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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**NETWORKING SKILLS OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTERS AND THE QUALITY OF
 ORGANIZATIONAL LINKAGES IN SELECTED STATE UNIVERSITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES.**

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Abstract

State colleges and universities (SUCs) in the Philippines established organizational linkages to better reach out to the communities. The SUCs entered into consortium contracts with other institutions to extend services through maximized expertise of the deans, faculty members, directors, and program implementers. The extension services were issue-oriented and development-focused, to meet its minimum requirement as a truly transformative force.

This descriptive study determined the influence of the networking skills of the deans, directors, and program implementers on the quality of the organizational linkages in selected state universities and colleges (SUCs) in the CALA BARZON area, Philippines.

It was found that the organizational linkages were highly and effectively implemented in the SUCs. Power and influence, as a networking skill, predicted the quality of the organizational linkages as to advocacy. The quality of the organizational linkages as to community organizing capacity was induced by the program implementers' creativity and innovation, communication skill, leadership skill and power and influence. Capacity building and network and alliance building was influenced by the program implementers' leadership skill and power and influence.

It was concluded in the study that the organizational linkages, that were of high quality, enabled the SUCs to build their good image and reputation. Mutual cooperation, knowledge mobility, network stability, and better services were achieved through the program implementers' networking skills as knowledge sharing, management of ideas, communication, innovation, and improved performance.

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Introduction:

The threats and promises of the new millennium are more complex and overwhelming. Universities and colleges around the world reorient and redefine their goals in a fast-changing world. The deans, directors, and program implementers in the state colleges and universities (SUCs) in the Philippines learn to draw up their priorities, considering the present forces of change. They encounter an on-going stream of rapidly changing problems and situations that require the ability to continually adapt mindsets and strategies. Therefore, they must be prepared to modify formal programs and structures to meet the challenges in an increasing turbulent environment (Yukl, 2008).

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The SUCs establish organizational linkages to better reach out to the communities. They enter into consortium contracts with other institutions to maximize the expertise of the faculty members, with the able leadership of the deans, directors, and program implementers. They conduct extension services that are issue-oriented and development-focused, to meet its minimum requirement as a truly transformative force. The quality of these linkages is gauged on the number of services extended, the number of beneficiaries served, and the extent to which pre-set goals are attained. Quality-oriented organizations focus on meeting present needs and risk-averse. They resort to strategic planning, benchmarking, and use customer-focused approaches (Leavengood, et al, 2014). Therefore, the members of the extension services in the SUCs may be exposed to pragmatic acculturation, where they are exposed to emerging ideologies and voluntary compliance and commitment to productivity and quality (Mohanty, 1998).

The roles played by the deans, directors, and program implementers have always been critical to the success of the SUCs, because they are involved in hands-on activities and are always in contact with other stakeholders in the organization. Their roles are being recognized inside and outside the work organization. As program implementers, they should build network and alliance by identifying groups or groups of individuals as collaborators. They should be able to deliberately and strategically use information to influence decision making, as part of their advocacy role. In order to enhance their community organizing capacity, they should plan effectively how to take collaborative action. Moreover, capacity building skill is enhanced by identifying systems and processes that would facilitate achievement of goals. The extent to which they form linkages with other organizations and employ networking skills, if not properly enhanced, may have an adverse effect on the quality of the organizational linkages in the SUCs.

Objectives of the Study:

The primary purpose of the study is to determine the influence of networking skills on the quality of organizational linkages in the SUCs. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Determine the level of networking skills of the deans and program implementers in terms of creativity and innovation, communication skill, leadership skill, and power and influence.
2. Establish the level of quality of the organizational linkages as to advocacy, community organizing capacity, capacity building, and network and alliance building.
3. Ascertain if the level of networking skills of the deans and program implementers predict the quality of the organizational linkages in the SUCs.

Review of Literature:

Effectiveness is the key to success of any organization. The school leaders must be prudent enough in the choice of objectives to realize, courses of action to undertake, resourceful enough in times of scarcity, and versatile in the performance of their roles. They must display a kind of leadership that causes the members to get moving towards the realization of organizational goals (Angeles, 2003). They may understand that the leadership skills that foster school performance include teamwork, judgement, oral and written communication, and understanding own strengths and weaknesses (Pricellas et al., 2016). They must also realize that higher-order dynamic capabilities start from collaboration, learning, and management of creative ideas for both strategic and operational benefits (Agarwal&Selen, 2009). They must use network coordination for increased capacity to plan for and address complex problems and better services for clients (Provan&Kenis, 2007).

School officials must have the ability to draw the public into the process by considering long-term interests built on procedural fairness, effective communication, building support and relationships, demonstrating commitment to impacted communities and nurturing a reputation in the community for long-term effectiveness (Greensweig, et al 2016). Internal communication, therefore must be intensified as it is the main form of information exchange; it maintains mutual cooperation and ensure utmost transparency (Dzamtovska-Zdravkovska, 2013). That is why the SUCs are mandated to develop consortia and other forms of linkages with local government units and both public and private local and foreign agencies and develop academic arrangements for capacity building. Playing a central role, the SUCs must see that the formation, growth and success of their networks is achieved through individual action. They may develop their broad capabilities within the organization to enhance knowledge mobility, innovation appropriability, and network stability (Dhanaraj, &Parkhe, 2006). The deans, directors, and program implementers are tasked to perform this special role. Therefore, they must work with anyone at any level within or outside the organization and provide the necessary networking mechanism for everyone.

The provision of extension services enables the SUCs to transfer technology, particularly their relevant research outputs. Technology transfer, continuing education and training, and information dissemination contribute significantly to the attainment of national development goals (Labuguen, 2004). That is why, the deans, directors, and program implementers continually sustain and expand the network of advocates and mobilizers. They see that network formation is crucial for problem solving, innovation, and competitiveness (Tracey & Clark, 2003). Further, training and capacity building create a better official image for managers for implementing their projects and schemes and provide a good climate for learning, growth, and coordination (Sangivikumar, 2017).

Through networking and alliance building, they identify relevant partner organizations that can contribute to the achievement of program goals (Honculada, 2001). The established alliance encourages interactive learning through knowledge sharing, facilitated through trust and shared values (Tracey & Clark, 2003), as it through mutual trust, communication, and commitment that collaboration capability thrives (Blomqvist & Levy, 2006; Ki & Hon, 2007). They respond to public actions through improved performance that is highly linked to learning and human capacity development (Wescott & Jones, 2007). They use communication strategies to ensure that publics understand the benefits of the collaboration (Ki & Hon, 2007).

The SUCs become empowered due to formed collaboration. Empowering people means greatly increasing the system's capacity by creating processes, setting up structures that institutionalize those processes, and involve a much wider range of stakeholders in management (Potter & Brough, 2004). That is why, the deans, directors, and program implementers mobilize programs and projects to win policy and political commitment for better resource allocation. They enlist cooperation of service providers and secure support to gain commitment of local political, religious, social leaders and local organizations. They utilize interventions that increase the capacity of the organization to achieve goals and improve quality of life in the communities (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004).

Methodology:

The 168 respondents of the study included the deans in the College of Teacher Education and the College of Industrial Technology, the program implementers of research and extension, and the on-the-job training coordinators at the five SUCs in the CALABARZON area. These were the Cavite State University in Cavite, Laguna State Polytechnic University in Laguna, Batangas State University in Batangas, University of Rizal System in Rizal, and Southern Luzon State University in Quezon.

The study used the descriptive design. The networking skills of the deans and program implementers were used to suggest influence to the quality of the organizational linkages in the SUCs. Descriptive research becomes correlational when questions are asked on how variables co-vary with other variables (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007). It is a form of associational research that seeks out relationships among variables and helps explain important human behaviors or to predict likely outcomes (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

A researcher-made questionnaire was used to gather data on the level of networking skills of the deans and program implementers and the extent of effectiveness of organizational linkages. The statistical tools used were weighted mean, standard deviation, and multiple regression analysis.

Results and Discussion:

The following discussion focused on the influence of the level of networking skills of the dean and program implementers on the quality of organizational linkages in the SUCs.

Level of Program Implementers' Networking Skills :-

Results in Table 1 showed that the respondents had *high* levels of networking skills in terms of creativity and innovation ($M=4.29$, $SD=0.642$), communication skill ($M=4.49$, $SD=0.573$), leadership skill ($M=4.43$, $SD=0.654$), and power and influence ($M=4.34$, $SD=0.762$). The program implementers were able to share creative ideas and unique solutions to problems, effectively communicate with co-workers and other stakeholders, and share vision for mutual beneficial exchange. They fully understand that the achievement of collaboration goals is facilitated by knowledge sharing, shared values (Tracey & Clark, 2003), management of ideas (Agarwal & Selen, 2009), commitment (Greensweig, et al 2016), communication (Blomqvist & Levy, 2006; Ki & Hon, 2007), innovation (Tracey & Clark, 2003; Dhanaraj & Parkhe, 2006), and improved performance (Wescott & Jones, 2007).

Table 1:-Mean and standard deviation on the level of networking skills of the deans and program implementers

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Remarks
Creativity and innovation	4.29	0.642	High
Communication skill	4.49	0.573	High
Leadership skill	4.43	0.654	High
Power and influence	4.34	0.762	High
General Weighted Mean: 4.39			
Legend:			
4.51 – 5.00 = Very High (VH)			
3.51 – 4.50= High (H)			
2.51 – 3.50= Moderately High (MH)			
1.51 – 2.50= Low (L)			
1.00 – 1.50= Very Low (VL)			

Level of Quality of the Organizational Linkages in the SUCs :-

The quality of organizational linkages in the SUCs were *high* in terms of advocacy ($M=4.29, SD=0.712$), community organizing capacity ($M=4.18, SD=0.773$), capacity building ($M=4.33, SD=0.681$), and network and alliance building ($M=4.45, SD=0.653$). The SUCs identified collaborators, strategically used information that influenced decision-making, encouraged the stakeholders to join technology-related projects, and helped in developing the systems and processes of community projects. Through these, the SUCs were able to develop their broad capabilities that enhance knowledge mobility, innovation appropriability, and network stability (Dhanaraj, & Parkhe, 2006). The networks formed by the SUCs help them improve problem-solving, innovation, and competitiveness (Tracey & Clark, 2003), as well as learning and human capacity development (Wescott & Jones, 2007). Mutual cooperation is maintained (Dzamtovska-Zdravkowska, 2013) as the SUCs plan for better services for clients (Provan & Kenis, 2007) that creates a better official image for them as they implement projects (Sangivikumar, 2017).

Table 2:- Mean and standard deviation on the level of effectiveness of organizational linkages in terms of quality

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Remarks
Advocacy	4.29	0.712	High
Community organizing capacity	4.18	0.773	High
Capacity building	4.33	0.681	High
Networking and alliance building	4.45	0.653	High
General Weighted Mean: 4.31			
Legend:			
4.51 – 5.00 = Very High (VH)			
3.51 – 4.50= High (H)			
2.51 – 3.50= Moderately High (MH)			
1.51 – 2.50= Low (L)			
1.00 – 1.50= Very Low (VL)			

Predictors of Quality of Organizational Linkages in the SUCs

The program implementers' *power and influence* was a predictor of the quality of organizational linkages as to *advocacy* ($\beta=0.460, t=-5.625, sig=.000$). The quality of organizational linkages as to *advocacy* was explained by 67.1% of the program implementers' *power and influence*. The F-value of 49.609 was significant at 0.000 probability level. The SUCs develop higher order dynamic capabilities through collaboration and management of ideas (Agarwal & Selen, 2009). They continue to build support and relationships and promote a reputation in the community for long-term effectiveness (Greensweig, et al 2016).

Table 3:-Regression analysis on the level of quality of organizational linkages in terms of advocacy

Networking skills	beta	t-value	Sig.
Power and influence	0.460	-5.625	0.000
<i>Adjusted R-square = 0.671</i>			
<i>F-value = 49.609</i>			
<i>Sig. = 0.000</i>			

The program implementers' *creativity and innovation* ($\beta=.356, t=4.054, sig.=.000$), *communication skill* ($\beta=.391, t=-3.593, sig.=.000$), *leadership skill* ($\beta=.378, t=3.350, sig.=.001$), and *power and influence* ($\beta=.310, t=-3.489, sig.=.001$) were significant predictors of the quality of organizational linkages as to *community organizing capacity*. The F-value of 38.438 was significant at .000 probability level. The quality of organizational linkages as to community organizing capacity was explained by 61.1% of the program implementers' creativity and innovation, communication skill, leadership skill, and power and influence. The program implementers organize community projects through mutual trust and commitment (Blomqvist& Levy,2006), sustain projects by understanding its strengths and weaknesses (Pricellas et al, 2016), and use network coordination for increased capacity to plan for and address complex problems and better services for clients (Provan&Kenis, 2007).

Table 4:-Regression analysis on the level of quality of organizational linkages in terms of community organizing capacity

Networking skills	beta	t-value	Sig.
Creativity and innovation	0.356	4.054	0.000
Communication skill	0.391	-3.593	0.000
Leadership skill	0.378	3.350	0.001
Power and influence	0.310	-3.489	0.001
<i>Adjusted R-square = 0.611</i>			
<i>F-value =38.438</i>			
<i>Sig. =0.000</i>			

It was found that the program implementers' *leadership skill* ($\beta=.479, t=6.711, sig.=.000$) and *power and influence* ($\beta=.646, t=7.308, sig.=.001$) were predictors of the quality of organizational linkages as to *capacity building*. The F-value of 64.971 was significant at .000 probability level. 72.8% of the variation in the quality of organizational linkages as to capacity building was explained by the program implementers' leadership skill and power and influence. Training and capacity building help in creating a better official image for managers for implementing their projects and schemes (Sangivikumar, 2017), that largely contribute to the attainment of national development goals (Labuguen, 2004). The program implementers value the spirit of teamwork (Pricellas et al., 2016) to achieve goals and manage creative ideas for both strategic and operational benefits (Agarwal&Selen, 2009) and ensure utmost transparency in their actions (Dzamtovska-Zdravkovska, 2013). They create and follow systems and processes, institutionalize these processes, and involve a much wider range of stakeholders in management (Potter & Brough, 2004) of extension activities.

Table 5:-Regression analysis on the level of quality of organizational linkages in terms of capacity building

Networking skills	beta	t-value	Sig.
Leadership skill	0.479	6.711	0.000
Power and influence	0.646	7.308	0.001
<i>Adjusted R-square = 0.728</i>			
<i>F-value =64.971</i>			
<i>Sig. =0.000</i>			

Results in Table 6 showed that program implementers' *leadership skill* ($\beta=.384, t=4.536, sig.=.000$) and *power and influence* ($\beta=.429, t=4.089, sig.=.000$) were predictors of the quality of organizational linkages as to network and alliance building. The F-value of 39.584 was significant at .000 probability level. 61.8% % of the variation in the quality of organizational linkages as to network and alliance building was explained by the program implementers' leadership skill and power and influence. Networks are used to better provide services to the clients (Provan&Kenis, 2007). The SUCs continue to build support and relationships and demonstrate commitment to the impacted communities (Greensweig, et al 2016) to establish better network stability (Dhanaraj, &Parkhe, 2006). They respond to public actions through improved performance (Wescott& Jones, 2007) utilizing interventions that improve the quality of life in the communities (Peterson& Zimmerman, 2004).

Table 6.-Regression analysis on the level of quality of organizational linkages in terms of network and alliance building

Networking skills	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Leadership skill	0.384	4.536	0.000

Power and influence	0.429	4.089	0.000
<i>Adjusted R-square</i> = 0.618			
<i>F-value</i> = 39.584			
<i>Sig.</i> = 0.000			

Conclusions:-

It was concluded in the study that the organizational linkages, that were of high quality, enabled the SUCs to build their good image and reputation. Mutual cooperation, knowledge mobility, network stability, and better services were achieved through the program implementers' networking skills as knowledge sharing, management of ideas, communication, innovation, and improved performance.

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