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RESEARCH UTILIZATION IN TWO HIGHER EDUCATION INSITUTIONS OF DIFFERING CONTEXTS

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Abstract

This study is an examination of the level of Higher Education (HE) research and utilization of research finding as an essential function of colleges and universities generally, with a view of research in the two higher education institutions. It utilized mainly literature review and a qualitative inquiry technique where higher education lecturers were interviewed to ascertain the major constraints contributing to the discrepancy between research function of the university/college and the utilization of research findings. Funding, lecturers work overload, lack of trust in quality of HE research, lack of knowledge transfer settings have been identified as the major constraints'. Research reports are stored in library without dissemination and it is also observed that there are no sections reserved for research abstracts nor are research findings disseminated in usable forms in most of the universities and colleges. Findings also reveal that policy makers or other constituents do not utilize research results for public accountability and management decisions. It is therefore recommended that HE develop a strategic and balanced approach that manifest authentic professional responsibility for utilization settings for research findings in public sector, and private sectors for improvement of standards, for innovations and management decision and even at classroom level.

Keywords: Utilization, research findings, Higher Education, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

INTRODUCTION

Research is one of the three major functions of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the other two being instruction and community extension. The Commission on Higher Education was mandated by the government to supervise the conduct of researches in HEIs, as stipulated in Republic Act 7722.

Licuanan (2017) identified the functions of research as (1) Guides poverty alleviation programs; (2) Builds human capital; (3) Generates new knowledge; (4) Engenders innovation; (5) Drives economic growth and competitiveness; (6) Expands and enhances career and life choices and chances; (7) Produces persons with humanist values, desire to serve the community and nation, academic, behavioral, and technical skills, ethical orientation and competency for lifelong learning.

Research is indeed indispensable in the development of the different countries of the world, including technological advancements. Quitoras and Abuso (2021) said that research fueled the economic development of European countries. They added that Singapore, China and other highly developed countries have showed evidence of using research to develop its physical and human resources. Some of the needs for research may be for the understanding of normal patterns of transportation activity, in any mode of transportation, behavior of earthquakes, storms and floods, how to mitigate environmental degradation and restore the earth, understanding how humans can get rid of processes that would need fossil fuels, preventing forest fires and many others.

In the academe, research is needed for the development of schools especially in the discharge of its major functions. In response to the research-related memorandum orders of CHED, research has been made indispensable in HEIs especially for graduating undergraduate and for the graduating graduate students. They are required to conduct researches for their theses and dissertations.

In both Davao Central College, Davao City and Cotabato State University, Cotabato City, one of the building blocks towards the attainment of the school's mission is the cultivation of a strong research culture. Conducting research is not enough. What is more important is how the researches have been utilized by the faculty.

Many development undertakings are based on research. The search for plants that could produce oil and which would not harm the environment is based on researches on properties of plants. This is a case of research utilization.

There are three kinds of research use: instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic or persuasive. Instrumental research utilization is a direct use of research knowledge. A research may be used for instrumental purposes when it is translated into a useable form such as a policy, protocol or guideline. Conceptual research utilization refers to the cognitive use of research where the research findings may change one's opinion or mind set about a specific

concept or idea but not necessarily one's particular action (Stingu, et. al, 2016).

This study is about utilization of the researches conducted by the faculty and those conducted by the students for their theses. Inclusive date is 2017-2020. This will investigate how the teachers made use of the theses they have deliberately read or have come across while serving as panel during the proposal and final defense.

Theoretical Framework

The Linkage Theory has very broad applications. Applied to this research and other social researches, it could assert that the manner with which one acts or produce can determine the process or outcome of another. This can effectively explain the relationship between two concepts or actions or processes. The proponent of this was William Bateson (1900) and this has been interpreted and used in many different contexts. Some use this in international relations, others in negotiations and still others in clinical or medical researches. This can also be used in educational context.

In this study, the relevance is the linkage between teaching and research. The science of teaching has been a product of numerous researches, and teaching can be improved through research. Also, research is a product of teaching.

Review of Related Literature

Creation of a Research Culture

Mirasol and Inovejas (2017) emphasized that leadership in research plays a significant role in the creation of a research culture. They identified two kinds of leadership: (1) a capable leadership that implements and regulates as provided by law and regulation the research activities of the faculty and students while (2) an innovative leadership participates and inspires faculty and students to excel internationally in research and instruction. Further, the researchers asserted that capability building in research is indispensable in the development of a research culture. In many Higher Education Institutions, this has always been a problem especially that most faculty members focus on instruction. The authors believe that "institutions wishing to develop a culture of research must allocate significant resources for faculty training and support. In fact, developing the culture of research requires open and collaborative personal relationships among faculty members". Also, they emphasized that "HEIs' successes are already anchored in its ability to produce quality, relevant and meaningful research and its ability to produce and publish researches in international refereed publications".

Mani, Fetalvero, Foja and Formento (2015) described the creation of a research culture by the Research, Development and Extension Unit of Romblon State College. They reported that the unit employed strategic

solutions in creating a research climate such as fostering research interests and confidence and sustaining the enthusiasm of faculty members through varied research capability building seminar workshops. They mentioned the support of the institution through the policies and guidelines on benefits, opportunities and grants were realized. Research linkages and networks were forged with local and international entities. Support was also given for the presentation, and publication of the research outputs.

Contexts are always different. Casci (2020) gave an advise on improving the research culture, starting from the priorities that matter most to the organization such as "those that reflect its values, fit with what the community really cares about.

Categories of Research Utilization

There are three categories of research utilization: instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic. Instrumental research utilization is a direct concrete application of research. Instrumental research utilization refers to the use of researches that have been translated to the research is often translated into a material and useable form such as a policy, protocol or guideline. Conceptual research utilization (CRU) refers to the cognitive use of research where the research findings may change one's opinion or mind set about a specific practice area but not necessarily one's particular action. It is an indirect application of research knowledge (Squires, Estabrooks, Newborn-Cook and Gierl, (2011).

A model of research utilization in crafting health policies was presented by Walugembe, Kiwanuka, Matovu, Rutebemberwa & Reichenbach (2015) with evidence from three case studies in Bangladesh. Results of the case studies revealed that activities implemented to promote research utilization included "conducting dissemination workshops, publishing scientific papers, developing policy briefs, providing technical assistance to policymakers and program implementers, holding one-on-one meetings, and joining advocacy networks". In addition, they said that findings were utilized to influence policymaking processes.

METHODS

The study uses the qualitative exploratory research design. The data are narratives on how the participants became interested in reading the researches

and the specific statements they gave describing how they utilize the researches they were able to read.

The schools comprising the locale differ in context. The first one, Davao Central College, is a private higher education institution located in Toril, Davao City which is in the western part of Mindanao, Philippines. The other HEI is Cotabato State University located in Cotabato City, which is part of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

The data were gathered through interviews. The interviews were done through phone calls and face-to-face conversations. The interviewees at Davao Central College were full-time tertiary faculty members who had been involved in research work. At the Cotabato State University, the participants were graduate school professors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There are two sets of data: the first set consists of the narrations of the teachers on the circumstances that brought them to the research offices in the two schools and gave them the opportunity for research utilization; the second consists of the data on how the participants utilized the research resources expressed in themes, core ideas and significant statements. The statements are considered significant because they may have been shared by one interviewee only but the other statements shared by other study participants express the same ideas.

Research utilization is not common. Many researches gather dust in the shelves. It is then interesting to find out what led the instructors or professors in the schools comprising the locale to utilize the researches of both the teachers and the students. The following data consist of narratives shared by ten instructors/professors from each school.

Davao Central College (DCC)

Participant 1

"I visited the research director to ask for help because I had an assignment in my Research subject in the graduate school where I am enrolled in now. I was told that there are two categories of researches in the research office; the research conducted by the teachers and those conducted by

students for their theses. She advised me to read before I ask for help. True enough, I learned so many things that I even used in my instruction".

Participant 2

"I was attending a meeting called to update the research director on the research that we are currently conducting. My attention was caught by a big folder marked "Faculty Researches" After the meeting, I asked permission to leaf through. The director said 'You are supposed to read them and utilize them in your instruction'. I stayed and came back regularly. I found out that there were already studies on the new normal instruction.

Participant 3

"I am a regular visitor to the research office because this is where I take my afternoon coffee. I was advised by the research director to read the researches done by the teachers and the theses of the students because this will inspire me to do my own research. After two months, I was able to write a research proposal with the assistance of the research director". I completed the research after six months and I presented it during the DCC 4th Regional Multidisciplinary Research Convention held at Davao Central College".

Participant 4

"If I remember right, in the research conventions regularly held at Davao Central College, it was always emphasized by administrators that being involved in research and utilizing the researches and theses is important and beneficial not only to the institution but also to the individual researcher. This is why, in teaching Criminology subjects, I always go to the research office to read researches including theses of students to find out what really are happening on the ground. Many Criminology books give general examples. To look for specific examples, I read theses of Criminology students. I like to read in the research office because there is a space for researchers to read.

Participant 5

"I was amazed by what the DCC president said in his message during the research convention. He cited Bernard Baruch who said that millions saw the apple fall, but only Newton asked why. So, I said why not. It seems that everybody is into research. Even the public school teachers are mandated to conduct action research. Besides, the research director promised to help me. The research work had stopped due to the pandemic but it will be completed as soon as I would be done with the modules I am preparing now. I was assigned to write two modules and I am about to finish them so I would have time to complete the research.

Cotabato State University Graduate School

Participant 1

"The dean of the Graduate School of the Cotabato State University was keen on research dissemination and research utilization. He encouraged the professors to use the faculty researches and the theses and dissertations in the library of the Graduate School. He inspired me to use the researches in peace and development because the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, where the school is located has always been a conflict- affected area. So, I have made the library of the Graduate School as my "hang out area".

Participant 2

"The prevailing concept of research utilization is one that stresses application of specific research conclusions to specific decisional choices It is the series of linkages, from problem definition to policy choice, that marks the 'use' of research. …However, the major use of social research in public policy making may not be problem solving. It is beginning to look as though research use is a much more diffuse and circuitous process."

Participant 3

"According to my direct superior…government decision makers tend to use research indirectly, as a source of ideas, information, and orientations to the world. Although the process is not easily discernible, over time it may have profound effects on policy. Even research that challenges current values and political feasibilities is judged useful by decision makers."

Participant 4

"Based on my experienced as part of the research team in our University, I was able to know at least three sets of behaviors are involved in generating actions from research. Adoptions occur when decision makers in user systems use research results or prescriptions derived from them to decide what to do. Use occurs when members of user systems act to implement decisions based on research results and prescriptions. Institutionalization occurs when actions implementing decisions based on research results and prescriptions become part of the expected and customary routines for doing things in user systems."

Participant 5

"Our individual researches were also used as references by our students especially in their grasp of writing research particularly in analysis and presentation. Aside dissemination through class discussion, these studies are also presented to the different fora and conferences both local and international. This is also good way of inspiring our students to cultivate research proficiency and interest."

Findings

Research findings have shown that the researcher is higher education are only in context of   academic study. This context does not make findings readily usable for organizations to transfer these findings into usable forms. In education the concentration of research is on students' performance, pedagogical issues and teachers' productivity and hardly on policy issues, legal issues or educational planning issues. Even where there are researches with organizational context the methodology makes it hard for transfer or transmission.

Research is important and lays the foundation for knowledge transfer but knowledge transfer itself, elucidates the relevance of research by disseminating the knowledge it discovers to the intended audience for utilization. Knowledge transfer is of importance in improving educational practices and linkage agents are central actors in the transfer process. Havelock (1973:9) describes the linkage agent as a person who facilitates planned change or planned innovation. Their intervention is critical to help adapt the knowledge produced by researchers and make it easier to adopt and use in higher education.

Conclusion and recommendations

Research is an essential function of universities/Colleges and seems most crucial amongst the two identified functions of HE namely; teaching, research, community service and storage of information. Findings have revealed that of gap exists between research and utilization of findings in HE in most universities. According to Tibenderana (2013), teaching cannot be separated from research as university academics and research are positively correlated. He asserts that the level of research in our country is very low despite the proliferation of universities in the country. Literature also reveals that Philippines has the lowest research level compared to her neighboring countries (Kasozi 2003). Researchers in the Philippines face many challenges especially those combining both functions as lecturers and researchers. In some universities/colleges, the workload (teaching and administrative function) do not give the lecturers, who are also seen as researchers, enough time to engage in meaningful, relevant and quality research. There is also lack of research culture since research grants are not accessible in most of the universities and colleges. These and many other factor have been identified as major factors affecting research and utilization of HE research findings in the Philippines. Few researches conducted lack the utilization settings for their utilization outside the universities.

Based on these, a clarion call is made here for strong linkage settings which are needed between universities and colleges, researchers and policymakers in order to improve research quantity, quality and utilization of HE research findings. There is also need for strong political will and support of HE on the part of the government. Government should not continue to pay lip-service to the research funding and accessibility of research grants for universities and colleges, while universities and colleges should strive to reduce faculty workloads, allowing them ample space and time to engage in usable and quality research.

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