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SCHOLARSHIP FOR STAFF AND INSTRUCTORS' KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM (SIKAP) OF THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN CORDILLERA ADMINISTRATIVE REGION

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the effectiveness of the Scholarship for Staff and Instructors' Knowledge Advancement Program (SIKAP) of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). It specifically determined the extent of attainment of the identified professional growth, challenges or problems do SIKAP scholars encounter during their studies, and potential interventions that could enhance the support provided by SIKAP, addressing specific challenges faced by scholars and strengthening the program's effectiveness in faculty development that advanced faculty development within the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

The study employed a quantitative descriptive research design. A survey questionnaire was used as the primary data-gathering instrument, and responses were obtained from 176 SIKAP scholars across various HEIs in CAR. Data were analyzed using statistical tools such as weighted mean, frequency, and ranking.

Findings revealed that SIKAP had a positive impact on faculty development. Most scholars reported improvements in their teaching competence, research productivity, and opportunities for promotion and leadership roles. The scholarship program also contributed to the institutional growth of HEIs by enhancing the qualifications and capabilities of their academic staff. However, challenges such as delayed fund release, administrative inefficiencies, and limited institutional support were identified as barriers to the program's full implementation.

Based on these results, the study recommends strengthened coordination between CHED and HEIs, improved fund management systems, and more straightforward program guidelines to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of SIKAP in achieving its goals for higher education in the region.

INTRODUCTION

Scholarships are financial resources designed to support students in covering educational expenses such as tuition, fees, and other costs associated with their studies. The benefits of scholarships are substantial, including reducing the financial strain of education, providing access to prestigious institutions, and fostering personal and professional growth through mentorship and networking opportunities. However, challenges exist, including intense competition and demanding application processes that often require essays, recommendation letters, and proof of qualifications. Increasingly, scholarships focus on promoting diversity and inclusion, particularly by supporting underrepresented groups in education. These initiatives underscore the role of scholarships in creating equitable opportunities for students (College Board, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

While graduate scholarships have become more accessible, several significant challenges persist. Limited funding and fierce competition often hinder access to higher education, especially in developing countries. Geographic disparities in scholarship opportunities, with a bias towards developed regions and specific fields, further exacerbate the issue, this was according to the UNESCO Digital Library.

The high cost of education and student debt burden many aspiring graduate students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. Lack of diversity and inclusion in scholarship programs often excludes marginalized groups.

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Return service obligations can limit career flexibility and contribute to brain drain from developing countries. To address these challenges, increased funding, greater diversity and inclusion, and flexible support are crucial steps toward creating a more equitable and accessible landscape for graduate scholarships.

One of the agencies overseas offering educational assistance for Masters and Doctorate is the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Scholarships. These are renowned for providing financial and academic support to international students pursuing master's or doctoral degrees in Germany, aiming to foster global academic cooperation and prepare scholars to address pressing global challenges. Available to students from developed and developing countries, DAAD scholarships emphasize inclusivity by targeting individuals with strong academic records, relevant professional experience (where applicable), and adequate language proficiency for their chosen programs. Covering a diverse range of fields, they often prioritize development-focused disciplines, such as public health, engineering, and renewable energy, aligning with global sustainability goals as stated on their official website, which is the DAAD Official Site.

Scholarship for Staff and Instructors' Knowledge Advancement Program (SIKAP) of the Commission on Higher Education in Cordillera Administrative Region examines how financial resources, program implementation, and educational outcomes interact to influence the success and sustainability of SIKAP. The Commission funded this on Higher Education (CHED where the specific budget for this scholarship comes from the annual budget allocation of CHED, which is sourced from the Philippine government's general fund.

This begins with financial resources and program design, which focus on the funding sources (government allocations, institutional contributions, or external partnerships) and the structure of SIKAP, including eligibility criteria, scholarship coverage, and financial packages. These elements transition into the implementation and utilization phase, where the processes of scholarship distribution, participant engagement, and adherence to program requirements are evaluated.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is rooted in understanding the effectiveness of the Scholarships for Instructors and Staff Knowledge Advancement Program (SIKAP) in enhancing faculty development within higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). The framework identifies key components: financial resources, program implementation, and educational outcomes, which interact to influence the success and sustainability of SIKAP.

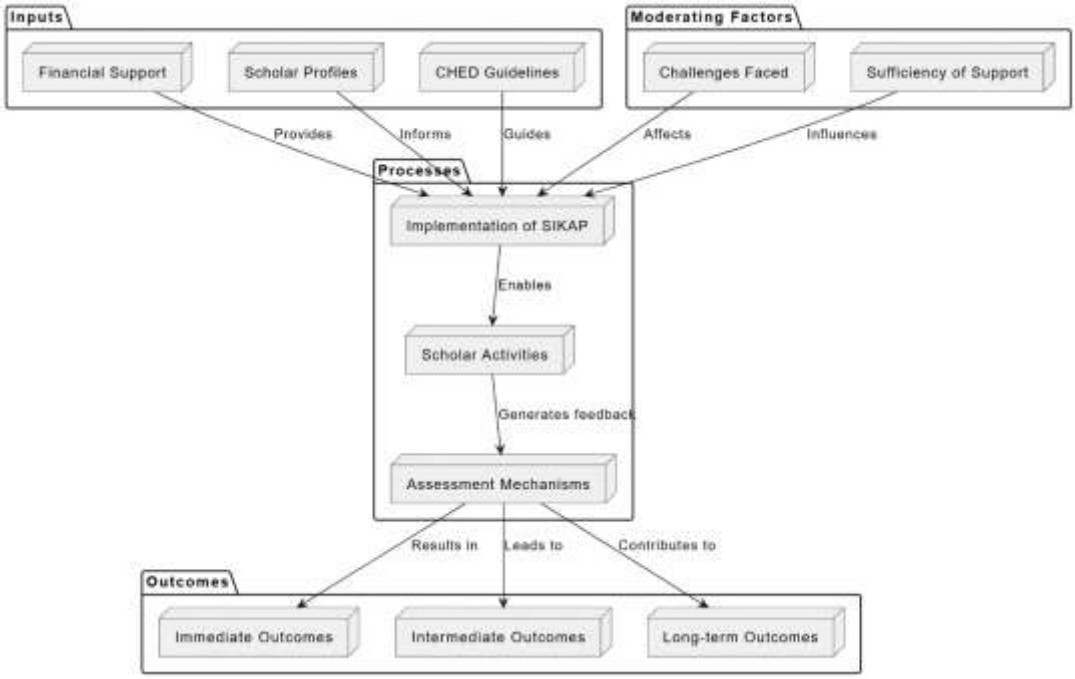


Figure 1. Logic Model of the SIKAP Program Implementation

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The Support for Individual Knowledge Advancement Program (SIKAP) plays a crucial role in faculty development by offering financial aid to educators pursuing graduate studies. This initiative is grounded in key educational theories that highlight the importance of investing in human capital, ensuring academic persistence, and promoting learning through social interactions. According to Human Capital Theory, education and skill enhancement serve as valuable investments that lead to both economic and social progress (Becker, 1964). By easing financial barriers, SIKAP allows faculty members to further their education, ultimately benefiting not only their personal growth but also the institutions and students they serve.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the Scholarships for Instructors' Knowledge Advancement Program (SIKAP) in advancing faculty development within the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). Specifically, it sought answers to the following:

1. What is the extent of attainment of the identified professional growth in being a SIKAP scholar?
2. What challenges or problems do SIKAP scholars encounter during their studies?
3. What are the potential interventions that could enhance the support provided by SIKAP, addressing specific challenges faced by scholars and strengthening the program's effectiveness in faculty development?

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach, utilizing a descriptive-survey research design, which allows for the observation and description of subjects' behaviors without any interference (Shuttleworth, 2008). By focusing on naturally existing variables, this design facilitates a clear understanding of the current situation, as similarly applied in the study by Caday et al. (2019). It emphasizes a fact-finding process that supports accurate and reliable interpretation of findings.

Locale and Population of the Study

The respondents for this study consist of scholars from the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). There are 176 scholars in the region who will participate in completing the questionnaire.

Treatment of Data

To answer the identified problems and to analyze the data gathered through the questionnaire, applicable statistical tools were utilized. Tables were constructed, and results were treated with frequency counts weighted means.

The four-point Likert scale was used to determine Problem 1: Extent of attainment of the identified professional growth in being a SIKAP scholar.

Numerical Value	Statistical Limits	Descriptive Rating	Symbol
4	3.26-4.00	Very Much Achieved	VMA
3	2.51-3.25	Moderately Achieved	MA
2	1.76-2.50	Slightly Achieved	SA
1	1.00-1.75	Less Achieved	LA

The answers in the questionnaires were based on the responses of the respondents through mean, weighted mean, and ranking. The number of responses is used to determine the assessment of the Staff and Instructors' Knowledge Advancement Program (SIKAP) of the Commission on Higher Education in the Cordillera Administrative Region.

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Using mean and ranking in questionnaire analysis helps summarize and interpret respondent data effectively. The mean, or average, is calculated by assigning numerical values to responses, summing them, and dividing by the total number of responses. Meanwhile, ranking allows respondents to prioritize or order items based on preference, importance, or relevance. By aggregating the ranks and calculating average ranks, researchers can identify which items hold the highest or lowest priority for the group.

The weighted mean is a statistical measure that accounts for the relative importance or weight of each individual value in a dataset. In this method, each value is multiplied by its corresponding weight, and the resulting products are summed. This total is then divided by the sum of all weights to calculate the weighted mean. This was used to treat the problem 2 and 3 using the following formula:

$$\text{Weighted Mean (WM)} = \frac{Frequency \ \ x \ Weight}{Number \ \ of \ \ Respondents}$$

Where:
∑ = summation
n = number of samples
f = frequency
x = weight of each score
Analysis tool packs through Microsoft Excel were also helpful devices in the analysis of data.

RESULT ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Extent of attainment of the identified professional growth in being a SIKAP scholar

Indicators	WM	D.E	Rank
1.1 I was able to gain a higher knowledge in my field.	3.89	VMA	1
1.2 I was invited as a resource person during seminars, trainings, and workshops.	2.77	MA	9
1.3 I was selected as a panel to research.	2.94	MA	6
1.4 I earned units of master's degree/doctorate degree.	3.56	VMA	2
1.5 I completed a master's degree/doctorate degree.	3.44	VMA	3
1.6 I was promoted to a higher position.	2.79	MA	8
1. 7 I was given a permanent position.	2.92	MA	7
1.8 I build relationships with peers, mentors, and industry leaders.	3.37	VMA	4
1.9 I received industry awards.	1.89	SA	10
1.10 I was able to switch to a new field or industry.	1.85	SA	11
1.11 I incorporated advanced technologies like Learning Management Systems (LMS), virtual labs, or AI-based tools into their teaching.	2.98	MA	5
Total Mean	**2.95**	**MA**	

Legend: VMA = Very Much Achieved
MA = Moderately Achieved
SA = Slightly Achieved

Table 1 presents the extent of professional growth achieved by SIKAP scholars in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

The average weighted mean is 2.95, which is moderately achieved. It indicates that while pursuing advanced studies brings moderate success, the relatively high ratings in gaining knowledge, completing academic qualifications, and building networks point to some benefits, while areas like career advancement, technology integration, and recognition in the field showroom for further improvement. These findings suggest that while advanced studies do contribute positively to faculty development, further support, opportunities, or changes in implementation may be necessary to achieve the maximum potential of these studies across all areas. Professional growth through knowledge acquisition, academic qualifications, and networking is evident, but areas like career advancement, technology integration, and recognition may require additional support, training, and opportunities.

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The table shows that the respondents mostly answered that they were able to gain a higher knowledge in their field, which resulted in rank 1. This implies that most of the respondents learned more strategies and added to their knowledge, which falls into very much achieved. Scholars who pursue advanced studies, for example, such as a master's degree in education, often gain deeper subject expertise and a strong grasp of educational theories, research methods, and effective teaching strategies. This advanced knowledge enhances their teaching, fosters innovation, and strengthens their classroom problem-solving skills.

Table 2: Challenges or problems SIKAP scholars encounter during their studies.

Indicators	%	Rank
2.1 I feel exhausted by the many requirements.	9.49	2
2.2 I was not oriented about the guidelines of the program.	8.03	4.5
2.3 My allowance is delayed/not on time.	22.63	1
2.4 The publication of my thesis/dissertation takes too long, which affects the date of my degree completion.	8.76	3
2.5 I was not advised or reminded of the documentary requirements to comply/ did not receive any notifications from my contact details.	8.03	4.5
2.6 I have encountered personal issues.	4.38	6
2.7 My documentary requirements from my School were delayed to release.	0.73	8
2.8 I did not receive any response to my queries.	0.73	8
2.9 I was not given a chance to render my return service in another Higher Institution.	0.73	8
Total	**100**	

The majority of respondents stated during the interview that they had not experienced notable difficulties throughout their studies. This aligns with Tinto's (2017) theory on student retention, which emphasizes that institutional support, clear academic pathways, and financial stability lead to a smooth academic journey.

Table 3. Potential interventions that could enhance the support provided by SIKAP, addressing specific challenges faced by scholars and strengthening the program's effectiveness in faculty development.

Indicators	%	Rank
3.1 Monitor the percentage of scholars completing the program versus those who drop out, along with reasons for attrition.	4.07	6
3.2 Evaluate teaching evaluations, research output (publications, presentations), and adoption of innovative teaching methods among scholars.	27.64	1
3. 3 Conduct regular surveys or interviews to assess satisfaction with mentorship, resources, and administrative support.	8.13	3
3.4 Monitor the percentage of scholars who achieve significant career milestones within 2–5 years after completing the program.	5.69	4.5
3.5 Re-orientation and open forum (monthly) Face to Face.	5.69	4.5
3.6 Reorientation and open forum (quarterly) Face to Face	8.94	2
Total	**100**	

The majority of respondents stated during the interview that No Additional Interventions were Needed. This suggests that many participants are already satisfied with the existing program structure and support mechanism. These statements are supported by the study of Tinto (2017), which highlights that when institutional support systems are strong, students are more likely to succeed without requiring additional interventions.

The study by Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) found that well-structured scholarship programs with adequate resources and mentorship lead to higher completion rates.

Table 3 presents potential interventions aimed at enhancing the support provided by the SIKAP scholarship program

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. The study revealed that scholars experienced moderate professional growth through the SIKAP program, with an overall mean Moderately Agree. The top three outcomes ranked highest by the scholars were gaining advanced knowledge in their field, earning academic units toward a master's or doctorate degree, and successfully completing their master's or doctorate degree. In contrast, the lowest-ranked outcomes were scholars being promoted to higher positions, being invited as resource persons in seminars, trainings, and workshops, and receiving industry awards.

2. The biggest problem encountered was delayed allowance disbursement, which affected scholars' ability to meet academic requirements. Scholars also cited heavy workloads, delays in thesis/dissertation publication, and unclear program guidelines as major concerns.

3. The most recommended intervention was evaluating scholars' teaching performance, research output, and innovative teaching methods. Scholars also supported quarterly re-orientation sessions and regular surveys to improve mentorship and administrative support.

Conclusions

1. The study highlights that while the Scholarship for Staff and Instructors' Knowledge Advancement Program (SIKAP) positively contributed to the academic and professional development of scholars, the overall impact was moderate. Scholars reported significant gains in their field knowledge and the successful completion of their master's or doctoral degrees, which are key indicators of academic growth. However, the program's influence on career progression, such as promotions, invitations to serve as industry experts, and recognition through awards, was less pronounced. This suggests that while SIKAP effectively enhances scholars' academic qualifications, additional support in areas such as career advancement and professional networking may be necessary to fully maximize the program's potential.
2. Financial and administrative challenges, such as delayed allowance disbursement, exhaustion to the many requirements, and the publication of thesis/dissertation takes too long that, affects the completion of the degree based on the original study plan, were among the key concerns raised by scholars. These issues suggest a need for more efficient financial management, academic support systems, and clearer communication between scholars and program administrators.
3. Evaluating teaching evaluations, research output, and adoption of innovative methods focuses on assessing scholars' academic contributions, conducting quarterly re-orientation and open forums emphasizing the need for regular engagement and communication between scholars and administrators and conducting surveys to assess satisfaction with mentorship, resources, and support highlights the importance of continuous feedback to improve the program. These interventions can help address challenges faced by scholars, improve their experience, and strengthen the program's overall effectiveness.

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