Innovativeness of a University: Its Implications to Individual and Organizational Transformation

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ABSTRACT

Innovativeness is a key component to an organization's success in an ever-changing educational landscape. This research aimed to determine the innovativeness of Aklan State University and its implications to individual and organizational transformation. The study utilized descriptive research design. Data was gathered using a standardized innovation quotient questionnaire answered by two hundred twenty-five (225) university administrators, faculty and staff, which was substantiated by focus group discussions. The data was statistically analyzed using descriptive measures such as mean and percentage, and inferential measures such as ANOVA. Findings revealed that 22.67% of the respondents are Innovators, 38.22% are Early Adopters, 28.89% are Early Majority, 6.22% are Late Majority, and 4.00% are Laggards/Traditionalists. The reasons for the perceived innovativeness of the university is its strong commitment to reaching international standards and the administration's full support in enhancing the capabilities of its faculty and staff. On the other hand, establishing training and incentive systems was suggested to be put in place to encourage innovative outputs. It is thus recommended that school leaders be deliberate in monitoring the level innovativeness of its personnel and foster a collaborative and stimulating environment to enhance the innovativeness of a university.

Introduction

The key to success of institutions or organizations depends on how they accept changes, and improve practices and competitiveness. All organizations have purpose: to meet the needs and wants of their clients or customer by doing innovation at some level of expertise. Organizational innovativeness is the willingness of administrators to encourage and support employees' innovation whereby the development of new knowledge and insights are promoted. Employees' innovativeness can bring number of benefits to an institution and it encourages the individual members to accept diverse ideas, open to newness and able to think in novel ways.

Innovativeness can be an engagement in innovative behaviors, which includes behaviors related to the innovation process such as idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization with the aim of producing innovations [1]. Furthermore, innovativeness is affected by differences in individual characteristics, for example, in terms of their demographic or biographic factors [2]. An individual's engagement in innovative work behaviors requires the individual to be both able (e.g. has certain cognitive capabilities, expertise, relevant task knowledge, necessary technical skills and personality characteristics) and willing (e.g. motivated and satisfied) to be innovative [3].

In analyzing the impact of four types of innovation (product, process, technological and organizational) on employee performance, results from the study of Osman, Mohamad Nor, and Lajin [4] revealed that the three types of innovations (product, process, and technological and organizational) were found to influence employee performance with the exception of attitude.

Setting up and motivating the employees to beyond their skills and knowledge involves an important step: organizations should cultivate a climate that is inviting, safe, and positive for employee innovators [5]. It is important for employees to know that the result of their idea has no impact on their job, furthering the feeling of a safe environment. Once the right mood has been set for innovation, it will be much easier to encourage employees to participate in the sharing of ideas, even if their initial suggestions are not enacted.

It is essential to consider that employee-driven innovations may take different forms and involve functions that can support innovative learning that goes beyond minor adjustments to the existing standards of production [6]. Moreover, employee-driven innovation may impose new demands on management leadership skills. It provides important guidance for future workplace development program, for vocational education and training or university activities that are customized to contexts to promote production capabilities, and to strengthen employee-driven innovation.

The relationship of organizational culture and innovation is very essential especially the multitude of cultural variables that led to a fragmented concept of culture for innovation [7]. Managerial practice requires an underlying structure in order to decide what culture should be implemented in order to innovate and to assess if a specific culture is an effective and efficient coordination instrument.

Innovation is of utmost importance to Aklan State University (ASU) as an institution committed to offer degree and non-degree curricula that would bring technological breakthrough in research, efficacy of extension and efficiency in production. In order to achieve this, the organization must have innovative people who are

capable of doing things differently, explore new things, embrace challenges and take risks by pushing the boundaries of their thinking.

ASU should already be at par with the ASEAN universities in terms of research. Innovative spirit should be initiated and internalized by everyone from the top down to the lowest level. Thus, this study was conducted to determine the innovativeness of Aklan State University and its implications to individual and organizational transformation. This study was conducted to determine the innovativeness of ASU and its implications to individual and organizational transformation.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following:
1. What is the level of perceived innovativeness of the University as assessed by administrators, faculty, and staff?
2. What is the overall innovativeness of ASU as perceived by the administrators, faculty, and staff and its implications to individual and organizational transformation?
3. What are the reasons on the perceived innovativeness of the university as assessed by the administrators, faculty, and staff?
4. What plan/s may be drawn from the study to serve as a model on how innovativeness can be strengthened or further internalized by everyone in the organization towards individual and organizational transformation?

Methods

The focus is on describing the characteristics of a phenomenon, and thus, observation and survey tools are employed to gather data [8]. It uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It involves collections of quantitative information that were tabulated to describe categories of information in a group situation. In the qualitative aspect, it gives a better and deeper understanding of a phenomenon on the basis of an in-depth study of the phenomenon.

The respondents of the study were ASU administrators, faculty and staff which were determined using stratified random sampling. The sample has a total of 225, obtained using the Slovin's formula taken from a population of 515.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents

Campus	No. of Respondents
ASU-Banga	77
ASU-Ibajay	37
ASU-New Washington	35
ASU-Makato	9
ASU-Kalibo	67
Total	**225**

The research instrument that was utilized in this study is the standardized questionnaire "Scales for the Measurement of Innovativeness" developed by Hurt, Joseph, & Cook [9] in order to determine the perceive innovativeness of the school administrators, faculty and staff of Aklan State University. Then, data was substantiated by focus group discussions (FGDs) to answer questions in the qualitative aspect. The qualitative data served to strengthen the results of the study. Descriptive statistics such as mean and percentage were used. In order to interpret the innovation quotient, the following scores and description adopted from Hurt, et al. [9] were utilized:

Table 2. Interpretation of Innovation Quotient

Score	Description
80 – above	Innovators
69-80	Early adopters
57-68	Early Majority
46-56	Late Majority
Below 45	Laggards/Traditionalists

The researcher sought the approval of the University President prior to the conduct of the study. After the permission was approved, the researcher circulated the survey questionnaire to the respondents to gather the data needed in the study.

Conclusion

Table 3 presents the profile of the respondents based on their sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, academic rank, length of service, monthly gross income, designation, and number of years in present designation.

Table 3. Profile of the Respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	82	36.44%
Female	143	63.56%
Total	225	100.00%
Civil Status		
Single	81	36.00%
Married	126	56.00%
Separated	7	3.11%

Widowed	11	4.89%
Total	225	100.00%
Highest Educational		
Bachelor's Degree	56	24.89%
Bachelor's w/ Masters Degree	46	20.44%
Masters Degree	63	28.00%
Masters w/ Doctorate Degree	29	12.89%
Doctorate Degree	31	13.78%
Total	225	100.00%
Academic Rank		
Instructor I-III	44	19.56%
Assistant Professor I-IV	35	15.56%
Assistant Professor I-V	46	20.44%
Professor I-VI	17	7.56%
University Professor	7	3.11%
Other	76	33.78%
Total	225	100.00%
Length of Service		
0-5 years	64	28.44%
6-10 years	23	10.22%
11-15 years	30	13.33%
16-20 years	20	8.89%
21-25 years	11	4.89%
26 years and above	14	6.22%
Other	63	28.00%
Total	225	100.00%
Monthly Income		
Php 10,000 and below	55	24.44%
Php 10,001- 20,000	51	22.67%
Php 20,001- 30,000	45	20.00%
Php 30,001- 40,000	32	14.22%
Php 40, 000 and above	42	18.67%
Total	225	100.00%

Designation		
Campus Administrator	9	4.00%
Chair Person / Coordinator	62	27.56%
Other	61	27.11%
None	93	41.33%
Total	225	100.00%
Number of Years in the Present Designation		
1-5 years	97	43.11%
6-10 years	38	16.89%
Other	90	40.00%
Total	225	100.00%

Table 4 presents the innovativeness of the respondents based on the questionnaire and scale developed by Hurt, et al. [9]. Data revealed that fifty-one (51) or 22.67% are Innovators, eight-six (86) or 38.22% are Early Adopters, sixty-five (65) or 28.89% are Early Majority, fourteen (14) or 6.22% are Late Majority, and nine (9) or 4% are Laggards/Traditionalists.

Table 4. Innovativeness of Respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Innovators	51	22.67%
Early Adopters	86	38.22%
Early Majority	65	28.89%
Late Majority	14	6.22%
Laggards/Traditionalists	9	4.00%
Total	**225**	**100.00%**

Overall, the average innovation quotient for the university is 72.10, indicating that ASU as a whole has the "Early Adopter" level of innovativeness.
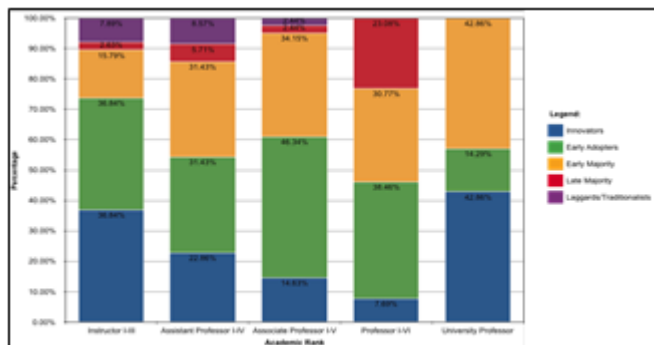
Figure 1. Profile of Innovativeness by

Figure 1 presents the the profile of innovativeness based on academic rank. Majority of Innovators were in the ranks of University Professor (42.86%) and Instructors I-III (36.84%). This indicates that innovativeness may be attributed to the openness to new ideas of younger instructors, and innovativeness may also come from the years of expertise for professors. On the other and, Laggards/Traditionalists were in the ranks of Instructors I-III (7.89%), Assistant Professor I-IV (8.57%) and Associate Professor I-V (2.44%). This indicates that as a faculty progresses through the ranks, they also free themselves of antiquated concepts and become more innovative.
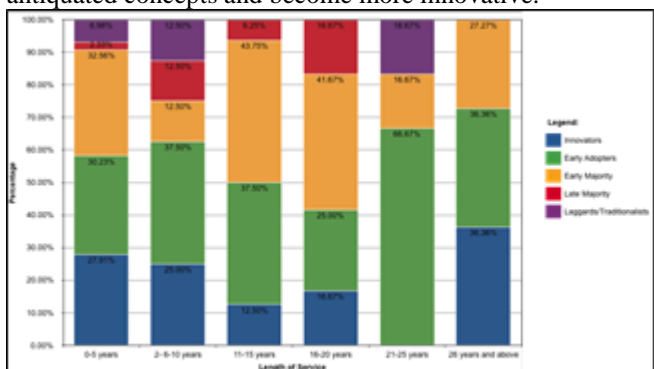

Figure 2. Profile of Innovativeness by

This trend is also seen in Figure 2, which shows that the percentage of Laggards/Traditionalists lessen as years in service increase, and the percentage of Innovators increase correspondingly with the length of service in the university.

Answer from the focus group discussions also revealed that most respondents perceive their innovativeness as high. One staff reasoned that he could "go with the flow and follow the trend." An administrator detailed,

"I believe my innovativeness is very high because I not only work for what is existing but I also am looking into what the College of Teacher Education and the university should be in the future. Hence I am proposing structures that are not there yet, such as the creation of a Center for Akeanon Heritage."

This innovativeness is perceived not only in the individual but also on an institutional level, with one respondent stating, "I observe the conscious efforts of the university to embark on internationalization, for example, faculty studying abroad, OJT for students abroad, agreements with foreign Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) and the like."

This innovation is cascaded to the members of the institution, as one respondent also noticed that "there is a lot of change in the behavior of students and staff. They are being more responsible". Another adds, "The continual progress of the university in terms of student awareness, quality education, and facilities are the exceptional innovation that each stakeholder currently cherish highly." One faculty reasoned that there is high innovativeness because the university is gearing "to achieve international standard".

The respondents believe that their perceived innovativeness contributes to the betterment of the university. One respondent said that it aids in the "transformation of the system", another commented that it "improves the quality of the delivery of services", and one staff stated that "the improvement of the system is seen not just by the staff but also the students, such as the implementation of new rules and regulations".

The effects are also felt personally by the people in the organization. One administrator conveyed that, "My innovation will improve my self-concept of a person making a difference in the organization. The organization will benefit from the objectives in setting-up a center and support will come from external sources." Another administrator remarked that, "It will drive people to improve in their own ways of understanding and doing things in the academe and industry. Ultimately, it will create improvements on the university in terms of instruction, research, creative outputs and the like."

However, the respondents also voiced that there is still much more to do before the university can reach it full potential. An administrator commented, "The university is just taking off from being innovative. We still have a lot to do to develop the physical, mental and emotional aspects of personnel towards the success of the organization."

In order to strengthen innovativeness, the respondents highlighted the need for research into the area. One faculty commented that there is a need for "more studies and discoveries for the enhancement or progress of the university". A staff stated that there should be "continuous planning and active participation in research". An administrator reasoned that, "further study or realizations that can push the administration more to create further progress for the university."

An administrator also zoomed in on the need for training and incentives, stating that " Training may first be conducted to orient the faculty and staff on the desirable value of being innovative. After that, the university may provide incentives for innovative ideas that will transform the organization."

Leaders as models of change was also suggested by a respondent, saying that innovativeness can be strengthened "by showing how discipling and responsible the leaders are to the members." Another suggested "institutionalizing internationalization efforts from all departments" to unify the university in its progress towards international standards.

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Majority of the administrators, faculty, and staff are Early Adopters and Innovators. They show a willingness to

to adapt to the changing trends by suggesting ideas for the betterment of the university;

2.   Aklan State University is at an Early Adopter level of innovativeness which means that the   people in the institution are progressing towards becoming innovators and systems must be put in place to propel the university to the next level;

3.   The university is perceived to have a high level of innovativeness because of the continuous improvement in services. In addition, innovativeness among administrators, faculty and staff has been high due to the the university's efforts to reach international standards; and

4.   Innovativeness can be strengthened through further research into the area, wherein results or realizations can be used as basis for trainings which would enable members of the organization to internalize the concepts.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are hereby recommended:

1.   The university must promote a culture of acceptance and collaboration by encouraging administrators, faculty, staff and students to share ideas that would enhance the quality of services in the institution;

2.   The university may provide incentives or awards for transformative ideas in order to encourage innovativeness among administrators, faculty, and staff;

3.   A Day of Recognition for Innovators may be conducted to acknowledge and appreciate innovative ideas generated from faculty and staff, thereby creating a positive environment to foster transformation in the university;

4.   The expertise of higher-ups may be cascaded to other members of the institution through trainings and setting examples for them to follow;

5.   Efforts for institutionalizing internationalization must be coordinated with various departments and colleges of the university to ensure that all divisions progress in a united manner; and

6.   Further research into innovativeness may be conducted to gain in-depth knowledge on practices that spur innovation in organizations.

Acknowledgement

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