Original Research Article

Sustaining Small Non-Sectarian High Schools: Innovation, Resources, and Community

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ABSTRACT

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| Sustaining quality education in small non-sectarian high schools presents ongoing challenges due to limited resources, infrastructural constraints, and evolving educational demands. Despite these realities, there remains a gap in understanding how such schools maintain instructional effectivenes and institutional viability through innovation and collaboration. This study explored the level of sustainability of small non-sectarian high schools in Kiblawan, Davao del Sur, focusing on innovative teaching strategies, resource management, and community involvement. Employing a qualitative phenomenological research design, the study gathered data through in-depth interviews with secondary school teachers and analyzed responses thematically. Findings revealed that teachers adopt holistic and adaptive teaching approaches to meet students' diverse learning needs. These include the use of multimedia tools, learner-centered strategies, collaborative projects, role-playing, and formative assessments that cultivate active engagement and support responsive learning environments. In the context of resource management, educators demonstrate innovative and collaborative practices, such as repurposing materials, sharing instructional tools, and leveraging partnerships with parents, local businesses, and external organizations to supplement limited school resources. Furthermore, community involvement emerged as a critical factor in sustaining educational delivery. Teachers actively engage barangays, local government units, and non-governmental organizations in school initiatives, strengthening support networks through transparent communication and stakeholder collaboration. The study also identified the need for comprehensive support systems, emphasizing financial assistance, access to technology, continuous professional development, and wellness programs to enhance teacher capacity and school sustainability. These findings underscore the importance of context-responsive strategies and community synergy in sustaining small non-sectarian high schools. Insights from this study may inform policies and practices aimed at improving educational resilience, particularly in resource-constrained academic environments. |

*Keywords:* innovative teaching strategies; sustainable education; resources management; community involvement; non-sectarian high schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Small non-religious high schools are vital for providing access to quality education, especially in rural and marginalized regions. These schools, known for their limited number of students and tight communities, offer distinct chances for individualized education, nurturing robust connections among teachers, learners, and their families. Nonetheless, maintaining these schools amid contemporary challenges necessitates tackling problems like insufficient funding, poor facilities, and the demand for creative teaching methods and strong community collaborations.

Worldwide, small schools are acknowledged for their capability to foster inclusive settings that enhance academic achievement and social growth. Studies indicate that smaller schools frequently excel in student engagement and achievement because they can offer personalized instruction and create a nurturing learning environment (Giambona & Porcu, 2018)). Nonetheless, sustainability continues to be a challenge, especially in low-income nations, where scarce resources, underqualified educators, and elevated dropout rates hinder the success of small educational establishments (UNESCO, 2022). Programs like UNESCO’s

Reimagining Education for a Sustainable Future highlight the significance of investing in small schools to promote fair access to education (UNESCO, 2021). Likewise, global examples from Finland and New Zealand have shown the effectiveness of community-focused schools and innovative teaching methods in improving the sustainability of smaller institutions (Sahlberg, 2015).

In the Philippine setting, small non-sectarian high schools play a crucial role in providing educational access, particularly in rural regions where bigger schools are impractical. Even though these schools play a vital role, they encounter major obstacles, such as inadequate resources, decreasing enrollment numbers, and restricted professional development options for educators (Department of Education, 2022). Initiatives such as the Enhanced Basic Education Program (K-12) have sought to tackle some of these challenges, yet numerous small schools still depend significantly on local government backing and community participation to enhance their scarce resources. A study conducted by Oracion (2014) emphasized the significance of community involvement in maintaining the sustainability of small schools in rural regions of the Philippines. Moreover, creative teaching methods, including differentiated instruction and contextualized learning, are essential to meet the varied needs of students in these environments (Llego, 2020).

Despite these initiatives, a significant gap persists in research regarding the strategies and practices that support small non-sectarian high schools, especially in the Kiblawan District. Although current research has examined the difficulties encountered by small schools, there has been limited focus on the interplay between teaching innovation, resource management, and community engagement. This research intended to fill this gap by examining the strategies used by teachers to improve student learning outcomes, manage limited resources, and engage community to support the educational goals and sustainability of small non–sectarian high schools. Additionally, it aimed to determine the support structures necessary for educators to maintain quality education in these schools. The results were anticipated to aid in policy formulation and capacity-building efforts to guarantee the ongoing sustainability of small non-sectarian high schools.

**2. METHODOLOGY**

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design using the phenomenological approach to explore and understand the lived experiences of teachers in the Kiblawan District concerning sustainable innovative teaching. Rooted in the ideas of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960), this approach emphasized understanding individuals' subjective experiences and interpreting their meanings within the context of their social and cultural backgrounds. Gadamer viewed hermeneutics not merely as a methodological tool, but as a philosophical lens through which human experiences are deeply understood.

2.2 Research Respondents

The participants of this study were teachers from small non-sectarian high schools located in the North District of Kiblawan, under the Division of Davao del Sur. Out of the total population of 32 teachers, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select 10 participants, five from Serapion C. Basalo Memorial College Incorporated and five from Cogon Bacaca High School of Kiblawan Incorporated. The selection of participants was guided by specific criteria to ensure the relevance and richness of the data collected. Teachers included in the study were those currently employed in the identified schools, with at least one year of teaching experience. They were actively involved in classroom instruction and in initiatives related to innovative teaching strategies, resource management, or community engagement. Moreover, they demonstrated willingness to participate and provided informed consent for the interviews.

2.3 Research Instrument

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data referred to original data collected first hand by the researcher for the purpose of the study. In this study, primary data were collected through in-person interviews with the participants using Interview Guide Protocol (IGP). The IGP was a structured set of questions that guide the interviewer and insure that the same information is gathered from each participant. According to Fontana and Frey (2005), primary data collection is essential in qualitative research because it allows for the exploration of complex and nuanced topics-in- depth, providing a rich source data.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher followed a systematic process to ensure the collection of reliable and meaningful data for the study:First, an official communication letter was sent to the identified schools to formally request permission for the participation of selected teachers in the research. This letter also explained the purpose of the study and sought the participants’ willingness to be interviewed and to share their current experiences related to sustainable and innovative teaching. Second, upon receiving approval and positive responses, the researcher personally visited the schools and met with the participants in their respective offices. Individual interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. The sessions were documented through audio recording and note-taking to ensure accuracy and completeness of the responses. Finally, the data gathered from the interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted to identify emerging patterns and significant themes. These themes served as the basis for the presentation of findings and discussions in the succeeding chapters of the study..

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected in this study were subjected to a series of statistical procedures to ensure comprehensive analysis and accurate interpretation. First, descriptive statistics, including the calculation of mean and standard deviation, were employed to describe the levels of emotional intelligence and instructional efficacy among the respondents. This provided a clear overview of the central tendencies and variability within the data.

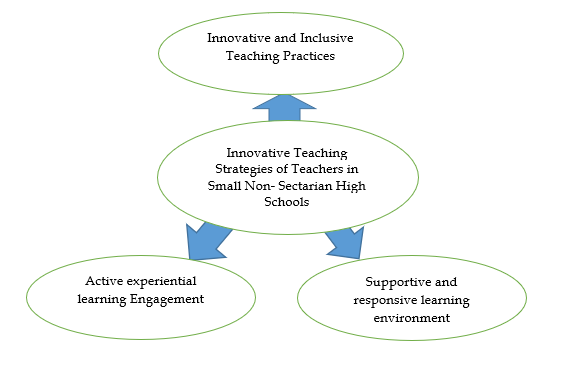
Next, correlation analysis using the Pearson r was conducted to determine the significance of the relationship between emotional intelligence and instructional efficacy. This statistical method was chosen to identify and quantify the strength and direction of the association between the two variables.

Finally, all computations were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Utilizing SPSS ensured the accuracy and reliability of the analysis, facilitating precise statistical calculations and enhancing the overall integrity of the research findings.

3. results and discussion

**3.1 Innovative Teaching Strategies of Teachers in Small Non- Sectarian High Schools**

Regarding the innovative teaching strategies of teachers in small non-sectarian high schools, the qualitative data yielded three key themes: (1) Innovative and Inclusive Teaching Practices, (2) Active and Experiential Learning Engagement, and (3) Supportive and Responsive Learning Environment. These dimensions are detailed below and supported by direct participant accounts and scholarly literature. Figure 1 shows the thematic figure on the innovative teaching strategies utilized by teachers in small no-sectarian high schools.



**Figure 1.** Thematic Figure on the Innovative Teaching Strategies of Teachers

**3.1.1 Innovative and Inclusive Teaching Practices**

In today’s rapidly evolving educational landscape, innovation and inclusivity are essential, particularly in small non-sectarian high schools. The study revealed that teachers deliberately incorporate various technological and multimedia tools to tailor instruction to contemporary learning needs. Their strategies extend beyond simply using technology; they foster an inclusive environment by respecting diverse student backgrounds and designing student-centered lessons that cater to individual interests, needs, and abilities.

Teachers in small non-sectarian high schools deliberately integrate various multimedia and digital tools in their lessons to ensure relevance and engagement. This practice demonstrates a conscious effort to modernize instruction and to cater to learners’ diverse contexts. Beyond technological adoption, these educators also embrace inclusivity by considering students' individual differences and cultural backgrounds in lesson planning.

As participants shared:

*“I use different methods in teaching like PowerPoint presentations, videos, and educational TV clips to help explain the lessons better.” – PST1*

*“Since students have different learning styles, I combine visual aids, storytelling, and digital resources to make my lessons more effective.” – PST5*

*“I adjust my approach depending on the needs of my students. I make sure that the lesson is inclusive and easy for everyone to understand, regardless of their religion or background.” – PST6*

Harrison (2022) emphasized that the integration of technology and inclusive practices supports not only student learning but also institutional sustainability. By embracing innovation, small non-sectarian high schools are able to distinguish themselves and remain relevant in the ever-evolving educational landscape. Teachers’ proficiency with digital tools and multimedia enhances interactivity, accessibility, and engagement in the classroom, positioning learners to thrive in a tech-driven society.

**3.1.2 Active and Experiential Learning Engagement**

Active and experiential learning places students at the center of their educational journey, enabling them to construct knowledge through real-world tasks and reflective engagement. This learner-centered approach involves collaboration, problem-solving, hands-on experiences, and purposeful discussions that stimulate creativity, enhance understanding, and promote higher-order thinking skills.

Teachers affirmed their use of interactive strategies to foster deeper learning and to encourage students to become active participants in the learning process:

“*I always encourage students to work in groups and conduct peer discussions so they can learn from each other.” – PST2*

*“I assign them projects and also facilitate role-playing activities so they can better understand the topics through application.” – PST4*

*“Our activities include problem-solving scenarios and reflective tasks where students present their outputs in creative formats.” – PST7*

These teaching practices align with the findings of Johnson et al. (2024), who emphasized that cooperative learning strengthens students’ teamwork, communication, and analytical thinking. This is particularly advantageous in small school settings, where close teacher-student relationships allow for more personalized facilitation of group-based learning. Additionally, experiential learning provides students with opportunities to apply concepts in meaningful ways, reinforcing retention and motivation. Zackariasson (2020) further supported these approaches by highlighting the role of scaffolded learning in helping students build independence. Through structured guidance such as prompts and cues—teachers can gradually reduce support as students gain confidence in managing complex tasks on their own. In the context of small non-sectarian high schools, where resources may be limited, these strategies offer powerful, cost-effective means to foster student engagement and sustained academic growth.

By incorporating active and experiential learning strategies, teachers not only make lessons more dynamic and relevant but also empower students to take ownership of their learning, laying a strong foundation for lifelong inquiry and adaptability.

**3.1.3 Supportive and Responsive Learning Environment**

A supportive and responsive learning environment is vital in small non-sectarian high schools, where teachers consistently offer formative assessments, personalized assistance, and flexible strategies to help students feel secure, valued, and academically capable. This environment is characterized by scaffolding techniques, encouragement of open communication, and tailored reinforcement activities to accommodate varying learning needs.

Participants highlighted various ways they cultivate this environment in their classrooms:

*“I conduct oral recitations and give short quizzes to reinforce what we discussed.” – PST3*

*“When students don’t understand the lesson, I give clues or examples to help them get the idea without giving the answer right away.” – PST8*

*“I always make time for students to ask questions. I also provide additional activities for those who struggle so they can catch up.” – PST9*

These strategies reflect the essence of scaffolded learning, which gradually builds student independence through guided support. As Zackariasson and Magnusson (2024) explained, scaffolding helps learners develop competence and confidence by offering cues, prompts, or structured assistance at critical learning moments. Such support allows students to progress effectively without feeling overwhelmed.

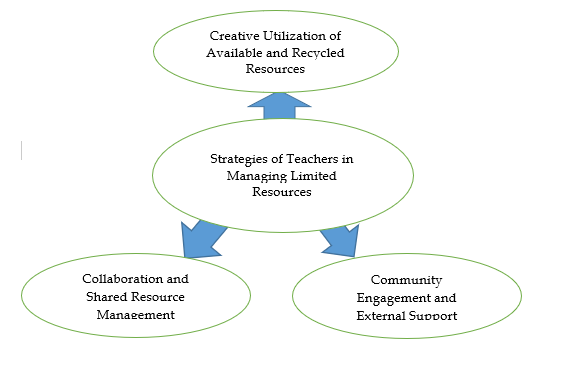
Moreover, many teachers incorporate inquiry-based learning (IBL) approaches to further support student engagement and self-directed discovery. Buchanan et al. (2016) emphasized that IBL fosters curiosity and real-life problem-solving skills, which are particularly beneficial in low-resource educational contexts. By encouraging students to explore topics that interest them, teachers not only build essential academic skills but also promote long-term intellectual growth. Ultimately, fostering a supportive and responsive classroom climate enables students to take risks in their learning, ask questions freely, and persist through challenges—key elements for holistic academic development in small, inclusive school settings.

**3.2 Strategies of Teachers in Managing Limited Resources in Small Non- Sectarian High Schools**

Effective teacher resource management is essential to academic performance, especially in small, non-sectarian high schools with limited human and material resources. Unlike larger or better-funded institutions, these schools face unique challenges in maximizing teacher deployment, instructional delivery, and the overall teaching-learning process. Non-sectarian schools, which operate independently of religious affiliations, are often driven by principles of inclusivity, diversity, and academic freedom. However, their smaller size and modest budgets demand that teachers take on multiple roles and engage in creative, context-based solutions to sustain learning quality.

Teachers in these schools often rely on grassroots efforts, repurposing available resources, and forming collaborative arrangements to manage daily instructional needs. They tap into community goodwill, pursue external partnerships, and cultivate a shared culture of resourcefulness. These localized and sustainable practices ensure the continuity of education even in resource-constrained environments.

From the qualitative data, three themes emerged, each reflecting the adaptive strategies of teachers in managing limited resources: Creative Utilization of Available and Recycled Resources, Collaboration and Shared Resource Management, and Community Engagement and External Support. These themes illustrate how teachers transform limitations into opportunities through innovation, teamwork, and outreach. Shown in Figure 2 is the thematic figure showing strategic management of teachers in managing limited resources in small non-sectarian high schools.



**Figure 2.** Thematic Figure on the Strategic Management of Teachers in Managing Limited Resources

in Small Non-Sectarian High Schools.

**3.2.1 Creative Utilization of Available and Recycled Resources**

In small non-sectarian high schools where financial and material limitations persist, teachers demonstrate ingenuity by repurposing available and recycled materials into valuable instructional tools. Instead of relying on new or costly resources, they make creative use of discarded items such as old manila paper, plastic bottles, and used cartons—to produce teaching aids and facilitate student outputs. This practice not only fosters sustainability but also promotes cost-efficiency, allowing educators to deliver quality education despite budgetary constraints.

Participants described how they innovatively use recyclable materials in their teaching:

*“I use unused papers, old manila paper, and other items that can still be repurposed to create visual aids, so we don’t have to spend money.” – PST4*

*“When students need to make a project, I let them use recycled materials like plastic bottles or empty cartons that are no longer in use.” – PST6*

*“We just use whatever materials are available instead of buying new ones. It helps save money and still meets our needs.” – PST1*

This practice aligns with global movements toward sustainable education. Istance and Paniagua (2019) emphasized the value of Open Educational Resources (OER), which empower educators to design context-appropriate materials while reducing costs. These strategies are especially critical in low-resource environments where teachers must be both creative and resourceful. Through the use of recyclable materials, educators model environmental responsibility, problem-solving, and adaptability which are important life skills that benefit students beyond the classroom.

**3.2.2 Collaboration and Shared Resource Management**

In resource-constrained learning environments, collaboration and shared resource management become vital strategies for sustaining quality education. Teachers in small non-sectarian schools often face limitations in instructional materials, equipment, and facilities. To address these challenges, they work collectively to share available tools, rotate equipment use, and support one another through peer assistance. This sense of community among teachers fosters efficiency, reduces individual burden, and enhances the overall learning experience for students.

*Participants shared how collaboration helps them overcome resource limitations:*

*“As teachers, we help each other out and share resources.” – PST9*

*“We take turns using the projector or laptop so everyone gets a chance to integrate technology into their lessons.” – PST5*

*“When I don’t have a particular material, I ask my co-teachers if I can borrow. We always support each other that way.” – PST7*

Research supports this practice as an effective model for professional support and resource optimization. Van den Hurk et al. (2016) and Lakkala et al. (2021) emphasized that collaboration among teachers through sharing lesson plans, instructional strategies, and classroom materials, strengthens teaching quality and builds a supportive learning environment. In schools with limited access to educational tools, collective resource use ensures that students still benefit from a variety of teaching methods and enriched content. Ultimately, shared resource management fosters a collegial culture where both students and teachers thrive despite constraints.

**3.2.3 Community Engagement and External Support**

In resource-limited school settings, teachers frequently go beyond the confines of their classrooms to seek assistance from administrators, local communities, and external organizations. Engaging school leadership is essential for initiating proposals, advocating for necessary resources, and applying for grants. These partnerships help address deficits in educational tools, particularly in technology and infrastructure. Beyond institutional efforts, many educators also reach out to local businesses and civil society groups to secure donations or material support to enhance the learning environment.

Participants emphasized the importance of such community involvement in alleviating school shortages:

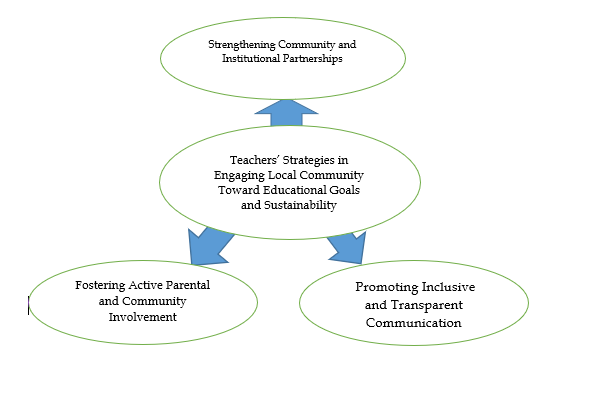
*“Due to the shortage of computers in our school, we reached out to a company for assistance. They responded by donating computers, which has been a tremendous help for the students, especially in enabling them to conduct research and improve their digital skills.” – PST8*

*“Parents and community volunteers are consistently supportive of school initiatives. Whenever there are shortages in materials or classroom resources, they are ready to contribute, whether through financial assistance or in-kind support.” – PST4*

*“Community members often step in to help not only by donating resources but also by volunteering their time and expertise whenever the school is in need. Their involvement significantly lightens our load and strengthens the support system for learners.” – PST2*

These insights illustrate how collaboration with community stakeholders can bridge gaps in public education, especially in under-resourced schools. As noted by Epstein et al. (2018), meaningful engagement with families and community members strengthens school programs, enhances student outcomes, and fosters a more inclusive educational environment. When teachers, parents, and external partners work together, they cultivate a holistic support system that uplifts both academic performance and overall school sustainability.

**3.3 Teachers’ Strategies in Engaging Local Community Toward Educational Goals and Sustainability**

Educational sustainability is defined by UNESCO (2020) as the ability of the education system to meet present and future learning needs, which relies on strong ties between schools, families, and local institutions. In such contexts, teachers serve as strategic facilitators of stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the school becomes a shared space for development, learning, and community transformation. As shown in Figure 3, three main themes emerged: (1) Strengthening Community and Institutional Partnerships, (2) Fostering Active Parental and Community Involvement, and (3) Promoting Inclusive and Transparent Communication. These themes reflect how teachers in small non-sectarian schools co-create educational solutions that are responsive, inclusive, and rooted in local realities.

**Figure 3.** Thematic Figure on Teachers’ Strategies in Engaging Local Community

Toward Educational Goals and Sustainability

**3.3.1 Strengthening Community and Institutional Partnerships**

Teachers in small non-sectarian high schools proactively establish strategic partnerships with local government units (LGUs), barangay councils, and non-government organizations (NGOs) to supplement limited school resources and enhance educational programming. These collaborations do not only provide immediate assistance such as materials, sports equipment, and scholarship opportunities, but also build a sustainable support network that the school can continually rely on. In resource-constrained contexts, these partnerships serve as lifelines that enable schools to thrive despite financial limitations

Teachers shared how their coordination efforts led to direct institutional support:

*“The teachers coordinated with the barangay and NGOs, which provided a budget for trainings, like for volleyball sports.” – PST4*

*“They provide donations and school supplies, especially scholarships, which are really helpful for our students.” – PST2*

*“We reach out to LGUs and organizations so we can have support not just for events but also for things the school lacks, like chairs or projectors.” – PST1*

Such inter-institutional relationships demonstrate how teachers extend their leadership beyond the classroom, acting as advocates and mobilizers of community resources. As noted by Qin (2025), school-community partnerships significantly enhance students’ access to educational tools, extracurricular opportunities, and equitable learning conditions. More importantly, when schools involve external institutions as long-term stakeholders, they not only gain access to resources but also cultivate shared ownership of educational outcomes. This co-responsibility strengthens the sustainability and legitimacy of school initiatives.

**3.3.2 Fostering Active Parental and Community Involvement**

In these small schools, parental and community participation goes beyond compliance with institutional requirements—it becomes embedded in the school's operational framework. Teachers intentionally cultivate a culture of collective action, inviting parents and community members to engage in various school activities such as beautification drives, minor infrastructure repairs, and co-curricular events. Parental involvement becomes essential to the school’s physical upkeep, student motivation, and overall school climate.

Teachers shared a simple yet meaningful strategies on how they involved parents in school:

*“Right now, we have a new flowerpot box because the parents initiated a solicitation drive. It’s really touching that this was made possible through their efforts.” – PST6*

*“At the start of classes, we invited the parents and barangay officials to help with Brigada Eskwela and other school activities.” – PST5*

*“Some parents help with carpentry, painting, or gardening, especially when we need classroom repairs. They don’t get paid—they just want to help.” – PST3*

These anecdotes highlight the school’s transformation into a shared community space, co-maintained by those it serves. According to Epstein (2018), active family-school collaboration is positively associated with academic performance and improved school morale. In underserved contexts, this engagement also fosters a culture of mutual accountability and empowerment. By creating opportunities for families to contribute meaningfully, teachers not only build social capital but also reinforce the message that education is a communal endeavor.

**3.3.3 Promoting Inclusive and Transparent Communication**

Effective communication lies at the heart of successful school-community partnerships. Teachers adopt various communication strategies—including mobile messaging, social media groups, and virtual orientations—to keep stakeholders informed and involved. These methods ensure that logistical constraints, such as distance or busy schedules, do not prevent stakeholders from participating in important school activities.

Teachers shared their ways on communicating to the community:

*“Through text and chat, I let them know about important meetings. If some parents or barangay officials can’t attend, I hold the meeting online for them.” – PST5*

*“We explain the purpose of our programs so they can really understand. We conduct orientations for both parents and barangay officials.” – PST6*

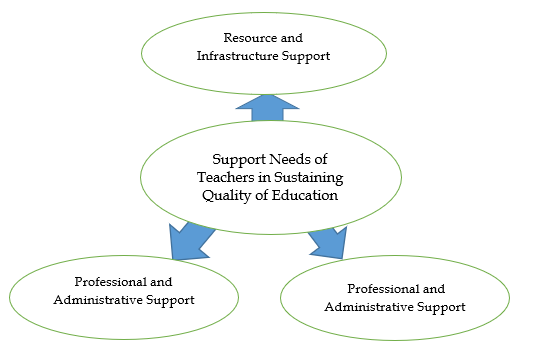
*“We organize seminars, livelihood trainings, and other activities in coordination with the barangay. We always inform them clearly and in advance.” – PST1*

These practices exemplify the principles of transparency and inclusiveness in school governance. Jeynes (2020) argued that consistent and clear communication enhances parental engagement, builds trust, and ensures that educational initiatives reflect shared community values. By leveraging accessible and flexible communication tools, teachers in small schools not only facilitate stakeholder participation but also promote democratic school practices. Such inclusivity is essential to the long-term viability of school-community partnerships.

In summary, teachers in small non-sectarian high schools play a multifaceted role as facilitators of community engagement and co-creators of educational sustainability. They strengthen institutional linkages, foster parental and civic involvement, and maintain open communication channels to ensure alignment between the school and its stakeholders. These strategies are not only reactive to material shortages but are proactive efforts to embed education within the fabric of the local community. As supported by Armstrong (2015), Epstein (2018), and Jeynes (2020), effective partnerships and communication are essential pillars of inclusive and sustainable education. The experiences of the teacher participants affirm that when communities and schools unite in purpose, they collectively build resilient educational ecosystems capable of thriving amid challenges.

**3.4 Support Needs of Teachers in Sustaining Quality of Education in Small Non-Sectarian High Schools**

Teachers in small, non-sectarian high schools face complex challenges in delivering quality education amidst limited resources, shifting educational priorities, and heightened student needs. As modern education emphasizes learner-centered approaches, technological integration, and holistic student support, the demand on teachers extends beyond instruction to include curriculum innovation, psychosocial engagement, and administrative multitasking. This study reveals three emerging themes: Resource and Infrastructure Support, Professional and Administrative Support, and Community and Parental Collaboration (Figure 4). These categories reflect the multifaceted support teachers require to sustain effective and inclusive educational delivery in under-resourced school environments.



**Figure 4.** Thematic Matrix on the Support Needs of Teachers in Sustaining Quality of Education

in Small Non-Sectarian High Schools

**3.4.1 Resource and Infrastructure Support**

The availability of reliable resources and infrastructure is fundamental to sustaining effective teaching and learning. In small, non-sectarian schools, where funding and facilities are often limited, access to instructional materials, digital tools, and physical amenities becomes even more critical. Teachers emphasized the importance of sufficient financial and material support in enabling day-to-day instruction.

Participants highlighted:

*“We receive enough support in terms of funding and materials like books and other supplies.” – PST8*

*“There is access to online resources through computers and internet connection, so students can learn and do research.” – PST1*

*“It would really help to have a projector or printer available in school, especially for visual and printed lessons.” – PST3*

These responses underline the indispensable role of both traditional materials and digital resources in achieving educational objectives. However, the challenges of budgetary constraints and insufficient infrastructure persist. As Muliati et al. (2022) argued, targeted investments in educational resources including updated teaching aids and digital platforms, can greatly improve pedagogical effectiveness, especially in marginalized contexts. Harris (2023) further pointed out that due to staff shortages in small schools, teachers often assume multiple roles, intensifying the demand for logistical and instructional support.

Therefore, strengthening infrastructure and ensuring access to learning tools is not a luxury but a necessity. Investments must prioritize both immediate classroom needs and long-term sustainability. A well-equipped learning environment enhances not only instructional delivery but also student engagement, academic performance, and teacher morale.

**3.4.2 Professional and Administrative Support**

Teachers thrive when supported by ongoing professional development and strong administrative leadership. In the context of small schools, where teachers often juggle diverse roles, structured support systems are vital to maintain instructional quality, teacher motivation, and psychological resilience.

Participant described the benefits of continuing education:

*“We have regular seminars, workshops, and training sessions to enhance our knowledge and skills.” – PST9*

*“It really helps when the principal checks in with us, asks how we’re doing, and listens to our concerns.” – PST2*

*“When we meet as a team to share strategies, it feels like we’re not alone. It helps us teach better and feel less stressed.” – PST6*

These insights echo the findings of Adams (2022) and Tondeur (2018) who affirmed that peer mentorship, collaborative learning communities, and regular professional development alleviate teacher stress and improve instructional quality. Likewise, Balyer et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of administrative support in ensuring that teachers feel valued and empowered, especially when faced with the demands of inclusive education and student mental health needs.

Without adequate professional and administrative backing, teacher burnout becomes a real risk, particularly in isolated or underfunded schools. Thus, institutional efforts should prioritize a culture of care, capacity-building, and shared leadership to ensure teacher retention, satisfaction, and performance.

**3.4.3 Community and Parental Collaboration**

Partnerships with families and communities form a cornerstone of resilient and inclusive educational systems. In small non-sectarian schools, these collaborations are especially significant due to the limited manpower and resources available within the school alone. Teachers often depend on parents and community stakeholders not only for moral support but also for tangible contributions to school operations and student programs.

Participants shared the collaborative atmosphere they had:

*“There’s active participation from parents and the community in school activities, and they also help by sharing resources.” – PST4*

*“Parents and community members really show up during programs like Brigada Eskwela or clean-up drives. Their support means a lot.” – PST5*

*“We can’t do it all as teachers. The help we get from barangay officials and parents—like for feeding programs or supplies—makes a big difference.” – PST1*

These narratives reflect a strong sense of shared responsibility in the educational process. As Jeynes (2020) stated, inclusive school-community collaboration improves trust, parental engagement, and student outcomes. Moreover, Epstein (2018) found that meaningful family-school partnerships lead to better attendance, behavior, and academic achievement. However, these partnerships do not emerge spontaneously. They must be cultivated through transparent communication, mutual respect, and active outreach.

Community collaboration thus acts as a buffer against institutional limitations, creating a more holistic and supportive learning environment. By recognizing parents and community members as co-educators, schools extend their capacity to nurture student success and foster educational equity.

The findings clearly reveal that teachers in small non-sectarian high schools require multi-dimensional support systems to sustain quality education. This includes ensuring access to essential learning resources and infrastructure, providing structured professional and administrative support, and cultivating active community and parental engagement. As emphasized by Balyer et al. (2017), Jeynes (2020), and Epstein (2018), such comprehensive support not only elevates teaching effectiveness but also promotes teacher well-being and student development. Addressing these needs holistically empowers educators to overcome structural limitations, adapt to evolving pedagogical demands, and foster inclusive, high-performing learning environments. Consequently, education stakeholders—from local administrators to national policymakers—must prioritize these areas to ensure that small schools are not only surviving but thriving.

**4.0 CONCLUSION**

Teachers in small non-sectarian high schools demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability in sustaining educational quality despite persistent limitations in resources and infrastructure. This study revealed that their instructional strategies are grounded in Holistic and Adaptive Teaching Approaches, encompassing three interconnected domains: Innovative and Inclusive Teaching Practices, Active and Experiential Learning Engagement, and Supportive and Responsive Learning Environments. These practices allow educators to respond effectively to students' diverse academic and socio-emotional needs by incorporating multimedia tools, learner-centered methods, performance-based tasks, and individualized guidance.

In the face of limited material and financial resources, teachers employ Innovative Resource Management strategies. These include the creative reuse of recyclable materials, collaborative sharing of teaching tools among colleagues, and mobilization of community support. Their ability to navigate resource scarcity highlights the importance of teacher ingenuity and the value of grassroots-level partnerships with parents, local businesses, and non-governmental organizations. These adaptive mechanisms not only mitigate funding gaps but also foster a sense of shared responsibility for educational outcomes.

The role of Community Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement also emerged as a cornerstone in sustaining quality education. Teachers actively cultivate partnerships with barangays, local government units, NGOs, and parents to secure both material and moral support. Through inclusive communication and participatory school initiatives, they strengthen the link between the school and its surrounding community. Such engagement enhances school operations, enriches student learning environments, and promotes social cohesion.

Furthermore, sustaining educational quality in these contexts depends on the presence of Comprehensive Support Systems that address teacher needs across several dimensions. These include adequate financial and material provisions, access to digital infrastructure, ongoing professional development, administrative encouragement, and community collaboration. When these supports are effectively implemented, they contribute to a positive learning climate, boost teacher well-being, and improve educational delivery.

**COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:**

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE):**

Authors hereby declare that generative AI technologies, such as Large Language Models, were used during the writing or editing of manuscripts. The details of data usage are provided below:

1. AI tool used: ChatGPT (GPT-4o), developed by OpenAI.
2. Purpose of Use: Assisted with revising specific sections of the manuscript, including the title and abstract.
3. Input prompts provided: Prompts focused on improving clarity, grammar, style and conciseness of content.

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