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Advancing Research Management in the Philippines: Policy Frameworks and Collaborative Initiatives

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Henry B. Wagas
University of the Visayas, Cebu City, Philippines
https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1566-0944

Osias Kit T. Kilag
PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Mercado St., Poblacion, Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0845-3373

Ryzel Maureen F. Canes
College of Arts and Sciences, Eastern Visayas State University, Tacloban City, Philippines
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1200-5733

John Michael V. Sasan
PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Mercado St., Poblacion, Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5987-6937

Abstract:

This study examines the landscape of research management development in the Philippine setting, with a focus on key initiatives and challenges faced in various sectors, including education. Through an analysis of policy frameworks, collaborative agreements, and capacity-building efforts, the study highlights the progress made in enhancing research management, capacity building, and collaboration, with particular attention to the role of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Key findings include the establishment of systematic policy frameworks, such as the Research Management Guidelines (RMG) in the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), aimed at promoting evidence-based policy and program development. Despite these advancements, challenges such as human resource constraints, bureaucratic hurdles, and the need for sustainable research funding persist, underscoring the importance of continued efforts to foster a dynamic research environment in the Philippines. Through sustained collaboration and investment in research and innovation, facilitated by organizations like CHED, the country can unlock its full potential for driving economic growth and addressing societal challenges.

Keywords: research management, Philippines, policy frameworks, collaboration, capacity building

Introduction:

Research management is a critical component in the advancement of educational and scientific knowledge. It encompasses the organization, administration, and strategic planning of research activities, ensuring that resources are effectively utilized to generate high-quality outputs. In the Philippines, the development of research management practices has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly within the educational sector. This focus is driven by the need to foster a robust research culture that supports evidence-based policy-making and innovation (Almonte-Acosta, 2007).

The Department of Education (DepEd) has been at the forefront of promoting research in basic education through various initiatives, including the establishment of the Research Management Guidelines (DO 16, s. 2017). These guidelines aim to provide a structured approach to managing research initiatives at national, regional, and local levels, enhancing support mechanisms such as funding, partnerships, and capacity building (Department of Education, 2017). By fostering a culture of research, DepEd seeks to improve the quality of education and facilitate informed decision-making processes.

Similarly, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has undertaken significant efforts to improve research and development (R&D) within higher education institutions (HEIs). During the Philippine-California Advanced Research Institutes (PCARI) International Seminar-Workshop in 2017, CHED Chairperson Dr. Patricia B. Licuanan emphasized the importance of advancing high-end research and development in the country. The seminar-workshop, supported by the USAID Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for Development (STRIDE) Program, addressed common issues in R&D management and produced recommendations for enhancing research productivity and innovation (Commission on Higher Education, 2017).

Despite these efforts, several challenges persist in the Philippine research landscape. Issues such as limited funding, inadequate linkages between academia and industry, and bureaucratic hurdles continue to impede the progress of research initiatives (Dobrzanski & Bobowski, 2020). Additionally, there is a need for improved mechanisms to support the commercialization of research outputs and the protection of intellectual property (Dellosa, 2017).

This study aims to evaluate the implementation and impact of DepEd's Research Management Guidelines and CHED's R&D initiatives on research management practices in the Philippines. It seeks to identify the successes and challenges faced by these initiatives and provide recommendations for enhancing research management within the Philippine educational context. By examining these efforts, the study contributes to a better understanding of how structured research management practices can support educational and scientific advancements in developing countries.

Literature Review:

Research management is a multifaceted discipline that encompasses the administration, oversight, and strategic planning of research activities within institutions. Globally, effective research management practices are seen as crucial to fostering innovation and advancing knowledge. In developed countries, robust research management frameworks include well-established funding mechanisms, comprehensive administrative processes, and strong industry-academic linkages (Kirkland, 2008; Van der Weijden et al., 2015).

In the United States and Europe, research management has evolved to include sophisticated support systems that cater to both the administrative and technical needs of researchers. These systems often involve dedicated research offices that handle grant applications, compliance with ethical standards, and dissemination of research findings (Bland et al., 2005). The adoption of such practices has significantly enhanced the efficiency and productivity of research institutions in these regions.

Research Management in the Philippine Context

In the Philippines, the development of research management practices is relatively nascent but has gained momentum over the past decade. The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) have been pivotal in this regard, implementing policies and guidelines to bolster research activities within educational institutions. The introduction of DepEd's Research Management Guidelines (DO 16, s. 2017) is a notable effort to provide a structured approach to managing research at various educational levels (Department of Education, 2017).

The Research Management Guidelines aim to enhance the research culture in basic education by offering clear protocols for managing research initiatives, securing funding, and fostering partnerships. These guidelines are designed to support evidence-based decision-making, improve the quality of educational outcomes, and ensure the sustainable development of research capabilities (Department of Education, 2017).

Simultaneously, CHED has made significant strides in promoting R&D within higher education institutions (HEIs). Through initiatives such as the Philippine-California Advanced Research Institutes (PCARI) project, CHED has sought to address common issues in R&D management and enhance the research productivity of Philippine HEIs (Commission on Higher Education, 2017). This initiative has facilitated international collaborations and provided a platform for capacity-building in research management.

Challenges in Research Management in the Philippines

Despite these advancements, several challenges continue to impede the progress of research management in the Philippines. One of the primary issues is the limited availability of funding for research activities. Many educational institutions struggle to secure adequate financial resources, which hampers their ability to conduct high-quality research (Almonte-Acosta, 2007). Additionally, the bureaucratic processes involved in the release and utilization of research funds further exacerbate this problem (Dobrzanski & Bobowski, 2020).

Another significant challenge is the shortage of qualified researchers. The Philippines faces a persistent brain drain, with many talented researchers opting to work abroad due to better opportunities and remuneration (Asis, 2006). This shortage is compounded by inadequate training and professional development opportunities for researchers within the country (Almonte-Acosta, 2007).

Furthermore, there is a lack of effective industry-academic linkages in the Philippines. Collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners is crucial for the practical application and commercialization of research outputs (Dellosa, 2017). However, such partnerships are often limited due to differences in priorities and the absence of facilitating mechanisms.

Best Practices and Successes in Philippine Research Management

Despite these challenges, there have been notable successes in research management within the Philippines. The implementation of DepEd's Research Management Guidelines has led to significant improvements in the organization and administration of research activities in basic education. These guidelines have helped streamline research processes, enhance the quality of research outputs, and foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation (Department of Education, 2017).

Similarly, CHED's initiatives, particularly the PCARI project, have yielded positive outcomes. By fostering international collaborations and providing platforms for capacity-building, CHED has enhanced the research capabilities of Philippine HEIs. The involvement of institutions like the University of California, Berkeley, has provided valuable insights and best practices that can be adapted to the Philippine context (Commission on Higher Education, 2017).

Moreover, there have been successful cases of industry-academic partnerships in the Philippines. For instance, the Department of Science and Technology's (DOST) technology transfer initiatives have facilitated the commercialization of research outputs, thereby contributing to economic growth (Payumo, et al. 2012). These initiatives highlight the potential of effective research management practices to drive innovation and development.

Lessons from International Models

To further enhance research management in the Philippines, it is essential to draw lessons from successful international models. In countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, research management is characterized by robust support systems that cater to both the administrative and technical needs of researchers (Bland et al., 2005; Van der Weijden et al., 2015). These systems include dedicated research offices, comprehensive grant management frameworks, and strong industry linkages.

For example, the University of California, Berkeley's model of research administration emphasizes minimizing bureaucracy to maximize research efficiency. This approach involves streamlined administrative processes, clear protocols for grant applications and compliance, and effective dissemination of research findings (University of California, Berkeley, 2017). Adopting similar practices in the Philippines could significantly enhance the efficiency and productivity of research institutions.

Moving forward, there are several key areas that need to be addressed to improve research management in the Philippines. First, there is a need to increase funding for research activities and ensure the timely release of funds. This can be achieved through innovative funding models and increased government support for research initiatives (Almonte-Acosta, 2007).

Second, enhancing the training and professional development opportunities for researchers is crucial. This includes providing access to advanced training programs, workshops, and international collaborations that can help build the capacity of Filipino researchers (Dobrzanski & Bobowski, 2020).

Third, fostering stronger industry-academic linkages is essential for the practical application and commercialization of research outputs. This can be facilitated through policies and mechanisms that encourage collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners (Dellosa, 2017).

Finally, adopting best practices from successful international models can provide valuable insights and strategies for improving research management in the Philippines. By learning from the experiences of institutions in developed countries, Philippine educational institutions can develop more effective and efficient research management practices (Bland et al., 2005; Van der Weijden et al., 2015).

The development of research management practices in the Philippines has seen significant progress, driven by initiatives from DepEd and CHED. However, several challenges remain, including limited funding, a shortage of qualified researchers, and inadequate industry-academic linkages. By addressing these issues and drawing lessons from successful international models, the Philippines can further enhance its research management capabilities and foster a robust culture of research and innovation.

Methodology:

This study employed a documentary analysis research design to examine the development of research management practices in the Philippine context. Documentary analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, documentary analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009).

The data for this study were collected from a variety of official documents, reports, policy guidelines, and academic publications. The primary sources of data included documents from the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). Key documents

reviewed included DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017, the PCARI project reports, and various CHED policy documents related to research and development.

Additionally, academic publications, including journal articles and conference papers, were reviewed to provide context and support for the analysis. These publications were sourced from Google Scholar and included studies on research management practices, both in the Philippines and internationally.

The documentary analysis followed a systematic and rigorous process to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. The analysis involved several stages: Relevant documents were identified and selected based on their relevance to the research questions. Inclusion criteria included documents that addressed research management practices, policies, and guidelines in the Philippine educational context.

The selected documents were subjected to content analysis to identify key themes, concepts, and trends. This involved a thorough reading and re-reading of the documents to code and categorize the information systematically. The coded data were then analyzed thematically to identify patterns and relationships among the various elements of research management practices. Themes such as funding mechanisms, administrative processes, capacity-building, and industry-academic linkages were explored in detail. To enhance the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was employed by cross-referencing the information obtained from different documents and sources. This helped to validate the results and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research management landscape in the Philippines.

Findings and Discussion:

Strengthened Collaboration and Resource Utilization in Renewable Energy Research:
The collaboration between the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) through the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signified a pivotal advancement in renewable energy (RE) research and development (R&D) in the Philippines. This partnership, outlined in the MOA, aimed to leverage the Renewable Energy Trust Fund (RETF), mandated by Republic Act No. 9513, to fund various RE initiatives across the country (Department of Energy, 2022).

The partnership focused on a wide array of RE projects encompassing solar, wind, hydro, biomass, ocean, and geothermal energy. By consolidating resources and expertise, the DOE and DOST addressed technical, economic, and policy challenges more effectively than ever before. This collaboration was instrumental in accelerating the development and deployment of RE technologies, essential for achieving sustainable energy goals and mitigating climate change impacts in the Philippines (DOST, 2022).

Through the efficient utilization of the RETF, the partnership facilitated the commercialization of RE innovations, translating research findings into tangible solutions for real-world applications. This not only enhanced the competitiveness of the local RE industry but also contributed to the growth of the green economy, creating new opportunities for economic development and job creation (DOE, 2022).

The MOA between the DOE and DOST exemplified a strategic alliance aimed at harnessing the potential of renewable energy to drive socio-economic progress and environmental sustainability in the Philippines. By aligning their efforts and leveraging available resources, both agencies demonstrated a shared commitment to advancing RE research and development, ultimately contributing to the country's transition towards a more sustainable energy future.

Development of a Systematic Policy Framework for Research Management
The establishment of the Research Management Guidelines (RMG) under DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017, marked a significant milestone in the development of a systematic policy framework for research management within the Department of Education (DepEd). This initiative aimed to streamline and enhance the management of research initiatives across various levels of governance, fostering a culture of evidence-based decision-making and promoting innovation in basic education (Department of Education, 2017).

The RMG provided a comprehensive set of guidelines and protocols for managing research activities, particularly focusing on the effective utilization of the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF) and other potential funding sources. By delineating clear procedures for grant application, evaluation, and monitoring, the RMG aimed to ensure transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the allocation and utilization of research funds (Galang, 2014).

Moreover, the RMG emphasized the importance of research dissemination and utilization, recognizing that the impact of research extends beyond the academic realm and should directly inform policy and program development in basic education (Kilag, et al., 2024). Through mechanisms such as research conferences, publications, and knowledge-sharing platforms, the RMG sought to bridge the gap between research outputs and practical

applications, facilitating the translation of research findings into actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders (Manalastas & Tomaneng, 2019).

One of the key outcomes of the implementation of the RMG was the strengthening of the link between research and educational processes within DepEd. By integrating research activities into the broader education agenda, the RMG ensured that research initiatives were aligned with the department's strategic priorities and contributed directly to the improvement of teaching and learning outcomes (Department of Education, 2017).

Furthermore, the RMG facilitated collaboration and partnership-building among stakeholders involved in research activities, including researchers, educators, policymakers, and funding agencies. By fostering a collaborative environment, the RMG encouraged the sharing of resources, expertise, and best practices, thereby maximizing the impact of research investments and promoting innovation in basic education (Quitoras & Abuso, 2021).

The development and implementation of the RMG represented a significant step forward in strengthening research management practices within DepEd. By providing a clear and systematic framework for managing research initiatives, the RMG laid the foundation for evidence-based policy and program development, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of the quality and effectiveness of basic education in the Philippines.

Enhanced Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

The partnership between the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), complemented by the initiatives of the Office of Planning, Research, and Knowledge Management (OPRKM) under the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), has played a pivotal role in enhancing capacity building and knowledge sharing within the Philippine research landscape. Through various collaborative endeavors and knowledge-sharing platforms, stakeholders from academia, government, and industry have been able to synergize their efforts, foster innovation, and drive sustainable development across multiple sectors (Commission on Higher Education, 2017).

One of the hallmark initiatives in this regard is the Philippine-California Advanced Research Institutes (PCARI) project, which exemplifies the commitment of both government agencies to fostering international partnerships and collaboration in research and development (CHED, 2017). Through the PCARI project, Filipino researchers have had the opportunity to engage with their counterparts from leading international institutions, exchange knowledge and expertise, and gain exposure to cutting-edge research methodologies and technologies. This has not only enhanced the research capabilities of Filipino scientists and scholars but has also facilitated the transfer of technology and best practices back to the Philippines, thereby contributing to the overall improvement of research quality and efficiency in the country (DOST, 2017).

In addition to large-scale initiatives like the PCARI project, numerous seminars, workshops, and capacity-building programs have been organized by both government agencies and academic institutions to facilitate knowledge sharing and skills development among researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders (DOE, 2017). These events provide valuable platforms for networking, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas, allowing participants to stay abreast of the latest developments in their respective fields and explore opportunities for interdisciplinary research and innovation.

Furthermore, the focus on capacity building in research has been a cornerstone of the OPRKM's mandate within CHED. By providing researchers with access to training programs, research facilities, and funding opportunities, OPRKM has empowered a new generation of Filipino scholars to pursue high-impact research projects that address pressing societal challenges (OPRKM, 2017). Through targeted investments in human capital and research infrastructure, CHED has sought to create an enabling environment for innovation and knowledge creation, fostering a culture of excellence in research across the higher education sector (Kilag, 2024).

Moreover, initiatives such as the Research Management Guidelines (RMG) implemented by DepEd have contributed to the professionalization of research management practices within the education sector, ensuring that research funds are allocated efficiently and utilized effectively to support evidence-based policy and program development (Department of Education, 2017). By promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance in research management, these guidelines have helped to build trust among stakeholders and enhance the credibility of the Philippine research ecosystem (Andrin & Kilag, 2023).

The partnership between the DOE and DOST, along with the initiatives of CHED's OPRKM, has significantly strengthened capacity building and knowledge sharing in the Philippine research landscape. Through collaborative efforts and targeted investments, stakeholders across academia, government, and industry have been able to harness the power of research and innovation to address complex challenges and drive sustainable development in the country.

Addressing Challenges in Research Management and Policy Implementation

Despite significant strides in research management and policy implementation, the Philippine research landscape continues to face several challenges that impede its full potential. These challenges, ranging from human resource limitations to bureaucratic hurdles, underscore the need for comprehensive reform agendas and strategic interventions to foster a vibrant research ecosystem (Licuanan, 2017).

One of the foremost challenges identified is the shortage of qualified researchers, particularly in specialized fields and emerging technologies. While initiatives such as capacity-building programs and collaborative research projects have been instrumental in nurturing research talent, there remains a pressing need to expand educational opportunities and incentivize careers in research to attract and retain skilled professionals (Dobrzanski & Bobowski, 2020).

Another critical issue is the lack of robust linkages between academia, industry, and government agencies, which hinders the effective translation of research outputs into tangible innovations and societal impact. Strengthening collaboration frameworks and incentivizing industry-academia partnerships are essential for bridging this gap and promoting technology transfer and commercialization (Payumo, et al., 2012).

Moreover, bureaucratic inefficiencies in fund disbursement and intellectual property protection pose significant challenges to research management and innovation. Cumbersome procurement processes, unclear intellectual property rights frameworks, and limited awareness of legal mechanisms hinder the efficient utilization and commercialization of research outputs. Streamlining administrative procedures and implementing clear guidelines for intellectual property management are imperative to foster a conducive environment for research and innovation (Santiago, 2017).

The sustainability of research and development (R&D) funding emerges as another pressing concern, given the finite nature of resources and competing priorities. Ensuring stable and predictable funding streams, diversifying funding sources, and advocating for long-term investments in research are critical strategies to sustain momentum and drive continuous innovation in the research landscape (Padolina, 2017).

Furthermore, the underrepresentation of social sciences in research endeavors poses challenges in addressing complex societal issues and promoting inclusive development. Balancing investments across disciplines and creating opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration are essential to harness the full spectrum of research expertise and address multifaceted challenges holistically (Arapis & Bowling, 2020).

Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated and multi-stakeholder approach, with government agencies, academic institutions, industry partners, and civil society collaborating to develop tailored solutions and implement effective reforms. By prioritizing strategic interventions such as talent development, industry engagement, administrative reform, and interdisciplinary collaboration, the Philippine research ecosystem can overcome existing barriers and unlock its full potential for innovation and development (Vea, 2017).

In conclusion, while the Philippine research landscape has made significant progress in recent years, several challenges persist, ranging from human resource constraints to bureaucratic inefficiencies and disciplinary imbalances. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts and strategic interventions to create an enabling environment for research and innovation to thrive. By prioritizing reforms in research management, policy implementation, and interdisciplinary collaboration, the Philippines can strengthen its position as a hub for scientific excellence and technological innovation in the region and beyond.

Conclusion:

The research landscape in the Philippines has undergone significant developments aimed at enhancing research management, capacity building, and collaboration in various sectors. The establishment of systematic policy frameworks, such as the Research Management Guidelines (RMG) in the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), has provided essential structures for managing research initiatives and promoting collaboration among key stakeholders.

Through these initiatives, efforts have been made to address challenges in research management and policy implementation, including human resource constraints, bureaucratic hurdles, and the need for sustainable research funding. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to ensure the efficient utilization of resources, the translation of research findings into practical applications, and the promotion of innovation-driven growth.

Moving forward, it is essential for policymakers, researchers, and industry stakeholders to continue working together to overcome these challenges and foster a dynamic research environment in the Philippines. By investing in human capital, strengthening industry-academia linkages, streamlining administrative processes, and ensuring sustainable funding for research, the country can unlock its full potential for innovation and development.

Furthermore, emphasis should be placed on promoting interdisciplinary research and knowledge sharing, particularly in addressing complex societal challenges and promoting inclusive development. By harnessing the collective expertise and resources of diverse stakeholders, the Philippines can position itself as a hub for research and innovation in the region.

Sustained efforts to strengthen research management, capacity building, and collaboration will be instrumental in driving the country's progress towards a knowledge-based economy and achieving its development goals in the years to come.

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