

Research Support Services and Research Capability of Personnel in a Private Higher Education Institution: Basis for Research Capability- Building Intervention

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Abstract

Theories of change can drive programs as well as navigate people. Comte's Theory of Change illustrates how and why the desired change is expected to happen in a particular context and maps out a "missing middle" between what programs or change initiatives can do and how these lead to the achievement. Therefore, this research firmly grounds itself on Comte's Theory since there is a compelling inquiry about the dearth of research studies produced by personnel in a private Higher Education Institution in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. This study sought to find the state of research support services the institution provided to its personnel and their research capability. Using a descriptive study method, the study was participated in by 42 college department faculty taken by purposive sampling. The researcher-made instruments underwent scientific reliability testing. Responses from the questionnaires were organized through descriptive statistics using means, percentages, and standard deviation. Three categories of inquiry were made to answer the two research questions. Findings revealed that the categories on the state of research support and management on an institutional level, research services and management on a departmental level, and personnel's research capability all pointed out the necessity of crafting a data-driven intervention package to strengthen the research engagement capability of the faculty.

Keywords: Research Support Services; Research Management; Research Capability; Research Capability Building Package

Introduction

A robust research culture manifests in unceasing research collaboration activities and checkups of research culture characteristics. These should naturally lead to continuous knowledge production and applications, dissemination and transfer, and sustenance of the human research capital (Pidor et al., 2017).

The context of this statement strongly affirms the research perspective of the private Higher Education Institution under study as a tertiary institution. It considers research indispensable in navigating its vision, mission, goals, and objectives. It has acknowledged research as a critical growth, relevance, and sustainability roadmap.

The existing Five-Year Research Development Plan is anchored on the core values of faith, excellence, and service and has strongly envisioned the provision of research- based policies, institutional plans, and curricula implementations in its research agenda.

From this standpoint, the weakness of an institutional research capability, especially for higher education institutions, cannot be taken for granted.

So, to translate the perspectives above into doable terms, the school has established a research agenda that emphasizes implementing a continuous research capability-building program to build a robust research culture verifiable through the production of research studies. The context just mentioned finds a grounding logic from the survey of Nguyen (2015) that stated, "Research activities and research productivity have become very important for institutions of higher education globally."

Meanwhile, a review of the number of research outputs this year, the fifth year of the Five-year Research Development Plan (SY 2016-2021) implementation, found that research production was minimal in the last four years.

The Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU) Team that visited the institution in SY 2019 to accredit academic programs in the college department noted the dearth of research. The team recommended that the school "ensure the regular and increased publication of quality research aligned with the research agenda crafted for the purpose."

The team further recommended that the research capacity-building programs should be implemented with an added institutional effort of increasing linkages with non- government institutions (NGOs) or local

government institutions (LGUs) for possible participatory research initiatives to strengthen the school's research culture.

Based on the facts above, the newly hired Research and Planning Coordinator considered it compelling to discover the reasons that must have caused the minimal research outputs. Moreover, it will be equally important to gather valuable information pertinent to the profile of the personnel's research capability to craft reasonable and realistic intervention measures.

Likewise, these researchers believe such interventions must be introduced to gain leverage over the notable dearth of research outputs. Through this, **a research culture change can be possible.**

Therefore, this research firmly grounds itself on the Theory of Change by Auguste Comte (1798–1857). Theories of change can drive programs as well as navigate people. **It comprehensively describes and illustrates how and why the desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It focuses on mapping out or "filling in" what has been described as the "missing middle" between what programs or change initiatives can do and how these lead to achieving desired goals.**

In that light, this study desires to discover the performance-promoting and performance-hindering factors pertinent to research engagement among personnel. Through this procedure, the strengths and weaknesses that will be disclosed from a fact-finding instrument can shed light on what kind of capability-building programs or interventions should be designed and implemented to equip the personnel with the essential research capabilities and strengthen the research program. **As such, the research engagement culture can be changed** (Nguyen, 2015).

Moreover, Republic Act No. 7722, also known as the Higher Education Act of 1994, which envisioned enabling the schools to produce high-quality research, has aggravated the concern of this institution on account of its dismal research outputs.

Therefore, to address the concerns at hand, the researchers find it imperative to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of institutional research support services provided by the private Higher Education Institution to its personnel?
2. What is the current research capability of the personnel that must have influenced the level of their research engagement?

Through these research questions, the data that will be generated can be used to identify the setbacks that have caused the research program's weaknesses that have impacted the development of a robust research culture. At the same time, the data can open an avenue toward creative strategies that will augment the personnel's research engagement initiative, thus, this research study.

Research Methodology

Design: This study employed descriptive design since this research is concerned with existing conditions and relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, and effects that are evident (Best & Khan, 2006). This method was used because it is considered appropriate and relevant to the present undertaking.

Participants: The participants of this study were forty-two college department faculty members purposively chosen.

Research Instrument: The research instruments were researcher-made. It is composed of two parts. Part 1 has twenty-six (26) questions that sought answers pertinent to institutional research support services and management that the school provided to its personnel to facilitate research engagement. Part 2 has fourteen (14) questions. It sought answers pertinent to the research capability of the personnel.

The research instruments underwent reliability testing to determine their internal consistency by administering it to thirty (30) participants. Using Cronbach's Alpha, Instrument 1 got a reliability index of .976, which means **Reliable**; Instrument 2 got a reliability index of .963, which also means **Reliable**.

Data Gathering Procedure. The questionnaires were personally given to the respondents by the research and planning office staff, who retrieved the questionnaires after two weeks. The participants were informed that their honest answers to the questions could best help the school determine appropriate research capability-building programs and interventions to strengthen its research culture.

Data Organization. Responses generated from the questionnaires were organized through descriptive statistics using means, percentages, and standard deviations.

Results and Discussion

About the first question that sought the participants' knowledge about the existing state of institutional research support services provided by the institution to its personnel, Table 1 shows the result.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage Distribution that Describes the State of Research Services and Management at the Institutional Level (n=42)

Range	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
4.51 – 5.00	Excellent	0	0
3.51 - 4.50	Very Good	8	19
2.51 - 3.50	Good	25	60
1.51 - 2.50	Fair	6	14
1.00 - 1.50	Poor	3	7
Total		42	100
Overall Mean			3
Interpretation			Good
SD			0.93

As disclosed in Table 1, their knowledge about the inquiry at hand clustered at GOOD as a range indicator. The overall mean of 3.00 implies that the conditions provided at an institutional-level context are acceptable. However, since it is two measures away from **excellence**, which is the ultimate benchmark conducive to a solid and well-grounded research engagement, there is still a large room for desirable improvements to be put in place to augment implementation performance.

Table 2 below shows the specific indicators that describe the respondents' awareness of the school's research services at the institutional level.

Table 2

Distribution that Describes the Respondents' Level of Awareness of the Research Services and Management in the Institutional Level (n=42)

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation	SD
1. The guidelines that govern the procurement of research funding sources to facilitate research engagement among faculty and staff members	3.33	Good	0.90
2. The clarity of administrative support to foster research culture in the institution	3.24	Good	0.73
3. The availability of pool of experts with whom students / faculty can network with for technical support	3.21	Good	1.07
4. The incentive system to foster research enthusiasm among the faculty	3.19	Good	0.80
5. The presence of research protocols for teaching, writing, and defending undergraduate research	3.17	Good	0.96
6. The existence of a mechanism that formulates protocols/guidelines on tasks for validators, statisticians and editors/readers of research	3.14	Good	0.84
7. The opportunity of participating in national and / or international research congress	3.02	Good	0.87
8. The provision of Dissertation and Master Thesis Books Collection to provide technical help to researchers	3.02	Good	0.92
9. The availability of research tools and software that facilitate the technical quality and scholarship of the research process and outputs.	3.00	Good	0.99
10. The availability of a Stakeholders' Linkage Program to facilitate research publications.	2.90	Good	0.96

11. The availability of qualified staff to assist in the growing research needs of the school	2.90	Good	0.96
12. The engagement of an in-house Research Presentation Forum for both Faculty and Students	2.88	Good	0.89
13. Provision for benchmarking with other research centers with reputable and mature research tradition	2.86	Good	1.05
14. The availability of external consultants to aid and direction.	2.81		0.86
15. The provision of RESEARCH TIME for the faculty to be able to engage with their research work	2.81	Good	1.04
16. The availability of professional growth programs for the personnel to further equip their research capabilities	2.79	Good	0.95
17. The research environment (Library, IT Department, Finance, Laboratory, and Faculty room) is adequate to provide the researchers' needs	2.71	Good	1.09

Notable among the indicators is Indicator No. 1, which asked about the guidelines governing the procurement of research funding sources to facilitate research engagement among faculty and staff members. It got the highest mean of 3.33, which is **good**. The implication is that the personnel are very much aware of the guidelines on obtaining funding sources to facilitate research engagement among them. This scenario could have had a stimulating effect on research engagement. However, it did not produce a driving outcome.

As revealed in the data, Indicator No. 17, which mentioned the adequacy of the research environment (Library, IT Department, Finance, Laboratory, and Faculty room) to provide for the researchers' needs, got the lowest mean of 2.71. It implies that the environment where the prospective researchers stayed could not substantially support their needs for connectivity, available literature, and other sufficient online databases to provide their research needs under conducive conditions. Research environments, or cultures, are the most influential predictors of research productivity. Environmental considerations such as robust cultures of research quality and support for researchers are considered the most significant predictors of research productivity (Ajjawi, 2018).

Table 3 hereunder shows the frequency and percentage distribution that describe the state of research services and management at the Departmental Level.

Table 3 discloses that 45 percent of the indicators are clustered at the good range indicator. Again, this denotes that the participant's knowledge about departmental conditions supposedly provided for fostering research engagement is good. It is also inspiring to note that the qualifications of teachers teaching research got the highest mean of 3.12, which is good.

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage Distribution that Describes the State of Research Services and Management in the Departmental Level (n=42)

Range	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
4.51 – 5.00	Excellent	0	0
3.51 - 4.50	Very Good	11	26
2.51 - 3.50	Good	19	45
1.51 - 2.50	Fair	7	17
1.00 - 1.50	Poor	5	12
Total		42	100
Overall Mean		2.92	
Interpretation		Good	
SD		0.96	

However, the disclosed data do not imply an assurance to improve the research engagement of the personnel due to the setback that is notable in Indicator No. 23. This indicator sought the presence of an in-house research forum for both faculty and students to harness the building of positive research consumerism awareness. Thus, it implies that providing administrative support to foster the institution's research culture is

not a research engagement stimulant without capability-building activities that will further equip them with technical knowledge.

The succeeding profile in Table 4 will disclose specific facts about the state of research support service and management at a departmental level.

Table 4

Distribution that Describes the Respondents' Level of Awareness of the Research Services and Management at the Departmental Level (n=42)

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>SD</i>
18. The clarity of coordination and direction governing research classes	2.95	Good	0.91
19. The functional review of the research curriculum to sustain its relevance amidst platform shifts	2.95	Good	0.96
20. A clearly articulated or detailed criterion for evaluating undergraduate research during proposal and final defense.	2.98	Good	0.98
21. Adequacy of library facilities that promote relative privacy for individual study	2.98	Good	0.84
22. A Research Bridging Program in writing for students to undergo intensive write shops and seminars to develop writing skills essential to produce quality research articles	2.81	Good	0.89
23. The presence of an in-house research forum for both faculty and students to harness the building of positive research consumerism awareness	2.71	Good	0.94
24. The clarity of the school's research agenda across academic programs	3.00	Good	1.10
25. The qualifications of faculty members teaching research	3.12	Good	0.92
26. The inclusion of Student Research Guidelines in the Student Handbook	2.76	Good	1.12

As disclosed in Table 4, it is remarkable that teachers who handled research classes have suitable qualifications. It could have produced a benchmarking indicator for better research engagement among students. However, based on the school performance of the school in its participation in students' research congresses held in the region, their performance is of low profile. It can be explained by the result of Indicator No. 23, which sought the presence of an in-house research forum for both faculty and students to harness the building of positive research consumerism. It got a mean of 2.71. With positive research consumerism, there is an implication that the students can present research conversantly because they are knowledgeable of the new knowledge value in their study and, thus, could improve their competitiveness in regional competitions. But the contrary is true.

About the second question that sought information about the research capability of the personnel, Table 5 shows its details.

Table 5

Frequency and Percentage Distribution that Describes the Research Capability of (n=42)

Range	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
4.51 – 5.00	Excellent	1	2
3.51 - 4.50	Very Good	6	14
2.51 - 3.50	Good	23	55
1.51 - 2.50	Fair	12	29
1.00 - 1.50	Poor	0	0
Total		42	100
Overall Mean			2.96
Interpretation			Good
SD			0.81

Table 5 discloses that 55% of the respondents are clustered at the range indicator of GOOD, implying that a research potential is present. Moreover, Indicator No. 27, with a mean score of 3.10, the highest among all the indicators that sought their data collection capability profile, gives a good promise. However, there is a noted challenge to the research potential because the profile revealed in Indicator No. 27 got the lowest mean of 2.76, which states that the personnel's knowledge about appropriate statistical tools for specific research is barely good. It is indeed a competency barrier. As such, justifying the snail-pace research engagement or not at all.

Table 6*Mean Distribution of the Research Capability of the Personnel*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>SD</i>
27. Formulation of a research problem	2.95	Good	0.73
28. Identification of congruent research variables	2.98	Good	0.75
29. Designing a schematic diagram for research a hand	2.98	Good	0.81
30. Determining the appropriate statistical tools applicable according to the nature of the research	2.76	Good	0.85
31. Research report organization	3.05	Good	0.73
32. Sampling procedures	3.02	Good	0.84
33. Data collection procedure	3.10	Good	0.82
34. Data analysis	2.88	Good	0.94
35. Making graphical presentations	3.05	Good	0.91
36. Distinguishing between the nature of quantitative and qualitative research	2.93	Good	0.81
37. Use of citation entries	3.00	Good	0.73
38. Interpretation of statistical presentations such as Tables and Graphs	2.95	Good	0.79
39. Formulation of implications	2.88	Good	0.86
40. Content editing and grammar editing skills	2.86	Good	0.75

It can be noted in Table 6 that Indicator No. 30, which determines the appropriate statistical tools applicable according to the nature of the research, has the lowest mean among others (2.76). This inadequacy is a focal weakness in any research engagement since knowledge about statistics is the heart of data treatment. This profile is a performance deterrent. It is imperative to denote that one of the major causes of weak research engagement and production is the weakness of its human capital. A barely good research capability profile is not enough as a grounding capability if an institution indeed envisions a robust research culture.

Human capital is the propelling power in an institution. Accumulating knowledge and human capital directly affect efficiency (Pasban & Nojede, 2016). Moreover, human capital, which shows the organization's volume of knowledge, technical skills, creativity, and experience, gains tremendous importance. Thus, the labor force is a productive asset (Hendricks, 2002, as cited by Pasban & Nojede, 2016).

Parallel to the standpoints of Pasban and Nojede (2016), these researchers are convinced that an empowerment initiative has become imperative to create a research culture change. This empowerment initiative will form a Research Development Program (RDP). This RDP will be data-driven based on the disclosures from the research results. Finally, Wong's (2019) findings, as cited by Caingcoy (2019), revealed that training could explain the research capability of teachers.

Conclusion

It is concluded that the survey, which was conducted to gain knowledge about the state of institutional research support services and management and human resource research capability, has attained its objectives. It is also clear that provisions for research engagements should be strengthened. The process of maintaining the research program and the research culture of the institution, in general, will eventually realize if a data-driven training package can be designed as an aftermath of this study. Therefore, this study is part of developing a Research Capability Training Program for functional implementation.

Recommendations

In the light of the conclusion, it is recommended that:

1. The Research Development Program, which a Research Agenda complements, must gain wide dissemination in the academe.
2. the indicators noted in the survey, which are realistic conditions to be looked into to strengthen the capability warranted in each;
3. a research capability training package with a composite training team must be composed and
4. the possibility of exploring the impact of incentive systems for researchers, advisers, panelists, statisticians, and another human resource supportive of the school's research activities be taken as another area for future research.

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