

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE ASEAN INTEGRATION

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Abstract - This is a preliminary study on the internationalization policy of higher education in the Philippines. In light of ASEAN integration and globalization, this paper will shed light on the programs, projects and perspectives of Philippine universities vis-à-vis the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)'s directions on this phenomenon. This paper historicizes the policies and memoranda from CHED with regards to internationalization of higher education. It highlights the basic principles and definitions that the Commission follow in directing the efforts of Philippine higher education institutions in internationalization in terms of research, instruction and community engagement.

Index Terms - ASEAN Integration, Higher Education, Internationalization, Philippines

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the ASEAN Economic Community was formally established. It is a major milestone in the vision of having a more cohesive and integrated ASEAN community. One of its implications is that ASEAN countries will be more open to each other in terms of products and services mobility. With this, integrating the education sectors of these countries poses opportunities to each other. In this time of globalization and ASEAN integration it is imperative to look into how higher education has been engaging in the internationalization.

In QS University Rankings in Asia in 2016, eight Philippine higher education institutions joined the prestigious list: the University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University, University of Sto. Tomas, Ateneo de Davao University, Silliman University, Xavier University and the University of San Carlos.

This annual list aims to highlight the top universities in Asia, using a methodology that consists of 6 indicators: academic reputation, employer reputation, student-to-faculty ratio, citations per faculty, international faculty ratio and international student ratio. This ranking has not always been a priority in Philippine universities, but a welcome reminder of striving to be a hub for quality education not just in Asia, but also in the world.

In the Philippines, Immigration Commissioner Ricardo David Jr. said the Bureau of Immigration (BI) student desk approved in 2012 a total of 47,478 applications for student visa and special study permit (SSP), which is 14 percent higher than the 41,443 aliens who applied in 2011 (Tubeza, 2013). (Dotong and Laguador 108).

The Philippines has become a popular destination for learners of English as a second language and is sometimes characterised as the home of the world's

“budget” English teacher (British Council 13).

English is the language of instruction in Philippine HEIs. Consequently, the adoption of English as the official language of the ASEAN Economic Community is expected to position Philippine higher education favourably within the region.

At least 1,530 South Korean students had acquired student visas to pursue higher education in the country as of May 26, 2014 BI data showed. The four other top foreign enrollees are: Indian nationals with 1,069 enrollees; Iranians, 1,032; Chinese, 1,000; and Nepalese, 561. Most of the foreign students in the country were taking up Bachelor of arts and medical courses, including dentistry. Most of these foreign students are studying in Metro Manila schools—Centro Escolar University, Adventist University of the Philippines, University of the East, Far Eastern University, Manila Central University, University of Santo Tomas, Jose Rizal University and De La Salle University (Santos, 2014). (Dotong and Laguador 108).

The Philippines' ability to attract talent and its research capability, indicated by the number of researchers per million population, are both the lowest in the group. Spending on research and development (R&D) is also low compared to the ASEAN peer group. Notwithstanding its relatively small research output, the Philippines' citation impact was the highest in the group, and 11 per cent above the global average. In terms of citation impact and volume of research output, the Philippines performs competitively in the subjects of environmental sciences and agricultural and biological sciences (British Council 26).

II. INTERNATIONALIZATION INITIATIVES

In the study conducted by Rufina Rosaroso, Irish Dakay and Raymund Sarmiento entitled “Selected

Philippine Higher Education Institutions' Perspectives on Internationalization of Education: Initiatives and Guidelines," a model named "HEI Strategy Formulation Framework" which can be adopted by HEIs to integrate international dimensions to the three HEIs 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 vision-mission, as the operational goal of every HEIs provides the impetus for sound policies and strategies that can lead to international initiatives of HEIs' core functions. (Rosaroso et al. Selected... 43-44).

On the other hand, the global needs' awareness and linkages on the other side of 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 (Rosaroso et al. Selected... 43-44).

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) (Rosaroso et al. Selected... 39). One of the first initiatives by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) was promulgating 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 (Rosaroso et al. Selected... 42).

Initiatives for research include international publications, research capability building, enhancement and involvement in international research conferences and fora, dissemination of research results, and sharing of best practices through international networks and communication systems, such as international reviews and publications, databases, conferences, seminars, workshops and colloquia on discipline and specialization related research. With regard to international recognition on research, findings revealed that it was still minimal

since research culture in Philippine HEIs is yet to be developed and the current research initiatives are effective within the regional level (Rosaroso et al. Current... 29).

In terms of community extension/service, it is not fully implemented internationally, but with future plans of going global. 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 linkages for research collaborations and community extension/services (Rosaroso et al. Current... 29).

III. THE ASEAN INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION OF PHILIPPINE HEIS

Government plays a significant role in supporting the initiatives of HEIs towards Internationalization. Educational programs and projects for student and faculty mobility as well as quality assurance in accordance with the ASEAN Integration assist the local academic institutions in reaching the goal of globalization. (Dotong and Laguador 112).

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is the governing body covering both public and private higher education institutions as well as degree-granting programs in all tertiary educational institutions in the Philippines. The CHED was established in May 18, 1994 through Republic Act 7722 or the Higher Education Act of 1994.

It is one of the three governing governing bodies in the education sector which includes the Department of Education (DepEd) for basic education, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for technical-vocational and middle level education.

In response to globalization, internationalization of education and the ASEAN integration, the Department of Education (DepEd) has recently launched the Kto12 Basic Education Program. This covers Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, 4 years of junior high school, and an additional 2 years of senior high school.

According to a 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.

CHED on the other hand is responsible for formulating and implementing plans, policies, and programs for the development and improvement of the Philippine higher education system. Its power and mandate are:

1. Promote relevant and quality higher education (i.e. higher education institutions and programs

- are at par with international standards and graduates and professionals are highly competent and recognized in the international arena).
2. Ensure that quality higher education is accessible to all who seek it particularly those who may not be able to afford it.
 3. Guarantee and protect academic freedom for continuing intellectual growth, advancement of learning and research, development of responsible and effective leadership, education of high level professionals, and enrichment of historical and cultural heritages.
 4. Commit to moral ascendancy that eradicates corrupt practices, institutionalizes transparency and accountability and encourages participatory governance in the Commission and the sub-sector

The International Affairs Staff (IAS) within CHED on the other hand has the overall responsibility for all bilateral and multilateral agreements involving international organizations, students and staff exchanges, degree and the qualification equivalencies, inflows and outflows of international students, and transnational education.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) crafted the ASEAN 2015 Action Plan for Philippine Higher Education. The action plan included the development of ASEAN 2015 Roadmap for higher education, the inclusion of more HEIs in the ASEAN University network, adoption of University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific Credit Transfer Scheme, and a framework for typology-based quality assurance system for Philippine higher education, among others (Rosaroso et al. Current... 24).

In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education is supporting the Higher Education Sector in addressing the challenges posted by the initiatives of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which include: membership to ASEAN University Network (AUN), consideration of ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRf), adoption of ASEAN International Mobility for Students Program [AIMS] (CMO 11, s. 2014) with recognition of UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme [UCTS] (CMO 33, s. 2013), and understanding of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) Project. AQAN concentrates on building the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework for higher education through discussions and sharing of QA best practices and experiences. (Dotong and Laguador 113).

In 2014, the CHED promulgated the Memorandum Order No.11 entitled, "Guidelines for the Implementation for Participation of Selected Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Program. It is within the mandate of CHED to oversee and guide Higher Education Institutions in participating in the internationalization process, with the goal of improving the quality of education, developing

human resources, and establishing a Filipino knowledge-based society (CHED CMO11, S. 2014 1).

The ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) promotes regional integration through student mobility. Student mobility is recognized as an essential element in fostering academic cooperation which shall lead to the development of a viable Southeast Asian regional higher education area. AIMS is a flagship program of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development which aims to create a vibrant student mobility system for citizens of all SEAMEO member states (CHED CMO11, S. 2014 1).

SEAMEO was established in November 1965 as a chartered international organization whose purpose is to promote cooperation in education, science and culture in the Southeast Asian region. It has 11 member countries: Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippine, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar and Timor Leste. It also has 8 associate member countries, namely: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and United Kingdom; and 4 affiliate members: the International Council for Open and Distance Education, University of Tsukuba, British Council, and China Education Association for International Exchange.

The CHED Memorandum aims to:

- Define, describe, and identify stakeholders of the AIMS Program and related mechanisms;
- Provide policies and guidelines for the participation of HEIs and students in the Program to accordingly improve their quality of education and expand academic cooperation among member states;
- Present and outline the requirements to be complied with by stakeholders, as well as detail the protocol and procedures to be followed by these stakeholders;
- Encourage adherence to quality assurance, credit transfer, monitoring, and assessment processes as well as other pertinent rules and regulations to ensure efficient management of the Program; and
- Promote a policy environment suitable to the facilitation of the Program as a student mobility scheme (CHED CMO11, S. 2014 2-3).

IV. INTERNATIONALIZATION POLICY

International initiatives in Philippine higher education have been driven in the past mainly by academic, social, cultural, and political factors. With the advent of globalization and rapid changes in information and communications technology, internationalization has increasingly become a key feature of higher education in the global era, in light of the freer flow

of students and workers within and across regional economies and the necessity of international linkages in the generation of productive knowledge, innovation and technology (CHED CMO55, S. 2016 1).

It is in this context that it was late last year, December 2016, when CHED issued the Memorandum Order #55, entitled "Policy Framework and Strategies on the Internationalization of Philippine Higher Education." Its objectives are:

- Articulate the Philippine higher education internationalization policy to provide a national perspective and context for various initiatives related to the subject of internationalization;
- Guide the Philippine higher education sector's internationalization efforts bearing in mind Philippine national interest, security and identity while also contributing to the improvement of the country's competitiveness;
- Define the strategies that underpin the various modes of internationalization;
- Set the principles to guide Philippine HEIs in pursuing internationalization programs;
- Encourage Philippine HEIs to adopt a programmatic approach to internationalization;
- Serve as a basis for improving programs, policies and standards on internationalization activities, cognizant of the need for appropriate government regulation for a cohesive internationalization thrust and in affirmation of the Philippines's efforts in upholding its global higher education reputation (CHED CMO55, S. 2016 2)

There are two types on mobility that the commission encourages: the home-based and the cross-border mobility. Activities under the category of home-based internationalization include:

- a. On curriculum and programs: providing international content and dimensions in the curriculum, learning/teaching programs, as well as, learning materials.
- b. On the teaching/learning process: involvement of returned study-abroad students, use of international scholars and teachers, integration of international and intercultural materials and virtual student mobility or the distance learning.
- c. On extra-curricular activities: establishment of student clubs and organizations linked with those in other countries, holding of intercultural campus events, as well as establishing connections with cultural and ethnic groups.
- d. On liaising with local cultural/ethnic groups: engagement with local cultural and ethnic groups through internships, placement, and applied researches; also, the involvement of members of local cultural and ethnic groups in teaching/learning, research and other extracurricular activities

- e. On research and scholarly activity: establishment of area and theme centers and joint research projects with international content, holding of international conferences, seminars and workshops, and establishment of linkages with international research partners (CHED CMO55, S. 2016 3).

Cross-border education, on the other hand, can involve mobility of students, faculty and researchers; programs, and institutions. Based on the UNESCO 2005 Guidelines, activities under cross-border education include:

- a. Student/faculty/researcher mobility: this includes 1. Movement of students to study in a foreign country; 2. Faculty exchanges between institutions located in different countries; 3. Research fellowships/ collaboration involving visits of scholars to countries of collaborating institutions; 4. Foreign language study; and 5. Building international perspectives through conferences and networks involving travel of learners, faculty or researchers.
- b. Program mobility: this includes 1. Twinning programs; 2. Academic franchising; 3. Program articulation programs; and 4. Joint/double awards.
- c. Institutional mobility: this consists of commercial presence of foreign universities in another country in the form of 1. Branch campuses; 2. Offshore institutions; and 3. International institutions (CHED CMO55, S. 2016 1).

HEIs shall be encouraged to pursue a programmatic and holistic approach to developing and implementing their internationalization strategy, rather than one-off, random activities, in order to generate synergy and impact

CHED Memorandum 55, Series 2016 also expressed its policies on specific internationalization factors such as academic, program and institutional mobility. Academic mobility is identified as the intake of international students, the outbound of students, and the faculty and researcher mobility.

Mobility of students, faculty and researchers shall be promoted by the CHED as integral to internationalization efforts. The CHED shall encourage and support HEIs participation in ASEAN and other regional and global initiatives on internationalization. In particular, participation in regional academic mobility schemes shall be promoted; these includes the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the ASEAN International Mobility for Students Programs (AIMS) and the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) (CHED CMO55, S. 2016 11).

Faculty and researcher mobility will also be intensified in two areas: 1. Those linked to research

and creative work, and 2. Those directed to the building of teacher competencies and standards for outcome based education (CHED CMO55, S. 2016 15).

CONCLUSION

Philippine universities has been engaging in internationalization for the past decades. In this time of globalization and ASEAN integration, it is important that these initiatives must be institutionalized and be recognized, not only by the other sectors of the community, but by the state. The policy of the CHED on internationalization laid out the direction for the universities's efforts to internationalize, but it should also express the concrete actions and support mechanism that will be provided to the higher education sector of the country.

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