REACT: A CHANGE MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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REACT: A Change Management Model for Rural Community Colleges in the Philippines

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Abstract

Management skills and organizational issues are considered predictors in developing a change management plan. Compared to other countries, community colleges in the Philippines are run by local municipalities; in which schools from 3rd and 4th class municipalities face problems. In connection, this study explores the management skills and organizational issues of rural community colleges in the Philippines as a basis for developing a change management plan. The study used sequential explanatory mixed methods research that has undergone two phases of data collection and analysis. It first collects and analyzes quantitative data using survey questionnaires, followed by qualitative data collection through focus group discussion (FDG). The study’s results explain that the different management skills of administrators, faculty, and non-teaching aligned with the four organizational cultures -clan, market, adhocracy, and hierarchy. It also discusses the core issues of rural community colleges on organizational performance and adaptability, organizational weakness, and internal conflict. Based on the findings, the study also develops the REACT model of a change management plan. The study highlights the need for rural community colleges to adopt change management based on their management skills and targets their organizational issues. Additional funding, support programs, and faculty and employee manual development are recommended.

Keywords: organizational culture, change management, Philippines, community colleges, management skills

Introduction

Successful community colleges require flexible leaders, faculty, and non-teaching personnel in facing both academic and organizational issues. According to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) or the agenda 2030 of the United Nations (UN), the aim for quality and accessible education for all focused not only on student support programs and upgrading school infrastructure but also targets the organizational upgrading and teachers’ development aligned with globalization (UN SDG, 2019). The success and development of every organization depend on the behavior and adaptability of its members (Linnenluecke, 2017; Schein, 1980; Cooke & Lafferty, 1989). Thus, more studies revealed that management skills are associated with behavior (Chisholm et al., 2017; Middleton et al., 2013; Luthans & Doh, 2013) and adaptability is associated with intelligence (Schoenherr & Swink, 2015; Grissom et al., 2015; Udayar et al., 2018; Parmentier et al., 2021; Pocaan, 2022).

In the case of rural community colleges (RCCs) in the Philippines, change management, and institutional upgrading are challenging to achieve. Goldrick-Rab et al. (2017) stated that, like most students, community colleges strive to survive due to the lack of funding. Adequate funds allow every academic institution to realize its institutional objectives toward quality service (Kaiser et al., 2014). Other countries fund their community colleges based on their performance (Kahlenberg, 2015); however, in the Philippines, the funds for community colleges depend on the local government units (Philippine Constitution, 1987). Community colleges in third and fourth-class municipalities in the country are expected to receive a small budget allocation. School budget concerns are a significant issue with apparent ties to student progress (Johnson et al., 2014). Schools with lesser funds sometimes cannot provide fewer classrooms and better programming (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Pocaan et al., 2022), resulting in poorer student success and a socioeconomic and educational divide (Baker, 2021).

On the other hand, Treat and Hagerdon (2013) argued that from regionally oriented schools bent on access and affordability to higher education, skill building, and community involvement, the modern community college is expected to participate worldwide in the liberalization and growth of the global workforce. So, the expectation for every community college is to provide cost-effective education specifically to marginalized students in order to be involved in economic development. Meanwhile, Legusov et al. (2022) stated that community colleges and other TVET institutions contribute to the united nations’ sustainable development goals. Given that the Philippines, as a developing country, face tremendous challenges in pursuing quality education, thus, problems exist inside the formal education system and external factors (Pocaan, 2022).
Examining the management skills of its personnel and the organizational issues is necessary to benchmark problems and develop solutions. To date, there is no study conducted on the management skills and organizational issues of RCCs in the Philippines. Hence, this study aimed to propose a change management plan for RCCs by exploring the management skills and organizational issues faced by the administrators, faculty, and non-teaching personnel.

**Methodology**

**Research Design and Instruments**

The study used sequential explanatory mixed methods research that has undergone two phases of data collection and analysis. It first collects and analyzes quantitative data using survey questionnaires followed by qualitative data collection through focus group discussion (FDG) or individual interviews (Wipulanusat et al., 2020). The questions used in the FGD of this study were related to the outcomes from the initial phase (Othman, 2020).

Moreover, for the quantitative phase, the study used the management skills assessment instrument by Cameron and Quinn (2011). It is a self-rating form with 60 items in which the participants can rate their management skills on 5 scales: 1—strongly disagree, 2—moderately agree, 3—slightly agree/disagree, 4—moderately agree and 5—strongly agree. The survey took approximately 20 to 25 minutes to complete. After considering the results of the quantitative data analysis, the second phase formulates and considers the following questions:

1. Is your school’s practice aligned with its vision? If not, have you revisited it?
2. As a member of the school, are you yourself resistant to change? Why?
3. What are the root causes of the problems or issues in your organization?
4. What are the things to be improved based on the employees/stakeholders' feedback?
5. Is there a problem with the budget given to the school? If yes, Provide solutions or alternatives to the problems.
6. Is there a conflict among the administrators, faculty, and non-teaching in your school? If yes, what can you suggest to avoid such conflicts?
7. Is there a support program for every member of the school? If none, what can you suggest?

The results of the data analysis guide the study to propose a change management plan for RCCs.

**Criteria for Selecting Community Colleges**

Among the 16 community colleges in Bicol Region, Philippines, only 4 were selected as the locus of the study. One of the criteria for selecting the school is the type of funding municipality, wherein, the selected schools were under third and fourth-class municipalities. The study selected community colleges under this type of municipality since they received less funding compared to other schools.

**Context of the Study**

According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) (2021), more than 27,000 students enrolled in RCCs in the Bicol Region during the academic year 2020 to 2021; one of the reasons is the existing free education for their students. However, RCCs still receive minimum to low funding compared to state universities and colleges. State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) were funded directly by the national government through the department of budget and management (DBM), while the community colleges depend on the local government units (LGUs). According to studies and experts, school funding affects the performance of the schools’ organizational culture, management skills, and performance (Adewale & Anthonia, 2013; Ahmed & Shafiq, 2014; Tarba et al., 2019).
This study explores the 5 RCCs from third and fourth-class municipalities in the Bicol Region in the Philippines. As shown in Table 1, the study surveyed and interviewed 45 school administrators, 115 faculty, and 70 non-teaching personnel using the management skills assessment instrument (MSAI) instrument developed by Cameron and Quinn (2011). The study used the stratified sampling technique to ensure each subgroup within the population receives proper representation within the sample.

All the participants spent 1 to 15 years in teaching service under regular and probationary status. Most of the participants under regular status obtained master’s and doctorate degrees, while most participants under probationary obtained units in master’s degrees. Most programs offered by 5 RCCs are Bachelor of Secondary Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, and Bachelor of Science in Business Management. Determining the management skills of the personnel and organizational culture may identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. Furthermore, the survey and interview results guide the study to draw a change management plan to improve the RCCs organizations.

### Data Analysis

The study used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) v.26 in quantifying the data (Cheng & Philips, 2014). Moreover, the study used a radar chart to describe the commonalities and differences in the responses. For qualitative analysis, the study used coding to generate similar themes and sub-themes. The study also used a qualitative master data sheet for easy data corroboration.

### Results and Discussion

The following are the results of the gathered data in exploring the management skills and organizational issues of rural community colleges.

#### Management Skills

Figure 1 shows the management skills of administrators, faculty, and non-teaching personnel. The administrators’ management skills show stability from adhocracy, market, and hierarchical cultures; however, it slightly declined in clan culture. It implies that the administrators were flexible and had strong management skills. On the other hand, the management skills of the faculty show higher stability from managing the development of others in clan culture to hierarchical culture. It means that the faculty demonstrates support and value the similarities and differences of every employee in the organization. Lastly, the non-teaching management skills show strength in managing the development of others, managing interpersonal relationships, and teams; however, it partially declined in energizing employees. It means that non-teaching personnel is competitive as well as supportive.

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that the high management skills of administrators are essential as they are responsible for the work performance of the organization. Moreover, administrators show high managerial flexibility. According to Mackey et al. (2017), influential education leaders are flexible, whereas flexibility is a significant skill since it enables an individual to generate novel ideas (Kolb et al., 2014).

Management Skills of the Faculty. Furthermore, based on the results, the most dominant management skills of the faculty were managing teams (M=4.69), managing interpersonal skills (M=4.74), and managing the development of others (M=4.69) under the clan culture (M=4.71). According to Kim et al. (2014), these management skills create a warm, supportive, and pressure-less working environment that facilitates firms to focus on developing people and team spirit to work with each other as a family. In addition, it prioritizes the development of shared understanding and commitment above an organized communication procedure (AfSar et al., 2020; Pocaan, 2022). It suggests that the faculty are exposed to a culture of cooperation and program engagement, while the core values reflect participation, loyalty, and dedication (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Carter & Baghurts, 2014). However, these results may sometimes hinder effectiveness (Liu, 2015). It is conceivable for the administration to be entirely top-down; such may impede workplace morale and cooperation (Kahsay & Bulte, 2021; Scott & Scott, 2016).

The results also Scott highlight managing acculturation (M=4.05), managing the control system (M=4.07), and managing coordination (M=4.08) under a hierarchy culture (M=4.07). These results may indicate that the organization can be slow to adapt to change and are typically inflexible when it comes to bending toward their employees’ needs or meeting their students’ demands (Gallos & Bolman, 2021). In general, results revealed that the faculty demonstrates support and value for the similarities and differences of every employee in the organization.

Management Skills of Non-Teaching. For non-teaching, managing competitiveness (M=4.40), energizing employees (M=4.32) and managing customer service under market culture (M=4.09) and managing teams (M=4.63), managing interpersonal relationships (M=4.65), and managing the development of others under clan culture (M=4.60) shows as the dominant management skills. It implies that non-teaching emphasizes competitiveness between the organization and its competitors and employees (Bowe et al., 2017). Furthermore, the results also emphasize developing shared understanding and commitment instead of a formalized communication process (Berkemeyer et al., 2015). According to Motilewa et al. (2015), the organizational culture positively impacts non-teaching staff's job performance. In general, the results suggest that aside from being competitive, non-teaching faculty are also supportive.

Organizational Issues. Table 2 presents the data on the organizational issues, generating 3 themes from the 6 categories. The issues on performance and adaptability were based on practices, vision, and change resistance, for organizational weakness was anchored on clientele satisfaction and problem rootcause. Lastly, the internal conflicts were based on organizational conflict, funding allocation, and support programs.

Issues on Organizational Performance and Adaptability. Based on the participants' responses, organizational practices are somehow aligned to its vision; however, several factors hinder putting the vision into practice, such as members' qualifications, support system, funding, digitalization, and globalization. Problems in realizing institutional objectives and vision require adequate funding and expertise. This result was supported by several research findings, which argued that more community colleges encounter slow progress because of their limited funds which are essential in supporting institutional upgrading (Cunningham et al., 2014; Scott-Clayton, 2015; Jenkins & Fink, 2016). Moreover, qualified experts in the field are most likely to apply to SUCs for better opportunities. This result was also expected since the lower-income local government units funded the selected RCCs.

In terms of change resistance, most participants are willing to adapt to organizational changes provided the support they demand, such as support programs and institutional upgrading. It implies that the participants’ willingness to adapt change management depends on the support system they will receive. School leaders should guarantee the support system in adapting change management. To guarantee that everyone within an organization embraces the changes caused by a merger, leaders must be knowledgeable and educated in the process of organizational transformation (Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006; Cameron & Green, 2019).

On the other hand, other participants are comfortable with the current organizational culture. It means that these participants are contented and favorable with the
organization’s current culture. According to several studies, the inability to adapt change management is because of political influence (Kuipers et al., 2014; Pelling et al., 2015), age (Mahon & Millar, 2014), and obsolete skills (Worley & Mohrman, 2014; Kohnke, 2017).

On the other hand, participants also considered poor digitalization, underqualified members, and lack of support systems as core issues. It implies that RCCs with poor digitalization are being left behind in organizational trends and upgrading. Digitalization is a new trend in every organization (Machekhina, 2017); it enhances the work process and output and savestime (Girbach, 2021). For the organization of the digital educational process, the potential of highly qualified, trained personnel of educational institutions will be necessary (Qizi, 2021). The lack of support systems in an organization disallows the professional growth of its members and institutional upgrading, which may result in being left behind.

**Internal Conflicts.** In terms of organizational conflict, participants echoed that there was a problem regarding promotion and choosing administrators. It may link to the previous findings where politicians sometimes monopolize the school’s decision, especially in selecting the person in the position. According to Henig (2013), politicians appointed individuals as school leaders because of their qualifications and personal connection. Moreover, the participants added that seniority and nepotism are the common cause of conflict. The appointment serves as a "debt of gratitude" where school leaders should provide favors to the politicians who appointed them to the position. According to Ballano (2017), in Filipino culture and politics, the "Padrino system," also known as patronage, is the value system wherein one receives favor, promotion, or political appointment by a family tie or acquaintance instead of merit. The "Padrino system" has been the subject of several disputes and instances of corruption (Ballano, 2017).

Furthermore, participants added that other problems exist because of the absence of the faculty and employee manual. A manual is an indispensable tool that guides every member of an academic institution to familiarize themselves with the administrative and academic policies, employees’ rights and privileges, and in responding to their duties (McDonald &

### Table 2. Organizational Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Transcripts</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Description of Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational weaknesses are somehow aligned to its vision, however, several factors, such as members’ qualifications, support system, funding, digitalization, and globalization, hinder putting the vision into practice.</td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
<td>Clientele satisfaction, Organizational weakness</td>
<td>Core issues and areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization meets the satisfaction of its students; however, given that the students are only locals and mostly from low-income families, it can imply that students are not too demanding.</td>
<td>Root cause of the problems</td>
<td>Organizational conflict, Internal conflicts</td>
<td>Issues within the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since RCCs are funded by the local government, politics play a role in selecting administrators, and local politicians sometimes control the school’s decisions. Poor digitalization, expertise, and support systems are also considered core issues.</td>
<td>Funding allocation and support programs</td>
<td>Funding allocation and support programs</td>
<td>Issues in times of calamity and emergency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hatcher, 2020; Lindsey et al., 2018). It implies that the absence of a manual may exploit the employee’s rights and privileges. Since the manual serves as the bases for protecting the rights of employees and administrators, its absence definitely may cause confusion and unending organizational issues (Pyzdek & Keller, 2014).

The participants also cited that there is no opportunity for the members to pursue higher learning. Part of institutional support is offering dedicated members opportunities like free training and professional development scholarships (Jacoby, 2014). Lack of support programs such as seminars, training, and scholarship may result in organizational stagnation, affecting the institution's quality as a whole. However, it is undeniable that the institution has limited funds to deliver these demands. Another issue raised by the participants was the lack of support programs in times of calamity and emergency. The Philippines encounters at least 20 typhoons yearly (Aruta, 2022); hence, it was expected that this calamity would affect the living of every organizational member. This result may be linked to the absence of a faculty and employee manual, wherein there is no basis on whether every member's assistance during a crisis is a right and privilege. The reason relies on the fact that low-income municipalities fund RCCs.

**Proposed Change Management Plan**

**Table 3. Proposed REACT Model of Change Management Plan for RCCs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REACT</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Manager (Who?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revisit</td>
<td>Revisit, examine, and re-align the institutional vision, mission, goals, and objectives to institutional policies, processes, and practices</td>
<td>End of the Academic year</td>
<td>Academic Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower</td>
<td>Empower every member by providing support programs such as team building, seminars, training, and scholarships for professional development.</td>
<td>Beginning of the academic year for team building and Year-end for the professional support programs</td>
<td>Board of Regents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Adapting new trends in organizational management, such as digitalization and acquisition of global standards through accreditation.</td>
<td>Year-end</td>
<td>Member of the board, Administrators, faculty and non-teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capture</td>
<td>Capture the core issues through collaboration with stakeholders, community leaders, and the members of the school provides practical solutions, sharing significant concerns, including funding and organizational conflicts through open forums.</td>
<td>Every end of the semester</td>
<td>Member of the board, Administrators, faculty, non-teaching, and external stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transform</td>
<td>Transform institutional practices by developing and employing an employee manual that will guide every organization member with the administrative and academic policies, their rights and privileges, and in responding to their duties. Impose institutional support programs, most especially in times of crisis. Tap local government officials to realize this motion.</td>
<td>Beginning of the academic year</td>
<td>Member of the board, Administrators, faculty, non-teaching, and external stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study proposed the REACT model of a change management plan for RCCs. REACT model stands for Revisit, Empower, Adapt, Capture, and Transform. Under revisit, the academic council will re-assess and re-align the institutional vision, mission, goals, and objectives to institutional policies, processes, and practices. It will redirect the organization to its primary purpose and aims. It should be done at the end of the academic year.

Furthermore, RCCs should empower every member by providing support programs such as team building, seminars, training, and scholarships for professional development. It will upgrade its members and strengthen the value of unity. Teambuilding should be done at the beginning of the academic year and year-round for the professional support programs.

Moreover, adapting new trends in organizational management, such as digitalization and acquisition of global standards through accreditation, will counter every member's change resistance. Adapting should be done year-round since it allows significant institutional upgrades to meet quality standards. It will also lessen the change resistance of every member and provides opportunities to perform better in their duties. Capturing the core issues through collaboration with stakeholders, community leaders, and the members of the school provides practical solutions through sharing significant concerns, including funding and organizational conflicts through open forums. It will provide an opportunity for every organization member to speak and be heard; it is appropriate to conduct every end of the semester. Lastly, transform institutional practices by developing and employing an employee manual that will guide every organization member with the administrative and academic policies, their rights and privileges, and in responding to their duties. Impose institutional support programs, most especially in times of crisis. Tap local government officials to realize this motion.

**Conclusion**

Based on the study results, it can be concluded that the administrators’ management skills were more likely flexible than faculty and non-teaching. The advantage of being a flexible leader is that it ensures better organizational results of undertakings. Flexible leadership in a less funded academic institution is essential to respond in uncertain or unpredictable circumstances. On the other hand, the faculty demonstrates support and value for the similarities and differences of every employee—faculty personnel
desire to perform their best in a work atmosphere that values diversity. Working well in a diverse workplace begins with self-awareness, which includes thinking about managing prejudice, inadequate treatment, and disagreement and showing appreciation to others.

Furthermore, non-teaching personnel demonstrates competitiveness and support to members. Competitiveness is the attribute or capacity of an organization to accomplish its objective with more success than rival organizations. In addition, the support of non-teaching to other employees exhibits unity and a strong foundation of the organization.

Although administrators, faculty, and non-teaching possess different management skills, organizational issues still exist. The problem in adapting change management and realizing institutional vision relies on support systems such as additional funding and digitalization. Resistance to change may provided that the institution should offer institutional upgrading. Additionally, RCCs are very political, whereas local politicians can monopolize the schools' decisions since they hold their budget allocation. Likewise, organizational members and the students were only at the level of understanding the school's situation rather than finding solutions to provide quality service better. Moreover, the existence of nepotism and seniority culture and the absence of faculty and employee manual further deteriorate the organizational management of RCCs.

The REACT Model of a change management plan for RCCs is based on their management skills and organizational issues. The model targets specific areas of need and opportunities for RCCs to upgrade their organizational management. The suggested REACT Model may enhance RCC communication, productivity, stress reduction, and decision-making; it may also aid in improving employee morale and creating a more pleasant work environment.

The limitation of the study can be found in the quantitative phase, where participants ask to rate their management skills using the MSAI. Other possible sources of management skills of the participants and triangulation may further uncover unforeseen information relevant to the study findings.

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