

# Internationalization Practices of Philippine Higher Education: Tier 4 Higher Education Institutions' Perspectives

Asia Pacific Journal of  
Management and Sustainable  
Development  
Vol. 9 No. 1, 73-77  
March 2021 Part III  
ISSN 2782-8557 (Print)

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Date Received: November 15, 2020; Date Revised: March 5, 2021

**Abstract** – Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines face a tremendous challenge in terms of internationalization. This challenge appears as a new economy in the field of education and it moves at an accelerating pace. It prompts education leaders to make it as a priority agenda in order for students and teachers to be kept at pace with the world. Hence, this study explores the current internationalization practices of Tier 4 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the National Capital Region (NCR). Using a descriptive-evaluative design, a content-validated, reliability-tested questionnaire was employed which is Likert type. A total of 180 administrators participated in the study. Percentage, frequency, weighted mean, chi-square, and fisher's exact test of independence for data analysis. Findings revealed that tier 4 HEI internationalization practices are significantly associated to their level of institutional accreditation, organizational infrastructure and budget allocation. Therefore, establishing and negotiating linkages to HEIs with best practices in internationalization for benchmarking purposes is recommended

**Keywords** – Descriptive-evaluative, Internationalization of Higher Education, Holistic Indicators of Internationalization, National Capital Region, Tier 4 HEIs

## INTRODUCTION

The education sector is one of the areas influenced mainly by internationalization—apart from economy and business cooperation, free trade market, and multilateral diplomatic relationship. Consequently, internationalization has brought about considerable impacts on education, which significantly contributed to perceivable changes in human life and various fields and disciplines. The internationalization of higher education has been emphasized by the global community to improve access and quality in higher education and achieve other global goals by promoting cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. One of the influences of internationalization on education that is relatively evident is the increasing number of international students who pursue advanced studies for numerous private purposes and educational purposes, in many countries worldwide. Australia, for instance, is a nation in which most foreign students move to pursue their education with different purposes, particularly from Asian nations [1]. Hence, massive developments have been taking place which is evident in Philippines HEIs since the educational landscape underwent reforms, including the launching of top universities and

colleges to internationalization initiatives while aiming to become "world-class universities."

Internationalization is of great interest to policy-makers and educational leaders because of its impact on economic performance, which can be adversely affected by the cross-border flows of knowledge, knowledge workers, and students [2]. Also with the accelerating pace in globalization, educational leaders find internationalization as one of their priority agenda because they want to connect their students, and faculty to the world. Moreover, internationalization diversifies and enriches students' learning experience to adapt to fast-paced changes in a global environment. In the study by Bernardo [3], higher education institutions are now being encouraged to internationalize. The prospects of internationalization in Philippine higher education were contextualized within the present educational system, which experiences diverse problems as to efficiency, quality, equity in access, and other external factors. Numerous research have been conducted which indicate that tertiary education in the Philippines is suffering from internally and externally inadequacies. Many of these also include absence of a comprehensive framework for developing public

higher education programs, low size efficiencies, poor student flows, and shortage of articulation of fiscal planning results, as well as the absence of a reasonable mechanism to ensure that curriculum offerings address comprehensive growth needs.

Numerous issues and consequences were also identified related to internationalization. The financial resources limit international student and staff mobility from the Philippines to other countries. Only institutions with large financial endowments could enjoy the said purpose and students from high-income families. Philippine HEIs with internationally and regionally competitive programs will primarily benefit from becoming destinations of student and staff mobility; hence, the need to develop a well-defined niche in the higher education market based on the areas of strength of the institution. Appropriate faculty training, adequacy of libraries and research facilities, among others, are necessary to be able to develop effective and efficient international programs. Elite HEIs are very likely to develop international research collaborations because of their resources, making them attractive partners for collaborations; thus, a more effective means of establishing research infrastructure and capabilities in Philippine universities. Moreover, participation in the international quality assurance system is likely to happen among elite HEIs as the resources required are mostly unavailable for most low-end and middle-level HEIs. A study also revealed [3] that international programs may intensify the existing weaknesses of the Philippine higher education (no improvement in the quality of most HEIs, lower external efficiency as institutions address global requirements, and more inequitable access to quality higher education). However, middle-level HEIs may benefit from internal education by benchmarking quality standards, mainly if appropriate government agencies support it. Hence, these issues and gaps prompted the researchers to pursue the study.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In general, the study purported to explore the perspectives of tier 4 Higher Education Institutions on their internationalization practices. Specifically, it shed light to the following objectives: to describe the participating HEIs in terms of type of HEI, length of establishment, level of institutional accreditation, presence of IRO, budget appropriation for internationalization, and existing policies for internationalization; to determine the extent by which the participating HEIs undertake internationalization in

terms of articulated institutional commitment, mobility for teaching and learning, research collaboration, institutional networks, social engagement, governance and leadership, external funding, and institutional investment to faculty; and to find out the significant difference in the internationalization practices of the participating HEIs, in terms of: level of institutional accreditation, organizational infrastructure, and budget allocation for internationalization activities.

#### **METHODS**

##### **Research Design**

The study primarily explored the current internationalization practices of Tier 4 HEIs. The study employed a quantitative-descriptive (cross-sectional) design to understand the current internationalization practices of Tier 4 HEIs.

##### **Participants**

A total of one-hundred eighty (180) administrator-respondents representing the tier 4 HEIs willingly participated in the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representativeness of the population which covers private HEIs, Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), State Universities and Colleges (SUC) Satellite, and special HEIs.

##### **Instrument**

Using a descriptive-evaluative research design, a content-validated, reliability-tested survey-questionnaire was developed to gather the data. Holistic indicators of internationalization were contextualized and used to measure the extent of internationalization of the HEIs. The indicators in the instrument were adapted from UNESCO Asia Pacific Policy brief on Internationalization, and American Council on Education. The instrument was subjected to content validation by experts on internationalization from Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Directors of international relations and programs from various HEIs. It was pre-tested to tier 4 HEIs and underwent reliability testing thru Cronbach's Alpha with a reliability coefficient of 0.87.

##### **Procedure with Ethical Consideration**

Prior to the actual data collection, the study was submitted for ethical review clearance by the College, followed by the University Research Ethics Committee to ensure that any participants' rights shall not be violated. An informed consent was also obtained from the participants before the gathering of data.

**Data Analysis**

Percentage, frequency, weighted mean, chi-square and fisher’s exact test of independence were the statistical measures used to analyze the gathered data. The scale used to interpret the results are as follows: “Not at All (1.0-1.49)”, “Evident to a Minimum Extent (1.5-2.49)”, “Evident to Some Extent (2.5- 3.49)”, “Evident to a Moderate Extent (3.5-4.49)”, “Evident to a Great Extent (4.5-5.49)”, “Evident to A Very Great Extent (5.5-6.0)”

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The following findings were revealed:

1. The Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) under study were dominated by private institutions, which accounted for 93% of the total respondents, and mostly were established around 11-20 years. Most HEIs belong to level 2 institutional accreditation based on Institutional Sustainability Assessment (ISA), have Institutional Relations Office (IRO), have budget allocated for internationalization ranging from Php 100, 000- Php 200,000, and policies on internationalization. This implies that HEIs have the right characteristics that could promote and implement internationalization programs.

2. Results show that social engagement obtained the highest mean, which is 3.98. This domain is made up of indicators to measure the extent of internationalization in the third mission (community outreach/extension) of a university, engagement with the society at large. This is followed by institutional investment to faculty with a grand mean of 3.80. This category represents the career growth opportunities currently offered to the faculty to encourage them to enhance their international knowledge and expertise. Third is articulated institutional commitment with a grand mean of 3.77. This exhibits the extent by which an organization has published or developed policies to promote internationalization. It was measured by looking into the vision and mission, development plan, systematic evaluation, management, and criteria for student exchange and faculty advancement of the organization.

On the contrary, among the holistic indicators of internationalization, governance and leadership obtained the lowest mean which 3.54. This domain focuses on indicators that underline institutional strategies and the governance of internationalization activities, including quality assurance, and enhancement. Governance and Leadership and

different perspectives and understanding of internationalization of higher education developed different organizational patterns to deal with international education programs and activities on campuses.

Table 1. Internationalization practices of Tier 4 HEIs

<b>Internationalization Indicators</b>	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
Articulated Institutional Commitment	3.77	Evident to a Moderate Extent
Mobility for Teaching and Learning	3.68	Evident to a Moderate Extent
Research Collaboration	3.72	Evident to a Moderate Extent
Institutional networks	3.66	Evident to a Moderate Extent
Social Engagement	3.98	Evident to a Moderate Extent
Governance and Leadership	3.54	Evident to a Moderate Extent
External Funding	3.65	Evident to a Moderate Extent
Institutional Investment to Faculty	3.80	Evident to a Moderate Extent

At colleges and universities, there are at least one or more types of international programs and activities simultaneously, and a committee who works exclusively on improving these internationalization programs should exist [4].

Table 2. Significant Difference in Internationalization Practices based on Level of Institutional Accreditation

<b>Level of HEI Accreditation</b>	<b>Evident to some extent</b>	<b>Evident to a moderate extent</b>	<b>Evident to a great extent</b>
Level 1	32	16	0
Level II	33	60	7
Level III or IV	5	19	8

$\chi^2 (6) = 34.440, p < .001$ , Fisher’s Exact Test Value = 31.873,  $p < .001$

Based on the test, the current practices in internationalization have a significant difference with the level of institutional accreditation. Table 2 shows that  $\chi^2 (6) = 34.440, p < .001$  is lesser than the significance level of .05. Similarly, Fisher’s exact test yields  $p < .001$  indicates evidence that the current practices on internationalization significantly differ with the HEI Level of Accreditation. Internationalization is one of the most significant factors in quality reviews [5]. The function of the

quality assurance in improving internationalization is becoming more important when it comes to evaluating, ensuring and improving the level of the internationalization element in accordance with the specified aims and goals of Tertiary Level Institutions (TLIs), Both domestic & global criteria. External quality assurance system primarily said the system of accreditation is an important tool for improving the standard of internationalization in TLIs.

Table 3. Significant Difference in Internationalization Practices based on Organizational Infrastructure

Level of HEI Accreditation	Evident to some extent	Evident to a moderate extent	Evident to a great extent
Yes	0	88	15
No	70	7	0

$\chi^2(6) = 153.510, p < .001$ , Fisher's Exact Test Value = 186.708,  $p < .001$

Table 3 exhibits that  $\chi^2(6) = 153.510, p < .001$  is lesser than the significance level of .05. Similarly, Fisher's exact test yields  $p < .001$  indicates evidence that the current practices on internationalization significantly differ with the HEI organizational infrastructure. Sangalang [6] stated that every HEI must have an office to manage the existing planning and projects relating to internationalization for the sustainable practices of the university's competence and effectiveness. Moreover, Ahwireng [7] stated that highly active universities in internationalization activities were likely to have a campus-wide internationalization task force and these two variables are highly associated with each other. The most prevalent strategies among all institutions was having an office that administered international education programs.

Table 4. Significant Difference in Internationalization Practices based on Budget Appropriation

Budget Appropriation	Evident to some extent	Evident to a moderate extent	Evident to a great extent
Yes	0	88	15
No	70	7	0

$\chi^2(6) = 153.510, p < .001$ , Fisher's Exact Test Value = 186.708,  $p < .001$

Table 4 exhibits the significant difference between HEIs' current practices and budget on internationalization. Based on the test, the current practices in internationalization have a significant difference with the budget allocation. It shows that illustrates that  $\chi^2(6) = 153.510, p < .001$  is lesser than

the significance level of .05. Similarly, Fisher's exact test yields  $p < .001$  indicates evidence that the current practices on internationalization significantly differ with HEI's Budget Allocation.

The Section 9 of Article IV of CMO 55, series of 2016 [9] explicitly states that financial resources (budget/funding allocation) is one of the conditions for HEIs to successfully implement internationalization programs. Apart from this policy, the need for funding support for internationalization programs in higher education is well-justified in the survey conducted by The International University Association (IAU) in 2014 [10] which needs a systematic approach to internationalization at all HEIs. The integration as an operational goal of an internationalization plan will originate together with the resources to execute it. Most significantly, HEIs will devote the required financial resources and perform the required analysis and assessment in order to provide "in place" a strategic approach to internationalization [11], [12].

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The varied internationalization practices of tier 4 HEIs indicate a growing importance and commitment to undertake and engage in internationalization. However, the level of accreditation, organizational infrastructure, and budget appropriation for international programs should be given much credence by these institutions. Further research can be initiated to explore their internationalization experiences, role of faculty and students' involvement as well as a follow-up on the governance issues encountered by HEIs as one of the indicators of internationalization.

The findings of the study hold implications to the various HEIs. Foremost, they could gain insights on the holistic indicators of internationalization. The indicators can be used as standards and parameters for institutionalizing internationalization programs. The findings revealed can be used as basis to create negotiations, partnerships, and linkages with other institutions of higher learning to promote and strengthen internationalization initiatives of the university. As internationalization is largely dependent on certain issues relative to institutional accreditation, organizational infrastructure including institutional policies, and budget, institutions could come up with an internationalization strategic plan that supports and addresses these issues.

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