ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Transforming Teacher Education through Leadership and Curriculum Management in the 21st Century

Rowena May T. David[1], Adrian P. Maroma[2]

[12]*Instructor I, College of Education, Bulacan State University, Malolos Bulacan, Philippines*

Corresponding Author's Email: rowenamay.david@bulsu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the leadership strategies and curriculum management practices of the Program Chair responsible for the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) and Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) programs at a higher education institution. It focuses on the Program Chair's methods for fostering professional development, supporting faculty growth, and conducting program evaluations. For the methodology, a qualitative case study approach was used, incorporating semi-structured email interviews to collect information about the Program Chair's strategies for curriculum management, faculty development initiatives, and evaluation processes. The research findings indicate that effective leadership, which is rooted in ongoing professional development, collaborative decision-making, and faculty growth, is crucial for successful curriculum management. The study also emphasizes the need to incorporate 21st-century skills, digital literacy, and critical thinking into the curriculum. Furthermore, it shows that strong faculty development programs, including mentorship and professional development opportunities, enhance teaching practices and better equip graduates to meet the challenges of the 21st-century workforce. In conclusion, the study suggests that higher education institutions can greatly benefit from updated curricula, improved faculty development programs, data-driven evaluation systems, and modern learning environments to maintain the success and relevance of their teacher education programs. These recommendations offer practical insights for institutions aiming to enhance their teacher education offerings.

Keywords: *curriculum management, higher education, leadership in education, faculty development, program evaluation, teacher education*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions have the very important role of preparing future teachers in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they will need to navigate the intricacies of education in the 21st century (UNESCO, 2019). It calls for flexibility and responsiveness in teacher education and effective leadership precisely in curriculum management. The study focuses on the leadership practices and curriculum management strategies the Program Chair adopts for the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) and Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) programs in a higher education institution.

This includes how these align with the institution's goals and the new education standards emerging in the world today, such as those found in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). The study intends to explore some curriculum management challenges, the responses initiated by the Program Chair towards these challenges, and how successful these have been, particularly in terms of faculty development programs and outcomes of the program overall.

Given the salience of both global trends and local educational contexts in curriculum management (Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2019), this paper addresses the call for adaptive leadership and innovative approaches. According to research by Baldwin et al. (2020), addressing resource constraints and faculty buy-in through strategic planning and professional development is vital. Manansala et al. (2021) note that, in the local setting, faculty training needs to bridge the gap, focusing on integrating technology and competency-based frameworks. De Guzman and Torres (2022) point out the importance of transformational leadership in facilitating collaboration and continuous improvement in higher education institutions.

Despite these points, there have been few works on the management of BSED and BPED curriculum through Program Chairs under the dynamism of increasing demands in education. Based on this observation, this research attempts to be helpful in providing actional recommendations for best practices in instructions, curricular alignment with professional practice, and faculty development initiative improvement. The findings of this study are meant to inform policy and practice in higher education so that teacher education programs can effectively prepare graduates to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

This article rested on a body of literature regarding some core theoretical frameworks and contemporary research pertinent to leadership in higher education, curriculum development, and faculty development.

Fullan (2020) Change Theory: This influential framework underscores the role of collaborative leadership and shared responsibility on the part of all stakeholders for successful educational change. It stresses the importance of a culture of continuous improvement and attention to sustainable reforms within the context of education.

Tyler's Rationale (Tyler, 2021): The classic framework guides curriculum development through a systematic process, focusing on well-defined objectives, effective organization of content, and rigorous processes of evaluation. Tyler's Rationale is used as a basic guide for developing and implementing meaningful and effective curricula.

These two frameworks give a robust basis for understanding the complexities of curriculum management and the critical role of leadership in driving educational improvement.

Effective leadership is the key to any successful school. Kouzes and Posner (2020) suggest that transformational leadership inspires, motivates, and empowers individuals within the organization. Transformational leaders develop a shared vision, encourage collaboration, and promote professional growth among faculty and staff.

According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2019), instructional leadership is the kind of experience that "strengthens teaching and learning practices." It further posits the support of instructional leaders for teachers in their adopting new approaches, connecting instruction to learning intentions, and having a positive and interactive learning environment.

Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) has emerged as a prominent approach to curriculum design, emphasizing the alignment of learning outcomes with desired student learning. Biggs and Tang (2019) argue that OBE encourages educators to design learning activities and assessments that directly support the achievement of these outcomes, thereby enhancing student learning and preparing graduates for success in their chosen fields.

Further, inquiry-based and student-centered approaches are also in the ascendance. These methods, therefore, allow for active learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills where students can actually take control over their learning in order to grow the necessary qualities for survival and success in today's rapidly evolving world (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

The CIPP Model of Stufflebeam offers a comprehensive framework for program evaluation, allowing institutions to assess the effectiveness and relevance of their programs. This model emphasizes evaluating context, input, process, and product in order to collect data, analyze findings, and make data-informed decisions regarding program and student outcome improvements (Stufflebeam, 2020).

Faculty development is essential in preparing educators with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach effectively in the 21st century. Mishra and Koehler's (2019) TPACK Framework emphasizes the effective integration of technology into teaching and learning. This framework underlines the importance of pedagogical, technological, and content knowledge for teachers and the ability to integrate these three areas seamlessly.

Kimmons and Hall (2021) also argue that professional development programs need to be responsive to the evolving needs of educators, such as integration of technology, digital literacy skills, and innovative methods of teaching.

METHODS

Study Design
The current study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the leadership practices and curriculum management of the Program Chair. Semi-structured interview questions were designed to elicit detailed insights into leadership styles, challenges in curriculum management, and the specific

solutions implemented. The Program Chair graciously agreed to participate in the study via email, where comprehensive responses were requested. This method ensured that data collection was both thorough and respectful of the participant's well-being, in line with ethical research principles (Tracy, 2020).

RESULTS

Professional Development of the Program Chair
The professional development of the Program Chair is fundamentally based on mentorship, advanced studies, and a diverse range of professional experiences. This tripartite approach to growth has prepared the Program Chair to meet the intricate demands of leadership in higher education. Gurr (2019) suggests that effective leadership emerges from a culture of ongoing learning and varied professional backgrounds. The Program Chairs' active participation in mentoring programs and their pursuit of additional degrees have significantly fostered the adoption of innovative strategies to address changes in higher education.

Curriculum Management Practices
The Program Chair adopts a collaborative and inclusive method for managing the curriculum, consistently aligning with the standards and guidelines set by the Commission on Higher Education. Regular meetings and thorough evaluations are held to guarantee that programs stay relevant and effective. Major curriculum adjustments are informed by constructive and meaningful feedback from key stakeholders, including faculty, students, and industry partners. These changes address current needs stemming from the demands of modern education, incorporating digital literacy skills and inquiry-based learning practices.This is in agreement with the view presented by Biggs and Tang (2019) that seeks that learning outcomes should be aligned to the expected students' learning. The leadership by the Program Chair, in a sense, is aimed at making an institution of learning innovative and inclusive. He promotes faculty and staff participation in curriculum development.

Overcoming Challenges
The Program Chair has been able to overcome the common challenges of higher education, such as scheduling constraints, faculty workload disparities, and the presence of irregular students. These have been overcome by effective time management strategies and the implementation of individualized support mechanisms.

There is flexible study plan and targeted remedial measures implemented to effectively deal with the needs of irregular students, which follows the principles of learner-centered education advocated by Fullan (2020). Strategic planning and proactive problem-solving have helped in resolving the operational issues to ensure smooth program functioning.

Faculty Development Initiatives
Program development programs include the implementation of observation exercises, full-cycle feedback sessions, and effective workshop sessions. The above faculty development initiatives facilitate reflective teaching and contribute to professional growth among the faculties.
Mishra and Koehler (2019) underscore the significance of feedback with constant learning within the frameworks of improvement in instructional effectiveness. Faculty development programs within the program are related to the infusion of technology with innovative teaching approaches necessary for

the changing expectations of 21st-century learners and thus better equipping them for careers after college.

Program Evaluation

The evaluation of the BSED and BPED programs will be done based on a broad range of measures such as graduate employment rates, LET performance, and dropout rates of students. These measures will serve as a crucial source of feedback for ongoing improvement and are in line with the principles of Stufflebeam's CIPP Model (2020). The high rates of graduate employment and strong LET performance demonstrate how effectively the program prepares future educators for successful careers. Additionally, insightful feedback from alumni and employers highlights the program's positive impact on its students and, consequently, on the broader educational landscape.

This study highlights the importance of a comprehensive strategy to improve the BSED and BPED programs, focusing on several critical areas. First and foremost, revitalizing the curriculum is essential. This requires a proactive approach to curriculum development that incorporates technology-enhanced learning modules, promotes digital literacy among students, and emphasizes student-centered learning methods, such as inquiry-based and project-based learning. Secondly, ongoing professional development for faculty is vital. This includes enhancing mentorship programs for new faculty, offering regular training on innovative teaching methods, curriculum design, and leadership skills, and cultivating a culture of collaborative learning among faculty through peer coaching and reflective practices. Thirdly, making decisions based on data is crucial for guiding program improvements. A strong evaluation system that monitors a wide range of indicators, such as graduate employment rates, LET performance, student satisfaction, and employer feedback, is necessary. Leveraging digital tools for data analysis will help the program spot trends, identify areas needing improvement, and make informed decisions based on solid evidence. Lastly, investing in infrastructure is essential to support effective teaching and learning. This involves modernizing educational facilities, especially those related to physical education programs, by acquiring state-of-the-art equipment, creating adaptable learning spaces, and integrating technology into the educational environment. By addressing these key areas, the institution can ensure that the BSED and BPED programs adequately prepare graduates to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities of the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

This case study emphasizes the vital role of effective leadership in managing curriculum and instruction within higher education institutions. The Program Chair's strong dedication to collaborative decision-making, ongoing curriculum evaluation, and dynamic faculty development initiatives has positioned the BSED and BPED programs as relevant and responsive to the needs of 21st-century learners. By creating an inclusive and innovative environment that fosters collaboration, encourages professional growth, and prioritizes student success, the Program Chair has significantly enhanced the overall quality of teacher education at the institution. Future research should delve deeper into how specific teaching innovations, like the integration of technology and student-centered learning approaches, impact student performance and employability. Additionally, it is essential to explore how sustainability practices, including environmental education and social justice, can be incorporated into teacher education programs, equipping future educators to tackle the complex challenges society faces today.

The findings of such research will provide valuable insights and recommendations for modernizing teacher education programs and equipping graduates with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to thrive in the 21st century.

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