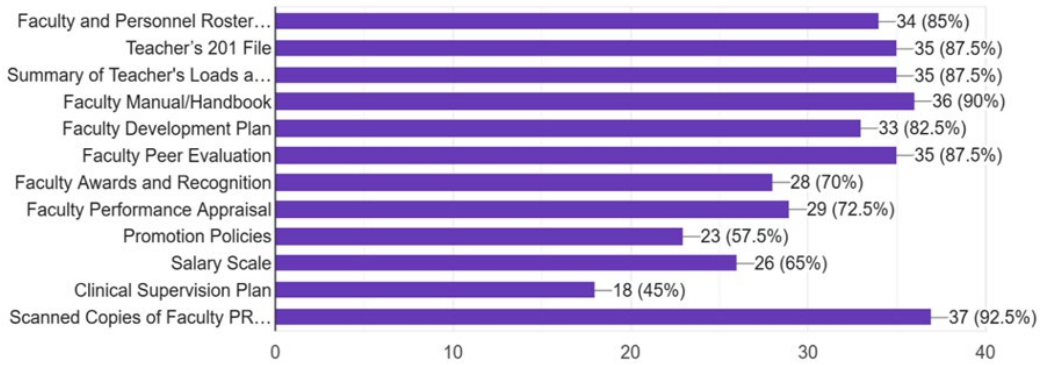

Figure 6.
Best Practices in Compliance with the Area.

This data suggests that ESC-participating schools meet the DepEd's PRC requirement; however, they pay less attention to clinical supervision and faculty promotion, as reflected in the figure.

Figure 7 shows the best practices of each school in accordance with the CAI areas—specifically, in terms of Administration and Governance. Based on the graph, “School organizational chart” has the highest percentage at 95%, while “Provisions for administrators’ upgrading” has the lowest percentage at 50%.

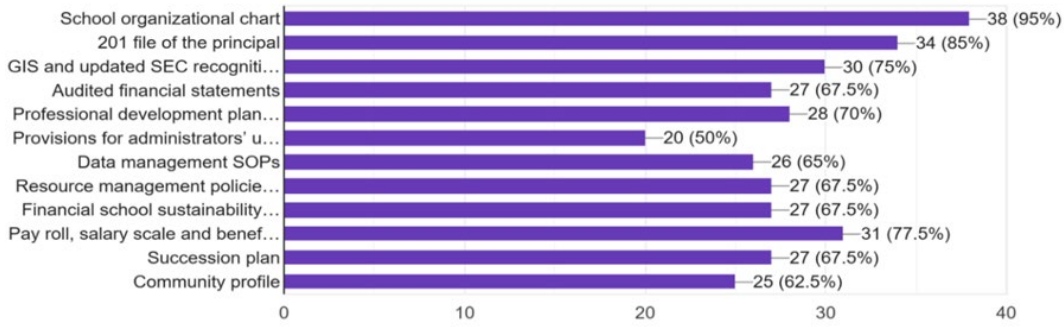

Figure 7.
Best Practices in Compliance with the Area of Administration and Governance

This data is supported by the findings of Asio et al. (2021), which indicate that most administrators need upgrading to improve the essential technical skills necessary for school management functions, including utilizing available technologies to enhance education.

Figure 8 shows the best practices of each school in accordance with the CAI areas—specifically, in terms of academic support and student development services. Based on the graph, "Personnel Profile" has the highest percentage at 92.5%, while "Testing Program" has the lowest percentage at 52.5%.

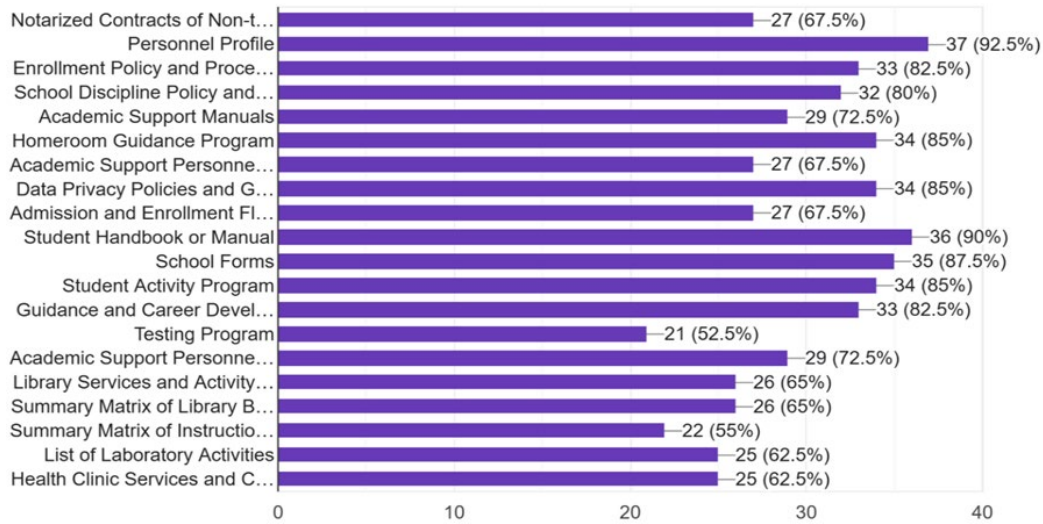

Figure 8.
Best Practices in Compliance with the Area of Academic Support and Student Development Services

Figure 9 shows the best practices of each school in accordance with the CAI areas—specifically, in terms of Physical Plant and Instructional Support Facilities. Based on the graph, "Vicinity Map and Floor Plans" has the highest percentage at 90%, while "Certificate of Water Potability Results" has the lowest percentage at 47.5%. This indicates that the ESC-participating schools give little attention to water potability.

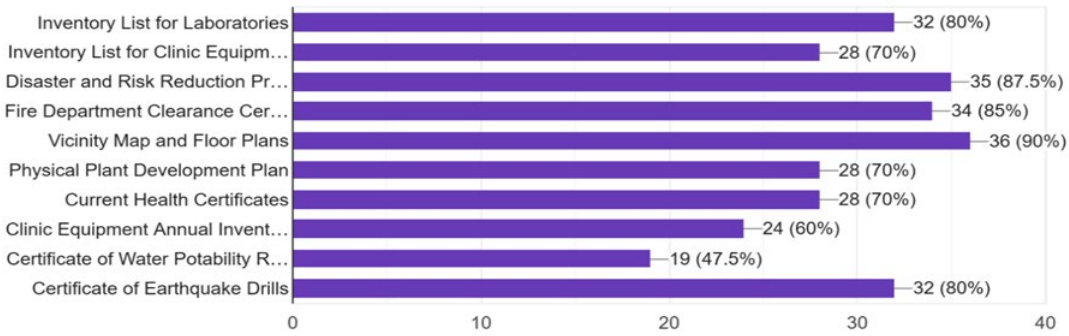

Figure 9.
Best Practices in Compliance with the Area of Physical Plant and Instructional Support Facilities

Figure 10 shows the best practices of each school in accordance with the CAI areas—specifically, in terms of school budget and finances. Based on the graph, "Department and Unit Budgets" have the highest percentage at 85%, while "Budget Performance Reports" have the lowest percentage at 70%. This may imply that the ESC-participating schools do not regularly receive updates or reports on actual budget performance.

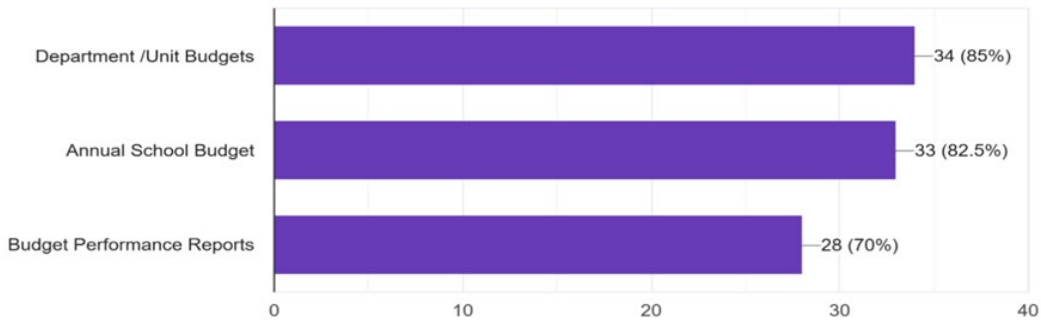

Figure 10.
Best Practices in Compliance with the Area of School Budget and Finances

Figure 11 shows the best practices of each school in accordance with the CAI areas—specifically, in terms of institutional planning and development. Based on the graph, "Annual Operational Plan" has the highest percentage at 95%, while "AOP Evaluation Results" has the lowest percentage at 50%. This indicates that ESC-participating schools tend to neglect the evaluation and reporting of their operational plan findings on a yearly basis.

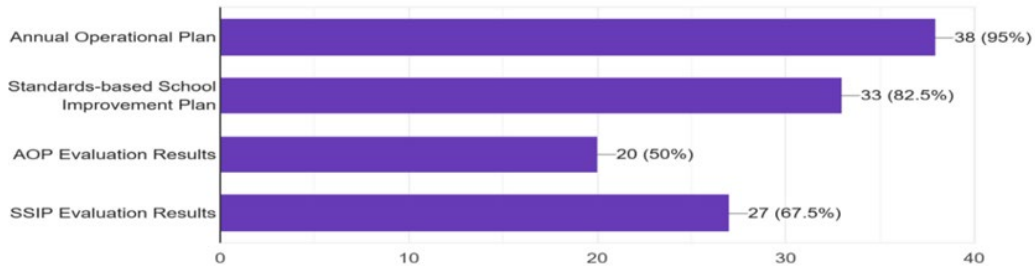

Figure 11.
Best Practices in Compliance with the Area of Institutional Planning and Development

Extent of compliance with DepEd minimum standards based on CAI areas

Table 1 shows the extent to which respondents met the DepEd's minimum standards in the eight areas. Thirty respondents chose "High" for "Philosophy, Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives" (75%), 29 for "Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction" (73%), and 28 for "Faculty" (70%). Only 22 (55%) of the 40 respondents considered themselves highly compliant in the area "Academic Support and Student Development Services," and only 23 (58%) said they are highly compliant in the area of "School Budget and Finance."

Table 1.
Extent of Compliance with Deped Minimum Standards and PEAC Certification Requirements Based on CAI Areas

	Areas	High		Moderate		Low		Non-compliant	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
a)	Philosophy, Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives	30	75	10	25	0	0	0	0
b)	Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction	29	73	11	27	0	0	0	0
c)	Instructional Leadership	27	68	13	32	0	0	0	0
d)	Faculty	28	70	12	30	0	0	0	0

e)	Administration and Governance	25	63	15	37	0	0	0	0
f)	Academic Support and Student Development Services	22	55	18	45	0	0	0	0
g)	Physical Plant and Instructional Support Facilities	24	60	16	40	0	0	0	0
h)	School Budget and Finances	23	58	17	42	0	0	0	0
i)	Institutional Planning and Development	24	60	16	40	0	0	0	0

Perceived level of initiative on the PEAC e-Recertification

Table 2 represents the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents regarding their perceived level of initiative on the PEAC e-Recertification among JHS heads and teaching personnel. The respondents based their answers on their assessments of the initiatives of their respective schools in the CAI areas. Most respondents reported an initiative level of 4 for PVMGO (20; 50%), instructional leadership (19; 48%), and faculty areas (18; 45%), followed by an initiative level of 5 for "Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction" (18; 45%), and "Academic Support and Student Development Services" (19; 48%).

Table 2.
Perceived Level of Initiative on the PEAC E-Recertification Among JHS Heads and Teaching Personnel

Areas	Level 5 – Act independently, report periodically		Level 4 – Act, then inform promptly		Level 3 – Recommend, then take action		Level 2 – Ask what to do		Level 1 – Wait until you are told	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
a. Philosophy, Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives	15	38	20	50	5	12	0	0	0	0
b. Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction	18	45	16	40	6	15	0	0	0	0
c. Instructional Leadership	16	40	19	48	5	12	0	0	0	0
d. Faculty	17	43	18	45	5	12	0	0	0	0
e. Academic Support and Student Development Services	19	48	15	37	6	15	0	0	0	0

The results indicate that JHS heads and teaching personnel took the initiative to comply by making quick decisions while being held accountable for their actions and keeping their superiors informed.

Table 3 displays the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents regarding their perceived level of initiative on the PEAC e-Recertification among administrators and non-teaching personnel. The respondents based their answers on their assessments of the initiatives of their respective schools in the CAI areas. Most respondents reported an initiative level of 4 for all the indicated areas, with 19 for PVMGO (48%), 22 for "Physical Plant and Instructional Support Facilities" (55%), 19 for "Administration and Governance" (48%), 24 for "School Budget and Finances" (60%), and 19 for "Institutional Planning and Development" (48%).

Table 3.
Perceived Level of Initiative on the PEAC E-Recertification Among Administrators and Non-Teaching Personnel

Areas	Level 5 – Act independently, report periodically		Level 4 – Act, then inform promptly		Level 3 – Recommend, then take action		Level 2 – Ask what to do		Level 1 – Wait until you are told	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
a. Philosophy, Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives	17	42	19	48	4	10	0	0	0	0
b. Physical Plant and Instructional Support Facilities	13	33	22	55	5	12	0	0	0	0
c. Administration and Governance	15	37	19	48	6	15	0	0	0	0
d. School Budget and Finances	11	28	24	60	5	12	0	0	0	0
e. Institutional Planning and Development	16	40	19	48	5	12	0	0	0	0

The results show that administrators and non-teaching personnel chose the best course of action with their ability while keeping their institutions informed of their decisions.

Discussions

The results of the study support the findings of Daukšienė et al. (2021) which highlight the significant need for a national digital curriculum. Faculty need to

use a variety of assessments, including both traditional and authentic ones, as well as rubrics, to evaluate students (Martin et al., 2019). When considering learner-centered evaluation and assessment, instructors may consider carefully developing both formative and summative assessments for evaluation (Gunaban & Panolong, 2021). The teaching quality assurance process is summarized from quality assurance system construction to teaching evaluation system improvement and teaching quality monitoring measures (Qianchi et al., 2020). To keep up with calls for internationalization, globalization, and outcomes-based education, concerned school officials must work to constantly revise the vision, mission, goals, and objectives statements (Villanca et al., 2020).

However, the achievement and sustenance of an efficient educational system depend heavily on financial resources and well-thought-out allocations. According to Akhter et al. (2018), financial resources and allocations are critical to improving any country's learning and teaching systems. Most of the respondents in the study made by Akhter et al. (2018) revealed that the majority of the principals were dissatisfied with the budgets and funds provided to their schools. Cost is the driving force behind various programs to achieve the goals that have been set. The cost of education is indeed a critical factor in achieving both quantitative and qualitative educational goals, as highlighted by Ortega-Dela Cruz (2016). Addressing this concern is essential for ensuring that schools can meet quality assurance standards and that the education process functions optimally, as emphasized by Hidayah and Syahrani (2022). Financial investments are necessary to ensure that all students have access to quality education, which in turn supports broader social and economic development. Governments and other stakeholders can build a strong educational system that fulfills the needs of all students and equips them for success by prioritizing funding for education.

Schools should also consider improving their catalog and prospectus in order to showcase their school and attract students. A school must ensure that it has an excellent catalog and prospectus that sell the school and provide prospective parents with all the information they need to make an informed decision about investing in their child's education with it (Sixsmith, 2019). In addition, the calendar of activities and minutes of PVMGO meetings are all necessary for a smooth implementation of plans.

Furthermore, the results indicate that the respondents prioritize preparing and improving their curriculum maps and creating their learning plans; however, they give little notice of intervention programs for students with learning difficulties, creating videos of learning encounters, and making subject department reports. According to Grigorenko et al. (2020), given the high prevalence of specific learning disabilities (SLDs) and their lifelong negative impact on functioning if not treated, it is

critical to establish and maintain effective prevention, surveillance, and treatment systems involving professionals from various disciplines trained to minimize risk and maximize protective factors for SLDs.

Based on the findings, the ESC-participating schools consider instructional leaders' development program and sample classroom observation reports as their best practices. However, they need to focus more on conducting annual intervies of principals. Nurfadillah and Suharto (2021) recommended that private schools perform supervision properly by counselling teachers, establishing a regular supervision schedule, and innovating to build capacity and ensure the quality performance of teachers.

According to Khan and Ahmad (2021), the effectiveness of the education system is dependent upon teacher education. Certified teachers become more effective at stimulating student achievement gains in both reading and mathematics (University of Texas Permian Basin, 2021). However, they also need to enhance their clinical supervision to ensure the best teaching performance of their faculty. This is supported by Veloo et al. (2013), whose findings indicate that clinical supervision for teachers improves the teachers' teaching performance. According to the researchers, there are effects of clinical supervision on teachers' teaching performance, enabling teachers to make amendments or improvements in their teaching practice to become better and more effective.

Promotion policies are another area to consider if schools want to ensure quality assurance. Employees, according to Ortega-Dela Cruz (2016) and Rinny et al. (2020), are the most important resource that is critical to organizational success. The researchers found that compensation, job promotions, and job satisfaction all had a significant impact on performance.

According to Aguilos (2015), testing services should be provided for diagnostic and evaluation purposes. However, certain drawbacks remained a concern to school counselors during the time of pandemic, such as a lack of nonverbal communication, difficulties with connectivity, technological concerns, ethical issues, and a lack of training in the use of these tools (Pedroso et al., 2022; Ramoso & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2024; Torres & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2022). Student support offices improve students' educational experiences by providing services and programs that are tailored to their specific needs (Estacio et al., 2022). Bettinger et al. (2013) concluded that the limited resources of institutions and equally limited funds of students make it imperative for postsecondary institutions to improve student academic support and other services.

According to Llego (2022) not all schools in the Philippines have access to potable water and hand washing facilities with regular supply of hygiene kits and soaps. Llego (2022) highlighted the essential health-related structures like potable

water, toilets, hand washing stations, and clinics in schools. According to him, these provisions and facilities ensure that proper hygiene is implemented and sustained for all learners, teachers, and school personnel.

In addition, the study conducted by Alio et al. (2019), which established that secondary schools in Mandera County rarely adhere to budget reporting practices geared toward improving financial management. This means that schools often neglect this area, which is necessary for ensuring quality assurance.

The State Government of Victoria (2022) supports AOP evaluation and dissemination of results to stakeholders before determining the area of focus in the next AOP, stating that before beginning their next Annual Operational Plan (AOP), it is essential for schools to evaluate their practice over the previous year. Schools must review their progress for the prior year to identify considerations for future planning.

The findings show that the majority of respondents believe they are very compliant with DepEd's minimum standards in the areas of PVMGO, Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, and Faculty; however, nearly half believe they meet DepEd's minimum standards in the areas of Academic Support and Development Services, and School Budget and Finances. According to Estacio et al. (2022), student support offices improve students' educational experiences; thus, schools must maintain their commitment to providing services and programs that are important to student performance (Villanueva & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2019). However, given the institutions' limited resources and students' equally limited funds, postsecondary institutions must improve student academic supports and other services (Bettinger et al., 2013).

Concluding Remarks

This study determined the best practices and aspects for improvement of the Education Service Contracting (ESC)-participating schools in the core and support areas and examined the extent of compliance with Department of Education (DepEd) minimum standards and the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC) certification requirements among ESC-participating schools in San Pablo City, Laguna, Philippines.

Each member of the ESC-participating school community plays an essential part in ensuring the school's certification status. The schools gave their best to comply with the different requirements requested by the certification unit and came up with their own best practices on areas of the Certification Assessment Instrument (CAI), such as School Philosophy, Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives, Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, Instructional Leadership, Faculty, Administration and Governance, Academic Support and Student Development Services, Physical Plant and Instructional Support Facilities, School Budget and Finances, and Instructional

Planning and Development. The ESC-participating schools provided ECEs, proving they comply with the requirements for quality assurance.

ESC recertification ensures schools meet current professional standards and maintain their certification. It is time-limited and requires renewal. Failure to uphold standards can lead to losing certification. Organizations that regress after obtaining certification risk falling into this trap. Some schools discontinue internal evaluation. The internal quality assurance team assists management in continuous improvement, and organizations must proactively identify and correct system flaws. Therefore, internal quality assurance is required to ensure certification and recertification.

The school certification and recertification assessment process play a pivotal role in ensuring quality education by evaluating various aspects of educational institutions. Through the evaluation of curriculum, teaching methods, infrastructure, student support, and administrative practices, certification processes promote continuous improvement, accountability, and benchmarking. By enhancing the overall quality of education, school certification helps create an environment that nurtures the intellectual and holistic development of students, preparing them for a successful future.

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