



Faculty development practices in Filipino–Chinese schools

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Abstract

This study aims to identify, describe, and compare faculty development practices in Filipino–Chinese schools and examines social contexts in which they are situated. Data were gathered from school heads, current teachers, and those who transferred schools through online interview to share their experiences, perspectives, and practices. Using case study design in multiple case study approach, three (3) school heads, six (6) current teachers, and three (3) teachers who transferred to other schools participated in the study. The interviews were done online through Google Meet or Zoom and the interview guide was validated by seven experts. Data analysis, research consultations, and selection of participants were conducted in Metro Manila, Philippines. The findings from this study revealed that faculty development practices in the three Filipino–Chinese schools are: (1) gears toward institutional excellence, (2) synergizes the development of leaders, (3) advances community endeavor, and (4) bears the responsibility of individual teachers and school. This study concluded that institutional support could nourish or hinder the implementation of faculty development, school culture is an important factor in designing faculty development programs, and migration to online teaching now dictates the future direction of faculty development program.

Keywords: Faculty development practices, faculty development, Filipino–Chinese schools

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1. Introduction

Chinese education system generates attention and interest for its successive performance in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and emergence as a global hub for higher education by establishing world-class universities [1]. However, Chinese education system has changed over the years and reshaped through experimentation and reform, focusing on high and universal expectations for all students, great teaching, provisions of resources for struggling students and schools, provision of the mandatory national curriculum framework for primary education, and employing textbooks as the principal means to implement curricular aspirations [2]. On top of these, teachers' professional development (PD) becomes a top priority tied to the education system's career advancement framework. A "teaching research system" has been set up to allocate training and extend support to teachers in the profession [3].

In the Philippines, the first Chinese school, named Anglo-Chinese School, was opened in 1898 and founded by Tan Chue–Lion, the first Chinese Consul in the Philippines. With the increasing Chinese population, Chinese schools totaled 58 by 1935 and 159 in 1964, with 52,000 students. Today, "there are 207 elementary and secondary schools for overseas Chi-

nese, three state–run Confucius institutes, and 27 colleges with Chinese course in the Philippines" [4]. Students in these schools are mostly of Chinese descent and only a few non-Chinese students.

The Philippines boasts of Filipino students who bagged and won awards from various international Math competitions [5]. However, these students mostly come from the best Filipino–Chinese schools in the country. Likewise, a number of Filipino–Chinese students have topped local and international competitions, such as the Math Challenge sponsored by the Metrobank Foundation, the Department of Education (DepEd), the Math Teachers Association of the Philippines (MTAP), and the International Math Olympiad (IMO). Such performance can attribute to certain best practices in terms of faculty development of teachers in Filipino–Chinese schools.

This research study aims to fill the research gap concerning the best practices in faculty development of teachers and the factors that impact it in Filipino–Chinese schools. What are the current faculty development practices in Filipino–Chinese schools as perceived by teachers and school heads?

Several researchers offered various conceptualizations of faculty development based on goal, scope, and emphasis [6]. It has evolved from the traditional model which is linked to the acquisition of knowledge and skills that is passed down from educational experts to teachers who then apply this knowledge in

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their classrooms [7] to a continuing learning process where teachers participate to learn and reflect on how to adapt their teaching practices to the learning needs of the students [8]. As such, it is regarded as a long-term process of growth, facilitated through regular opportunities to promote learning.

Furthermore, extensive research has defined the characteristics of effective faculty development to be successful as follows: content focus, active learning, coherence, sustained duration, and collective participation [9],[10]. In addition, its relationship to student achievement and transfer of learning was also examined by various researchers [11-13]. However, learning opportunities that are available to teachers today have been found ineffective in improving instruction or focused on individual teachers and individual programs or activities without inclusion of influences from the school system context [14]. More studies have emphasized the factors that impede the implementation of faculty development, such as the heavy workload of teachers, lack of time, attitude of teachers, lack of support from the school and leaders, and lack of teacher centeredness in terms of topic or content [15].

Emergent directions of faculty development are due to advances in technology as characterized by mobile-centric society [16], heutagogy, connectivism and connected learning theories [17]. It is imperative to learn how this can provide alternative approaches to faculty development. Consequently, numerous studies highlighted the positive impact of technology and innovation, such as the use of online social networking services, like Twitter, to build professional learning community through sharing practices online [18]. Several studies that have theoretical underpinnings in connectivism and connected learning were consolidated and reviewed by Watulak [19]. Connected learning is an evolving model that “uses media technologies and human networks” to support interest-driven, in-and-out-of-school, online, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary learning that transcends global boundaries.

2. Methodology

The case study approach allowed the researcher to examine the faculty development practices in Filipino-Chinese schools, to identify the common elements in these activities, and to explore what variables were linked. It also enables the researcher to uncover the meaning that teachers and school heads ascribe to their FD experiences in their own context [20]. The interviews were done online through Google Meet or Zoom and the interview guide was validated by seven experts. Data analysis, research consultations, and selection of participants were conducted in Metro Manila, Philippines.

The first step conducted in analyzing the data was to transcribe the interviews. The verbatim transcriptions

of audio or video recordings captured the whole statement of both the interviewers and interviewees. Next is coding the text. This process also involves organizing the data by bracketing, segmenting, and writing words representing a category in the margins. After the initial coding, the researcher scrutinized the data with a closer eye, one document (one interview transcript) at a time, and studied the meanings. The most descriptive wording(s) for the codes were turned into categories. By creating these code categories, the data became more organized, and the researcher was able to see new connections between different groups of codes and reduce the list of categories. Moreover, the researcher identified redundant codes or codes that do not support the analysis to be eliminated. To implement this action, literal meanings of the codes were analyzed, the number of meaning occurrences was counted, and some non-verbal clues connected with the codes were recapped. From this categorization of codes, the researchers advanced to identify the consistent and overarching themes in the data. This is the part where the researchers analyzed and drew meaning from the data, generated themes for analysis, proceeded as to how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative, and finally interpreted the themes.

The participants in this study were three (3) school heads, six (6) current teachers, and three (3) teachers who transferred to other schools. Hence, purposive sampling was employed. The school head participants are limited to principals, directors/directresses, officers-in-charge, or the highest-ranking professionals responsible for faculty development in Filipino-Chinese schools. The teachers with a minimum of ten (10) years of working experience in these schools were considered participants. Those who transferred to other schools but possess a minimum of five (5) years of teaching experience in Filipino-Chinese schools also included in the case study.

2.1 Results and Discussion

2.1.1 Faculty development gearing toward institutional excellence

The end goal of any faculty development program is student learning. Teachers engage in FD to become excellent by broadening their vision, perfecting their competencies, and sharpening their skills. When students learn, the school stands out because it provides quality education. In this respect, it leads to institutional excellence. Indeed, the school gives intentional and continuous training so that teachers will be excellent in their field to accomplish the goal of the school which is to provide quality education and be competitive with other schools.

“How can we provide quality education if we cannot share that with our students. So we need to have our quality education first before we can share that

with our students. That's the purpose of our institution.” (T2-TH1)

Every institution conducts an assessment in some form as part of continuous improvement initiative. However, performance review or evaluation of teachers and staff should not stop from collecting documentation and assessing the results. It must be combined with planning and used as a basis for preparing or implementing faculty development program. Likewise, performance appraisal must have coherent performance indicators and marking schemes, and be tied to the salary increase. Therefore, its orientation is to give and get a reward from participation in these activities.

“There is a pointing system for promotion. How many seminars have you attended? Okay so, the pointing system that we need to count, not only to get renewal of license.” (SH3-TH1d)

2.2 Faculty development synergizing the development of leaders

The word “synergy” means working together to create something better than doing it alone or being partners to achieve excellence. In this regard, faculty development can be an avenue to develop leaders whether at present or in the future. Each school must have succession planning for sustainability. In addition, it will reduce the expense in recruitment and high turnover costs.

Implementing a leadership strategy is akin to career mapping. It directs the initiatives in leadership development with strategy, vision and mission, goals, and aspirations of the school. The first step in any leadership strategy is to identify potential leaders and help them identify their God-given talents and calling. Next is mentoring that involves instruction to facilitate the transfer of vital knowledge, skills, and information to the potential leader; giving the leader the right tools; and shaping and strengthening the character through mentor-mentee relationship. The last one is an empowering culture that gives opportunities to potential leaders to watch, learn, and lead along with his/her mentor or other leaders with more experience. When teachers are empowered, it also makes the team or the community better. It creates synergy. To quote:

“We complement each other; some teachers may be good at this, some teachers maybe not, but they have other strengths. We can complement each other, empowering each other.” (L3-TH2b)

No leader can lead alone; leaders seek support from other administrators or teachers by delegating or distributing responsibilities to focus on more crucial tasks. This can provide opportunities for teachers and other leaders to grow and realize their potential. It involves matching and assigning the task to the right people [21]. The participants shared the following practices in terms of creating new leadership lanes: training students for outside competitions,

heading a program committee for a school program, being assigned as a class or club adviser, or tapping teachers with certain skills or specialization to conduct the training whether school-wide, departmental or in smaller groups. In some cases, the leadership role is established due to change or external factors.

2.3 Faculty development advancing community endeavor

Faculty development mainly takes place in the community, the school. Similarly, if we want to achieve institutional excellence for the sake of student learning, our mindset regarding faculty development should change. We need to realize that faculty development is not about “me” but is a community endeavor. Roels [22] described it as mirrored development between the individual professional and the school community. She further explained that “the development of every single teacher and administrator in the school setting has profound implications for every other person associated with the school”. [23]

The first sub-theme shows that faculty development is culture-focused. It mirrors the culture of the school. Each school has its own unique culture, more in Filipino-Chinese schools where learners are more diverse in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, and family background. Sullivan [24] further stated that teachers’ attitude on professional development planning is influenced by school culture. The school needs to utilize a matching strategy between tools (individual strengths of teachers) and plan (FD opportunities) and align it to the intended future of the school. Likewise, it should include everyone even the janitors, janitresses, security guards, and other maintenance personnel.

Next is collaborative planning for faculty development which is characterized as organized, collegial, and cooperative. Planning is admittedly the most difficult aspect in the implementation of faculty development. Obviously, developing a collaborative plan intensifies the difficulty of the process. It seems repetitive. But to make the planning effective, the people involved in planning must have an in-depth understanding of the institutional goals and focus all the initiatives or efforts toward them. One commonality among the participant schools is that no single or specific office can oversee and manage the faculty development alone, but with collaboration. The practices involve: (1) regularly meetings with team members, (2) soliciting feedback from teachers, and (3) aligning institutional and departmental FD goals to complement the overall vision and mission of the school. To quote:

“Ahh. It's a collaboration of the academic heads, vice-principal for academic, vice-principal for admin, and then the supervisors. The HR also gives input.” (SHB-TH3b)

One practice that was found common to all participants is in the aspect of collegial learning. Teachers

are learning together, especially in terms of technology use and integration of technology into teaching in an informal and personal way. In this format, teachers learned how to use Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and other apps that help in delivering instruction to students online. Also, teachers who have the necessary skills are given a chance to train other teachers and share what they know. However, FD promotes collegial sharing and learning even before the pandemic. Teachers are bringing in and recommending new ideas to schools. To quote:

"So, there are many new ideas that we implement, like... "you know we can do this, I learn this from my MA". "I learn this from my Ph.D." "I learned this from webinars." So, we have an exchange of ideas. We can do this." (SHC-TH3c)

The participants shared that the most tangible support they received in terms of FD from the school is financial support. It comes in different forms: (1) scholarship grant, (2) study loan, (3) registration fee for seminars and workshops, (4) food and transportation allowance when attending in-house and outside training, and (5) subscription to different apps like Kahoot! and Pear Deck. Also, the teachers can use school materials and school resources like printing and researching for their papers or assignments. They are also allowed to use their vacant periods to work on their assignments or study as long as supervisors are informed. Some commonality from the responses is the perceived support from leaders and colleagues through the following: (1) encouraging them to pursue graduate studies, (2) substitution system, (3) psychological support, like counseling, and (4) instructional coaching. With the onset of migration to online teaching, some commonalities from the responses concerning institutional support are the following: (1) online trainings and virtual workshops, (2) provision of laptop, (3) financial loan to purchase laptop or other peripheral devices, and (4) internet subsidy.

2.4 Faculty development bearing the responsibility of individual teacher and the school

There is a multitude of educational seminars, conferences, workshops, professional development blogs, and online resources for faculty development. The process must start from individual teachers at the bottom with overall leader and institution support echoed by some participants:

"I think to generalize mine; my perception of faculty development is a responsibility. So, one is... it is your responsibility to yourself, to your growth for your personal growth. And then, it is your responsibility to your students as well." (L2B-TH4)

Three sub-themes emerged: (1) Teacher as a lifelong learner (continual improvement). Technological changes are evolving across all facets of our lives. A decade ago, there was even a claim that machines or robots will replace human manpower in the future as

depicted from the earliest science fiction movies to the more realistic advances today in artificial intelligence, smartphones, cloud storage, and the Internet.

Among all the cases, the participants perceive that teachers are lifelong learners because they demonstrate the tendency to be self-directed individuals. They have a passion to teach, engage in continuous learning, and update their skills. The participants asserted that teachers have to improve themselves to be effective in their craft due to the following reasons: (1) the content of the lessons are changing; (2) the way we deal with students has to change; and (3) what is happening right now with emerging technologies. Thus, seeking continual improvement is a responsibility for both the teachers and the institution.

Education evolves so fast that techniques, skills, and technologies become obsolete within five years. It is, therefore, a necessity for teachers to have an attitude of a lifelong learner. As Jao [25] stated, teachers must "refine and redefine" their views, assumptions, and practices about teaching through professional development. It helps them incorporate new tools and strategies into learning process to boost students' learning development.

Second, teachers became digital migrants (Progressive, Innovative, Adaptive). Ultimately, technology became an integral part of teachers' lives. The pandemic altered the educational landscape around the world since last year illustrating a myriad of changes. Faculty development is not limited to face-to-face (F2F) workshops and seminars. The classroom is no longer a four-walled room, and students can experience field trips and perform laboratory experiments in a virtual environment. Even before the pandemic, teacher participants exhibited characteristics of being digital migrants such as the following: (1) searching the Internet for sample lessons, illustrations, or related instructional videos; (2) using online portals like Scholastic Learning Zone, and KooBits; (3) using Google Classroom and Edmodo in uploading and posting instructional materials and tasks for students to accomplish; and (4) attending online courses.

One positive thing about the pandemic that influences teachers is that they were forced to upgrade themselves.

"But in a way, it gave us a new perspective. Those who are still traditional teachers, at the moment they are learning new technology, platform, and how to teach using this mode, at least." (T4B-TH4b)

Most often than not, teachers got so overwhelmed with classroom responsibilities and other institutional requirements, so that faculty development takes a backseat in their professional lives. But in the current high-tech, global, and instant-message culture, teachers are driven to enhance themselves to keep up with the trends. With the migration to online learning, they were pushed to become digital migrants. In this study, the teachers showed that they are progressive, innova-

tive, and adaptable when the situation required them to be.

In the third sub-theme, schools are considered as a provider of faculty development (Responsible, Accountable). A school that is committed to faculty development of the teachers, staff, and all other personnel conveys a strong and clear message to the community: pursue continuous improvement. School administrators and leaders should believe in investing in teachers. Their attitude toward faculty development will dictate the FD program in schools even the infrastructure and other resources related to the implementation of the program. To quote:

"I have a very strong support from the board. They fully understood what faculty development is, and that's very important. Of course, allocation of budget... very important." (SHC-TH4d)

Similarly, the schools in this study provide institutional and departmental FD aligned to their schools' vision and mission. This depends on the clientele and needs of teachers in each department. But the differences in the practices among all the cases stem from the attitude of school leaders or school boards toward faculty development. It demonstrates the need to: (1) get the buy-in of the school board, (2) consider teachers as key factors in schools, and (3) invest in teachers.

The following factors were found to hinder the implementation of faculty development in the three Filipino-Chinese schools. First, the composition of teachers impacted faculty development in terms of engaged and unengaged participants. Tenured teachers are more relaxed in their participation, unlike the teachers who are still on probation. Second, financial support is limited because it depends on tenure or the number of years in service in schools. To quote:

"There are qualifications to meet, or requirements to meet before we can support you." (SHB-BA2)

Third, the salary and benefits of teachers are not significant and at times it is not proportional to the heavy workload assigned to teachers.

Fourth, the number of training is perceived as limited by some teachers because not all are sent to outside training. Fifth, the consistency and frequency of FD delivery are affected by class suspensions. Most of the time, the schedule for FD is already plotted in the calendar of activities for the whole school year. However, due to class suspensions or disruptions, the schedule is pushed back and at times coincides with other activities resulting in conflict with other deadlines of institutional requirements, like submission of grades, lesson plans, or quarterly tests. Sixth is the absence of follow-up after evaluation of FD activities. Last is leaders' perception or attitude towards FD.

The participants' perceptions regarding the future direction of faculty development were also stated. Furthermore, these challenges manifested in the faculty development practices found common in this study.

The solutions given are summarized as follows: (1)

provision of incentives (pointing system tied to performance appraisal and salary increase, flexible working arrangement, substitution system with compensation, and financial assistance/loans); (2) soliciting inputs from teachers; (3) technological infrastructure upgrade (internet subsidy; laptop loan; and school's class disruption plan), (4) technology-focused training; (5) mentoring/coaching (indoctrination, Solomon-Effect mentoring style, and customizes/personalized FD); (6) succession planning; and (7) promoting parents' involvement (equipping parents-role as co-educators at home).

Now more than ever, FD should address the need to enhance teachers' competencies related to curriculum, particularly on content, methods, and strategies of teaching content and theories and the use and integration of ICT in online teaching.

3. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that faculty development gears towards instructional excellence, and the end goal should be student learning. Holistic activities that are aligned to the goals of the school must be provided, tied to performance evaluation. Consequently, faculty development synergizes the development of leaders. Career mapping or succession planning must be incorporated into the FD program. To develop a leadership culture, these practices must be cultivated: modeling or practicing what is preached, mentoring, empowering, and delegating tasks to the right people.

Faculty development advances community endeavor through collaborative planning and providing institutional support. This collegial atmosphere encourages teachers to become collaborative learners. Finally, faculty development bears the responsibility of individual teachers and the school to seek continual improvement. The growth mindset of teachers combined with the accountability of schools to ensure the provision of effective FD will lead to institutional excellence.

From the findings and conclusions derived from the study, the researcher hereby put forward the following recommendations. Faculty development programs should be balanced or holistic, vision-driven, growth-oriented and productive, and reward-oriented. It must be planned with specific goals; thus, goal setting is important to individual teachers or the institution.

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