



A Comparative Organizational Performance of ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified Schools Division Offices: Basis for Framework Enhancement

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Mary Lisette P. Villas-Rojas - ORCID No. [0009-0009-7243-6747](https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7243-6747)

Master in Public Administration, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Sta. Mesa, Manila, Philippines

Abstract

Organizational performance remains a key concern in public sector institutions, with Quality Management Systems (QMS), particularly ISO 9001, widely adopted to enhance service delivery and operational efficiency. Despite its widespread adoption, existing studies report mixed findings on the extent to which ISO certification contributes to improving organizational performance, indicating the need for further investigation. This study compared the organizational performance of ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified Schools Division Offices (SDOs) in the Department of Education. It also identified implementation challenges and proposed a framework for performance enhancement. A convergent parallel mixed-method design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Mann-Whitney U test, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. Results showed that all five organizational performance dimensions were generally rated as consistently implemented, with Management Responsibility and Stakeholders' Participation receiving the highest ratings. However, qualitative findings revealed recurring challenges, including leadership instability, resource constraints, process inconsistencies, limited data utilization, and stakeholder engagement issues. Although ISO-certified SDOs obtained slightly higher mean performance scores than non-ISO-certified SDOs, the difference was not statistically significant, suggesting that ISO certification alone is insufficient to account for variations in organizational performance. The study concludes that organizational performance depends more on the effective implementation of quality management practices than on ISO certification alone. Leadership stability, adequate resources, standardized processes, and evidence-based decision-making are critical determinants of performance. Based on these findings, the study proposes an Organizational Performance Enhancement Framework that promotes continuous improvement, process standardization, and context-responsive quality management practices to strengthen organizational performance across Schools Division Offices.

Keywords: ISO 9001, Quality Management System (QMS), organizational performance, Schools Division Offices, public sector, continuous improvement



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INTRODUCTION

Despite the growing adoption of ISO 9001 in public sector organizations, evidence regarding its contribution to organizational performance remains inconclusive. Existing studies have largely examined the benefits, implementation challenges, or performance implications of QMS within individual organizations or sectors. However, limited empirical evidence directly compares the organizational performance of ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified Schools Division Offices within the Philippine basic

education system. Moreover, previous studies have generally examined certification and performance as separate concerns, with less attention given to the organizational and implementation conditions that may explain variations in performance outcomes. This limitation is particularly relevant in the Department of Education (DepEd) context, where SDOs operate under similar mandates but may differ in certification status, organizational capacity, leadership stability, resource availability, and implementation practices.

This study addresses this gap by providing a comparative assessment of organizational performance between ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified SDOs while simultaneously examining the challenges encountered in implementing quality management practices. Its novelty lies in integrating quantitative evidence on performance differences with qualitative evidence on implementation challenges, thereby moving beyond the assumption that ISO certification alone determines organizational effectiveness. The study further develops an Organizational Performance Enhancement Framework based on the empirical findings, linking performance improvement to continuous improvement, process standardization, leadership stability, resource adequacy, stakeholder participation, and evidence-based decision-making. In this way, the study contributes not only to the literature on ISO 9001 and public sector performance but also provides a context-responsive framework that may guide SDOs in strengthening organizational performance beyond compliance with certification requirements.

Comparing ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified SDOs is important because ISO 9001 certification represents a formal commitment to standardized processes, performance monitoring, continual improvement, and systematic quality management. In principle, these practices should translate into stronger organizational performance among certified offices. However, certification does not necessarily guarantee effective implementation, and the extent to which QMS practices influence actual performance may vary across organizational contexts. Comparing SDOs with and without ISO certification therefore provides an empirical means of determining whether certification status is associated with differences in organizational performance or whether performance is influenced more strongly by implementation quality and organizational conditions. Since both groups operate within the same DepEd system and perform comparable functions, the comparison provides a relevant basis for

examining the actual contribution of ISO certification to organizational performance.

Theoretical Framework. This study draws on New Public Management (NPM) and Total Quality Management (TQM) as complementary lenses for examining ISO 9001 certification and organizational performance in DepEd. NPM emphasizes efficiency, accountability, measurable results, and responsiveness, while TQM explains how leadership, process management, stakeholder focus, evidence-based decision-making, and continual improvement translate these expectations into organizational practice. Together, they support the premise that certification may provide a formal quality-management structure, but performance depends on how that structure is implemented.

NPM frames ISO 9001 as a public-sector management mechanism that reinforces explicit standards, managerial responsibility, monitoring, and accountability (Hood, 1991; Verbeeten & Speklé, 2015). ISO-based QMS requirements for documented processes, defined responsibilities, performance evaluation, and management review are consistent with these principles. However, the effects of public-management reforms vary by institutional context (Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020), making implementation conditions important when comparing SDOs.

TQM complements NPM by focusing on the internal mechanisms of quality improvement. It emphasizes stakeholder focus, leadership commitment, employee involvement, process orientation, evidence-based decisions, and continual improvement. ISO 9001 operationalizes many of these principles through requirements on process management, performance evaluation, corrective action, and continual improvement. Evidence generally links ISO 9001 with improved operational performance, while also showing that resources and organizational commitment affect the benefits realized (To, Lee, & Yu, 2011; Fonseca & Domingues, 2018).

Integrating NPM and TQM provides the basis for comparing ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified SDOs. NPM explains the emphasis on measurable outcomes and accountability; TQM explains the processes through which those outcomes may be sustained. The study therefore examines whether certification status is associated with organizational performance while recognizing that leadership stability, resources, process consistency, stakeholder participation, and implementation quality can strengthen or constrain performance.

Conceptual Framework. DepEd's ISO 9001-based Quality Management System seeks to integrate and standardize internal processes, improve service delivery, support continual improvement, and strengthen client satisfaction. Guided by NPM and TQM, the conceptual framework links ISO certification status with organizational performance without assuming that certification automatically produces superior outcomes.

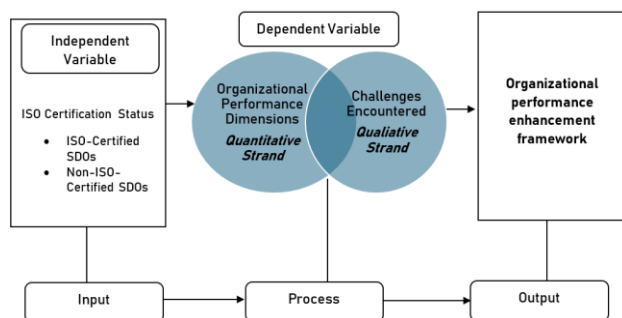


Figure 1
Conceptual Framework on the Relationship between ISO Certification Status and Organizational Performance of Schools Division Offices

Figure 1 presents the study's conceptual framework. ISO certification status is the independent variable, categorized as ISO-certified or non-ISO-certified SDOs. Organizational performance is assessed quantitatively across management responsibility, resource management, service realization, measurement, analysis and improvement, and stakeholders' participation. In parallel, qualitative data identify implementation challenges affecting these dimensions.

The two strands are integrated during interpretation to determine areas of convergence, complementarity, or divergence. This mixed-method integration allows numerical performance patterns to be examined alongside organizational conditions such as leadership instability, resource constraints, process inconsistencies, data-use limitations, and stakeholder concerns. The combined findings provide the empirical basis for the proposed Organizational Performance Enhancement Framework and corresponding policy recommendations.

With the direction of the Department to establish one certification in the entire agency, the purpose of this study is to assess whether there is a difference on the organizational performance of ISO certified and non-ISO certified offices. This study aims to seek answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of organizational performance in the Schools Division Offices of the Department of Education in terms of:
 - 1.1 Management Responsibility;
 - 1.2 Resource Management;
 - 1.3 Service Realization;
 - 1.4 Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement; and
 - 1.5 Stakeholders Participation?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the organizational performance of ISO-certified and non-ISO certified Offices?
3. What are the challenges encountered by ISO-certified and non-ISO certified offices in terms of:
 - 3.1 Management Responsibility;
 - 3.2 Resource Management;
 - 3.3 Service Realization;
 - 3.4 Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement; and
 - 3.5 Stakeholders Participation.
4. Based on the findings of the study, what Organizational Performance Enhancement Framework may be proposed for the Department of Education?

The scope of this study is confined to examining and comparing the organizational performance of ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified Schools Division Offices (SDOs) within the Department of Education. It focuses on employees from selected SDOs from Region IV-A (CALABARZON) and Region IV-B (MIMAROPA) who represent various designations, age groups, genders, lengths of service, and positions. Their perceptions and assessments serve as the primary basis for evaluating organizational performance. The study considers ISO certification status as the independent variable and organizational performance as the dependent variable, while demographic characteristics of respondents and office profiles, such as years with ISO certification and preparations for certification, are treated as contextual factors. Geographically, the research is limited to SDOs within the chosen region or province, and the data collection is restricted to the current academic year, reflecting the operational practices and certification status during this period.

The limitations of the study arise from several factors. First, the reliance on employee perceptions means that the findings may not fully capture all dimensions of organizational performance, such as financial outcomes or external stakeholder satisfaction. Second, the coverage is restricted to selected ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified SDOs, which limits the generalizability of the results to the entire Department of Education nationwide. Third, organizational performance is measured through survey instruments and self-reported data, which may be subject to bias or differences in interpretation. Fourth, the findings are time-bound and reflect only the situation during the period of data collection, without accounting for changes in certification status or organizational practices that may occur afterward. Finally, the study does not control for external factors such as government policies, budget allocations, or socio-economic conditions, all of which may also influence organizational performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

New Public Management. NPM emphasizes efficiency, accountability, performance measurement, managerial responsibility, and responsiveness in public organizations (Hood, 1991). Results-oriented systems encourage agencies to establish targets, monitor outputs and outcomes, and use performance information for decision-making. Empirical evidence suggests that such systems can improve organizational clarity and service delivery, although their effectiveness varies across institutional settings (Verbeeten & Speklé, 2015; Virani & van der Wal, 2023). In the Philippine public sector, these principles are reflected in performance-management and accountability mechanisms that emphasize measurable results and service standards.

Total Quality Management. TQM explains how quality and performance improvements are achieved through stakeholder focus, leadership commitment, employee involvement, process orientation, evidence-based decision-making, and continual improvement. It treats quality as an organization-wide responsibility rather than a final inspection activity. In DepEd, these principles are reflected in efforts to standardize processes, monitor performance, improve client satisfaction, and continually improve service delivery.

Quality Management System and ISO 9001. A QMS is a structured set of processes, responsibilities, procedures, and resources for achieving quality objectives. ISO 9001 provides an internationally recognized framework that institutionalizes process management, leadership, customer focus, performance evaluation, corrective action, and continual improvement. Research generally reports positive associations between ISO 9001 implementation and operational performance, but the magnitude of benefits varies with organizational context and implementation quality (To et al., 2011; Fonseca & Domingues, 2018). Certification therefore demonstrates conformity with requirements but does not, by

itself, establish that quality practices are fully embedded in organizational culture.

Organizational Performance. Organizational performance is multidimensional and context-dependent, reflecting the extent to which an organization achieves objectives and responds effectively to its operating environment (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Scott & Davis, 2015). In public education, performance encompasses not only goal achievement but also process efficiency, service quality, accountability, stakeholder participation, resource use, and continual improvement. The present study therefore assesses performance through five dimensions aligned with quality-management practice.

ISO 9001 and Organizational Performance. Evidence on ISO 9001 and organizational performance remains mixed. Some studies report improvements in quality, compliance, productivity, cost efficiency, and operational performance, while others emphasize that benefits depend on motivations, organizational capabilities, and QMS maturity (Ayyadi & Oulhadj, 2024; Demir et al., 2021; Esquivias et al., 2025; Fonseca & Domingues, 2018). These findings support examining certification as a potentially enabling structure rather than a sufficient condition for superior performance.

This distinction is relevant to DepEd because SDOs perform comparable functions under a common governance system but differ in certification status and organizational conditions. Comparing certified and non-certified SDOs can therefore identify whether formal certification corresponds with measurable performance differences and whether leadership, resources, process consistency, employee engagement, and implementation quality help explain the observed outcomes.

METHODS

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-method design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently,

analyzed separately, and integrated during interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Guetterman et al., 2021). This design enabled comparison of measurable organizational performance with participants' experiences and explanations of implementation conditions.

Research Setting. The study involved selected DepEd Schools Division Offices in Regions IV-A and IV-B, grouped according to ISO 9001 certification status. For the quantitative strand, 410 respondents were selected through stratified sampling to represent ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified SDOs.

Profile of the Respondents. The respondents for this study are both permanent and contract service personnel of the SDOs under Regions IV-A and IV-B in the Department of Education. They are largely composed of individuals in their prime working years and are permanent employees.

Table 1
Respondents' Profile

Profile Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Age	21 – 30 years old	14.69
	31 – 40 years old	31.47
	41 – 50 years old	34.27
	51 – 60 years old	16.78
	61 and above years old	2.80
Employment Status	Permanent	87.41
	Coterminous	0.00
	Contract of Service	0.70
	Job Order	11.89
	Less than a year	11.19
Length of Service	1 – 3 years	12.59
	4 – 9 years	33.57
	10 – 15 years	12.59
	16 – 20 years	9.09
	21 years and above	20.98

For the qualitative strand, purposive sampling selected participants with relevant experience and direct involvement in SDO processes (Campbell et al., 2021; Palinkas et al., 2023). Participants had to be affiliated with a participating SDO, have sufficient experience to provide informed perspectives, be willing and available to participate, and provide voluntary informed consent.

A total of 15 participants were targeted for the online qualitative questionnaire, guided by data saturation; collection continued until no new themes, insights, or relevant information emerged.

Survey Research Instrument and Data Collection. Quantitative data were collected using a 24-item structured questionnaire covering the five organizational performance dimensions and rated on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was influenced by Joyce Awour Ogoye's work on QMS implementation and organizational performance and contextualized for DepEd SDOs. Three experts reviewed the items for relevance, clarity, appropriateness, and alignment with objectives.

The survey were administered to personnel from selected ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified Schools Division Offices (SDOs). After securing the necessary permissions, the questionnaires were distributed to qualified respondents. Participation was voluntary, and all responses were treated confidentially. Completed questionnaires were retrieved, checked for completeness, and encoded for statistical analysis.

A pilot test involving 40 respondents outside the final sample yielded an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.96, indicating excellent reliability.

Qualitative Instrument and Data Collection. The qualitative strand used open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives and five performance dimensions. Questions explored organizational practices, QMS implementation, leadership, resources, stakeholder participation, improvement initiatives, and related challenges. Necessary permissions were secured, and participants were informed of the study purpose, procedures, voluntary participation, and confidentiality measures.

Quantitative Data Analysis. Descriptive statistics determined the performance levels across the five dimensions, while the Mann-Whitney U test assessed differences between ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified SDOs. The

level of significance was set at 0.05, and effect sizes were considered in interpreting the magnitude of group differences.

Qualitative Data Analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis through familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, definition and naming of themes, and report production. Repeated reading and iterative refinement were used to ensure that themes represented participants' accounts and addressed the research questions.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings. Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during interpretation through side-by-side comparison and narrative weaving. Convergence, complementarity, and divergence were examined to explain performance patterns and identify contextual conditions. The integrated evidence informed the Organizational Performance Enhancement Framework.

Ethical Considerations. The Polytechnic University of the Philippines-University Research Ethics Center approved the study under UREC 2023-1028 on October 26, 2023. Permissions were obtained from relevant DepEd authorities and participating SDOs. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was secured, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and collected data were securely stored and used solely for academic and research purposes.

RESULTS

This study examined the effect of ISO certification on sustaining organizational performance of the Department of Education, using a comparative mixed-methods approach between ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified Schools Division Offices (SDOs). Organizational performance was assessed across five determinants: management responsibility, resource management, service realization, measurement, analysis and improvement, and stakeholders' participation.

Level of Organizational Performance in the Schools Division Offices of the Department of Education. Among the five determinants shown in Table 1, Management Responsibility ranked first, with a grand mean of 4.72. Within this dimension, ensuring that clients' needs and expectations are met obtained the highest indicator mean ($M = 4.76$, Rank 1), followed by setting clear and attainable objectives and establishing clear roles and responsibilities (both $M = 4.75$, Rank 2.5). Indicators related to process-based and risk-based thinking ranked lowest ($M = 4.60$, Rank 6), though still consistently implemented. Overall, the results indicate that organizational performance across all SDOs was rated very high, with grand means for all five determinants falling within the range interpreted as consistently implemented (4.51–5.00).

Stakeholders' Participation ranked second, with a grand mean of 4.67. Both conducting stakeholder convergence and having an SOP for handling client complaints shared the highest rank ($M = 4.69$, Rank 1.5), while updating transparency boards ranked lower ($M = 4.57$, Rank 3). Resource Management ranked third, with a grand mean of 4.62.

Table 2
Mean Distribution of Respondent's Responses According to Determinants of Organizational Performance

ITEMS	MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION
Management Responsibility		
The Top Management set clear and attainable objectives/targets for the office	4.75	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management establishes clear roles and responsibilities for each employee	4.75	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management promotes the use of a process-based approach and risk-based thinking	4.60	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management advocates process improvement	4.71	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management communicates new policies, guidelines, and standards to personnel	4.74	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management ensures that the client's needs and expectations are achieved	4.76	Consistently Implemented
Grand Mean	4.72	Consistently Implemented
Resource Management		
The Top Management ensures that hired personnel are fit and qualified for the job	4.62	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management provides adequate resources that support your office performance	4.58	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management ensures a safe and conducive working environment	4.66	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management provides continuing professional development to employees	4.57	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management ensures that all employees are aware of the office operations	4.69	Consistently Implemented
Grand Mean	4.62	Consistently Implemented

Service Realization		
The process owners conduct quality assurance of processes and procedures to ensure effective and efficient delivery of services	4.57	Consistently Implemented
The process owners make sure that noncompliant outputs/services are identified, controlled, and improved before it was delivered to the clients	4.55	Consistently Implemented
The process owners ensure identification and traceability of the improvements made in the delivery of services	4.55	Consistently Implemented
The BAC Secretariat ensures that the suppliers' performance is evaluated	4.57	Consistently Implemented
Grand Mean	4.56	Consistently Implemented
Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement		
The Top Management monitors the budget utilization vis-à-vis office accomplishments every quarter	4.81	Consistently Implemented
The Internal Quality Audit (IQA) Team conducts internal quality audit at least once a year	4.41	Consistently Implemented
The Administrative Unit analyzes and reports client satisfaction rating	4.57	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management encourages research and innovations to improve service delivery	4.62	Consistently Implemented
The Top Management conducts a management review/meeting to discuss office status and performance	4.71	Consistently Implemented
The process owners conduct a risk and opportunities assessment to ensure the effectiveness of actions taken	4.48	Consistently Implemented
Grand Mean	4.60	Consistently Implemented
Stakeholders' participation		
The Top Management conducts stakeholder convergence at least once a year	4.69	Consistently Implemented
The SDO has an in-place Standard Operating Procedure to address the client's complaint	4.69	Consistently Implemented
The SDO updates its transparency seal/transparency board quarterly	4.62	Consistently Implemented
Grand Mean	4.67	Consistently Implemented
Overall Grand Mean	4.63	Consistently Implemented

Legend: "The activities are not all implemented in the SDO (1.00 – 1.50)", "The activities are seldom implemented in the SDO (1.51 – 2.50)", "The activities are occasionally implemented in the SDO (2.51 – 3.50)", "The activities are frequently implemented in the SDO (3.51 – 4.50)", "The activities are consistently implemented in the SDO (4.51 – 5.00)"

The highest-rated indicator was ensuring that employees are aware of office operations ($M = 4.69$, Rank 1), followed by ensuring a safe and conducive working environment ($M = 4.66$, Rank 2). Continuing professional development ranked lowest ($M = 4.57$, Rank 5). Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement ranked fourth, with a grand mean of 4.60. The indicator monitoring budget utilization vis-à-vis office accomplishments obtained the highest mean across all tables ($M = 4.81$, Rank 1). However, internal quality audits ranked lowest ($M = 4.41$, Rank 6), and risk and opportunities assessment also ranked relatively low ($M = 4.48$, Rank 5). Service Realization ranked lowest among the five determinants, with a grand mean of 4.56. Indicators related to handling noncompliant outputs and traceability of improvements shared the lowest rank ($M = 4.55$, Rank 1.5),

while quality assurance of processes and supplier performance evaluation ranked slightly higher ($M = 4.57$, Rank 3.5). When ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified SDOs were compared, ISO-certified offices consistently posted higher mean scores across all dimensions. Notably, ISO-certified SDOs obtained higher means in Management Responsibility ($M = 4.86$ vs. 4.62), Service Realization ($M = 4.71$ vs. 4.46), and Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement ($M = 4.80$ vs. 4.46).

Differences in Organizational Performance Between ISO-Certified and Non-ISO-Certified Offices. The statistical tests in Table 3 showed significant differences favoring ISO-certified SDOs in Management Responsibility ($p = .018$), Service Realization ($p = .031$), and Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement ($p = .004$). Effect sizes ranged from small to moderate, with the largest effect observed in Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement ($r = 0.254$). No significant difference was found in Stakeholders' Participation ($p = .248$). These results highlight the practical value of ISO certification in strengthening internal management systems and operational effectiveness, particularly in areas that require systematic monitoring and accountability.

Table 3
Mann-Whitney U Test Results on Differences in Stakeholder Assessments Across the Dimensions of Organizational Performance

	Test	Statistic	p	Effect Size	SE Effect Size
Management Responsibility	Mann-Whitney	1971.000	.018	0.196	0.099
Resource Management	Mann-Whitney	2100.500	.113	0.143	0.099
Service Realization	Mann-Whitney	1976.500	.031	0.194	0.099
Measurement	Mann-Whitney	1827.500	.004	0.254	0.099
Stakeholder's Participation	Mann-Whitney	2207.000	.248	0.100	0.099

Challenges Encountered by ISO-Certified and Non-ISO Certified Offices. The qualitative findings in Table 4 helped explain the numerical patterns. Both ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified SDOs reported challenges related to leadership transitions, unclear

accountability, manpower shortages, delayed budget releases, initiative overload, data fatigue, and difficulty sustaining stakeholder engagement. ISO-certified SDOs demonstrated more structured systems, clearer documentation, and greater awareness of quality processes. However, participants also described audit-driven practices, documentation burden, and difficulty sustaining leadership commitment between certification cycles.

Table 4
Challenges Encountered by ISO-Certified (PY) vs Non-ISO (PN) SDOs Across Five Domains

Category	Theme (Multiple per category)	Initial Codes	ISO-Certified SDOs (PY) – Participant Response Excerpt	Non-ISO SDOs (PN) – Participant Response Excerpt
A. Management Responsibility	A1. Leadership instability disrupts strategic direction	leadership shift; changing direction	PY-1: "Change of strategic directions/development plans due to leadership shift."	PN-2: "Consistent leadership commitment and leaders' priorities..." (noting weak commitment).
	A2. Weak/unclear accountability and role clarity	unclear KRAs; lack of accountability	PY-1: "no accountability... changing of roles/KRAs."	PN-3: "Some personnel do not know their KRAs to the fullest..."
	A3. Policy communication distortion and delays	cascading issues; communication delays	(limited explicit in PY responses)	PN-2: "Diverse policy interpretation, Communication delays..."
	A4. Management review becomes compliance-driven	review for compliance; weak feedback loop	(implicit; not strongly stated in PY)	PN-3: "group chat... leads to message distortion or delays... creates confusion..."
B. Resource Management	B1. Budget constraints and delays	budget delays; insufficient funds	PY-3: "rely on the budget... there's an instance of delay... limited resources/partnership..."	PN-1: "insufficient funding and limited access to technology and internet..."
	B2. Manpower shortage and competence gaps	staffing shortage; mismatch between staff qualifications and assigned roles...	PY-5: "limited training and staff shortages... mismatch between staff qualifications and assigned roles..."	PN-4: "Not enough manpower... results to inefficient delivery of services..."
	B3. Infrastructure and aging facilities	old buildings; maintenance gaps	(not strongly emphasized in PY)	PN-3: "buildings were 30 or more years old, dilapidated and undersized... overcrowding..."
	B4. ICT connectivity and technology limitations	weak internet; lack of hardware	(limited explicit in PY)	PN-5: "WiFi connectivity is more challenging..."
C. Service Realization	C1. Conflicting directives and policy misalignment	conflicting orders; unclear guidelines	PY-2: "Conflicting DepEd orders..."	PN-2: "Diverse policy interpretation..."
	C2. Process inconsistency across divisions (standardization gaps)	uneven processes; non-uniform procedures	PY-3: "standardize policy and process of each functional division... no standardized quality assurance..."	PN-6: "Lack of collaboration among functional divisions..."
	C3. Initiative overload and time pressure	overlapping activities; strict timelines	PY-2: "Too many active programs... strict timeline... reducing the quality..."	PN-4: "Time constraints due to overlapping of activities from CO/RO/SDO..."
D. Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement	D1. Data accuracy issues and reporting quality	inaccurate data; delayed reporting	(implicit; limited)	PN-1: "Data accuracy and reporting particularly at the school level..."
	D2. Weak analytics capacity	limited data skills	(implicit; limited)	PN-3: "data analytics" skills needed; PN-3: "data fatigue..."
	D3. Absence of monitoring tools / weak corrective action monitoring	no tools; weak CAPA monitoring	(not prominent in PY)	PN-2: "Absence of centralized monitoring tools... Absence of standardized monitoring on corrective actions..."
	D4. Compliance-heavy data culture ("data fatigue")	compliance reporting; duplicate systems	(not prominent in PY)	PN-3: "Office suffer from 'data fatigue'... multiple, unintegrated data collection systems... duplicate entries..."
E. Stakeholders Participation	E1. Low parental engagement and weak coordination	low participation; weak parent link	PY-1: "low parental engagement..."	PN-3: "Limited coordination with the stakeholders like the parents..."
	E2. Sustainability problems and donor fatigue	donor fatigue; sustaining involvement	PY-1: "donor's fatigue..."	PN-3: "primary challenge is how to sustain stakeholders' motivation..."
	E3. Resistance to change and communication gaps	resistance; communication gap	(limited explicit in PY)	PN-2: "Resistance to change of majority..."
	E4. Presence of supportive LGU (contextual enabling factor)	LGU support	PY-3: "The LGU are supportive also..."	PN-3: "Fortunately, our LGU is very supportive..."

Non-ISO-certified SDOs relied more on informal practices and individual initiative, resulting in uneven implementation but greater flexibility in

some cases. Across both groups, stakeholder engagement practices were largely driven by DepEd governance requirements rather than ISO certification, explaining the consistently high quantitative scores and the absence of significant differences.

Proposed Organizational Performance Enhancement Framework. Based on the quantitative and qualitative findings, the study proposes an “Organizational Performance Enhancement Framework” that positions ISO 9001 as an enabling mechanism rather than a sole determinant of performance. The framework integrates NPM and TQM principles through five key areas: strategic leadership, process standardization, resource optimization, evidence-based decision-making, and stakeholder engagement, supported by continuous monitoring and improvement.

Table 5
Institutional Leadership Continuity (addressing Theme A1)

Strategic Focus Area	Rationale	Framework Enhancement	Expected Outcome
Leadership and Governance (Management Responsibility)	Although Leadership and Governance obtained the highest quantitative rating, qualitative findings revealed recurring concerns regarding leadership instability, shifting priorities, and accountability gaps.	• Succession planning for leadership • Systems of institutional knowledge management • Transition management procedures • Document best practices and lessons learned • Routine management review and accountability tracking	The organization becomes less dependent on individual leaders and more reliant on institutionalized systems, ensuring continuity of quality management initiatives despite administrative transitions.

Table 6
Digitalization and Process Integration (addressing Themes C2 and D4 – Data Fatigue)

Strategic Focus Area	Rationale	Framework Enhancement	Expected Outcome
Process Standardization and Service Delivery; Data Management and Continuous Improvement	Findings on process inconsistencies, overlapping activities, conflicting directives, data quality issues, and reporting fatigue indicate the need for integrated digital systems and streamlined workflows.	• Integrated data management platforms • Integrated systems of planning, monitoring and reporting • Document management systems (electronic) • Automation of approval processes and workflow • Real-time performance dashboards	Digital integration reduces duplication, improves data accuracy, enhances decision-making, and promotes continuous improvement rather than compliance-oriented reporting.

Table 7
Targeted Capacity-Building and Resource Allocation (addressing Theme B2)

Strategic Focus Area	Rationale	Framework Enhancement	Expected Outcome
Resource Optimization	Despite high ratings in resource management, human resource shortages, skills gaps, and capacity limitations continue to affect implementation.	• Training programs based on competency • Develop data analytics capability • Workforce planning approach • Budgeting based on evidence • Focus on critical operational needs • Professional development focused on ICT	Resources are allocated more strategically, resulting in improved employee competence, operational efficiency, and service delivery performance.

Table 8
Community and Stakeholder Co-Ownership (addressing Themes E1 and E2)

Strategic Focus Area	Rationale	Framework Enhancement	Expected Outcome
Stakeholder Engagement and Sustainability	While stakeholder engagement structures are generally strong, sustaining participation and long-term partnerships remains a challenge.	• Participatory planning processes • Joint monitoring and evaluation • Community feedback systems • Advisory councils as institution of stakeholders • Long term agreements with LGUs and external partners	Stakeholders become active partners in organizational improvement, increasing accountability, sustainability, and shared commitment to quality outcomes.

Table 9
Implementation Plan for the Organizational Performance Enhancement Framework

Strategic Focus Area	Key Interventions / Activities	Timeline	Resources Needed	Focal Persons / Offices
A. Leadership and Governance (Addressing A1-A2)	- Conduct leadership development and continuity planning workshops - Clarify roles, KRAs, and accountability mechanisms - Establish regular management review and feedback sessions	Short-term (0-6 months) for training materials for monitoring	- Training funds - HR development materials - Facilitators/trainers	Schools Division Superintendent Assistant Schools Division Superintendent HR Development Unit
B. Resource Optimization (Addressing B1-B2)	- Improve budget planning and timely fund release processes - Conduct skills audit and capacity-building programs - Align staff competencies with assigned roles	Short- to medium-term (0-12 months)	- Budget allocation - Training programs - ICT and operational support	Finance Unit Administrative Officer HR Unit
C. Process Standardization and Service Delivery (Addressing C1-C3)	- Harmonize policies and standard operating procedures across divisions - Develop coordination mechanisms among functional units - Review and streamline overlapping programs and activities	Medium-term (6-18 months)	- Policy review committee - Process documentation tools - Coordination workshops	Planning Unit Quality Assurance Team Division Chiefs
D. Data Management and Continuous Improvement (Addressing D1-D4)	- Develop integrated data management systems - Conduct training on data analysis and reporting - Reduce duplicate reporting requirements and streamline systems	Medium- to long-term (6-24 months)	- ICT infrastructure - Data management software - Technical training support	ICT Unit Planning Office Monitoring and Evaluation Team
E. Stakeholder Engagement and Sustainability (Addressing E1-E3, E4)	- Strengthen stakeholder engagement programs (parents, LGUs, partners) - Establish regular consultation and feedback mechanisms - Develop sustainability plans for partnerships and programs	Short- to medium-term (0-12 months) Continuous for sustainability	- Communication materials - Stakeholder engagement funds - Partnership support	Public Affairs Unit Schools Division Offices LGU Partners
Monitoring and Evaluation	- Conduct regular performance assessment using five dimensions - Integrate quantitative results with qualitative feedback - Develop corrective action plans based on findings	Continuous (quarterly and annual reviews)	- Monitoring tools - Evaluation frameworks - Reporting systems	Monitoring and Evaluation Team Quality Assurance Team Top Management

These elements are expected to contribute to efficient processes, quality service delivery, accountability, stakeholder responsiveness, and sustained organizational improvement. The framework also underscores the importance of aligning organizational resources, processes, and stakeholder needs to achieve desired performance outcomes. It highlights that ISO 9001 is most effective when supported by leadership commitment and a culture of continuous improvement. The strategic focus areas are operationalized through specific framework enhancements presented in Table 5 (Institutional Leadership Continuity), Table 6 (Digitalization and Process Integration), Table 7 (Targeted Capacity-Building and Resource Allocation), and Table 8 (Community and

Stakeholder Co-Ownership), while the corresponding implementation strategies, timelines, resource requirements, and responsible offices are outlined in Table 9 (Implementation Plan for the Organizational Performance Enhancement Framework).

The proposed framework is strengthened by four cross-cutting sustainability components that operate across the five strategic focus areas. These components address persistent implementation challenges identified in the qualitative findings and ensure that quality management practices are institutionalized, integrated, and sustained over time.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that organizational performance among the participating DepEd Schools Division Offices (SDOs) was generally high across the five dimensions examined. ISO-certified SDOs obtained relatively higher ratings in Management Responsibility, Service Realization, and Measurement, Analysis, and Continuous Improvement, while Stakeholder Participation remained strong across both groups. These results are consistent with studies indicating that ISO 9001 can strengthen process standardization, management practices, and continuous improvement (Fonseca & Domingues, 2018; Ayyadi & Oulhadj, 2024). However, the comparable performance of non-certified SDOs suggests that effective governance and quality practices may also be developed outside formal certification.

Convergence of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings. Table 10 presents the convergence analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative findings indicate that Management Responsibility obtained the highest rating (M = 4.72), suggesting that leadership structures, goal setting, and role clarity are consistently implemented across SDOs. However, qualitative findings reveal deeper organizational dynamics that complicate this picture. For instance, one participant from an ISO-certified SDO noted that “change of strategic directions/development plans due to leadership shift” (PY1), while

another reported “no accountability... changing of roles/KRAs.”. Similarly, a non-ISO participant stated that “some personnel do not know their KRAs to the fullest” (PN3), reflecting gaps in role clarity.

Resource Management is also rated high (M=4.62) meaning that human and material resources are generally adequate for the operations. However, qualitative findings suggest continued constraints. One ISO respondent commented “rely on the budget... there's an instance of delay... limited resources/partnership” (PY3), whereas a non-ISO respondent highlighted “insufficient funding and limited access to technology and internet” (PN1). “Not enough manpower... results to inefficient delivery of services” (PN4) another participant added. The positive ratings on resource management are indications that the institution has the systems in place that generally support the institution's operations. But participants also noted ongoing challenges, including a lack of staff and workers who do not meet the qualifications and responsibilities of their positions.

Table 10
Convergence Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings on Organizational Performance Dimensions and ISO Certification

Performance Area	Quantitative Findings (Quant)	Qualitative Findings (Quali)	Convergence
Management Responsibility	Ranked 1st (GM = 4.72); ISO higher but weak correlation with performance	Leadership instability, unclear KRAs, compliance-driven reviews	High ratings reflect visible leadership compliance, but effectiveness is person-dependent, not system-embedded.
Resource Management	Ranked 3rd (GM = 4.62); minimal difference across groups	Manpower shortages, delayed budgets, ICT and training gaps	Strong ratings conceal operational strain; systems exist but are under-resourced.
Service Realization	Lowest ranked (GM = 4.56); ISO higher scores	Policy overlap, initiative overload, time pressure	Despite standardization, governance complexity constrains service delivery quality.
Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement	Ranked 4th; strong monitoring but weak internal audits	Data fatigue, weak analytics, compliance-focused reporting	Measurement systems support accountability but fail to drive learning and improvement.
Stakeholders' Participation	Ranked 2nd (GM = 4.67); no ISO difference	Low engagement, donor fatigue, communication gaps	Engagement is procedurally compliant but relationally weak.
ISO Certification Across Indicators	Higher scores but very weak correlation with performance	Compliance pressure, documentation burden	ISO functions as a support mechanism, not a determinant of performance.

The issues highlight the effective use of current resources, but also the role of personnel capacity and professional development constraints on overall performance. The results also suggest a tension between the desire to maintain operational efficiency and the desire to invest in long term organizational development.

The institution seems to have been able to maintain service delivery through efforts to optimize existing resources but financial, staffing and training constraints may limit opportunities for ongoing improvement. Therefore, quality improvement not only depends on the existence of systems to manage resources, but also on the institution's capacity to build capacity within its workforce and promote employee development. The findings suggest that the organization has functional resource management systems and is capable of meeting current demands; however, its long-term effectiveness is constrained by persistent structural and financial limitations.

The domain with the lowest mean score was Service Realization ($M = 4.56$), indicating a relatively weaker performance compared to the other domains. The qualitative data strongly support this pattern. These are conflicting directives and policy misalignment (C1), inconsistent processes across divisions (C2) and initiative overload and time pressure (C3). Issues like "conflicting DepEd orders" (PY2), "lack of collaboration among functional divisions" (PN6), and "overlapping activities... resulted to low performance" (PN6) were emphasized by participants.

Most participants stated that service delivery was consistent; however, operational issues such as process inconsistencies, lack of clear directives, and coordination issues between units were identified. The above concerns show inconsistency in the application of procedures or poor alignment of responsibilities and expectations which could affect the quality of services. These conditions can result in inefficiencies; more burden on employees and more difficulty in ensuring that consistent standards are maintained across service processes.

The rating for this domain was relatively high ($M = 4.60$), indicating strong monitoring and evaluation practices. However, qualitative findings reveal salient themes that suggest limitations exist. Key themes include issues of data accuracy (D1), weak analytics capacity (D2),

lack of monitoring tools (D3), and compliance-heavy data culture or "data fatigue" (D4). Participants mentioned for example "data accuracy... at school level" (PN1), "absence of centralized monitoring tools" (PN2) and "data fatigue... multiple systems, unintegrated" (PN3). Triangulation is thus a complementary relationship where quantitative strengths in monitoring are explained and qualified by qualitative themes indicative of systemic limitations.

The second is Stakeholders' Participation ($M = 4.67$) which showed that there were regular mechanisms to involve stakeholders. Qualitative findings support this but also offer several themes that add to the interpretation. The themes are poor parental engagement and poor coordination (E1), sustainability issues and donor fatigue (E2), resistance to change and communication gaps (E3), and the enabling theme of LGU support (E4). For instance, participants reported "low parental engagement" (PY1), "limited coordination between stakeholders" (PN3) and "donor's fatigue" (PY1). At the same time, participants noted that "LGU are supportive" (PY3).

The findings are aligning with the observations where strong engagement structures are moderated by contextual and sustainability challenges. The triangulation supports the system driven and context dependent nature of SDO organizational performance. ISO certification reinforces the internal structures. But over time performance is a function of dealing with thematic issues of leadership stability, resource availability, process coordination and stakeholder engagement. The integrated findings of this study suggest that the Schools Division Offices (SDOs) generally consistently implemented measures to achieve quality in organization performance, but the qualitative themes point to critical gaps that influence the depth, consistency and sustainability of these practices.

Limitations and Future Research. The study has several limitations. The use of self-reported data may introduce response bias, while the

cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation. The inclusion of selected SDOs also limits the generalizability of the findings to the wider DepEd system. Future research should therefore employ longitudinal and nationwide designs and incorporate objective indicators such as service-delivery efficiency, financial performance, client satisfaction, and audit results. Further studies may also examine the influence of leadership, organizational culture, resource capacity, employee engagement, and QMS maturity on organizational performance.

Overall, the findings affirm that sustaining organizational performance requires moving beyond certification-driven compliance toward the institutionalization of quality management as an integral part of organizational governance. Consistent with the principles of Total Quality Management and New Public Management, long-term organizational performance depends on sustained leadership commitment, employee involvement, continuous improvement, accountability, efficient resource utilization, and evidence-based decision-making. ISO certification should therefore be viewed as a strategic enabling framework that supports, rather than determines, organizational excellence.

In light of these findings, the study recommends that the Department of Education Central Office and Regional Offices strengthen institutional support for both ISO-certified and non-ISO-certified SDOs by promoting ISO-aligned quality management practices, particularly in management responsibility, service realization, and continuous improvement. Leadership accountability should be institutionalized through standardized management systems, clearly defined responsibilities, and succession mechanisms to ensure continuity beyond individual office leaders. SDOs should further strengthen internal process standardization, performance monitoring, and evidence-based decision-making while sustaining stakeholder engagement through responsive and collaborative governance mechanisms.

DISCLOSURES

Author contributions. The author solely conceived and designed the study; developed the research framework, instruments, and methodology; collected, validated, and analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data; interpreted the findings; prepared the proposed organizational performance enhancement framework; drafted, reviewed, and revised the manuscript; and approved the final version of the paper for publication. The author assumes full responsibility for the content and integrity of the work.

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