Assessing the Needs for a Leadership Training Platform: Empowering Church Leaders for Effective Ministry

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Abstract— This study evaluates the necessity and potential impact of developing a Leadership Training Platform for lay leaders within the Diocese of Cabanatuan. The research addresses the significant leadership gaps and the technological readiness of the diocese's 15,000 potential lay leaders who assist in ministry roles. Recognizing the limitations of traditional leadership training methods, the study highlights the advantages of an online platform that offers flexibility, scalability, and accessibility. Through quantitative research involving 122 lay leaders, the study identifies the importance of interactive content, multimedia tools, certification, and alternative methods such as simulations and role-playing. The findings indicate a strong preference for flexible, technology-driven leadership development and emphasize the need for robust technical support and high-quality content to ensure the platform's effectiveness. By integrating these elements, the platform can empower lay leaders to serve their communities more effectively and foster sustainable church growth.

Index Terms— **Lay leaders, Leadership, Ministry, Needs Assessment, Online Platform, Web-based Solution.**

1. Introduction

Leadership is a vital component in the growth and sustainability of any organization, including churches. Effective leadership within the church not only fosters spiritual growth but also ensures the successful administration and outreach of ministry activities. However, many churches face challenges in developing leaders who are adequately equipped to handle the diverse and evolving needs of modern congregations. These challenges often stem from a lack of structured leadership development programs that address both the spiritual and administrative aspects of church leadership.

The Diocese of Cabanatuan, a prominent religious jurisdiction in the Philippines, oversees a network of parishes and communities where lay leadership plays a crucial role in ministry. With over 15,000 potential lay leaders, there is a significant need to provide structured, consistent, and accessible leadership training. These lay leaders, who assist priests and lead various ministries and outreach programs, are central to the growth and vitality of their parishes. However, without adequate training, they may struggle to fulfill their roles effectively, leading to gaps in leadership, ministry coordination, and community engagement.

The importance of leadership training in faith-based organizations has been extensively discussed in academic literature. According to [1] Barna Group (2020), churches face increasing leadership challenges, especially in adapting to the changing cultural and technological landscape. Leadership within churches must evolve from solely spiritual guidance to administrative and strategic oversight to ensure ministry effectiveness in the digital age. A study by [3] Drucker and White (2019) highlighted that church leaders who receive continuous training are better equipped to manage resources, engage with their congregations, and foster sustainable growth.

The role of technology in leadership training has also become an emerging area of focus. Research by [4] Goh and Sandars (2021) underscores that technology-driven learning platforms have revolutionized the education sector, with e-learning tools becoming an integral part of leadership development programs. In religious settings, technology offers the advantage of flexibility, allowing leaders to access training materials at their convenience. In addition, [2] Brown and Jacobson (2018) note that online platforms facilitate peer collaboration, mentorship, and interactive learning—elements crucial to developing holistic leadership competencies.

While traditional leadership training methods like workshops and retreats are still relevant, they are often constrained by time, location, and financial resources [6] (Ramos, 2020). The transition to digital platforms addresses these limitations by providing cost-effective, scalable, and more inclusive solutions. Additionally, [7] Pew Research Center (2020) found that digital platforms enable continuous learning, which is vital for lay leaders who need ongoing development as they balance their ministry roles with other personal and professional responsibilities.

Given these developments, it becomes increasingly evident that the integration of technology in leadership training is not just an option but a necessity. However, it is crucial to first assess the technological readiness of church leaders before implementing any digital platform. Studies by [5] Johnson and Smith (2017) indicate that successful technology adoption in training programs depends on users' access to technology, their digital literacy, and the availability of relevant content. This

highlights the need for a comprehensive technology needs assessment to ensure the effectiveness of a leadership training platform tailored for church leaders.

In today's increasingly digital world, integrating technology into the leadership training of lay leaders is essential to addressing existing gaps. Traditional methods of training, such as in-person workshops and seminars, while valuable, are often limited by geographical constraints, time availability, and resource allocation. A digital Leadership Training Platform can overcome these limitations by providing flexible, scalable, and easily accessible resources that fit the schedules and needs of busy lay leaders. Through the use of technology, church leaders can access training materials, participate in virtual workshops, engage in peer collaboration, and receive ongoing mentorship, all through a centralized online platform.

The integration of technology not only makes leadership development more accessible but also enhances the quality of training by offering dynamic, interactive content and personalized learning experiences. Moreover, digital tools can help track progress, provide feedback, and ensure that the training stays relevant to the evolving needs of modern ministry. However, to effectively implement such a platform, it is crucial to understand the specific technological requirements and readiness of the target users.

This paper serves as a technology needs assessment for developing a Leadership Training Platform for the Diocese of Cabanatuan's lay leaders. It aims to evaluate the current leadership development gaps, the technological capabilities of potential users, and the specific tools and resources required to create an effective digital training solution. By conducting this needs assessment, the research will provide valuable insights into the technological infrastructure, user preferences, and potential barriers that need to be addressed, laying the groundwork for the successful deployment of a technology-driven leadership training initiative. The findings will guide the development of a platform that empowers both ordained and lay leaders to serve more effectively, fostering stronger ministry and community engagement across the diocese.

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do the accessibility and flexibility of an online platform impact the participation and completion rates of church leadership training among lay leaders in the Diocese of Cabanatuan?
2. Identify the relationship of the quality of content and the perceived effectiveness of the online training with the satisfaction and learning outcomes.
3. How does the level of technology readiness, including access to devices and internet, and the availability of technical support, affect the willingness and ability of lay leaders to participate in online church leadership training?
4. How does the availability of certification and formal recognition in online church leadership training influence the likelihood of lay leaders enrolling in and recommending such programs to others?
5. How does the inclusion of alternative training methods, such as simulations and role-playing, in online church leadership programs differ across different levels of development of leadership skills among lay leaders?
6. What desired features can be included in the leadership training platform?

2. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to assess the technology needs for developing a Leadership Training Platform for lay leaders in the Diocese of Cabanatuan. The quantitative approach is suitable for this research as it allowed the collection of measurable data to identify patterns, trends, and relationships regarding the leadership training needs and technological readiness of the lay leaders. By using numerical data, the study quantifies the perceptions and attitudes of participants, providing statistically valid insights that can inform the platform's development.

The participants in this study included 122 lay leaders from various parishes within the Diocese of Cabanatuan. These individuals were selected because they are actively involved in church ministry and play key roles in assisting priests and leading various outreach activities. A representative sample of the population of lay leaders was drawn using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that the results could be generalized to the wider population.

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary tool for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data about the participants' leadership training experiences, their perceived gaps in leadership development, and their technological readiness for adopting a digital platform for training. The structured format of the questionnaire ensured that all participants responded to the same set of questions, allowing for consistent data collection.

To ensure that the questionnaire produced reliable results, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of lay leaders. This preliminary testing helped identify any ambiguities or misunderstandings in the questions, ensuring that the tool captured the necessary data accurately. After gathering feedback from the pilot test, revisions were made to improve clarity and coherence.

Following the pilot testing, the reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, a statistical method used to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.973 was computed using SPSS, indicative of acceptable reliability.

Once the questionnaire had been validated and its reliability tested, it was distributed to the participants through online surveys. The responses were collected and recorded for quantitative analysis. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using percentages to summarize the responses and identify the distribution of the data.

In addition to the quantitative data collection, interviews were conducted with the parish priest and the Director of the Commission on Evangelization, Fr. Mike Veneracion, to gather insights regarding the desired features of the Leadership Training Platform. The interviews focused on essential components such as content management, PDF transcripts of

lessons, uploading and updating questions, a chat room for participants and facilitators, video discussions, progress reporting, completion recognition, and certification, user account roles, opening new batches of trainees, and offering advanced courses.

The results from the statistical analysis provided actionable insights into the specific leadership training needs of lay leaders and their level of technological readiness. These insights, combined with the qualitative data gathered from the interviews, will guide the development of a Leadership Training Platform that is responsive to the unique needs of the Diocese of Cabanatuan's lay leaders.

3. Results

The responses gathered on the Accessibility and Flexibility of Online Training reflect the general sentiment and preferences of lay leaders towards adopting an online church leadership training platform.

The Table 1 shows the summary percentage of the responses on the Accessibility and Flexibility of Online Training.

The survey results reflect a strong inclination toward the accessibility and flexibility offered by online church leadership training. A significant majority, 51.64% strongly agreed and 42.62% agreed, that an online platform would allow them to access leadership training from any location, underscoring the value of geographic flexibility. Similarly, 95.08% of respondents find it important to complete training at their own pace, with 45.08% strongly agreeing and 50.00% agreeing, which indicates that self-paced learning is a highly preferred option.

In terms of scheduling challenges with in-person training, responses were more mixed. While 11.48% strongly agreed and 40.98% agreed that it is difficult to attend in-person sessions due to their schedules, 41.80% disagreed, suggesting that for some participants, scheduling is not a major barrier. Despite this, there remains a clear demand for more accessible training

options in general, with 40.98% strongly agreeing and 56.56% agreeing that such options are needed in their community.

Participants also expressed a clear preference for courses that include interactive components, such as forums or live webinars. 34.43% strongly agreed and 55.74% agreed with this statement, which indicates a desire for engaging, dynamic learning environments in online formats. Finally, affordability is an important factor for many respondents. 77.87% would prefer an online course if it were more affordable than in-person options, though 22.13% expressed disagreement, suggesting that cost alone may not be the sole deciding factor.

The data points to a strong preference for the flexibility and convenience that online church leadership training offers. Respondents highly value the ability to complete training from any location and at their own pace. While scheduling challenges with in-person training are not universally felt, the demand for more accessible training remains evident. Additionally, interactive elements and affordability are key considerations for participants when evaluating online courses. This synthesis suggests that churches and training providers should consider expanding online leadership training options, incorporating interactive components, and ensuring affordability to meet the growing demand for flexible learning solutions.

The findings strongly suggest that an online leadership training platform offering flexibility, interactive elements, and affordability would positively impact the participation and completion rates among church lay leaders in the Diocese of Cabanatuan, addressing the core issues outlined in the research problem.

The survey results provide insights into participants' views on the effectiveness and quality of online church leadership training. While 19.67% strongly agreed and 49.18% agreed that online training can be as effective as in-person training, a notable 28.69% disagreed, suggesting that for a significant portion of respondents, traditional in-person training still holds an advantage in terms of effectiveness. However, when it comes to content quality, 40.16% strongly agreed and 50.82% agreed

Table 1
Accessibility and flexibility of online learning

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An online platform would allow me to access church leadership training from any location.	51.64%	42.62%	4.92%	0.82%
Being able to complete church leadership training at my own pace is important to me.	45.08%	50.00%	4.92%	0%
I find it difficult to attend in-person church leadership training sessions due to my schedule.	11.48%	40.98%	41.80%	5.74%
There is a need for more accessible church leadership training options in our community.	40.98%	56.56%	2.46%	0%
I would prefer church leadership courses that offer interactive components, such as forums or live webinars.	34.43%	55.74%	8.84%	0%
I would consider an online church leadership course if it were more affordable than in-person options.	22.13%	55.74	22.13%	0%

Table 2
Effectiveness and quality of online church leadership training

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Online training can be as effective as in-person training for church leadership.	19.67%	49.18%	28.69%	2.46%
High-quality content is more important to me than the format of the training (online vs. in-person).	40.16%	50.82%	9.02%	0%
The integration of multimedia (videos, podcasts, etc.) makes online learning more engaging for me.	31.15%	57.38%	10.66%	0.82%
Interaction with other course participants is an essential part of church leadership training for me.	40.98%	58.20%	0.82%	0%
Online discussions and collaboration would enhance my learning experience in church leadership training.	32.79%	54.92%	12.30%	0%
The ability to access additional learning resources online provides added value.	27.87%	67.21%	4.92%	0%

that high-quality content matters more to them than the format of the training, whether online or in-person. This indicates that the substance of the material is the primary concern for most participants, regardless of the mode of delivery.

The role of multimedia in enhancing engagement was also highlighted, with 31.15% strongly agreeing and 57.38% agreeing that incorporating videos, podcasts, and other multimedia elements makes online learning more engaging. Only 10.66% disagreed, showing broad support for multimedia integration. Furthermore, interaction with other participants was overwhelmingly considered an essential part of leadership training, with 40.98% strongly agreeing and 58.20% agreeing that this aspect is crucial for them.

The survey also reflected a strong belief that online discussions and collaboration would improve the learning experience, as 32.79% strongly agreed and 54.92% agreed with this statement, although a smaller percentage (12.30%) expressed disagreement. Additionally, the ability to access extra learning resources online was seen as highly valuable, with 67.21% agreeing and 27.87% strongly agreeing, while only 4.92% disagreed.

The data indicates that while some participants may still prefer in-person training for its effectiveness, there is clear support for the idea that high-quality content is more important than the format of the training. The integration of multimedia and interactive elements, such as online discussions and collaborations, are seen as significant factors that enhance the online learning experience. Participants also value the ability to access additional resources online, further underscoring the importance of creating rich, engaging, and flexible online training programs. This suggests that future church leadership training initiatives should prioritize content quality and incorporate interactive and multimedia components to ensure a more effective and engaging learning experience.

By focusing on these elements, church leadership training programs can ensure that they not only meet the needs of their participants but also contribute effectively to the development of skilled, knowledgeable leaders within the church community. Ultimately, this alignment of quality content with perceived effectiveness, engagement, and additional resources can result in increased satisfaction and better learning outcomes, creating a cycle of continuous improvement and empowerment for lay leaders in the Diocese of Cabanatuan.

The survey results regarding technology readiness and support reveal a generally positive response toward the participants' ability to engage with online training. A significant 63.11% agreed and 19.67% strongly agreed that they are comfortable using technology to access training materials and courses online, though 17.21% disagreed, suggesting that there is still a portion of the population that may struggle with technology. Similarly, 23.77% strongly agreed and 60.66% agreed that they have the necessary devices and internet connection to participate in online training, while 14.75% disagreed and a small 0.82% strongly disagreed, indicating that access to technology may still be a barrier for some.

Interestingly, the need for technical support for those who are not tech-savvy was a widely shared sentiment, with 43.44% strongly agreeing and 54.10% agreeing. Only 2.46% disagreed, emphasizing the importance of providing robust technical assistance for participants who may lack advanced technology skills.

The data suggests that while most participants are comfortable with using technology and have the necessary devices and internet access to engage in online training, a notable minority still faces challenges. The overwhelming support for the availability of technical support for less tech-savvy individuals highlights the need for training programs to include easily accessible tech assistance to ensure all participants can fully benefit from the online learning experience. By addressing these technological concerns, online leadership training can become more inclusive and effective for a broader audience.

While the majority of lay leaders are poised to take advantage of online training opportunities, ensuring that robust technical support is in place will be critical to overcoming potential obstacles related to technology use. Churches and training providers should consider implementing comprehensive support systems to assist participants in navigating online platforms effectively.

In terms of recognition, recommendations, and certification for online church leadership training, the survey reveals a strong interest in programs that offer formal recognition or certification. 19.67% strongly agreed and 61.64% agreed that they are likely to invest in online training if it provides certification or formal acknowledgment, whereas 28.69% disagreed—indicating that while the majority value

Table 3
Technology readiness and support

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am comfortable using technology to access training materials and courses online.	19.67%	63.11%	17.21%	0%
I have the necessary devices and internet connection to participate in online training courses.	23.77%	60.66%	14.75%	0.82%
There should be technical support available for participants who are not tech-savvy.	43.44%	54.10%	2.46%	0%

Table 4
Recognition, recommendation and certification for online church leadership platform

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am likely to invest in online training that offers certification or formal recognition.	19.67%	61.64%	28.69%	0%
I would actively recommend an online church leadership course to peers and colleagues.	23.77%	45.90%	30.33%	0%
Developing an online platform for church leadership training would be beneficial for our church community.	27.87%	60.66%	11.48%	0%

Table 5
Leadership development in alternative methods

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The opportunity to practice leadership skills through simulations or role-playing online would be valuable.	22.13%	65.57%	12.30%	0%
It is my desire to enhance my leadership in an alternative way.	32.79%	61.48%	5.74%	0%

certification, there is a segment that does not consider it essential.

When asked if they would actively recommend an online church leadership course to peers and colleagues, 23.77% strongly agreed and 45.90% agreed, while 30.33% disagreed. This suggests that although most respondents are likely to recommend such courses, nearly a third may be hesitant, possibly due to personal experiences or perceptions of the course's value.

Lastly, the question on whether developing an online platform for church leadership training would be beneficial for the church community garnered positive responses. 27.87% strongly agreed and 60.66% agreed, while 11.48% disagreed. This demonstrates widespread recognition of the potential value of an online platform, though a small minority may have reservations.

The data shows strong support for online church leadership training programs that offer formal certification and are recognized by peers, highlighting the importance of certification in enhancing the perceived value of such programs. While most respondents are open to recommending these courses and see the benefit of an online platform for their community, there remains a significant minority that is hesitant, underscoring the need to address concerns about the quality or effectiveness of these programs to boost broader acceptance and endorsement.

The data strongly indicates that the availability of certification and formal recognition significantly influences lay leaders' likelihood to enroll in online training and recommend such programs to others. The desire for formal recognition serves as a powerful motivator, highlighting the importance of implementing structured certification processes in online church leadership training initiatives. By ensuring that these programs offer valuable certifications, churches can enhance participation rates and foster a community that actively supports and promotes ongoing leadership development. This emphasis on recognition and community engagement is essential for developing effective online training solutions that meet the needs of lay leaders in the Diocese of Cabanatuan.

The survey results on leadership development and alternative methods show a strong preference for non-traditional ways of developing leadership skills, particularly through online simulations or role-playing. 22.13% of respondents strongly agreed and 65.57% agreed that the opportunity to practice leadership skills through online simulations or role-playing would be valuable. Only 12.30% disagreed, indicating that most participants recognize the effectiveness of such methods for practical leadership development.

Additionally, 32.79% strongly agreed and 61.48% agreed with the statement that they desire to enhance their leadership skills in an alternative way, while a small minority (5.74%) disagreed. This demonstrates a broad openness to innovative approaches to leadership training, moving away from traditional in-person formats.

The findings suggest that participants are receptive to alternative methods of leadership training, particularly through interactive online tools like simulations and role-playing. There is a strong desire for practical, hands-on approaches that allow leaders to build and refine their skills in dynamic environments. This highlights the need for leadership programs to incorporate more interactive and immersive online training opportunities, aligning with the participants' evolving preferences for leadership development.

These results indicate a strong alignment between the desire for alternative leadership enhancement methods and the recognition of the value of experiential learning opportunities in online training. Participants not only see the merit in engaging with simulations and role-playing as a means to develop their leadership skills but also express a broader interest in exploring non-traditional avenues for personal and professional growth. As such, online church leadership training programs should prioritize the incorporation of these interactive and experiential elements to cater to this demand, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience for lay leaders in the Diocese of Cabanatuan.

A. Desired Features of the Leadership Training Platform

In an insightful interview with Fr. Mike Veneracion, Parish Priest and Director of the Commission on Evangelization, several key features were identified as essential for the online church leadership training project. He emphasized the importance of a robust content management system that allows for easy organization, retrieval, and modification of training materials, ensuring that all resources are up-to-date and accessible to participants at any time. To facilitate better understanding and retention, the availability of PDF transcripts of lessons was suggested, which would serve as valuable reference materials for participants to review content at their convenience.

Fr. Veneracion also highlighted the need for a feature that allows for the uploading and updating of questions related to the course material, enabling facilitators to continuously engage with participants by addressing their inquiries and concerns in a timely manner. To foster communication and collaboration, he recommended a dedicated chat room for participants and facilitators, facilitating real-time discussions that encourage interaction and support among learners and mentors. Additionally, incorporating video discussion sessions as part of the training would enhance engagement, allowing participants to discuss topics face-to-face in a virtual setting, thereby fostering a sense of community and collaboration.

The implementation of progress reporting features would enable participants to track their learning journey effectively, allowing facilitators to provide feedback on their advancement

through the curriculum, which would help maintain motivation and focus. Moreover, Fr. Veneracion stressed the importance of a system that offers completion recognition and certification, providing formal acknowledgment of participants' achievements and enhancing the credibility of the training program.

He suggested establishing user account roles to streamline the experience, distinguishing between participants and facilitators, which would help manage access to resources and functionalities based on user roles. Fr. Veneracion also highlighted the need for a system that facilitates the opening of new batches of trainees, ensuring continuous engagement and learning opportunities. Finally, he expressed an interest in offering advanced courses for those who have completed foundational training, catering to individuals looking to deepen their knowledge and skills in specific areas of church leadership. These insights provide a comprehensive framework for developing an effective online church leadership training program that meets the needs of the parish community while supporting their growth as church leaders.

4. Discussion

The study focuses on the need for a Leadership Training Platform for lay leaders in the Diocese of Cabanatuan. It explores the challenges church leaders face in adapting to modern ministry, emphasizing the importance of technology in leadership development. The research assesses the leadership development gaps and the technological readiness of lay leaders, aiming to create an online platform that is flexible, accessible, and effective. Surveys revealed a strong preference for online training due to its flexibility, affordability, and interactive elements, although concerns regarding technological access and support remain. Participants also valued high-quality content, certification, and alternative training methods like role-playing and simulations.

The findings indicate that online leadership training can address existing gaps in church leadership development by offering flexibility, engagement, and accessibility to lay leaders who juggle multiple responsibilities. While most lay leaders are comfortable with technology, a significant portion still requires technical support, and access to reliable internet remains a challenge for some. The study confirms that quality content, interactive elements, and formal certification are crucial for the success of an online training platform. Additionally, incorporating alternative methods such as simulations would enhance the practical leadership skills of participants.

To develop an effective online leadership training platform for lay leaders, it is essential to create a flexible and accessible system that allows participants to engage with the training materials at their own pace and from any location. This will help address the common scheduling constraints that many lay leaders face, making it easier for them to balance their ministry roles with personal and professional responsibilities. The platform should also incorporate interactive and multimedia content, such as forums, live webinars, videos, and podcasts, to keep participants engaged and enhance their overall learning experience. By providing multiple formats for content delivery, the platform can cater to different learning styles and preferences.

Moreover, offering robust technical support is critical, especially for participants who may not be tech-savvy. This support will improve accessibility and help ensure that all users can successfully navigate and benefit from the platform. Structured certification and formal recognition should also be included, as these elements can serve as powerful motivators for enrollment and completion, adding value to the program and providing participants with credentials that recognize their efforts and achievements.

Additionally, integrating alternative training methods such as simulations, role-playing, and experiential learning can help participants develop practical leadership skills in a dynamic, hands-on way. These methods allow for the application of theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios, thus enhancing the training's effectiveness. Lastly, the platform should feature a system for regular content updates, progress tracking, and feedback, ensuring continuous improvement in leadership development and maintaining the relevance of the training materials. By monitoring participants' progress and offering personalized feedback, the platform can foster ongoing growth and adaptation in leadership skills.

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