The Impact of Faculty Development Programs (FDP) on Enhancing Professional Competence Among Criminal Justice Educators

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Abstract

Faculty development plays a crucial role in equipping educators with the necessary skills for effective teaching. This study investigates the impact of Faculty Development Programs (FDPs) on enhancing the competence of criminal justice educators. Utilizing a qualitative approach, interviews were conducted with five (5) criminal justice educators affiliated with a higher educational institution in Baguio City, offering programs in Criminology and Forensic Science. The findings reveal that the experiences shared by the participants regarding their involvement in FDPs indicate a transformative effect on their professional development. Insights gleaned from the study demonstrate notable enhancements in their confidence, creativity, and overall competence in the realm of teaching. This research contributes valuable insights into the tangible benefits of FDPs within the context of criminal justice education, shedding light on the positive influence these programs can exert on educators' professional growth.

Keywords: Faculty Development, Criminal Justice Education, Teaching Competence

1. Introduction

Progressive academic reforms and innovations are based on the need for high-quality higher education and the ability to deliver it effectively. As such, higher education institutions must strengthen their capacity to provide excellent academic services, especially in instruction as reinforced by an appropriate program on faculty training and development (Somera, 2009).

Faculty development is a vital tool for helping educators to become skillful in their teaching (Hewson et al., 2001). Developing faculty members contributes to maintaining a high standard of instruction, which benefits students by enabling them to get the most out of their educational experiences (Malvik, 2022). The FDP could also help in understanding instructional concepts and teaching processes can be expanded and deepened via professional development. It also encourages faculty responsibility for continuous, career-long growth based upon theory, research, and professional collaboration with colleagues in addition to the trial and error of experience (Altany, 2023).

As described by Mukerji (2013), "Faculty development is the process of giving faculty members coaching and professional development opportunities to help them perform better at work, especially in specialized areas like teaching and research". According to Kamel (2016), faculty development has been a well-established and acknowledged activity in higher education. Thus, to remain competitive in

this rapidly changing global landscape, higher education institutions must provide their faculty members with top-notch professional training programs.

For instance, in today's new normal, distance learning options have been vastly accelerated due to pandemic restrictions in place. The new online education process has affected teachers' expectations, needs, skills, and roles to a great extent (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). Also, Farnell, et al. (2021) found that during the COVID 19, majority of higher education institutions provided teaching and learning support in training and technical assistance. This is because of the universities' experiences with technology and tools when it comes to conducting online classes.

In the study of Trower and Gallager (2010), they reported that faculty members are more successful and satisfied if faculty development was made available for them. Also, relationships within the teaching community can improve participation by fostering an inviting atmosphere, offering advice, and promoting individual involvement (Schreurs et al., 2015). In addition, people can learn how to act, think, and interact in ways that are appropriate for their context through learning from practice. However, because learning from practice is highly contextual, it can be a difficult learning environment (Teunissen, 2014).

One of the activities related to FDP is mentoring and coaching among the colleagues. According to Eraut (2007), increasing opportunities for collaborating and consulting with colleagues will improve workplace learning, which depends heavily on the support and feedback provided by a mentor or coach. Mentors can help faculty members in a variety of settings by offering advice, direction, support, or expertise. They can also help teachers understand the organizational culture in which they work and connect them to invaluable professional networks. Therefore, mentoring should be viewed as an explicit approach in FD (Walker et al., 2002).

As Somera (2009) stated, "Teacher empowerment is one of the consequential thrusts of educational reforms that basically involves ultimate teaching, learning and active leadership to aid in the holistic development of students and in similar manner to
the teachers' holistic development, thus, making them empowered."

These findings carry significant implications for the study focusing on the impact of faculty development programs on criminology educators. Firstly, recognizing the positive correlation between FDP availability and faculty success and satisfaction underscores the potential benefits for criminology educators. Secondly, understanding the role of positive relationships in the teaching community suggests that creating an inclusive and supportive atmosphere within the criminology education context could enhance the effectiveness of FDPs. The recognition of the challenges of learning from practice also calls for thoughtful design and implementation of FDPs tailored to the specific needs and contexts of criminology educators. Lastly, the explicit incorporation of mentoring as an approach in faculty development programs, as suggested by Walker et al. (2002) and Eraut (2007), can be considered as a strategic component for fostering the professional growth and success of criminology educators.

The Philippine government, through the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), has made it a priority to provide major stakeholders in the academic community with ongoing professional development. Professional development is a lifelong process that educators and administrators must constantly engage in to meet and adapt to the rapidly changing ecology of education (CHED, 2020).

As such, on October 26, 2021, the Department of Education (DepEd) launched the Professional Development Program on Assessment and Emerging Literacies, focusing on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in its commitment to enhance the quality of basic education in

the Philippines. The program, part of the ongoing preparations for the 2022 PISA cycle, targets teacher-participants nationwide. Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones stressed the urgent need to upskill and reskill teachers to meet evolving education standards. Developed in collaboration with various educational entities, the program comprises five component courses, addressing areas such as teacher assessment competencies, the alignment of the Philippine K-12 Curriculum with international assessments, and the adaptation of assessment principles to emerging literacies. Dr. Marlene Ferido of the Assessment, Curriculum, and Technology Research Centre (ACTRC) highlighted the initiative's goal to elevate teachers' assessment practices, emphasizing the importance of assessment for effective teaching. The program, catering to Grade 8 and 9 teachers, will extend from October 2021 to April 2022, aiming to empower educators with enhanced assessment strategies and practices for improved classroom outcomes (Department of Education, n.d.).

In Batangas, Alilio (2020) found that the faculty development programs specifically the Gender and Development programs, in-service trainings and learning action cells sessions have significant impact to the instructional performance of teachers.

The Criminal Justice Education: Policies and Standards for the Criminology Program stipulated that the mission of the criminology program is to provide graduates who are morally upright and professionally competent in law enforcement, crime detection and investigation, and custody and rehabilitation of offenders among others. Thus, to achieve this mission, the quality of instruction especially in the credibility of instructors must be increased.

The challenges faced by educators in criminology, particularly those who are not education graduates, are multi-faceted. First and foremost, they may lack formal training in pedagogical methods and instructional design, which are crucial elements in effective teaching. Education programs provide a foundation in educational theories, classroom management, and diverse instructional strategies, elements that may not be part of the academic background of those with a criminology specialization. This gap in pedagogical knowledge can affect the quality of instruction and the ability to engage students effectively.

Pioquinto, et al. (2019) found that criminology educators face challenges such as low confidence, difficulties in oral and written communication, a teacher by accident, lack of preparation for teaching practice, job satisfaction, professional status, technical skills, professional and personal growth, and support to enhance teaching competence.

In light of the challenges identified by Pioquinto et al. (2019) among criminology educators, this study aims to bridge a critical research gap by investigating the Faculty Development Programs (FDPs) attended by Criminal Justice educators at a selected university in Baguio City. Through a comprehensive analysis of the FDPs' impact on the professional competence of Criminal Justice educators, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of existing professional development initiatives within the criminology education domain. The findings have the potential to inform not only the university's faculty development policies but also contribute to the broader discourse on enhancing the quality of criminology education in Baguio City and beyond.

2. Methodology
Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design. This design is used to obtain deep insights into an issue or to spark new ideas for investigation. It entails gathering and evaluating non-numerical data (text, video, or audio) to comprehend concepts, opinions, or experiences (Bhandari, 2023).

Research Site

The researcher selected five (5) participants for this study who have been actively involved in teaching practice in a higher education institution in Baguio City offering Criminology. The criteria for choosing them are: (1) They must at least be graduates of Criminology or Forensic Science; (2) They are employed in the HEI for at least one (1) year but not more than three (3) years; and (3) They must be teaching criminology or forensic science subjects. For purposes of confidentiality, the study participants have pseudonyms.

Data Collection

This study utilized a self-structured interview guide which was based on the literatures and was validated by experts. The interview guide was utilized in the in-dept interviews conducted with the participants.

Letters were given to the participants. Before conducting the interview, the consent forms were first signed. With their prior approval, the interview was audio-recorded. Then, the interview was conducted in 30 minutes to 90 minutes. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and the decision to join or abstain had no bearing on the participants' existing or future relationships with any institution, agency, or individual. Informants were explicitly notified of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. If at any time they felt stressed or uncomfortable, they were empowered to discontinue their involvement or choose to skip personal questions without consequence. Participants were assured that, in the event of withdrawal, the collected data would either be returned or destroyed based on their preference, ensuring their confidentiality and privacy throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the interviews. Then, thematic analysis was conducted in deriving the themes of the interviews. The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes—topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that recur—using a method called thematic analysis, which is typically applied to a set of texts, such as transcripts or interviews (Caulfield, 2023).

3. Results and Discussion

The following are the impact of the FDP on criminology educators from an HEI offering criminology in Baguio City.

Gained Confidence in Teaching

Confidence in teaching is important for improving teaching quality and having the courage to blaze new trails in teaching (Cai & Wang, 2022). Through FDPs, the participants mentioned that as they acquire new skills and refine existing ones, they become more proficient in their roles. KI 1 attended a DNA laboratory skills training course and as a teacher who teaches forensic DNA to forensic science students, she has gained a comprehensive understanding of the said technique.

KI 1: "Attending the DNA Laboratory Skills Training Course has been a transformative experience for me as a forensic science instructor. Throughout the course, I have gained a comprehensive understanding of DNA laboratory techniques and procedures, including DNA extraction, PCR amplification, gel electrophoresis, and DNA sequencing. The hands-on training and practical exercises allowed me to develop proficiency in performing these techniques, ensuring that I can confidently instruct my students in their use."

From her statement, it can be inferred that the training has equipped her with confidence to instruct students in the use of DNA laboratory techniques. This confidence indicates not only knowledge acquisition but also the ability to transfer that knowledge effectively to students. In the study of Nor (2019), the FDP are crucial in enhancing the teacher's confidence. Similarly, Lavis et al. (2015) found that the FDP resulted in an improved instructor's confidence and student learning.

KI 2 also shared, "I can now discuss lessons with more assurance and share the knowledge and experiences gained from the FDPs." KI 2 mentions that because of the FDPs, they now discuss lessons with more assurance. This suggests a positive impact on their confidence and proficiency in delivering instructional content.

To support, Nor (2019) found that FDPs boost teachers' competence in areas such as pedagogy, research, motivation, and administration, fostering professionalism.

In conclusion, the testimonials from KI 1 and KI 2 underscore the vital role of Faculty Development Programs (FDPs) in fostering confidence among educators. Confidence in teaching is not only crucial for improving the overall quality of instruction but also for encouraging innovative approaches in education (Cai & Wang, 2022). Consistent with findings from Nor (2019) and Lavis et al. (2015), FDPs play a pivotal role in enhancing teacher confidence, encompassing various aspects of pedagogy, research, motivation, and administration. As KI 2 affirms, the ability to discuss lessons with assurance and share knowledge gleaned from FDPs reflects the positive impact of these programs on educators' confidence and proficiency in instructional delivery. Overall, investing in FDPs emerges as a strategic approach to fostering teacher confidence and, consequently, promoting professionalism in education.

Developed Creativity inside the Classrooms

One of the FDPs offered by the HEI is the Book Writing Workshop. Through the initiative of the administration, a memorandum between the HEI and the publishing company was crafted. Among the activities included in the book writing workshop with the end goal of producing criminology books.

This theme centers on the idea that through this workshop, it serves as a catalyst for unleashing creativity in teaching. This is reflected in the statement of KI 3 below.

KI 3, "Furthermore, the book writing workshop has fostered my creativity and encouraged me to think outside the box. Writing a book requires originality and fresh ideas. Similarly, as a teacher, I aim to create innovative and engaging lessons that inspire curiosity and enthusiasm in my students. The workshop has provided me with the tools and techniques to encourage creativity in my teaching, whether through interactive activities, project-based learning, or incorporating multimedia resources."

From this statement, it can be inferred that the tools and techniques acquired during the workshop help them to think outside the box. In writing educational textbooks, one needs to innovate and be creative in the learning activities included in the book. As further emphasized by KI 5, "By engaging in the process of writing a book, I have conducted extensive research, organized my thoughts, and developed a deeper understanding of my subject area". As a result, in the criminology department of the

chosen HEI, they were able to produce five (5) criminology textbooks from six (6) faculty members turned authors. As proven by Jasni, et al. (2020), to maintain the quality of teaching, teachers need to be creative to ensure that the teaching and learning process encourages students to experience meaningful learning.

This success in textbook creation suggests that investing in professional development opportunities, like the book writing workshop, not only enhances individual creativity but also has a broader positive impact on the quality of education within the criminology department. It serves as an inspiring example of how nurturing the creative capacities of educators can result in tangible contributions to the learning experiences of students, aligning with the broader goals of educational excellence and meaningful learning outcomes.

Increased Teaching Competence

In most cases, FDPs include pedagogical teaching, providing the educators with insights into effective teaching strategies. In the interviews conducted, they mentioned that a seminar on teaching strategies emphasizing higher order thinking skills was organized.

KI 4: "Attending the Seminar on Teaching Strategies Emphasizing on Higher Order Thinking Skills has transformed my teaching approach and has had a profound impact on my students' learning.
By applying the various effective strategies, I learned from the seminar, such as inquiry-based learning and collaborative learning, my students have become more engaged, independent, and confident learners."

KI 4 underscores that through this activity, there is an upgrade of his teaching skills. This could be a shift from the usual instructional methods towards strategies that emphasize higher-order thinking skills among students. According to Abdellatif and Abdel-Gawad (2020), higher-order thinking skills contribute to predicting psychological hardiness among university students, helping them better handle stressful situations. Harnessing higher-order thinking skills among students require higher competencies, innovation and strategies.

In addition, the HEI also provided seminars and training in the conduct of research like research writing and mixed methods design.

KI 5: "The Seminar on Research Writing has refined my skills in teaching research writing and has equipped me with effective strategies for guiding students through the research process. I have learned how to teach students to critically evaluate sources, synthesize information, and   present their findings in a coherent manner. This has led to an improvement in my students' research skills and their ability to think critically and analytically. Additionally, I have become more proficient in providing feedback and assessing research papers, ensuring that my students are able to produce high-quality academic writing."

KI 6: "Participating in the Seminar on Mixed Methods of Research has expanded my knowledge of different research methodologies and their applications in educational research. This has allowed me to incorporate a variety of research techniques into my lessons, enabling students to explore and investigate topics in a holistic and comprehensive manner."

Both KI 5 and KI 6 mention learning effective strategies from the seminars. KI 5 specifically mentions strategies for teaching students to critically evaluate sources, synthesize information, and present findings coherently. KI 6, on the other hand, notes the expansion of knowledge regarding different research methodologies.

The statements from KI 5 and KI 6 illustrate the significant impact of research-oriented seminars and training on teaching practices and student outcomes. The implications are twofold: first, faculty members are equipped with enhanced skills and strategies that directly benefit their instructional delivery; second, students experience improvements in research skills, critical thinking, and analytical abilities. These findings underscore the importance of providing faculty members with opportunities for professional development in research-related areas, as it directly contributes to the overall quality of education and student learning outcomes within the Higher Education Institution. Moreover, the integration of new methodologies into teaching practices demonstrates the practical applicability of the knowledge gained from such seminars, showcasing a commitment to advancing educational approaches in response to contemporary research methodologies.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The experiences shared by the participants regarding FDPs proved that there is a transformation on their professional development on their confidence, creativity, and competence in teaching. The trainings and seminars like the Book Writing Workshop proved that investing in FDPs can help educators in unleashing their skills and realizing their potentials which can results to positive impacts on the quality of education they provide to their students. Furthermore, the integration of higher-order thinking skills and research-oriented seminars into teaching practices has contributed to the enhancement of teaching competence and student outcomes. The adoption of effective strategies, such as inquiry-based learning and critical evaluation of sources, has led to increased student engagement, independence, and proficiency in research skills.

Recommendation

In light of the findings, the HEI should conduct further needs assessments regarding FDPs to identify training and workshops to address all aspects of professional growth. Moreover, emphasis on the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of FDPs should be made to ensure that the professional development initiatives align with the evolving needs of educators and the institution.

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