State Funding of Research in the Philippines: Processes and Stakeholders' Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The role of higher education institutions in the Philippines is threefold: instruction, research, and extension. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) acknowledges the importance of research by making available research funding to all higher education institutions. This qualitative case study aimed to explore the research funding process flow from CHED's central office down to the recipient in the state college or university. The study relied on interviews and document analysis for its methodology. Results revealed that the Commission has a set of guidelines for research funding application; although difficult to implement, capability-building activities are limited in number, and the number of approved research grant applications is much fewer than the rejected ones. These issues are due to many different factors both in the CHED application and review process, as well as factors related to faculty members and their university process. Recommendations are made to offset the challenges.

Keywords: Research, research funding, faculty, Commission on Higher Education, case study, Philippines, college, university, application process.

INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, the role of a faculty member in higher education institutions (HEIs) is summarized in three major aspects (Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007). First, the HEI educator is expected to teach the assigned courses. This role is understood by most people who are called educators no matter which level of education they belong. The second aspect of the HEI educator is doing extension works. This concern engages the faculty member to move out of the classroom and participate in the community outside his or her HEI. This aspect allows the HEI educator to implement ideas and

In a recent study, the seven major factors that lead to limited publications in three different Philippine HEIs include "having limited time, lack of training on publication, fear of rejection, lack of interest, faculty laziness, limited funds, and lack of institutional support" (Wa-Mbaleka, 2015a). The current study focuses on one of the

research findings in local communities. The third one, and maybe the most challenging one in the Philippines, is the production and dissemination of research. Roughly 10 to 20 % of HEI faculty in the Philippines are conducting and publishing research (Acar, 2012). The remaining 80 to 90% of HEI educators are mainly focused on teaching and maybe on some extension activities.

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seven factors prevailing in the literature: funding. Financial resources play a significant role in the conduct and dissemination of research. Research data collection and dissemination of completed research through conference presentations and paper publication usually require some financial support. Access to funds is challenging for many HEI educators.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), through its vision stipulated in its National Higher Education Agenda-2 (NHERA-2), highly promotes the conduct and dissemination of research in HEIs (CHED, 2009). The CHED has planned "funding/financial assistance for research in higher education in the form of blocked grants, grants-in-aid and commissioned research" (p. iv). The problem is that these funds seem not being used fully for the conduct of research while faculty members at the research conduct level complain that funds are not available for research.

The purpose of this study was to explore the financial flow from the CHED Central Office to the faculty of the HEI research funding. Exploring this process was intended to understand the mechanisms that are in place so that these can bring light to the scholarly community, evaluate practices that may promote a better flow of financial resources to the end user; that is, the HEI faculty, and make recommendations to improve the process.

Review of the Literature

An enormous amount of wealth has been shared in scholarly publications that support the importance of the following: research in higher education (CHED, 2009; Wa-Mbaleka, 2015a); enhancement of the research culture and research productivity in higher education (Calma, 2009; Johnson & Louw, 2014); connection of research to practice (Bero et al., 1998; Saxena, Pratap, & Saraceno, 2004; Titler, 2007; Wa-Mbaleka, 2015b); and factors that either prevent or propel faculty to produce research (Bay Jr. & Clerigo, 2013; Bengo, Herrera, San Diego, & Santos, 2012; Chen, Gupta, & Hoshower, 2010; Gonzalez-Brambila & Veloso, 2007; Kotrlik, Bartlett II, Higgins, & Williams, 2002; Nuqui & Cruz, 2012; Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007; Smith, Barry, Williamson, Keefe, & Anderson, 2009; Wa-Mbaleka, 2015a). One of the factors that keeps popping up among the essential elements of promoting research productivity in HEIs is that of funding (Calma, 2010; Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007). The current study focused solely on the aspect of funding as it involves many stakeholders who may not even be part of the university. For this paper, this review focuses on the importance of research and research funding, and the sources of financing.

Importance of Research

Research plays a significant role in many different fronts including, and not limited to, the development of the nation (CHED, 2009), improvement in learning and in HEIs (CHED, 2009; Creswell, 2012), and the positive impact on faculty who publish research (Chen, Gupta, & Hoshower, 2004). According to CHED (2009), research plays a significant role in the development of any nation. No country can develop without research. The more the society grows, the more the research outputs can be produced. This view is probably because "research informs policy" (Creswell, 2012, p. 6). It is therefore in the best interest of any government to invest significantly in research to boost the development of that nation. Leaving the funding of research primarily in the hands of multinational organizations-a practice that can be seen in developing countries-may not be the best strategy to develop a country.

In addition to helping the nation develop, research helps improve learning in HEIs (Taylor,

2007). In NHERA-2, it is stated that part of the agenda is "to produce high-quality research that will advance learning and national development" (CHED, 2009, p. i). Research and publication help faculty members learn new ideas and update knowledge, which, in turn, affects what and how they teach (Chen et al., 2004; Griffiths, 2004; Jenkins, 2000; Tight, 2016; Wa-Mbaleka, 2014) and how students learn (Healey, 2005; Healey, Jordan, Pell, & Short, 2010; Gibbs, 1995).

Professors who do not conduct and publish research can easily teach the same knowledge in the same way over the years because they have not read new literature. It is therefore for the best interest of HEIs to have faculty conduct and publish research as it provides them some professional development opportunities where their knowledge is updated.

Research helps improve the institution and its image (Gottlieb & Keith, 1997; Lundvall, Johnson, Andersen, & Dalum, 2002; Hall & Mairesse, 1995; Keesing, 1967; Thirtle, Lin, & Piesse, 2003). Many HEI accrediting bodies have a component of research (Wa-Mbaleka, 2015a). The accreditation of an HEI is therefore in jeopardy if it lacks a strong research culture that is evidenced through conference presentations and publications. The more research an HEI produces, the more reputable it becomes nationwide and even internationally (Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007).

Research conduct and dissemination plays an important role also on faculty (Chen et al. 2004). In fact, the first beneficiary of a research study is most likely the faculty who carries it out. According to Chen et al. (2004), a professor has several advantages from his or her publication. The publication makes a teacher more competitive in new job application processes, recognition from peers and the institution, promotion, and tenure, just to name a few (Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007). In other cases, faculty members who publish research receive reduced teaching load and financial incentives (Bengo et al., 2012). While scholars should not be led to research primarily for financial gain, it is important to keep in mind that some of the faculty members expect it (Bengo et al., 2012; Wa-Mbaleka, 2015a).

Importance of Funding

Given the significant role that research plays in a country and higher education, it is important to fund it appropriately. Without proper funding for research, it is inevitable to see limited research production and dissemination in a nation. As part of budgeting for research nationally and in HEIs, it is important to consider a few factors that need research funding.

One of the major topics that has received recommendations over and over in the Philippines is that of capability building (Calma, 2010; CHED, 2009; Dumbrique & Alon, 2013; Nuqui & Cruz, 2012; Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014; Salazar-Clemeña Salazar-Clemeña, 2006; & Almonte-Acosta, 2007; Salmingo, 2011; Song, Loke, & Hooper, 2014). For research productivity to improve in the Philippines, it is, therefore, important to allocate a significant portion of the research budget to capability building. Funds are needed to strengthen and update the research knowledge and skills of HEI faculty and to prepare active research professors who will train future researchers. Funding is required to provide research capability training regularly to professors and all the HEI faculty members, especially those who are actively involved in research.

The central area that mostly necessitates funding is about the resources needed to carry on a research study. To conduct research, the faculty members usually need funds for many different needs (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003; Calma, 2010). The research funds are used for the research travel, board and lodging of the researcher, printing and photocopying expenses, and even some minimal tokens that may be needed for participants or research site gatekeepers (Creswell, 2012). Once the study is completed, it needs to be disseminated through conference presentation and publication (Wa-Mbaleka, 2016). All the research studies conducted by faculty should be towards publication and probably dissemination through conference presentations. All these expenses need funding to support the research work of the faculty (Salazar-Clemeña, 2006; Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007).

Financial incentives have either been found or at least highly recommended as a way to motivate faculty in higher education to be involved in producing and disseminating research (see for instance Bengo et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2010; Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014). It must be highlighted here, however, that financial gain has not been reported so far in the literature to be the most important factor to motivate faculty members to conduct and publish research. A common trend seems to be that the major motivators are internal, such as self-actualization and personal passion for research and writing.

Sources of Funding

Different scholars have discussed funding sources for research differently (Nuqui & Cruz, 2012; Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014; Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007; Wa-Mbaleka, 2014). Put together, they all seem to converge towards four primary funding sources: personal, institutional, government, and nongovernment. No matter what the financial source is, funds are needed to conduct and disseminate research.

In financially struggling HEIs, research funding is highly limited. This fact may be especially true in colleges that offer only 4-year degree programs. This insufficient funding for research ends up putting faculty members who are interested in research in a situation where they must spend their personal money on their research (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014). Although not recommended, the individual source of research funding should not be ignored as it has importantly contributed to research endeavors.

The second source of funding is the institutional research budget. All HEIs are expected to allocate some funds for research (Darbyshire, Gustafsson, & Müllersdorf, 2015; Gonzalez-Brambila & Veloso, 2007; Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014). It is deplorable to note that the percentage of research in some HEIs is minimal, while a study suggested that it would be ideal to have 25% of the HEI budget allocated to research (Calma, 2010). The budget assigned to research at an HEI sends the message to the faculty members about the importance the HEI leadership places on research.

The government has the responsibility to allocate some budget for research for the national development and the improvement of the quality of education in HEIs (CHED, 2009). The Philippine government has different agencies used for research funding. The one directly related to this study is the budget from CHED. In 1994, the Philippine government mandated CHED to oversee research production and quality nationwide (Calma, 2010). Additionally, the Philippine government has other government entities that are specifically set up for research production; for instance, the National Research Council of the Philippines.

The last source that is highly encouraged, but least utilized in many HEIs is that of the nongovernment funding sources (Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007), known as external funding organizations (Calma, 2010; Nuqui & Cruz, 2012). Such funding comes from businesses, non-government organizations, and international funding agencies, among others.

In trying to understand the mechanism of

research funding from CHED to the faculty at one selected HEI, the following research questions were the focus of the study:

- 1. What is the process of funds' disbursement both at the national and regional levels?
- 2. What is the funds' disbursement process at the selected university?
- 3. What improvement is needed in the state funding process for research funding?

METHODOLOGY

Funding is needed for research in HEIs to be effective, and for HEIs to develop stronger research culture. One of the funding sources that faculty members rely on in the Philippines is the one coming from CHED. This study was conducted to understand the funding process all the way from CHED to the end user of the research funds - that is, the HEI faculty.

Qualitative research was preferred in this study because it focuses on a process that is quite complex and with no clear preset variables (Lichtman, 2012).

Research Design

The current study followed the case study design because it focuses on a contemporary issue that deals with a complex process with no clear or preset variables (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Lichtman, 2012; Yin, 2014). In this case study, we intended to understand the research funding process from CHED's central office to the end user - the faculty. This in-depth exploration required a close look at different guidelines, practices, and input from several different people involved in CHED's research funding process. The case study is, therefore, the best design for the study due to its high flexibility in accommodating different types of data and complex processes (Merriam, 2009).

Participants, Sampling, and Setting

To be able to understand the complicated process of CHED-funded research, we used purposive sampling. This preference is because purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants who can provide the best information needed to address the research problem (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Additionally, multiple variation sampling was used to make certain opinions from different stakeholders were included in the collective understanding of the process of CHED research funding.

Three groups of participants were included in this study. The first group was composed of CHED officials. The second category consisted of university administrators. The last group consisted of two types of faculty researchers: those who had applied for CHED funding and those who applied for other sources of finance.

At the CHED's central office, one of the employees of the Office of Planning, Research and Knowledge Management took part in the study through face-to-face interview and contribution of some documents that allowed us to understand better the budget and funding process. The second category of participants of the study was composed of two university administrators who had some experience working in the research department. This group included a former university research vice president and a former research director. The last category was made of six faculty members of the same selected university. Three faculty members were selected on one condition that they had applied for CHED research fund at least once. The other three were also selected for having completed research projects that were funded by sources other than CHED. All in all, ten people participated in the study.

The research setting consisted of three main places: the CHED national office, a CHED regional

office which is not named here for reasons of confidentiality, and a state university whose name is also kept confidential for ethical reasons.

Data Collection

Qualitative research depends on many different types of data sources, including but not limited to interviews, focus groups, artifacts, observations, documents, and archival data (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). For this current study, data were collected and analyzed using the triangulation of interviews, documents, and archival data.

For the interviews, an appointment was made in advance, except for the CHED central office. On the day of the interview, the purpose of the study was reiterated; informed consent was explained; interviewees then granted their permission for recording, and then each participated in a 30-60-minute interview at their convenient time and place. With the permission granted by all the interviewees, we used audiorecording devices to record the interviews for further systematic analysis.

All the interviews were semi-structured, as semi-structured interviews are preferred for their flexibility for probing and for a clear and logical map of the interview (Merriam, 2009). We designed the interview guide questions by ourselves since qualitative researchers usually produce their own instruments. Each interview lasted about 30 to 60 minutes.

During and sometimes at the end of the interviews, we asked participants to share voluntarily any document (such as guidelines about research funding) and archival data (such as budgets and expense reports) that could be useful in our exploration. These documents were meant to help better understand the common practices in CHED research funding process. Additionally, the archival data (such as statistics on CHED fund expenditures) were collected to obtain a broad perspective on how much money and how was it being used for CHED research, although what was provided by CHED seemed discrepant with what was posted on CHED's website.

Ethical Considerations

All the participants volunteered to take part in this study after the purpose of the study was explained to them. They knew that their names would be kept confidential. Interviews were conducted in the place and at the time convenient to the participants. Participants shared with us only the data that they were comfortable to share, as we used no coercion in obtaining any data, whether for interviews or documents.

Researcher's Positioning

As published research authors, we have our passion for research that has led us to consider learning processes involved in obtaining research funding. One of us had talked to one of the CHED's national research leaders who complained of HEIs and their faculty for not taking advantage of CHED's research funds. On the other side, we had both encountered several faculty members from different HEIs complaining about the lack of research funds, which confirmed what was already reported in existing literature. One of us had published articles on the issue of research production and publication. One of us had been involved in applying for CHED research funding. One of us had studied on a government scholarship. We believe that all these elements may have affected our understanding and the way we explored the issue.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in a case study can be done

using one of the five techniques which are pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, or cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2009). For this study, explanation building was preferred because, according to Yin, this technique fits if the main purpose is to build an explanation for a selected case. According to Yin, the goal of explanation building as data analysis method is "to analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case" (p. 141). According to him, this data analysis method is best suited for an explanatory case study. The current case study is an explanatory case study since it focuses on explaining the CHED funding process; hence, the explanation building technique was the best-suited one. Yin furthered that the unit of analysis can be a person, an institution, a program, or a process. In this study, the CHED funding process is the unit of analysis.

RESULTS

The results section is presented in three main parts: the first deals with the CHED research funding process, guidelines, and practices; the second focuses on the lessons learned from the university's research administrators; and the last is about the opinions and lived experiences of faculty researchers who have applied for research funding at the selected university.

CHED Research Funding Process, Guidelines, and Practices

Some faculty members may not be applying for CHED research funds merely because they do not know what CHED research funding is all about - its application process, its guidelines, and the practices involved. Data collected from the two CHED offices (the central office and the regional office) were meant specifically to help understand the process involved in the CHED research funding. This section synthesizes what should be known about CHED research funding. When it comes to research grant applications, the CHED regional office only receives and evaluates documentary requirements from the applicants. After that, the office makes endorsements to the CHED central office which gives the final approval and directly communicates to the applicant.

About CHED funds. CHED funds come from two major sources. A portion of it comes from the general appropriations which are allocated yearly; the second part comes from the higher education fund which comes from several funding sources including different government agencies. This second part is specifically used for development programs.

The budget for the following year is usually prepared before the end of the year. The budget for research falls under CHED's Office of Planning, Research, and Knowledge Management which is divided into several categories. These also include grants and aid programs where NHERA-2 falls as well as the budget for capability building, which provides support for faculty travel for international conference presentations and grants for theses and dissertations. Awards and incentives are also part of this budget, which includes the research publication awards for CHED-funded studies published in ISI and CHED-accredited journals. The next are the best higher education research award and best extension program award given to institutions that demonstrate outstanding research or extension programs implemented. Additionally, there is a category for journal accreditation services. This grant helps cover expenses incurred in printing and running a CHED-accredited journal.

CHED research funding process. CHED has already established a process for research funding, although most of those interviewed believed that the guidelines included in the process make it quite challenging to be approved. First, CHED

sends out the call for research proposals to the state universities and colleges (SUCs) through the Regional CHED offices and posts it on their website. The call usually contains the research priority being covered by the call. This first step is primarily for a concept note of about five pages for a potential research proposal. CHED's website has the forms and instructions to be used for both the concept note and the full proposal. From the date this call for proposals is sent out, people usually have about 3 to 4 weeks to submit their concept notes. Once the proposals are received, they are evaluated by CHED-appointed experts. And once approved, the faculty researchers are asked to prepare and submit a full-blown research proposal within three weeks. CHED's website usually contains guidelines for all the priorities for different research grants, and these guidelines are revised from time to time to fit better the current national research needs.

Proposals are then evaluated by CHEDappointed technical evaluation committees which consist of renowned academicians and industry practitioners depending on the field of the research. Sometimes, changes may be required before proposals are approved by the Commission en Banc. CHED then prepares a memorandum of understanding to be signed by CHED and the research grant recipient for notarization. Paperwork is sent to CHED's accounting department for the release of the funds. The time between the submission of the full-blown proposal and the disbursement of the research funds can vary between 3 and several months depending on both the involved paperwork and the number of times the proposal needs to be revised before the final approval.

Only about 30% to 40% of research proposals submitted to CHED are approved. From CHED's perspective, there are a few problems that make it difficult for faculty to avail the research funds. Some proposals are rejected primarily due to research methodology issues. Other reasons include 1) applicants for research grants are not considered experts in the field in which they are applying; 2) the lack of solid theoretical foundation due to a weak review of the literature, and 3) there are no clear research objectives or research problem.

CHED's guidelines. It is clear that CHED has set up some guidelines for research funding application. The call for research proposals usually contains guidelines and deadlines needed for the application. The CHED website also provides the application guidelines and templates, together with the research priorities. The CHED official from the central office stated that CHED is currently making revisions to the research funding process "to make it more accessible and the policies less stringent."

CHED's practices. CHED provides about four national capability-building conferences a year, mainly in Manila, with each gathering around 300 faculty members; leading to about 1200 faculty accessing the training. This number seems significantly small compared to the thousands of faculty members working in Philippine higher education. If all HEIs were considered, this number would lead to less than one faculty member per institution who has access to CHED capability-building events on a yearly basis. In addition to funding the conduct of research, CHED also provides travel funds for research approved for presentation at an international conference.

Perspectives of University's Research Administrators

At the selected university, CHED-funded projects began only three years before this study. These CHED-funded projects were done by one person, by a group, or in collaboration with other universities. The research projects were national in scope because CHED funds research that must have an impact nationwide.

CHED funding practices at the university level. At the selected institution, the Grants in Aids (GIA) projects by Zonal Research Center (ZRC) of which two the institution participated as members only, both were met. Another practice that CHED implemented which the administrators found commendable was the establishment of ZRC. Under ZRC is the Program Cluster Implementer at the regional level. The structure helped the university to come up with research using the funds of CHED. The ZRC leaders organized activities to train novice researchers from the region. They funded training and research proposals. They also gathered professors from different universities to conduct collaborative research. This structure was however phrased out. As a result, the institution was no longer able to obtain updated information regarding CHED research grants.

Processes were to be followed for those who applied for CHED research grants. Steps outlined by the faculty researchers matched the reality found at the CHED's central office. Once the proposal is approved, the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between CHED and the head of the agency is done. Notices to proceed and of disbursement are then given. Once the fund is downloaded to the institution, usual accounting procedure follows.

Opinions and Lived Experiences of Faculty Researchers

From the opinions and lived experiences of the faculty researchers involved in this study, there was much learned about the funding process including challenges and ways for improvement.

Downloading the fund. "The money is not directly given to the personal account of the faculty proponent but the university," said one participant. The university administration makes sure that the faculty is being assisted in liquidating the money following the Commission on Audit regulations. The proponent submits the liquidation to the cashier. In the case of collaborative research, the cashier presents the liquidation to the institution where the project leader belongs, and then they submit the reports to CHED. The following statements reflect the fund downloading process.

Some challenging experiences. For one of the participants, the time of application for the funds to be released took six months to one year. The release of money was in tranches; 25% of the budget usually took around six months to be released for the first tranche, and another six months after completion for the final tranche. Typically, the mobilization fund is 25% of the total funds, and the 75% can only come in once the proponent is done with the research. In the two of the approved projects of the participants of this study, there was no disbursement made to the proponents at all. One participant had indicated during the interview that although it was already "the second year, no words from CHED until now." The reason for withholding the approved funds was never officially communicated to the proponents in both cases.

Some faculty felt that although there are available funds, the requirements are too tedious, making it discouraging or difficult to avail. This concern reflected what was also expressed at CHED's central office. For instance, most of the participants indicated that there was no orientation or linkage between the HEI research office with CHED and they had not attended any forum or an orientation activity regarding CHED funding for research. They felt that there is no extensive dissemination of information regarding CHED research funding, training, opportunities, and processes. These findings were corroborated by the research administrators during their terms

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at the research office; accordingly, there was no CHED capability-building activity they could recall. One participant stated, "I have a very little idea about it. I am not aware of or have not attended any activity regarding the CHED funding process."

Other faculty participants, on the other hand, believed that CHED's requirements are already well established. It is just up to the institution or the proponents to persevere in applying for the funds. One participant stated, "...for me, there is not much problem on the CHED. It is just based on how we push ourselves to go after it." Another one stated, "We just have to push hard to go after the funding from CHED."

To be able to increase the chance for funding, the proposal must be strong. The methods to be used in the study must be scientifically sound. If the evaluators find a proposal persuasive, they would not usually have any qualms about it. Unfortunately, some faculty members are weak in these areas. The approval of the study also dramatically depends on the evaluating panel whose research bias is very crucial. For instance, some faculty proponents find it disappointing that proponents have to concede to whatever the technical panel suggests. One participant stated, "it is disappointing because you will have to concede to these people who will approve or disapprove your paper."

The obligation of the project proponents to the university. Once the project is approved, the faculty proponent performs the stipulated duties and responsibilities in the contract and produces the expected deliverables. The proponent is expected to produce the research manuscript as the final product. As expectedly specified by one participant, "Well, you have to deliver what you have promised in the proposal. CHED monitors the project and asks for reports on the progress of the project from time to time. The manuscript produced can be claimed for many kinds of evaluation such as SUC leveling, normative financing, and a performance-based bonus".

Fund sources aside from CHED. Faculty members whose research projects are not funded by CHED finance their work from their personal money. Others receive grants from other funding agencies such as DOST-Technology Application and Promotion Institute (TAPI), DOST, DOH, EVCIERD, and UNESCO. Some faculty members may not be applying for CHED research funds simply because they do not know what the CHED research funding is all about. Other reasons mentioned included 1) requirements and process being too tedious to comply with; 2) research strands for funding not always meeting faculty's expertise since it "is more in the areas of Science and Technology"; 3) some faculty members may want to conduct their research at their pace and since receiving the grant has a corresponding responsibility of meeting deadlines and finishing on time, some high level of pressure on some faculty members may be created; 4) research funded by CHED is usually done in groups or collaboration with other universities. Some faculty members do not like working in a group because of differences in the levels of collaboration. One participant stated, "I want to research at my pace when availing of a fund as it comes with the corresponding responsibility to finish on time."

Efforts at the university level. One general strategy rarely used by the University is capability building by conducting workshops on proposal writing. When it has been done, it motivates faculty members to do research. It still needs to be intensified, though. The faculty participants recommended that there should be a stronger linkage between the university and CHED regarding proper information dissemination on the CHED research funding process and relevant capability-building opportunities. One administrator emphasized a strategy of strengthening the liaison between CHED and the university by "inviting people from CHED and let them talk regarding the policy. A CHED workshop for the preparation of research proposal for CHED funding" is recommended.

The experience of the application process. It is essential to explore the experiences of the faculty participants of this study to better understand the application process. The experiences were diverse, and they varied from being tiring and tedious to budget bias.

The process is primarily considered exhausting because of the limited time to prepare the proposal and meet the deadline; otherwise, the money allocated for the institution for research funding may be lost. This effect is reflected in one participant's statement, "it was tiring because [done] with [sic] a very small amount of time to put it together." Secondly, the minds of the faculty proponents and the consultants may not meet. The consultant or panelist may be more oriented towards quantitative research than qualitative research while the research proponent is inclined towards the opposite. One participant mentioned that "it was disappointing that the consultants were very much quantitatively-wired."

Proponents likewise felt that no matter how large the available funds for research grants are, CHED seemed to favor some SUCs over others. Hence, the grant and the release of funds to those favored SUCs are much easier and faster than that of the others. Those SUCs which have established their relationship with CHED through previous agency-funded research seem to have quicker and easier process of receiving funding. For those SUCs that are not favored, almost $\frac{1}{2}$ of the budget is cut. This result was corroborated by the observation of the university administrators who indicated that the track record of the institution regarding completing CHED-funded research matters significantly. They alleged, "If you could not deliver a project with a smaller amount and this time you ask for a larger amount, how can we trust that you can deliver in a larger amount?".

DISCUSSION

This study was undertaken to try to understand the process of the CHED research funding process. The results showed that CHED has a set of guidelines that are in place to fund research, although these guidelines are viewed as stringent, sometimes confusing, and ineffectively communicated. It is well documented that CHED has the good intention of seeing the Philippines rise in research production and dissemination (Calma, 2010; CHED, 2009; Dumbrique & Alon, 2013; Nuqui & Cruz, 2012; Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014; Salazar-Clemeña, 2006; Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007; Salmingo, 2011). It likewise explains why CHED would have a significant budget for research funding. Good intentions are not enough. Practical guidelines are needed to make sure an effective and efficient mechanism is in place to disburse the funds to the most qualified applicants. While progress is seen in the usage of CHED research funds, there is room for improvement on the guidelines and the whole process of disbursing the research funds.

At the university level, not much CHED funding had been disbursed. Even with the few grants that were received, the institutional disbursement process was also inefficient. Such inefficiency simply added to the frustration of faculty who are already overloaded with their teaching load; a factor that was found to demotivate faculty from conducting research (Wa-Mbaleka, 2015). With stringent guidelines and process from CHED to inefficient disbursement process at the university level, faculty members are discouraged from applying for CHED research funds. Additionally, lack of expertise in research grant application writing was found to hamper faculty's motivation to be involved in funding applications. This finding is in line with Wa-Mbaleka's (2015) study that reported that lack of know-how was one of the major factors preventing university faculty from producing research.

In trying to move the outcomes of this study into practical application, a list of recommendations is presented below. Some recommendations are for CHED, others for the university administrators, the next for the faculty, and then some for further research. Some recommendations came directly from the participants themselves while others are solely based on the results of this study. All the recommendations, however, are directly related to the results presented above.

For CHED

Running more calls for research proposals and research capability-building seminars at the regional office may help serve and train more faculty researchers than running on a centralized system that is currently running. For instance, calls for proposals from regional offices may reach more faculty researchers than those coming from the central office. More regional committees to review the research proposals may help evaluate several proposals concurrently in several regions of the country. This decentralization may also help with research capability building.

Intensive information dissemination is necessary to increase the number of applicants for CHED research grants. This method can provide the vital information an applicant needs to follow the required process and submit the requirements. Also, to be able to present a good proposal, a reasonable amount of time should be given to applicants. Ample time is required to put together a project that is well thought out. Also, finding more creative ways of sharing such information can help increase faculty's awareness of the services and resources available to them from and through CHED.

Furthermore, since there is a CHED regional office, it is suggested that personnel from CHED regional office reach out to the different SUCs by conducting symposia regarding the policies and procedures for applying for CHED's research funding. If there are more faculty researchers trained in research grant writing, more may be encouraged to apply.

The call for research proposal should be sent out at least 1 to 3 months before the deadline. These deadlines could also be available starting the first day of the new fiscal year so that on any day of the year when a faculty member wishes to apply for CHED research fund, he can just check that information on the CHED's website. Between the approval of the concept note and the submission of the full-blown research proposal, at least 1 to 2 months should be allotted to afford faculty more time to prepare stronger research proposals. This practice would be especially important given that one of the factors that prevent faculty members from publishing in scholarly journals is the limited time that comes from being overloaded with teaching (Wa-Mbaleka, 2015a).

CHED needs to conduct some research that involves faculty, university administrators, and their regional office administrators to develop procedures and guidelines that will be more user-friendly to research grant applicants. This recommendation comes as a solution to the strong opinion aired by faculty members and university administrators who were involved in this study.

Some research proposals submitted for funding are of regional significance. It is suggested that projects at this level be examined by technical experts coming from the related region. It is important to have a pool of technical experts from each region in which the credentials of each member can be screened by the CHED's central office. Members of the regional technical panel can provide more comprehensive feedback on research papers in which the scope is at the regional level.

Another suggestion was to lessen the number of signatories and requirements. The requirements are quite tedious to comply with and the procedure too difficult to follow. If possible, the fund should also be directly downloaded to the proponent. In the first place, the memorandum of agreement is a contract between CHED and the researcher. This approach can make the release of funds more effective. When funds are sent to the university, it sometimes takes longer for the disbursement of funds to the researcher. The administration has their procedure to follow that can take months to receive the funds and a tedious liquidation process. Additionally, it entails an administrative cost, which was reported to be around 10-15% of the total amount downloaded to the university. The administrative cost is for the preparation of the vouchers, payroll, and liquidation reports.

For University Administrators

University research administrators need to have firm plans for capability building in research problem statement, research goals, research methodology, literature review, research grant writing, and CHED research funding. They should provide research-oriented training activities such as forum or workshop on the preparation of research proposal for CHED funding. Information dissemination is directly coming from CHED; thus, inviting some CHED personnel as the resource persons to discuss the intricacies of the research grant policy is important to encourage and improve the number of applications for CHED research grants.

Administrators also need to collaborate more with the CHED research-funding

department at both the regional and national levels. Additionally, the university needs to develop some plan to de-load faculty involved in the research grant writing process. According to the interviewed university administrators, the faculty members who are doing research should be de-loaded and research being done should be equivalent to corresponding units of a load. This approach will provide faculty with more time to do research. The current loading system that the institution has makes it difficult for the faculty to find a chance to conduct research and to apply for research funding.

The institution's Office for Research and Extension should establish a stronger linkage with CHED. The institution should consider making a team of faculty researchers whose function is really to write research proposals for CHED funding. Such a group would also need to be briefed on the step-by-step guidelines regarding the intricacies of CHED research funding process. The process of availing this fund should be communicated effectively to them.

Additionally, workshops must be planned every year about government procedures, government accounting principles, and auditing rules. Some workshops can be facilitated by faculty members with research grant writing experience. Lastly, the university administrators of the institution should also be persistent in asking for available funds from CHED for research. In this way, they can facilitate having an updated access to information regarding CHED research grants. Access to current and accurate information can give an edge to the university in this matter.

For Faculty

Faculty members need to understand that accepting an HEI teaching position includes conducting research. It is their responsibility to find means and opportunities for capabilitybuilding to be able to conduct and disseminate research. When their research knowledge and skills are enhanced, they increase the likelihood of obtaining the funding. On the applicant side, one has to be persistent. The proponent should follow the corrections and suggestions and meet the deadlines to obtain the funds.

The figure below synthesizes the process that should take place in the research funding to be more effective and more efficient.



Figure 1. Proposed process for effective CHED research funding.

CONCLUSION

This study helped explain the whole process of research funding from CHED to the recipient of the research grant. First, CHED has a clear budget for research and set guidelines, forms, templates, and instructions to be followed in the application process. Although all these exist, they may not be well known to all the faculty members in HEIs, and they are found to be difficult to follow. These tedious procedures can lead to only a few funding applicants. Secondly, proposals may be rejected because the applicants do not know how to follow the guidelines or present strong theoretical foundation or methodology. Moreover, there seems to be too much centralization in the process as far as funding for research conduct, research capability building, and research travel is concerned. Thus, more involvement of the Regional CHED offices and stronger collaboration with the SUCs through capability-building activities may yield better results. Finally, there is also a challenge with the faculty skills for writing proposals, designing research, and making a strong case for the research they propose to conduct. For this reason, SUCs, in collaboration with CHED, are therefore encouraged to provide more research capability-building opportunities within the institution for their faculty-researchers.

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