

A Proposed Framework of Faith-Based School Leadership Model (FBSLM)

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ABSTRACT

Existing models for educational leadership often struggle to capture the nuanced, faith-driven dynamics at play within religious school systems. To address this, the present paper puts forward a new conceptual framework for studying leadership in faith-based institutions, one that was derived directly from a qualitative, descriptive-narrative study of school principals in the South-Central Luzon Conference (SCLC) of the Philippines. This proposed framework moves beyond traditional theories by centering on a "Divine Calling" as the primary motivating driver of leadership. From this core, a unified practice of Spiritual and Instructional Leadership emerges, which is constantly shaped by external

Contextual Factors such as culture, society, and economics. This integrated practice ultimately leads to the creation of holistic best practices and a resilient, effective Adventist learning environment. As an empirically-grounded model, it offers a more accurate and contextually-aware tool for anyone seeking to understand and cultivate effective leadership in similar settings.

Keywords: *Faith-Based Education, Educational Leadership, Divine Calling, Spiritual Leadership, Philippine Education*

INTRODUCTION

The Need for an Empirically-Grounded Model

While the field of educational leadership is rich with research, there is a noticeable scarcity of models that truly capture the unique spirit of faith-based schools. Principals in institutions like Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) schools carry a dual mandate: they are expected to ensure academic rigor while also serving as the spiritual fulcrum of their communities (Gümüş et al., 2024; Shula et al., 2022). This requires a style of leadership that conventional administrative or instructional models do not fully encompass. While theories such as Servant Leadership offer a valuable philosophical starting point (Greenleaf, 2002), they

can lack the specificity needed to analyze leadership within a particular cultural and organizational setting, like that of the Philippines (Cimene et al., 2023).

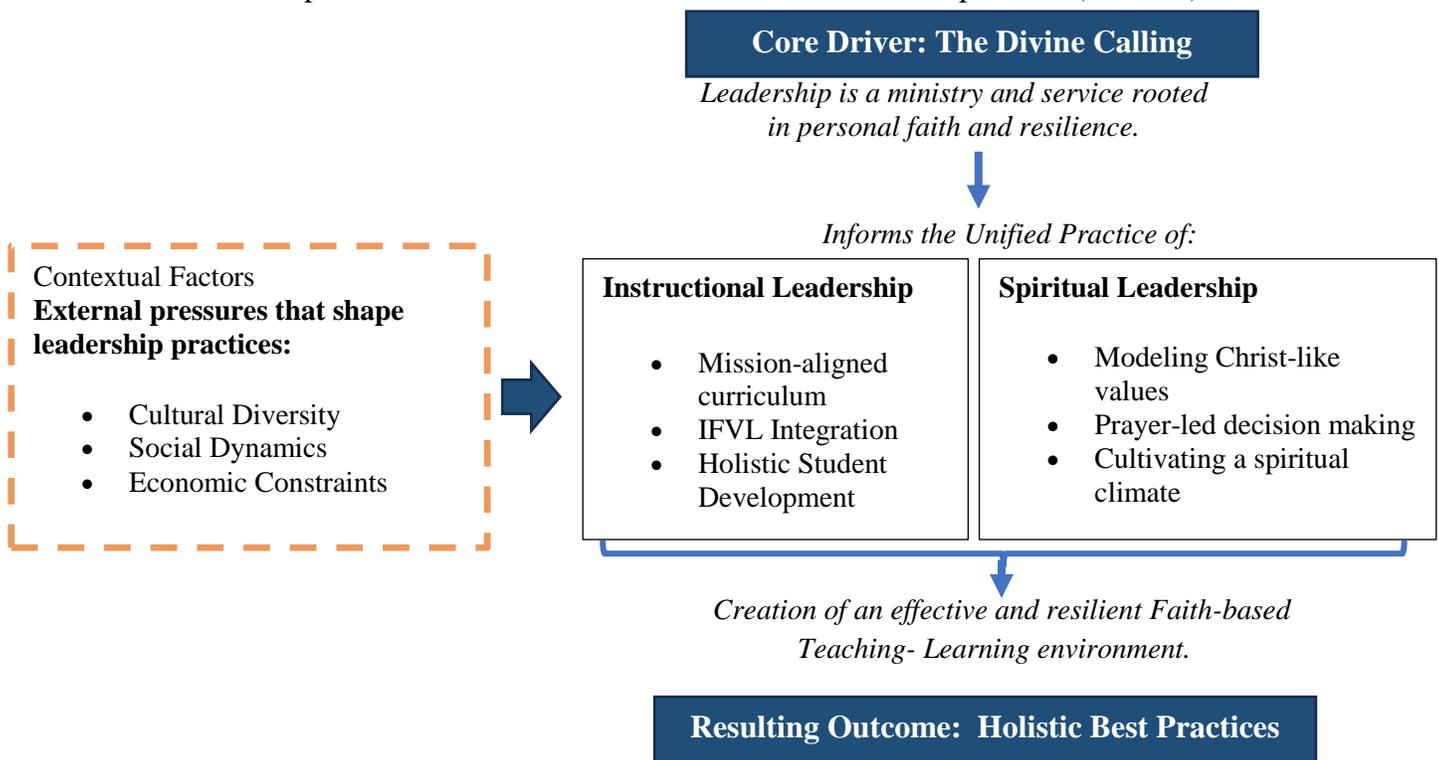
The findings from a foundational study on the lived experiences of principals in the SCLC, however, pointed toward a distinct and powerful leadership model. It became clear that their practices were animated by something deeper than theoretical knowledge—a profound sense of purpose and ministry. This paper, therefore, sets forth a new conceptual framework that arises directly from these empirical findings. It is not a top-down application of theory but a bottom-up construction of reality, offering a more authentic lens for future research (Susada, 2023).

A Proposed Framework of Integrated Adventist Leadership

The proposed framework, detailed in the table below, presents an integrated model of leadership rooted in the specific realities that Adventist principals in the SCLC face. It is composed of four keys, interacting components.

Table 1: The Proposed Framework of Integrated Faith-based Leadership

A Proposed Framework of Faith-Based School Leadership Model (FBSLM)



Component 1: The Core Driver — The Divine Calling

At the very heart of the framework lies the central motivating force identified in the study: the “Divine Calling.” This is something more than professional commitment; it is a deeply held conviction that leadership is a form of ministry, a personal calling from God.

Definition: This sense of calling was found to be the wellspring of their resilience, purpose, and humility. It has the power to transform administrative tasks into acts of stewardship and provides the perseverance needed to navigate immense challenges. As the principals in the study noted, their role was not a job they sought but rather a journey God was using to shape them personally and professionally.

Implication: Unlike other models that begin with leadership styles, this framework suggests that for these leaders, their internal spiritual conviction is the primary engine for everything that follows.

Component 2: The External Pressures — Contextual Factors

The framework makes it clear that leadership is not practiced in a vacuum. The Core Driver is constantly being influenced by a set of powerful external pressures. These are the specific contextual factors that emerged from the study:

Cultural Diversity: The necessity of leading mixed-faith communities with sensitivity while preserving the core Adventist identity.

Social Dynamics: The critical importance of building and maintaining strong alliances with parents, the local church, and community sponsors.

Economic Constraints: The universal challenge of navigating financial limitations, which in turn forces resourcefulness, innovation and reliance on faith.

Component 3: The Unified Practice — Integrated Leadership Pillars

Flowing from the Divine Calling and shaped by these contextual factors is the actual practice of leadership. The study revealed that these principals do not compartmentalize their duties. Instead, they engage in a unified practice that integrates two core pillars:

Spiritual Leadership: This pillar includes the observable practices of modeling Christ-like values, grounding decisions in prayer, and intentionally cultivating a spiritual climate through worship and other school activities.

Instructional Leadership: This pillar encompasses ensuring a mission-aligned curriculum, fostering the integration of faith and learning in all subjects, and guiding teachers toward the holistic development of every student (Knight, 2015).

The framework illustrates that these pillars are interdependent; instructional decisions are consistently filtered through a spiritual lens, and spiritual goals are achieved through the academic program.

Component 4: The Resulting Outcome — Holistic Best Practices

The effective integration of these components—driven by the Divine Calling and adapted to contextual pressures—results in the framework's final outcome: the creation of an effective and resilient Adventist teaching-learning environment. This outcome is characterized by holistic best practices that address the spiritual, intellectual, and social needs of the students.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

This empirically-derived framework offers a valuable tool for both scholars and practitioners.

For Researchers: It provides a more nuanced model for studying faith-based leadership and invites research questions that move beyond generic inquiries. One might ask, for example, *how does the strength of a principal's "Divine Calling" mediate the negative effects of economic constraints on school performance?* Or, *which adaptive strategies are most effective when cultural pressures conflict with mission fidelity?* This framework can be tested, refined, and adapted for use in other faith-based educational contexts globally.

For Practitioners: It serves as a powerful tool for professional development and self-reflection. Aspiring and current principals can use this model to assess their own leadership, asking themselves: *Is my leadership truly rooted in a sense of calling? How am I actively integrating my spiritual and instructional roles? How am I adapting to my school's unique context?* It provides a clear roadmap for leadership that is both spiritually authentic and practically effective.

CONCLUSION

The leadership required to guide a faith-based school is both complex and deeply personal. The proposed Framework of Integrated Adventist Leadership offers a model that honors this complexity. By moving beyond abstract theories and grounding itself in the lived experiences of principals in the Philippines, this framework provides a more authentic, relevant, and powerful tool for understanding and cultivating leadership as ministry. It is offered as a contribution to the field, with the hope that it will inspire further research and support the vital work of school leaders in faith-based communities around the world.

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