IN THE DEANS’ SHOES: A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF ISSUES REQUIRING STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING IN TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the decision-making processes of deans in teacher education in the Philippines and investigates the challenges they encounter. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in the interpretive paradigm, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of current and former deans. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and reflective essays, with thematic analysis used for data interpretation. Findings reveal key issues necessitating strategic decisions, including performance in licensure exams, introduction of new programs, accreditation demands, inherent functions, and faculty development programs. The identified key issues impact institutional quality, accreditation, and faculty competence. This study underscores the significance of strategic decision-making in teacher education leadership and administration, offering insights for educational policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders. By shedding light on these aspects, this study contributes to continuous improvement in teacher education and the broader educational landscape, aligning with evolving societal needs.

Keywords: Deans; Strategic decisions; Strategic decision-making; Teacher education institutions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the midst of an ever-changing and uncertain environment, higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly compelled to adopt strategic approaches to address both immediate and long-term challenges. Scholars have recognized the importance of strategic decision-making (SDM) within HEIs, emphasizing the need to evaluate various alternatives and their potential outcomes during the decision-making process (Nooraie, 2014). These strategic decisions, due to their far-reaching and intricate nature, carry inherent risks and significantly influence the institution’s future, including decisions related to curricular changes that impact student enrollment and resource allocation (Divjak, 2016). Given the unpredictable and dynamic nature of this landscape, SDM plays a critical role in guiding organizations toward their objectives (Shepherd & Rudd, 2014). As such, a comprehensive understanding of the strategic decision-making process (SDMP) in HEIs, particularly concerning teacher education, holds substantial academic significance and practical relevance.

In the ever-changing realm of higher education, teacher education institutions (TEIs) hold a vital role in shaping the future of education and society by nurturing the next generation of educators. At the forefront of these institutions, deans assume positions of immense responsibility and influence as educational leaders. Their task is to navigate their institutions through a plethora of challenges and intricate decisions, profoundly impacting the quality of education they provide. Strategic planning and decision-making are of paramount importance for deans, enabling them to steer their institutions toward excellence and adapt to the dynamic demands of the educational landscape (Coll et al., 2018; English & Kramer, 2017).

Teacher education occupies a critical place in molding the future of education, preparing teachers who will shape the minds of tomorrow’s leaders. The success of teacher education institutions hinges upon the vision, expertise, and strategic acumen of their deans (Cleverley-Thompson, 2016; Coll et al., 2018). These academic leaders encounter a myriad of issues and concerns, ranging from ensuring high-quality instruction to navigating the complexities of accreditation and responding to ever-evolving educational paradigms. As the educational landscape continues to transform, the challenges faced by deans become increasingly intricate and demanding, calling for judicious decision-making (Catacutan & de Guzman, 2015; Jamian et al., 2016).

This qualitative study delves into the decision-making processes of deans in teacher education, offering valuable insights into the challenges they face. The findings hold both academic significance and practical relevance, potentially informing higher education leadership and administration policies. Policymakers, educational administrators, and stakeholders in teacher education stand to benefit from this research, leading to continuous improvement in teacher education programs and the broader educational landscape. By shedding light on these aspects, this study aims to foster a brighter future for education, ensuring that it aligns with the evolving needs and aspirations of society.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Leadership in higher education

Over the past three decades, HEIs have undergone substantial changes due to various challenges, such as the universalization of higher education and the increasing expectation for universities to contribute to socioeconomic development. These challenges have prompted a radical reevaluation of governance models at both the institutional and systemic levels, leading to the redesign of decision-making and policy implementation processes. Many aspects of higher education institutions, particularly those related to governance, have been modified to make them more effective, efficient, and responsive to societal needs (Capano & Pritoni, 2020).

The ever-changing economic, social, and technological landscape presents new challenges for higher education, especially concerning decision-making. HEIs are currently facing a dilemma, uncertain about how to address the dynamic environment and rapid changes in the education sector, as discussed in Divjak (2016), Immordino et al. (2016), and Philbin (2015). These challenges are compelling institutions to reconsider their operations and delivery methods. HEIs have gained more autonomy but also greater responsibility. Consequently, they are adopting best practices from the business sector, such as developing and implementing strategic plans to stay competitive and succeed in this fast-paced environment (Immordino et al., 2016).

Governance in higher education is becoming increasingly complex and demanding. Institutions must understand their challenges and respond appropriately when needed. Emphasizing the significance of strategic decision-making (SDM), as highlighted in the literature, HEIs are now considering SDM as a proactive option. Therefore, there is a pressing need to analyze the approaches to strategic decision-making at the institutional level and evaluate the impact of such decisions (Bauer et al., 2018; Falqueto et al., 2020; Immordino et al., 2016).

2.2. Strategic decision-making in HEIs

The concepts of strategic management, planning, and decision-making, once confined to the business world, have now become relevant in higher education due to their recognized significance (Divjak, 2016). Scholars such as Immordino et al. (2016) emphasize that SDM can assist HEIs in addressing challenges. It is widely agreed among researchers that HEIs must adopt strategic planning to overcome these challenges effectively (Hinton, 2012). While strategic planning in HEIs has gained momentum over the years, it is not entirely a new practice (Immordino et al., 2016). However, HEIs encounter obstacles during both the planning and implementation phases.

Currently, there is a growing demand to investigate the role of SDM in the context of HEIs, as it is believed to aid in problem-solving and facing challenges. One compelling reason for HEIs to prioritize SDM is its ability to help decision-makers compare and evaluate alternatives effectively, leading to better choices (Nooraie, 2014).
Selecting an appropriate method for strategic decision-making is crucial to ensuring effective outcomes. Strategic decision-making problems in higher education often involve dependencies between criteria, for which methods supporting modeling of influences have been proposed (Kadoić et al., 2018). The analytic network process (ANP) is one popular method that facilitates group decision-making, sensitivity analysis, risk analysis, and cost-benefit analysis. Decision-makers can employ the ANP to thoroughly evaluate various factors, analyze how they are interconnected, and rank them according to their respective significance. This approach enables decision-makers to effectively assess different options while considering a range of criteria, including advantages, opportunities, expenses, and potential risks, as outlined in the study by Dağdeviren and Eraslan (2008). ANP features are particularly relevant in the higher education field, where strategic decisions are characterized by uncertainty, risk, and long-term consequences and involve significant human, material, and financial resources (Divjak, 2016).

Despite the widespread use of SDM in various sectors, including higher education, the current knowledge on SDMP remains somewhat limited, relying mainly on normative or descriptive studies and untested beliefs. Higher education institutions struggle to comprehend the changing and less stable environment, which necessitates developing strategic plans and employing SDM to address challenges. Existing research on strategic change in higher education highlights the need to envision long-term goals to cope with potential disturbances and maintain organizational momentum and order (Stensaker et al., 2014). Additionally, few studies have explored the decision-making mechanisms that HEIs could use to effectively navigate challenges and control contributing factors (Magd & Bindah, 2016).

2.3. Deans as strategic decision-makers

Academic deans play a crucial role in facilitating transformative change within their institutions (English & Kramer, 2017). They have the authority and opportunity to implement significant structural and transformative changes. Effective deans not only advocate for individual faculty members but also for broader administrative goals, earning the trust of faculty to enable sustainable and transformative change (Williams-June, 2014).

The role of the education dean has evolved significantly over time, transitioning from chief compliance officer to chief change agent (White-Lewis, 2022; Williams-June, 2014). They are expected to be trailblazers in the process of change and adaptation, facing both internal and external stressors. Internal stressors stem from institutional factors such as budget constraints, shifting enrollments, and increased accountability demands. External stressors come from school districts, policymakers, and think tanks with varying expectations and opinions regarding education (English & Kramer, 2017).

Although academic deans play a critical role in universities, their deanships have received surprisingly little attention in academic literature (Cleverley-Thompson, 2016). Academic deans head the academic colleges or divisions within a university, focusing on teaching and/or research aspects of the institution’s mission. They serve as a bridge
between faculty and administration, oversee college finances, and handle various responsibilities related to faculty and student needs (Melon-Galvez, 2018).

Owing to the lack of comprehensive studies on the role of the dean, it remains unclear which tasks and priorities are most significant. Many deans have an academic background but may lack an understanding of management and leadership outside of academia (Harvey et al., 2013). To explore the relationship between leadership frameworks and the roles of the dean, Bolman and Deal’s work is instrumental in understanding how personal leadership philosophies drive decision-making (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Deans occupy a complex position, representing both managerial tendencies and leadership behaviors. They interact with diverse constituents across the university and approach various scenarios from different viewpoints or reference frames (Smethers, 2020). Deans, positioned at the forefront of strategic decision-making in teacher education institutions, possess invaluable insight due to their responsibility for high-level choices that impact a wide range of stakeholders both within and beyond their institutions. (Keeney, 2012).

3. DATA AND METHODS

3.1. Design

This study adopts a descriptive-qualitative approach to explore the issues and challenges related to strategic decision-making by the deans of colleges of education. The rationale for using qualitative methods is to achieve a thorough understanding of the subjective experiences and perspectives of the participants. Through this qualitative approach, the research aims to delve deeper into the intricate and diverse phenomena under investigation, which may not be easily captured using quantitative methods. Moreover, this research design offers flexibility in data collection, allowing participants to express their experiences in a more detailed and elaborate manner (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

3.2. Research paradigm

This study is grounded in the interpretive paradigm, which forms its philosophical foundation. The interpretive paradigm emphasizes the importance of understanding and interpreting human experiences, beliefs, and behaviors within their unique social and cultural contexts (Yadav, 2022). In this study, the focus is on gaining a nuanced comprehension of the issues and challenges related to strategic decision-making by the deans of colleges of education from the perspective of the participants themselves. By embracing the interpretive paradigm, this study acknowledges that knowledge is constructed through the interaction between the researcher and the participants, allowing for a more subjective and holistic exploration of the complex phenomena under investigation. Through this paradigm, the research aims to uncover rich insights and meaning behind the participants’ perceptions, shedding light on the context-bound nature of their decision-making experiences.
3.3. Locale, sampling, and participants

The data for this study were collected from five state universities and colleges (SUCs) with teacher education programs in Eastern Visayas, Philippines. A total of eight deans participated in this study. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, using specific criteria as a basis for their inclusion. Eligible participants were either current or former deans of a college of education, engaged in strategic decision-making within the past three years, and willing to share their insights about SDMP. Only those who fulfilled all three criteria were chosen to participate in the research. The sample size was determined through the concept of saturation, which refers to the point in data analysis where incoming data (interviews) start to yield little or no new information relevant to the study’s objective. Guest et al. (2020) recommend that data saturation serve as a conceptual benchmark for estimating and evaluating qualitative sample sizes.

3.4. Data gathering instruments

In this study, the researcher employed semi-structured interviews and a self-made focus group discussion (FGD) guide, all of which were in English. Additionally, a reflective essay was utilized to gather further information from the participants. Prior to implementation, the instruments underwent a thorough review and validation process by experts in the fields of qualitative research and educational management to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness.

3.5. Ethical considerations

Throughout all stages of the study, rigorous adherence to ethical guidelines was maintained and appropriate permissions were obtained. Participants were presented with an informed consent form, allowing them to review and understand the study’s conditions before providing their consent with a signature. The utmost level of confidentiality was assured in handling the research data, safeguarding the privacy and identity of the participants. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used in both the interview transcripts and the final research report, thereby protecting the individuals’ identities while preserving the integrity of the findings.

3.6. Data collection

Following approval from the presidents of the higher education institutions, the researcher contacted the participant deans through email, providing an explanation of the study’s objectives along with the informed consent form. Once the deans were confirmed to meet the predetermined inclusion criteria, they were individually interviewed. Following the one-on-one interviews, the participants were asked to create reflective essays to further contribute their insights. A focus group discussion was conducted after the completion of the individual interviews, encouraging collaborative discussions and the exchange of ideas among the participants.
3.7. **Data analysis**

This study utilized the thematic analysis approach of Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes in the data. The process involves becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, organizing potential themes, refining themes, establishing connections with the research question, and producing a coherent narrative of the findings.

3.8. **Trustworthiness of the study**

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher followed Yadav’s (2022) recommendations, which entail triangulating data, validating respondents, maintaining an audit trail, and collecting data until saturation was rigorously observed. These practices enhance the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

4. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study revealed various issues and concerns necessitating strategic decisions, which emerged from the interviews and focus group discussions. The identified reasons encompassed (i) performance in the licensure examination for teachers, (ii) introduction of new programs and curriculum changes, (iii) accreditation demands, (iv) inherent functions, and (v) faculty development programs. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of strategic decision-making in the context of the study.

4.1. **Performance in licensure examination**

Participants in the study emphasized that teacher education institutions (TEIs) in the Philippines establish their brand of educational quality based on their graduates’ performance in the licensure examination for teachers (LET). The following statements from the participants elucidate why they considered LET performance a significant concern requiring strategic decisions:

LET. Definitely, LET is one of them. That is one of the first things I checked when I got here. (Dean Hermes, interview, personal conversation)

LET. That’s number one. (Dean Hera, interview, personal conversation)

Performance in the licensure examination was the first one I thought of … so it is one of the many things in the college that deserves to be given focus in the strategic planning and decision planning. (Dean Leda, reflective essay, personal information)

Participants shared that the LET is a crucial criterion of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in granting Center of Development (COD) and Center of Excellence (COE) status to the curricular programs of TEIs. They also explained that local and international accrediting agencies consider the institution’s performance in the licensure examination a key performance indicator for quality assurance. Given the significance of
the LET, TEIs are compelled to perform better in the board examination. To this end, TEIs conduct curricular reviews, update course syllabi, and implement stringent admission and retention policies. Extensive pre-board review programs are also conducted by TEIs to prepare teacher education students for the LET. Baylan (2018), who studied the trend of LET performance from 2008 to 2017 of leading TEIs across different regions in the Philippines, revealed that a considerable number of TEIs were struggling to attain the 60% national passing standard. Participants expressed this concern through the following statements:

In the College of Education, LET is really very important. We have to give much attention on how we could improve our performance. It has been the consistent problem, particularly with elementary education. This needs long-term decisions. (Dean Eros, interview, personal conversation)

Our LET performance. It is always on my list. Though our performance improved a little, we want it to be improved more since it’s like a domino effect affecting many things like accreditation, performance assessment, and definitely performance-based bonus. (Dean Apollo, FGD, personal conversation)

Based on the statements of the participants, performance in the licensure examination is seen as one of the issues and concerns that warrant strategic decision-making. Examination of the strategic plans shared by the participants validated the interview and FGD data, indicating that LET performance is one of the key priority areas. Teachers and TEIs are thought to be gauged by their stakeholders and clientele based on their performance in the licensure examination for board courses. Performance in the LET is also important for accreditation activities and the performance rating of faculty members in general. Tan et al. (2015) argued that graduates’ performance in the licensure examination reflects the quality of education and training provided by their schools.

4.2. Introduction of new programs and curriculum changes

The study participants recognized that introducing new programs and implementing curriculum changes necessitate careful and thorough preparation. They also perceived these instances as opportunities to diversify curricular offerings and enhance college enrollment. Decisions related to these issues were considered critical for shaping the college’s strategic direction, thus requiring strategic planning and decision-making. The following responses provide evidence that supports this theme:

I am proud to say, sir, that we were able to open new programs, and that required a great deal of effort and extensive planning. It is not easy to make decisions, especially that those programs are new. (Dean Hera, interview, personal conversation)

There are times when changes in the curriculum of a particular teacher education program need to be implemented. I think it’s one of the issues requiring strategic decisions. (Dean Icarus, interview, personal conversation)
We had the same experience. Those new programs really made us meet and brainstorm in the college. (Dean Leda, FGD, personal conversation)

The statements provided by the participants indicate that they view new program offerings and curricular changes as issues that require strategic decision-making. Furthermore, document analysis revealed plans related to program offerings and curriculum changes. In the context of society and its institutions, the ability to respond to problems and adapt to changing conditions is vital for the growth and development of schools and school systems. To ensure the effectiveness and longevity of curriculum changes, it is essential to involve those who will be implementing the curriculum in its development (Franzhardi et al., 2022).

Curriculum development and change are significant decision-making activities. Curriculum developers face various decisions, such as what to teach, the philosophy or point of view to support, methods to use for delivering the curriculum, differentiation for special populations, and the type of school organization that best supports the curriculum. Effective curriculum development should not be left to chance but should involve careful planning and be backed by adequate resources, sufficient time, and the appropriate personnel (Oliva & Gordon, 2012).

4.3. Accreditation demands

Institutional accreditation involves evaluating an entire educational institution, and the guidelines and standards for this process are collaboratively formulated with the accrediting agencies’ federations or networks, subject to approval by CHED. Accreditation serves as a mechanism for HEIs to ensure compliance with established standards. According to Cambel et al. (2012), accreditation signifies that an institution delivers quality education and serves as a catalyst for growth and development, motivating academic institutions with high standards to excel further (Dumancas & Prado, 2015).

The study participants not only described the benefits of accreditation activities but also highlighted their demanding nature. Adequate preparation and planning are essential, especially when seeking accreditation for programs for the first time. Colleges must establish long-term plans to attain different levels of accreditation and sustain the momentum for accreditation activities. Participants stressed the need for long-term solutions to address identified accreditation challenges, such as increased personnel workload, limited awareness of continuous quality improvement, organizational resistance to change, insufficient personnel training, and a lack of performance outcome measures. The responses given below from the participants provide further clarification on these points.

SUCs are subject to accreditation. When you’re the dean, you man the preparation for that particular program or programs to be accredited. You should have already had a concrete plan about how to go about it. You must have decided about how
to mobilize every resource for accreditation. It is not something that you just do when it happens. (Dean Eros, interview, personal conversation)

If the college wants the program to pass accreditation, then it should be well planned. You choose the right decisions, especially regarding resources, manpower, and timing. It should be part of the strategic plan. (Dean Hera, interview, personal conversation)

With accreditation, the problems are always the same every time. And those involved in the process seem to not learn from mistakes. It has to be corrected, so accreditation matters should be planned well, especially how to make it a part of university culture. (Dean Athena, interview, personal conversation)

The dean must be strategic in his or her decision on how to make programs in the college accredited. (Dean Icarus, interview, personal conversation)

Accreditation demands were identified as an issue requiring a strategic decision, as evidenced by the statements above. More specific issues related to accreditation were also identified. It was also emphasized that there is no reason for colleges and universities to be complacent despite reaching a high level of accreditation because there are instances when the level of accreditation of HEIs may be downgraded. And when that time comes, institutions have to process the application for accreditation again.

4.4. Inherent functions

The core functions of higher education institutions (HEIs) consist of teaching, research, and community extension, all contributing to the institution’s role as an agent of national development in line with its general mission. In certain Philippine state colleges and universities, production has been incorporated as a fourth function. These functions are interconnected and serve one another, ultimately enabling higher education to effectively provide society with valuable services and products. A participant in the study emphasized that these three inherent functions, which encompass faculty members and consequently deans, require strategic decision-making to fulfill their purposes effectively.

There must be a concrete plan on how to achieve goals for instruction, research, and extension. These things are really naturally expected from us, and we are expected to deliver. However, targets are high and resources can’t keep up. The dean should be good at making decisions around these concerns. (Dean Hermes, interview, personal conversation)

The foremost issue about inherent functions that participants shared concerned how targets and expectations would be met. They described devising strategies to reach at least the minimum acceptable level of performance because lack of foresight and poor planning make the achievement of higher levels of performance difficult. Specific to instruction, participants specified issues concerning learning management systems, teacher training on teaching methodologies, catching up with blended learning, and the development of learning materials. Emphasis was given to the fact that the pandemic and
its effects on teaching and learning will persist over the next five years. Thus, a very good strategic decision must be made relative to those concerns. For instruction, the following statements embody the concerns and issues:

You can relate with me, sir, that today we are in a very challenging time, and delivering instruction becomes more challenging. I personally do not expect that this situation will be over in the near future. So, this is the issue I recently dealt with and made a decision on. (Dean Icarus, interview, personal conversation)

Teacher training on new methodologies and IMs suited to the pandemic situation or in the new normal should be given focus. It will affect how the college performs and how students learn. (Dean Leda, interview, personal conversation)

For research, the specific issues identified were related to mentoring and increasing research productivity to reach and even go beyond expectations. The following statements show concerns and issues related to research:

Every year, school year, every faculty member is expected to generate a specific number of research publications. The administration is very specific on number, on quantity. Reaching the required number is the problem – my problem for the faculty of the college. (Dean Athena, interview, personal conversation)

We have new teachers, and since they are still novices, research is something they are still struggling with. And mentoring is a challenge since either faculty member, the senior ones, are not willing or the schedule does not allow. (Dean Hermes, interview, personal conversation)

For extension, the specific issues identified were related to the lack of administrative support, the quantity of extension activities, and the creation of impactful extension programs. The following statements show concerns and issues with extension:

It is always an observation during accreditation that we have limited extension programs, and if there are, they are not that impactful. It is one thing that I am carefully studying about. (Dean Hera, interview, personal conversation)

... and with extension. Producing research-based and impactful extension activities, which accreditors are looking for, remains a challenge. (Dean Apollo, FGD, personal conversation)

Common issues or concerns focus on extension and production. Sometimes, these become an issue because of limited support from the administration. In as much as the faculty are willing to do some extension and production work, they are being constrained because of limited resources, and this is the reason why the faculty are not well motivated in this respect.

Extension and production activities do not happen overnight. There is a need to do long-term planning, from assessing the needs of the community to its project
implementation and to also assessing the impact of the project after a year or two. Strategic decision-making is very important in this aspect since there is a need to consider everything from the need, available resources, possible actions to take, and its outcome to see its impact if it has changed lives in the community as part of the extension project. (Dean Leda, reflective essay)

This study showed that deans make most strategic decisions on issues and concerns related to instruction, research, and extension, the inherent functions of faculty members. It was also noted that their concerns were expressed in terms of their impact on accreditation results.

4.5. Faculty development programs

Participants emphasized the significance of providing support and guidance to faculty members in their pursuit of professional development. Consequently, they identified the faculty development program as an issue that necessitates strategic decision-making. Recognizing the pivotal role of faculty development in creating successful academic experiences for students and faculty, as well as enhancing the university’s competitive edge and uniqueness in the higher education market, Rahal et al. (2015) advocate for strategic planning, effective implementation, and outcomes assessment in the faculty development process to showcase best practices and ensure accountability.

Over the past two to three decades, critics of higher education have highlighted the need for improvements in university teaching practices and faculty development. The following evidence illustrates the theme that the faculty development program is an issue that requires strategic decision-making:

As dean, I really want all my faculty members to be really qualified to teach. Not just that it is part of what is seen in accreditation, but also, I want to help them as colleagues. The problem is that the university has a limited budget for faculty development and many wants to avail, but slots are limited. Sometimes faculty are scheduled, but no implementation occurs because of the budget. Some just fish for external funding or an offering. That’s it. It becomes one of the issues needing a long-term solution. (Dean Apollo, interview, personal conversation)

True. True. I receive letters for scholarship offerings, but the programs offered are not in line with the faculty’s specialization. (Dean Eros, FGD, personal conversation)

The issue on faculty development is one which really must be seen closely. Specifically, with guidelines. Sometimes qualified, sometimes not. Someone qualified before, now another of the same qualifications is not qualified. Sometimes, if you are loved by the people above, you go, if you’re not, then you stay. (Dean Hermes, interview, personal conversation)
The statements above indicate why faculty development was identified as an issue that demands strategic decision-making. While some claim to receive administrative support for this aspect, others expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support, if any, from the administration. The call for faculty members to pursue continuing education is evident, but a clear roadmap for faculty development is perceived to exist mostly on paper. Several reasons were identified as contributing to the problems related to faculty development, including inadequate budget allocation, inconsistent inclusion criteria for scholarships, a mismatch between available scholarship opportunities and faculty specialization, and administrative intervention.

5. CONCLUSION

This study delved into various issues and concerns that require strategic decision-making at higher education institutions. Through interviews and focus group discussions, participants identified five key areas necessitating SDM: performance in the licensure examination, new programs and curriculum changes, accreditation demands, inherent functions (teaching, research, and extension), and faculty development programs.

The participants emphasized the importance of LET performance in establishing an HEI’s brand of educational quality. LET results were considered a significant concern requiring strategic decisions due to their impact on institutional reputation and quality assurance. Accreditation emerged as another critical issue, with participants highlighting its demanding nature and the need for meticulous planning to maintain and improve accreditation status. The introduction of new programs and curriculum changes was identified as an area that necessitates careful preparation and strategic decision-making. The dynamic nature of education calls for institutions to adapt and respond to changes effectively.

Regarding inherent functions, which encompass teaching, research, and extension, participants stressed the importance of strategic decisions to meet targets and expectations. Challenges were identified, such as resource limitations and administrative support, that require long-term planning and solutions. Furthermore, faculty development programs were highlighted as vital in supporting faculty members’ professional growth. However, concerns were expressed about inadequate administrative support and challenges in matching scholarship opportunities with faculty specialization.

The findings of this study have several implications for higher education institutions in the Philippines. First, HEIs should prioritize strategic decision-making in areas such as performance in licensure examinations, offering new programs, and meeting accreditation requirements. This entails careful planning, resource allocation, and alignment with institutional goals to enhance educational quality and maintain competitiveness. Second, faculty development programs need to be strategically designed and supported to ensure continuous improvement in teaching practices and overall academic excellence. Third, this study underscores the importance of responsive and adaptive approaches in addressing challenges related to teaching, research, and extension functions. By embracing strategic decision-making, HEIs can position themselves as
agents of development, delivering valuable services and products to society while fostering a culture of continuous improvement and growth.

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