

# Providing Quality Education: Mission of Catholic Schools

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**Abstract:** *Quality education transforms every individual. Positive transformation is the goal of educational institutions, including Catholic schools. This study aims to show a selected Catholic School's contributions in giving quality education to their students. The study measured the satisfaction of parents as their children receive instruction in the respective school. A survey questionnaire is used for this research objective. The researchers conducted a survey and analyzed the results of the respondents. Respondents of this study are randomly selected parents who enrolled their children in a selected Catholic school for the school year 2019-2020. The findings affirmed the critical role that a Catholic school performs to achieve quality Catholic education and ensure compelling vigor in responding to its evangelical mission. Hence, the active involvement of the school community members to this effect in maintaining the Catholic identity of the school. It also that culture and content are essential in providing quality education. In the end, this research would like to commend some ways and practices of the selected Catholic school in nurturing and continuously practicing unique qualities of a Catholic school that made parents decided to enroll their children in a Catholic school. Thus, a school that provides quality Catholic aims to promote dialogue, harmony, and understanding among different beliefs, particularly for strengthening the mission of Catholic Schools. Overall, the study shows positive responses and validated quality education among the students.*

**Keywords:** inclusion, education, dialogue, transformation

## INTRODUCTION

To address the needs of society, schools must prioritize education. As part of the historical perspective of the Philippine educational system, the Department of Education (DepEd) illustrated the situation of education during the pre-Magellanic times wherein "education was informal, unstructured and devoid of methods" [1]. During this time, children were given more in terms of 'vocational pieces of training' rather than 'academics' by their parents or 'tribal tutors.' Moreover, the Republic of the Philippines Department of Education pictured how the pre-Spanish education system underwent significant changes during the Spanish colonization [1]. It was mentioned on their website that the Spanish Missionaries replaced the tribal tutors. At this time, education was religion-oriented. However, education in this time can only be accessed by the rich people, especially in the early years of Spanish colonization. "Access to education by the Filipinos was later liberalized through the enactment of the Educational Decree of 1863 which provided for the establishment of at least one primary school for boys and girls in each town under the responsibility of the municipal government; and the establishment of a normal school for male teachers under the supervision of the Jesuits" [1]. This is how the Catholic schools starting to develop in the

Philippines.

The missionary activities of early friars paved the way for the spread of Catholic education in the Philippines. Del Castillo mentioned that it is crucial to understand and appreciate how the Catholic faith was established and translated into native culture [2]. This development of a popular Catholic Filipino culture and various faith expressions are manifested in the Philippine context through the early missionaries' help. Catholic missionary orders have contributed a lot in spreading Christianity in the Philippines through Catholic education [2].

Looking at this segment in Philippine history, one can denote that Catholic schools help Filipino people find God daily [3]. A school is where young minds progressively learn to see the beauty of life and practice virtuous actions. Catholic school continues to pursue artistic goals for the formation and development of the students. The uniqueness of Catholic schools permeates a community climate grounded in the Gospel teachings [4]. Catholic schools are also characterized as an educating community that provides a humane experience to develop the community members. It is a place where authentic dialogue, compassionate care, and active fellowship are present. These qualities are necessary for transformational and quality education.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper aims to present the mission of Catholic schools in providing quality Christian education in the Philippines. This paper also shows specifically in one of the Catholic schools and how the school offers a quality Catholic education. This paper will even hope to contribute to the literature on religious education by answering the questions: 1) What elements of catholic education are important considerations from the parents' perspective? And 2) What school activities are beneficial in the transformation of students?

### *The Mission of the Catholic Education in a Catholic Schools*

Education is tremendously changing because of many factors that challenge educators. Pittau emphasized these challenges in education today have three essential education elements. These elements are message, community, and service [5]. Transmission of the message should be clear to provide quality communication. This is essential in making the message understandable from the messenger to the recipients. The educative community must be ready to take responsibility, especially in the children's formation under their care. Service is vital in school activities. It supports the schools' mission, which is to respond to the needs of the community members.

Amidst these challenges, Pope Paul VI pointed out Catholic education's primary mission in his apostolic exhortation [6]. Catholic education's mission is to evangelize. It means that people are assisted in gaining spiritual growth, leading to an integral formation [4]. To acquire Christian education, the Catholic school gives the venue in achieving an authentic Catholic culture.

Schools are children's second home, and the teachers are their second parents. Catholic schools provide opportunities for new learning. They form a portion of the salvific mission of the Church, especially for the formation of children. Integration of faith and culture is essential to make learning possible [6]. Pope Paul VI added that education is the primary concern of the Church because it has the duty of proclaiming the way of salvation to all men, the Church as a mother is under an obligation. Therefore, to provide for its children an education by which their whole lives may be inspired by the spirit of Christ [7]. Its goal is to provide primary education to form children's holistic development attuned to society's needs. Pope John Paul II also emphasized the catholic schools' role as a second

home as they serve as a community that disseminates knowledge and practice values. It is also the Catholic schools' mission to bring salvation among the people they cater for the good of the world [8].

However, the Declaration on Religious Freedom stated that human being has the right to religious freedom [7]. Family members have the privilege unreservedly to choose and carry on with a strict life under parental concern and direction [7]. Guardians benefit from figuring out what sort of rigorous instruction they need for their youngsters to get. With this, everybody does not reserve the privilege to force in any explanation either the school itself. In his article, James Kent Donlevy discussed the ten measurements to consideration that make an 'intuitive matrix' [9]. It tells that even Catholic schools are intended to give quality Christian education, they also have the responsibility to welcome and respect non-Catholic students [9]. He further said that inclusion is necessary for the common good. It is the commitment of the organizations that benefit all people, whatever their faith belief is. Hence, schools should include the inclusion of non-Catholic students in the curriculum. Pope John Paul II supports this. He said ecumenical responsibility in the Church is in solidarity with the world [10].

The 2018 survey shows the school's parents' view by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, California [11]. The study shows that there are three main characteristics that they search for in a school among parents. These characteristics are (1) building good character and virtue, (2) offering an excellent academic curriculum, and (3) having a great teaching staff and administration. They also added that parents love religious education in their child's curriculum [11]. From this information, parents are keen on sending their children to Catholic schools because they are extensively seen in the school community. Building good character, a quality academic curriculum, excellent staff & teachers, and a safe school community are also positive elements. Given this, the researchers explored how a selected Catholic school offers Catholic education to Catholic and non-Catholic learners. This paper also hopes to contribute to the literature on religious education by answering the questions: 1) What elements of catholic education are important considerations from the parents' perspective? And 2) What school activities are beneficial in the transformation of students?

## METHODS

This exploratory research shows the perception of parents towards the quality of education was identified and discussed. The researchers utilized survey questions and analyzed the responses. The gathered information was then examined. This strategy gave meaning to why Catholic and non-Catholic parents and guardians chose the selected catholic school for their children.

This study's respondents are the randomly selected non-Catholic and Catholic parents of a Catholic school in Manila. Out of 20 parents who were given the letter, only 12 parents agreed to participate in the survey. The respondents' ages range from 25 to 35 years old. In compliance with data privacy, a letter of consent and confidentiality were given and answered by the respondents. The researchers gave the survey through online google forms.

### *Instrument*

The researchers formulated a survey questionnaire. To validate the reliability of the questions, subject matter experts were asked to check the problems. There are two open-ended questions that the respondents answered. These are 1) What are the qualities of a catholic school you consider before enrolling your child? Why? 2) What are the activities of the catholic school and how satisfied are you with those? After which, the researchers added a self-rating questionnaire to check the difference in the answers between Catholic and non-Catholic parents. The researchers then analyzed responses, and new insights were generated from the data.

### *Data Gathering*

The nature of the study was explained to the participants prior to data. Informed consent was obtained from the participants. The researchers collaborated with the guidance office to identify who among them were non-Catholics and non-Christian. Twenty parents were then invited to participate in the research through a letter of consent. Upon agreeing, the researcher distributed the survey questionnaire to the respondents and collated them a week after validation and analysis. Ethical considerations were made to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the respondents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey results showed that parents were able to identify several characteristics of good Catholic

schools. Based on their answers, parents should see that the school builds good character and value among their children. Priority is given to character building because they value the formation of their children.

Based on the respondents' survey, parents' value five qualities of a Catholic school when enrolling their child in the institution (See Figure 1). These qualities are 1) building good character and value, 2) offering an excellent academic curriculum, 3) having a great teaching staff and administrator, 4) learning environment, and 5) more opportunities for exposure. These qualities may be grouped into two categories, namely: culture and content. Convey identified these categories as components of a catholic school identity [12]. Culture is recognized as a unique atmosphere animated by the Gospel, supported by the faith community. This is in harmony with the faith and life of each member of the community. Convey argued that the nature of a catholic school should have a distinct Catholic culture. In the context of the selected catholic school, numbers 1, 4, and 5 are part of the culture component that Convey mentioned. The second component is content. According to Convey, content refers to the curriculum of the school. This is critical, especially in the transmission of the knowledge and gospel message [12]. The systematic teaching of content is necessary to form the identity of a catholic school. Content is also composed of the primary drivers of education: the administrators, teachers, and staff. School leaders and teachers are responsible for shaping the school culture by providing content to the students.

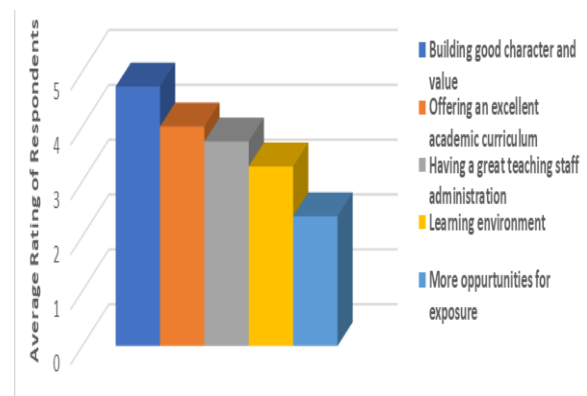


Figure 1: *Qualities of Catholic School*

Figure 1 shows that the parent-respondents perceived the culture of building good character among their children as the most important quality that they need. This answer had the highest score among the respondents. Since schools are said to be the second

home of the children, values and proper conduct must be taught to the educative community. Moreover, as Pope Paul IV pointed out, the catholic school's primary responsibility is to evangelize. This calls for an action that requires teaching the ways of Christ [6]. Christ exemplified Christian love, and this includes loving the least, the lost, and the last.

The second quality that the parent-respondents perceived as necessary is the offering of an excellent curriculum. Convey argued that content is needed for the transmission of knowledge [12]. The systematic organization of the curriculum is essential to help the students adapt to society's changing needs. This will equip the learners with the skills to navigate in life.

The third quality of a catholic school that parent-respondent perceived to be important is teachers and staff's quality. The administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders are necessary for the success of the school. They must possess the right attitude in serving both the parents and students. Giving their best for the transformation of children is salient in the achievement of quality education.

The fourth answer is the learning environment. Quality of education is felt in the condition of the learning environment. This is seen and felt in the culture that the community is promoting. The diverse locations may be inside the classroom or outside, be safe, and promote peace and self-development. A positive relationship between the teachers and students must exude. Infinite possibilities in learning should allow the students to express themselves and be accepted.

This leads to the last response, which is providing more growth opportunities. The Catholic school must not be a rigid community. Instead, it should allow flexibility and room for more opportunities for individual and group development. Parent-respondents agree that options made available for their children are necessary to show that a school offers quality education. As Donlevey posited, flexibility is essential in catholic schools, including ecumenism and opportunities for catholic and non-catholic students [12].

Figure 2 shows a comparison between the perception of parent-respondents who are Catholics and parent-respondents who are non-Catholic. The results show that parent-respondents who are Catholics are keener to put more emphasis on culture than content. Building good character, having the right learning environment, and providing more students opportunities are the most important qualities for them.

In comparison, parent-respondents who are non-Catholics perceived that content is more important than culture. Having an excellent curriculum and great teachers and staff are more essential for them.

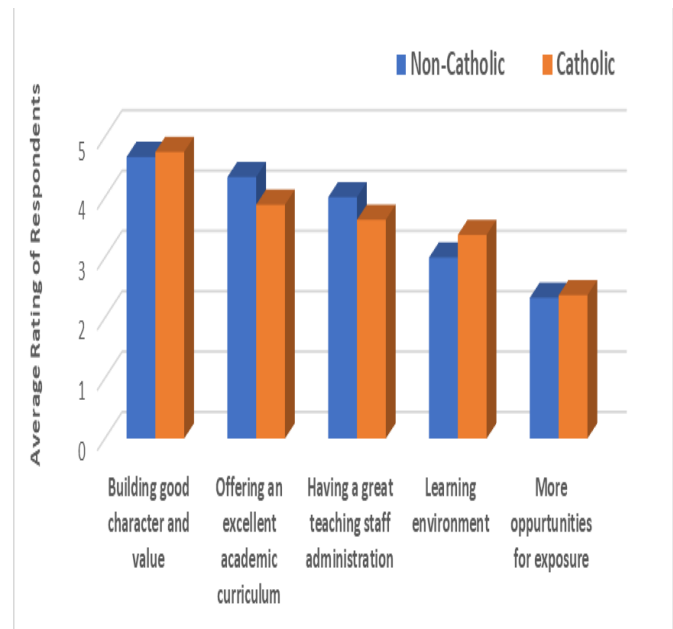


Figure 2: Comparison between non-catholic and catholic respondents

As for satisfaction with the selected catholic school activities, parent-respondents find the following activities as salient: Eucharistic celebration, first communion, catechetical week, family day, and foundation day. These are the activities that provide both culture and content in the education of the students. The activities that the respondents identified can be categorized as sacramental celebrations, which include the eucharist, confirmation, and catechetical week. In comparison, the other category is the general activity where religion is not necessarily involved. Thus, Daniel S. Mulhall highlighted that being a Catholic school must have a "dialogue in culture" wherein students are formed to have a 'strong character' and 'making a positive contribution to society [13].

Figure 4 shows the comparison between parent-respondents who are non-catholic and Catholics. The results show that Catholics' parent-respondent find the sacramental celebrations as more important than the general activities. This tells us that Catholics give importance to their faith practices and traditions that can be practiced in the liturgy and catechetical works. In contrast, parent-respondents who are non-Catholics

are most likely to approve the general activities of the school.

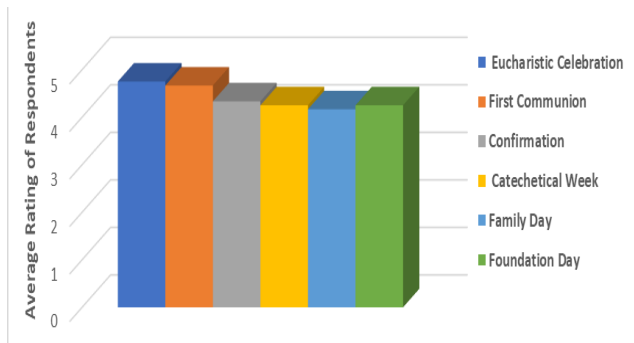


Figure 3: Satisfaction with the activities offered

This is because it does not involve faith beliefs. The data shows that sensitivity to non-Catholic students must be emphasized to have a more open dialogue among faith beliefs. Indeed, the Church in her mission is "universal" because God's love to humanity is universal [14]. "We are reminded that the mission of the Catholic school is the integration of faith, culture, and life within a unique school climate infused with a Gospel spirit of freedom and love" [15]. Whether Catholic or non-Catholic parents, they both will choose what is best for their children. They believe that Catholic schools can provide it to their children since one of the qualities of the Catholic culture of the school is being 'committed to the development of the whole person and 'cultivates human values [13].

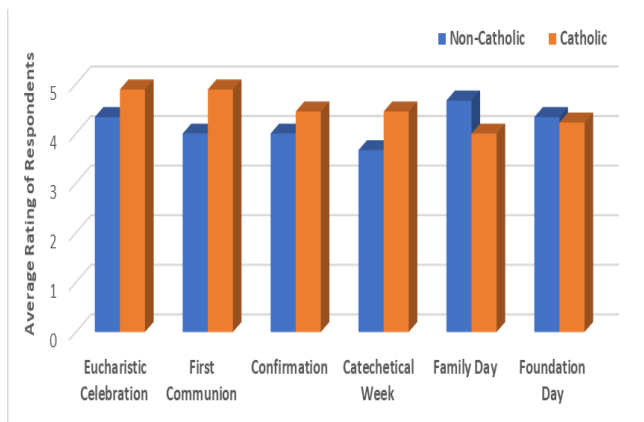


Figure 4: Comparison between Non-Catholics and Catholics

**CONCLUSIONS**

The aspects of catholic education that were considered by the parent-respondents can be categorized into culture and content. Culture shows that building character, having a suitable learning

environment, and providing students with opportunities are essential in the school's quality education to the students. However, the results also show that parent-respondents who are Catholics tend to prioritize more the cultural elements of catholic education. On the other hand, parent-respondents of non-Catholics perceived that content is salient in their children's education.

The study also shows that the respondents find the school activities beneficial in the transformation of their children. They have identified several activities that are categorized into sacramental and general activities. Parents who are Catholics give more importance to the sacramental activities, including the Holy Mass and other sacraments. In contrast, parents who are non-Catholic perceived that the general activities will benefit their children more. This only shows that the selected Catholic school's mission in providing quality education is present and affirmed by the high school of parents in the survey. Both culture and content are current and offered in the school. Pope John Paul II reiterated that every Catholic school's central commitment is to evangelize and form the holistic development of each individual [8]. For this to happen, cooperation among the school's stakeholders is needed in every activity offered by the school for students' holistic development.

Quality education will not be possible if both parties are not willing to take their part. Thus, this study shows that this is present and active in the educational community. This research will only spotlight the respondents' insights in relation to the quality education provided by the selected Catholic school. Thus, the respondents underscored their reasons for choosing a Catholic school for their children and how satisfied they were with the school's activities.

On the other hand, the findings of this study have several important implications for all Catholic schools around the globe, which serves as a basis or guide in measuring its own unique identities as a Catholic school and the activities that they offered for the "holistic development" of every person [7]. Therefore, it is recommended that the school administrators initiate further studies to enhance their leadership and governance skills to manage the operation of the Catholic school efficiently in fulfilling the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ. It is also recommended to continue the commitment to practice inclusive education that caters to all students regardless of their faith belief. As James Kent Donlevy said, "Yet in Catholic schools, the position may be taken that a

willingness to hear and understand other voices and perspectives, Christian and non-Christian alike, while espousing within the Catholic school the theological singularity of one's faith, are not incommensurable" [16]. Thus, this study shows that this is present and active in the educational community. It is also recommended to continue the commitment to practice inclusive education that caters to all students regardless of their faith belief.

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