

Research Article

WHEN LINES DON'T MEET: ANGLES AND TANGLES IN THE NON-FULFILLMENT OF THE TRIFOCAL FUNCTIONS OF TERTIARY FACULTY, NORTHWESTERN PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

This study focused on exploring the reasons why some faculty members face challenges in performing their three-fold functions of instruction, research, and extension services. The research aimed to determine the perspectives of the faculty members towards their three-fold functions, examined the factors affecting their performance in carrying out these functions, and the challenges they encountered. The study used phenomenological research design where 20 faculty members were interviewed. By delving into the perspectives and experiences of faculty members, the study seeks to understand their perceptions of their instructional, research, and extension roles. It also examined factors that influence their performance, such as institutional support, workload management, available resources, and opportunities for professional development. Additionally, the study identified and analyzed the challenges they face while fulfilling their functions. Findings showed that they exhibit a solid grasp of their responsibilities and find great fulfillment in teaching, research, and extension activities, however, they encounter several significant challenges such as limited involvement, heavy workloads, inadequate resources, and institutional obstacles that impede their effectiveness. Four themes emerge in the study namely: Faculty Perception and understanding, Affecting performance factors, Challenges encountered, and Enjoyment and fulfilment. The findings will provide valuable insights for developing targeted interventions and strategies to enhance faculty members' performance and address the challenges they encounter. This research is aimed at supporting the faculty members of State Universities and Colleges in successfully fulfilling their three-fold functions.

Keywords: Three-fold Functions, Faculty Members, Factors Affecting Performance

Introduction

State Colleges and Universities (SUCs) in the Philippines serve the countrymen through their three-fold functions, which are crucial for institutional effectiveness and national development. These functions include instruction, research, and extension. However, it is worth noting that some SUCs incorporate production as an additional function alongside their existing three-fold functions. This expansion reflects their commitment to further contribute to the development and progress of the nation.

These functions are intricately interconnected, yet at times, novice educators perceive them as separate entities, excelling in certain aspects while neglecting others. This fragmented approach results in imbalances and hinders holistic performance. Numerous factors contribute to this phenomenon, including inadequate institutional support and limited resources. Despite persistent efforts, the challenges and issues underlying these problems remain unresolved.

In Giannikas' (2020) study, discrepancies exist between the objectives and practices involved in evaluating teachers' performance. Questionnaires serve as instruments to assess teacher performance, but they fail to fully capture the intended measurements, primarily relying on students' perceptions. The study concludes that universities should adopt coevaluation techniques to evaluate faculty members' performance and enhance their practices. These findings align with the research conducted by Li and Wang (2020), which highlights the negative impact of techno-complexities and techno-insecurities on teachers' performance. Additionally, the study reveals that older teachers exhibit lower performance compared to younger teachers, as they are more susceptible to techno-stressors such as techno-complexities and techno-insecurities. However, both older and younger teachers are positively influenced by techno-overload.

Moreover, Rhodes and Beneicke (2003) discuss how school managers offering professional qualifications can help poor-performing teachers based on their concern for students' educational well-being. While they acknowledge that mentoring and collaboration better help these teachers improve their performance, they also explore the potential mismatch between the root causes of the challenges faced by teachers and the professional development programs offered. Some faculty members consider their teaching duties their only responsibility, thereby not participating in other activities. They focus on enhancing their teaching strategies and methodologies to facilitate better student learning and maximize potential. However, gaps persist, particularly among the new generation of technologically savvy students and teachers. Knowledge of technological development in teaching also affects their teaching performance.

In terms of research, Tindowen et al. (2019) in their study entitled "Teachers' Conception and Difficulties in Doing Action Research" find that research is necessary not only for improving the quality of education but also significantly contributes to teachers' professional development. The challenges encountered by teachers in conducting research include additional workload, writing anxiety, lack of time, and inadequate knowledge in action research. Likewise, Bullo et al. (2021) explore challenges faced by teachers in conducting educational research. Their study reveals that most teachers struggle with time management, experience writing anxieties, and view research as an additional burden. They suggest that teachers facing such difficulties should

undergo training, graduate studies, and LAC sessions. Ulla (2018) discusses both the benefits and challenges of conducting research as experienced by Philippine Public School teachers. He argues that engaging in research positively impacts teaching pedagogies and personal growth, while also highlighting challenges like lack of financial support, heavy teaching loads, and insufficient research skills and resources.

Despite efforts, some institutions still encounter problems, particularly in budget allocation and securing funding for comprehensive research initiatives for faculty members. Institutions conduct interventions to better equip the faculty with the tools needed for research; however, studies assessing the effectiveness of these initiatives remain lacking.

In terms of extension functions, the study by Paulican and Intong (2020) on the determinants of extension productivity reveals that faculty members are highly motivated in doing extension work. Their study also shows that extension service productivity connects to competence, motivation, and organizational climate. However, they find that some faculty members are not active in community engagement activities. Similarly, Medina (2019) points out issues and challenges faced by SUCs in establishing community engagement activities, including low faculty motivation, viewing extension activities as secondary to research, multiple responsibilities, and inadequate budgets.

The same observations occur in the context of this study. In the past academic year, while most faculty members received very satisfactory and outstanding performance ratings, few received only satisfactory or fair ratings. Data from the past rating period shows that nine out of 137 faculty members received low ratings in instructional delivery.

A similar pattern emerges when considering research and extension services. According to preliminary survey findings, approximately 83% of the campus' faculty members with permanent status engage in ongoing research and extension services, either as project proponents or technical staff. However, the remaining 27% either have research proposals declined by the Committee on Research, Extension, and Innovation or do not submit proposals.

Hence, this study aims to investigate the factors contributing to the challenges faced by faculty members in effectively carrying out their three-fold functions within the university. It seeks to identify the reasons behind the difficulties encountered by these faculty members and explore potential solutions to address these challenges.

Research Objectives

This study focused on exploring the reasons why some faculty members do not perform so well on their three-fold functions, namely: instruction, research, and extension.

Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Determine the perception of the respondents on their three-fold functions;
2. Identify the factors affecting the performance of the respondents in doing their three-fold functions; and,

3. Point out the challenges they encountered in performing these functions.

Research Methodology

The challenges serving as roadblocks for the selected faculty members on their three-fold functions in the university was explored using the phenomenological research design. Phenomenological design is the most suitable for it focuses on exploring the experiences of faculty members and understanding the essence of their experiences. This was anchored on the philosophical assumptions of a constructivist paradigm

Population/Sample Research Participants

The research was conducted in the selected state universities in the Northwestern Philippines as the setting for the study. There were nine institutions participated in the study. These universities provide a rich context for exploring the challenges faced by faculty members in performing their three-fold functions as to teaching, research, and extension services. Out of these nine institutions, there were two representatives from the faculty who were identified by the department to have been performing low in terms of the three-fold functions.

Instrumentation & Data Collection

The researcher acknowledges the importance of developing valid and reliable instruments for data collection in exploring the challenges faced by selected faculty members on their three-fold functions. The researcher underwent a rigorous process of instrument development that includes consultation with experts. This instrument is in the form of an interview where interview guides were also prepared. Prior to the data gathering, interview guides were crafted where five experts were consulted for validation. The instrument is composed of 18 open-ended questions to gather qualitative data from the 20 respondents during the academic year 2023-2024.

In recording the data, the researcher used a reliable method that preserves the accuracy and integrity of the information collected. Audio and video recording, note-taking, and transcription were the methods used during the data gathering. The researcher also developed a clear timeline for data collection and ensures that ethical considerations are addressed throughout the research process using informed consent.

Analysis of Data

Analyzing the challenges faced by faculty members in fulfilling their three-fold functions in universities is a complex and nuanced process that requires careful attention to details, rigorous analysis, and a deep understanding of qualitative research methods used. By following a systematic process that involves transcription, coding, memoing, thematic analysis, categorization, and organization of data, the researcher will unfold rich insights and develop a comprehensive narrative that captures the experiences of the respondents.

Results and Discussion

The study yielded several significant findings, which provide valuable insights into the topic at hand. These major findings shed light on the perceptions, experiences, and challenges encountered by faculty members in performing their three-fold functions. They provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject and offer valuable insights into future decision-making and strategies to enhance faculty members' engagement and effectiveness.

1. The study revealed that faculty members have a solid understanding of their three-fold functions, namely teaching, research, and extension services. They recognize the distinct roles and responsibilities associated with each function, and they also derive personal enjoyment and a sense of fulfillment from performing their functions. Many expressed satisfactions in teaching and witnessing student progress, while others found excitement in engaging in research activities and contributing to knowledge. Additionally, some faculty members derived satisfaction from making a tangible impact through their involvement in extension activities.

The findings are aligned with previous research on faculty members' perceptions and understanding of their multiple functions. Several studies such as the study of Grobgeld (2016) has emphasized the importance of faculty members having a clear understanding of their roles in teaching, research, and extension services. This understanding helps them effectively fulfill their responsibilities and contribute to the academic mission of the institution.

Furthermore, the enjoyment and fulfillment reported by faculty members in the study are consistent with Liu et al (2018) that highlights the intrinsic rewards associated with their roles. Many faculty members express a sense of satisfaction in teaching and witnessing student progress, as it validates their impact on students' learning and development. Similarly, the excitement and fulfillment derived from engaging in research activities align with research that highlights the intellectual stimulation, contribution to knowledge, and personal growth experienced by faculty members through research endeavors.

The satisfaction derived from making a tangible impact through extension activities is also in line with Santos (2020) emphasizing the importance of faculty members' community engagement. Such activities allow faculty members to apply their expertise and knowledge to address societal needs, fostering positive change and enhancing the university's impact beyond academia. They also have personal goals and aspirations related to their three-fold functions. These included professional growth and development, improving student learning and support, advancing knowledge and research, making a positive impact on the community and society, balance and well-being, and recognition and success.

These findings are also in accordance with Gegenfurtner (2020) and Carson, et al (2019) that have explored faculty members' goals and aspirations, emphasizing the importance of understanding these motivations to support faculty development, foster job satisfaction, and enhance overall well-being. By recognizing and addressing these aspirations, institutions can create environments that promote faculty engagement, productivity, and success.

2. The study also identified various factors that hindered the performance of faculty members in their three-fold functions. These factors included limited or non-involvement in certain functions, lack of training and support, workload and time constraints, lack of resources, experience and expertise, institutional barriers and priorities, and lack of clarity and communication. Various challenges faced by faculty members in performing their three-fold functions were also identified which encompassed teacher-related issues, physical limitations, economic constraints, cultural factors, institutional dynamics, time constraints and workload, funding and resource limitations, personal factors, and well-being.

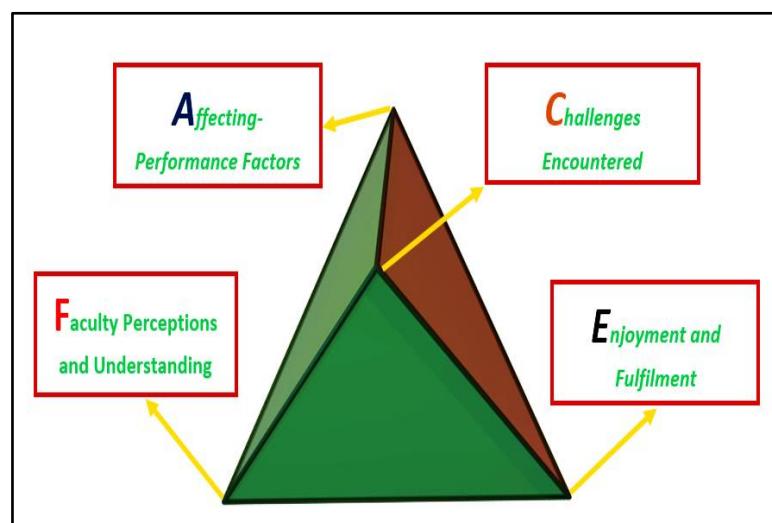
Likewise, Lithoxoidou et al. (2021); Garcia-Morales et al. (2021); Wright et al. (2020) and have examined the challenges faced by faculty members in their three-fold functions. Understanding these common barriers and challenges can inform institutional policies and practices to provide appropriate support, resources, and professional development opportunities for faculty members. By addressing these factors, institutions can create an enabling environment that promotes faculty success and enhances their overall performance.

The findings are also in accordance with the study of Kohli (2018), Asih et al (2022); Powell and Bodur (2019); and Martin et al. (2019) also highlighted the importance of professional development activities for faculty members. Continuing education, networking and collaboration, involvement in professional organizations, and online learning opportunities were identified as essential for enhancing their performance in fulfilling their three-fold functions.

3. The study's findings gave rise to four key themes, which can be encapsulated in the acronym FACE: Faculty Perceptions and Understanding, Affecting-performance Factors, Challenges Encountered, and Enjoyment and Fulfillment. These themes provide a concise framework to summarize and categorize the insights gained from the study, offering a comprehensive overview of the faculty members' experiences and perspectives related to their three-fold functions.

Figure 1

FACE Matters



Theme 1: Faculty Perceptions and Understanding

This theme explores the faculty members' perceptions and understanding of their three-fold functions. It encompasses the following sub-themes:

a. Solid understanding of three-fold functions

The participants unanimously showcased a comprehensive understanding of their roles as faculty members, recognizing the three distinct aspects of instruction, research, and extension within the university. Their responses reflected a shared awareness and acknowledgement of these three-fold functions and their significance in their professional responsibilities. This consensus among the respondents indicates a solid foundation of understanding regarding the diverse dimensions of their roles and the multifaceted nature of their contributions in the academic setting.

b. Insights into each function

The perceptions expressed by the respondents offered valuable insights into their understanding of instruction, research, and extension. These insights provided a deeper understanding of their perspectives, expectations, and motivations as faculty members. Through their responses, they demonstrated familiarity with each function and provided insightful explanations, showcasing their knowledge of the specific responsibilities involved. The respondents' perceptions shed light on their beliefs and attitudes towards the three-fold functions, offering valuable perspectives on how they conceptualize and approach their instructional, research, and extension roles. Other faculty members are not too familiar with their functions, hence affecting their performance. These findings contribute to a greater understanding of faculty members' subjective experiences and can inform strategies to enhance their engagement and effectiveness in fulfilling these functions.

Theme 2: Affecting-Performance Factors

This theme focuses on the various factors that affect the faculty members' performance in their three-fold functions. It includes the following sub-themes:

a. Supportive elements aiding effective function performance

The study underscored the significance of various factors in enhancing faculty members' engagement and effectiveness in their three-fold functions. The findings emphasized the importance of support from colleagues, as well as access to necessary resources, which enable faculty members to carry out their responsibilities more effectively. Effective time management was identified as another critical factor, enabling faculty members to balance their various tasks and responsibilities. The study also highlighted the role of professional development opportunities in promoting faculty members' growth and enhancing their effectiveness in fulfilling their functions. Additionally, intrinsic motivation was identified as a key factor that drives faculty members' engagement and commitment to their roles. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of support and motivation and provide valuable insights for institutions seeking to create an environment that fosters faculty members' engagement and effectiveness.

b. Gaps or insufficiencies hindering performance

The respondents acknowledged the presence of gaps and insufficiencies that hinder their performance, such as limited or non-involvement in specific functions. Factors contributing to these challenges include inadequate training and support, heavy workload and time constraints, lack of resources, experience, and expertise, institutional barriers and competing priorities, as well as ambiguity and poor communication.

c. Personal goals and aspirations related to functions

The faculty members expressed their personal goals and aspirations related to their three-fold functions, encompassing professional growth and development, student learning and support, knowledge advancement, community impact, well-being, and recognition.

d. Impact of professional development activities

The study examined the influence of professional development activities on the faculty members' overall performance, emphasizing the importance of continuing education, networking, collaboration, involvement in professional organizations, and online learning opportunities.

Theme 3: Challenges Encountered

This theme explores the challenges faced by faculty members in performing their three-fold functions. It includes the following sub-themes:

a. Teacher-related challenges

The faculty members participating in the study identified challenges pertaining to their own expertise and skills, shedding light on areas where continuous improvement and development are necessary. These challenges may arise from a variety of factors, including advancements in their respective fields, evolving pedagogical methods, emerging research methodologies, and changing student needs and expectations. Faculty members recognize the importance of staying up-to-date with the latest developments in their disciplines and enhancing their knowledge and skills to effectively meet the demands of their roles. The identification of these challenges emphasizes the ongoing nature of professional growth and the need for faculty members to actively engage in continuous learning and development.

b. Physical-related challenges

The study acknowledged the physical limitations and constraints that faculty members encounter in their functions, which may impact their performance.

c. Economic-related challenges

Financial constraints were identified as a significant challenge that may hinder faculty members' engagement and effectiveness.

d. Cultural and institutional dynamics

The study recognized the influence of cultural and institutional factors, which may pose challenges and affect faculty members' performance.

e. Time constraints and workload

The respondents mentioned the challenges associated with managing time effectively amidst competing demands and heavy workloads.

f. Funding and resource availability

Limited resources and funding were identified as challenges that may impact the faculty members' ability to perform their functions optimally.

g. Personal factors and well-being

The study acknowledged the importance of personal factors and well-being, as faculty members' performance can be affected by various personal circumstances and factors.

Theme 4: Enjoyment and Fulfillment

This theme explores the faculty members' enjoyment and fulfillment in performing their functions.

It includes the following sub-themes:

a. Personal enjoyment in fulfilling functions

The study highlighted the faculty members' personal enjoyment derived from fulfilling their roles within the university.

b. Fulfillment in teaching and student progress

Many faculty members expressed a sense of fulfillment in teaching and witnessing the progress of their students, which contributes to their overall satisfaction.

c. Excitement in research and contributing to knowledge

Some faculty members specifically mentioned their excitement and enthusiasm for research activities and their contribution to the advancement of knowledge.

d. Satisfaction from making a tangible impact through extension.

The study identified the satisfaction faculty members derive from making a tangible impact through their involvement in extension activities, further highlighting their sense of fulfillment in serving the community.

Conclusions

This study reveals the important perceptions and experiences of faculty members as they engage with their three primary functions in higher education. While they exhibit a solid grasp of their responsibilities and find great fulfillment in teaching, research, and extension activities, they encounter several significant challenges. These include limited involvement, heavy workloads, inadequate resources, and institutional obstacles that impede their effectiveness. To improve faculty performance and enhance the overall quality of educational institutions, it is crucial to address these barriers. By creating a supportive environment that empowers educators, institutions can help faculty members excel in their diverse roles, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

Suggestion

To effectively tackle the challenges highlighted in this study, institutions should consider several important strategies that incorporate research findings and inform future studies. Enhancing support systems through mentoring and collaborative platforms can significantly boost faculty engagement and reduce feelings of isolation. Implementing effective workload management techniques is also crucial, as it allows faculty members to balance their various responsibilities, ensuring they have ample time for teaching, research, and extension activities. Additionally, increasing access to essential resources—such as funding, research materials, and technology—will empower faculty to excel in their roles. Offering regular professional development opportunities is vital for helping faculty stay updated on current trends in education and research. Lastly, fostering collaboration between departments can facilitate knowledge sharing and enhance interdisciplinary efforts. Future research can further explore specific challenges, investigate additional factors influencing faculty performance, and evaluate the efficacy of interventions aimed at improving faculty experiences and outcomes. Lastly, addressing these challenges and providing support to faculty members in their three-fold functions contributes to the overall success and quality of higher education institutions.

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