

# A Journey towards Internationalization

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**Abstract**—The study delved into the quest for internationalization of the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA in the Philippines based on the theory of James Williams, et al., (2016) and improvement of quality education in the ten areas of Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA). Opinions and convictions of the members of the Management Committee (ManCom) of the three campuses of the university who are academic deans, program chairs, directors and heads of support services were gathered using a 5-point scale. The three campuses were assessed of their readiness towards internationalization in levels of accreditation particularly on their ability to dispense quality education in a combined eleven (11) areas and domains, their trust ratings on the certification of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and accreditation of PACUCOA. Data were quantitatively gathered per campus during their two-day strategic planning workshop for the academic year 2016-2017. A total of seventy-three, proximately eighty-four percent (84%) of the attendees participated in the study. Faculty, Laboratories, Student Services and Community Outreach, and Facilities and Support System were found to be ready for internationalization and considered to be at par with ASEAN and global standards. International Student Recruitment, Cooperation and Development Assistance, however were perceived to be areas of concern. Research Collaboration was perceived to be deficient that need to be acted with urgency. The middle leadership of the institution has high trust levels on accreditation and certification agencies. They are convinced that top leadership has high priority on the delivery of quality education. The institution is set to launch its campaign for international student recruitment and linkages with industries in local and in the ASEAN-member countries.

**Keywords**— Internationalization, Curriculum, student mobility, facilities support system.

## I. THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

### Introduction

For decades the Philippines has one of the highest functional literacy among the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) despite the fact that the Philippines has only ten years then of basic education. One of the factors attributed to this is the long presence of many foreign cultures. This led to high resiliency and receptivity of the Filipino people to new ideas, including the ability to adapt and the facility to speak foreign languages. Although, Biro, E. (2015) said that there are not enough studies to decipher learners' epistemological assumptions towards language learning, ability to speak other language than the mother tongue has always advantages. For decades this has been construed as an advantage for Filipinos. The on-set of globalization has seemingly slowly eroded this edge. Formal education as contended by many cannot be replaced by high sense of innate adaptability nor resiliency. This led to the rational perception

that Filipino education is inferior according to global standards because of the number of years dedicated to formal education. The implementation the K dash 12 program (K-12) in school year 2012-2013 was coupled with optimism that our graduates become highly educable, globally competitive in knowledge, skills, and professionalism. This would make the Philippines at far with the ASEAN countries and other developed countries.

Philippine educational system has a unique structure because of its constitutional provisions that give the private sector greater participation in the education. Quality of basic, tertiary and vocational education are under the direct supervision of government agencies, Department of Education, (DepEd) Commission on Higher Education, (CHED) and Technical Skills Education and Development Authority (TESDA) respectively. The private education sector has developed its own accrediting agencies to ensure that the quality of education is above the threshold government regulating bodies. The Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) plays an indispensable role in insuring quality education among its member-schools.

The three campuses of the University of the Perpetual Help System DALTA (UPHSD) in her quest to contribute to nation-building through the formation of Christian character (UPHSD Philosophy, 2016) and research-oriented professionals (UPSHD Vision, 2016) has entrusted PACUCOA a partnership. This is to ensure that every perpetualite graduate that is equipped with globally competitive knowledge and skills should also be imbibed with strong moral fiber and commitment to the highest quality of life.

This paper is an assessment of the members of Management Committee (ManCom) on the readiness towards internationalization of education at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA using PACUCOA areas and the domains of internationalization of higher educational institutions (Williams, J., et al., 2016). PACUCOA as a member of international quality assurance organizations like the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) among others is well-armed with the credentials to extend a steady helping hand to the university on dispensing international quality of education as a response to the impact of globalization in the light of ASEAN harmonization and integration to provide strategic directions for the institutional leadership.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

(Cinches et al., 2017). Many higher educational institutions have been in the move, exerting efforts and investing resources to respond to the pressing need to internationalize in catching up with the demand for global academic environment. This is the case of four higher educational institutions on their journey in evaluating approaches and practices on its impact to students and members of the faculty. Higher educational institutions in this study have varied range of practices and approaches to gain international status, both in academics and economics. Areas that have positive views and receptivity were on the attitudes of members of the faculty and students. There are however gaps that have to be addressed with both urgency and caution due to limited opportunities for organized events on internationalization in the Philippines. These can be summated to the exposures of faculty members and students in international forums and exchange programs.

(Dator, W., 2016). The influx of students enrolling in nursing in colleges and universities has considerably diminished for the last five years. Some observers say that this was due to market saturation for professional nurses here and abroad. Another observation was the declining national passing rate in the Nurse Licensure Examination. This study veered into the significant relationship between the accreditation of higher educational institution by PACUCOA and Nurse Licensure Examination. It appeared that levels of accreditation in educational institutions affect performance ratings. Institutions with high accreditation levels, have the tendency to perform better during licensure examinations.

(Howe, E., 2019). Japan considers student mobility as priority means of internationalizing universities. Internationalization means focusing on educational reforms driven by neo-liberal globalism that could create significant changes and pitfall as well, like commodification of education. This solicits deep concerns among Japanese educators citing a UNESCO study in 2009 that globalization could exacerbate linguistic extinction in some countries within the next century. However, there is a strong belief that uniformity (or hybridity) of higher education brought globalization and internationalization is a positive trend that could lessen the effect of brain drain. Given these two scenarios, Japanese universities and educators are given a free course of action.

(Gamboa, A. et al. 2018). Domains of International Organization for Standardization are used to provide strategic planning and directions in Portuguese vocational schools. Government bureaucracy which previously provides restrictions on the planning and projections of educational institutions was depicted in a more positive light, directions and commitment as it has allowed the schools to use the standards for more options on their operations to improve quality and efficiency.

(Jibeen, T. & Asad Khan, M., 2015). Journey towards Internationalization had been in the forefronts of high performing higher educational institutions for decades. This has been accepted by many as interdependence in the political, economic and social dynamics. They have shifted to achieving

a sustainable educational processes in the enhancement of curriculum with international contents which they consider a trademark of quality education. Expansion of campuses, linkages, cooperation and exchange including intercontinental universities have become an effective vehicle for mobility of talents and knowledge. Linkages have not remain in papers but find realities in faculty and students exchanges programs that empirically acted as conjoins in the transfer of knowledge and skills in the global educational arena. These activities open opportunities for rewards and risks as well that are closely associated with education for profit and academic colonization. Higher educational institutions however, whatever they have become, remain essential actors to maintain an equilibrium and constructive strategies for global understanding through exchange of knowledge.

(Makrides, G., 2018). Two surveys conducted by International Association of Universities (IAU) and European Association for International Education (EAIE) suggested standards and reference for the internationalization of Higher Education institutions in Europe. Every plan for future development need cohesion policy support in both structural and cultural. There were ten key developments for Europe and may be for the rest of the world, foremost among them are: the growing importance of internationalization at all levels; increasing institutional strategies for globalization while mindful of the inherent risk of homogenization; challenges in funding international programs and trends towards privatization in Higher Education through diversity of revenue generations.

(Rumbley, et al., 2009). Internationalization of higher educational institutions is currently one of the most evasive forces that permeate most institutions in the world for decades. However, there is actually no such thing as global higher education, only movements for internationalization create such education to be global in character. Internationalization of education for many is exciting, rewarding and worrisome. It brings enormous opportunities and benefits. While it is true that the current playing field is inherently uneven, some well-resourced educational institutions could garner more options and benefits on how to play in the global arena, in return this generates winners and losers. Losers from developing countries are often vulnerable and find it more difficult to gain recognition from potential foreign providers. Few educational institutions however, succeeded in the integration of for-profit providers that sometimes exploit educational processes. This leads to fundamental ethical conflicts between educational stakeholders and profit-providers as the latter introduce for-profit higher educational activities. These ethical challenges are compounded by the rising scale of commercialization of education in the pretext of internationalization of higher educational institutions.

(Soliman, S. et al., 2018). Internationalization of higher education despite several initiatives lacks focus on the perspective of organizational strategy. Four universities in England were studied using grounded theory approach on whether or not, internationalization is a deliberate effort or just an emergent necessities for the improvement of educational quality. Although considered emergent for a long period of

time, leadership trajectories point to a more deliberate effort by the institutions to join the bandwagon and enjoy its perceived benefits while exposing itself to become a global commodity. The maturity of strategy towards internationalization was influenced by political issues. Such maturity has undergone phases wherein approaches have to progress from operational to strategic.

(Yeravdekar, V. and Tiwari, G., 2014), There are varied requirements for career competencies that necessitate transnational networks in education. The global market for professionals demanded by corporate employers implies high-caliber skills and knowledge. Educational institutions have no easy tasks in maintaining and catching up with the demands for skills and knowledge essential for a global workforce for local and trans-national corporations. Convinced that corporate competitiveness is an integral part of globalization, substantive skills formation for professionals lies in the shoulders of higher educational institutions. Corporate global competitiveness which is premised by the steady supply of competent professionals is closely intertwined with educational institutions that have opened their doors for dynamic curriculum. Internationalization of education creates a strong impact on corporate competitiveness. They have to be however stay abreast with trends in academics, research and student recruitment.

(Yudkevich, M. et al., 2016). World academic rankings among institutions is always a source of pride and honor. There is proposal for a broad perspective due to new influence concerning academic rankings in many parts of the world. This is a conglomeration of different case studies on academic rankings emanated from all over world that looked differ into implications of world rankings that would enable readers to assess some converging trends based on economic, political and historical contexts. Most case studies are from Europe and the Americas with special participation of China and Malaysia as Asian counterparts. Germany, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States of America focused their case studies on how a specific outlier deals with global rankings. Quest for academic rankings of higher educational institutions is a free choice that would subject them to stringent requirements, evaluation and monitoring.

(Zhou, J., 2016). Every educational processes are loaded with dynamism. Achieving a status of an international institution of learning is basically a process and not a goal. Five proposed levels of internationalization of higher education: Global, National, Institutional, Programs and Personal, require processes that are intertwined and closely linked with each other that dichotomizing them would deprive the true understanding of internationalization. Each of these levels has a developmental stage and mechanisms that are always referred to in every achieved level of development. Parameters that marked every developmental level may be relative to institutional contexts, like country and programs. Internationalization of higher educational institutions viewed in accordance to the dynamic systems perspective need to be reaffirmed particularly on student mobility and cooperation.

### *Synthesis of Related Literatures*

Journeying towards internationalization is positive trend in global educational arena articulated in the study of Howe, (2019). Higher educational institutions in their quest for recognition and academic rankings had been experiencing this most invasive phenomenon of internationalization for the last two decades (Rumbley, et al., 2009). This is an emergent and lingering concept for quite a time in the portals of academic institutions, but it remains a deliberate trajectory among educational leadership (Soliman, S. et al., 2018). Institutions of learning are given freedom of choice (Howe, E., 2019) (Yudkevich, M. et al., 2016), to respond to certain responsibilities and unexpected effects.

The benefits of internationalization is worth the effort (Yeravdekar, V. and Tiwari, G., 2014) for internationalized institutions are considered suppliers of competent professionals in the international labor market for increased competitiveness and economic productivity of corporations, (Jibeen, T. & Asad Khan, M., 2015). There are suggested standards in structural, academics and cultural for an internationalized academic institutions, (Makrides, G., 2018). While internationalization points towards a dynamic educational processes, international institutions are vulnerable of just becoming a global commodity (Soliman, S. et al., 2018) and risk of homogenization (Makrides, G., 2018) that lower diversity of knowledge and skills required by global industries.

The University of Perpetual Help System DALTA akin to its vision and philosophy considers accreditation and certification as indispensable tools for better performance in licensure examinations (Dater, W., 2016) as a prelude to internationalization of its three campuses. Gaps have to be addressed with both urgency and caution (Cinches et al., 2017) where partnership with PACUCOA is indispensable due to limited opportunities and uneven field in the global educational arena (Rumbley, et al., 2009).

### III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The University Perpetual Help System DALTA on her journey towards internationalization as a response to the impact of globalization is anchored on the ten areas of PACUCOA and the ten Internationalization domains based on the theory of James Williams, et al., (2016). A total of eleven (11) combined standards were used to measure readiness for internationalization of the UPH System DALTA Campuses. Number one to five (6 areas) were taken from PACUCOA areas of accreditation while number seven to eleven (5 domains) were taken from Internationalization domains. Trust Ratings on the accreditation (PACUCOA) and certification (ISO) and the level of support from the top leadership were also measured. Continuous improvement and operational concerns that could help the respondents evaluate objectively were based on the standards of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and in coordination with a UPHSD Consultant on some practices and traditions. The UPH System DALTA while willing to upgrade and transform into the dynamics of internationalization in all its educational endeavors could remain steadfast on its philosophical

individuality as “builders of Christian characters towards nation-building”.

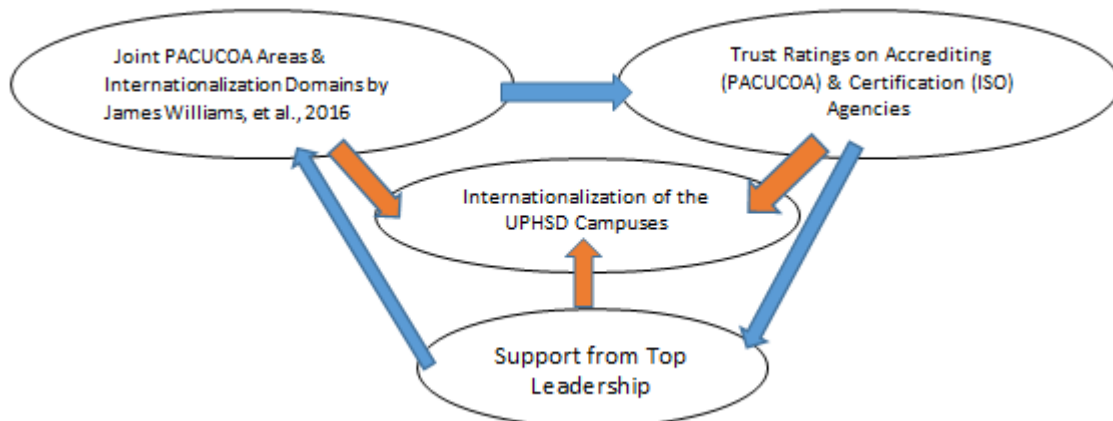


Fig. 1. Conceptual Paradigm.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

##### *Method of Research Used*

This is a quantitative study that zeroed in and veered into the journey of the UPH System DALTA on accreditation and certification processes as a prelude to internationalization. Using a descriptive-evaluative approach it analyzes quantitative data on the readiness of the system towards internationalization as it responds to the impact of globalization particularly the ASEAN harmonization and integration. It ventured further on the trust ratings of ManCom members on the accrediting (PACUCOA) and certifying (ISO) agencies and the expected support from top leadership. Qualitative data that may support quantitative data particularly on the trust ratings and expected support were randomly gathered and analyzed in a view-point of positivist philosophy.

##### *Respondents and Instruments of the Study*

Members of the ManCom who attended the planning and conference-workshop in the summer of SY 2016-2017 were the respondents of the study. A total seventy-three (73) of the eighty-seven MANCOM members from the three UPHS DALTA campuses or eighty-four percent (84%) participated in the study. The instruments used in this study were deduced from the PACUCOA areas and internationalization domains by the conference-workshop attendees with the guidance of Dr. Ginez, a UPHSD Consultant as facilitator. These instruments (Standards) were thoroughly discussed with the participants since their departments were evaluated using these instruments and the results were the basis for their operational and strategic plans.

##### *Data Gathering Procedures and Analysis*

Gathering of data was through questionnaires as an integral part at the start of the conference-workshop to analyze the status, trends and projections of the UPH System DALTA for the succeeding five years. A part of the data gathered were discussed during the conference. Qualitative data were notes of the researcher during the sharing, discussions and workshops. The quantitative data were analyzed using

descriptive statistics while qualitative data were interpreted in a positivist philosophy view-point.

#### V. FINDINGS

Calamba Campus considers its rosters of faculty members, services for students and adopted communities as main strengths in going into internationalization. ManCom members believed that credentials, abilities and behaviors of faculty members (Cinches et. al., 2017) when augmented with well-equipped laboratories and physical facilities that have established procedures and processes play vital roles in the internationalizing the campus. The readiness of the campus to enter in the arena of accepting students from the ASEAN-member countries lies on the competency of faculty members and the dynamics of academic support services. Research collaboration as a deliberate effort to recruit foreign students have to be addressed with urgency.

The Las Piñas campus, the center of UPH System operations and oldest of the three campuses has established a very strong faculty line-up to operationalized its enhanced curriculum, a trademark for quality education (Jibeen, T. & Asad Khan, M., 2015). This campus is within the jurisdictional supervision of Commission on Higher Education, National Capital Region and with higher PACUCOA accreditation levels in many of its programs account for its much better laboratories, libraries and dynamic student services to support every academic endeavor that provides meaningful learning experiences.

Despite that the campus has opened its doors to foreign students to enroll in allied sciences and lately even in business and liberal arts, many are convinced that efforts to recruit foreign students particularly in ASEAN-member countries is not enough and services that are specific to these groups have to be intensified including research collaboration, linkages with various industries for cooperation and development.

Top leadership’s effort to homogenize curriculum for the UPH System has emerged in all its campuses. The ManCom members are unanimous that despite that the three campuses belongs to two Commission on Higher Education regional jurisdictions, the UPH curriculum, laboratories and student

services have remained substantially the same and carried out in a very *perpetualite* manner. The latter is attributed to the eight core *perpetualite* values that shaped the positive views of students and faculty behaviors (Cinches et al., 2017) operationalized in Filipino Christian Living courses delivered by professors with solid background in Christian philosophy and Catholic doctrines.

At a glance, the UPH System DALTA is very prepared into internationalizing its three campuses. Four of the eleven basic areas and domains required of an institution to open its doors like the ASEAN harmonization and integration, or thirty-six point four percent (36.4%) is perceived to be highly prepared to play in the uneven playing field of internationalization. The remaining seven domains or sixty-three point six percent (63.6%) puts the UPH System to be on its very prepared status.

The current efforts of UPHSD leadership to inflation-proof and increase viability of the institution amidst economic slow-downs as a means of diversity of income generations (Makrides, G., 2018), Technical-Vocational (TECH-VOC.) education through UPHSD Short Courses Department were given administrative support and emphasis. The domains research collaboration appears to be consistently deficient in all campuses is given a boost when the leadership offers generous incentives and travel allowance for researchers. Cooperation and Development Assistant was also given a new state of dynamism when top leadership created a separate Linkages Office for each campus whose main task is to forge memorandum of agreements (MOA) with local and foreign industries, particularly academes in the ASEAN-member countries. The areas of research collaboration, exchange programs and deliberate effort on the internationalization of student recruitment are the weakest link to internationalization. Further observations and informal discussions with ManCom members particularly in the two campuses located in the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon (CALABARZON Region) regional jurisdiction of Commission on Higher Education (CHED) point to another deficiency on students mobility, a highly desired domain in the internationalization of higher education (Zhou, J., 2016). This is attributed to minimal presence of agencies capable of organizing international fora.

There is an ambivalent view on how the three UPHSD campuses look at the accrediting and certifying agencies. ManCom members of the small campuses of Calamba and Molino have very high trust ratings for PACUCOA despite their limited encounters with the accreditors. *"It is always a pleasant experience discussing with accreditors on how we can improve the delivery of services to the students"*, a college administrator from Molino quipped. Las Piñas campus who experienced a lot accreditation and certification visits have trusted so much both PACUCOA and ISO. They appeared to have imbibed a culture of "every day is an accreditation or certification day and taking every accreditor and auditor a mentor and a friend."

Molino campus who had just undergone a surveillance visit appeared to have high respect on ISO auditors. *"They are objective, polite and very professional in dealing with us even*

*in the most blatant non-conformities, they seem to see a lot on the things we usually have taken for granted"*, a high ranking administrator said.

Calamba campus ManCom members seem to look at a quite different angle on certifying agency. They are apprehensive and expressed a lot of uncertainties even as they are only in the preparation phase for the ISO auditing. An administrator said: *"I am not sure how ISO can measure the standard of quality education since they will audit only on the operations. I personally have not seen any provision taken from ISO-International Workshop Agreement (ISO-IWA) specifically on educational institution in the audit guidelines we are asked to prepare for the upcoming ISO visit"*. Another department head added: *"I think ISO could only be good in other industries whose product quality could easily be determined unlike in education where products could be the graduates or the services to be rendered like the curriculum, hence complications on the operational processes that ensure product quality cannot really be ascertained"*. Definitely there are apprehensions and doubts on the validity and efficiency of every accreditation and certification that affect trust ratings of administrators. ISO certification standards received skepticism despite that they offer more options (Gamboa, A. et al., 2018) for administrators to tailor operational needs of the institution. The three campuses consider the two agencies to be very trustworthy though with high preference for PACUCOA.

The UPHSD leadership offers all the needed support for all campuses both in infrastructures and procurement and training and exchange programs of personnel on their accreditation and certification endeavors. New senior high school building in Calamba campus was built and more floors were added in the main building of Las Piñas campus. *"There is an established system on how to request for supplies and funds for enhancement programs, in fact there were considerable number of equipment for classrooms, laboratories and libraries procured for the last five years when the campus subjected itself to PACUCOA accreditation, even our office has state of the art table and chairs"*, a ManCom member mused.

The adverse impact on the decrease of enrollment in the nursing program that affected many institutions was least felt by UPH System flagship programs due to the support of leadership to pursue higher levels of accreditation that continue to attract students due to better licensure examination ratings (Dator, W., 2016).

UPHSD campuses have hosted several foreign students in cultural exchange program. Linkage Officer for every campus were hired to forge tie-ups with ASEAN colleges and universities for exchange programs both for students and faculty members in line with one of the most important domains of internationalization on student mobility (Howe, E., 2019) and (Zhou, J., 2016). Travelling both local and foreign to attend conferences, seminars and workshops either paper presenter or speaker is processed by AR Travel and Tours, one of the subsidiary companies of UPHSD established to diversify educational Income generations (Makrides, G., 2018) in education.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The UPH System DALTA campuses are very successful and highly trusted the partnership with PACUCOA in their quest for internationalization as a response to the impact of globalization. The support of leadership is a deliberate trajectory to realize the vision of the institution as a supplier of highly competitive professionals in the global market by directly addressing at least three areas and domains of internationalization.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

PACUCOA accreditation should be pursued in all UPH System DALTA programs up to their highest levels as benchmarks for internationalization. Areas and domains on Research Collaboration, internationalization of student recruitment and seeking for collaboration and development assistance should be addressed with urgency yet with caution to avoid the pitfall of educational commodification.

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