

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Managerial control practices of physical education department heads of higher education institutions in Zamboanga City

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### ABSTRACT

The paper aims to describe and analyze what models and methods of managerial control physical education departments of higher education institutions in Zamboanga City commonly adopt. It also sought to determine how department heads in tertiary physical education enforce managerial control policies. As one of the descriptive-qualitative research methods, the phenomenology pattern was used in the research. There were the four P.E. service department heads, two faculty members (one senior and one junior faculty), and the college/department secretary who participated in the study. Findings showed that P.E. department heads in both public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Zamboanga City not specifically adopt certain managerial control models and methods for their management practices. Instead, they relied on the existing management practices especially with the managerial control system of their respective universities or colleges. Department heads enforced managerial control techniques that were pragmatic, intuitive, and reactionary. To thrive and be successful in the management, P.E. department heads must engage in acquiring knowledge of managerial control principles, concepts, and models. The P.E. department heads should be able to determine and use appropriate management control strategies that can be programmed, pre-determined, and applied to situations, highlighting a systematic management control system.

**Keywords:** managerial control practices; physical education department heads; HEIs

## 1. Introduction

The managerial control practices relative to the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling are among the most important factors that contribute to the improvement of an organization's operation and overall performance. HEIs in the public or private sector also need managerial control in order to be effective and efficient in their operations toward the attainment of their objectives.

In the academe, the three layers of management-top management, middle management, and lower management also exist. Top managers are the policymakers and these include the President, Vice Presidents, and the Board of Directors for private educational institutions and the Board of Regents/Trustees for state universities and colleges (SUCs). Middle managers are the Deans and Directors while lower managers are the heads or chairpersons of academic departments. Of the three (3) managerial levels, the lower managers or the department heads are the ones who have immediate supervision over faculty members. This position will consequently allow the department heads to exercise direct control over them.

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Among the management functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling the department heads are in charge of the operations and ensure that departmental objectives are achieved. It is for this reason that department heads are appropriately educated and trained in directing and leading subordinates. However, merely directing and leading toward attaining objectives without any means of regulating certain activities will not always work well in any organization. According to Miranda and Miranda-Gow<sup>[1]</sup>, there must be a balance between directing and controlling. It is the controlling process that determines how closely organizational plans and their objectives are being achieved.

Control as defined by Anthony and Govindarajan<sup>[2]</sup> is, “the process by which managers influence other members of the organization to implement the organization’s strategies”. It is therefore an important responsibility of every manager that deserves attention as far as managerial control of subordinates is concerned, especially in higher education institutions. Maciariello and Enteman<sup>[3]</sup> were more specific to universities in explaining the meaning of control. They believe a management control procedure (or system) is one that provides the information an institution requires to allocate its resources to the programs that are most productive in fulfilling its objectives.

Macintosh<sup>[4]</sup> stated that control may be the most controversial word of our time, and believes that half the world thinks of control as coercion and oppression which that we should have less of it. However, other researchers also believe society is pretty much out of control and that we need more of it. Either way, control is a phenomenon that requires careful study if we are to make sense of it. Control, therefore is a process and a cycle used in organizations to attain the set objectives. It is viewed to have both positive and negative strategies. In HEIs, control is used in the same context-even at the level of department heads.

As Bateman and Snell<sup>[5]</sup> noted, there is really no fixed consensus in the literature regarding the definition of managerial control, control, or control system. Various definitions of control exist but most authorities agree that managerial control is the assurance that planning strategies are being fulfilled. In fact, control has been called one of the “Siamese twins” of management. The other twin is planning. Some means of control are necessary because once managers formulate plans; they must ensure the plans are carried out. This means making sure that other people are doing what needs to be done and not doing inappropriate things. If plans are not carried out properly, management must take steps to correct the problem. This is the primary function of control in management.

One of the cited models in research that describe the control process among heads in academic departments is the Gmelch and Miskin Model. Gmelch and Miskin<sup>[6]</sup> outlined a model of control for department chairpersons which shows that the first step of the control model is department planning. This includes developing mission and measurable outcomes and goals, both short-term and long-term. Second, it entails implementation which involves the individual faculty and staff goals and action plans. Finally, evaluation and control complete the process in the model. The term ‘control’ should not mean monitoring or checking up on daily activities and assignments, instead, its purpose should be to help individuals become more productive in accomplishing personal goals and contributing to the achievement of department success.

In Zamboanga City, physical education departments in HEIs both public and private are commonly managed by a department head that is educated and trained to teach P.E. and other related activities. However, not all department heads have been properly or sufficiently equipped with the experience, knowledge, and skills to perform managerial functions, especially the controlling function. This situation can result eventually in ineffective managerial practices. P.E. department heads in HEIs must have knowledge of the nature and meaning of managerial control to be able to exercise appropriate managerial control techniques and strategies. Otherwise, their concepts of managerial control will be limited to the existing practices in the organization.

At present and for so long, there is a scarcity of information regarding the managerial control practices among P.E. department heads in both public and private universities and colleges in Zamboanga City. The dearth of this information suggests the need for more scholarly works and research on how P.E. departments in HEIs are actually being managed and controlled. Furthermore, for P.E. departments to flourish as academic institutions, heads of academic departments must focus on their managerial performance to attain the intended goals and objectives.

Since not much attention is given to research on how managerial control practices are being performed in the PE departments of higher education institutions in Zamboanga City, hence, this study was conducted. The results can serve as a basis for improving managerial control practices among HEIs during similar conditions. This study is linked to the Robert J. Mocker control process. He posits that managerial control practices is a systematic effort to set performance standards with planning objectives, to design information feedback systems, to compare actual performance with these predetermined standards, to determine whether there are any deviations and to measure their significance, and to take any action required to assure that all corporate resources are being used in the most effective and efficient way.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study aims to describe and analyze the current managerial control practices of physical education department heads in Zamboanga City. Specifically, this study sought to determine (1) what models and methods of managerial control P.E. department heads of higher education institutions in Zamboanga City commonly adopt; and, (2) how department heads in tertiary physical education programs enforce managerial control policies.

## **2. Methods**

The descriptive–qualitative research design was used because the findings of this study could not be measured by statistical tests and procedures or other means of quantification. Its goal is to understand behavior in a natural setting as well as the meaning the respondents give to their experience. It seeks to understand the perspective of the research participant within the context of their everyday life, and it is concerned with asking broad questions that allow the respondent to answer in their own words. Participants of this study were determined through the criterion sampling method which is one of the purposeful sampling methods<sup>[7-10]</sup>. Of the fifteen (15) HEIs existing in Zamboanga City, only four (4) HEIs have been selected whose P.E. department met the criteria established by the researcher for this particular study.

A total of 16 key informants were interviewed. These were the four P.E. service department heads, two faculty members (one senior and one junior faculty), and the college/department secretary. Data were collected from two (2) public and two (2) private HEIs in Zamboanga City. They were grouped and classified in terms of their demographic and descriptive profiles, respectively. Information about the HEIs and respondents participating in the study is given in **Tables 1** and **2**.

The semi-structured interview type of instrument adapted from a similar model used by Sather<sup>[11]</sup> in his studies on managerial control of faculty by physical education department chairpersons was utilized in this particular study. The instrument is more open-ended than the structured type to elicit rich data responses. Furthermore, probing questions were added to the instrument to ensure adequate descriptions of each question asked. Data for the study were collected from 16 key informants through the interview method on a voluntary basis. Each interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes and all interviews were completed in one and a half months. Most of the methods used in gathering the data for this particular study were similar to the steps conducted by Sather<sup>[11]</sup> and the five phases of data collection by McMillan and Schumacher<sup>[9,10]</sup>.

**Table 1.** Descriptive profile of individual respondents.

School	No. of senior PE faculty members/staff	No. of junior PE faculty members	No. of students enrolled in service PE	Total school population
HEI-1	19/1	6	5133	11,706
HEI-2	4/1	3	2110	4393
HEI-3	4/1	2	2000	4000
HEI-4	3/1	4	4600	10,800

**Table 2.** Demographic profile of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Position	Age	Years in current position	Years at the institution	Designation/title
<b>Department heads:</b>				
Respondent 1	60	17	37	Dean/dept. head
Respondent 2	34	7	13	Executive assistant
Respondent 3	37	9	9	P.E. coordinator
Respondent 4	55	4	11	Department head
<b>Senior faculty:</b>				
Respondent 1	54	12	16	Regular faculty
Respondent 2	32	6	19	Regular faculty
Respondent 3	60	23	31	Regular faculty
Respondent 4	34	2	4	Regular faculty
<b>Junior faculty:</b>				
Respondent 1	23	2	2	Visiting lecturer
Respondent 2	23	3	3	P.E. Instructor
Respondent 3	31	6	6	P.E. instructor
Respondent 4	22	2	2	P.E. instructor
<b>College/dept. secretaries:</b>				
Respondent 1	37	3	11	College secretary
Respondent 2	41	4	15	College secretary
Respondent 3	43	4	10	College secretary
Respondent 4	21	2	3	Institute secretary

The semi-structured interview questions were subjected to content validity which was done through a panel of three (3) experts in management. The panel of experts was composed of one (1) former college dean and now chair of a graduate school, one (1) holder of a doctorate degree and currently a department head, and one (1) former vice-president for planning and administration and presently a senior faculty member. They were purposely considered on the basis of their professional and educational qualifications, extensive experience in managerial practices, and the nature of their present job assignments. The three-member panel of experts evaluated whether the interview statements could accurately gather the necessary data that should provide the answers to the specific problems of the study.

Before the list of guide questions was subjected to reliability testing, the validators were encouraged to give feedback and suggestions about the possible modification and improvements of the proposed guided questions to be used, the interview process, and the actual research procedures similar to the process described by Vizcarra<sup>[12]</sup>. They were also asked to evaluate each question whether it was Relevant (2) or Not Relevant

(1). The ratings of the panel of experts were then subjected to a statistical treatment using Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance as cited by Vizcarra<sup>[12]</sup> to determine the degree of agreement among the raters for each item. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance formula is:

$$W = \frac{12 \sum d_i^2}{m^2 n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Using the above-stated formula, the computed W is 0.90 which indicated that the magnitude of association among the ratings was high. Therefore, the panelists had a high degree of acceptability as to the validity of the proposed instrument. The inter-rater reliability score for the data analysis from the series of interviews was .90 and this was sufficient (over .80 level) for the reliability of the coding according to Miles and Huberman<sup>[13]</sup>. If 80% and more researchers and expert consensus are provided in qualitative research, then a coding study will be considered to be reliable<sup>[10]</sup>. Consequently, it can be said that the study is generally reliable study. Questions used in the scheduled interviews were also field tested for their reliability. It was accomplished through a pilot study that was conducted on another tertiary school not selected in the study but offers a similar service physical education program.

Participants for the pilot testing were the physical education department head of the selected pilot school, the college/department secretary, and one senior faculty member with more than five (5) years of teaching experience. Each was interviewed face-to-face using the semi-structured interview questionnaire. All interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder. A micro-cassette audio analog recorder was also used as a backup gadget for the interviews. At the completion of each interview, the respondents were asked to provide feedback about the questions and the interview process. The verbal feedback provided by the respondents served as information for improving the instrument and procedures for use in the actual study. In the course of the test, three (3) questions were modified for clarity purposes. Based on the results of the pilot study, the researcher concluded that data collection utilizing a semi-structured interview technique was appropriate for this investigation.

This paper likewise made use of data triangulation. Data were obtained from three different groups of respondents, the department heads, the senior faculty members, and the junior faculty members of the college. An in-depth interview was conducted to gain insight into what the respondents perceived as managerial control practices by the department heads. Triangulation of data was done by looking for results that are agreed upon by the group of respondents or data that runs counter. The weight of the result suggests that if every respondent looks at the issue from different points of view, and sees the result then it is more likely to be a true outcome. By listening to the interviews and reading the transcripts, all the data gathered were analyzed by identifying pertinent themes from the information that might best describe the common managerial control practices in each of those departments.

For this particular study, data analysis began with the construction of the facts as found in the recorded data in search of recurring and emergent patterns<sup>[9,14,15]</sup>. The emergent pattern relevant to the statement of the problem for this study was tested through further interviews and participant observation. The data analysis for this particular study provided in-depth insights into the research based on Coetzee<sup>[16]</sup>, Giorgi<sup>[17]</sup>, and Omery<sup>[18]</sup>.

### **3. Results and discussions**

#### **3.1. Models and methods of managerial control commonly adopted among P.E. department heads in higher education institutions in Zamboanga City**

In general, P.E. department heads in both public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Zamboanga City do not specifically adopt certain managerial control models and methods for their

management practices. Instead, they relied mostly on the existing managerial control practices of their respective universities or colleges. This is supported by the statement of one of the department heads, who said; *“Most of our department plans are activity-oriented. It is linked to the university’s overall plan. It involved physical and social activities that are focused on keeping the students fit by providing them with various P.E. activities to make them worthy citizens of the country”*.

There are different characteristics of managerial control which the department heads could model and implement. For instance, activity-oriented heads focus on engaging the stakeholders in academic and planned activities that could develop their personality and character. This managerial practice can be linked to sustainable and healthy stewardship of an educational organization<sup>[19–24]</sup>. For those who value the innovation, teachers with creative and ingenious ways of adapting to challenges tend to develop effective teaching practices and management of learning difficulties<sup>[19,20,22]</sup>.

This finding supports the theory of Frost, Lockhart, Marshall<sup>[25]</sup> which states that there is really no single modus operandi that will serve all situations and all executives equally well. Different techniques were effective depending upon the circumstances surrounding a given situation. It included the nature of the individuals affected and the knowledge and personality of the administrators themselves. A former department head and now a senior faculty of the department claimed that; *“The dean would call a meeting because the president liked to conduct a certain activity. The process is up to me to accomplish. Sometimes I am fed up with the usual activities. Our new teachers sometimes introduce new innovations. We try out if it is feasible or not, by trying out some of them, but we always inform the dean”*.

Maciariello and Enteman<sup>[3]</sup> said that in a private school’s management-control system, an institution must be highly situational and deal with the specific characteristics of each institution. If department heads in the current study approached management control with unique perspectives for their situation, one would therefore expect differing managerial methods or techniques to manifest themselves. Most P.E. departments in Zamboanga City encountered almost very similar managerial control experiences. Most department heads in the study manifested their desire to implement managerial control methods or approaches. They indicated that some intervening factors such as the school management prerogatives, disagreement of faculty members on the department head’s policies and procedures, the constraint of time, and available resources to implement such methods are the major limiting factors.

In order for a change to take place that creates and sustains unique managerial control practices in physical education departments, the entire department would need to subscribe to the process and contribute to the effort. This may be difficult considering that faculty generally maintains distastes for involvement in management and planning<sup>[16]</sup>.

In the current study, department heads exhibited managerial control which is called “management by situation or crisis” and another only involved the department in planning on a “case-to-case” basis. As Clegg and Palmer<sup>[26]</sup> indicated, “Management is less a science and more like cookbook knowledge: it is knowledge of recipes and their application, we think”. Sather<sup>[11]</sup> suggested that perhaps, the best control analogy for a manager of professionals is as an orchestra director, and he states; *“When you reflect on it, the symphony orchestra is like many other professional organizations—for example, consulting firms and hospitals—in that it is structured around the work of highly trained individuals who know what they have to do and just do it. Such professionals hardly need in-house procedures or time-study analysts to tell them how to do their jobs. That fundamental reality challenges many preconceptions that we have about management and control. Indeed, in such environments, covert leadership may matter more than overt leadership”*.

Many new managerial control practices or methods tend to fail in higher education possibly because they

attempt to change the culture. The leader takes his position with an already established culture in place. Instead of replacing the culture, the leader may enhance it<sup>[27,28]</sup>. The workers, even new workers, know what to expect and what they need to do. The leader provides a sense of uniqueness compared to other groups. However, this is not the case for the persons interviewed. They neither take positions and do not even enhance managerial control nor provide a sense of uniqueness.

Persons seeking to become highly qualified directors or heads of the physical education and/or athletics department should be at least knowledgeable about the basic theories, procedures, methods, and techniques of administration of academic departments. With this capability in hand, they will then be in an exact position to select the best models or methods suited to the purpose of the organization and the personalities involved. Physical Education department heads do not follow the specific model in management control. They rely mostly on the existing managerial practices of their superiors.

This may be the reason why department heads sometimes act as a facilitator for their subordinates and superiors. They plan the departments' goals and objectives and the day-to-day activities geared towards the overall plan of the university or college.

### **3.2. Enforcement of managerial control policies among physical education department heads**

Since the department heads do not follow certain models or methods in exhibiting managerial control, they follow a pragmatic, intuitive, and reactionary technique. It is pragmatic because P.E. is more concerned with practical results rather than with theories and principles. It is intuitive because they are more inclined to use managerial control known directly and instinctively, without being discovered or consciously perceived. It is reactionary because department heads use managerial control only when the situation arises. Faculty in a larger department appeared to be more conforming to these directives or changes rather than initiating their own departmental control technique. The managerial control procedure is still centered on the directives of the administrators above the department head's level. These directives often emanate from their respective university presidents or college deans.

Setting up policies is an important part of planning. When goals and objectives are set, policies should be formulated to guide the accomplishments of the goals and objectives. At the P.E. departments, policy statements include decisions on priorities in the usage of facilities and equipment, disciplinary measures for erring faculty members and students, limits on faculty teaching loads, requirements for graduation, strict implementation of the curriculum, and guidelines for grades or eligibility rules for student-athletes.

Policies are likewise used as an effective way of communicating by providing feedback using the standing policies of the institution as far as a basis is concerned. They are also the base for evaluation and control. Oftentimes, policies are applied to specified situations in the form of departmental procedures. In this study, department heads relied mostly on existing controls in higher education and initiated very few innovations. It is still the university or their colleges' standards and policies that the P.E. departments follow and maintain. This was confirmed by a department head who said; *"In our department, we see to it that we follow the program of the College of Education since our department is under it. We considered the pros and cons of the program and see if it will benefit not only the department but the university as well"*.

Performance evaluation in the academe usually focuses on the traditional areas of teaching effectiveness and service output. As gathered by the researcher, the P.E. departments in the study do not use formal standards or indicators to gauge the attainment of departmental objectives. As long as they are able to follow and implement the plans for the year and teach the assigned subjects well, it is assumed that the P.E. department is attaining its goals. As one department head said; *"We have set plans at the beginning of the school year. We will see to it that this plan is accomplished at the end of the school year"*. In another school, one department

head stated; “*It depends on the teacher teaching the subject, there is no gauge as to the achievement of the teacher*”.

After the evaluation, feedback is often provided to the faculty. This was done through verbal actions, like giving positive or negative comments on their performance. This was commonly presented during departmental meetings. As one department head said; “*Feedback is given to the faculty to remind them that there are some responsibilities that they have to realize. It is taken up during the faculty meeting*”.

The researcher also observed that the following areas are where the main managerial control policies of P.E. department heads are commonly enforced; (1) control of department budget, (2) purchasing and expenditures, (3) strategic planning sessions or meetings when required, (4) monitoring of work performance, and (5) annual evaluation of faculty members and staff.

#### **4. Conclusion and recommendations**

Although it seems that the department heads in the current study demonstrated managerial practices in their respective departments without manifesting accurate expertise in management functions, there still be some continual effort to improve the overall performance of the department based on sound managerial concepts and models, particularly on the controlling aspects. Ironically, many department heads in tertiary physical education ignore the significance of these managerial control concepts and models and thus fail to practice what they espouse as professionals—change through the use of scientifically proven methods. Likewise, the managerial control practices of P.E. department heads affect the working relationship, both positively and negatively, between the department heads and the faculty and staff. This subsequently also affects the overall performance of the P.E. department through budgeting, feedback system, monitoring and evaluation, and rewards and incentives. In the context of the results of this study, it is recommended that department heads should strive to uplift their knowledge of the aspects of managerial control principles, concepts, and models. In order to do so, P.E. department heads in HEIs must initiate to engage in acquiring knowledge of managerial control principles, concepts, and models. Universities and colleges should institute formal managerial training, seminars, and/or workshops like a series of leadership, organizational, or management in-service training programs for all existing department heads or chairpersons. The P.E. department heads should also be able to determine and use appropriate management control strategies that can be programmed or pre-determined to be applied to recurring situations, thus, there will be a semblance of a systematic management control system. Department heads, therefore, will only be using reactionary or intuitive management control strategies for situations or problems that are unusual or out of the ordinary.

#### **Conflict of interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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