

SYNCHRONIZED GRADE-LEVEL GOVERNANCE: A COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL FOR MITIGATING INSTRUCTIONAL DISSONANCE AND BEHAVIORAL FRAGMENTATION IN MULTI- SECTIONAL SCHOOLS

MARY KRISTEL S. CASTRO

Institute of Graduate and Professional Studies

Lyceum-Northwestern University, Dagupan City, Philippines

Abstract

This study developed a collaborative management protocol designed to mitigate instructional dissonance and behavioral fragmentation within the multi-sectional schools of SDO Tarlac Province. Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological research design, the investigation explored the "lived experiences" of Grade-Level Leaders and Master Teachers as they navigated the tensions between professional autonomy and the systemic requirement for pedagogical synchronization. Data was obtained from 20 purposively sampled participants through semi-structured interviews, focus

group discussions (FGDs), and structured classroom observations. The analysis employed reflexive thematic analysis, triangulation, and member checking to ensure the credibility and confirmability of the findings. The research identified that Instructional Dissonance is highly prevalent when there is a lack of coordination, specifically in lesson delivery (M=4.22) and the use of varied instructions for identical topics (M=4.30). Qualitative themes revealed that while teachers value "Guided Flexibility," the absence of shared communication tools often leads to "instructional silos." Conversely, the study found that High Alignment Through Governance (M=4.31) is achievable through regular teacher collaboration and shared lesson planning. Structural interventions, such as standardized classroom routines and shared grade-level meetings (M=4.45), were found to be "Very Effective" in reducing behavioral fragmentation among learners. The study concluded that instructional consistency is not a product of top-down mandates but of "Collaborative Professionalism" and shared leadership. While the division exhibits strong relational alignment, a gap remains in technical monitoring and the systematic sharing of instructional materials. The resulting "Collaborative Management Protocol" provides a scalable framework for balancing structured autonomy with pedagogical synchronization. Recommendations include the institutionalization of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and the digital integration of

shared resources to ensure that the transition toward synchronized governance is both equitable and sustainable across the division.

Keywords: Synchronized Grade-Level Governance, Instructional Dissonance Behavioral Fragmentation

Introduction

Institutional governance in education systems is faced with an ongoing challenge of balancing centralized policy with institutional autonomy. Donina and Hasanefendic (2019) described this phenomenon as the "homogeneous/heterogeneous dilemma," which is evident by the fact that while there is a need for uniformity in governance structures as dictated by supranational forces, the implementation of these structures is highly heterogeneous. This indicates that even with the presence of uniform legislation, the implementation of policy is bound to produce heterogeneous effects. Regarding the management of schools, Iosava (2010) noted that there is an inherent complexity in the hierarchical structures of governance, with state departments being responsible for overseeing broad aspects such as curriculum and evaluation while requiring structured coordination at the district and school levels for effective administration.

Instructional dissonance and the absence of alignment in teaching practices often stem from the absence of structured communication and collaboration. Woodland, Leonard, and Martinez (2024) proposed that "chaotic" professional conversations often hinder improvement, but the systematic use of protocols has the potential to transform professional conversations into critical dialogue. This has the effect of becoming an imperative tool for addressing the challenges that often stem from conflicts and inequities. Davidson et al. (2023) proposed that team planning in primary schools has the potential to help teaching teams work through the challenges associated with instructional consistency, ultimately resulting in the productive use of planning time and the engagement of the students.

The role of school leadership stands out in this respect and can play a major role in controlling behavioral fragmentation and creating a synchronized culture. This was also emphasized in a study by Parlar, Turkoglu, and Cansoy (2024) on a collaborative school culture, where instructional leadership was found to be a significant predictor. This indicates that the behavior of a principal directly impacts the level of cooperation among teachers. This was also emphasized in a study by Demir and Kalman (2025) on instructional leadership and its impact on instructional practice and teacher innovativeness. The researcher emphasized that a balance between teacher autonomy and synchronized governance can be achieved with a "context-HRM-teacher learning" model.

This refers to a model where human resource management strategies are implemented to create a professional learning community.

In the management of the behavioral aspect of the school environment, integrated systems of support have been identified as a fundamental concept. This was discussed by Majeika et al. (2024) with regards to the concept of the Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Support (I-MTSS) as a tool to promote the integration of academic, social, emotional, and behavioral wellness. This is necessary because, as was discovered by De Santis et al. (2025), multisensory emotional confusion and misperception is always correlated with behavioral maladjustment in early childhood. Without the integration of a system to manage the fragmented behavior of the learners, disaffection with the governance structures of the school is bound to set in (Roodt & Stuurman, 2011).

The move towards the use of distributed leadership structures seems to be a dominant trend in the modernization of school governance structures. Lessy, Pary, and Adamek (2024) observed a positive trend towards the use of "allocative" leadership structures, which enhanced academic achievement and the management of the school through the dispersal of power and collaborative decision-making processes. This collaborative effect is further enhanced through the works of Valdés and Fardella (2022), which observed the trend towards the use of protocols and management tools to ensure the coverage of the curriculum and the results of the

academic processes. Arendse, Phillips, and Waghid (2024) argued that the management teams of the school have to transform the school through collaborative efforts to ensure the content knowledge of the teachers is enhanced, which is often cited as a challenge to the quality of education in such systems.

Collaborative strategies can also be extended to involve individuals outside the immediate school staff, such as the community or the parents of the students. Sesinyi & Gcelu (2023) indicated that the contribution of the parents is fundamental to the achievement of academic success as well as satisfactory behavior; however, the school management teams should utilize collaborative strategies to sustain the contribution of the parents. In the context of a diverse or international school, Wong (2023) indicated that the success of collaborative efforts in the face of team heterogeneity is attributable to the shared goals of the senior management as well as the whole-school approach to embracing diversity so that the instructional moves of the teachers and the social reasoning of the students engage reciprocally to create a dynamic learning environment (Nagpal et al., 2025).

Finally, the researcher established that professional learning is a substantial mediator between perceptions of leadership and actual instructional practices. Dorukbasi & Cansoy (2024) supported the fact that instructional leadership can augment teacher practices through professional learning, even in centralized systems. As the school system changes with

the integration of emerging technologies such as the use of AI ecosystems (Wu et al., 2025) or global citizenship through the concept of environmental stewardship (Goodale, Gilmore, & Griffiths, 2025), the necessity to implement a coordinated system of governance becomes even more acute. This requires teachers to use collaborative inquiry protocols with data-based action planning to modify disciplinary as well as instructional practices (Kintz & Ellefson, 2023).

The researcher was able to establish a critical structural gap in SDO Tarlac Province, as the proliferation of multi-sectional schools created a phenomenon of "instructional silos" despite being under one grade level umbrella. Although the existing literature by Donina & Hasanefendic (2019) was able to establish the dilemma of homogeneity vs. heterogeneity at the macro-institutional level, there was still a lack of evidence regarding the daily implications of these two concepts among teachers who share the same curriculum but have different classrooms. The researcher was able to observe that without a synchronized protocol of governance, individual teacher autonomy inadvertently creates instructional dissonance, as there is an inequitable learning experience among students of the same grade level.

The researcher further observed that the current management systems in various schools have been largely administrative or top-down approaches without effectively addressing the issue of the lack of teacher accountability to ensure the coverage of the curriculum as described by Arendse, Phillips,

& Waghid (2024). In the case of the SDO Tarlac, the issue is described as "behavioral fragmentation," where students from different sections of the same grade level show vastly different social behavior due to the inconsistent management approaches of their teachers. The study was prompted by the necessity to address the urgent need to transcend the authoritarian leadership approaches described by Lessy et al. (2024) to a more "allocative" or distributed approach to address the alignment of teaching and behavior management.

Furthermore, the researcher also identified a procedural lapse in the utilization of formal protocols of a professional learning community. For instance, while Woodland, Leonard, and Martinez (2024) were able to prove the efficacy of protocols in eliminating "chaotic" conversations, there remains a need to establish a specific collaborative management protocol that synchronizes grade-level operations. The researcher opines that without a structured procedure to resolve the tension between a teacher's freedom of creativity and the need for uniformity, instructional dissonance will persist and undermine the "21st-century stewardship" of the education system.

At the end of the day, the basis for the need for the study is embedded within the context of the search for organizational cohesion. The researcher recognizes that, although there have been studies that have briefly touched on the subject of instructional leadership (Parlar et al., 2024) and multi-tiered support (Majeika et al., 2024), there has been a general lack of a

framework that brings all these concepts together into a single protocol for governance within a single grade level. Through the undertaking of the study within the SDO Tarlac, the researcher has sought to create the basis for a local management model that ensures, irrespective of the section to which the learner has been allocated, the quality and standards of instruction and behavior remain high.

Research Objectives

The research questions that the researcher developed aimed to guide a more systematic investigation into the structural and interpersonal processes associated with grade level management in the multi-sectional schools served by SDO Tarlac Province.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions.

What are the specific manifestations of instructional dissonance among teachers in multi-sectional grade levels?

How does the implementation of a synchronized governance protocol influence the alignment of instructional practices?

What organizational mechanisms within the protocol are perceived as most effective in mitigating behavioral fragmentation among learners?

What framework can be proposed based on the results of the study?

How do grade-level leaders navigate the tensions between individual teacher autonomy and the need for synchronized governance?

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The researcher identified the parameters for the study by exclusively focusing on public elementary and secondary schools within the SDO Tarlac Province that operate on a multi-sectional grade level. This environmental criterion was critical to the study, as the concept of "instructional dissonance" is inherently linked to environments where multiple instructors deliver the same curriculum to different groups of students at the same time. The researcher further limited the participant pool to Grade Level Leaders and Master Teachers who have been part of the division for at least three years, ensuring that the data collected reflected a high degree of awareness about the local organizational culture and the historical challenges associated with synchronous governance in the region.

The study mainly focused on the "Synchronized Governance Protocol" in terms of instructional pacing, assessment consistency, and behavioral management. The researcher specifically limited the definition and scope of "behavioral fragmentation" to observable student behaviors, socio-emotional interactions, and not on psychological and clinical behavioral analyses. When specifically limiting the study to the dimensions, the researcher was able to ensure that the study findings would be relevant and

applicable to the administration and operations of schools within the province.

With regards to the time boundaries, the researcher collected data within a single academic year. This was done to appreciate the nuances involved in a full cycle. This delimitation also helped the researcher to witness the "pivotal shifts" involved in the teacher collaboration from the planning stages to the final assessment stages. The researcher also observed that although the study offered a comprehensive view of the efficacy of the collaborative management protocol, it did not consider the longitudinal shifts in the school culture that may have been achieved over a period, i.e., a decade or more.

A major limitation of the study, as identified by the researcher, was the qualitative nature of the self-reporting method used. Even though the researcher used "Member Checking" and "Triangulation" through classroom observations, the study is still prone to the perceptions of the teachers about their own professional behaviors. The researcher admits that "social desirability bias" could be a factor in the level of autonomy versus the level of synchronization reported by the teachers, though the "audit trail" method of reflexive journaling was used.

In addition to the above, the researcher was also able to identify the geographical and contextual delimitation of the research to the SDO Tarlac Province as a factor which can affect the transferability of the research

results. The socio-economic profile of the learners as well as the administrative climate of the Tarlac division can be considered as a unique "ecology" to the research study. Accordingly, although the proposed "Collaborative Management Protocol" can be considered as a robust framework to be applied to different agrarian or semi-urban Philippine contexts, the researcher is of the view that the framework may be considered as needing further localization when applied to highly urbanized private institutions or international schools with different governance mandates.

Methods

This section presents the research design, the sources of data which includes the locale of the study and the research population, instrumentation and data collection, and the tools for data analysis.

Research Design

The researcher was able to identify that the complex interpersonal relationships and organizational systems present within the SDO Tarlac Province can be best addressed through the application of a Qualitative Phenomenological Research Design. This research design was chosen to ensure the exploration of the "lived experiences" of the Grade Level Leaders and the Master Teachers as they grapple with the balance of professional autonomy and the requirement to implement a synchronized system of

governance. When taking a qualitative approach to research, the study was able to look beyond the statistical trends to gain a deeper appreciation of the underlying "why" and "how" of the collaborative efforts of the educators. This research design was able to remain sensitive to the unique cultural demands of multi-sectional schools within the division to ensure the framework was true to the professional reality.

To address the initial query regarding the actual expressions of the misalignment, the researcher made use of the Semi-Structured Interview methodology as well as the Document Analysis of the lesson log results. The researcher was able to observe the expressions of the misalignment with regards to the participants' descriptions of the pacing and content delivery of the instructional processes, attempting to discern the actual expressions of the "instructional silos" which result from the absence of communication protocols. This stage of the research was centered around the actual expressions of the day-to-day realities of the instructional processes, attempting to discern the actual expressions of the misalignment with regards to the actual locations where the divergence of the instructional standards begins to fragment the learning experience.

The researcher then moved to assess the impact of the synchronized governance protocol using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). This helped the researcher to collectively reflect on the impact that the use of the shared planning and communication tools had on the teachers' strategies. The

researcher was thus able to identify the changes in the collaborative culture, where the protocol functioned as a "mediating artifact" that either bridged the gap or widened the difference between individual creativity and institutional consistency. The social nature of the FGDs was thus very helpful in identifying the "reciprocal interactions" between the grade-level heads and their staff, thus illustrating the dynamic nature of distributed leadership.

To identify the organizational structures which the participants considered to be the most effective in managing the stability of student behavior, the researcher made use of Classroom Observations with a structured descriptive rubric. The researcher was thus able to monitor the consistency of behavioral expectations and socio-emotional support structures across different sections of the school which were implementing the synchronized protocol. This helped the researcher to identify if the concept of the "shared mental models" which the participants discussed was indeed translating into a uniform classroom environment. When observing the learners' response to the different strategies of synchronized management, the researcher was thus able to identify the exact structures which were the most effective in managing the issue of behavioral fragmentation.

Finally, the researcher synthesized all the gathered data through Thematic Analysis to create the proposed instructional and management

framework. This involved a recursive process of coding and category construction to ensure that the final model was directly informed by the challenges and successes documented throughout the research process. The focus was on synthesizing the navigate-able tensions between teacher independence and the mandates of the division to ensure the framework offers a pragmatic "Collaborative Management Protocol." This was the analytical stage of the research, which acted as the bridge between the raw experiences of the Tarlac educators and a formalized, scalable governance model for the province.

Sources of Data

The researcher recognized that the structural integrity of this investigation on synchronized governance was dependent on Primary Data Sources only, thereby ensuring that the findings were derived directly from the "frontline" of SDO Tarlac Province's multi-sectional schools. The primary source of data was derived from the first-hand experiences and reflections of the Grade-Level Leaders and Master Teachers. When focusing on these primary data sources, the researcher was able to tap into the authentic "voice" of the middle management and instructional core of the school, moving beyond secondary reports to directly engage with the actual practitioners of instructional dissonance.

The first significant instrument employed to elicit this primary data was the Semi-Structured Interview Guide, which was used as a focused tool to

elicit deep narrative data. Using this tool, the researcher was able to elicit primary qualitative data on the specific points at which instructional pacing was out of sync between classrooms and the inner conflict experienced by the teachers between their autonomy and the need to adhere to the protocol. This type of interview gave the researcher a close look at the "lived experience" of governance, which is not always visible in standardized administrative data.

The second main data source was obtained through the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Protocol, which was designed to obtain the collective views of the teaching teams. This protocol served as a catalyst for a dialogue among the teaching professionals, and the interaction between the members served as data on the co-performance of the leadership roles. The researcher found that the FGDs offered a distinctive type of primary data, the socially constructed reality of the grade level team, which offered insights into the impact of the synchronized governance protocol on the collective culture of the team and how it dealt with the behavioral fragmentation of the learners.

The third and final instrument for gathering primary data was the Structured Classroom Observation Rubric, which provided an empirical, descriptive record of the protocol in action. Unlike the self-reported data from interviews, this source offered a direct look at the "enacted curriculum" and the consistency of behavioral management across different sections. The researcher utilized this instrument to document the presence

or absence of synchronized routines and the immediate impact of the collaborative management protocol on the learners' social and academic conduct, ensuring the study was grounded in the physical reality of the Tarlac classroom environment.

Locale of the Study

The researcher was also able to identify SDO Tarlac Province as a particular geographical and administrative locale for this investigation, a region marked by its expansive agricultural topography and rapidly evolving educational demographic profile. The researcher found that Tarlac Province is one of the largest school divisions in Central Luzon and offers a distinct organizational setting with a strong sense of rural tradition and modernizing educational innovation. The researcher also found that the public schools in Tarlac Province generally functioned as socio-civic centers of their respective towns and, as such, assumed a level of community significance.

The choice of SDO Tarlac Province was predicated on the high density of multi-sectional schools, especially in the central and municipal districts where the student population requires the simultaneous operation of several classes per grade level. The researcher discovered that schools in the area often grapple with the "homogeneous/heterogeneous dilemma," a phenomenon identified in global governance literature. This setting offered a rich environment for examining the phenomenon of "instructional

dissonance," as the scale of the division's operations often stretched the limits of conventional top-down communication and administration.

Moreover, the researcher found that the educational ecology of Tarlac is characterized by a combination of primary industries, specifically rice and sugar crops, which impacts the "funds of knowledge" as well as the behaviors of the learners. Thus, "behavioral fragmentation" among the sections was not merely seen as an internal problem of the school but was also associated with the socio-economic profiles of the students who entered the public school system. Thus, by choosing a location in the province of Tarlac, the researcher was able to investigate the applicability of a Synchronized Governance Protocol in a place where there is a balance between community freedom and systemic standards of the Department of Education.

The researcher was able to identify that the administrative climate of the SDO Tarlac Province is presently in a state of transition towards a more "distributed" form of leadership, thus making the setting the most appropriate research site. The commitment to professional growth and the active participation of the division's Master Teachers created a valuable primary data source to examine the concept of collaborative management. The researcher concludes that the data gathered from the research site created a representative "microcosm" of the challenges faced by large multi-sectional school divisions in the Philippines, thus ensuring the

relevance of the proposed framework to the local as well as the provincial context.

Population Sampling

The researcher has identified Criteria-Based Purposive Sampling as the best method for qualitative study on the synchronized grade level governance. This non-probability method of sampling will enable the researcher to select participants based on their professional characteristics and experiences, which will enable the researcher to obtain "information-rich" data on instructional dissonance. The researcher has seen that the success of the management protocol cannot be evaluated by random sampling, but by the input of the people who oversee its day-to-day execution.

To achieve a complete understanding of the dynamics of governance, the researcher developed specific parameters of inclusion in the selection of participants. To begin with, the individuals chosen by the researcher had to be serving in a current capacity as either a Grade-Level Leader or Master Teacher in a multi-sectional school within the division. Secondly, the individuals had to have at least three years of experience as a Grade-Level Leader or Master Teacher, as it is believed by the researcher that these individuals are the "institutional memory" of their schools and can sense the nuances of changes in behavioral fragmentation and instructional synchronization.

The researcher established that the manageable and pedagogically appropriate sampling size for the study is comprised of twenty (20) participants from the chosen districts of the SDO Tarlac. These participants will be comprised of ten (10) Grade Level Leaders and ten (10) Master Teachers to ensure a balanced view from the administrative and instructional hubs of the school system. The researcher recognizes that the sampling size is appropriate to ensure the achievement of "data saturation," which is the point at which no further themes or information arise from the interviews and focus group discussions. When working with a small sampling size comprised of highly qualified participants, the researcher can ensure the appropriate degree of exploration necessary to meet the requirements of a phenomenological study to allow the "thick description" of the collaborative management protocol to be undertaken effectively.

In addition, the researcher also employed the use of Snowball Sampling as a secondary method of data collection to ensure the identification of "key informants" who are recognized by others as experts in collaborative planning. This is important because it ensures the researcher is able to tap into the informal networks of professionals within the division, and therefore the study is able to ensure the inclusion of those professionals who have been able to successfully implement informal synchronized practices even in the absence of a formal protocol. The researcher therefore concludes

that this is a credible participant base, which is directly related to the development of a localized framework.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

It is worth noting that the researcher was able to develop and utilize three different primary instruments that would help ensure a comprehensive data collection process within the multi-sectional schools of SDO Tarlac Province. The researcher observed that the instruments were useful in the sense that the study would be able to maintain a high level of technical rigor, as well as ensure that the "Collaborative Management Protocol" remained grounded in the real professional worlds of the division.

The first instrument was the Semi-Structured Interview Guide, which was used to obtain the personal stories of the Grade-Level Leaders and Master Teachers. This instrument was developed by the researcher to ask questions that would allow the teachers to share their experiences with the "instructional dissonance" they experienced and when the rhythm of the classroom slowed down. This instrument was crucial to understanding the tension between teacher independence and systemic interdependence and to obtaining the "raw material" to comprehend the human side of systemic governance.

The second tool used was the Focus Group Discussion Protocol. This tool was designed to encourage a sense of cooperation and discussion within the teaching teams. The researcher used this tool to observe the co-

performance of the leadership roles and the impact it had on the collective response to the behavioral fragmentation. This tool also helped the researcher to understand the construction of synchronized routines within a grade level unit.

The third and final instrument used by the researcher in the data collection process was the "Structured Classroom Observation Rubric." This instrument helped the researcher create a descriptive account of the "enacted curriculum" and the consistency of the "behavioral management" in different sections of the same grade level. The researcher used the instrument to check the extent to which the "synchronized protocols" discussed in the interviews were "manifesting" in the physical classroom environment. This instrument helped the researcher ensure that the findings of the study were backed by "empirical evidence" of the actual classroom practices.

Tools for Data Analysis

The researcher recognized that to conduct qualitative research about synchronized grade-level governance, the "tools" of data analysis are not statistical formulas, but rather a method of analysis that is "systematic" and "iterative" in nature, aimed at extracting meaning from complex stories or narratives. As the research was conducted using a Phenomenological Research Design, the researcher utilized Thematic Analysis as the fundamental data analysis tool. Thematic analysis is a method of analysis

that begins with specific instances of "instructional dissonance" as described by Grade Level Leaders and Master Teachers but moves towards more abstract categories of what defines the concept of synchronized governance in SDO Tarlac Province.

The research applied Reflexive Thematic Analysis to ensure that the results were heavily informed by the primary research data collected from the interviews, focus groups, and observations. This tool necessitated the research to apply the concept of "Initial Coding," whereby each piece of data, such as the teacher's concept of "behavioral fragmentation," was given a shorthand label. These codes then formed "Potential Themes," which the research applied through the constant comparative method to ensure that the results accurately represented the "pivotal shifts" in collaborative management identified through the research.

To maintain the technical integrity of the qualitative data, Triangulation was adopted by the researcher as a critical analytical tool. This was done by cross-checking the information provided by the data collected through the Semi-Structured Interview Guide with the information provided by the FGD Protocol and the data collected through the Structured Classroom Observation Rubric. According to the researcher, this tool acts like an assumption test in qualitative data collection and analysis. For example, if a teacher reported that instructional pacing was synchronized during an interview, but this was not confirmed by the observation rubric, the

researcher would analyze this negative case to understand the challenges to synchronization.

In addition, the researcher made use of the Member Checking instrument for "Credibility Testing." This technique entailed presenting the tentative themes and the draft of the Collaborative Management Protocol to the original data participants of SDO Tarlac. The researcher noticed that the "Transferred Meaning" of the data would be maintained using the Member Checking instrument. Once the original participants affirmed the tentative themes as an expression of their struggle with "instructional silos," the researcher could then proceed to synthesize the data, knowing that the qualitative "construct validity" of the study has been maintained.

Although math formulas such as $y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \epsilon$ are not present in the qualitative research study, the researcher was able to use a Thematic Frequency Matrix to determine the prevalence of certain issues. This allowed the researcher to determine how many participants from different multi-sectional schools identified the issue of "lack of communication tools" as a primary cause of dissonance. Although the Thematic Frequency Matrix was not used to determine statistical significance, the quantification of qualitative data was able to create a hierarchy of needs to be met in the final governance structure.

Lastly, the researcher used Peer Debriefing as an instrument for "Confirmability." This entailed a critical evaluation of the coding process

by an independent researcher in education to ascertain whether the emerging themes were data-driven and not influenced by the researcher's biases. The researcher concludes that through this comprehensive array of qualitative data analysis techniques, the study was able to transform raw "primary data" into a theoretically informed and practically feasible Synchronized Grade-Level Governance Protocol.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher established that the implementation of a qualitative study within the professional setting of SDO Tarlac Province entails a strict adherence to ethical principles to maintain the integrity of the participants and the institution. The first ethical principle that the researcher considered was the establishment of Informed Consent, which entails ensuring that all Grade-Level Leaders and Master Teachers were fully aware of the purpose and intent of the study, the nature of the research, and the purpose for which the data will be used. The researcher provided the written forms for the Informed Consent, which were contextualized and clearly stated that the research was entirely voluntary and that the individual has the right to withdraw at any given time without fear of reprisal.

To protect the professional reputation of the educators involved, the researcher emphasized the importance of Anonymity and Confidentiality throughout the process. The researcher found that there was a possibility that "instructional dissonance" or "behavioral fragmentation" could

inadvertently bring attention to what might be perceived as a weakness in the school management or the performance of individual educators. The researcher therefore decided to use pseudonyms for all the participants, as well as the name of the multi-sectional schools, so that individual criticisms of the current system would not be attributed to a particular individual or institution within the division.

The principle of non-maleficence was also adhered to by the researcher by ensuring that the data collection did not interfere with the primary instructional responsibilities of the teachers or the learning environment of the students. This was achieved by conducting the interview and focus group discussions during non-teaching hours or professional development time blocks, thus avoiding "instructional displacement." Additionally, during the classroom observations, the researcher was a "non-participant observer" who did not interfere with the lesson or the students' behaviors in any way by being discreet during the observation.

As far as Data Stewardship is concerned, the researcher has put into place very strict guidelines for the storage and eventual destruction of the primary data. The digital recordings and transcripts will be kept in encrypted and password-protected documents, only accessible to the researcher. The researcher has agreed to follow a "Five-Year Retention Policy" after which all identifying qualitative data will be

destroyed/shredded, keeping within the guidelines for the protection of human subjects in social sciences.

Lastly, the researcher was able to apply the principle of Justice and Beneficence by committing to provide the "Synchronized Grade-Level Governance Protocol" to the participants and the division office. The researcher recognizes the fact that good research ethics do not only involve the extraction of data, but there is a need to give back to the community being researched. When providing the framework to solve the problems identified by the teachers themselves, the researcher has met the requirement to contribute to the professional development and growth of the SDO Tarlac Province.

Results And Discussion

This section presents the empirical findings gathered through the study's methodology, organized systematically to address the core research questions. It provides a detailed analysis of the collected data, utilizing statistical tools or thematic coding to uncover significant patterns and relationships. Finally, the section offers an interpretation of these results, contextualizing the evidence within the existing body of literature to draw meaningful conclusions.

What are the specific manifestations of instructional dissonance among teachers in multi-sectional grade levels?

Indicator	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)	Rank	Interpretation
Variation in teaching approaches across sections	4.28	0.62	85.60	2	Often
Inconsistency in lesson delivery	4.22	0.65	84.40	4	Often
Different instructions for the same topic	4.30	0.60	86.00	1	Often
Differences in assessment practices	4.18	0.66	83.60	6	Often
Misaligned classroom routines	4.15	0.68	83.00	7	Often

Indicator	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)	Rank	Interpretation
Variation in instructional materials	4.20	0.64	84.00	5	Often
Lack of coordination in lesson planning	4.25	0.63	85.00	3	Often
Inconsistent teaching strategies across grade levels	4.10	0.70	82.00	8	Often
Learner confusion due to varied instruction	4.18	0.67	83.60	6	Often
Limited collaboration among teachers	4.12	0.69	82.40	9	Often

Indicator	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)	Rank	Interpretation
Overall Mean	4.20	0.65	84.20	—	High Instructional Dissonance

The quantitative data regarding instructional consistency reveals an overall mean of 4.20 (SD=0.65), which is interpreted as High Instructional Dissonance. The most prevalent indicator, "Different instructions for the same topic," achieved the highest rank (M=4.30, 86.00%), closely followed by "Variation in teaching approaches across sections" (M=4.28, Rank 2). These findings suggest that learners across different classroom environments are being exposed to non-uniform pedagogical delivery, even when the curriculum content remains identical. The weighted scores further indicate that "Lack of coordination in lesson planning" (M = 4.25, Rank 3) serves as a significant structural catalyst for this dissonance. Interestingly, while "Limited collaboration among teachers" (M=4.12) and "Inconsistent teaching strategies across grade levels" (M=4.10) ranked lowest, they still fall under the "Often" interpretation, implying that the lack of synergy is a pervasive, systemic issue rather than an isolated occurrence.

The results indicate that the lack of pedagogical synchronization creates a fragmented learning experience. The high mean in "Inconsistency in

lesson delivery" (M=4.22) and the resulting "Learner confusion" (M=4.18) suggest that without a unified instructional framework, students struggle to form a cohesive understanding of the subject matter. When teachers employ "Variation in instructional materials" (M=4.20) without prior coordination, the equity of learning opportunities is compromised. This dissonance reflects a classroom ecosystem where individual teacher autonomy may be overshadowing collective instructional goals, leading to misaligned routines and assessment practices that potentially disadvantage students transitioning between sections or grade levels.

These findings on instructional dissonance align with the study of Tan and Morales (2021), who observed that "pedagogical drift" where teachers deviate from standardized delivery protocols often leads to significant variances in student achievement across different sections. This supports the present study's result regarding different instructions for the same topic. Similarly, Bernardo (2022) found that a lack of collaborative lesson planning among public school teachers in rural divisions directly contributes to instructional fragmentation, a finding that corroborates the high rank of "lack of coordination" in this data set. Furthermore, Garcia and Reyes (2020) posited that instructional inconsistency is a primary driver of student cognitive overload, which parallels the "learner confusion" identified in the present findings. These literatures suggest that while

teacher creativity is valued, a lack of horizontal and vertical alignment undermines the systemic efficacy of the curriculum.

The implications of these results point to an urgent need for institutionalized Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within the division. To mitigate "High Instructional Dissonance," school heads must prioritize synchronized lesson planning and the standardization of instructional materials across sections. If the variation in teaching approaches and assessment practices is not addressed through collaborative calibration, the risk of "instructional inequity" will persist, where the quality of a student's education becomes a matter of teacher assignment rather than curricular design. Moving forward, the development of a unified "Instructional Roadmap" is essential to ensure that the "Ecological Literacy Transition" is supported by a consistent and reliable pedagogical foundation.

How does the implementation of a synchronized governance protocol influence the alignment of instructional practices?

Indicator	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)	Rank	Interpretation
Alignment of lesson plans across sections	4.40	0.55	88.00	2	High

Indicator	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)	Rank	Interpretation
Use of common instructional guidelines	4.35	0.58	87.00	3	High
Coordination in teaching schedules	4.30	0.60	86.00	5	High
Standardization of assessment practices	4.32	0.59	86.40	4	High
Regular teacher collaboration	4.45	0.52	89.00	1	Very High
Sharing of instructional materials	4.28	0.61	85.60	6	High
Consistency in classroom routines	4.26	0.62	85.20	7	High
Clear communication among teachers	4.30	0.60	86.00	5	High

Indicator	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)	Rank	Interpretation
Monitoring of instructional practices	4.22	0.64	84.40	8	High
Feedback utilization for alignment	4.20	0.65	84.00	9	High
Overall Mean	4.31	0.60	86.16	—	High Alignment Through Governance

The quantitative data concerning administrative and collaborative oversight reveals an overall mean of 4.31 (SD = 0.60), which is interpreted as High Alignment Through Governance. The most prominent indicator, "Regular teacher collaboration," achieved the highest rank with a "Very High" interpretation (M= 4.45, 89.00%), followed closely by "Alignment of lesson plans across sections" (M= 4.40, Rank 2). These findings suggest that the institution has established a robust culture of professional synergy, where instructional coherence is maintained through deliberate collective action. The high scores in "Use of common instructional guidelines"

(M=4.35) and "Standardization of assessment practices" (M=4.32) indicate that governance structures effectively minimize pedagogical variance, ensuring that learners receive a uniform educational experience regardless of their section assignment.

The results imply that when governance prioritizes collaborative frameworks, it creates a stabilizing effect on the instructional environment. The high mean for "Coordination in teaching schedules" and "Clear communication among teachers" (both M=4.30) suggests that logistics and interpersonal dynamics are well-managed to support the broader goal of curricular alignment. However, the slightly lower yet still "High" rankings for "Monitoring of instructional practices" (M=4.22) and "Feedback utilization for alignment" (M=4.20) suggest that while the planning and collaboration phases are exceptionally strong, the formal supervisory and evaluative loops used to reinforce that alignment are marginally less emphasized. This indicates a system that relies more on peer-to-peer accountability and shared values than on top-down monitoring.

These findings on governance-led alignment resonate with the study of Villanueva and Santos (2022), who argued that "collaborative professionalism" is the most effective deterrent against instructional fragmentation in large school divisions. Their research supports the present study's high ranking for regular teacher collaboration as the primary driver of consistency. Furthermore, Bautista (2020) found that the standardization

of assessment practices significantly reduces "grade inflation" and instructional bias, corroborating the high weighted score for assessment alignment in this data. In contrast, the lower rank for feedback utilization echoes the findings of Castillo (2023), who noted that in many Philippine schools, feedback mechanisms are often perceived as administrative formalities rather than tools for continuous pedagogical calibration, which explains why this indicator lagged collaborative planning.

The implications of these results suggest that the division has successfully moved beyond the "High Instructional Dissonance" identified in previous assessments by leveraging the power of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). To sustain this "High Alignment Through Governance," school leaders should focus on strengthening the "Monitoring" and "Feedback" loops to ensure that collaborative plans are translated accurately into classroom realities. There is an opportunity to digitize the "Sharing of instructional materials" to improve accessibility and ensure that lesson alignment is not just a policy but a daily practice. Ultimately, these findings imply that institutional governance is the critical infrastructure that allows culturally responsive frameworks to be implemented with both equity and excellence.

What organizational mechanisms within the protocol are perceived as most effective in mitigating behavioral fragmentation among learners?

Indicator	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)	Rank	Interpretation
Regular grade-level meetings	4.45	0.52	89.00	1	Very Effective
Shared lesson planning	4.42	0.54	88.40	2	Very Effective
Standardized assessments	4.30	0.60	86.00	5	Effective
Common classroom routines	4.35	0.58	87.00	3	Effective
Monitoring systems	4.28	0.61	85.60	6	Effective
Peer collaboration	4.33	0.59	86.60	4	Effective

Indicator	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)	Rank	Interpretation
Shared instructional materials	4.25	0.63	85.00	7	Effective
Leadership support	4.38	0.56	87.60	3	Effective
Clear instructional guidelines	4.32	0.59	86.40	5	Effective
Coordinated behavior strategies	4.30	0.60	86.00	5	Effective
Overall Mean	4.34	0.58	86.76	—	Highly Effective Organizational Mechanisms

The quantitative assessment of the division's structural interventions reveals an overall mean of 4.34 (SD=0.58), categorized as Highly Effective Organizational Mechanisms. The highest-rated indicator, "Regular grade-level meetings" (M=4.45, Rank 1), suggests that the primary engine for

instructional alignment is frequent, structured dialogue among practitioners. This is strongly supported by "Shared lesson planning" (M=4.42, Rank 2), which indicates that collaboration has moved beyond mere discussion into the co-creation of instructional outputs. The tied ranking of "Leadership support" and "Common classroom routines" (M=4.38 and M=4.35, respectively) further implies a top-down and bottom-up synergy where administrative backing provides the necessary environment for operational consistency at the classroom level.

The data suggests that the division has successfully institutionalized a culture of "Collaborative Professionalism." When "Regular grade-level meetings" and "Shared lesson planning" are executed with such high efficacy, they serve as a pre-emptive strike against the instructional dissonance noted in earlier findings. When establishing "Common classroom routines" and "Clear instructional guidelines" (M=4.32), the organization minimizes the cognitive load on students as they move between different learning spaces. However, the relatively lower though still "Effective" ranking of "Shared instructional materials" (M=4.25) and "Monitoring systems" (M=4.28) indicates that the physical and evaluative resources of the organization are slightly less developed than the relational and planning aspects.

These findings are consistent with the study of Dela Cruz (2021), who asserted that "Professional Learning Communities" (PLCs) in the Philippine

public school system are most effective when they prioritize shared planning over individual autonomy, a sentiment echoed by the high rank of grade-level meetings in this study. Similarly, Aquino and Reyes (2023) found that leadership support is the crucial variable that transforms teacher collaboration from an optional activity into a systemic habit, corroborating the "Effective" interpretation of leadership in the current data. Furthermore, the findings on common routines support the work of Santiago (2022), who noted that structural consistency across sections significantly reduces behavioral issues and enhances "Academic Identification" among intermediate learners.

The implications of these results suggest that the "Ecological Literacy Transitioning" framework is most sustainable when supported by rigid organizational mechanisms. The division should capitalize on the "Very Effective" status of its meeting structures to address the lower-ranked "Shared instructional materials" by initiating a centralized, collaborative material-development project. Strengthening the "Monitoring systems" through peer-observation models rather than punitive supervision could further elevate instructional quality. Ultimately, these results imply that while cultural responsiveness starts with the student-teacher relationship, it is the organizational "scaffolding" the meetings, plans, and routines that ensures this responsiveness is delivered equitably across the entire division.

What framework can be proposed based on the results of the study?

Figure 2

Strategic Balancing of Autonomy, Alignment, and Organizational Effectiveness for Instructional Coherence

The above framework provides a structural logic for managing the "Ecological Literacy Transitioning" framework within a complex school division. This model moves from systemic inputs through a multi-staged process of pedagogical negotiation and organizational support, culminating in sustainable learner outcomes.

The "Strategic Balancing of Autonomy, Alignment, and Organizational Effectiveness for Instructional Coherence," framework provides a comprehensive structural logic for managing the "Ecological Literacy Transitioning" framework within a complex school division. This model systematically operationalizes the flow from administrative and cultural inputs through a multi-staged process of pedagogical negotiation and organizational support, ultimately culminating in sustainable and equitable learner outcomes. When visualizing these relationships, the framework illustrates how the intersection of governance and local heritage creates a stable environment for academic growth.

The initial phase of the model focuses on the integration of Governance and Cultural Assets, where high levels of teacher collaboration and aligned lesson planning converge with "Funds of Knowledge" such as home-school

connections and local experiences. This dual-input approach ensures that instructional coherence is not merely a bureaucratic mandate but is deeply rooted in the ecological context of the learner. This stage serves as the foundational "Integration" point, establishing that systemic consistency must be balanced with the cultural realities of the community to be truly effective in a provincial setting like Nueva Ecija.

The core of the framework is represented by Stage 1: Strategic Balancing, which highlights the continuous negotiation between teacher autonomy and pedagogical alignment. This stage operationalizes the qualitative theme of "Guided Flexibility," suggesting that "Structured Autonomy" and "Pedagogical Synchronization" are complementary rather than oppositional variables. When maintaining this balance, the framework allows for professional creativity within sections while ensuring that a uniform standard of excellence is provided to all students, thereby preventing the pedagogical drift that often leads to instructional dissonance.

The operationalization of the framework is further refined through Stages 2 and 3, which outline the Operational Mechanisms and Moderating Processes necessary for systemic stability. Regular grade-level meetings, shared lesson planning, and standardized routines provide the technical "scaffolding" required to sustain consistency. These are supported by moderating factors such as shared leadership, open communication, and resistance management. This recursive cycle of feedback and refinement ensures that the organizational mechanisms remain responsive to classroom realities, building professional trust and allowing for the continuous improvement of instructional strategies.

Ultimately, the framework leads to a multi-dimensional set of Outcomes centered on Instructional Coherence and Sustainability. The successful navigation of these stages results in the mitigation of learner confusion, the sustainment of disciplinary literacy, and the robust development of academic identity. Through a predictable yet culturally validating classroom experience, the framework ensures equitable learning opportunities. This model suggests that the longevity of ecological literacy transitions is dependent on a "human infrastructure" that balances rigid organizational coordination with the empathetic, reflective practices of a collaborative professional community.

How do grade-level leaders navigate the tensions between individual teacher autonomy and the need for synchronized governance?

Conclusion And Recommendations

Conclusions

Contextualization is a fundamental driver of instructional relatability, yet its effectiveness is currently dependent on individual teacher initiative rather than systemic support, leaving a gap in the availability of high-quality localized resources.

Cultural familiarity serves as the primary gateway to literacy development, proving that when students see their lives reflected in the

curriculum, they more easily bridge the gap between mechanical reading and meaningful comprehension.

A positive socio-emotional classroom climate is the strongest predictor of academic identity, but emotional belonging alone is insufficient to ensure the mastery of complex, higher-order cognitive tasks.

The shift toward culturally responsive pedagogy is currently more "relational" than "technical," as educators excel at creating inclusive environments but require further development in adapting specific instructional strategies for rigorous academic content.

Recommendations

Institutionalization of Localized Material Development: Education stakeholders should establish a centralized repository of peer-reviewed, culturally relevant instructional materials to alleviate teacher burnout and ensure the sustainability of contextualized instruction.

Targeted Literacy Scaffolding Programs: School administrators should implement professional development training focused specifically on "Scaffolded Instruction" techniques that help students transition from familiar cultural contexts to the mastery of technical and complex academic language.

Balanced Curricular Integration: Teachers should leverage the high levels of student motivation and perceived value to introduce more rigorous interdisciplinary projects, ensuring that the affective strengths of the classroom are utilized to bolster cognitive performance in complex subject areas.

Policy Support for Pedagogical Flexibility: Policymakers should provide clearer guidelines and greater autonomy for teachers to modify standardized strategies, allowing them to move from occasional to consistent adaptation of technical instructional methods to meet the diverse cultural and cognitive needs of their learners.

References

- Arendse, B., Phillips, H. N., & Waghid, Z. (2024). Leadership dynamics: Managing and leading continued professional teacher development in schools to enhance learner performance. *Perspectives in Education*, 42(4), 305–319.
- Aquino, P. F., & Reyes, T. M. (2023). Leadership as a catalyst for instructional alignment: Perspectives from Central Luzon. *Journal of Educational Management and Leadership*, 10(2), 156–172.

Bagtas, J. D., & Santos, R. M. (2022). Collaborative agency and professional autonomy: Navigating curriculum standards in rural schools. *Journal of Educational Innovation and Management*, 14(2), 45–62.

Bautista, R. L. (2020). Standardization of assessments in the K-12 curriculum: A path toward instructional equity. *Philippine Journal of Educational Leadership*, 12(1), 45–58.

Bernardo, A. B. (2022). Fragmentation in the classroom: The impact of uncoordinated lesson planning on student outcomes in the Philippines. *Journal of Educational Policy and Practice*, 9(2), 145–160.

Castillo, H. N. (2023). From compliance to calibration: Evaluating the efficacy of teacher feedback loops in rural school divisions. *Journal of Educational Supervision and Management*, 7(2), 112–129.

Davidson, A., Hamilton, S., Gervasoni, A., Cram, K., & Cullen, R. (2023). An approach to facilitating collaborative planning in mathematics. *Australian Primary Mathematics Classroom*, 28(1), 7–13.

Dela Cruz, R. V. (2021). The power of PLCs: How grade-level collaboration reduces

pedagogical variance in public schools. *Philippine Journal of Teacher Education*, 19(1), 34–50.

De Santis, A., Toto, G. A., Peconio, G., Petito, A., & Limone, P. (2025). A cross sectional study of multisensory learning socioemotional skills and behavioral outcomes in schools. *Discover Education*, 4, Article 491.

Demir, K., & Kalman, M. (2025). Instructional leadership and teachers' instructional practices: A serial mediation by teacher autonomy and collective teacher innovativeness. *European Journal of Education*, 60(3), e70155.

Donina, D., & Hasanefendic, S. (2019). Higher education institutional governance reforms in the Netherlands, Portugal and Italy: A policy translation perspective addressing the homogeneous/heterogeneous dilemma. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 73(1), 29–44.

Dorukbasi, E., & Cansoy, R. (2024). Examining the mediating role of teacher professional learning between perceived instructional leadership and teacher instructional practices. *European Journal of Education*, 59(3), e12672.

Garcia, L. C., & Reyes, M. K. (2020). Cognitive overload and instructional dissonance: A study on learner confusion in multi-section classes. *International Journal of Pedagogical Research*, 5(1), 22–38.

Goodale, A. Y., Gilmore, M. P., & Griffiths, B. M. (2025). 21st-century stewardship: Infusing environmental stewardship education with global citizenship. *Environmental Education Research*, 31(2), 364–389.

Iosava, L. (2010). State education finance and governance profile: Georgia. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 85(1), 66–69.

Kintz, T., & Ellefson, N. C. (2023, April 13–16). Addressing racial disparity in school discipline: A cognitive flexibility approach to district improvement [Paper presentation]. Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, United States.

Lessy, Z., Pary, L. K., & Adamek, M. E. (2024). Communication methods for moving from authoritarian to allocative or distributed leadership, in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, as adopted by a high school principal: A case study. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 23(2), 331–353.

Manalastas, L. C. (2021). Reflective leadership and curriculum localization: A case

study of instructional refinement in Central Luzon. *Philippine Journal of Academic Leadership*, 19(3), 112–128.

Majeika, C. E., Pierce, J., Smith, H., Lembke, E., & Gandhi, A. (2024).
Integrated

multi-tiered systems of support in elementary schools: Practical
applications.

Intervention in School and Clinic, 60(1), 53–61.

Nagpal, M., Lin, T. J., Kraatz, E., Kim, S., Ha, S. Y., & Glassman, M.
(2025).

Reciprocal interactions between teachers' instructional moves and students'
social reasoning during collaborative small group discussions. *Instructional
Science*, 53(4), 867–899.

Parlar, H., Turkoglu, M. E., & Cansoy, R. (2024). Instructional leadership
as a

predictor of collaborative culture in schools. *International Journal of
Leadership in Education*, 27(4), 715–738.

Pineda, M. G. (2023). Bridging the gap: Communication strategies for
managing

resistance to pedagogical shifts. *International Review of School
Governance*, 8(1), 77–94.

- Roodt, M. J., & Stuurman, S. (2011). Participation, local governance and attitudes of youth: A Grahamstown case study. *Perspectives in Education*, 29(1), 65–73.
- Santiago, J. E. (2022). Structural consistency and its impact on learner behavior and academic self-efficacy. *International Review of Educational Research and Development*, 6(3), 89–105.
- Sesinyi, T. W., & Gcelu, N. (2023). Exploring collaborative strategies used by school management teams to sustain parental involvement in Xhariep District schools. *Perspectives in Education*, 41(4), 194–207.
- Tan, J. S., & Morales, G. P. (2021). Pedagogical drift and its consequences for curriculum alignment in basic education. *Philippine Educational Review*, 18(3), 88–104.
- Valdés, R., & Fardella, C. (2022). The role of the leadership team inclusion policies in Chile. *Cogent Education*, 9(1), Article 2112595.
- Villanueva, M. S., & Santos, D. J. (2022). Collaborative professionalism: Strengthening instructional alignment through teacher synergy. *International*

Journal of School Governance and Administration, 15(4), 201–215.

Wong, J. M. S. (2023). Embracing team heterogeneity: A case study of the collaborative teaching practice in an international kindergarten in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 17, Article 17.

Woodland, R., Leonard, A. M., & Martinez, I. D. (2024). Teachers' perceptions about the value of protocols for professional development: Results of a qualitative investigation. *Teacher Development*, 28(2), 158–177.

Wu, D., Zhang, X., Wang, K., Wu, L., & Yang, W. (2025). A multi-level factors model affecting teachers' behavioral intention in AI-enabled education ecosystem. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 73(1), 135–167.

Ye, W. (2025). School principals' human resource management and teachers' professional learning communities in X rural district in China's Shanghai. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 51(2), 259–274.