

Institutional and Leadership Capabilities of Community Colleges

Gilbert B. Blanza *

Tabaco College, Tabaco City, Philippines.

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Abstract

This study examined the institutional and leadership capabilities of community colleges, addressing four primary research objectives: (1) leadership capabilities pertaining to academic capabilities, moral ascendancy, and personality; (2) institutional capabilities in student services, faculty development, and governance; (3) traditional policies and practices; and (4) the transformative approach of existing policies. A descriptive survey research design was employed, utilizing questionnaires administered to respondents from community colleges in the First District of Albay. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, facilitated by the MICROSTAT program. The results indicated that community colleges demonstrated exceptional academic capabilities, with a focus on practical skills and knowledge (weighted mean: 4.33 for transfer programs). Leadership capabilities were characterized by empowerment of students (weighted mean: 3.88 for moral ascendancy) and a supportive environment (weighted mean: 3.97 for college personality). Institutional capabilities excelled in student services, particularly financial aid (weighted mean: 4.83), but showed room for improvement in career counseling and job placement (weighted mean: 2.77). Governance received excellent ratings for local board of trustees (weighted mean: 4.70), but relationships with local government units and the Commission on Higher Education required enhancement. Traditional policies and practices were found to hinder innovation, whereas transformative approaches prioritized student-centered and collaborative practices, implementing online processes and technology-enhanced instruction. Hence, the findings provided actionable insights into leadership and institutional capabilities, highlighting areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement.

Keywords: Institutional Capabilities; Leadership; Moral Ascendancy; Revolutionary Approach

1. Introduction

The enactment of Republic Act No. 7160, the Local Government Code of 1991, catalyzed transformations in community colleges, necessitating innovative leadership approaches that prioritized student success and institutional transformation (De Leon, 2015; Bass, 1985). Notably, this legislative shift underscored the importance of adaptive leadership in navigating decentralized governance and community engagement. However, despite this evolution, research on community college leadership and institutional capabilities was scarce, particularly in the Philippine context, leaving a notable gap in understanding effective strategies for promoting institutional excellence (Northouse, 2016). Consequently, this study addressed this gap by examining the Institutional and Leadership Capabilities of San Jose Community College and Tiwi Community College in Albay, Philippines. Specifically, this research evaluated the leadership capabilities, institutional capabilities, traditional policies and practices, and revolutionary approaches of these community colleges, with the aim of proposing recommendations for enhancing their sustainability and growth, and contributing to the literature on community college leadership and institutional development.

* Corresponding author: Gilbert B. Blanza

2. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the institutional and leadership capabilities of community colleges. The sequential explanatory design involved collecting and analyzing quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. This approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between leadership, institutional capabilities, and student success. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and document analysis. Specifically, the survey instrument measured leadership capabilities, institutional capabilities, and student success outcomes, while interviews gathered more in-depth information about leadership and institutional capabilities. The procedure entailed administering surveys online, scheduling interviews, and analyzing data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 software. Also, thematic analysis involved coding, categorization, and theme identification was applied.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The findings of the study were summarized as follows

3.1.1. Leadership Capabilities of Community Colleges

Academic Capabilities. The leadership capabilities of community colleges were assessed in relation to their academic capabilities. The highest weighted mean score of 4.33, categorized as "Excellent," was recorded for programs that enabled students to complete two years of coursework before transitioning to a four-year institution (Bass, 1985). Community colleges demonstrated strong collaboration with local employers and industry experts to align curricula with labor market demands (weighted mean: 4.07, "Very Good") (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). However, the provision of vocational training and certification programs received a lower weighted mean score of 3.18, indicating room for improvement.

Moral Ascendancy. The data revealed that community colleges demonstrated a commitment to providing accessible and affordable learning opportunities to diverse populations (weighted mean: 3.87, "Very Good") (Burns, 1978). However, the statement regarding social mobility and career transition pathways received a lower weighted mean score of 3.37, categorized as "Good" (Goleman, 1998).

Personality. The leadership capabilities of community colleges were also assessed in relation to specific personality traits. The findings indicated that community colleges provided a supportive and nurturing environment (weighted mean: 3.97, "Very Good") (Koh, 1990) and maintained a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere (weighted mean: 3.75, "Very Good") (Schein, 2010).

3.2. Institutional Capabilities of Community Colleges

Student Services. The findings revealed that community colleges provided financial aid and scholarship services, receiving the highest weighted mean score of 4.83, categorized as "Excellent" (Astin, 1993). However, career counseling and job placement services received a lower average rating of 2.77, indicating a need for improvement (Tinto, 1993).

Faculty Development. Community colleges offered workshops and training sessions for faculty development, receiving a weighted mean score of 3.35, categorized as "Good" (Gusky, 2000). However, the establishment of mentorship programs for new faculty members received a lower weighted mean score of 3.00, indicating an area for improvement (Boice, 2000).

Governance. The findings indicated that community colleges were governed by a local board of trustees, receiving a weighted mean score of 4.70, categorized as "Excellent" (Kerr, 2001). The governance structure was also influenced by local government units and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), receiving a weighted mean score of 3.73, categorized as "Very Good" (Davis, 2005).

3.3. Traditional Policies and Practices of Community Colleges

The traditional policies and practices of community colleges were characterized by manual registration processes, traditional classroom instruction, and limited use of technology-enhanced instruction (Cuban, 2001). Faculty evaluation and development were limited, and student support services were restricted (Boyer, 1990), affecting overall academic performance greatly.

3.4. Revolutionary Approach of Existing Policies

In contrast, the revolutionary approach of existing policies emphasized student-centered admission and registration processes, innovative instructional methods, and faculty development and support (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Enhanced student support services, collaborative governance, and strategic partnerships with local businesses and industries were also highlighted (Kern, 2000)

4. Conclusion

The community colleges played a pivotal role in democratizing access to higher education, catering to diverse student populations with varying needs and aspirations. Effective leadership was instrumental in shaping their institutional capabilities and fostering academic excellence. This study examined the interplay between leadership capabilities, institutional practices, and student success in selected community colleges, revealing that leaders who embodied moral ascendancy and a strong personality drove innovation and enhanced student outcomes. Specifically, the results indicated that prioritizing student services, faculty development, and governance was crucial for supporting student retention and overall college experience. Notably, community colleges that navigated traditional policies and practices while adopting progressive approaches were better positioned to respond to community needs and foster regional prosperity. Consequently, by leveraging their strengths and addressing challenges, community colleges enhanced institutional effectiveness, drove student success, and contributed to socioeconomic development. In light of these findings, this study highlighted the imperative for community colleges to continually assess and refine their leadership capabilities and institutional practices to remain vibrant and relevant in an ever-changing educational landscape.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest to disclose.

Statement of ethical approval

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institution and the research committee.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their confidentiality was maintained throughout the study

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