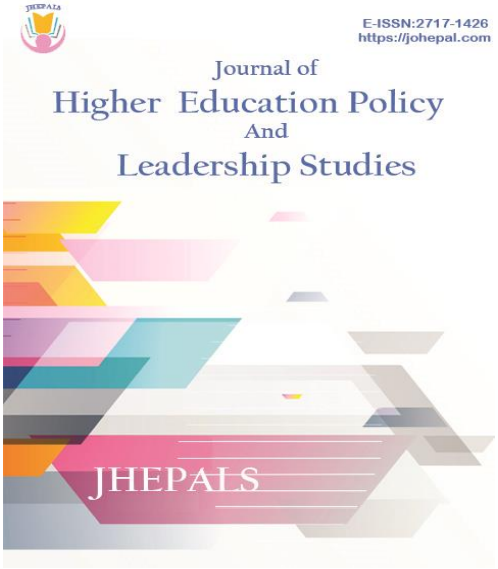
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Institutional Leaders' Employment of Flexible Leadership in a Philippine State University



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Abstract

This descriptive research investigates the degree of flexible leadership employed by institutional leaders amidst the emerging and anticipated shocks in the context of a higher education institution (HEI) in the Philippines. Eight (8) college deans and 143 faculty members assessed the implementation of flexible leadership in all five (5) campuses. Through a survey, variables of flexible leadership were considered high: building commitment to core ideology; building capable leadership; involvement and empowerment; keeping communication lines open; using reward system to support multiple objectives; and encouraging and exemplifying leadership by examples. Notably, a flexible leader understands the university's objectives, priorities, and strategies (M=4.57), builds and supports its values system (M=4.51), and understands that faculty members are the university's most valuable asset (M=4.50). Through interview protocols and triangulation, there were facets to be focused on like holding regular forums to discuss issues and changes, encouraging an open-door policy to increase access to information, and ensuring that faculty members not only understand what is expected of them but are committed to doing it. Flexible leadership can be nurtured and this implies commitment, credibility, and consistency among institutional leaders to reap more academic successes amidst the challenges faced by an HEI.

Keywords: Flexible Leadership; State University; Flexible Education; Post-Pandemic; Higher Education

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Introduction

Effective academic leaders build excellence. They do not command it. Excellence is being the best within the limits of one's responsibilities in an organization. This mantra of quality assurance starts with having the characteristic of good, flexible, and strong leaders who fit into the whole process of leadership. The COVID-19 pandemic had disturbed the operations of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines (Alvarez, 2020). There is an urgent need for our academic leaders to rethink and reshape appropriate learning delivery systems to safety the quality and transformation of tertiary education (Beytekin, 2021).

The involvement of the board of regents, policymakers, curricularists, school leaders, and faculty is gradually gaining recognition as the education sector recovers from the disturbances brought on by the pandemic. Consequently, reforms in HEIs have been popular worldwide (Guàrdia et al., 2021; Konkin et al., 2021; Adelowotan, 2021; Lee et al., 2022), especially in the post-pandemic era that requires more of filling in the gap of knowledge and information through intensive research, critical thinking, and collaboration to solve issues in education. Institutional leaders need enough knowledge on assessing how an education system faces disruptions, provide remedies to concurrent shortcomings in curriculum delivery, and build a sense of future thinking that fosters change that may have a great impact on the whole academic community. In such a manner, flexible education leaders become trailblazers amidst the rapidly-changing education landscape in the Philippines.

Generally, the failure of leaders to adapt leadership styles and strategies during dynamic environmental conditions within colleges and universities may be seen as a loss of competitive gain and reduced sustainability. The flexibility of a leader is expressed by a multi-dimensional structure containing a variety of dynamically activated forces and changes in a context-dependent manner (Wilkes et al., 2011).

Revano (2019) explained that leadership today is very different from the leadership before and the research done on this subject is no different. Even in the past, arguments have been done towards defining, approving and identifying certain leadership principles, and as of now, this gap only expands over time. Concerning what makes a good leader? It can be concluded that it needs to be a two –street, for a good leader to function he must have a good set of members and vice versa. The collapse of a leader or the collapse of its members paves the way for failure and, as such: a good leader must be charismatic, enthusiastic, adaptable, and emphatic to win over the test and respect of his or her subordinates. Maxwell (2005) said that

> the key to taking on the Multi-Hat Challenge is knowing what hat to put on at any time and enjoying the challenge it offers. How does one do that? The secret is to remain flexible. Because there are so many demands on leaders in the middle of an organization, they cannot afford to be rigid, they need to be able to turn on a dime or change hats at a moment's notice. (p. 49)

Aligned with the concept of Flexible Leadership Theory, the constructs of this research project were discussed in the context of several areas: leadership, human resources management, strategic management, organizational theory, and organizational change (Yukl, 2008; Jones & Nieto, 2015). Flexible leadership can also be manifested in various

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contexts (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). A resilient leader can balance competing values and contrasting behaviors in a way that is suitable to a complex situation (Landin, 2017).

Context and Background of the Study

Considering the scope or thrusts of HEIs in the Philippines, the need to have a flexible leader is vital in promoting the culture of research, extension, instruction, and production. Building a resilient school also needs a strong teaching force that could deliver such a mandate. In light of this, the academic force through HEI faculty must be guided, trained, and mentored (Tuga et al., 2021) by competent academic leaders. Responding to the turmoil that may surface would imply the need for flexible leadership at all levels of an organization that can mitigate future greater shocks (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2022).

In this study, the state university has been the first to be established and is composed of five (5) campuses geographically situated in the school district to foster higher learning. Amidst challenges and change, flexibility equates to the agility and ability to readily respond to shifting circumstances and expectations (Fearnley & Ulayao, 2021), especially during the post-pandemic era. Flexible leaders are expected to change plans as situations would require. Moreover, it also demands the ability to know when to apply each behavior and the skill to accomplish the necessary actions to resolve new challenges in a complex reality (Hoch & Bentolila, 2021).

Landin (2017) emphasized that enhancing flexible leadership skills would involve openness to experiences and the meaning of seeking the learning opportunities that each situation presents. Flexibility in leadership translates to effectiveness. Moreover, in the light of the post-pandemic setup, the integral part of leadership is assumed to lead the organizational success as organizations face challenges of a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. As an approach, flexible leadership will bear greater assurance that the mandates in instruction, research, extension, and production incumbent on an HEI are accurately addressed. Cahapay (2020) stressed that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic created negative effects on education. These undesirable effects and changes were evident in the learning delivery of teachers. This was supported by Toquero (2020) when he pointed out that both private and public HEIs in the Philippines were not ready to implement online learning modality.

Combined with being optimistic and confident that they can provide and offer that is distinctive, exciting, and worthwhile in a learning institution, Marshall (2016) pointed out that higher education leaders need to be agile and flexible. The best possible learner outcomes and subsequent impacts must be at the fore and it is the leader's role to make sense of and keep up with the drivers of rapid change, and either reinvent or recalibrate the various components of teaching excellence accordingly. Marshall further stressed that a sound understanding of higher education governance, and how leadership interfaces with the governance infrastructure, is essential for any executive leader. Working with a higher education institution the education leader is responsible for aligning resources with the proposed delivery mechanism.

Research Focus and Questions

This study aimed to determine the institutional leaders' employment of flexible leadership as assessed by the faculty members from five campuses of a state university in the

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Philippines. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions: 1) What is the degree of employment of flexible leadership—building commitment to core ideology; building capable leadership; involvement and empowerment; keeping communication lines open; using reward system to support multiple objectives; and encouraging and exemplifying leadership by examples--as assessed among the teachers under these?; and 2) In what way flexible leadership and its facets are manifested by college deans as a ssessed by the faculty members?

Research Methodology

The descriptive research design was used in this study. As a study, this applied a variety of methods to investigate one or more variables that aimed to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon (McCombes, 2023). To gather data for the study, a questionnaire survey was used as a technique for gathering statistical information about the attributes, attitudes, or actions of a population by a structured set of questions (Preston, 2009). Adhering to the post-positivist perspective, this research involved various variables and gathered data from faculty members through a survey on leadership assessment scale on building commitment to a core ideology, capable leadership, involvement, and empowerment, reward system to support multiple objectives, and encouraging and exemplifying leadership by examples.

Respondents

Sampling design is a process to select an appropriate amount of units from the population of interest to provide accurate information about the entire population (Hair, et al., 2019). The target population for the research refers to the entire group of people the researcher is interested in (Easton & McColl, 1997). The respondents of this study were the 143 permanent faculty members of a Philippine state university. This research study was conducted in May 2023. Using the proportional stratified sampling technique, a sample of 143 out of 242 faculty members was included as respondents. The researcher utilized proportional stratified sampling to have representation of faculty members from the campuses as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1.
Proportional Stratified Sampling Used to Determine the Respondents from All Campuses

Campus	N	n
Main Campus- Site A	60	38
Main Campus- Site B	57	36
Campus C	39	25
Campus D	26	17
Campus E	43	27
Total	242	**143**

As shown in Table 2, respondents came from the system-wide scale of a state university. The majority of the respondents or more than half of them came from Main Campus-Sites A and B, respectively.

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Table 2.
Distribution of Respondents

Campus	f	%
Main Campus- Site A	38	26.6
Main Campus- Site B	36	25.2
Campus C	17	11.9
Campus D	25	17.5
Campus E	27	18.9
Total	**143**	100.0

Observing interview protocols, eight (8) deans participated from the College of Fisheries Aquatic and Sciences, College of Education, College of Information and Communications Technology, College of Industrial Technology, College of Management or College of Hospitality Management, and College of Agriculture distributed among all the campuses of the university.

Procedures of the Study

Following ethical principles, the researcher requested the consent of the faculty members to share their experience of the flexible leadership of the deans and campus administrators. They were oriented to the benefits and risks that they may encounter while participating in the study. This meant that their experience of this type of leadership can be considered as an insight for implementing a more contextualized flexible education. All the respondents and participants were ensured of their confidentiality and anonymity in the study. Minimum health standards were also observed during the conduct of the survey.

This study is descriptive which pivoted the researcher came up with a survey questionnaire distributed to the respondents. To establish the quality of this cross-sectional study, the tool was validated, pilot-tested, and generated a reliability score. An arbitrary scale of means was employed to interpret the gathered data from the respondents. To triangulate the data gathered from the faculty members, an in-depth interview was conducted with the deans. The lead investigator also assessed the relationship (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019) between the presence of flexible leadership implemented by the deans and campus administrators and with that the perceived experience of the faculty members. As one of the common methods in collecting descriptive data and triangulating data through the survey, the study used an open-ended interview guide to secure a productive and efficient gathering of practicing flexible leadership of the institution leaders.

Findings

Degree of Employment of Flexible Leadership among Institutional Leaders

This study determined the institutional leaders' employment of flexible leadership as assessed by the faculty members from the five (5) campuses of a state university in the Philippines. Through their responses to a survey, 143 respondents informed the researcher of the degree of employment of flexible leadership of the 8 deans through the facets of flexible leadership. Generally, faculty members considered their deans with a "high" degree of employment of flexible leadership which is presented in Table 3.

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Table 3.
Overall Degree of Employment of Flexible Leadership among Institutional Leaders

Flexible Leadership	N	Mean	SD	Description
Building Commitment to a Core Ideology	143	**4.10**	.58	**High**
Building Capable Leadership	143	**4.24**	.67	**High**
Involvement and Empowerment	143	**4.20**	.66	**High**
Keeping Communication Lines Open	143	**3.92**	.49	**High**
Using Reward System to Support Multiple Objectives	143	**3.80**	.71	**High**
Encouraging and Exemplifying Leadership by Examples	143	**4.04**	.69	**High**

Degree of employment of flexible leadership: *High (3.67-5.00); Average (2.34-3.66); Low (1.00-2.33)*

Faculty members in a state university experienced a high degree of flexible leadership as exemplified by their college deans. Data in Table 3 connote that the pandemic and even the post-pandemic landscapes in such a state university require a flexible leader to foster the thrusts of an HEI on the culture of research, extension, instruction, and production. In particular, flexible, adaptive leadership bears even greater importance when there is a substantial change in the situation and the leadership behaviors that are relevant to it (Yukl, 2008). With this, flexible leadership refers to adapting one's leadership style, method, or approach to diverse and changing contexts (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010).

Specifically, Table 4 presents the degree of employment of flexible leadership of the college deans in terms of building commitment to a core ideology as assessed by the faculty members.

Table 4.
Building Commitment to a Core Ideology among Institutional Leaders

Degree	f	%
Low	2	1.4
Average	28	19.6
High	113	79.0
Total	143	100.0

Degree of employment of flexible leadership: *High (3.67-5.00); Average (2.34-3.66); Low (1.00-2.33)*

Building Commitment to a Core Ideology

Based on the data, Table 4 revealed that out of 143 respondents, the majority of them (113 or 79%) assessed their college deans with "High" employment of flexible leadership and 28 or 19.6% of them assessed these institutional leaders as "Average". Only 2 or 1.4% of them were assessed with a "Low" level of building commitment to a core ideology. Evans and Lindsay (2020) posited that leaders who wish to have a major impact on their organizations must take a long-term perspective, work to stimulate their organizations intellectually, invest in training to develop individuals and groups, take some risks to promote a shared vision and values and focus on customers and employees as individuals. Another aspect of flexible leadership is the ability of the college deans to build capable leadership (Table 5).

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Table 5.
Building Capable Leadership among Institutional Leaders

Degree	f	%
Low	1	.7
Average	26	18.2
High	116	81.1
Total	143	100.0

Degree of employment of flexible leadership: *High (3.67-5.00); Average (2.34-3.66); Low (1.00-2.33)*

Building Capable Leadership.

In this particular aspect, Table 5 indicates that 116 or 81.1% of the faculty assessed their deans with a "High" degree of building capable leadership. Among the faculty, 26, or 18.2% responded that their deans had an "Average" degree of building capable leadership and only 1, or 0.7% indicated the deans were "Low" in terms of this aspect of flexible leadership. In Table 6, necessary involvement and empowerment were felt by the faculty members.

Table 6.
Involvement and Empowerment among Institutional Leaders

Degree	f	%
Low	1	.7
Average	29	20.3
High	113	79.0
Total	143	100.0

Degree of employment of flexible leadership: *High (3.67-5.00); Average (2.34-3.66); Low (1.00-2.33)*

Involvement and Empowerment

Table 6 revealed that 113 or 79% described their deans with a "High" degree of flexible leadership. There were around 29 or 20.3% of them assessed their deans as "Average" and only 1 or 0.7% indicated "Low" respectively.

Evans and Lindsay (2020) explained that by empowering employees, organizations drive decision-making down to its lowest possible level. Empowerment allows the organization to flatten its organizational structure because fewer managers are needed to "direct and control" employees. Moreover, Eckert (2018) mentioned that formal development experiences for faculty members and administrators are rare. In this sense, when faculty members and administrators collaborated at the university level, a deeper appreciation for the work of others made progress toward mutual goals more likely. It also led to a deeper understanding of their roles and perspectives. Below is another aspect of flexible learning which focuses on the communication of the deans to their constituents in the academic community.

Table 7.
Keeping Communication Lines Open among Institutional Leaders

Degree	f	%
Low	2	1.4
Average	29	20.3
High	112	78.3
Total	143	100.0

Degree of employment of flexible leadership: *High (3.67-5.00); Average (2.34-3.66); Low (1.00-2.33)*

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Keeping Communication Lines Open

Table 7 revealed that 112 or 78.3% believed that the deans have a degree of "High" employment of flexible leadership. In addition to this, 29 or 20.3% of them assessed the deans as "Average" and only 2 or 1.7% of them assessed them as "Low".

Hoch and Bentolila (2021) highlighted that to lead with flexibility, a leader requires a deep recognition of the person or audience to which his messages are directed. Without knowing the specific needs and character of the audience for whom a message is intended, a speaker can't convey an accurate message that resonates with his listeners. Meanwhile, Table 8 highlights the use of a reward system to support multiple objectives.

Table 8.
Using Reward System to Support Multiple Objectives) among Institutional Leaders

Degree	f	%
Low	6	4.2
Average	38	26.6
High	99	69.2
Total	143	100.0

Degree of employment of flexible leadership: *High (3.67-5.00); Average (2.34-3.66); Low (1.00-2.33)*

Using Reward System to Support Multiple Objectives

Based on this particular area, Table 8 showed that 99, or 69.2% assessed their Deans as "High", in their employment of flexible leadership and 38, or 26.6% of them assessed their Deans as "Average", and only 6, or 4.2% of them assessed their Deans "Low". Specifically, Leithwood (2019) defines leadership as the exercise of influence on organization members and diverse stakeholders toward the identification and achievements of the organization's vision and goals.

Encouraging and Exemplifying Leadership by Example

Table 9 shows that 105 or 73.4% assessed their deans as "High in terms of the employment of flexible leadership. Only 35 or 24.5% described them as "Average" and only 3 or 2.1% assessed them as "Low".

Table 9.
Encouraging and Exemplifying Leadership by Example among Institutional Leaders

Degree	f	%
Low	3	2.1
Average	35	24.5
High	105	73.4
Total	143	100.0

As Hurtado and Mukherji (2015) explained, cognitive flexibility embraces abilities such as sense-making and framing, the ability to lead processes of change, persuasive communication, and the ability to motivate others. A leader who possesses these abilities may convince a wide range of people to trust and follow him. His approach will consider the nature of the audience being addressed (Jia et al., 2018). Assessed by teachers, college deans were described with a "High" degree of employment in flexible learning.

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Table 10.
Deans' Overall Degree of Employment of Flexible Leadership as Assessed by Teachers

Degree	f	%
Low	2	1.4
Average	31	21.7
High	110	76.9
Total	143	100.0

Table 10 showed the overall result of the degree of deans' employment of flexible leadership as assessed by the faculty. Teachers assessed the Deans as "High" in their Employment of Flexible Leadership. Meanwhile, 110, or 76.9%, 31, or 21.7% assessed their deans as" Average", and only 2, or 1.4% of them assessed their Deans as "Low" in the employment of Flexible Leadership.

Flexible leadership entails a high level of emotional intelligence, logic, intuition, ability in interpersonal interaction, ability to assess a situation, adjust to it, and adopt the correct course of action (Novicevic et al., 2011; Baron, et al., 2018; Hurtado & Mukherji, 2015; Heemsbergen, 2004; Pillay, 2015).

Ways Flexible Leadership Being Manifested by Institutional Leaders

Aside from the degree of employment of flexible leadership, the following are the ways these are implemented in various campuses of the state university. Table 11 highlights the flexible leadership being practiced by the college deans as assessed by their faculty members.

Table 11.
Ways Flexible Leadership in Terms of Building Commitment to a Core

A. Building Commitment to a Core	N	Mean	SD
1. builds and supports the values system of the university	143	**4.51**	.70
2. helps faculty members come together in support of a shared mission	143	**4.47**	.74
3. recognizes faculty contributions	143	**4.43**	.79
4. explains the university's culture embedded explicitly in the form of stories and myths	143	**3.52**	1.21
5. does not maintain a good strategic plan	143	**3.45**	1.40
6. provides weak support for faculty members who are trying to uphold the university's core values and ideas	143	**3.44**	1.48

Among the responses on establishing a commitment to a core in Table 11, flexible leaders are seen to build and support the value system of the university (M=4.51). On the other hand, the least focused among institutional leaders is seen as providing weak support for the faculty who are trying to uphold the university's core values and ideas (M= 3.44). This was supported by Dean Arthur who said that "contextualizing the University's plans creatively shall be made…". This was also affirmed by Dean Margaret raising her concern on "putting in the frontline are supposed to be the implementers—the faculty" in the implementation of flexible leadership. Table 12 indicates another aspect of flexible leadership exemplified by the college deans—building capable leadership.

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Table 12.
Ways Flexible Leadership in Terms of Building Commitment to a Core

B. Building Capable Leadership	N	Mean	SD
1. understands that faculty members are the university's most valuable asset	143	4.50	.74
2. understands that faculty members are the essential aspects of the school's "dynamic capabilities"	143	4.48	.75
3. enhances leadership development through empowering	143	4.35	.82
4. communicates the importance of leadership development in the university	143	4.27	.87
5. is deeply not involved in planning and implementing leadership development activities	143	3.80	1.13
6. does not enhance leadership development through coaching	143	3.77	1.09

Based on Table 12, One important practice of the flexible college deans is understanding that faculty members are the university's main asset (M= 4.50). To achieve such an ideal of flexible leadership, college deans must focus more on enhancing leadership development through coaching (M=3.77). During the interview, Dean Acosta said, "One indicator of being successful is producing more leaders through your leadership." This was confirmed by Dean May who elaborated:

> "The faculty members are the 'think-tanks' of the University… They (faculty) are to be likened to atoms of a system that support the plans and goals of a leader. Hence, they also need to be involved in the strategic planning and crafting the improvement design of an institution."

In addition to this, Table 13 identifies another essential aspect of the manner the college deans implement flexible leadership.

Table 13.
Ways Flexible Leadership in terms of Involvement and Empowerment

C. Involvement and Empowerment	N	Mean	SD
1. understands that a cooperative effort is needed to meet challenges effectively	143	**4.48**	.82
2. finds ways to accomplish the University's mission	143	**4.39**	.82
3. finds ways to achieve the University's vision	143	**4.39**	.85
4. acts on faculty members' suggestions	143	**4.24**	.90
5. does not act in ways that are mutually compatible with other administrators at different levels of the University organization	143	**3.67**	1.15
6. inactively solicits opinions and feedback from faculty members	143	**3.59**	1.11

In terms of Involvement and Empowerment, Table 13 shows that college deans were observed to practice flexible leadership by understanding that a cooperative effort is needed to meet effectively the challenges of a university (M=4.48). On the other hand, faculty members shared that the college deans inactively solicit opinions and feedback from them (M=3.59). Specifically, Dean Bernard emphasized that "…even though we aspire to implement flexible leadership, gathering information on how this affects the stakeholders is minimal." In addition to this, he elaborated that "as a University, implementing flexible leadership is a challenge because there are some who also practice academic freedom and this varies from one professor to another… So, we have to give them (faculty) an opportunity to co-operate with us to achieve this kind of leadership". In Table 14, keeping communication lines open has been considered vital in having flexible leadership.

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Table 14.
Ways Flexible Leadership in terms of Keeping Lines Open

D. Keeping Communication Lines Open	N	Mean	SD
1. understands the University's objectives, priorities, and strategies	143	**4.57**	.687
2. plays an active role and makes good decisions	143	**4.46**	.785
3. encourages and maintains face-to-face interaction	143	**4.46**	.812
4. hold regular forums to discuss issues and changes	143	**2.71**	1.363
5. encourages an open-door policy to increase access to information	143	**2.29**	1.192
6. ensures that faculty members not only understand what is expected of them but are committed to doing it	143	**1.71**	.810

Keeping lines open among the institutional leaders was considered crucial for flexible leaders as pointed out in Table 14. This component presents that a flexible leader understands the University's objectives, priorities, and strategies (M=4.57). On the other hand, faculty members observed that the college deans had limitations in holding regular forums to discuss issues and challenges (M=2.71), encouraging an open-door policy to increase information (M=2.29), and ensuring that faculty members not only understand what is expected of them but are committed to doing it (M=1.71). Dean Arthur mentioned that "making plans is just the start of the gargantuan task; implementing and keeping everyone involved is another mountain to conquer." One of the institutional leaders said,

> "Among the roles of a leader, there are constraints for us to keep on monitoring and evaluating necessary facets of the University. While it is ideal to conduct meetings for constant deliberations of concerns, only a few among the faculty can actively participate in reality. In light of this, we will commit to taking in insights from the faculty by giving them opportunities to become flexible in terms of their classroom practice".

Table 15 shows the use of a reward system to support multiple objectives of flexible leadership in the context of a state university.

Table 15.
Ways Flexible Leadership in Terms of Using Reward System to Support Multiple Objectives

E. Using Reward System to Support Multiple Objectives	N	Mean	SD
1. tries to implement and align a human resource system with those goals vital to effecting real culture change	143	**4.16**	.91
2. develops reward and recognition programs that can help improve efficiency	143	**3.99**	.97
3. develops reward and recognition programs to improve human relations	143	**3.97**	1.01
4. develops reward and recognition programs that can encourage innovation	143	**3.97**	.96
5. develops reward and recognition programs to attract and retain highly competent faculty members and staff	143	**3.96**	.97
6. ensures that the appraisal and reward systems are consistent with the objectives of the University	143	**2.77**	1.40

Among the statements, Table 15 indicates that a flexible leader tries to implement and align a human resource system with those goals vital to effecting real culture change (M=4.16). Meanwhile, college deans were assessed by the faculty members to inconsistently ensure that the appraisal and reward systems are consistent with the objectives of the University (M=2.77). "There must be a focus on keeping track of achievements," said Dean

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Acosta. She also specified that "…to keep the success of flexible leadership, the University should allocate more funds to give due recognition to the efforts of the faculty and staff. This also pertains to those job hires and contract of service, and all other personnel of the University". Finally, Table 16 presents the manner college deans facilitate the encouragement and exemplification of flexible leadership.

Table 16.
Ways Flexible Leadership in Terms of Encouraging and Exemplifying Leadership by Examples

F. Encouraging and Exemplifying Leadership by Examples	N	Mean	SD
1. shows an impressive demonstration of his/her commitment	**143**	**4.38**	**.839**
2. serves as a role model for the kinds of behavior expected of faculty members and employees	143	**4.36**	.900
3. shows an impressive demonstration of his/her sincerity	143	**4.35**	.890
4. sets an example by making big sacrifices for the school	143	**4.27**	.927
5. is aware that the examples that he/she sets can influence the faculty members at the lower level of the university organization	143	**3.42**	1.465
6. is sensitive to human issues	143	**3.19**	1.506

According to the data in Table 16, a flexible leader shows an impressive demonstration of his/her commitment (M=4.38). Meanwhile, there are two things that college deans should focus on further among themselves: being aware that the examples that he/she sets can influence the faculty members at the lower level of the university organization (M=3.42) and being sensitive to human issues (M=3.19). Dean Joseph confirmed that "… Now, leaders are powerful influencers." He also added that:

> "While we focus more on administration and other management concerns, to be a flexible leader keeps the college's direction and this involves the students, faculty, and staff. You become the captain of the ship through which you become the lead navigator by setting policies and all these influence the dispositions of the academic community—trust, responsibility, and of course, liability".

Conclusions

The Philippines is a county that aspires to facilitate quality tertiary education and this requires flexible leaders who can manage their organization to uphold the Commission on Higher Education's thrusts. Institutional leaders must imbibe into their core the facets of flexible leadership such as building commitment to a core ideology, building capable leadership, involvement and empowerment, keeping communication lines open, using a reward system to support multiple objectives, and encouraging and exemplifying leadership by examples. On top of the ways to implement flexible leadership, faculty members assessed that a flexible leader should be building and supporting the values system of the university, trying to implement and align a human resource system with those goals vital to effecting real culture change and showing an impressive demonstration of his/her commitment. Moreover, flexible leaders should have a deeper understanding that the faculty members are the university's most valuable asset, put a premium on the cooperative effort needed to meet challenges effectively and keep the university's objectives, priorities, and strategies by properly communicating them to all.

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In terms of the specific facet of flexible leadership, building capable leadership tops the others which can be characterized by understanding that faculty members as the university's most valuable asset and essential aspects of the academe's "dynamic capabilities". In turn, flexibility comes when there is an enhancement of leadership development through empowering the faculty. Consequently, involvement and empowerment follows the above and can be best manifested through understanding that a cooperative effort is needed to meet challenges effectively in the university context. This is coupled with finding ways to accomplish the University's mission and vision. While the stated facets are the necessary components of flexible leadership, the results of the study revealed that building commitment to a core ideology can also be integrated into the management of a university. A leader should be capable of building and supporting the values system of the university, helping faculty members come together in support of a shared mission, and recognizing faculty contributions. This implies that flexible university leadership is not a one-man show but a collaborative and consultative effort.

However, it is equally important to consider among university administrators the other facets of flexible leadership such as keeping communication lines open, using a reward system to support multiple objectives, and encouraging and exemplifying leadership by examples. While all these were considered high in such a context, it may also trigger a borderline that leaders must take note of and keep track of themselves. First, flexible leaders should hold regular forums to discuss issues and changes, encourage an open-door policy to increase access to information, and ensure that faculty members not only understand what is expected of them but are committed to doing it. Moreover, there must be a development of reward and recognition programs to attract and retain highly competent faculty members and staff, and these appraisal and reward systems are consistent with the objectives of the university. All these must be put into action; hence, leaders must manage the academe as a role model. Awareness that the examples that one sets can influence the faculty members at the lower level of the university organization and is human-centered.

While there is a high degree of employing flexible leadership in such a state university, there were also important concepts that the college deans should focus on as flexible leaders such as providing stronger support for faculty members who are trying to uphold the university's core values and ideas, enhancing leadership development through coaching, soliciting opinions and feedbacks from faculty members, ensuring that faculty members not only understand what is expected of them but are also committed to doing it, having appraisal and reward systems that are consistent with the objectives of the university, and being sensitive to human issues in the context of the university.

Based on the narratives of the participants, a flexible leader understands the university's objectives, priorities, and strategies. In managing a university-wide system, an administrator should show an impressive demonstration of one’s commitment to flexible leadership. As the education sector gears up into the challenges of the 21st-century landscape, a university must also implement and align a human resource system with those goals vital to effecting real culture change and towards the goal of the institution. To ensure the quality of all these, feedback giving is a 360-degree process at the university level. A flexible leader strengthens support for faculty members who are trying to uphold the university's core values and ideas. This also involves the dynamic communications lines that carry the blood of a flexible culture intertwining micro and macro levels. All these lead to an

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active solicitation of opinions and feedback from faculty members—a flexible and safe space or environment for teaching and higher learning.

Amidst the challenges, flexible leadership is no longer just a concept in educational management but a springboard to contextualize a university's development plan, to cater the needs of the stakeholders through human-centered policies, and nurture the sense of a community among the faculty members, staff, and students.

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Human Participants

This research underwent ethical procedures to ensure that the participants' confidentiality and safety were achieved.

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The authors confirm that the manuscript is their original work, and if others' works are used, they are properly cited/quoted.

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