

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Common Problems in Research and Development Programs among Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

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Abstract: *The major concern of this study is to determine the strengths, weaknesses and common problems in Research and Development Program of the three higher education institutions in region III Philippines during the school year 2021-2022, to serve as input to research productivity enhancement program. The respondents of the study consisted of program implementers such as the research directors, research coordinators, and faculty researchers of the institutions. Qualitative approach through interviews were utilized. Data were processed using code and themes procedures. Findings suggest that the limited appropriation of budget would mean that there is still a need to study the research budget. But it is noted that the majority of the higher education faculty of the aforementioned institutions have recognized the value of scholarship as shown in their interest in doing research.*

Keywords—Research and development programs, private higher education institutions, productivity model

1. INTRODUCTION

Instruction, Extension, Production and Research are the four main thrusts of the Commission on Higher Education or CHED. Among these, research activities have been utilized as one of the parameters of institutional quality. These functions are not independent of one another but rather work hand in hand, complementing each other. One of the three main purposes of all higher education institutions in the Philippines is research, as mandated by the commission. [1]. Administrators must therefore have a comprehensive awareness of how research should be incorporated into their academic duties in order to facilitate thoughtful and collaborative solutions. The theories learned and knowledge acquired in the classroom must be put to actual practice. Instruction can only be considered relevant if it comes from research and applied to community extension services to empower people in improving their way of life.

In Region III Philippines, there are colleges and universities whose contributions in the field of research are indeed commendable and worth to benchmark on. Furthermore, it is worth to contemplate on why these institutions perform well in research while others really do not, considering that the CHED strictly monitors the performance of every HEI on this function. These can be further gleaned on the pronouncement of Commissioner of CHED, in one of the recent occasions she attended where she posited that research is the prelude for a certain college to be elevated to university status. First and foremost, it is the research capability of the school that needs to be strengthened and the rest will follow.

Thus, this study aims to present the best practices of the Research and Development Office of these three leading HEIs in research as reflected on its development program and serve as benchmark in the preparation of a model or research

program that would be of great importance to other colleges and universities in the region or even to the entire HEIs in the country. This model may be used to enhance the research productivity of other HEIs in order to realize its functions and be the prime movers of reform and development as what the country needs today.

2. RELATED WORKS

The involvement of faculty members in research can be traced from the gradual emergence of the primary functions of higher education institutions. The medieval university performed academic work with teaching as its core on the basis of unchanging established knowledge. With the institutionalization of science into the university in the 19th century transformed the university dramatically from the pursuit of the sole ideal of teaching to the pursuit of research.

The significance of research is contained in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIV, Section 10, [2] that science and technology are vital for the national development and progress. The state shall give priority to research and development, inventions, innovations and their utilization, and to science and technology education, training and services. It shall support indigenous, appropriate, and self-reliant scientific and technological capabilities and their application to the country's productive systems and national life.

The status of research in higher education in general was first discussed during the First Regional Research Seminar for Asia and the Pacific at Tokyo, Japan May 13-14, 2004 among other concerns. Accordingly, there had been a general complaint that research in the universities is not taken seriously in political debates in the individual participating counties in which the Philippines was one of the attendees. Thus, as proposed, there is a need to get a re-assessment of the importance of research in higher education. Though, in a

number of Asian countries, there have been considerable capacities in research in higher education as evidenced by the presence of research centers and institutes, sometimes in government and sometimes separately.

During the same regional research seminar, an author presented a case study describing the status of research in the Philippines [3]. It was noted that improvement of the research capability of the country is necessary. Almost similar report was presented in an international seminar on research by a scholar [4]. Accordingly, it was given an emphasis that for the internalization of Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), research culture must be developed to foster and strengthen institutional readiness for this thrust. It was also disclosed that the idea that research enhances teaching activities lacks support in actual practice because not too many faculty members are actively doing research in most of the Philippine HEIs.

Schools at different places do research in varying extent of practice and implementation. Here in the Philippines, the well-established state and private universities have made their names in research in different disciplines [5]. Others are on the rush to be categorized as an institution whose focus is not merely on instruction, but more on research for the latter would serve as the nation's partner in the attainment of the so-called national development.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The general problem of the study consisted of: What are the strengths, weaknesses, and common problems in the Research and Development Program of higher education institutions in Region III during the school year 2021-2022, which would eventually serve as input to a research productivity enhancement program? Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the research and development program as perceived by the head and staff?
2. What are the common problems related to research that these HEIs encounter and how do they handle such?
3. What enhancement program for research and development program may be proposed to HEIs based on the results of the study?

4. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was utilized in an attempt to define the problem or develop an approach to the problem. The goal was to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and common problems in research and development programs in higher education institutions in Region III in aid of developing a research productivity enhancement proposal. Deeper qualitative methods such as focus group discussion and in-depth interviews were conducted in the interest of understanding different perspectives between groups and categories of people.

The respondents of the study included the research directors, research coordinators, faculty researchers of the three higher education institutions in Region III, Philippines during the school year 2021-2022.

The researcher used open-ended questions that includes factors on strengths, weaknesses, and common problems of various HEIs in Region III.

Code and themes analysis was used to process the gathered data from the interview.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program

A study on the status of research outputs in the 1,605 public and private HEIs in the country showed a low turnout as evidenced by the 13,859 research reports from 1996-2001. The limited involvement of faculty in research activities may be attributed to the lack of training from graduate studies that would make them consistent producers of research, and other problems and issues encountered by the faculty members in the conduct of the research activities. Because faculty members are expected to be the primary producers of research in a university, it would be useful to discover their views of the problems and issues they encountered in improving their research productivity. Hence, the strengths and weaknesses of the three institutions in region III Philippines were evaluated.

Institution 1. The research and Development Office was headed by a competent Research Director who was able to motivate faculty researchers to commit to the goals of the program and the University. The university, particularly the RDO maintained active linkages with several agencies such as Central Luzon Health Research and Development Consortium, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Health, CHED-UP-ZRC through memoranda of agreement to produce quality research outputs and to disseminate the same to fellow professionals. In addition, the academic community positively welcomes opportunities for research activities as evidenced by the observation that teachers and students' research were published regularly in the School research journals of the university.

While strengths of the University are identified, evidence of faculty research that were discipline-related were limited. A number of studies were institutional in nature. Program implementers were very vocal on the identified weakness of the research programs of LCUP. Their statements are as follows:

"The budget for research is not adequate to sustain the culture of research among faculty members"

"Local/international presentations and publications of completed researches in a refereed journal are limited"

Institution 2. The institution develops research agenda based on the thrusts of NHERA, NHURA, RHURA, and NIBRA. Grants are also given to faculty members who would like to conduct a study. The approval of research grant depends

on the quality of paper and alignment with the university's research agenda. In addition, the formulation of research agenda is participated by the university president, vice-president, research director, department deans, research coordinators, and faculty researchers. This means that the research agenda were drawn from the cooperative efforts of academic personnel of the institution.

However, faculty research involvement is still relatively low. Only 19 percent of the faculty members actively participate in the conduct of scientific research.

Institution 3. The research agenda of the institution is based on the thrusts of NHERA which is painstakingly developed by the research director, deans, and administrators. This means that the research agenda were drawn from the cooperative efforts of academic personnel of the institution.

Also, low research productivity of faculty members and low participation to international publication are two of the most common weaknesses of BU.

The kind of research environment may lead to research productivity among faculty members in HEIs. Hence, developing an attainable research agenda, good culture of research, appropriate budget for research, functional research units and services, linkages and networks, provision of research benefits and incentives, research committee, and venue for publications are the essential elements of supportive research environment.

In fact, the Commission on Higher Education has mandated all higher education institutions to ensure the continuous operation of the Research Unit and the conduct of research in the college/university by allotting a reasonable budget of at least 2% of the total school budget for their research undertakings.(CMO, No 9 Series 2003).

Common Problems Encountered and Solutions Provided

The work of the faculty in higher education institutions has traditionally been trifocal, consisting of teaching, research, and community extension. The faculty members of the University are expected to become teachers, researchers, and service-oriented professionals. This traditional trinity is expected to operate in relation to the specific thrust of the University. Only 15 out of 223 HEIs met the requirements for the graduate-capable HEI category, and only two HEIs met the criteria for research university categories. This goes to show that majority of HEIs are teaching institutions. In light of this reality, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has been constantly pushing for a stronger research orientation among the HEIs. In this study, the common challenges/issues/problems encountered and solutions provided were assessed.

One of the problems that the three HEIs is facing is the low research productivity of faculty members. With this, the research and development office conducts regular mentoring through research training and seminars as well as write-shop

in order to improve the skills and capabilities of faculty members in writing a scientific paper. In fact, LCUP implements a deloading scheme of about 6-12 units to faculty members who intend to conduct a research activity.

It was also opined by one of the program implementers' projects low participation to international research publication. Hence, one of the programs developed to address the issue is the conduct of lecture on how to write for international publication. And since the budget is not enough to support the researches of the faculty members, the University through the RDO encourages the writers to submit research proposals to the Commission on Higher Education, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Health among others for possible financial support.

Availability of research mentors was also identified to be one of the issues at LCUP. Therefore, a monthly mentoring activity is being conducted to develop a pool of advisers that will guide and motivate faculty members to conduct a research. Among the topics identified for mentoring the mentors are "research conceptualization", "making sense of literature review", "the research process", "quantitative research designs", "qualitative research designs", "mixed methods", "plagiarism 101", and "writing for international publication".

Even while mentorship might not be enough on its own, it is crucial to encourage a positive outlook and comprehension of the ethical conduct of research. All of the institution's researchers share a professional obligation for mentoring. Effective communication of science, science practice, conduct norms, and ethical and social responsibility are essential to the scientific endeavor. It should not be optional to actively contribute to the education of the upcoming generation of scientists. Additionally, it is the duty of scientific trainees to actively participate in their own development and seek out mentors.

Some administrative policies may be put in place namely, strategic deloading of faculty members who are interested to do a research; research may be used as a criterion for hiring and ranking faculty members; the active production of research by the school administrators to motivate faculty members and become model of research productivity.

Enhancement Program Based on the Findings of the Study

In lieu of the identified issues and problems encountered by the faculty members in conducting research, the HEIs in Region III may strategically identify specific areas of expertise and create research structures that will provide sustained support for individual as well as collective faculty efforts towards the furtherance of a clearly articulated research agenda. In fact, CHED Memorandum Order No 10 (2007) stipulates that HEIs are required to:

1. Establish a funding program, either in the form of an endowment or a system of annual grants and professorial chairs that can provide substantive support to individual as

well as collaborative faculty research efforts, whether on a competitive or non-competitive basis;

2. Put in place a system for generating and screening research proposals, awarding research grants, and monitoring research outputs;

3. Develop a clearly articulated research agenda which will either generate new knowledge in the field or contribute to the body of instructional materials in the field; and

4. Establish a well-conceived and strategic plan for pushing this agenda forward and generating the desired scholarly work and publications output.

6. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the significant findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

The limited appropriation of budget for research would mean that there is still a need to study the research budget. But majority of the higher education faculty of the aforementioned institutions have recognized the value of scholarship as shown by their interest in doing research.

Challenges/issues/problems encountered by the three HEIs in Region III can serve as a springboard in revisiting or re-engineering the activity plans made to improve the research productivity of the faculty members.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher offers the following recommendations on the basis of the findings and the conclusions derived from the study.

1. Availability of research mentors was also identified to be one of the issues. Therefore, a monthly mentoring activity may be conducted to develop a pool of advisers that will guide and motivate faculty members to conduct a research. Among the topics identified for mentoring the mentors are “research conceptualization”, “making sense of literature review”, “the research process”, “quantitative research designs”, “qualitative research designs”, “mixed methods”, “plagiarism 101”, and “writing for international publication”.

2. The findings of the study suggest that some administrative policies may be put in place namely, strategic deloading of faculty members who are interested to do a research; research may be used as a criterion for hiring and ranking faculty members; the active production of research by the school administrators to motivate faculty members and become model of research productivity.

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