Status and Prospects of SUC Laboratory Schools in Strengthening Innovative and Technological English Language Teaching and Teacher Preparation

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Abstract

This paper examines the characteristics and prospects of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) laboratory schools as educational institutions. Laboratory schools, integrated within SUCs play a vital role in providing hands-on learning experiences for English Pre-Service Teachers. However, there is a need to assess their present characteristics for further development and improvement. Thus, this research examined the characteristics of SUC laboratory schools in terms of its mission, goals, and objectives, physical plant and facilities, budget or financial resources, curriculum content and development, faculty profile and staffing, organizational structure and lines of authority, implementation of policies and programs on student selection and admission, pre-service teacher training and development, and instructional performance, pedagogical and curricular innovations, research and utilization, and instructional materials development and production to explore into the prospects of SUC laboratory schools at present. Moreover, this study uses a mixed-model descriptive research design to analyze the status of four SUC laboratory schools using data collected through surveys and the Delphi method from 385 respondents. The findings reveal the positive impact of laboratory schools on English Pre-Service Teachers' learning outcomes, their role in fostering research and innovation, and their challenges such as resource limitations and inadequate infrastructure. The study recommends strengthening partnerships with external organizations, expanding collaborations, and implementing comprehensive teacher training programs to enhance pedagogical skills and promote innovation in teaching practices. The findings can also guide policymakers, administrators, and educators in formulating strategies to enhance the effectiveness of SUC laboratory schools in delivering high-quality education.

Keywords: *Teacher Preparation, English Language Teaching Educational Innovation, Curriculum Development, Faculty Profile and Staffing*

1. Introduction

The importance of education cannot be overemphasized. That is why a strong formal education and retooling of teachers implies the responsibility and commitment to provide the best education for prospective teachers in teacher training institutions especially from state universities and colleges (SUCs). The recent developments in Philippine education, particularly the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program through Republic Act No. 10533, have been instrumental

in shaping the current landscape of teacher education. This reform, which added Kindergarten and two additional years to basic education, prompted a thorough review of the relevance and quality of teacher preparation. As a result, it led to the development of a new framework for teacher quality—the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). This standard has contributed to important advancements in teacher training and professional development. These events have remarkably high stakes in SUC Teacher Training Institutions and the prospects of its laboratory schools for teacher training, pedagogy, and research.

In this context, a laboratory school is a university-run or affiliated elementary or secondary school for teacher training, demonstration, educational research. It serves as a setting to develop, test, and model innovative teaching practices [4]. Laboratory schools can be found in comprehensive colleges and universities, or research and other specialized or technical institutions. They are diverse in terms of the population served, programs offered, and operations. In Zamboanga Peninsula, the researcher's immediate community, there are state universities and colleges that offer teacher education programs for undergraduate level. The laboratory school or Integrated Laboratory School (ILS) supported the institution's teacher education program by providing preservice teachers with the necessary exposures and practical experiences to link theory learned in the classroom into practice based on their field observations and practice teaching experience. Since their inception, the fundamental purpose, structure, and goals of laboratory schools have remained a topic of debate, particularly within the broader context of 21st-century education, research, and teacher development. Nonetheless, innovations continue to emerge within these institutions. As highlighted by Elicker and Barbour [4], some laboratory schools, like in early childhood education, have actively pursued research-driven improvements aligned with their evolving mission in higher education.

In 1996, when all laboratory schools in both public and private higher education institutions were placed under the supervision of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), it began reviewing the existence of laboratory schools in SUCs and CHED Supervised Institutions (CSIs). Subsequently, it released Orders 4 and 8 series of 1996 and Order No. 21 series of 1997 to limit the operations of laboratory schools, including downsizing the enrolment to 600 students and phasing out of laboratory schools of those TEIs not offering Elementary Education Program while the secondary programs of CSIs were also ordered to close effective CY 1997-98 [5]. These resulted in SUCs offering the laboratory school program to cease or limit operations after the national issuances and only those SUCs offering both elementary (BEED) and secondary (BSED) teacher education programs continued to operate. It is only during the K-12 Transition period that DepEd has entered into a memorandum of agreement with SUCs to accommodate learners in the ILS and authorized the increase of the number of students that resulted to the reopening of the SUCs laboratory schools for limited programs only, particularly the junior high school and few strands of senior high school.

Meanwhile, amidst laboratory schools valued contribution to preservice teacher training, research and institutional outreach, there has been increasing criticisms and critical scrutiny about them from multiple value perspectives since the early 20th century [5]. In a laboratory school setting, where preservice teachers gain teaching experience in an "*ideal*" classroom environment, with smaller class sizes and students selected based on academic quality [2], the experience is limited. Such conditions do not fully reflect the "*real world*" challenges that teacher education students are likely to encounter outside the campus [20]. This disparity raises concerns about the

authenticity and effectiveness of the training provided in such environments. Consequently, questions persist regarding the extent to which laboratory schools truly prepare preservice teachers for the complexities of diverse and resource-constrained classroom settings.

Furthermore, in recent years, both local and international laboratory schools have also faced serious threats due to budget constraints and questions of sustainability. Foreign university-based laboratory schools, for instance, have been audited for their relevance, cost-effectiveness, and the prioritization of functions beyond teacher training [4]. This brings to the forefront the issue of accountability—specifically, whether the resources allocated to laboratory schools are being utilized effectively for their intended educational [5]. Additionally, there has been a growing struggle to maintain the balance among their service, training, and research functions, with the latter increasingly diminishing in practice.

Compounding these challenges is the critical issue of financing. Laboratory schools require substantial investment in terms of personnel, facilities, and operations, making them difficult to sustain within the limited budgets of state-funded institutions. During periods of fiscal constraint, justifying continued support for these schools becomes increasingly difficult. In the Philippine context, many SUCs have faced pressure to downsize or close their laboratory schools altogether due to financial and operational limitations. Similarly, in the United States, numerous child development laboratory schools have experienced reduced funding and are at risk of closure. In response to these threats, some teacher education institutions have adopted more sustainable alternatives, such as smaller clinical laboratories embedded within campuses. These settings offer focused opportunities for teaching practice, curricular experimentation, and classroom simulations using tools like hypermedia, written cases, and multimedia. These adaptations reflect a broader shift toward more scalable and flexible models of teacher preparation in considering financial, institutional, and pedagogical challenges. The challenges of sustainability, relevance, and alignment with contemporary educational reforms raise important questions about laboratory schools' future role and contribution. There is a growing need to critically examine the status and viability of SUC laboratory schools at present in fulfilling their mandate within teacher education programs. This is to strengthen English language teaching and teacher preparation amidst ongoing policy shifts, financial constraints, and evolving educational demands.

Literature Review

Dictionary definitions of a laboratory school, with the earliest known meaning dating to 1901, highlight commonalities such as being operated by or affiliated with a college or university that trains teachers and being used for experience-based learning, especially for student teaching and demonstrating classroom practices (Collins Dictionary; Merriam-Webster). This concept originated from John Dewey who runs a laboratory school at the University of Chicago. His laboratory school focuses more on research while training educational professionals in the background.

Advances in education have contributed to a new concept of laboratory schools that apply pedagogy based on recent research. For example, Khan Lab School, a non-profit independent school affiliated with Khan Academy, provides free, world-class education using technology as its educational platform. Although it is not affiliated with a university, the school justifies the use of the term "*lab school*" by stating on its website that it "*monitors existing and new findings in education research and learning science to inform its programmatic choices*" [7].

The restructuring of a laboratory school environment and operations emanates from the periodic review of the school's mission statement. This allows the school to critically analyze their role in the university and the community. In the early years of the twenty-first century, there was a new advocacy from scholars for the laboratory schools "*to move beyond the mere accumulation of scientific knowledge to the dissemination of this information to improve the lives of children and families*" – this novel approach has been labeled Applied Developmental Science (ADS). This approach imply that "*the laboratory school becomes a place where students or faculty ask questions, often based on observations of real-life problems, and then can carefully observe, reflect, report on, and make recommendations that can influence the thinking and actions of other professionals*". Thus, the lab school becomes a workshop for ADS, where students learn through meaningful exploration and discovery and take part in both the generation and dissemination of new knowledge".

Today, laboratory schools worldwide are increasingly establishing connections with each other, with many of them becoming affiliated with the International Association of Laboratory and University Affiliated Schools (IALS). The IALS website highlights that the concept of laboratory schools varies depending on the specific contexts in which they were created. However, the core characteristics of laboratory schools, as outlined by IALS, include curriculum development, educational experimentation, professional development, research, and teacher training. According to IALS, laboratory schools take responsibility for designing their own curriculum, tailoring it to meet the specific needs of their students. These schools provide an environment that fosters educational experimentation, encouraging teachers to explore innovative teaching approaches and methods. Moreover, they prioritize the professional development of their educators and staff, ensuring they receive continuous training and support. Research is highly valued in laboratory schools, as they actively engage in scholarly activities to advance educational practices. Lastly, these schools play a crucial role in training future teachers, offering them comprehensive mentorship and guidance during their practical experience.

In the Philippine context, laboratory schools in State Universities and Colleges almost share common features and functions as reviewed from their official websites, that is, a laboratory school is a subunit of a teacher training institution primarily to promote pre-service teacher development and research as well as to serve as the institution's extension or outreach. The common organizational structure of laboratory schools often operates within the academic framework of the university commonly located within education colleges, either at the graduate or undergraduate level, with a designated administrator, who could be a faculty member or staff member, directly reporting to the dean [12]. In review on the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college-and university-based teacher education, he pointed out that pre-service teacher education should be centered on clinical. This included the creation of campus-based laboratory schools on college and university campuses where "*particular teaching approaches can be demonstrated and practiced under the guidance of university faculty and staff*".

Correspondingly, the first laboratory schools to be established began with a focus on teacher training, titled "*Normal Schools*", and were created for the purpose of pre-service training for future teachers and researching how children learn [12]. In the process of acquiring these skills, a program of field observations or field study is experienced by the students and would culminate in actual teaching experience known as practice teaching. All these experiences from field study and observations to practice teaching are conveniently held in a controlled environment called

laboratory schools. The apprenticeship model was employed in these institutions wherein student teachers serve as apprentices to the master teachers. In recent years, however, most of these institutions forge long-term agreements with cooperating schools for these pre-service experiential and field observation activities rather than maintaining a laboratory school. Maintaining laboratory schools or establishing agreements with cooperating schools for teacher training is a mandated requirement in CHED policies on teacher education programs. Recent teacher training aligns with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, expecting pre-service teachers to acquire the essential knowledge and skills for effective teaching and to meet the entry criteria defined by the Beginning Teacher Indicators.

Along this development, many English teaching experiments have emanated from rigorous evaluations as they were implemented and carried out in laboratory schools. These schools offer fertile ground for enhancing educational practices in English Language Teaching within an authentic context providing immediate feedback and practical insights among researchers and educators. Moreover, this realistic environment bridges the gap between theory and practical classroom application to test new innovative approaches to be effective and adaptable. Experiments like John Flavell's "Theory of the Mind" and Walter Mischel's "The marshmallow test" were all set in laboratory schools and have contributed significantly to the fields of cognitive development and child behavior [7]. By founding experiments in a non-simulated setting dynamic, laboratory schools continue to serve as a ground for evidence-based educational innovation.

Moreover, several empirical evidence also stress the benefits and effectiveness of laboratory schools in enhancing English language learning outcomes. One such example is the study of where they conducted a quasi-experimental study on Numbered Heads Together strategy on English learning in a university affiliated Elementary school. Similarly [16], Yuan and Lee conducted action research to a university partnered secondary school involving Augmented Reality-supported language teaching [21]. While both studies demonstrated significant gains in learners' comprehension and language retention, their true importance lies in highlighting the role of laboratory schools as environments that effectively facilitate the implementation of innovative pedagogical strategies within authentic classroom settings. Hence, the success of these interventions supports the broader claim that laboratory schools, by virtue of their flexible and research-friendly environments, are essential for innovating and strengthening English language instruction.

Beyond student progress, laboratory schools also shape teacher efficacy and develop their professional attitude. In a study of a public laboratory school in the Philippines, found that school culture contributed positively to teacher efficacy [1], whereas burnout accounted for the efficacy decline. In the same vein, reported that through the partnership of a university and laboratory school, English teachers have improved their instructional capabilities and professional resilience [8]. Henning [10], emphasize that these schools serve as dual sites for teaching and research, fostering reflective practice and enabling pre-service teachers to integrate theory with practice. Their autonomy and infrastructure further support innovative ELT approaches, benefiting both learners and educators.

As an avenue for Research and Development, Dewey, [12] noted that the primary goal of laboratory schools was to investigate educational theories and apply the knowledge to practical teaching. Dewey envisioned the University of Chicago Laboratory School as a leader in advancing research-based pedagogical practices and enhancing student engagement. However, highlighted

that state-mandated standards-based reforms have constrained the progressive nature of laboratory school curricula by imposing uniform knowledge and assessment requirements. In response, the International Association of Laboratory Schools advocated for autonomy in programs, curricula, and research to maintain their role as innovative alternatives to traditional schools.

Despite their intended foundational role in aspects of education, laboratory schools in the Philippines have received limited scholarly attention in recent decades. A review of unpublished theses and CHED-funded research reveals that the most recent comprehensive national study was conducted in 2001 [5]. This points to a concerning gap in current discourse, especially as the educational landscape has changed significantly since then. Earlier studies such as Belgica [2] already acknowledged this lack of literature, which prompted an institutional case study on the laboratory high school of Bicol University. Belgica's work focused on internal factors such as curriculum, faculty, instructional strategies, and the resulting student outputs, culminating in a five-year development proposal [2].

De Guzman's CHED-commissioned research critically evaluated the roles of laboratory schools in teacher education, advocating for their expanded function beyond student teaching [5]. The study suggested that these schools should serve as centers for demonstration teaching, curriculum innovation, materials development, and professional development. Using a combination of Scriven's formative-summative evaluation model and Stufflebeam's CIPP framework, the research assessed mission statements, program inputs, teaching processes, and outcomes. Complementary studies also analyzed similar dimension, ranging from faculty qualifications and teaching methods to facilities and student performance [4], across various laboratory schools. While earlier studies recognized the potential of laboratory schools as research and innovation hubs, this role has largely been underutilized. For instance, the documented that research conducted within these schools remains minimal, often due to limited infrastructure and lack of institutional support [6]. International literature supports the claim that the sustainability of laboratory schools is highly dependent on three interrelated factors: research productivity, institutional reputation, and revenue generation. Although research is typically embedded in laboratory schools' mission statements, few schools have achieved strong research profiles or established significant partnerships with local public-school districts, which could enhance their relevance and impact.

In the Philippines, the sustainability of laboratory schools is further challenged by financial constraints. Tuition-based funding models often prove inadequate, particularly in institutions serving diverse and economically disadvantaged populations. Some schools rely on state subsidies or philanthropic donations, but these funding streams are inconsistent and often insufficient to maintain long-term operations. Another key issue is policy-driven decline. Since CHED's establishment in 1994, several laboratory schools have been downsized or closed due to orders such as CHED Memorandum Orders No. 4 and 8 (1996), and No. 21 (1997), which phased out non-aligned teacher education programs. Consequently, many SUCs have ceased operating laboratory schools, yet CHED has no updated or centralized database regarding which institutions have retained them.

Criticisms of laboratory schools include their failure to reflect the realities of public education. Scholars have described them as "*ivory towers*"—idealized environments that do not adequately prepare pre-service teachers for the challenges of public schools [20]. While such environments offer structured and safe learning conditions, critics argue that they may not expose student-teachers to the diversity and unpredictability of real classrooms. De Guzman found that student-

teachers gained more hands-on experience in off-campus placements than in laboratory schools, partly because of the limited capacity of laboratory schools to accommodate large numbers of student-teachers [5]. Furthermore, faculty members received low ratings in engaging student-teachers in professional discussions or sharing current research, which undermines the laboratory schools' potential as learning communities.

Although original conception of laboratory schools emphasized research and innovation, this function appears largely neglected in current practice. In most SUCs, laboratory schools are primarily used as venues for practice teaching, rather than as centers for educational experimentation or professional development [5];[6]. Resource limitations and uneven funding across regions further hinder the advancement of laboratory schools, especially in terms of access to technology-based facilities and research support.

There is a clear and pressing need for updated research on laboratory schools in the Philippines. Most existing studies are dated, institution-specific, and lack a systems-level perspective. Moreover, current literature fails to address how laboratory schools can adapt to new educational demands, integrate technology, foster inclusive teaching practices, or contribute meaningfully to teacher education in a decentralized and increasingly diversified national education system. These gaps highlight the importance of conducting a contemporary, comprehensive study on the current status, challenges, and prospects of laboratory schools in the Philippines.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded on the Systems Theory which sees an organization as "an interrelated entity with various parts that fit together mutually reinforcing each other as a system to produce the observed outcome [13]. The systems theory views all organizations as open systems. Their survival depends on the interaction with the surrounding environment. General systems theory assumes that "everything is a part of a larger interdependent arrangement, that in order to understand an organization one must know both the parts and the relations between them [13].

The systems theory with input-output analysis of the program was given emphasis and importance in the administration, supervision, and achievement of desired results in education. All facets of the educational system are interrelated to accomplish the set institutional mission and goals. The conceptualized that the school system is a "processor" consisting of workers, buildings, equipment, and material, with inputs of money and raw materials in the form of students, and with outputs in the form of human materials that has been developed and improved by the educational services provided by the processor. On the other hand, pointed out that to achieve the objectives and to have real accomplishments, inputs such as students, teachers, physical facilities are to be converted or processes through a series of educational strategies, tools, and techniques. The conversion of the system means the use of educational processes or conversion techniques to optimize the most from the inputs. The processes include instruction, record, community or extension services, governance and management systems, counseling, and consultancy. Expected outputs are the graduates, community services and other clienteles served.

The Systems theory is supported by the Structural-Functional theory traced in the works of which is the development theory. The functional approach to social change is like an International Building Model, the basic premise of which is that change is introduced primarily in and through formal organizations. In this model, the change agent has some *official and political sponsorship* which attempts to introduce changes in the social system. In the change process, the change does

not coerce but influences those who are to be affected by the innovation. The change agent is identified as a leadership which has the following tasks: define the problems and needs into programs through policies and action measures; mobilize human and physical resources; combine these resources into structures of authority which perform functions that facilitate the implementation of the planned innovation. Human resources are mobilized and developed into structures that enable the organizations to implement its programs through direct participation which has two factors: decentralization or dispersion of authoritative decision-making from the top of the institutional hierarchies downward from within the organization and outward to the people affected and direct involvement of the citizens in the decision-making process (Boyle, 1981).

While many developments have occurred in teacher training as of writing, there has been a limited discourse about laboratory schools and their management, and a dearth of more recent studies were conducted at the national and local level. Is today's laboratory school still relevant? Has it evolved from its previous function or mandate? An explorative study of a state university or college -based laboratory school will be a valuable contribution to the knowledge pool. It is because of the foregoing reasons that this study was conducted to examine the status including best practices and rate the most pressing issues, challenges, and prospects of a State University and College-Based Laboratory School to strengthen its viability and rationalize its new strategic purpose and direction.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study aims to determine the Characteristics and Prospects of a SUC-based laboratory school and examine the practices and the emerging issues and the challenges that the respondent SUC have encountered in its implementation from the lens of the administrators and faculty, laboratory students, and pre-service teachers.

Specifically, it intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of SUC laboratory schools in terms of:
    a. Mission, goals, and objectives
    b. Physical plant and facilities
    c. Budget or financial resources
    d. Curriculum content and development
    e. Faculty profile and staffing
    f. Organizational structure and lines of authority
    g. Implementation of policies and programs on student selection and admission
    h. English Pre-Service -Teacher training and development, and instructional performance
    i. Pedagogical and curricular innovations, Research and utilization, and Instructional materials development and production
2. What are the prospects of SUC laboratory schools?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The respondents of the study included the SUC administrators who are directly involved in the management of laboratory schools such as the Lab school principals (and their equivalent) of the teacher education institution; Faculty who are teaching in the laboratory schools or cooperating with the college's teacher education and training; English Pre-Service Teacher Education Students who have experience in the laboratory school; Laboratory school students; and a separate group of experts on the subject.

The respondents and SUCs laboratory schools, were purposively selected through convenience sampling due to its accessibility and relevance to the research conditions. Fisher's formula was used in determining the sample size of 385 drawing an assumption at the 95% level of confidence with a 5% margin of error. A sampling proportion was used to determine the sample strata for each group of respondents, and the representative samples were drawn randomly from the responses using the RAND function in Microsoft Excel. The respondent groups who represent the subject matter experts were selected through purposive (nonprobability) sampling to participate in the study. The purposive sampling method concentrates on depth rather than breadth and requires a phenomenological understanding from the participant's "insider perspective" [20]. Any of following criteria were used for the selection of experts to participate in this study:

Table 1 *Distribution of Respondents Selected to Assess the Perceived Characteristics of* SUC *Laboratory School*

Respondent Groups	**Laboratory in a State University**			**Laboratory in a State College**			**Total n**
	N	%	N	N	%	n	
Administrators	4	0.3	1	3	0.2	1	2
Faculty	44	5.5	21	23	1.3	5	26
Laboratory school students	275	58.2	224	157	10.1	39	263
Pre-service Teachers	57	13.6	52	83	10.8	42	94
Total	380	77.6	298	266	22.4	87	385

2.2 Data Collection

The study was conducted in a state-run, publicly funded university and college laboratory school in Zamboanga Peninsula. Two (2) state-universities and two (2) state-colleges have met the desired conditions for the study to include accessibility, security, and ease of conducting the research. The respondent SUCs offer a laboratory school for its teacher education programs.

Furthermore, this research used a mixed-model descriptive research design where data were collected from survey questionnaires. One method used the survey questionnaire to determine the perceived assessment of the respondents to describe the characteristics of the laboratory schools in terms of their delivery systems. Another method used subject-matter experts through the Delphi survey and as a supplement to the quantitative descriptive survey method. In this method a panel of experts of laboratory school operations and management were enlisted to identify and describe the most pressing issues, challenges, and prospects for viability for a SUC laboratory

school. The Delphi method theorizes that the best sources of predictive information for any discipline or field are from the experts within that discipline [20].

2.3 Data Analysis

2.3.1 Statistical Treatment

The descriptive statistics below were used in the analysis and interpretation of the data. The quantitative measures in treatment for each research objective are as follows:

The Median. This measure of central tendency was used in determining the perceived characteristics of the SUC laboratory school. This was also used to analyze the experts' responses in Round 2 of the Delphi process. The median interprets the responses for each indicator of the respective dimensions of the laboratory school characteristics for the respective respondents. The data were described and interpreted using the central tendencies as follows:

Table 2 *Adequacy, Attainability or Awareness in the Implementation of Mission, Goals, and Objectives*

Median	**Quantitative Rating**	**Interpretation**
4	4	Strongly Agree (SA): (Very Adequate/ Very Attainable/ Very Aware in the Implementation)
3	3	Agree (A): (Adequate/ Attainable/ Aware in the Implementation)
2	2	Disagree (D): (Less Adequate/ Less Attainable/ Less Aware in the Implementation)
1	1	Strongly Disagree (SD) (Not Adequate/ Not Attainable/ Not Aware in the Implementation)

Mann-Whitney U Test. This measure was used in determining whether there is a significant difference between State Universities and State Colleges on their perceived characteristics of their respective laboratory schools.

Kruskal-Wallis Test. This measure was used in determining whether there is a significant difference in the perception of the respondents on the characteristics of the laboratory schools' delivery systems

3. Results

3.1 Characteristics of the SUC Laboratory Schools

The different colleges and universities, in general, strongly agree (*Median* = 4) to best practices in relation to mission, goals and objectives, physical plant and facilities, budget and financial resources, curriculum content and development, faculty profile and staffing, organizational structure and lines of authority, implementation of policies and programs on student selection and admission, pre-service -teacher training and development, and instructional performance and, pedagogical and curricular innovations, Research and utilization, and Instructional materials development and production.

In terms of the mission, goals, and objectives, all respondents from the different categories responded either agree or strongly agree (*Median*= 3 to 4) to each statement. From the data, there is a high to a very high degree (*Median*= 3 to 4) of perceived awareness, adequacy of implementation and or attainability of the laboratory school's mission, goals, and objectives to a great extent across all the respondents.

There is a high to very high degree (*Median* 3 to 4) of functionally adequate and perceived to be very important to the laboratory school physical plant and facilities reported by the respondents.

In terms of budget, there is somewhat adequate to very adequate (*Median*= 3 to 4) extent of implementation of the laboratory school's budget or financial resources as reported by the respondents in the respective median values for each indicator. This is further supported by the reported findings in the characteristics of the laboratory school in the previous discussion in terms of its physical facilities where the respondents may have found the provision for equipment and facilities only somewhat adequate and functional, and it may be due to financing concerns. In addition, capital outlay in SUCs requires support and financing from the national government but requires every SUC to generate from within the agency the means to finance it. This may be why the respondents strongly concurred that, "*It is important and necessary that the Laboratory School operates from a combination of state funding, tuition-based financing program and indirect financial support for its sustainability*". This is consistent with the findings where some laboratory schools rely on state funding for financial support and other philanthropic funds to cover the costs of capital improvement projects or in the form of scholarships, and in the context of the study, government subsidies through the Education Service Contracting (ESC) voucher program under the Government Assistance to Private Education (GASTPE) that cover full tuition for a designated child especially for Grades 11 and 12 (Senior High School). This is not an uncommon observation in SUCs where the bulk of expenditures (about 75%) is reserved for personal services (PS) which goes to the salaries and benefits of the faculty, and the rest goes to maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE, 22%) and only about 3% for capital outlay (CO). This implies that the programming for expenditures in SUCs is dependent upon its strategic directions, and until the laboratory school's relevance poses a significant potential and value in the attainment of this direction, it will continue to be more understated.

The laboratory school's curriculum content and development as reported by the respondents are very relevant and very adequate (Median= 3 to 4). Worth noting is the curriculum content and development for teacher training and experience in basic education for both regular and students with special needs. Like most SUC laboratory schools in the country, its most common function is teacher training and education by providing relevant classroom experience in a controlled setup.

As regards faculty profile and staffing, the respondents agree to strongly agree (*Median*= 3 to 4) on the indicators of quality and preparedness of the faculty profile and staffing in the SUC laboratory school. The indicators include requirements such as a valid professional teacher's license, relevant work experience, educational qualification and training, and skills in instruction and in conducting pedagogical and curricular experimentation and innovation. The reported results reflect both the requirement for selection of faculty and the current staffing in both university and college laboratory schools. This is a good indicator of the hiring and selection process of laboratory school faculty in state colleges and universities which commits to ensuring quality education especially for the teacher education programs and the institutional needs especially for research, production, and extension.

The SUC laboratory school has a very systematically coordinated organizational relationships (Median = 4) as reported in the results all respondents agree to strongly agree on all indicators for organizational structure and lines of authority. The findings describe the laboratory school organization like that in [12] that laboratory schools are viewed as units within a college at the graduate or undergraduate level with the laboratory school administrator (faculty or staff) directly reporting to the dean.

In terms of student selection and admission, the respondents somewhat agree to strongly agree (*Median*= 3 to 4) on almost all statements pertaining to student selection and admission, while university administrator and faculty disagrees (*Median*=2) on some statements. These include how the respondents view policies on the selection and admission in the laboratory school as consistently implemented. As regards selection procedures they view achievement test scores coupled with interview and equal demographic representation as an important bases for selection to the laboratory school more than lottery or any impartial drawing selection especially from the perspective of the university laboratory school administration and faculty. This student selection practice preferred by SUCs counters the observation noted in Bersani and Hutchins (2003) as one of the criticisms of laboratory schools that failed to serve a diverse group of students [12]. If laboratory schools were to adopt new mandates from both national and local communities in need, and to strengthen the generalizability of research findings, lab schools may have to sustain and or ensure this enrolment and admission practices that would not only benefit PST training but also other state and institutional mandates especially in research and pedagogical experimentation.

In terms of pre-service training, all faculty, students, and PST in both university and college laboratory school respondents said they strongly agree *(Median* = 4) to each statement except for the college administrator who agreed but not as strongly (*Median*= 3) compared with the other respondents. This means that the laboratory school "operates to train teachers and is used for experience-based learning especially for student-teaching and demonstration of classroom practices" and "effectively provides well-trained and well-developed PSTs in terms of instructional performance". Consequently, the laboratory schoolteachers who served as cooperating teachers in the training and development of the PSTs during their field experience, gets to receive continuing professional education by constantly updating themselves through the mentoring of PSTs. The results imply the indispensable role of the laboratory school as a controlled environment for observing and or experiencing the actual classroom setting prior to deployment to nearby basic education institutions.

The English PSTs' self-evaluation and the Administrator and Faculty group on the PSTs' instructional performance in terms of the five major indicators, i.e., *Knowledge and Pedagogy,*

Learning Environment, Diversity of Learners, Curriculum and Planning, and Assessment and Reporting is highly effective. It is also noted that among the five indicators, the respondents are unanimously amenable (*Strongly Agree, Median=4*) that the PSTs are highly effective specifically on the following: *Learning Environment, Diversity of Learners, and Assessment and Reporting.* The respondents view that in terms of instructional performance; PSTs are highly effective and apparently this is the laboratory school's area of strength. Another observation worth noting that validates the opportunity provided by the respondent laboratory school by allowing the participation of students with special needs into the mainstream classes through the inclusive education program. This allows for a more inclusive classroom which adds more features to classroom experiences for the PSTs and has contributed to better performance. This result implies that, given a well-supported lab school program, PSTs gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and confidence in this experience with the laboratory school. Whether the PSTs' lab experiences are better or not in providing these same set of qualities or allowing them to accomplish more relevant and real-world experiences than in their off-campus work is delimited in the study.

The laboratory school implements and is effective to some extent in these academic functions on pedagogical and curricular innovations, research, and instructional materials developed across all the respondents. Among the three functions, the laboratory school strongly values the importance of research as an integral part of education and firmly believes in research collaboration with undergraduate students and peers in the university. The respondents' agreeing to strongly agreeing (*Median*= 3 to 4) on the indicators for these academic activities is a welcoming opportunity for the laboratory school to expand its mandate and function to be more than just a teacher training school but also as a research hub for the entire university. This means that the laboratory school can be the specific avenue for research and development especially in the investigation and experimentation of educational theories and use this generated knowledge to classroom applications and bring out reforms in education especially in a diverse community such as ours [12].

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4. Discussion

4.2 Prospects of the SUC Laboratory School

The specific findings of the study that the respondents find as an important component or feature of the characteristics of the laboratory school as well as the various issues and challenges that were highlighted in the evaluation given by the various types of respondents open prospects for a more evolved and relevant institution of the University in the 21st Century.

4.2.1 On the Context of the SUC Laboratory School as an Integrated Laboratory School

4.2.1.1 *Responsive and Relevant Mission, Goals, and Objectives*

The context of an organization such as the SUC Laboratory School as an Integrated Laboratory School considers the internal and external environmental factors that define the organization's strategic goals and objectives in the management of its operations. The internal and external

community's views about the laboratory schools as mere "free private education for students" fails to see the importance of laboratory schools for children, teacher education students, and faculty research. The integrated laboratory school is more than just "free private education for students", it must eliminate the "blurring lines between laboratory schools as outreach schools, schools for research and innovation, and student-teacher training" by redefining the Integrated Laboratory School's Mission, Goals and Objectives in the 21st century. Should it start to shed its role as a center for teacher education and evolve into an avenue where theories and methodologies are tested or generated and translated into generalizable practice? Or retain its role where pre-service teachers apprentice themselves in a controlled experiential setup in compliance with the *Revised Policies and Guidelines for Undergraduate Teacher Education Curriculum* (CMO No. 30, Series 2004) and then expand its role to what the university has defined in its strategic direction? According to [12], the restructuring of a laboratory school environment and operations emanates from the periodic review of the school's mission statement. This allows the school to critically analyze their role in the university and the community. Sometimes, the changes in the mission often resulted from changes in administration within the larger university, the restructuring of a laboratory school environment and operations emanated from the periodic review of the school's mission statement.

4.2.2 On the SUC-based Laboratory School Input/Resources

4.2.2.1 *Improved and Efficient Use of Physical Plant and Facilities*

The University's Physical Plant and Facilities should be such that support the Laboratory School environment that will enhance learning and teaching of pre-service teacher education. It must be conducive in creating a physical environment that allows collaboration between mentors and apprentices and class observations that are not disruptive to the regular flow of instruction in classrooms. The laboratory school must also strive to address the inadequate provision of instructional facilities and material resources and allow only class size within the carrying capacity of the school and in compliance with existing regulations.

4.2.2.2 *Relevant Curricular Content and Development*

The laboratory school offers regular basic education curriculum of the Department of Education from Grade1 to Senior High School and a special program for students with special needs (for the physically challenged). This is to provide the real-world experience for the students of the teacher education program and as feeder to other programs of the university such as the SHS Academic Track for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand and the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) strand for the higher education programs of the undergraduate level.

4.2.2.3 *Stronger Faculty Profile and Staffing*

To sustain the laboratory school functions, it is crucial that that the positions are filled by qualified staff who can support and contribute to the four-fold functions of the university, i.e., instruction, research, extension, and production. This shall be the prevailing organizational culture in the laboratory which can be enhanced only by the most qualified and capable faculty. The

laboratory school must be staffed by faculty who shall have at minimum a master's degree and often more; are very capable in conducting pedagogical and curricular experimentation and innovation; and requires at least several years of teaching experience with students at a specific grade level; and updated with the current trends in the profession and practice.

4.2.2.4 *Enhanced and Sustained Budget Allocation or Augmenting Financial Resources*

The laboratory school supporting instruction, research, extension, and production requires a great deal of financial, material and human resources. While the national government funds the salaries of tenured faculty through the personal services (PS), the salaries of teaching personnel who are classified on a contractual basis, regarded as visiting lecturers are charged in full against the university's operational funds in the MOOE and or General Fund and or a combination with IGPs. Visiting lecturers or teaching personnel on a contractual basis were hired for a variety of reasons, some are specialized to a program offered by the laboratory school, e.g., special needs education, and some are hired to take over classes in excess of the regular faculty's load of 18-hour actual teaching or less because of administrative role assignments. Most of the visiting lecturers stayed in the same status for quite some time because of limited availability of items and or not being able to meet the minimum hiring requirements in a state higher education institution. This in turn had some serious significant implications on financing the laboratory school's operations but also opens up new prospects for the school in terms of staffing, private-public partnership, strong financial management policies and practices, and expansion of the base of support for the laboratory school program and operations such as the gender research center, the university special programs and projects that taps international non-government organizations for their projects, and other colleges and departments for their instruction, research, extension, and production activities.

4.3 On the Processes of the SUC-based Laboratory School

4.3.1 *A More Refined Organizational Structure and Lines of Authority*

There are state regulations defining the existence of the laboratory school as an integrated unit and located within the university as a laboratory for its teacher education programs. Jozwiak & Vera [12] describes how laboratory schools are mostly organized, and the respondent-laboratory school adheres to that description where it is divided into elementary and high school departments and each one is headed by a school principal who are reporting directly to the dean of the College of Teacher Education. The departments' school principals and the Dean of College each have specifically defined duties and responsibilities as indicated in the institutions' records. In terms of the organizational flow of communication and coordination, there are administrative protocols of communications within and between offices as well as a University Organizational Chart reflected in various media. This ensured the widest dissemination of information for its internal and external stakeholders and other interested parties.

4.3.2 *Consistent Adherence in the Implementation of Policies and Programs*

The laboratory school used a combination of the interview and written examination mechanisms in the selection and admission of students in the laboratory. Students are selected based on merit

and once admitted, will guarantee admission in the succeeding grade levels. Bersani and Hutchins (2003) in Jozwiak & Vera identified one criticism of laboratory schools failing to serve a diverse group of students [12]. Selection based merit from written examination and interview perpetuates the same dilemma whether pre-service teachers should be trained in the "most ideal" or in the "most real" classroom setting [20], however stressed that the first experiences should have "safety nets" in developing competencies of apprentices (pre-service teachers on apprenticeship) with the guidance, education, and supervision of competent mentors. This kind of learning environment with a "safety net" is currently provided in the laboratory school. To augment the "most real" classroom environment is done in off-campus teaching experience through continued partnership with cooperating elementary and secondary schools nearby taking its support from CMO No. 52, Series 2007.

Having identified the issue on the increased number of students more than the required class size, the Guidelines for Senior High School (SHS) Program Implementation of State Universities and Colleges (CMO No. 33 Series of 2015) puts a cap on the enrollment of students to 750 students (from the 1000 cap in the K-12 transition period) to add 125 students in each level of grades 11 and 12 of the SHS from the originally authorized 500 students cap of the laboratory school. Limiting the number of enrolled students in the laboratory school follows existing state and institutional regulatory requirements. Equitably distributing the required number of students per class is the concern of the laboratory school administrators and providing an institutional policy or guideline on this regard will ensure a manageable class size and consequently address limited facilities and infrastructure issues and challenges.

4.4 On the Product of the SUC-based Laboratory School

4.4.1 *Improve Student-Teachers' Performance*

Jozwiak & Vera pointed out the purpose of the laboratory school created for the purpose of training future teachers and researching how children learn [12]. The pre-service teachers (PSTs) which refer to the undergraduate students in the teacher education program get acquainted with the laboratory school for experienced-based learning during their field observations or field study and culminates in apprenticeship or practice teaching. The PSTs get to experience on campus apprenticeship before being fielded off-campus in cooperating schools. This arrangement of a supplemented off campus experience resulted in strong teaching performance as concurred in the respondents' evaluation. In the findings of the performance of teacher training institutions with laboratory schools is comparatively better than those without [4]. This makes the laboratory school an indispensable component of teacher training and development in the university.

4.4.2 *Opens Opportunities to Maximize Pedagogical and Curricular Innovations, Research, and Instructional Materials Development*

The concept of a laboratory school focuses more on research while training educational professionals in the background. Others, focused on applying theories and not research [7]. The International Association of Laboratory and University Affiliated Schools (IALS) states that the concept of laboratory schools depends on the contexts by which the schools were created. The integrated laboratory school is an attached institution in a former Normal College, was originally created for the purpose of solidly providing mentorship and assistance to the pre-service teachers

during their field experience but it is a hidden gold mine waiting for prospectors. The laboratory school is the most conducive avenue where curricular and pedagogical innovations are tested, and theories about teaching, learning, and assessment are created. De Guzman [5] proposed to redefine the functions of the existing laboratory schools of teacher training institutions. The laboratory schools should be used not only for student teaching but also and more importantly, as centers for teaching and learning. To ensure the sustainability of the laboratory school, Jozwiak & Vera found out three key factors and one of which is research which also has a ripple effect on reputation and revenue [23]. Research must be strengthened in universities, and the laboratory school is the medium to promote collaboration between programs and between and among faculty within and outside of the college of teacher education through interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and consequently builds the laboratory school's reputation. A well-established reputation brings about professional development, monetary donations, material support, enrichment, and support services to children and families enrolled in the school and most importantly the support of the highest policy-making body of the university.

5. Conclusion

SUC-based laboratory schools have adequately defined an attainable mission, goals, and objectives which provided the context for the necessary inputs in the organization. Ensuring the attainment of the laboratory school's MGO, it has provided resources like the best quality and highly prepared lineup of faculty and staff and well-defined organizational structure and lines of authority; adequate physical plant and facilities; and has established relevant and adequate curriculum content. It has effectively implemented its institutional policies and internal processes including the selection and admission of students and program of expenditures. As a result, it was able to provide an effective pre-service teacher training and development which contributed to a high level of instructional performance among PSTs; conducting pedagogical and curricular innovations; and research and utilization, and instructional materials development and production.

The SUC-based laboratory school has a well-defined mission, goals, and objectives that focused on the provision of basic elementary and secondary education with a curriculum content based on the country's basic education program. In addition to a provider of basic education to its own students in the laboratory, although not explicitly stated in its mission statement, goals, and objectives, it has been serving the College of Teacher Education by providing the ideal and real classroom setup and mentoring to the teacher education students. This is made possible by an able faculty profile and staffing selected based on the current established functions. Physical plant and facilities and budgetary support are provided although limited requires careful fiscal management initiatives from school leaders. There is no more doubt about the laboratory's capacity to provide a good experiential ground in pre-service teacher training and development. With its current characteristics, the prospect of a new and relevant SUC-based laboratory school that is more than just a teacher training institution is at the doorstep. It is ready to redefine and make its presence a vital component in the university.

It is strongly recommended to foster networks among SUCs to enhance greater awareness of models of best practices and sustain the Integrated laboratory school programs as a center for experiential learning courses in pre-service teacher training and development, curricular and pedagogical experimentation, instructional materials development, and research as advocated in the school's mission statement. On this regard, SUCs shall create a National Association of

Integrated Laboratory Schools (NAILS) whose main objective is promoting excellence, collaboration, and innovation in integrated laboratory schools across the country. Sustain provisions for human and material resources by strengthening partnerships with external organizations to ensure that the SUC-based integrated laboratory schools will continue to have adequate and functional physical plant and facilities, budget and financial resources, and quality faculty with relevant licenses, educational attainment, teaching experience and training. Institutional policies should include mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the laboratory school in achieving its mission, goals, and objectives.

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