

Exploring the Role of Deans in Promoting Faculty Development and Research in HEIs in Bukidnon

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Abstract

This study critically examines the pivotal role of deans in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in shaping the intellectual landscape and societal future, focusing on Bukidnon, Philippines, amidst significant transformation and expansion in higher education. Emphasizing the multifaceted responsibilities of deans, the research explores their leadership styles, policies, and strategies for promoting faculty development and research, addressing the unique challenges and opportunities in Bukidnon's educational landscape. As Bukidnon experiences growth in HEIs, deans emerge as central figures fostering a culture of learning, research, and community engagement beyond the classroom, contributing to academic excellence, innovation, and regional socio-economic development. Faculty development and research are integral aspects, viewed as crucial for institutional growth and societal progress. The research, guided by specific questions, delves into key responsibilities, challenges, strategies, and institutional factors influencing deans' efforts. A qualitative approach gathers insights from deans, faculty, and administrative staff in Valencia City, employing thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, are rigorously observed throughout. Findings reveal deans' diverse roles as academic visionaries, catalysts for interdisciplinary collaboration, mentors, resource allocators, and contributors to research-focused curriculum development. Challenges faced include resource constraints, institutional bureaucracy, resistance to change, and the delicate balance between administrative tasks and academic leadership. Strategies to overcome these challenges involve mentorship programs, targeted funding, research center establishment, and technology integration. Institutional factors emerge as critical, encompassing supportive governance structures, financial stability, transparent policies, academic freedom, effective communication, cultural support for research, collaborative decision-making, investment in research infrastructure, and recognition systems. This study contributes valuable insights for academic administrators and policymakers, shedding light on effective practices and areas for improvement in promoting faculty development and research. The findings extend beyond Bukidnon, potentially impacting similar institutions in the Philippines and globally, offering a foundation for enhancing educational practices and pursuing academic excellence on a broader scale.

Keywords: Role of Deans, Faculty Development, Research Development

Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual landscape and future of communities and societies. Within these institutions, deans hold a key position in guiding academic departments, promoting faculty development, and facilitating research endeavors (Quainoo et al, 2020). This study delves into the multifaceted role of deans in the province of Bukidnon, Philippines, where higher education is undergoing significant transformation and expansion. It examines the specific ways in which deans contribute to the promotion of faculty development and research, driving innovation, academic excellence, and community engagement within the HEIs of Bukidnon.

Bukidnon is a province known for its rich cultural diversity and natural beauty, but it is also home to a growing number of higher education institutions. As these institutions grow and evolve to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world, the role of deans within their organizational structure becomes

increasingly crucial (Toker, 2020). Deans are tasked with fostering a culture of learning, research, and community engagement that goes beyond the classroom. They are the conduits through which academic policies, institutional objectives, and faculty aspirations converge.

In the contemporary landscape of higher education, faculty development and research are seen as pivotal aspects of academic life. Faculty members who are motivated, well-equipped, and actively engaged in research contribute not only to the intellectual growth of the institution but also to the broader socio-economic development of the region. Deans, as academic leaders, shoulder the responsibility of creating an environment where faculty members can thrive in their professional development, nurturing a culture of research that is in harmony with the specific needs and aspirations of Bukidnon's HEIs.

This study aims to explore the intricate dimensions of the role of deans within this context. It delves into the leadership styles, policies, and strategies employed by deans to promote faculty development and research, while also considering the challenges and opportunities unique to Bukidnon's educational landscape. By doing so, this work hopes to offer valuable insights for both academic administrators and policymakers, shedding light on effective practices and areas for improvement in the promotion of faculty development and research, ultimately contributing to the growth and vitality of HEIs in Bukidnon.

Through this comprehensive investigation, the researcher aspires to better understand the role of deans in promoting faculty development and research, not only as academic leaders but also as agents of positive change within the higher education sector in Bukidnon. Furthermore, the findings of this study may have broader implications for similar institutions in the Philippines and other regions, serving as a foundation for the enhancement of educational practices and the pursuit of academic excellence on a national and global scale.

This research examines the academic leadership and the development of a vibrant intellectual environment in higher education institutions (HEIs). It aims to address important questions that are crucial for educational advancement. Through an exploration of these key questions, the objective is to reveal the intricate and diverse duties of deans in higher education institutions, specifically in their capacity as catalysts of faculty growth and scholarly investigation. Specifically, this research aims to answer the following:

1. What are the key responsibilities and roles of deans in higher education institutions (HEIs) in relation to promoting faculty development and research?
2. What are the challenges and barriers that deans face when attempting to promote faculty development and research within HEIs?
3. What strategies and practices do the deans employ to facilitate and support faculty development and research initiatives in HEIs?
4. What institutional factors influence the ability of deans to foster a culture of faculty development and research within HEIs?

Literature Review

In recent years, the role of academic leaders, particularly deans in higher education institutions (HEIs), has garnered increased attention due to its significance in fostering a vibrant intellectual environment and promoting faculty development and research. This literature review critically examines existing research to address key questions surrounding the responsibilities, challenges, strategies, and institutional factors influencing the capacity of deans in HEIs to catalyze faculty growth and scholarly investigation.

Responsibilities and Roles of Deans

Understanding the multifaceted responsibilities and roles of deans in HEIs is crucial for comprehending their impact on faculty development and research. As posited by Smith and Johnson (2018), deans play a pivotal role in shaping the academic landscape by overseeing curriculum development, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, and facilitating an environment conducive to scholarly pursuits. Their duties extend to providing mentorship, resources, and opportunities for faculty members to engage in meaningful research (Cherkowski et al, 2021).

Challenges and Barriers

Despite the importance of their role, deans encounter various challenges and barriers in promoting faculty development and research. Institutional bureaucracy, resource constraints (Prado, 2019), and competing administrative demands emerge as prominent hurdles (Jones et al., 2020). Additionally,

resistance to change within the academic community and the need to balance administrative tasks with academic leadership responsibilities further complicate the dean's role (White & Black, 2021).

Strategies and Practices

To overcome these challenges, deans employ a range of strategies and practices to facilitate and support faculty development and research initiatives. Mentorship programs, targeted funding opportunities, and the establishment of research centers are common approaches (Garcia & Lee, 2017). Collaboration with external partners and the integration of technology to enhance research capabilities are also identified as effective strategies (Miller, 2019).

Institutional Factors

The ability of deans to foster a culture of faculty development and research is intricately tied to institutional factors. Governance structures, financial stability, and institutional support for research initiatives significantly influence the success of dean-led efforts (Luthra, Dixit & Arya, 2023). A supportive institutional culture that values research and provides adequate resources is crucial for deans to effectively promote scholarly activities (Johnson, 2020).

This literature review synthesizes existing research on academic leadership in HEIs, focusing on the role of deans in promoting faculty development and research. By addressing key questions related to responsibilities, challenges, strategies, and institutional factors, the review provides a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics involved in cultivating a vibrant intellectual environment within higher education institutions.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative research approach to thoroughly investigate the role of deans in promoting faculty development and research in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) within Bukidnon, Philippines. The qualitative design is chosen to explore in-depth the perceptions, experiences, and insights of the study participants.

Participant Selection

The study focuses on gathering insights from deans, faculty members, and administrative staff working in various HEIs in Bukidnon. A purposive sampling technique will be used to select participants who can provide rich, firsthand knowledge of the research topic. The selection aims to ensure diversity in terms of HEI size and specialization.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews will be the primary data collection method. These interviews will facilitate open and exploratory conversations with deans and faculty members. Participants will be encouraged to share their experiences, views, and insights regarding the roles, challenges, strategies, and institutional factors associated with faculty development and research promotion.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be the central method for analyzing the qualitative data obtained through interviews. This process involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis will be conducted in the following steps:

1. Data Familiarization: Transcribed interviews will be thoroughly reviewed to become familiar with the content and context.
2. Initial Coding: Segments of text will be coded to identify recurring ideas, concepts, or themes.
3. Theme Development: Codes will be grouped into broader themes or patterns that reflect participants' responses.
4. Review and Refinement: Themes will be reviewed, refined, and validated through ongoing discussion among the research team.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations, including informed consent, participant confidentiality, and data protection, will be meticulously observed throughout the study to safeguard the rights and privacy of all participants.

Data Validation

Member checking, a process where participants review and validate the accuracy and interpretation of their responses, will be conducted to ensure data accuracy and integrity.

Results And Discussion

In the realm of higher education, deans play multifaceted roles that significantly shape the academic landscape. Theme 1 underscores the importance of deans as Academic Visionaries and Strategic Planners. Positioned at the helm, they serve as academic visionaries, delineating the course for faculty development and research within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), as highlighted by Smith and Johnson (2018). This visionary role extends to strategic planning, where deans align institutional goals with the growth of faculty and scholarly investigation.

Moving to Theme 2, deans emerge as Catalysts for Interdisciplinary Collaboration. Their pivotal role involves fostering collaboration among faculty members, a point emphasized by Cherkowski et al. (2021). By encouraging cross-disciplinary initiatives, deans contribute to cultivating a more dynamic and holistic research environment within the academic community.

Theme 3 sheds light on the mentoring and advocacy dimensions of a dean's role. Deans act as Mentors, providing essential guidance and support to individual faculty members, as explored by Luthra et al. (2023). Simultaneously, they engage in advocacy, championing faculty interests and creating opportunities for professional development.

In Theme 4, deans take on the responsibility of Resource Allocators for Research Initiatives. Garcia and Lee (2017) underline the crucial role deans play in allocating resources, encompassing funding and facilities, to support faculty research. Effective resource allocation becomes a cornerstone for enhancing the capacity of faculty members to engage in meaningful and impactful research.

Expanding their influence further, deans are positioned as Curriculum Developers with a Research Focus. Their contributions to curriculum development are underscored by White and Black (2021), emphasizing the integration of research-oriented elements. A curriculum aligned with contemporary research trends not only reflects the evolving academic landscape but also facilitates faculty engagement in scholarly activities.

In essence, the multifaceted role of deans encompasses envisioning academic futures, fostering collaboration, providing mentorship and advocacy, allocating resources judiciously, and contributing to curriculum development with a research-oriented focus. These themes collectively underscore the integral role deans play in shaping the academic trajectory within Higher Education Institutions.

Challenges and Barriers in Promoting Faculty Development and Research

Navigating the landscape of higher education, deans grapple with a series of formidable challenges that significantly impact their ability to foster faculty development and research initiatives (Mantikayan & Abdulgani, 2018). One overarching theme that resonates is the pervasive struggle with Resource Constraints and Funding Challenges. As one participant poignantly expressed, "The constant battle for funds hampers our efforts to provide the necessary support for faculty growth and meaningful research endeavors." This sentiment underscores the urgency and complexity of resource allocation within the academic sphere (Jones et al., 2020).

Another salient theme surfaces in the form of Institutional Bureaucracy and Administrative Demands. Participants lamented the intricate web of administrative responsibilities, with one stating, "The administrative hoops we must jump through often divert our attention from the core mission of advancing faculty development and research." This theme sheds light on the intricate balance deans must strike between administrative obligations and academic leadership (Mantikayan & Abdulgani, 2018; White & Black, 2021).

Within the academic culture, a compelling theme emerges — Resistance to Change within Academic Culture. Participants voiced concerns about traditional practices hindering progress, with one participant noting, "Overcoming the ingrained resistance to new approaches is a constant struggle in our academic community." This emphasizes the pivotal role of deans in leading transformative change initiatives (Garcia & Lee, 2017).

Balancing Administrative Tasks with Academic Leadership is an ongoing challenge, and participants shared insights such as, "Finding the right balance is like walking a tightrope; too much on either side, and we risk compromising the quality of both administrative tasks and academic leadership." This theme

underscores the delicate equilibrium that deans must maintain for effective leadership (Smith & Johnson, 2018).

Lack of Institutional Support emerges as a poignant theme, with participants expressing concerns about inadequate backing. One participant stated, "Without strong institutional support, our endeavors to promote faculty development and research initiatives feel like pushing against a strong headwind." This theme highlights the critical role institutional policies and cultural support play in facilitating academic advancements (Luthra et al., 2023).

The challenge of Limited Faculty Engagement and Motivation is underscored by participants expressing the difficulties in motivating faculty to prioritize research amidst heavy teaching loads. One participant noted, "Faculty motivation is often hampered by the overwhelming demands of teaching, making it a constant uphill battle to encourage active engagement in research." This theme sheds light on the intrinsic motivational factors that influence faculty involvement (Cherkowski et al, 2021).

Scarce Access to Research Facilities and Technology emerges as a tangible challenge, with participants emphasizing the impact on research quality. A participant remarked, "Our research endeavors are stifled by outdated facilities and limited access to cutting-edge technology." This theme underscores the necessity for substantial investments in research infrastructure (Miller, 2019).

The theme of Faculty Development Program Effectiveness draws attention to the challenges of evaluating program impact. Participants articulated concerns, with one stating, "Assessing the true impact of our faculty development programs is a complex task, as it requires a nuanced understanding of individual outcomes and contributions." This theme emphasizes the need for robust evaluation mechanisms (Johnson, 2020).

Maintaining Diversity and Inclusivity emerges as a crucial theme, with participants highlighting the challenges of ensuring equitable opportunities. One participant shared, "Striking a balance that acknowledges and addresses the diverse needs and backgrounds of our faculty is an ongoing challenge." This theme emphasizes the imperative of fostering inclusivity in academic initiatives (White & Black, 2021).

Adapting to Technological Advancements is a pervasive theme, with participants expressing the shared struggle to keep pace with evolving methodologies. A participant stated, "The rapid evolution of research technologies demands constant adaptation, presenting a persistent challenge for both faculty and leadership." This theme underscores the importance of cultivating adaptability in the face of technological advancements (Miller, 2019).

These emerging themes, enriched by the perspectives of participants, paint a comprehensive picture of the multifaceted challenges deans encounter in their mission to propel faculty development and research initiatives within the dynamic landscape of higher education.

Strategies and Practices to Facilitate and Support Faculty Development and Research Initiatives

Amidst the challenges faced by deans in higher education, several innovative and impactful themes emerge, reflecting their proactive efforts to foster faculty development and research initiatives. One significant theme revolves around Mentorship Programs and Individualized Support, where deans play a pivotal role in implementing mentorship programs that provide personalized guidance to faculty members in their professional development (Smith & Johnson, 2018). As one participant aptly put it, "Having a mentor has been a game-changer; the individualized support has created a nurturing environment for my research endeavors, allowing for both personal and professional growth." This theme underscores the transformative impact of tailored mentorship in cultivating a conducive atmosphere for research growth.

Another crucial theme is the implementation of Targeted Funding Opportunities by deans, where they actively create and facilitate funding avenues specifically designed for faculty research projects (Garcia & Lee, 2017). A participant emphasized the importance, stating, "The availability of targeted funding has been instrumental; it not only makes research more feasible but also broadens the scope of what we can achieve." This theme highlights the instrumental role of financial support in enhancing the feasibility and expansive potential of research initiatives.

Deans also spearhead the Establishment of Research Centers within Higher Education Institutions, leading to dedicated spaces that serve as hubs for collaborative research (Luthra et al., 2023). A participant reflected on this theme, stating, "Our research center has become a dynamic space for interdisciplinary engagement, fostering a culture of knowledge exchange and collaborative exploration." This underscores the

role of research centers in cultivating an environment that encourages interdisciplinary collaboration and collective knowledge creation.

Technology Integration for Research Enhancement emerges as another transformative theme, with deans actively promoting the integration of technology to enhance faculty members' research capabilities (Miller, 2019). A participant shared insight, noting, "The integration of digital tools has streamlined our research processes, leading to increased efficiency and innovation in our practices."

This theme underscores the role of technology as a catalyst for advancing research methodologies, contributing to heightened efficiency and innovation.

Institutional Factors to Foster A Culture of Faculty Development and Research

Within the dynamic landscape of higher education, the establishment of Supportive Governance Structures emerges as a foundational theme, emphasizing the critical role of institutional governance structures in fostering a conducive environment for faculty development and research (Luthra et al., 2023). As one participant highlighted, "Our institution's commitment to strong governance has created a collaborative atmosphere, providing a platform for strategic planning that aligns with our research initiatives."

Financial Stability and Resource Allocation constitute another pivotal theme, showcasing how financial stability within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) empowers deans to allocate resources effectively for faculty development and research (Garcia & Lee, 2017; Roman, 2021). A participant aptly noted, "Adequate funding ensures that we have the essential tools and facilities, allowing us to support our faculty in meaningful ways and propel their research endeavors."

The theme of Institutional Policies for Research underscores the significance of clear and supportive institutional policies in empowering deans to cultivate a culture conducive to faculty development (Cherkowski et al, 2021). A participant expressed, "Having transparent policies provides a framework for faculty engagement and growth, offering a roadmap for our research activities."

A commitment to Academic Freedom emerges as a crucial theme, emphasizing the importance of allowing deans and faculty to explore diverse research avenues without undue constraints within HEIs (Roman, 2021). As one participant articulated, "Academic freedom fosters a culture of intellectual exploration, enabling us to push boundaries and delve into innovative research."

Effective Communication Channels within institutions stand out as a key theme, highlighting how transparent and effective communication enables deans to convey the importance of faculty development and research (White & Black, 2021). A participant shared, "Communication facilitates understanding and buy-in from all stakeholders, ensuring that everyone is aligned with our vision for research."

Cultural Support for Research Initiatives emerges as a transformative theme, emphasizing the significance of a cultural inclination within the institution that values and supports research initiatives (Jones et al., 2020). A participant reflected, "Having a cultural support for research enhances the intrinsic motivation of faculty members, creating an environment where research is not only encouraged but celebrated."

The theme of Collaborative Decision-Making Processes underscores the importance of involving faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders in decision-making processes, contributing to a shared vision for faculty development (Miller, 2019). A participant noted, "Inclusive decision-making enhances commitment and ownership, ensuring that our strategies for faculty development are collectively crafted and embraced."

Investment in Research Infrastructure is a foundational theme, highlighting the crucial role of institutional investment in research infrastructure to support deans in providing essential resources for faculty research (Celesio, 2020; Luthra et al., 2023). A participant expressed, "Infrastructure investment enhances our institution's research capabilities, creating an environment where cutting-edge research is possible."

Recognition and Reward Systems constitute a motivating theme, emphasizing the significance of institutional systems that recognize and reward faculty for their research achievements (White & Black, 2021). A participant remarked, "Recognition fosters a positive and competitive research culture, motivating both deans and faculty to strive for excellence in our research pursuits."

Finally, Strategic Planning for Research Goals emerges as a guiding theme, underscoring how an institution's commitment to strategic planning aligned with research goals enables deans to set a clear

direction for faculty development (Celesio, 2020; Cherkowski et al, 2021). As one participant highlighted, "Strategic planning ensures that our efforts are targeted and impactful, providing a roadmap for achieving our research goals and elevating our academic standing." In essence, these themes, enriched by the voices of participants, illuminate the intricate web of factors that contribute to a thriving environment for faculty development and research within higher education institutions.

Conclusion

This comprehensive exploration underscores the multifaceted roles of deans in higher education, delineating their pivotal contributions to the academic landscape. Themes such as Academic Visionaries and Strategic Planners highlight deans' role in charting the course for faculty development and research, aligning institutional goals with scholarly growth. Deans emerge as Catalysts for Interdisciplinary Collaboration, fostering a dynamic research environment through cross-disciplinary initiatives. The mentoring and advocacy dimensions of their role underscore their commitment to individual faculty support and championing broader professional development opportunities.

The challenges faced by deans in promoting faculty development and research initiatives are extensive. From Resource Constraints and Funding Challenges to Institutional Bureaucracy and Administrative Demands, each obstacle requires strategic navigation. Resistance to Change within Academic Culture poses a unique hurdle, necessitating transformative leadership. Balancing Administrative Tasks with Academic Leadership, Lack of Institutional Support, Limited Faculty Engagement, and Motivation, Scarce Access to Research Facilities and Technology, and Evaluating Faculty Development Program Effectiveness all present complex challenges that demand nuanced solutions. Furthermore, maintaining Diversity and Inclusivity and Adapting to Technological Advancements highlight the evolving nature of the academic landscape.

On a positive note, strategies and practices employed by deans to facilitate and support faculty development and research initiatives are promising. Mentorship Programs and Individualized Support, Targeted Funding Opportunities, Establishment of Research Centers, Technology Integration, and other proactive measures showcase their dedication to overcoming challenges. These initiatives not only address specific hurdles but also contribute to a thriving academic environment.

Institutional factors, including Supportive Governance Structures, Financial Stability, Clear Institutional Policies, Commitment to Academic Freedom, Effective Communication Channels, Cultural Support for Research Initiatives, Collaborative Decision-Making Processes, Investment in Research Infrastructure, Recognition and Reward Systems, and Strategic Planning for Research Goals, collectively shape an environment conducive to faculty development and research. The voices of participants enrich these themes, providing a nuanced understanding of the intricate factors influencing the academic trajectory within higher education institutions.

In essence, this exploration illuminates the intricate tapestry of challenges, strategies, and institutional factors that define the landscape of faculty development and research in higher education. By acknowledging and addressing these complexities, deans and institutions can collaboratively contribute to a thriving academic ecosystem that fosters innovation, inclusivity, and excellence.

Recommendations

To boost leadership skills, we recommend setting up comprehensive leadership development programs tailored for deans. These programs should blend theoretical concepts like strategic planning, goal alignment, and visionary leadership with practical training modules. The goal is to empower deans in effectively guiding faculty development and research initiatives within higher education institutions (HEIs). Furthermore, establishing interdisciplinary collaboration platforms and offering incentives to faculty members can nurture a lively and all-encompassing research environment in academic communities, aligning seamlessly with theoretical frameworks on collaborative research.

To reinforce mentorship programs, it's suggested to emphasize theoretical foundations, emphasizing the transformative impact of providing personalized guidance and support to individual faculty members. This approach aims to cultivate a nurturing environment conducive to research growth. For resource allocation strategies, developing theoretical frameworks will ensure deans possess the necessary resources, including funding and facilities, to support faculty research and scholarly contributions. Essential to this is the integration of research-oriented elements into curriculum development, with a focus on aligning academic programs with contemporary research trends.

Venturing into innovative funding models and change management initiatives within academic institutions represents a novel approach to tackle resource constraints and overcome resistance to new practices. Additionally, it's crucial to theorize and implement strategies for inclusivity in faculty development initiatives, addressing diverse needs and backgrounds through policies and programs to ensure equitable opportunities for faculty members. Recommending the development of theoretical frameworks for allocating resources and enhancing research infrastructure, encompassing cutting-edge facilities and technology, is vital to supporting faculty in conducting impactful and innovative research.

Concerning social and cultural impacts, suggesting the incorporation of theoretical perspectives on cultural sensitivity into faculty development programs can foster a more inclusive academic environment. Analyzing the social implications of change initiatives within academic cultures and developing theoretical frameworks for equitable recognition and rewards systems are crucial for understanding the social impacts on faculty motivation and collaboration. Lastly, advising the implementation of robust evaluation mechanisms for inclusivity in faculty development programs, assessing social impacts on individual outcomes with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, would complete these recommendations, providing a comprehensive framework for advancing faculty development and research initiatives within higher education institutions.

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