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Faculty Readiness and Professional Development for Distance Education in Philippine Higher Education Institutions: A Scoping Review

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Abstract: *Distance education has become a defining mode of delivery in higher education, particularly in the Philippines where Republic Act 10650, or the Open Distance Learning Act of 2014, institutionalized open and distance e-learning (ODeL) as an alternative to traditional classroom instruction. In this context, faculty readiness and professional development play a critical role in ensuring quality and sustainability. Faculty readiness involves technological competence, pedagogical adaptability, and openness to innovation, while professional development provides structured opportunities to address gaps and enhance faculty capacity. This study employed a scoping review method guided by the framework of Arksey and O'Malley (2005). The review proceeded through five stages: formulating research questions, retrieving literature from databases and institutional repositories (2000–2025), selecting eligible studies through inclusion criteria, charting data systematically, and synthesizing findings using thematic analysis. Search terms included "faculty readiness," "professional development," "distance education," and "Philippine higher education institutions. "Three major themes emerged from the synthesis. First, faculty readiness dimensions were found to be uneven across institutions, influenced by infrastructure, digital literacy, and faculty attitudes. Second, professional development models such as workshops, webinars, micro-credentialing, and communities of practice were widely adopted, though many focused more on technical skills than on holistic pedagogical transformation. Third, institutional support and barriers revealed that disparities in funding, workload adjustments, and policy alignment significantly affect the success of readiness and professional development initiatives. The review concludes that strengthening distance education in Philippine HEIs requires sustained, evidence-based, and policy-supported approaches that align faculty readiness, professional development, and institutional strategies to create a resilient and inclusive higher education system.*

Keywords: ***Faculty Readiness, Professional Development, Distance Education, and Philippine Higher Education Institutions***

1. INTRODUCTION

Distance education has become a defining feature of higher education worldwide, driven by rapid technological advancements and the demand for flexible learning opportunities. It has proven especially vital in ensuring educational continuity during crises and in expanding access to students in geographically isolated or underserved areas (Tuguic & Bilan, 2023). In the Philippines, this shift was formalized through Republic Act 10650, otherwise known as the Open Distance Learning Act of 2014, which institutionalized open and distance education as a recognized mode of instruction (Ilagan & Perono, 2021). The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has since released guidelines and memoranda to encourage higher education institutions (HEIs) to adopt open and distance e-learning (ODeL) as a complement to traditional classroom teaching (Arinto, 2016). These policy measures underscore the country's commitment to building a more inclusive, resilient, and technology-enabled higher education system.

Central to the success of distance education is the readiness of faculty members who serve as the primary facilitators of learning. Faculty readiness is a multidimensional construct that involves technological proficiency, pedagogical adaptability, and affective dispositions such as openness to innovation and willingness to embrace new teaching models (Medalla, et.al, 2021). In Philippine HEIs, the degree of readiness varies widely, influenced by institutional resources, infrastructure, and prior exposure to online teaching environments (Clemen, et.al, 2021). Faculty who are well-prepared are more likely to design effective digital learning experiences, whereas those lacking in confidence or competence may face difficulties in engaging students or ensuring quality instruction (Callo & Yazon, 2021).

Despite the growing relevance of distance education, challenges surrounding faculty readiness remain pressing. Many educators, particularly in state universities and colleges located in resource-constrained regions, continue to grapple with issues of digital access, insufficient training, and inadequate institutional support (Kunjiapu, et.al, 2025). Even in private HEIs with better access to technology, faculty often report difficulties in transitioning from traditional pedagogy to digital and student-centered approaches. These realities highlight persistent disparities and point to the need for targeted interventions that address both individual competence and systemic barriers (Benavides, et.al, 2020). Professional development programs have been widely regarded as essential for bridging readiness gaps. In the Philippine context, HEIs have introduced a range of initiatives including workshops, webinars, mentoring programs, and, more recently, micro-credentialing opportunities (Lomenario, 2025). While these interventions

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have succeeded in raising basic digital competencies, evidence suggests that many remain focused on technical training rather than holistic pedagogical transformation. Furthermore, systematic evaluations of the long-term effectiveness of such programs are limited, leaving questions about their actual impact on teaching practices, learner outcomes, and institutional resilience (Cam & Koc, 2024).

Given these concerns, there is a clear need to systematically map the body of literature on faculty readiness and professional development for distance education in Philippine HEIs. This study employs the scoping review framework of Arksey and O'Malley (2005) to examine how readiness has been defined, assessed, and supported across institutions, as well as to identify the professional development models most frequently employed. By synthesizing both published and grey literature, the review seeks to provide a comprehensive picture of current practices, challenges, and gaps. In doing so, it aims to inform policymakers, administrators, and educators in shaping future strategies that strengthen faculty capacity and enhance the overall quality of distance education in the Philippines.

2. METHODS AND PROCEDURE

This study employed a scoping review method to synthesize available literature concerning faculty readiness and professional development in the context of distance education within Philippine higher education institutions. Following the framework advanced by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), a scoping review adopts a comprehensive approach to identifying and synthesizing relevant studies regardless of methodological design. Its iterative and non-linear character allows for researcher reflexivity throughout its stages, making it particularly suitable for exploring the breadth and depth of emerging themes in faculty readiness and professional development.

Arksey and O'Malley (2005) outlined sequential stages in conducting a scoping review, including: (1) identification of the research questions, (2) retrieval of relevant studies, (3) selection of eligible studies, (4) data charting, and (5) aggregation, synthesis, and reporting of findings. Guided by this structure, the first stage involved the formulation of research questions that focused on (a) how faculty readiness for distance education is defined and assessed in Philippine HEIs, (b) what professional development programs and interventions have been implemented to support faculty, and (c) what challenges and enablers are reported in relation to readiness and professional development.

The second stage entailed a systematic search for literature using databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC, and institutional repositories, complemented by targeted searches of CHED memoranda, UPOU publications, and grey literature. The search covered the years 2015–2025, using key terms including *"faculty readiness," "professional development," "distance education," "open and distance e-learning (ODeL),"* and *"Philippine higher education institutions."* In the third stage, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied by examining titles, abstracts, methodologies, findings, and discussions. Only studies that directly addressed faculty readiness and professional development in the context of Philippine HEIs were included, while those outside higher education or unrelated to distance education were excluded.

Stage four involved systematic data charting similar to procedures in systematic reviews. Relevant information such as author, year, type of HEI, study design, readiness dimensions, professional development interventions, and key findings were organized in a charting table to facilitate analysis. Finally, in stage five, a thematic content analysis was conducted to synthesize and summarize the evidence base. This process enabled the identification of patterns, gaps, and future directions in faculty readiness and professional development for distance education in Philippine HEIs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Faculty Readiness and Professional Development for Distance Education in Philippine Higher Education Institutions

Theme 1: Faculty Readiness Dimensions in Distance Education

Faculty readiness in Philippine HEIs has often been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct, encompassing technological skills, pedagogical competence, institutional support, and affective dispositions (Lucero, et.al, 2021). Studies highlight that readiness goes beyond the ability to operate a learning management system; it requires integrating pedagogy with technology through frameworks such as TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) (Valle, et.al, 2024). This integration ensures that instructors not only transfer classroom content to digital spaces but also adapt strategies to suit asynchronous, synchronous, and blended modalities.

Evidence suggests variability in readiness levels across types of institutions. Faculty members in state universities and colleges (SUCs), especially those in resource-constrained regions, report challenges related to internet stability, access to devices, and limited exposure to formal online teaching (Ramoso & Cruz, 2024). In contrast, private HEIs in urban centers tend to have greater access to platforms, but readiness gaps still emerge in the areas of instructional design and digital assessment. Readiness is therefore uneven and highly contextual, shaped by both individual competencies and institutional infrastructure (Mercado & Lagto, 2018).

Beyond technological proficiency, readiness is tied to faculty attitudes and willingness to embrace innovation. Research during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that many educators initially approached distance education with apprehension due to fears of workload intensification, lack of mastery, or concerns about learner engagement (Moralista & Oducado, 2020). Over time, however, some adapted through self-directed learning, peer sharing, and formal institutional training. This underscores the dynamic, evolving nature of readiness: it is not a static measure but one that develops through continuous practice, support, and reflective teaching.

Theme 2: Professional Development Models and Practices in HEIs

Professional development has been the primary vehicle for bridging readiness gaps in Philippine HEIs. Training programs range from short-term workshops on LMS navigation (e.g., Moodle, Canvas, Google Classroom) to more intensive certificate and diploma programs offered by institutions like the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) (Roa, et.al, 2023). Many HEIs, guided by CHED memoranda and RA 10650, have initiated capacity-building activities to institutionalize online teaching competencies. These include structured webinars, mentoring schemes, and communities of practice that encourage peer collaboration (Claro & Munar, 2022).

The formats of PD programs are diverse. Some universities employ cascaded training models where trained faculty serve as multipliers to train their peers, while others establish partnerships with international organizations to access global best practices (Chin, et.al, 2021). Recently, micro-credentialing and modular training programs have gained traction as flexible pathways for continuous upskilling. Such models allow faculty to stack competencies over time rather than undergo one-off training, thus aligning professional development with the realities of teaching loads and institutional demands (De Rosa, et.al, 2024).

Despite these innovations, challenges persist. Many PD initiatives remain generic, focusing heavily on platform navigation rather than deeper pedagogical redesign or student-centered strategies (Marcial, et.al, 2024). Faculty often express the need for sustained follow-up support, not just isolated workshops. Additionally, there is a lack of standardized evaluation mechanisms to assess the long-term impact of PD on teaching effectiveness, student learning, and institutional performance. This points to the necessity of designing PD models that are iterative, evidence-based, and responsive to the diverse needs of faculty across Philippine HEIs (Mantos, et.al, 2025).

Theme 3: Institutional Support, Barriers, and Future Directions

Faculty readiness and professional development cannot be divorced from the institutional ecosystems in which they are embedded. Philippine HEIs differ widely in how they prioritize and allocate resources for distance education. Some have created dedicated ODeL (Open and Distance eLearning) offices and robust ICT infrastructures, while others rely on ad hoc committees with limited funding (Lapada, et.al, 2020). Institutional leadership and policies thus play a critical role in sustaining readiness and PD efforts. Where administrative support is strong, faculty report higher confidence and engagement in online teaching (Pandit & Agrawal, 2021).

Barriers to readiness and PD are multifaceted. Common challenges include inadequate internet connectivity, especially in rural campuses; absence of incentives or workload adjustments for faculty undergoing training; and cultural resistance to technology adoption (Mananay, et.al, 2024). Moreover, while national policy frameworks such as CHED's Flexible Learning Memoranda and RA 10650 provide guidance, the translation of these policies into local practice varies widely. For some institutions, compliance is limited to surface-level adjustments rather than deep pedagogical transformation (Abisado, 2020).

Looking forward, future directions for enhancing readiness and PD in Philippine HEIs include embedding professional development within long-term faculty evaluation systems, institutionalizing micro-credentials recognized by CHED, and leveraging learning analytics to inform continuous improvement (Eleorda, et.al, 2025). Collaborative models across HEIs—through consortia, resource sharing, and joint training initiatives—may also reduce disparities between well-resourced and resource-constrained institutions. Ultimately, addressing readiness and PD requires systemic alignment: equipping faculty with tools and skills, creating enabling policies, and fostering cultures of innovation that sustain distance education as a legitimate and quality-driven mode of instruction (Galeon & Palaoag, 2020).

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This scoping review highlighted that faculty readiness for distance education in Philippine higher education institutions is shaped by multiple dimensions—technological competence, pedagogical adaptability, and institutional support. Evidence shows that readiness remains uneven, with disparities influenced by access to infrastructure, digital literacy, and faculty attitudes toward technology integration. Readiness, however, is not static; it develops over time through sustained practice, exposure, and professional development opportunities.

Professional development emerged as the main strategy to address readiness gaps, with HEIs implementing diverse models such as workshops, webinars, micro-credentialing, and communities of practice. While these initiatives have improved digital competencies, many remain surface-level and lack systematic evaluation of their long-term impact on teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. This points to the need for more structured and responsive faculty development frameworks that prioritize not only tool mastery but also deeper pedagogical redesign for distance education.

To strengthen both readiness and professional development, HEIs should adopt holistic interventions that integrate digital skills training with pedagogical innovation and affective support for faculty. Institutional policies must provide adequate incentives, workload adjustments, and recognition systems to encourage sustained participation in professional development. Furthermore, embedding iterative and evidence-based PD models—such as mentoring, micro-credentials, and communities of practice—within long-term faculty evaluation systems will ensure continuity and impact. National agencies like CHED can play a stronger role by funding capacity-building initiatives, setting evaluation standards, and fostering cross-institutional collaborations to minimize disparities between well-resourced and resource-constrained HEIs. By aligning faculty readiness, professional development, and institutional support, Philippine higher education can build a resilient and inclusive distance education ecosystem.

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