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Strengthening educational leadership: Development and validation of the academic heads' work performance rating instrument

Claire Theresa S. Bentor

¹School of Graduate Studies, Biliran Province State University, Naval, Biliran Province, Philippines 6560.

(Email: clairebentor@bipsu.edu.ph)

Abstract

Higher education institutions (HEIs) depend significantly on effective academic leadership in addition to competent teaching staff. This study aimed to develop and validate an assessment tool for evaluating the performance of academic heads across instructional, research, extension, and production (IREP) domains. A researcher-designed quantitative instrument was utilized, employing multivariate analysis and confirmatory factor analysis to establish robust constructs from respondent data. The findings confirmed the validity and reliability of the evaluation tool, identifying a structured three-factor model: (1) research and extension, (2) instruction, and (3) production. Notably, respondents tended to perceive research and extension as closely intertwined, underscoring challenges in distinguishing these critical institutional functions. This study underscores the importance of clarifying these distinctions for academic leaders, emphasizing that effective HEIs must foster a holistic approach to academic roles beyond instruction, encompassing research, extension, and technological innovation. Integrating these components (IREP) into HEI strategic plans, academic audits, and faculty development initiatives is crucial for enhancing institutional effectiveness and leadership capacity.

Keywords: Academic head, Higher educational leadership, Upward appraisal, Work performance.

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1. Introduction

The quality of higher education and its graduates is a critical aspect for evaluating the performance of academic institutions in addressing societal and national needs. The Philippines recognizes the importance of fostering globally competitive graduates who possess motivation, knowledge, and social consciousness. To achieve this, educational institutions must be led by competent individuals who can adhere to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) demands and support the institution's fourfold functions of Instruction, Research, Extension, and Production, as defined by the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP).

Effective leadership is crucial for the success of an educational institution. As Sergon [1] suggests, leaders can inspire, motivate, guide, and listen to their subordinates. Academic leaders who are skilled and committed to their roles create a sustainable, high-quality learning environment and have a direct impact on teaching and learning outcomes. While numerous studies have demonstrated the correlation between effective leadership and organizational performance, there is limited research on the specific evaluation of academic leaders, particularly department heads.

The primary objective of this study is to develop and validate an instrument that enables faculty members to assess the work performance of their department heads. The proposed evaluation tool aims to address the gap in assessing the leadership performance of department heads within Philippine State Universities, focusing on the fourfold functions of Instruction, Research, Extension, and Production. By evaluating department heads based on these functions, the study seeks to provide essential feedback for individual and institutional improvement, ensuring compliance with quality education standards and informing administrative decision-making.

In addition to supporting individual growth and organizational development, this performance evaluation instrument will contribute to the broader goal of enhancing the quality of education provided by Philippine State Universities. By systematically measuring department heads' performance, academic institutions can better understand their strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions regarding appointments, resource allocation, and strategic planning. Ultimately, the development and validation of this instrument will contribute to the ongoing pursuit of excellence in higher education and the cultivation of globally competitive graduates equipped to address the needs of society and the nation.

In this study, we operationalize the factors of a department head's work performance within the context of the fourfold functions of Instruction, Research, Extension, and Production. These factors serve as the foundation for assessing the department heads' effectiveness in their respective roles.

Instruction: This factor encompasses the department head's supervisory role in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the teaching-learning process. This includes overseeing the development of curricula, ensuring the quality of instructional materials, and providing guidance and support to faculty members in their teaching endeavors.

Research: This factor refers to the department head's competence in promoting research activities within the department. This includes facilitating research proposal writing, organizing events that encourage faculty members to author or co-author scholarly articles aligned with the department's research agenda, and modeling research publication in CHED-accredited or international journals.

Extension: This factor pertains to the department head's ability to lead and organize faculty participation in service-oriented projects in the community, as well as professional and technical events conducted for the benefit of adopted communities. The department head plays a crucial role in fostering a culture of community engagement and social responsibility among faculty members.

Production: This factor relates to the department head's capacity to support faculty members in the creation of educational materials, such as modules, laboratory manuals, operation manuals, workbooks, teaching guides, or textbooks. Additionally, it involves the department head's ability to contribute to innovations or discoveries with direct relevance to education, science, and technology.

By examining these factors, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of department heads' work performance within Philippine State Universities. This evaluation will enable institutions to identify areas of strength and areas requiring improvement, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of higher education and the development of globally competitive graduates.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design and Sampling

This quantitative study employs a descriptive survey design to test the developed instrument for evaluating department heads' work performance [2]. Utilizing convenience sampling, the researchers conducted a pilot test of the questionnaire among 390 faculty members from State Universities and Colleges in the Eastern Visayas and Central Visayas regions, selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the online survey.

According to Hair et al. [3], an appropriate sample-to-variable ratio for factor analysis is 10:1, indicating the need for 10 participants per item. However, the researchers obtained only 134 (34%) responses, which, based on Gorsuch [4] sample-to-variable ratio of 6:1, remains adequate for assessing sampling sufficiency. The demographic breakdown of the respondents includes 56 (41.9%) males and 78 (58.1%) females. Although the study features a higher proportion of female participants, this is reflective of the generally higher number of female faculty members in academia.

In terms of years of service, the distribution of respondents is as follows: 3 (2.3%) with 21-25 years, 19 (14%) with 16-20 years, 22 (16.3%) with 11-15 years, 25 (18.6%) with 6-10 years, and the majority of 65 (48.8%) with 5 years or less. This diverse range of experience levels allows for a comprehensive evaluation of department heads' work performance across different stages of academic careers.

2.2. Academic Head's Work Performance Rating Sheet

In developing this research instrument, several established tools were utilized as the foundation for constructing the items. These tools were adapted to create a comprehensive evaluation instrument specifically designed for assessing department heads' work performance within the context of higher education institutions.

The Qualitative Contribution Evaluation (QCE) of the National Budget Circular No. 461, implemented in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), focuses on instruction and teaching effectiveness, fostering a culture of excellence

across four areas: instruction, research, extension, and production [5]. The QCE is designed to be an effective motivator for developing a culture of excellence and is used as a reliable measure for faculty ranking among public tertiary institutions.

The Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACUP)'s survey instruments play a critical role in the accreditation process for higher education institutions in the Philippines [6]. The primary purpose of AACUP is to develop mechanisms for and conduct evaluations of academic programs and institutions, with a particular focus on state universities and colleges. The AACUP instrument assesses the educational activities of a department, either in whole or in part, and determines whether it substantially achieves its objectives and maintains a standard of quality comparable to similar institutions.

Drawing from elements of existing evaluation tools, the newly developed research instrument aims to provide a robust and comprehensive assessment of department heads' work performance, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of higher education institutions and fostering the development of globally competitive graduates. The instrument differs from previously discussed tools in two main aspects. First, it specifically targets the measurement of individual performance for unit heads. Second, although aligned with the four-fold function of the institution like other instruments, it contextualizes this alignment by distinguishing the unit head's performance from that of the organization.

The instrument comprises two parts: the respondent's profile and the work performance evaluation of the unit head. The latter contains 52 descriptive statements addressing the department head's performance in each construct (Instruction, Research, Extension, and Production).

An initial literature review was conducted to obtain descriptions of the constructs to be measured. These descriptions were then transformed into items that best represent the chosen constructs, as operationally defined. To establish face validity, the instrument was reviewed by two experts in research instrument construction and one expert in evaluating employee work performance in academic institutions, such as a Human Resource Management Officer. Following revisions and deletions based on the experts' suggestions, the instrument was refined to include 39 descriptive statements for pilot testing. A five-point Likert scale (5 - Exceptional Performance, 4 - Exceeds Expectations, 3 - Fully Meets Expectations, 2 - Needs Improvement, 1 - Not Evident) was employed to gauge the extent to which each statement reflects the respondent's perception of the department head's performance.

2.3. Data Analysis

The establishment of construct validity is a crucial aspect of any research study aiming to measure complex constructs. In this study, construct validity was established through the utilization of a rigorous methodological approach. Specifically, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation and exclusion of factor loadings lower than 0.50 was employed. To evaluate the strength of the consistency of the set of items and the reliability of the instrument test, Cronbach's alpha was employed. This method is a widely accepted statistical measure of internal consistency reliability that provides insight into the degree to which the items in the test measure the same construct consistently.

In this study, the adopted scales were based on the fourfold function of higher education, a well-established theoretical framework that describes the key functions of higher education institutions. The major techniques used to analyze the responses included Cronbach's Alpha for estimating internal reliability and multivariate analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v.28). The former provided an estimate of internal consistency reliability, while the latter allowed for testing the internal consistency and validity of the instrument. Additionally, the use of SPSS v.28 enabled the identification of potential sources of bias or error in the data.

3. Findings and Discussion

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was utilized to assess the internal consistency of the scale items in order to determine the Reliability of the department head performance metrics was assessed through an initial analysis of the questionnaire's first version, which consisted of 39 items. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.97, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items. The first step in factor analysis involved evaluating whether the data exhibited the necessary characteristics for such analysis. Data with limited or no correlation between variables are unsuitable for factor analysis. The researcher reported a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of 0.87 for the 39-item scale, exceeding the recommended minimum value of 0.5, which suggests sampling adequacy. Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 6749.976$, $p < .0001$), confirming the appropriateness of the sample for factor analysis. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the 39 items was 0.97, further supporting the high internal consistency. The factor analysis identified four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00, collectively accounting for 78.42% of the total variance. All commonalities were above 0.40, indicating that each item shared some common variance with other items, thus confirming the adequacy of the factor structure (see Table 1). Initial eigenvalues indicated that the first four factors explained 49.34%, 16.22%, 7.25%, and 5.61% of the variance, respectively. The pilot-tested 39-item instrument was ultimately reduced to 18 items after extracting items with multiple loadings.

The first factor, accounting for 49.34% of the total work performance scale, was labeled as Production. This factor encompasses the department head's ability to assist faculty members in authoring modules, laboratory manuals, operation manuals, workbooks, teaching guides, or textbooks, as well as their capacity to generate innovations or discoveries that directly contribute to education, science, and technology. Six items (items nos. 42, 44, 45, 46, 48, and 49) measure the department head's performance concerning their production function. Results indicated that teacher-respondents perceive production as the design and development of instructional materials that facilitate and disseminate knowledge both within the classroom and the broader community. They believe that department heads must possess the aptitude to support

production-related activities. According to Momanyi [7] employees in educational institutions prefer department heads who demonstrate care and appreciation for their work, which subsequently motivates them to work effectively.

The second factor, accounting for 16.22% of the variance, comprises seven items (item nos. 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, and 26) describing the department heads' competence in monitoring and evaluating classes, facilitating access to resources for classroom utilization, ensuring the quality of teaching-learning activities, and providing research capability-building opportunities for teachers, given the inclusion of research as a course or program requirement. Tumapon [8] posits that the content taught in classes should ideally be the product of scientific research, which seeks to uncover the truth about a specific aspect of reality. Consequently, as representatives of their academic units, department heads should remain abreast of contemporary ideas and the latest research findings in the service of instruction.

Table 1.

Factor loadings and communalities based on a principal components analysis with varimax rotation for 18 items (n = 139).

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Communality
The Department Head...					
Observe classes at least once a month.		0.723			0.755
Provides teachers access to the resources within the department for classroom use.		0.855			0.789
Encourages the involvement of students in meaningful learning activities		0.855			0.822
Fosters the innovativeness and resourcefulness in the different instructional processes		0.683			0.709
Allows the utilization of ICT and other resources in the enhancement of the teaching-learning process		0.845			0.759
Coordinates with the Research Services Office (RSO) for inter- and intra-school research activities.		0.736			0.727
Boosts the conduct of externally funded research.			0.754		0.748
Requires faculty and students to conduct research as a course requirement (whenever its applicable)		0.716			0.710
Initiates publication of research outputs preferably in refereed journals.			0.780		0.723
Ensures that the extension activities are properly documented to serve for monitoring and evaluation.			0.682		0.643
Assures that the budget for the extension program of the department is utilized as proposed plan.			0.730		0.672
Table 1 Continued...					
Obligates extension coordinators per program to provide proposals for extension activities at the start of every semester.	0.831				0.747
Requires faculty members to have a printed compilation of handouts and exercises/and classroom activities.	0.906				0.870
Grants credits to faculty members who are actually involved in the production of scholarly materials.	0.872				0.880
Allows faculty members to work collaboratively to produce workbooks and instructional manuals for the same subject taught.	0.849				0.800
Invites experts to conduct training sessions for faculty on how to create books and instructional materials.				0.966	0.957
Establishes linkages with publishing companies that will facilitate the publication of instructional manuals authored by the faculty members.	0.895				0.894
Coordinates with the institution to provide access/subscription to scholarly journals for referencing.	0.913				0.909

Note: Factor loadings of <.40 are suppressed.

The final identified factor comprises statements evaluating the department head based on their Research and Extension functions. This factor accounts for 7.25% of the total variance and contains four items (item nos. 25, 29, 38, and 40). These items pertain to the department head's ability to facilitate and promote research and extension activities, conduct monitoring and evaluation of research and extension projects to ensure efficient and proper fund utilization, and pursue studies aligned with the institution's strategic initiatives and the agendas of relevant national agencies. The results suggest that the items measuring Research and Extension individually coalesced into a single factor, potentially reflecting teachers' belief that Research and Extension are interdependent. Pacoy [9] posits that the invigorating effect of research

bolsters both instructional and extension functions, as knowledge acquired through research is disseminated to communities via extension activities.

The last factor, which explains 5.61% of the total variance, contains only one item. Gang [10] proposes that a factor should comprise at least three items to be considered significant. Consequently, the final factor was discarded due to its insufficient item count.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The primary objective of this study is to develop an instrument that measures the performance of department heads or deans in alignment with the fourfold functions of higher education institutions, as Biliran Province State University lacks an institutionalized evaluation form for assessing these metrics. The final instrument confirms the existence of the four operationally defined constructs, demonstrating their validity and reliability. However, the results produced a three-factor model wherein research and extension were perceived by respondents as a single unit rather than separate functions. This may be attributed to some faculty members' difficulty in distinguishing between research and extension. Moreover, in many State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), research and extension functions are situated within a single organizational department under the same supervisor, thereby reinforcing the perception of their interconnectedness.

Higher education institutions should strive to cultivate the understanding among faculty that their role extends beyond instruction; they are also mandated to pursue research, generate new knowledge, engage in extension activities, and develop tools that aid instruction. At present, Biliran Province State University holds a SUC Level 3 accreditation, signifying that there are areas in need of improvement. The institution should concentrate on further enhancing and strengthening research, extension, and production by reorienting its institutional outcomes and goals towards a more comprehensive, community-based approach to innovation. This can be achieved through fostering quality research, extension, and production activities aligned with ASEAN integration and the Strategic Development Goals of the Philippines.

The data obtained from this study can serve as a valuable resource for the university in envisioning and realizing its goals over a specified period. By analyzing the results, the university can identify areas of improvement and revise its mission and vision accordingly to emphasize a more research-oriented approach, particularly in relation to research-based extension activities. A research-focused mission and vision can help foster a culture of academic excellence within the institution, encouraging faculty members to engage in cutting-edge research and innovative extension projects that address pressing societal issues. By integrating research and extension activities, the university can establish a symbiotic relationship between these two functions, maximizing the impact of research findings on the communities it serves and ensuring that extension activities are grounded in evidence-based practices.

In conclusion, the data gleaned from this study can significantly contribute to the university's strategic planning and decision-making processes. By reevaluating and refining its mission and vision to emphasize research-oriented and research-based extension activities, the institution can effectively adapt to the evolving demands of higher education, ensuring a meaningful and lasting impact on the communities it serves.

The study's findings indicate that the attributes measured in the developed instrument accurately reflect the perceived performance of department heads, reducing ambiguity for respondents when completing the evaluation. The implementation of the Academic Head's Work Performance Rating Sheet (AHWPRS) is expected to influence the functioning of unit heads within the organization, promoting a harmonious working environment. The AHWPRS can serve as a valuable communication tool that benefits both faculty members and the administration.

For future research, it is recommended to utilize a larger sample size to further establish the instrument's validity and reliability. Additionally, careful consideration of the language used in the evaluation is essential. A performance evaluation need not be overly complicated; the crucial aspect is that the included items capture the instrument's intended purpose effectively and efficiently.

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