

Selected Philippine Higher Education Institutions' Perspectives on Internationalization of Education: Initiatives and Guidelines

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Date Received: August 6, 2015; Date Revised: September 10, 2015

Abstract –*This is a qualitative study where grounded theory was used as a research method. The generative questions guided the researchers in the identification of relationships between core theoretical concepts and data. The key analytic strategies used were coding for categorizing data in providing the implications and details of the identified themes/patterns and integrative diagram to inductively collect all the data which helped in “making sense of data” with respect to the emerging theory.*

Further, in-depth interviews were conducted to the key informants such as university presidents, deans, department chairs for pertinent data collection. Aside from in-depth interviews, documents such as articles and newspaper clips served as additional sources of data.

The transcribed data were based from identified theoretical concepts where Higher Education Institutions' (HEIs) Strategy Formulation Framework emerged. This model is composed of three key factors that serve as mechanism for internationalization of education namely; reformed organizational programs (policies, mission-vision), responsiveness to global needs (accreditation to international standards), and active/strong linkages (student and faculty exchange, visiting professors).

Since the three factors are within the control of HEIs, change can emanate from within themselves. Thus, they can strategize to aim for change in research, instruction and extension while the stakeholders in government agencies are working on reforms and policies at the national level.

Keywords – *global needs, grounded theory, internationalization of education, linkages, organizational programs*

INTRODUCTION

In response to globalization, a renewed focus on higher education is noted. Such era of globalization

has led formidable transformation of the world's economy from labour-oriented manufacturing-based to knowledge-based society. Kritz [1] contends that the overwhelming growth of information economy steered not only on worldwide employers' competition for the highly intellectuals but also among higher education institutions (HEIs) which train and specialize the “best brains”. He further affirms that the increasing demand for higher education exceeds the capacity of many countries to supply their local counterparts. Consequently, many students have gone to other countries to obtain higher education degrees and such academic endeavour increases in number.

This international academic mobility, as posited by Altbach and Knight [2], is geared towards quality education systems where students' south to north movement is evident.

Another response to this global issue as pointed out by Mokis [3] societal transformation to regional education hubs and cross-border or transnationalization of higher education (TNHE). Examples of this endeavor is Singapore's engagement in the “global school project,” and Malaysia's development of two mega education cities [3,4]. Singapore offers joint-degree programs for local universities and their overseas counterparts. Local Singapore universities collaborate with peer universities internationally with regard to academic programs. Students are allowed to study at both campuses with faculty supervision and monitoring. In addition, Cheng contends that Singapore also offers financial assistance to international students such as scholarships, 10% above the local rate for tuition fees and tuition grants with a condition of working for Singaporean companies for a minimum of three years after graduation[5].

According to Mok, transnationalization of higher education (TNHE) in Singapore has several achievements, namely; 1) at least 86,000 international students from 120 countries were enrolled in 2007

with 1,120 cross-border education program/s arrangements; 2) more than 1,200 private HEIs and 44 pre-tertiary schools are into international curricula in Singapore; and 3) Raffle Education Corp., has established its international headquarters in Singapore where 61,000 students are studying in its 28 colleges around the Asia-Pacific region[3].

Further, Mok stresses that in Malaysia the development of transnational higher education is into the local higher education institutions' engagements in promoting activities globally. Student and staff mobility is also needed for local and transnational collaborations[3].

The *National Higher Education Strategic Plan*, established in August 2007 motivated 100,000 international students to study in Malaysia in 2010. Known for this is the Nottingham Malaysia campus which attracted more than 2700 international students.

In 2004, 32% students were enrolled in private higher education institutions in Malaysia. Nineteen UK universities are into 110 twinning programs accredited in the Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR); while 18 Australian universities are offering 71 programs in the country[3].

With this scenario, achievements of TNHE in Malaysia as posited by Pekwan, include the following, namely; 1) creation of a regional hub of education; 2) establishment of Newcastle University in the UK; 3) In 2007, 17.6% Indonesians are studying in Malaysia, 13.5% Chinese, 7.7% Iranians, 6% Nigerians and 5.2% Bangladeshis [4]. Further, The Ministry of Higher Education revealed that these developments are Malaysia's weapons goal for global influences[6].

On the other hand, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Education disclosed that public universities in Malaysia are also involved in the creation of regional hub of education [7], [8]. The three autonomous universities enroll 20% international students from the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), China and India. According to Lasanowski, most of them are pursuing degrees in Engineering and Science courses[9].

Chen emphasizes that Taiwan disclosed in January 2011 the island state's transformation to a regional education hub by motivating international students from Southeast Asia and Mainland China [10]. Further, Chen and Mok reiterate that Korea promotes research and scholarship with its "Brain 21 Project," while China is into strategic investments in major universities through "211," "981" for global university ranking [10], [3]. These projects are for global competitiveness and at the same time

enhancing regional education hub projects in Asia. In addition, Bhalla contends that India has more than 8,000 international students, 95% were from Asian countries [11].

The Philippines, on the other hand, demands for international linkages where students' and faculty mobility is observed. One problem arising in this scenario is the fact that prestigious universities abroad link up only with qualified faculty and staff. As postulated by Mok, the increase of TNHE in Malaysia and Singapore and their pursuits for regional hub status have indicated that Asian governments are into the expansion of education market not only for income generation but also for "soft power" contention, making European Union to promote its market to Asia[3].

This institutional reform apparently directed HEIs worldwide to adopt "internationalization of education," as a key strategy in response to globalization. Internationalization of education, for Van Damme, is commonly associated with HEIs' activities which are supported by multilateral agreements, to expand their horizon over national borders [12]. Some common forms and current developments in internationalization of higher education (HE) include students and teaching staff mobility, internationalization of curricula, branch campuses, institutional cooperation agreements and networks, transnational university networks and virtual delivery of higher education as well as mutual recognition agreements (MRAs). Two of the well-known MRAs worldwide are Bologna Accord, an agreement among signatory countries mostly in Europe to make their institutional systems compatible with each other where degrees from one country would be accepted by any other country signing the accord and Washington Accord, an agreement between international bodies responsible for accrediting professional engineering degree programs in each of the signatory countries. Further, Patil and Gray affirm that the Washington Accord recognizes the substantial equivalency of programs accredited by those bodies, and recommend that graduates of accredited programs be recognized worldwide for meeting the academic requirements in engineering degrees [13]. MRAs are expected to grow in number in the near future.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has recently launched the K to 12 Basic Education Program in response to globalization, internationalization of education and the forthcoming ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. According to

DepEd article, one important point underscores mutual recognition problems frequently encountered by overseas Filipino workers such as non-recognition of their degrees due to insufficiency of basic education, deteriorating quality of higher education, limited access to quality higher education and the lack of overall vision, framework and plan [14].

While the Department of Education carries out an added paradigm in basic education, HEIs on the other hand, must inevitably undertake essential measures as a response to these educational reforms. The old quote of Thomas Paine (1776) “Lead, follow or get out of the way,” may add stimulus to HEIs to initiate reforms. Along this notion, this empirical study was conducted to uncover pertinent insights and relevant initiatives undertaken by selected HEI’s stakeholders. It also described how the selected middle managers in higher education institutions in Cebu City, Philippines will adopt institutional initiatives and guidelines on internationalization of education in 2016. Results indeed would serve as baseline data in preparation for internationalization of education on reforms in higher education institutions in the Philippines.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study described the institutional guidelines and initiatives that can be adopted to effectively change the present Philippine educational system in preparation for internationalization of education.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A grounded theory design, as explained by Walker and Myrick, was utilized in the study where generative questions guided the researchers in the identification of relationships between core theoretical concepts and data[15]. The researchers then named the developed model as Strategy Formulation Framework for HEIs Transformation. The key analytic strategies used were coding for categorizing data in providing the implications and details of the identified themes/patterns and integrative diagram to inductively collect all the data which helped in “making sense” of the phenomenon under study.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the key informants of the study where a predetermined set of criteria was identified. They were seventeen HEI top and middle managers such as university presidents, college deans and department chairmen from four selected higher education institutions in Cebu City, Philippines. Two authorities from the Commission of Higher Education (CHED) and a K 12 Task Force also

participated in the study. Letters of entry to the sites were sent prior to data gathering. An interview guide was used to elicit responses from the key informants, was content validated by experts on qualitative research. Confidentiality of the selected key informants’ identities was highly observed for ethical considerations purposes.

Further, in-depth interviews were conducted to enhance the key informants’ responses for pertinent data collection. Aside from in-depth interviews, documents such as articles and newspaper clips served as additional sources of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Emergence of Categories:

The responses verbalized by the key informants with internationalization dimension were grouped into three categories, namely, Global Demands, Organizational Programs, and Linkages. Each category reflected the responses which share similar nature and characteristics as shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

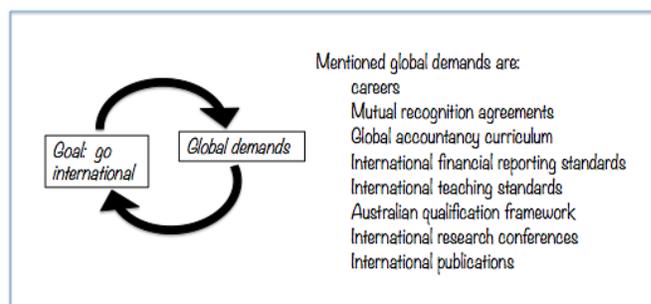


Figure. 1. Category of Global Demands

The respondents showed acertitude in adopting internationalization of education as they have indicated to have worked on Mutual Recognition Agreements, global accountancy curriculum, international financial reporting standards, international teaching standards and Australian Qualification Framework which have influenced reforms in curriculum and instruction; international research conferences and international publications as avenues for promoting research output. Awareness of these global demands has indeed moved certain HEIs to a certain international extent. However, it is also notable that no initiative yet has internationalized its Community Extension Services (CES) function. Nevertheless, looking into this particular area then, one can say that HEIs can actually just learn from their own initiatives, continuously enhance them and

must have to bring them across their three main functions.

Figure 2 summarizes the answers of the respondents which can be categorized into organizational programs, strategies and system. Certain HEIs have defined quality management systems as mechanisms to continuously improve, those that have stepped relatively farther in the quest to go international have recognized the need to do organizational restructuring, collaboration with other institutions, update vision-mission-goals-objectives to include the need to go international, and to update related policies. This category according to Knight & de Wit [16] can be identified as a process approach describing internationalization initiatives focusing on organizational strategies geared toward institutional policies, planning, and organizational processes.

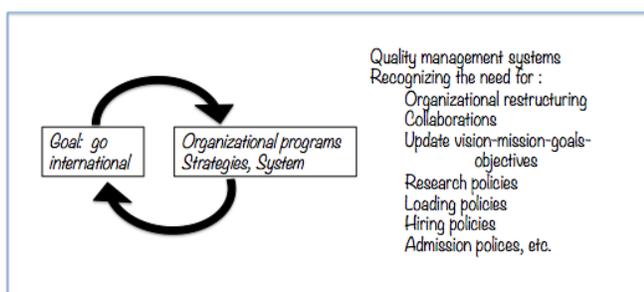


Figure 2. Category of Organizational Programs

As indicated in the figure which implies a cycle, the study reveals that when HEIs plan to go international, organization programs, strategies and systems may be good drivers in the attainment of such goal.

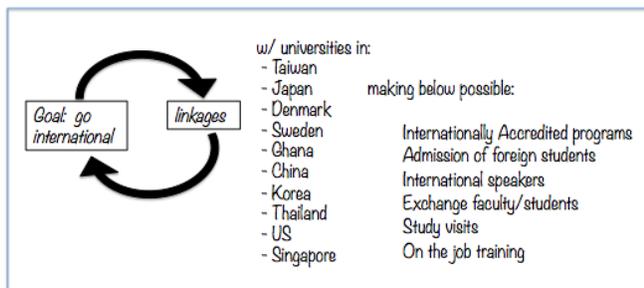


Figure 3. Category of Linkages

The third category of the respondents' answers was on international linkages. Figure 3 summarizes the international linkages by the HEIs. Through these linkages, internationally accredited programs, admission of foreign students, having international speakers, exchange students/faculty international study visits and on-the-job training abroad are made

possible. These are actually in accordance on how Tullao [17] identifies activities that are originally in the spirit of internationalism as faculty exchange and development, international network among others. His other activities mentioned, include that of research; however, based on the responses of the HEIs, not much linkage has been made for research collaborations. This also applies to the community extension service function of the HEIs. Most of the initiatives are yet developing in the context of their local community and no international linkages have been forged yet. Perhaps, HEIs must have to work on finding the right partner for research collaborations and community extension services.

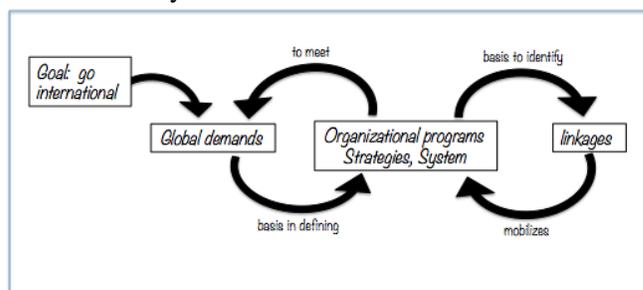


Figure 4. Interrelationship of Global Demands, Organizational Program and Linkages

Figure 4 illustrates the interconnectedness of the three categories. If HEIs have the goal to promote themselves internationally, they need to be keen on the global academic environment and must seek to know the current and future global demands. The global academic environment and its demands will become the basis in the formulation of well-defined organizational programs, strategies and policies that will effectively work towards the planned international higher education system of local HEIs. The organizational programs and policies, in turn, will finally dictate the type of international HEIs that local HEIs will forge linkage with. Both the local and international HEIs must have complementing goals. Moreover, local HEIs' linkage program must be such that it will mobilize the organizational strategies and system in order to meet global demands.

A Reference to Internationalization of Education: The Strategy Formulation Framework for HEIs Transformation

As globalization takes its form in higher education institutions, inevitable reforms are currently taking place. Late as Region 7 HEIs may be embracing these challenges compared to other institutions in the world, data through in-depth interviews revealed a certain

extent of how these institutions are committing themselves to changes as in the basic education structure and the emergence of mutual recognition agreements.

The study revealed that there have been on-going practices in the higher education institutions which the proponents, based on constant comparisons with related literature, regard as essential in going international. Such are then used as bases in coming up with the Strategy Formulation Framework for HEIs Transformation, a framework/model deduced to effectively mobilize institutions to internationalization of education



Figure 5. The Strategy Formulation Framework for HEIs Transformation

The current initiatives of the HEIs are carried out in partials, that is, one institution has more of these activities relating to its research dissemination and another in curriculum equivalencies. But since the core functions of HEIs include research, teaching and community extension/service, it must be that when institutions go global, they must take these three aspects to the same ground. Basically for the reason that these three and the integration among them are what makes these institutions.

As to how possibly higher education institutions could internationalize, mechanisms must be identified and these are those that make up the triangle in the Strategy Formulation framework for HEIs Transformation. These include reformed organization programs, global needs awareness and international linkages.

At the base is “reformed organizational programs” which include vision-missions, policies relating to research, loading, rank and tenure, admission, retention, faculty development, hiring and the like. This is placed at the base intended to support the other

two mechanisms. An institutional direction should guide these three core functions. Two institutions have recognized the need to update their vision-mission to incorporate internationalization of education. Such realization may initiate assessments that could bring out strategies, especially when the direction to go international has been articulated. These could then trickle down to specific institutional policies supporting related activities.

The other mechanism is global needs awareness. This refers to awareness on the existence of mutual recognition agreements, what needs to be worked on, competencies required abroad, curriculum integration and niche markets, among others. This also requires mastery of the institution’s own competencies and needs for effective positioning, evidenced by the thrust for excellence with local initiatives. Integration with reformed organizational programs then is the key. As such, the institution may be able to come up with systems facilitating for the acquisition of global needs awareness and embedding of its core functions.

Internationalization of education is not possible without partners or linkages, which bring us to the third mechanism. This is to refer to compatible partnerships that bridge local HEI’s to the globalized world. The compatibility may be determined by the global need or gap that the institution intends to fill to be able to position internationally. Basically, it has to be beneficial and aligned to the institutions’ goals and objectives.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) on the other hand, has a policy to internationalize higher education institutions for human development responsive to 21st century. In this regard, CHED Memorandum Order 01 series of 2000 established the policies and guidelines on international linkages and twinning programs. These policies and guidelines aimed to strengthen educational, cultural, social, economic and political bonds between the Philippine and foreign institutions of higher learning fostering cultural exchange in a global community [18].

The implementation of this program is CHED’s responsibility in coordination with the Department of Foreign affairs (DFA) and the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation (BID). The international linkages and twinning programs is an agreement between Philippine HEIs and foreign institutions of higher learning through inter-university partnership, networking, consortium, and linkages. Foreign institutions, on the other hand, should have standards at par with Philippine HEIs in terms of government recognition, faculty strength and curriculum [18].

The Twinning Program can be done through faculty-student exchange, collaborative research, scholarship grants, short and long-term training such as Diploma, MA, PhD, curriculum development and enhancement, library and laboratory enrichment and cultural exchange. Philippine HEIs should identify “potential partner” and the “candidate foreign partner institution.” Both partners should sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in terms of the programs, duration, evaluation and termination of the agreement. A review of the agreement is needed before submitting to CHED. For evaluation purpose, the following documents are required, namely; objectives and nature of the twinning program, background of the foreign institution with its recognition from the Ministry of Education or its equivalent, the contracting parties’ proposed MOA, Foreign Ministry or Ministry of Education’s approval of the proposed MOA or its equivalent and certification of accreditation of the contracting parties [18].

Philippine HEIs which plan to offer international degrees, diplomas or certificates under the twinning program should be at least level 2 accredited. Foreign universities, on the other hand, should be in their highest level of recognition from their countries[18].

Moreover, HEIs who are members of international network and consortium should be CHED recognized and possess financial mechanism to support their memberships. HEIs should further ask approval from CHED with regard to their membership to international networks and consortium. Documents are also required to submit, namely; objectives and nature of the consortium/network, Memorandum of Understanding/ Agreement stating the degree to be conferred, certification of program recognition, level II or III of the programs to be awarded. Recognized Philippine HEIs who intend to be members of the international consortium and network who do not grant degrees in all levels may freely join in this collaboration [18].

With regard to establishing foreign schools and institutions of higher learning with a partner local university, CHED authorizes the operations in special economic zones to guarantee available services to foreign investors and their dependents. The foreign university, who will have a linkage with a local university should abide the procedures and secure clearances from CHED and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The two contracting parties should help each other as what has been agreed upon pursuant to each country’s laws and regulations[18].

In addition, CHED implements evaluation and validation systems in International Linkages and Twinning Programs. These systems are part of the quality assurance mechanism in line with international standards of excellence. Authorized officials are assigned in programs’ assessment and evaluation. HEIs, in return, should submit a report regularly on the status of international linkages and twinning programs. Further, any violations are subject to revocation of its permit to participate in the programs [18].

Thus, international linkages, global needs awareness and reformed organizational programs are the three mechanisms which are within the control of the institutions. The study suggests that HEIs change at institutional level and in a pro-active manner. As one of the key informants had expressed, “There is so much that higher institutions can do”. However, in the course of the study, the proponents have encountered HEIs who expressed to just wait for national reforms through a series of memoranda. This is rather safe; however, the current practices of some other HEIs combined imply that the challenge to go international can be done while government is working on policies and policy revisions. If institutions could do so, they could even suggest to government for policies in the institutionalization of internationalization initiatives country-wide.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study revealed the researchers’ developed model named, “HEI Strategy Formulation Framework” which can be adopted by HEIs to integrate international dimensions to the three HEI core functions, namely; instruction, research and community service/extension. The model has three interlocking mechanisms surrounding the HEIs core functions which are considered significant factors for internationalization of education, namely; a) reformed organizational programs, b) global needs’ awareness, and c) linkages. The reformed organizational programs, as the underlying mechanism, encompass an institutional transformed vision -mission which can address the prevailing internationalization of education across the world. The mission-vision, as the operational goal of every HEI, provides the impetus for sound policies and strategies that can lead to international initiatives of the HEIs’ core functions. The global needs’ awareness and linkages on either side of the reformed organizational are interrelated, that when implemented will lead to optimum utilization of resources and connections to bring the

local to the fore of international competitiveness in the near future.

Currently, the global academic environment has partially gained the momentum in driving the Philippine HEIs to shape up, restructure and transform in order to be internationally competitive in the light of the free movement of educational services and professional services, not only in the Southeast Region, but worldwide. The offshoot of this empirical investigation, the *HEI Strategy Formulation Framework*, provides the stakeholders a model that would serve as a reference in their quest to go international.

Results of the study confirm that HEIs need to continue with their current initiatives to align with international standards and demands. Thinking global but utilizing local resources has to be continuously observed to effectively enhance these initiatives to gradually seek not only for internationalization of education but also for responding to rapid changes worldwide

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations of the study:

1. The 21st century education demands for the utilization of “The Strategy Formulation Framework for HEIs Transformation” in line with internationalization of education and for other relevant institutional reforms the 21st century education demands.
2. Implementation of initiatives through curriculum revisit and realignment, as well as international linkages in research and extension between faculty and staff should be part of every higher education institution’s budget allocations.
3. Another study of this kind is highly recommended to check the effectiveness of the Strategy Formulation Framework for HEIs Transformation.
4. International linkages with prestigious universities, though it’s a challenging academic endeavour, should not be the end goal of this investigation.

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