

# Coping with Constraints: School Administrators' Lived Experiences in Managing MOOE Funds

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## Abstract

Managing school funds is a crucial responsibility that directly affects the day-to-day operations of public schools. In the Philippines, the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) fund is essential for enabling schools to function efficiently. This study explored the lived experiences of public-school administrators in Glan District 4, Sarangani Province, focusing on the challenges they face, their coping strategies, and the insights they have gained in managing MOOE. Using a qualitative research design grounded in phenomenology, the study involved in-depth interviews with selected school heads who have been actively involved in MOOE administration. Thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke's framework, was used to examine the data. Findings revealed that school administrators encounter a range of financial and operational challenges, including delays in fund releases, limited training, bureaucratic restrictions, and conflicting demands from stakeholders. Despite these, they adopted coping strategies such as transparency, prioritization of urgent needs, collaboration with stakeholders, and resourcefulness. The study also uncovered valuable insights, including the need for more financial management training, clearer policy guidelines, and sustained support from local and national agencies. These results highlight the realities of school-level fund management and provide a deeper understanding of how educational leaders adapt to financial constraints while remaining committed to school improvement. The study calls for stronger institutional support and continuous capacity-building efforts to empower school administrators in navigating the complexities of fund management

Keywords: Resiliency; MOOE fund management; school administrators; lived experiences; public education; qualitative research; financial challenges

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

In public schools across the Philippines, principals and school heads play a crucial role not only in providing academic leadership but also in ensuring that daily operations run smoothly. A key part of this responsibility involves managing the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) fund—a financial lifeline meant to support a school's basic needs, such as utilities, instructional materials, minor repairs, and even emergency expenses. For many administrators, however, managing this fund is not as straightforward as it seems.

In this light, the role of school leaders in managing MOOE becomes more than just a technical responsibility—it becomes a test of their

leadership, decision-making, and accountability. Their ability to effectively manage school finances directly affects the quality of education services, making fund management a critical dimension of educational leadership. Understanding their experiences provides insight not only into the challenges they face but also into the innovative practices, they develop to cope with them.

The legal frameworks provided by DepEd Orders No. 13, s. 2016, and No. 8, s. 2019, outline the responsibilities and guidelines for MOOE utilization. However, statistical data from COA audits reveal significant challenges, including delayed fund releases, procurement issues, and underutilization of allocated funds. These challenges underscore the difficulties faced by school leaders in resource-constrained areas like Glan District 4 of Sarangani Province.

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of public-school administrators in managing the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) funds in Glan District 4, Sarangani Province. It seeks to understand the real challenges they encounter in fulfilling their financial responsibilities, as well as the strategies they use to overcome these difficulties. It also intends to gather insights and reflections that these school leaders have developed through their experiences. By capturing their voices and perspectives, this research hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of how MOOE funds are managed at the school level, and how this process can be improved to better support educational outcomes.

### Theoretical Framework

This study employs a multifaceted theoretical framework to examine the challenges and strategies involved in managing Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) in public schools. **Resource Dependence Theory (RDT)** explains how schools, dependent on external funding, adapt strategies to cope with financial constraints and optimize limited resources. Complementing this, **Contingency Theory** asserts that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, emphasizing the importance of adapting management practices based on contextual factors such as location, size, and student population.

The **Theory of Public Accountability** highlights the obligation of administrators to manage public funds transparently and responsibly, particularly in prioritizing expenditures and addressing regional disparities. **Stewardship Theory** supports the idea that administrators, when entrusted with responsibility, act in the long-term interests of their schools, focusing on sustainability over short-term fixes. However, contrasting perspectives like Agency Theory suggest that without proper oversight, administrators may act out of self-interest rather than for the school's benefit.

Similarly, **Bureaucratic Management Theory** presents a tension with Contingency Theory by emphasizing rigid structures that may hinder flexible and context-sensitive decision-making. Altogether, these theories provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how school

administrators navigate the complexities of MOOE management, balancing accountability, adaptability, and strategic planning.

### Statement of the Problem

This study adopted a qualitative approach to delve deeply into the lived experiences of public-school administrators, exploring their challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights to improve MOOE management.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of public-school administrators in managing MOOE funds?
2. What challenges do public school administrators encounter in the management of MOOE funds?
3. How do public school administrators cope with the challenges of managing MOOE funds?
4. What insights and recommendations can be proposed based on the experiences of public-school administrators?

### Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides valuable insights into the challenges and strategies in managing MOOE funds in public schools, aiming to improve financial practices and the overall quality of education in the Philippines.

For the **Department of Education (DepEd)**, the findings can enhance budgeting systems, inform policy improvements, and support training programs for school administrators.

**School administrators** benefit by learning best practices in resource management, promoting strategic planning and accountability.

**Teachers** gain a better understanding of how financial decisions impact classroom conditions, encouraging collaboration with administrators for improved resource use.

**Students**, as the ultimate beneficiaries, experience improved learning environments through better-managed facilities and materials.

**Parents** are empowered to engage more actively in school affairs, understanding how MOOE influences educational quality.

Lastly, **stakeholders** such as LGUs, NGOs, and community leaders can use the findings to align their support with school needs, fostering more effective partnerships to enhance public education.

### Scope and Delimitation

This study focused on the experiences of school heads and teachers-in-charge from Glan District 4, Division of Sarangani, who are directly involved in managing Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) in public elementary and secondary schools. Participants were full-time Department of Education (DepEd) employees with at least three years of administrative experience, actively engaged in education strategies and willing to share their insights. The study aimed to understand the challenges they face in managing MOOE, influenced by factors such as school location, size, and regional economic conditions. Data were collected through interviews and discussions. The study excluded private schools, institutions not managing MOOE, and the perspectives of non-administrative teachers, students, and parents. It also did not cover financial auditing or technical accounting procedures.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms are operationally defined to enable a clear grasp of the multiple terminologies used in this study:

**Administrative Hurdles:** The bureaucratic challenges, such as complex processes or paperwork, that slow down or complicate the management of MOOE. The study will examine how these obstacles impact school operations.

**Budget Constraints:** The financial limitations or shortfalls that schools face when their MOOE funds are not enough to cover all operational needs. This study explores how these constraints affect decision-making.

**Contextual Variations:** The differences in school environments, such as location (urban or rural), size, and regional economics, that influence how MOOE is managed. This study will focus on how these variations affect MOOE management.

**Innovative Approaches:** Creative or new strategies that administrators develop to manage MOOE more effectively, especially when

resources are tight. The study will explore examples of these approaches used by schools.

**Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE):** Refer to the funds given to public schools to cover daily operational needs like utilities, minor repairs, and instructional materials. In this study, it focuses on how administrators manage these funds to ensure smooth school operations.

**Spending Prioritization:** The way school administrators decide which needs should be addressed first when allocating MOOE funds. This study will look at how administrators prioritize spending under limited budgets.

**Transparency and Accountability:** The responsibility of school administrators to manage MOOE funds openly and fairly, ensuring all stakeholders know how funds are used. The study will explore how administrators maintain these principles.

## II. Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology of the study, research design, role of the researcher, research participants and materials, data collection, data analysis, validity, role of the researcher, and ethical considerations.

### Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of public school administrators in managing Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE). Through in-depth interviews, it aimed to understand how administrators navigate challenges like budget constraints and administrative hurdles. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes, providing insights into their decision-making processes and coping strategies.

### Participants of the Study

The study involved 5 school heads and Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) from public schools in Glan District 4, Sarangani Province. These participants were selected based on their direct responsibility for managing Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) funds, including planning, allocation, and utilization. To ensure relevant experience, all participants had a minimum of one year in their administrative roles.

Only those who voluntarily consented to participate were included. Exclusions applied to non-administrative staff, newly appointed administrators with less than one year of MOOE management experience, and individuals from schools outside Glan District 4.

This selection ensured that the study focused on experienced administrators familiar with the financial and operational challenges specific to this rural and economically disadvantaged area.

### **Sampling Technique**

This study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability method commonly used in qualitative research to select participants with specific knowledge and experience relevant to the research question. Five school heads and Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) from public schools in Glan District 4, Sarangani Province, were chosen due to their direct involvement in managing Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) funds.

Their insights were deemed essential for understanding the challenges and strategies associated with resource management in rural, economically disadvantaged settings. This approach ensured that the study gathered rich, detailed data from individuals most knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015; Etikan et al., 2016).

### **Locale of the Study**

This study was conducted in Glan District 4, Sarangani Province, encompassing several rural public schools, some situated in remote areas with significant Indigenous Peoples (IPs) populations. These schools face challenges due to geographical isolation, limited access to basic services, and socio-economic hardships, as many community members rely on upland farming and fishing for livelihood. The study aimed to understand how school administrators manage Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) amidst these constraints, considering cultural diversity and logistical complexities. Insights from this research may inform strategies for similar rural and remote districts in the Philippines.

### **Research Instrument**

This study utilized a semi-structured interview guide to gather qualitative data from school administrators overseeing Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) in rural public schools. Semi-structured interviews, as described by Moustakas (1994), are particularly effective in phenomenological research because they allow participants to express their lived experiences in depth while maintaining a consistent framework across interviews.

This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives, aligning with the study's aim to explore the complexities of MOOE management in rural educational settings.

To ensure credibility and reliability, this instrument was validated by a panel of evaluators, who were experts in the construction of relevant research instruments.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The researcher followed the Graduate School's protocols, obtaining approval from the Dean before proceeding. Subsequently, formal permission was requested from the Schools Division Superintendent for conducting research in ten designated schools.

Upon receiving consent, the researcher engaged with school administrators through separate letters, including the approved request from the Division and District Office. Interviews were conducted with participants via in-person meetings and messaging platforms. All responses were transcribed, analyzed, and debriefed accordingly.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher employed thematic analysis to systematically categorize and interpret participants' recorded and written responses, identifying patterns and themes that reflect their experiences and perspectives. This method, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), offers a flexible and rigorous approach to analyzing qualitative data, facilitating a deep understanding of the phenomena under study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Key ethical considerations were integrated into the study to uphold participants' rights and

welfare, ensuring the research process's integrity. These included obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring voluntary participation, as outlined by the Belmont Report .

Additionally, the study adhered to ethical principles such as beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, ensuring that the research was conducted responsibly and equitably.

### **Informed Consent**

Written consent was obtained to comprehensively inform participants, ensuring that participation was voluntary and that respondents could withdraw at any time without repercussions (Israel & Hay, 2006).

### **.Confidentiality and Anonymity**

All data collected were anonymized, with pseudonyms replacing actual names to protect participants' identities. Identifiable information was securely stored and accessible only to the researcher, ensuring confidentiality throughout the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Respect for Autonomy**

Participants' autonomy was upheld by ensuring their voluntary involvement, with opportunities to review and amend their responses, aligning with the principle of respect for persons as outlined in the Belmont Report (1979). This principle emphasizes the necessity of informed consent and the protection of individuals' decision-making rights in research contexts.

### **Transparency and Honesty**

The researcher maintained transparency throughout the research process by adhering to ethical guidelines and securing approval from relevant institutional bodies and academic ethics committees, as emphasized by Bryman (2016). This approach ensured the integrity of the study and upheld ethical standards in research.

### **Cultural Sensitivity**

The researcher respected the local context, cultural norms, and values during data collection and analysis to build trust with participants, recognizing the cultural nuances of their

leadership styles and practices (Holloway & Galvin, 2016).

### **Data Protection**

In compliance with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), the researcher implemented stringent security measures to protect participants' personal data. All collected data were anonymized, and pseudonyms were used in place of actual names. Identifiable information was securely stored and accessed only by the researcher, ensuring confidentiality and adherence to legal requirements. These actions align with the Act's provisions on data security, which mandate the implementation of reasonable and appropriate organizational, physical, and technical measures to protect personal information against accidental or unlawful destruction, alteration, and disclosure, as well as against any other unlawful processing.

### **Research Positioning**

The researcher positioned herself as an outsider-researcher, which came with both advantages and responsibilities. Being an outsider allowed for a more objective perspective, potentially reducing biases and enabling a fresh analysis of the data. However, this position also required careful attention to cultural nuances and an effort to build trust with participants, as noted by Holloway and Galvin (2016). Maintaining transparency and ethical integrity was essential in navigating this role.

## **II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the analysed themes that emerged from interviews with five school administrators in Glan District 4, Sarangani Province. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, four key themes surfaced: *Lived Experiences in Managing MOOE Funds, Challenges Encountered, Coping Mechanisms and Strategies, and Insights and Recommendations*. These themes offer a comprehensive picture of how school leaders navigate the financial complexities of public-school operations, particularly in underserved rural areas.

The themes reflect the multifaceted role of school leaders, who are responsible not only for

academic outcomes but also for ensuring day-to-day operations run smoothly.

### **Theme 1: Lived Experiences in Managing MOOE Funds**

Administrators described MOOE fund management as a balancing act between financial accountability and instructional leadership. They viewed the MOOE not just as a budget but as a tool to support learners' everyday needs.

School administrators shared that managing the MOOE fund involves more than adhering to policies and disbursing expenses—it is deeply tied to their commitment to sustaining a functional, learner-centred environment. For many, it meant making critical decisions with limited resources, prioritizing urgent school needs, and ensuring that every peso spent contributes meaningfully to the school's goals. Their experiences highlight the constant pressure to maintain compliance with financial guidelines while also being responsive to the everyday demands of running a school.

#### **Sub-theme 1.1: Roles and Responsibilities in MOOE Management**

Administrators consistently described their role as both academic leaders and financial managers. Their narratives reflect a strong sense of accountability, knowing that their financial decisions directly impact student learning.

Participants emphasized that managing the MOOE fund requires them to wear multiple hats. While they are expected to lead instructionally, they are equally held accountable for the proper and transparent use of public funds. This dual role often places them at the centre of various operational concerns, including procurement, budgeting, and reporting. Administrators expressed that their decisions—whether on minor repairs, classroom supplies, or student activities—must align with both policy requirements and the school's educational mission. Their reflections show a deep awareness of how financial stewardship directly influences the quality of teaching and learning.

*“As a School Head, my role significantly influences the decision-making process when allocating and utilizing MOOE funds. I make sure that every peso we spend benefits the learners.” (Person 1)*

*“I am the manager and instructional leader. I oversee the curriculum, supervise teachers, and at the same time manage the budget. MOOE is one of my greatest concerns because it runs the day-to-day operations of the school.” (Person 4)*

This statement emphasizes the administrators' commitment to resource optimization, aligning with Myende et al. (2018), who noted that school heads often function as multi-role leaders in low-resource contexts. Their emphasis on transparency and stakeholder collaboration in crafting the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) mirrors Ecija's (2021) findings, where active participation of school stakeholders ensured more relevant and sustainable financial planning.

#### **Sub-theme 1.2: Day-to-Day Experiences in Managing Funds**

Participants detailed how their daily routine involves a continuous cycle of planning, monitoring expenditures, and responding to urgent school needs. This often requires the realignment of budgets to accommodate unexpected repairs, supplies, or learner-related concerns. They emphasized that while long-term planning is essential, flexibility is equally important in order to ensure that limited MOOE funds are maximized to support both instructional goals and the smooth operation of the school.

While they recognized the importance of strategic, long-term financial planning, they stressed that flexibility was key to effective fund utilization.

Administrators shared that being able to adapt their budgets in real-time was critical in maintaining school functionality and ensuring that instruction was not disrupted. This delicate balance between structure and adaptability highlighted their commitment to both fiscal responsibility and the well-being of the school community.

*“Every week, I check the school's needs—supplies, utilities, minor repairs—and ensure our spending follows DepEd guidelines.” (Person 3)*

*“We sometimes ask for donations from alumni or partner organizations when the MOOE*

*is not enough, especially for school events or classroom improvements.” (Person 4)*

These accounts highlight the weight of financial responsibility, with administrators bridging operational gaps through community engagement and creative planning.

## **Theme 2: Challenges Encountered in MOOE Management**

Participants frequently mentioned delays in fund release, procurement hurdles, and budget inadequacy as major barriers to effective MOOE management. These challenges often disrupt planned activities and force administrators to make difficult choices in allocating limited resources. Delayed fund disbursements affect the timely implementation of school programs, while strict and sometimes unclear procurement procedures create bottlenecks in acquiring necessary materials and services.

Inadequate budgets were also a common concern, particularly in schools located in rural areas with growing student populations and aging infrastructure. Administrators described how they often had to stretch limited funds to cover pressing needs such as minor repairs, instructional materials, and utilities. In some cases, they resorted to seeking support from the PTA, barangay officials, or their own personal resources just to keep operations running smoothly. These constraints not only add pressure to school heads but also limit their ability to focus on instructional leadership, as they are forced to juggle multiple administrative and financial responsibilities.

### **Sub-theme 2.1: Budget Constraints and Delayed Fund Releases**

Most participants cited delays in fund release and limited allocations as the biggest barriers to executing their school improvement plans effectively. These financial setbacks often forced administrators to postpone urgent activities or temporarily halt procurement processes. Some school heads shared that the first quarter of the school year is especially challenging, as operations must begin even before the actual downloading of MOOE funds.

In addition to the timing of fund releases, the participants noted that the allocated budget is often insufficient to meet the diverse and growing

needs of their schools. Basic necessities such as water, electricity, and classroom supplies already consume a large portion of the fund, leaving little room for developmental programs, emergency repairs, or support for learners with special needs.

*“Delayed fund release greatly impacts our ability to procure learning materials on time.” (Person 1)*

These constraints align with Ngwenya and Sibanda’s (2017) findings that financial bottlenecks and bureaucratic systems disrupt school operations in low-income settings. This finding is also supported by Eyasu (2019), who described similar delays in Ethiopia that disrupted school programs and compromised learning continuity. Locally, Almazan (2023) found that school heads experience bottlenecks due to bureaucratic procurement systems, often having to delay or cancel projects due to rigid and slow processes.

### **Sub-theme 2.2: Procurement Process Difficulties**

Participants expressed concern over the complicated and time-consuming procurement procedures, which significantly hinder the timely implementation of school projects. The bureaucratic requirements involved in the procurement process, such as preparing numerous forms, obtaining multiple signatures, and adhering to strict guidelines, often result in delays. These delays are particularly problematic for schools that need immediate resources for repairs, instructional materials, or other essential needs.

Many administrators shared that the lengthy approval processes for even minor purchases could stretch for weeks, sometimes months. This slow pace impacts the efficiency of managing MOOE funds, as funds that could be used to address urgent issues are often held up in administrative steps. Some participants also highlighted the lack of adequate training or guidance on procurement procedures, which leads to mistakes or the need for repeated revisions. As a result, these inefficiencies create frustrations for school heads, who are already under pressure to balance multiple responsibilities.

*“Procurement is very hard to follow.” (Person 4)*

Such challenges underscore the disconnect between school-level needs and top-down financial systems.

### **Sub-theme 2.3: Inflation and Price Fluctuations**

Inflation further exacerbates the challenges faced by school administrators, as the real value of allocated MOOE funds diminishes over time. Rising prices for essential goods and services—such as building materials, office supplies, and utilities—mean that the funds initially allocated for specific projects or needs are no longer sufficient to cover the costs. This issue is particularly acute in rural areas where access to resources is limited, and price fluctuations can be more pronounced due to transportation and supply chain challenges.

Participants expressed concern that inflation leads to difficult decision-making, as school heads must stretch their budgets further to meet basic operational needs. In some cases, administrators reported having to reduce the scope of planned activities or delay much-needed repairs and upgrades simply to keep up with rising costs. These price fluctuations ultimately reduce the purchasing power of the MOOE fund, forcing school leaders to constantly adjust their financial strategies and prioritize expenditures that align with the most pressing needs of their school communities.

*“The budget we used to stretch for three months barely lasts two now.” (Paraphrased)*

This economic challenge reinforces the call for flexible, needs-based budgeting that reflects local realities.

## **Theme 3: Coping Mechanisms and Strategies**

Faced with recurring challenges in managing the MOOE fund, school administrators have developed practical and adaptive coping strategies to ensure that schools remain operational despite financial constraints. One of the most commonly mentioned strategies was spending prioritization. Administrators often had to make difficult decisions about where to allocate limited resources, focusing first on critical needs such as utilities, repairs, and instructional materials. By carefully assessing which expenses would have the most immediate impact on student

learning and school functionality, they could ensure that essential operations were not disrupted.

### **Sub-theme 3.1: Prioritization and Reallocation of Funds**

Participants described shifting funds mid-year as a necessary strategy to respond to immediate needs such as repairs, supplies, and other unanticipated expenses. Given the fluid nature of school operations, administrators often found themselves needing to adjust their financial plans based on urgent circumstances that arose throughout the school year. For instance, when a classroom roof leaked or essential learning materials ran out unexpectedly, administrators had to reallocate funds from other less critical areas to address these issues.

This process of fund reallocation, while necessary, often meant that other planned activities—such as extracurricular programs or facility improvements—had to be postponed or scaled back. School heads emphasized that this kind of flexibility was critical to maintaining the school's functionality and ensuring that essential needs were met. However, the ability to make these adjustments also required strong financial oversight, as administrators had to ensure that any shifts in fund allocation still complied with guidelines and maintained accountability to the community and governing bodies.

*“We prioritize what’s most important—repairing classrooms, buying teaching materials.” (Person 1)*

### **Sub-theme 3.2: Stakeholder Involvement**

Engaging parents and community stakeholders through regular meetings and planning sessions emerged as a key strategy for administrators to ensure transparency and foster shared ownership of school financial decisions. Participants highlighted that involving parents, barangay officials, and local organizations not only strengthened community ties but also created a collaborative approach to problem-solving, particularly when resources were scarce. Regular communication, such as PTA meetings or local assemblies, allowed school leaders to provide updates on fund allocation, discuss upcoming needs, and seek input on priorities.

This engagement not only enhanced transparency but also encouraged a sense of shared responsibility. By inviting stakeholders into the decision-making process, school administrators ensured that the community felt invested in the school's success. In many cases, local stakeholders would offer support in the form of donations, volunteer work, or fundraising efforts to help cover expenses that could not be met by the MOOE funds. This collaborative model helped mitigate some of the financial constraints faced by the schools and demonstrated the value of community partnerships in achieving educational goals.

*“Our PTA and SGC are involved in drafting the AIP. They help specify the projects and even decide the budget allocation.” (Person 4)*

### **Sub-theme 3.3: Innovative Practices and Resource Sharing**

Cost-saving measures like bulk-buying and resource pooling were common practices among participants as they sought to maximize the impact of their limited MOOE funds. Many administrators reported collaborating with nearby schools or local government units to purchase supplies in bulk, thus securing discounts and stretching their budgets further. This approach not only helped reduce costs but also allowed for better planning and coordination of resources, ensuring that essential materials and supplies were available when needed.

Resource pooling was also a key strategy, with schools sharing facilities, equipment, or personnel to cut down on individual expenses. For example, neighboring schools might share a maintenance worker, or they might combine resources to purchase a large quantity of instructional materials. These innovative practices helped mitigate the financial strain on individual schools, fostering a collaborative spirit and demonstrating the power of creative problem-solving in managing limited resources.

*“Buying supplies in bulk saves us money.” (Person 4)*

*“We implemented a resource-sharing program with nearby schools. For example, we held joint INSET training to save on expenses.” (Person 1)*

These methods align with Arevalo and Comighud's (2020) findings that grassroots innovation can compensate for budgetary limitations.

### **Sub-theme 3.4: Community and NGO Collaboration**

Support from local government units (LGUs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) often made a substantial difference in the ability of school administrators to meet their operational needs. Many participants shared that collaboration with these external partners was crucial in filling gaps left by limited MOOE funding. Local government officials, through the Barangay or LGU, often provided financial aid, infrastructure support, or access to community-based resources, such as volunteer labor or materials for school projects. This partnership not only alleviated some of the financial burdens but also reinforced the school's connection to the larger community.

NGOs, on the other hand, frequently offered targeted support, such as donations of educational materials, funding for specific school programs, or assistance during emergencies. These partnerships allowed schools to extend their reach and enhance their offerings, even when their allocated funds were insufficient. Participants highlighted that these collaborations helped build a sense of shared responsibility between schools and the broader community, ensuring that both educational and operational goals were more easily met. Through such collaborative efforts, schools could leverage additional resources, allowing them to implement essential projects that might otherwise have been delayed or scaled back.

*“Our school is a beneficiary of a foundation that provides school supplies. It minimizes our MOOE expenses, allowing us to focus on other needs.” (Person 4)*

### **Theme 4: Insights and Recommendations**

The final theme of the study captures the participants' reflections, lessons learned, and their calls for policy reform in MOOE fund management. Administrators expressed a deep sense of responsibility in managing the funds, and their experiences provided valuable insights into the challenges and potential solutions for

improving school financial operations. One key lesson learned was the importance of flexibility and adaptability in managing resources, especially when faced with unforeseen challenges such as fund delays or price fluctuations. Many administrators emphasized that being proactive in financial planning, while also leaving room for adjustments, could help mitigate some of the uncertainty and pressure that comes with managing the MOOE.

Participants also made several recommendations for policy reforms to improve the effectiveness of MOOE fund management. They suggested simplifying procurement processes, providing more timely and predictable fund releases, and offering additional training for school heads to enhance their financial management skills. Some administrators called for a more localized approach in fund allocation, which would consider the unique challenges faced by schools in rural areas. Additionally, there was a strong call for more transparent and efficient communication channels between schools, LGUs, and the Department of Education, as this could help streamline decision-making and improve overall resource utilization.

#### **Sub-theme 4.1: Lessons Learned**

Participants highlighted several crucial lessons learned throughout their experiences in managing MOOE funds, with a strong emphasis on the importance of clear planning, responsible spending, and accountability. Administrators consistently noted that clear and thorough planning at the beginning of the school year was key to navigating the challenges that arose during the year. By setting a well-defined budget with clear priorities, they were able to allocate resources effectively, reducing the likelihood of financial mismanagement. Participants emphasized that a solid plan allowed them to stay focused on the essential needs of the school, even when unexpected situations arose.

In addition to planning, participants stressed the significance of responsible spending, which involved making careful decisions about where and how funds were used. Many administrators shared that they had learned to balance immediate needs with long-term goals, ensuring that funds were directed toward areas that

would provide the greatest impact on student learning and school operations. The importance of accountability was also frequently mentioned, with school leaders recognizing that maintaining transparency in financial decisions was essential not only for compliance but also for maintaining the trust of the school community. By keeping accurate records and regularly reviewing expenditures, administrators ensured that every peso was spent wisely and in alignment with the school's mission.

*“Stick to your plan and make sure every peso is used wisely for the learners’ benefit.”*  
(Person 4)

#### **Sub-theme 4.2: Advice to Other Administrators**

Participants shared valuable advice for other school administrators, emphasizing the importance of early stakeholder involvement and consistent financial monitoring to ensure transparency and effective management of MOOE funds. Many administrators recommended that involving key stakeholders, such as parents, local government officials, and teachers, early in the planning process was crucial for gaining support and understanding. This collaboration not only enhanced the decision-making process but also helped build a shared sense of responsibility among the school community. By keeping stakeholders informed and engaged, administrators were able to create a more transparent and accountable environment for managing the school's resources.

Additionally, participants stressed the importance of consistently monitoring finances throughout the year. They advised other administrators to regularly review their budgets and expenditures to identify any discrepancies or areas where funds could be reallocated. This proactive approach helped them stay on top of financial challenges and allowed for adjustments to be made before small issues turned into larger problems. By maintaining a close watch on the funds and ensuring all transactions were well-documented and aligned with the school's goals, administrators could avoid unnecessary overspending and ensure that every penny was used efficiently for the benefit of the learners.

*“During the General Assembly, we show the stakeholders the MOOE amount and allow them to be involved in the process.” (Person 1)*

### **Sub-theme 4.3: Policy Recommendations**

Participants offered several insightful policy recommendations aimed at improving the management and utilization of MOOE funds, with a focus on streamlining procurement processes and increasing MOOE allocations for rural schools. One of the most frequently mentioned recommendations was the need to simplify the procurement process. Administrators expressed frustration with the complicated and time-consuming procurement procedures, which often delayed the implementation of essential school projects and resource purchases. They suggested that streamlining these procedures—perhaps by introducing more flexible guidelines or faster approval processes—would enable schools to respond more swiftly to their needs and ensure timely delivery of necessary supplies and services.

Another common recommendation was to increase MOOE allocations for rural schools, which often face greater financial constraints due to their location and limited resources. Many administrators pointed out that rural schools typically have higher costs associated with transportation, utilities, and infrastructure maintenance, yet their MOOE funds were often insufficient to meet these demands. By increasing the MOOE allocation for schools in underserved areas, the participants believed that educational outcomes could be significantly improved, as school leaders would have more resources to address the unique challenges of rural education.

These policy changes, they argued, would not only ease the financial burden on school heads but also contribute to a more equitable distribution of resources across the education system.

*“Simplify the procurement process.” (Person 5)*

These practical insights echo Almazan’s (2023) call for supportive policy frameworks that empower school leaders in underfunded regions.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings revealed four major themes: lived experiences in managing MOOE, challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, and key insights

and recommendations—all of which align with and extend previous research on school financial management.

First, administrators shared that they play a dual role—as instructional leaders and financial managers. They recognized the impact of MOOE on the daily operations of schools and made deliberate efforts to ensure that every expenditure benefits learners. This finding reflects Myende et al.’s (2018) observation that school leaders in resource-limited contexts must take on multiple responsibilities, often beyond their formal training. Their consistent use of collaborative planning, especially with stakeholders, supports Ecija’s (2021) findings that inclusive financial planning promotes transparency and community ownership.

Second, school heads reported common challenges such as delayed fund releases, rigid procurement procedures, and limited allocations. These concerns align with the studies of Eyasu (2019) and Almazan (2023), who noted that bureaucratic barriers and insufficient budgets constrain school operations, particularly in developing countries. Inflation and price increases further reduce the purchasing power of funds, echoing Abellon et al.’s (2020) findings on MOOE inadequacy.

Despite these difficulties, administrators have developed adaptive coping mechanisms such as budget prioritization, resource sharing, and partnerships with external groups. These responses affirm Miranda and Pérez’s (2021) findings that school leaders often rely on grassroots innovations to stretch limited funds. The integration of parents and community stakeholders in budgeting processes, as emphasized by Arevalo and Comighud (2020), also proved essential in this study.

Lastly, the study uncovered key insights that suggest ways to improve fund management. Administrators highlighted the importance of detailed planning, transparent practices, and regular financial training. These recommendations echo those made by Almazan (2023) and Otegbulu (2016), who underscored the need for continuous capacity building in school financial leadership. Simplifying procurement processes and increasing MOOE allocations for geographically challenged schools were also proposed as practical steps to

reduce financial strain and improve implementation efficiency.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that while school administrators face recurring financial challenges, their experiences and coping strategies reflect resilience, creativity, and a strong sense of accountability—qualities essential for navigating the complexities of public school fund management in underserved areas.

### Summary of Findings

Based on interviews with 5 school administrators in Glan District 4, Sarangani Province, four key themes emerged regarding the management of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) funds. Administrators perceive MOOE fund management as a balance between financial accountability and instructional leadership, emphasizing transparency and stakeholder collaboration in crafting the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) to ensure that every expenditure benefits learners.

Challenges such as delays in fund release, procurement hurdles, and budget inadequacy hinder timely implementation of school projects and affect the procurement of necessary learning materials. To address these challenges, administrators employ strategies like prioritizing essential expenditures, engaging stakeholders in financial planning, and collaborating with community and non-governmental organizations for additional support. Participants highlight the need for clear planning, responsible spending, and increased stakeholder involvement, advocating for policy reforms to streamline procurement processes and increase MOOE allocations, especially for rural schools.

These findings underscore the multifaceted role of school administrators in managing limited financial resources while striving to provide quality education in underserved areas.

### Conclusion

This study set out to understand the lived experiences of public-school administrators in managing Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) funds in Glan District 4, Sarangani Province. Through a qualitative approach, the research uncovered the realities faced by school leaders as they navigated both

instructional leadership and financial management responsibilities.

The findings revealed that administrators perceive MOOE fund management as a critical part of their role, requiring transparency, careful planning, and collaboration with stakeholders. Their experiences showed how, despite limited resources, they strive to ensure that financial decisions benefit the students and support school operations.

Participants also offered valuable insights, emphasizing the importance of aligning expenses with plans, simplifying procurement processes, and providing continuous financial training for school leaders. These reflections contribute to a broader understanding of how MOOE funds are managed on the ground and highlight areas for policy improvement.

The study contributes to the development of school financial management practices by amplifying the voices of those directly handling public school funds. It offers evidence that can inform training programs, strengthen support systems, and guide decision-makers in creating more responsive and efficient funding policies in the Philippine education system

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the management of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) funds in rural public schools:

- 1. Streamline Procurement Processes:** Simplify and expedite procurement procedures to address delays and bureaucratic hurdles that hinder the timely implementation of school projects.
- 2. Ensure Timely Fund Releases:** Coordinate with relevant authorities to guarantee the prompt release of MOOE funds, enabling schools to plan and execute their programs without financial interruptions.
- 3. Provide Continuous Financial Management Training:** Offer regular training and capacity-building programs for school administrators and personnel involved in financial management to enhance their budgeting and resource allocation skills.
- 4. Engage Stakeholders in Financial Planning:** Involve parents, teachers, and community

members in the financial planning and decision-making processes to foster transparency and shared responsibility.

**5. Implement Regular Audits and Transparency Measures:** Conduct periodic audits and utilize transparency boards to publicly display financial information, strengthening accountability and building trust within the school community.

**6. Explore Partnerships for Additional Support:** Collaborate with local government units and non-governmental organizations to supplement limited resources, providing additional support for school programs and infrastructure.

**7. Invest in Modern Accounting Technologies:** Adopt modern accounting and reporting technologies to improve the accuracy and efficiency of financial transactions, reducing errors and facilitating timely reporting.

**8. Develop Contingency Plans:** Establish contingency plans to address unforeseen financial challenges, ensuring that schools can maintain operations and continue providing quality education despite budgetary constraints.

**9. Promote Financial Literacy Among Staff:** Encourage financial literacy among teachers and staff to enhance their understanding of budgeting processes and foster a culture of fiscal responsibility.

**10. Regularly Review and Update Financial Policies:** Continuously assess and update financial policies to align with current needs and ensure the effective utilization of MOOE funds.

By implementing these recommendations, rural public schools can improve the management of MOOE funds, ensuring that financial resources are utilized effectively to enhance educational outcomes.

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