(RESEARCH ARTICLE)

A multi-campus assessment of frontline service processes and redress mechanisms

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Abstract

This study entitled "A Multi-Campus Assessment of Frontline Service Processes and Redress Mechanisms at Surigao del Sur State University (SDSSU)" aims to evaluate the level of implementation and consistency of key governance variables transparency, responsiveness, accountability, and redress mechanisms across SDSSU's six campuses: Cagwait, Cantilan, Lianga, San Miguel, Tagbina, and Tandag. Utilizing a quantitative research design with validated and piloted questionnaires, the study involved 582 respondents, including students, personnel, and external clients. Results show that while transparency, responsiveness, and accountability are generally perceived as "Very Well Implemented" in selected campuses, redress mechanisms are mostly "Well Implemented," with disparities among locations. Legal frameworks such as the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 (RA 9485), Civil Service Commission guidelines MC No. 12, s. 2007 and MC No. 24, s. 2010, and related public administration literature reinforce the ethical and operational standards for service delivery in public institutions. The findings suggest a need for more uniform practices, enhanced grievance systems, and institutional reforms aligned with governance principles. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on public sector governance in multi-campus university systems in rural contexts.

1. Introduction

The study titled "A Multi-Campus Assessment of Institutional Processes and Redress Mechanisms at Surigao del Sur State University" aims to evaluate the level of implementation and effectiveness of key institutional processes and grievance-handling systems across the university's six campuses namely: Cagwait, Cantilan, Lianga, San Miguel, Tagbina, and Tandag. The focus of the study revolves around three core governance variables: transparency, responsiveness, and accountability. These principles are essential in ensuring efficient public service delivery and trust in institutional operations, particularly in the context of frontline services. The study seeks to determine whether each campus uniformly upholds these values in their processes and whether students and employees have access to functional redress mechanisms when service delivery falls short.

Scholars have long emphasized the importance of good governance in higher education institutions. Bovens (2007) defines accountability as a cornerstone of public sector performance, where institutions are answerable for their decisions and actions. Heald (2006) asserts that transparency allows for visibility in decision-making, which in turn encourages trust and participation from stakeholders. Meanwhile, responsiveness ensures that institutions adapt and act promptly to the needs of their clientele. While these studies highlight the importance of these values, many are situated in national or urban academic contexts. Few studies focus on rural or provincial universities in the Philippines, particularly multi-campus state universities like Surigao del Sur State University (SDSSU), where diverse administrative practices and varying resource allocations may impact institutional consistency.

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This research fills a gap by providing a comparative analysis across SDSSU's six campuses. Despite being under a unified system, each campus has its own administrative structure and frontline service practices, which may lead to inconsistencies in how processes are carried out and how redress mechanisms are activated. By investigating each campus, this study will uncover disparities or best practices that could be scaled university-wide. Furthermore, it will analyze whether stakeholders especially students and frontliners perceive institutional procedures as transparent, responsive, and accountable. The study will gather data from both administrative records and stakeholder feedback to form a holistic understanding of current practices.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both policy enhancement and academic discourse. From a practical standpoint, the findings can guide SDSSU administrators in creating more standardized and equitable service delivery protocols across campuses. Academically, the study contributes to the body of knowledge on institutional governance in higher education, particularly in geographically dispersed, resource-challenged settings. It highlights how core governance principles can be assessed and applied in real-world university settings, thus serving as a model for other multi-campus institutions in the Philippines and beyond. By promoting transparency, responsiveness, and accountability, this research advances the broader goal of inclusive and effective public service in education.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative research design to objectively assess the implementation of institutional processes and redress mechanisms in Surigao del Sur State University (SDSSU). The quantitative approach was selected to allow for the collection and statistical analysis of measurable data related to the variables of transparency, responsiveness, and accountability. Through the use of a researcher-made questionnaire, the study aimed to evaluate the implementation of frontline service delivery and grievance mechanisms. The results were analyzed to determine levels of implementation among the six university campuses.

2.2. Research Locale

The approval of Republic Act 9998 last February 22, 2010, converted the then Surigao del Sur Polytechnic State College into Surigao del Sur State University.SDSSU is one of the four State Universities and Colleges in Caraga Region. It has six campuses namely: Cagwait, Cantilan, Lianga, San Miguel, Tagbina and Tandag. The center of governance is Tandag campus located at Rosario, Tandag City, Surigao del Sur. The University provides quality higher education in terms of engineering, technological, professional instruction and training, trade, fishery, agriculture, arts and sciences, education, environmental studies, marine biology, and information technology. In 2017, it garnered an award as 6th placer in terms of ARTA Report Card Survey of the Civil Service Commission.

2.3. Research Respondents

The research respondents are the internal and external clients. Internal clients are the students and faculty and staff of the six campuses who are the direct beneficiaries of the frontline services. External respondents are non-employees or walk-in clients. They are the service seekers. In getting the samples for internal clients, stratified proportional random sampling was used. While for external clients purposive sampling was applied, data of the respondents was based on the civil service sample. This sampling was used in choosing the potential respondents who were involved in the study.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents

Campus	Population			Total	Sample				Total
	Students	SDSS Personnel			Students	SDSS Personnel		External (Non-Students/Walk in service seekers	
			External (Non-Students/Walk in service seekers						
		Faculty	Staff			Faculty	Staff		
Cagwait	320	126	44	30	520	13	5	2	30	50
Cantilan	1968	68	23	30	2089	77	3	1	30	111
Lianga	1047	35	25	30	1137	41	1	1	30	73

San Miguel	254	36	19	30	339	10	1	1	30	32
Tagbina	986	16	13	30	1045	39	1	1	30	71
Tandag	4793	16	4	30	4843	187	1	1	30	219
Total	9368	297	128	180	9973	384	12	6	180	582

2.4. Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire and was subjected to content validation by three experts from the Department of Education, State Universities and Colleges, and the Local Government Unit. It was piloted to a group of clients of other government agencies within the province to test its reliability. The result of the reliability test is high; therefore, the questionnaire is significantly reliable.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Processes

3.1.1. Transparency

Table 2 shows that, Transparency was rated Very Well Implemented (VWI) in Cagwait (3.39), Cantilan (3.40), and San Miguel (3.37), while Lianga, Tagbina, and Tandag received a Well Implemented (WI) rating. The grand mean for this indicator is 3.26 (VWI), suggesting a generally high level of openness and visibility of institutional processes, although there is inconsistency across campuses.

Table 2 Level of Implementation in Terms of Processes and Redress Mechanism

INDICATORS	Processes	Transparency	Responsiveness	Accountability	Redress Mechanism	Over-all Mean
CAGWAIT	Mean	3.39	3.33	3.32	3.25	3.32
	Adj. rating	VWI	VWI	VWI	WI	VWI
CANTILAN	Mean	3.4	3.45	3.36	3.3	3.38
	Adj. rating	VWI	VWI	VWI	VWI	VWI
LIANGA	Mean	3.17	3.17	3.15	3.23	3.18
	Adj. rating	WI	WI	WI	WI	WI
SAN MIGUEL	Mean	3.37	3.57	3.32	2.97	3.31
	Adj. rating	VWI	VWI	VWI	WI	VWI
TAGBINA	Mean	3.14	3.23	3.25	3.22	3.21
	Adj. rating	WI	WI	WI	WI	WI
TANDAG	Mean	3.09	3.28	2.93	3.07	3.09
	Adj. rating	WI	VWI	WI	WI	WI
GRAND MEAN		3.26	3.34	3.22	3.17	3.25
OVER-ALL ADJ. RATING		VWI	VWI	WI	WI	WI

Legend: VWI- Very Well Implemented; WI- Well Implemented

This is in line with the Anti-Red Tape Act (ARTA) of 2007, or Republic Act No. 9485, which mandates government offices and state universities to simplify procedures, eliminate fixers, and ensure public access to information such as frontline service steps and processing time through Citizen's Charters. The Civil Service Commission (CSC) MC No. 12, s. 2007 further supports this, stating that all government agencies must display service standards and ensure that clients

understand what to expect. According to Heald (2006), transparency enhances public accountability and strengthens citizen engagement by making institutional actions visible and understandable.

3.1.2. Responsiveness

Responsiveness was rated VWI in four campuses: Cagwait (3.33), Cantilan (3.45), San Miguel (3.57), and in the overall grand mean (3.34). However, Lianga, Tagbina, and Tandag had lower ratings (WI). These results show that while most campuses are perceived to be responsive to client needs, others need improvement in addressing concerns in a timely and adequate manner.

Responsiveness is a key principle in New Public Management (NPM), which emphasizes service quality and citizen satisfaction. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) advocate for a more customer-focused government, suggesting that institutions must shift from bureaucratic control to responsiveness to clients. In the Philippine context, CSC rules require public institutions to provide quick and courteous frontline services. As outlined in CSC Resolution No. 060948 (2006), agencies must also handle complaints promptly through established feedback systems.

3.1.3. Accountability

Accountability was rated VWI in Cagwait (3.32), Cantilan (3.36), and San Miguel (3.32), but WI in Lianga (3.15), Tagbina (3.25), and Tandag (2.93), resulting in an overall grand mean of 3.22 (WI). This indicates that while some campuses maintain a high standard of responsibility and answerability in service delivery, others need reinforcement in monitoring and compliance mechanisms.

According to Bovens (2007), accountability in public service ensures that institutions explain and justify their actions to stakeholders. The Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 reinforces this by requiring performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms to evaluate staff performance in public-facing roles. Furthermore, CSC MC No. 01, s. 2001 (Revised Code of Conduct for Government Officials and Employees) obliges all public servants to uphold integrity and take responsibility for their actions, especially in service provision.

3.2. Redress Mechanism

Among all indicators, Redress Mechanisms scored the lowest overall, with only Cantilan (3.30) achieving a VWI rating. San Miguel received the lowest at 2.97, while the remaining campuses were rated WI, resulting in a grand mean of 3.17 (WI). This indicates that while feedback and complaint systems may exist, their functionality, accessibility, or effectiveness may be limited in several campuses.

The Civil Service Commission's Citizen Satisfaction Center Monitoring System (CSC-Citizen's Feedback Mechanism), provides a legal and operational foundation for institutional redress systems. CSC also released MC No. 24, s. 2010, requiring agencies to establish grievance machinery to address internal and external complaints. In higher education settings, Luescher-Mamashela (2013) notes that accessible and trusted redress mechanisms are vital to protecting students' rights and building institutional credibility.

3.3. Overall Analysis

The overall mean score of 3.25 indicates that institutional processes and redress mechanisms in SDSSU are generally "Well Implemented" but not yet uniformly strong across all campuses. Cantilan, Cagwait, and San Miguel performed more consistently, while Lianga, Tagbina, and Tandag showed areas for improvement, particularly in redress and accountability.

The results reinforce the importance of continued compliance with the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 and the full implementation of CSC standards to promote good governance in state universities. Furthermore, this study supports the recommendation for stronger policy standardization, training of frontline staff, and the strengthening of feedback and grievance systems across all campuses to achieve equitable, effective, and citizen-centered service delivery.

4. Conclusion

The research findings indicate that while the institutional processes of SDSSU are generally aligned with the principles of good governance, significant gaps remain in terms of implementation consistency, especially in redress mechanisms. The campuses of Cantilan, Cagwait, and San Miguel stand out for stronger performance, while Lianga, Tagbina, and Tandag show areas that require administrative strengthening. Transparency and responsiveness are evident but not uniform, and accountability mechanisms need reinforcement in several locations.

The ethical implications of this study lie in advocating for fair, transparent, and accountable public service delivery. The Anti-Red Tape Act (RA 9485) and Civil Service Commission guidelines provide a legal mandate for these principles, while public administration literature underscores their importance in enhancing citizen trust and institutional credibility. The university must address variations in service delivery by enhancing staff training, standardizing procedures, improving monitoring systems, and institutionalizing responsive and accessible grievance redress mechanisms.

This research contributes to the academic and practical discourse on higher education governance, particularly in geographically dispersed and resource-challenged contexts. It advocates for institutional reforms guided by the ethical obligation to provide equitable, efficient, and citizen-centered service delivery in the Philippine public education sector.

Compliance with ethical standards

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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