

Quality Assurance Preparedness of the Schools Division Offices in Pangasinan

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Abstract: This study determined the quality assurance preparedness of the schools division offices in Pangasinan as to the following: the demographic profile of the top managers and rank and file employees; the extent of availability of process, people, resources and infrastructure in their Quality Management System (QMS); the respondents' perception on the level of quality assurance preparedness of their schools division office along context of the organization, leadership, planning, support, operation, performance evaluation; and continuous improvement; the relationship between the respondents' demographic profile and their perceived level of quality assurance preparedness; and the difference between the perceived level of quality assurance preparedness by the top managers and the rank and file employees. Descriptive research design was used with the questionnaire as the main instrument in gathering data; data gathered were properly tabulated, interpreted, and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, average mean, Chi-square and Spearman's rho Correlation Mann Whitney U Test. Results revealed that Top management is largely occupied by middle-aged employees who have attained the highest educational degree whereas rank-and file employees are relatively young and new in the SDOs. Top managers and rank-and-file employees believed that QMS along process, people, resources and offices/infrastructure in Pangasinan SDOs are Much Available. A significant relationship exists between sex and respondents' level of quality assurance preparedness along Context (.045) and Leadership (.050). Also, significant relationship was observed between age and all aspects except Planning. As per number of QMS-related seminars/trainings etc., it is significantly related to all 7 aspects as manifested in their p-values of lower than the .05 alpha. Years in the position and civil status, however, did not have significant relationship with their level of preparedness along all aspects. Further, there is a significant difference between the top managers' and rank-and-file employees' perceived level of quality assurance preparedness along all aspects.

Keywords: ISO 9001:2015, Preparedness, Quality Assurance, Quality Management System

INTRODUCTION

Today, companies and institutions, both public and private, face several complex tasks to succeed, to be globally competitive and to satisfy their clienteles' expectations. [1] Expectations and needs of clienteles about the quality of products and services have continuously increased leading to the realization of Quality Assurance (QA) or Quality Management System (QMS) as an indispensable managerial task in the day-to-day operations of their business [2].

With accreditation and verification of a certified QA or QMS, and with consequent verification management of the quality of their products and services, they are able to prove their sincere and serious mission to prevent failures in order to meet customer satisfaction. By implementing a well-researched and well-organized QA or QMS, companies, organizations and institutions are assured of continuous cycle of progress in their processes- internal and external [3].

Many companies and organizations worldwide are now certified by ISO 9001:2015 [4]. Attaining such certification requires identification of processes, assessment and implementation of changes. ISO standards, particularly ISO 9001:2015, have immensely influenced organizations nowadays; it serves as a guiding tool for them especially in giving valuable information about the necessity of quality management systems [5][16,17].

In consideration thereof, the researcher finds it relevant to pursue an investigation on the quality assurance preparedness of these SDOs; it is crucial beneficial and necessary for their endeavor- ISO Certification.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the level of quality assurance preparedness of Schools Division Offices (SDOs) in Pangasinan.

Specifically, the researcher attempted to find answers to the following: demographic profile of the top managers and the rank and file employees in the SDOs of Pangasinan in terms of

age, sex, civil status, position, number of years in the position, highest educational attainment and number of QMS-related seminars/ trainings/ workshops/ conferences attended; extent of availability of the QMS along process, people, resources; and infrastructure; level of quality assurance preparedness of the SDOs in Pangasinan as perceived by top managers and rank and file employees along context of the organization, leadership, planning, support, operation, performance evaluation and continuous improvement; significant relationship between the respondents' demographic profile and their perceived level of quality assurance preparedness; and significant difference between the perceived level of quality assurance preparedness by the top managers and the rank and file employees

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Employing descriptive research design [14] [15], this study assessed and described the quality assurance preparedness of the SDOs in Pangasinan which have not yet undergone ISO certification- Pangasinan I & II. Specifically it used survey method as the respondents answered questions through a questionnaire that was administered. Respondents' answers were then described and interpreted. This helped in finding the underlying principles, as it provided a systematic way of looking at the event/s, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting results [6]. Correlation was also utilized to measure relationship of variables.

The respondents were the Top Managers and rank and file employees of the SDOs. A questionnaire composed of three (3) parts was utilized in obtaining the data needed in this study. Frequency counts, percentages, average mean, Chi-square and Spearman's rho Correlation Mann Whitney U Test were used in analysing the data gathered.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Top Managers

It was revealed that majority of the top managers, 30 or 57.7%, are under 51-60 years old; there were 4 or 7.7% who aged 61-65. Meanwhile, 15 or 28.8% were under 41-50; only 3 or 5.8% were under 31-40. These data show that most of the top managers are those who are not new in DepEd. Apparently, they rose through the ranks; most of them came from teaching positions. Meanwhile, almost three fourths, 38 or 73.1%, of the top managers are female while only 14 or 26.9% are male. These data may be attributed to the common observation that DepEd is a female-dominated agency in the Philippines [7] [12] [13]. Almost all of the top managers, 49 or 94.2%, are married. Only 2 or 3.8% are single and only 1 or 1.9% is a widow/widower. It can be surmised from the finding that as their position gets higher, the more financially stable they become. Thus, they marry and raise their own family. Many of the top managers, 21 or 40.4%, have been in their current position for 4-6 years; 15 or 28.8% are under 7-10 years in their position and 14 or 26.9% are under 0-3 years. Only 2 or 3.8% have been in their position for 11 years above. The finding is in congruence with DO 52, S. 2015 – New Organizational Structures of the Central, Regional, and Schools Division Offices of the Department of Education; new top manager positions were created upon its implementation in the following years. Thus, two fifth, 21 or 40.4%, of them are under 4-6 years in their current position.

It was revealed further that almost all of the top managers, 50 or 96.2% are doctoral degree holder while only 2 or 3.8% are graduates of master's degree. These only show the importance, benefit and necessity of pursuing graduate and post graduate studies to be promoted in DepEd. A great majority of the top managers, 34 or 65.4%, have attended 4-above QMS-related Seminars/ Trainings/ Workshops/ Conferences; 12 or 23.1% have attended at least 2-3 QMS-related seminars. Only a few of them, 6 or 11.5% have 0-1QMS-related Seminars/ Trainings/ Workshops/ Conferences Attended. Notably, aside from those who have just entered DepEd or those who have just been promoted, these top

managers are exposed to QMS as it is required of their position. They serve as prime movers in the implementation of QMS in their office [8].

Profile of the Rank-and-File Employees

Half of the rank-and-file employees, 36 or 50%, are under 21-30 years of age followed by 22 or 30.6% who are under 31-40 years old. There are 12 or 16.7% who are under 41-50 while there are only 2 or 2.8% who are under 51-60 years old. None of the rank-and-file employees are above 60 years old. It is interesting to note that most of these rank-and-file employees are young which is directly opposite the top managers where majority of them were under 51-60 years of age. This implies that the rank-and-file employees may have brighter career opportunities ahead of them. A great majority of the rank-and-file employees, 50 or 69.4%, are female; only 22 or 30.6 are male. Just like in the top managers, this finding affirms the common observation that DepEd is a female-dominated department in the country. Majority of the rank-and-file employees, 37 or 51.4% are married; almost half of them, 35 or 48.6% are single. This finding supports the finding on age bracket where half off these rank-and-file employees are under 21-30 years of age. Most are just fresh graduates from college therefore they seek for financial stability before entering married life.

Majority of the rank-and-file employees, 37 or 51.4% have spent 0-3 years in their present position; 25 or 34.7% of them have been in their position for 4-6 years. Additionally, 7 or 9.7% have been in their current position for 11 years above while only 3 or 4.2% have spent 7-10 years in their position. Majority of these rank-and-file employees have just graduated from college; hence, they are just new to the service.

It was further revealed that almost all of the rank-and-file employees, 60 or 83.3%, finished Bachelor's Degree; few of them, 10 or 13.9% pursued Master's Degree while there are 2 or 2.8% graduated Doctoral Degree. These data imply that those who pursued graduate and post-graduate studies are those eyeing for promotion

in the future. It also implies that rank-and-file employees pursue higher studies not only for promotion but more importantly for personal enrichment and fulfilment. Most of the rank-and-file employees, 56 or 77.8%, have no or at least 1 QMS-related Seminars/ Trainings/ Workshops/ Conferences; 12 or 16.7% attended 2-3 QMS-related seminars while only 4 or 5.6% attended 4-above QMS-related seminars. It can be surmised from the data that since most of them are just new to the service, the chance of attending these seminars is slim.

Extent of Availability of QMS in the SDOs of Pangasinan

Table 1. Extent of Availability of QMS in the SDOs of Pangasinan

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	EXTENT OF AVAILABILITY				
	5	4	3	2	1
A. Process	38 (30.6%)	41 (33.1%)	37 (29.8%)	5 (4.05%)	3 (2.4%)
B. People	30 (24.2%)	51 (41.1%)	37 (29.8%)	3 (2.4%)	3 (2.4%)
C. Resources	20 (16.1%)	53 (42.7%)	43 (34.7%)	5 (4.0%)	3 (2.4%)
D. Offices/Infra structure	26 (21.0%)	43 (34.7%)	48 (38.7%)	43 (3.2%)	3 (2.4%)
Overall Extent of Availability Available	37.9% - Much Available				

Legend: 5- Very Much Available; 4-Much Available; 3-Available; 2-Fairly Available; 1-Not Available

As could be gleaned from the table, the scale which had the most number of respondent's answer is 4 or much available: process, 41 or 33.1%; people, 51 or 41.1%; resources, 53 or 42.7% and offices/infrastructure, 43 or 34.7%. This yielded an average of 37.9%.

As perceived by the respondents, the QMS in the SDOs of Pangasinan is much available. This implies that there are organized and systematic processes being implemented. It further implies that resources and offices/infrastructure have been provided and more importantly there are enough people to effectively implement the QMS.

Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness in the SDOs of Pangasinan as Perceived by Top Managers and Rank-and-File Employees

This part presents the level of quality assurance preparedness of the SDOs in Pangasinan as perceived by the top managers and rank-and-file employees along context of the organization, leadership, planning, support, operation, performance evaluation and continuous improvement. The data gathered were treated using frequency counts and percentages and were interpreted using a five-point Likert Scale.

Level of Preparedness Verbal Interpretation
 5 Very Strongly Agree Very Much Prepared
 4 Strongly Agree Much Prepared
 3 Agree Prepared
 2 Partially Agree Moderately Prepared
 1 Disagree Not Prepared

Table 2. Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness along Context of the Organization of the SDOs in Pangasinan as Perceived by Top Managers

QUALITY ASSURANCE INDICATORS	LEVEL OF PREPAREDNESS				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. determine external and internal issues that are relevant to the organization;	15 (28.8%)	32 (61.5%)	3 (5.8%)	2 (3.8%)	0
2. monitor and review	12	34	4	2	0

information on these issues;	23.1	65.4%	7.7	3.8	
3. determine and document boundaries and applicability of QMS by considering external and internal issues, requirements of interested parties and the services offered;	11	31	9	1	0
4. establish, implement, maintain and continually improve a QMS including all processes needed, interactions and sequences of processes and assigning of resources; and	14	27	10	1	0
5. maintain necessary documented information to support the processes and are confident that they are being carried out as planned.	15	29	7	1	0

**Overall Level of Preparedness 58.8%
- Strongly Agree/Much Prepared**

As could be gleaned from Table 2, majority of the top managers perceived that the SDOs in Pangasinan are much prepared along context of the organization as majority of them answered 4, Strongly Agree/Much Prepared, as far as the 5 items are concerned; to wit: item 1, 32 or 61.5%; item 2, 34 or 65.4%; item 3, 31 or

59.6%; item 4, 27 or 51.9% and item 5, 29 or 55.8%.

These data imply that they understand the organization and its context and have determined the scope of the QMS and its processes. Further, the finding implies that their QMS especially their processes are well-documented and are strictly implemented.

Table 3. Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness along Context of the Organization of the SDOs in Pangasinan as Perceived Rank-and-File Employees

QUALITY ASSURANCE INDICATORS	LEVEL OF PREPAREDNESS				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. determine external and internal issues that are relevant to the organization;	16	24	29	0	3
2. monitor and review information on these issues;	11	28	29	1	3
3. determine and document boundaries and applicability of QMS by considering external and internal issues, requirements of interested parties and the services offered;	15	20	32	5	0
4. establish, implement, maintain and continually improve a QMS including all processes needed, interactions and sequences of processes and	17	20	30	2	3

assigning of resources; and					
5. maintain necessary documented information to support the processes and are confident that they are being carried out as planned.	17 (23.6%)	20 (27.8%)	30 (41.7%)	5 (6.9%)	0
Overall Level of Preparedness Agree/Prepared	41.7% -				

Table 3 shows that as regards context of the organization, the scale that got the most number of frequencies of the respondents' answer is 3, Agree, which is interpreted as Prepared. Specifically, items 1&2 had 29 or 40.3%; item 3 had 32 or 44.4% while items 4 & 5 had 30 or 41.7% yielding an average of 41.7 %. The data reveal that the perception of the majority of the rank-and-file employees in this context is 1 scale lower than those of the top managers which is 4, Strongly Agree or Much Prepared. This can be attributed to the fact that majority of these rank-and-file employees have never attended or have only attended 1 QMS-related seminars/ trainings/ workshops/ conferences.

Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness along Leadership of the SDOs in Pangasinan as Perceived by Top Managers and Rank-and-File Employees

The over-all level of preparedness of the SDOs in Pangasinan along leadership is 48.1% - Strongly Agree which is interpreted as Much Prepared because most of the top managers perception fell under scale 4: item 1, 25 or 48.1%; item 2, 22 or 42.3%; item 3, 27 or 51.9%; item 4, 30 or 57.7% and item 5, 21 or 40.4%. This implies

that the top managers show commitment in establishing a quality policy and ensuring that it available, maintained and communicated. It implies further that they lead in maintaining a customer-focused environment and they ensure that resources are readily available for the successful implementation of the QMS.

Meanwhile, majority of the rank-and-file employees perceived that the SDOs in Pangasinan are prepared along context of the organization as majority of them answered 3, Agree interpreted as Prepared, as far as the 5 items are concerned; to wit: item 1, 31 or 43.15%; item 2, 25 or 34.7%; item 3, 28 or 38.9% and items 4 & 5, 32 or 44.4% respectively.

Evidently, the perception of the majority of the rank-and-file employees, 3, Agree/Prepared, is 1 scale lower than majority of the top managers' perception, 4, Strongly Agree/Much Prepared. While it is true that their perception differ, top managers still show leadership and commitment in promoting QMS in the SDOs of Pangasinan.

Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness along Planning of the SDOs in Pangasinan as Perceived by Top Managers and Rank-and-File Employees

SDOs in Pangasinan are Much Prepared in this QMS aspect as evidenced by an overall level of preparedness of 53.8% under scale 4 which had the most number of frequencies of the top managers' answers. Specifically, item 1 had 27 or 51.9%; item 2 had 23 or 44.2%; item 3 yielded 30 or 57.7% and item 4 had 32 or 61.5%.

Meanwhile, SDOs in Pangasinan are Prepared in terms of Planning as evidenced by an average (overall level of preparedness) of 53.8% under scale 3 where majority of the rank-and-file employees' frequency of responses fell, to wit: item 1, 31 or 43.1%; item 2, 28 or 38.9%; item 3, 36 or 50% and item 4, 45.8%.

Again, these findings reveal that the rank-and-file employees' perception (44.4%-Agree/Prepared) in this aspect is lower, than the top managers' perception (53.8%-Agree/Prepared). This implies that the top managers have a deeper understanding of the QMS plans of the SDOs and thus need to be communicated well to the rank-and-file employees for greater commitment in the implementation of the office's QMS.

Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness along Support of the SDOs in Pangasinan as Perceived by Top Managers and Rank-and-File Employees

It can be noted that under this QMS aspect, the top managers Strongly Agree that the SDOs in Pangasinan are Much Prepared as evidenced by an average (overall level of preparedness) of 58% under scale 4 which had the most number of frequency of their responses. Specifically, item 1 had 33 or 63.5 %; item 2 had 32 or 61.5%; item 3 & 6 yielded 29 or 55.8%; item 4 had 28 or 53.8% while item 5 yielded 30 or 57.7%.

The rank-and-file employees, on the otherhand, only Agree that the SDOs in Pangasinan are Prepared in this aspect as evidenced by an average of 45.6% under scale 4 where most of the rank-and-file employees' answers fell; to wit: items 1, 2 & 4, 31 or 43.1%; items 3 & 5, 35 or 48.6%; and item 6, 34 or 47.2%.

Again, it is worth noting that the perception of the top managers (58%-Strongly Agree/Much Prepared) is higher than that of the rank-and-file employees' (45.6%-Agree/Prepared). Nonetheless, SDOs in Pangasinan still manifest preparedness in this aspect; they enough people who have the competence to do the tasks, infrastructures and other resources need for the QMS implementation. It implies further that they have

a documented information- maintained and controlled.

Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness along Operation of the SDOs in Pangasinan as Perceived by Top Managers and Rank-and-File Employees

Pangasinan SDOs, based on the responses of the top managers, are much prepared along operation. Results showed that 60.4% responded 4, Strongly Agree/Much Prepared, which indicates that the SDOs implement and control the processes needed to meet the requirements for the provision of products and services. Moreover, data showed that 75% of the top managers believed that there is a process to identify and control nonconforming outputs of process and that information is documented and maintained. This implies that the SDOs have a concrete plan to meet the requirements for delivery of services; they implement and control its processes. It also means that they have determined the features of the services they offer and have defined how the processes will be performed and what criteria the product needs to be accepted. It implies further that they have determined the resources needed for the processes and the records needed to demonstrate that these processes were are carried out as planned.

However, many (44.2%) of the rank-and-file employees believed SDOs only met the minimum requirements of ISO along Operation as indicated by their rating of 3; to wit: items 1 & 2, 27 or 37.5%; item 3, 32 or 44.4%; item 4, 34 or 47.2%; items 5 & 6, 31 or 43.1% and item 7, 38 or 52.8%. Of the 7 indicators, the last had the most number of the rank and file employees' answer which indicate that documented information is maintained along operation.

The difference between the responses of the top managers and rank-and-file employees may be attributed to the fact that most of the rank-

and-file employees do not have QMS-related Seminars/Trainings/Workshops/ Conferences yet on ISO. As a consequence, they might not be aware of practices and processes existing in the SDOs which exceed ISO's minimum requirements.

Moreover, this could be attributed to the finding that most of these rank and file employees are new in their position in particular and in DepEd in general. As such, they are not yet fully aware of its QMS especially in its operations.

Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness along Performance Evaluation of the SDOs in Pangasinan as Perceived by Top Managers and Rank-and-File Employees

Top managers perceived that the SDOs in Pangasinan are Much Prepared (55.8% - Strongly Agree) in this aspect as majority of the respondents' answers were under scale 4; to wit: item 1, 28 or 53.8%; item 2, 30 or 57.7% and item 29, 55.8%. This implies that the SDOs have determined what needs to be monitored and measured, how, and when, as well as when the results will be analyzed for the successful implementation of the QMS and for further revisions if needed.

The same trend can be observed as regards rank-and-file employees' perception on the level of quality assurance preparedness along performance evaluation of the SDOs in Pangasinan. Their perception is lower than the top managers with an average of 42.6% - Agree, interpreted as Prepared as scale 3 got the most number of frequencies of their responses. It can be inferred from the findings that the SDOs' QMS would be more effective if top managers review on its appropriateness, adequacy and applicability.

Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness along Continuous Improvement of the SDOs in

Pangasinan as Perceived by Top Managers and Rank and File Employees

Based on the top managers' responses, SDOs in Pangasinan are much prepared along continuous improvement. Results showed that 52.9% responded 4, Strongly Agree/Much Prepared, which indicates that the SDOs make decisions and take actions towards continual improvement. These actions can be in the form of corrective actions, trainings, reorganization, innovation, and so on. It implies that SDOs' top management are making decisions regarding opportunities for improvement, need for changes in the QMS, and resources needed for the upcoming period.

On the contrary, the rank-and-file employees perceived that Pangasinan SDOs are only prepared along Continuous Improvement. Rating 3 or Agree/Prepared recorded the highest number of responses for the four indicators in the Continuous Improvement aspect, 30 (41.7%), 34 (47.2%), 26 (36.1%), and 30 (41.7%). It cannot be denied, however, that many answered 4 and 5, Strongly Agree/Much Prepared and Very Strongly Agree/Very Much Prepared respectively. Thus, this implies that Pangasinan SDOs, as perceived by rank-and-file employees, are Prepared to Very Much Prepared in the ISO certification along Continuous Improvement.

Significant Relationship Between the Respondents' Demographic Profile and Their Perceived Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness

Table 4. Significant Relationship Between the Respondents' Sex and their Perceived Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness

QUALITY ASSURANCE ASPECTS	CHI-SQUARE TEST STATISTICS	df	SIGNIFICANCE	Cramer's V	SIGNIFICANCE
Context	9.738 *	4	.04 5	.26 1	.076
Leadership	7.815 *	3	.05 0	.23 5	.076
Planning	7.630	4	.10 6	.23 1	.159
Support	3.787	4	.43 6	.16 3	.513
Operation	3.774	3	.28 7	.16 8	.323
Performance Evaluation	3.387	4	.49 5	.14 2	.642
Continuous Improvement	7.664	4	.10 5	.22 3	.186

*significant at the .05 level

As shown in Table 4, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between sex of the respondents and their perceived level of quality assurance preparedness along Context and Leadership is hereby rejected as manifested in their significance values of .045 and .050 respectively. The rejection of the hypothesis means that sex somehow influences their perception along these indicators. However, when Cramer's V values were computed to show how strong the association is between sex and the quality assurance aspects, data yielded weak to moderate association and significance values of .076 for Context and Leadership which means

that the association is not significant. Therefore, it is not safe to say that their level of preparedness is dependent on sex.

Other indicators of quality assurance showed no significant relationship with sex of the respondents. Specifically, the indicators such as Planning, Support, Operation, Performance Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement generated significant values greater than the set alpha of .05. This implies that respondents' sex is independent from their level of preparedness along these QA indicators.

Table 5. Significant Relationship Between the Respondents' Civil Status and their Perceived Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness

QUALITY ASSURANCE ASPECTS	CHI-SQUARE TEST STATISTICS	df	SIGNIFICANCE	Cramer's V	SIGNIFICANCE
Context	10.39 2	8	.23 9	.20 4	.24 4
Leadership	6.499	6	.37 0	.16 1	.37 5
Planning	5.768	8	.67 3	.15 7	.63 8
Support	8.105	8	.42 3	.17 4	.48 4
Operation	6.697	6	.35 0	.17 3	.28 1
Performance Evaluation	4.513	8	.80 8	.13 2	.82 9
Continuous Improvement	6.262	8	.61 8	.15 6	.63 9

*significant at the .05 level

It can be observed that civil status is not significantly related to the respondents' level of quality assurance preparedness along the seven aspects as manifested by the significance level greater than .05. This means that their level of preparedness along Context, Leadership, Planning, Support, Operation, Performance Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement is independent from their civil status.

Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the two variables is not rejected. The non-rejection of the hypothesis implies that being single, married, or

widow/er does not determine level of quality assurance preparedness.

Presented in Table 6 is relationship between other demographic profile variables such as age, years in the position, highest educational attainment, and number of QMS-related seminars/trainings/workshops/conferences attended. Data revealed that age is significantly related to respondents' level of preparedness along all quality assurance aspects, except Planning, as indicated by their p-values which are less than .05 level. This

Table 6. Significant Relationship Between the Respondents' Demographic Profile in terms of Age, Number of Years in the Position, Highest Educational Attainment, and Number of QMS-related seminars/ trainings/ workshops/conferences Attended to their Perceived Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness

QUALITY ASSURANCE ASPECTS	AGE		YEARS IN THE POSITION		HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		NUMBER OF QMS-RELATED SEMINARS, ETC	
	ρ	p-value	ρ	p-value	ρ	p-value	ρ	p-value
• Context	.373**	.000	.140	.121	.281**	.002	.340**	.000
• Leadership	.255**	.004	-	.968	.222*	.013	.277**	.002
			.004					
• Planning	.172	.056	-	.598	.170	.059	.195*	.030
			.048					
• Support	.266**	.003	.027	.769	.238**	.008	.275**	.002
• Operation	.261**	.003	-	.770	.235**	.009	.336**	.000
			.026					
• Performance Evaluation	.206*	.021	-	.862	.168	.062	.281**	.002
			.016					
• Continuous Improvement	.243**	.007	-	.724	.240**	.007	.343**	.000
			.032					

*significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

means that age determines level of preparedness along Context, Leadership, Support, Operation, Performance Evaluation, and Continuous

Improvement. Planning, on the other hand, is independent of age.

In terms of years in the position, Table 6 shows no significant relationship of this profile variable to level of quality assurance preparedness as reflected in the p-values of

greater than the set alpha; hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, it can be said that respondents' level of preparedness is not influenced by the number of years they have spent in their position.

Likewise, it can be gleaned from the table that the highest educational attainment of respondents and their level of preparedness along five aspects, to wit: Context, Leadership, Support, Operation, and Continuous Improvement are significantly related as evidenced by the p-values of .002, .013, .008, .009, .007 respectively. On the contrary, no significant relationship exists between highest educational attainment of respondents and their level of preparedness along Planning and Performance Evaluation.

Interestingly, the number of QMS-related seminars/trainings/workshops/ conferences is found to influence respondents' level of preparedness along all aspects of quality assurance. All aspects yielded p-values lower than .05 level; hence, rejecting the null hypothesis. This finding highlights the need to

conduct necessary seminars, trainings, etc. to both top managers and rank-and-file employees to prepare them in the ISO certification. Through Table 7. Difference in the Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness by the Top Managers and the Rank-and-file Employees

seminars/trainings, employees will better understand the quality assurance tool and the certification process. Moreover, these trainings will serve as an avenue for employees to understand their roles and responsibilities. If they understand their roles, the better they will perform and the better their outputs will be.

Significant Difference Between the Perceived Level of Quality Assurance Preparedness by the Top Managers and the Rank And File Employees

Table 7 shows the difference in the level of preparedness between the top managers and rank-and-file employees.

It can be gleaned from the table that the overall mean rank in the level of preparedness of the top managers was 76.24 with a sum of rank of 3964.50 while that of the rank-and-file employees was 52.58 with a sum of rank of 3785.50, which indicates that top managers have higher level of preparedness as compared to the rank-and-file. Moreover, the table shows that there is a significant difference between the level of preparedness between the top managers and the rank-and-file employees as revealed by the significance level of .000, which is lower than the prescribed significance of .05.

ASPECTS	GROUPS COMPARED	MEAN RANK	SUM OF RANKS	MANN-WHITNEY U	SIGNIFICANCE	REMARKS
Context	Top Managers	73.90	3843.00	1279.000*	.002	Significant
	Rank-and-File	54.26	3907.00			
Leadership	Top Managers	73.50	3822.00	1300.000*	.003	Significant
	Rank-and-File	54.56	3928.00			
Planning	Top Managers	78.69	4092.00	1030.000*	.000	Significant

	vs. Rank-and- File	50.8 1	3658.0 0			
Support	Top Managers vs. Rank-and- File	75.86 52.85	3944.50 3805.50	1177.500 *	.000	Significan t
	Top Managers vs. Rank-and- File	74.5 4	3876.0 0	1246.000 *	.001	Significan t
Performanc e Evaluation	Top Managers vs. Rank-and- File	77.7 8	4044.5 0	1077.500 *	.000	Significan t
	Top Managers vs. Rank-and- File	72.9 5	3793.5 0	1328.500 *	.005	Significan t
Continuous Improveme nt	Top Managers vs. Rank-and- File	54.9 5	3956.5 0			
	Top Managers vs. Rank-and- File	76.2 4	3964.5 0	1157.500 *	.000	Significan t
Overall	Top Managers vs. Rank-and- File	52.58	3785.5 0			

****Significant at .05 level***

Thus, the hypothesis stating no significant difference in the level of preparedness between the top managers and rank-and-file employees is rejected. Findings imply that the top managers and rank-and-file employees have different levels of preparedness along the seven aspects of quality assurance.

**CONCLUSIONS
AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Top management is largely occupied by middle-aged employees who have attained the highest educational degree whereas rank-and file employees are relatively young and new in the SDOs.

DepEd is female-dominated, both in the top management and rank-and-file group. Further, the top managers have been given more access to seminars/trainings etc. in quality assurance mechanism.

The respondents have varied perceptions on the extent of availability of QMS in Pangasinan SDOs. Perceptions of the top managers on the QA preparedness of Pangasinan SDOs are different from those of the rank-and-file employees.

Civil status and years in the position are not determinants of the level of respondents' quality assurance preparedness. However, other profile variables such as sex, age, highest

educational attainment, and number of QMS-related

seminars/trainings, have influence on their level of quality assurance preparedness along varied aspects.

The top managers have higher level of preparedness in quality assurance certification than rank-and-file employees.

In the light of the aforementioned, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

Proper trainings and seminars especially for the untrained top managers and rank-and-file employees should be conducted to improve the practice and increase awareness on the quality management of the institutions.

Benchmarking activities in ISO certified institutions may be done to further improve the QMS practices in the SDOs of Pangasinan.

Pangasinan SDOs should apply for ISO certification to ensure that their services and products meet international standards.

A similar study maybe conducted in all SDOs of DepEd Region 1 before going through ISO certification or any other quality assurance accreditation to devise a plan that works better for all employees and the agency as a whole.

Future researchers should conduct studies on the status or effects of ISO Implementation not only in the regional and division offices of DepEd but more importantly in the schools.

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