

# Internationalization of State Standards through Institutional Research: Bridging The Knowledge Gap for International Competitiveness

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## ABSTRACT

*Internationalization of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is a need in the globalized world. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) dictates policy standards to enhance quality assurance. Besides, there is a gap between the Philippine HEIs and their rankings. This study identified the knowledge gap through the perceptions of administrators, faculty, and students about the privilege of raising the education standards and state standards for internationalization of education for international competitiveness. The institutional theory recommends institutional research for state standards and knowledge gap theory on quality assurance. This study used qualitative research design with interviews, focus group and literature review; and is limited to HEIs in Silang, Calabarzon Region (Region IV-A) as the respondents. The major findings are the effects of internationalization, institutional research on standards in college/university under CHED, and effects of internationalization of standards on bridging the knowledge gap. Recommendations are made for HEIs and policymakers of CHED.*

**Keywords:** Internationalization, Institutional Research, State Standards, Knowledge Gap, International Competitiveness, Case Study.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this 21st Century, the world has reduced to a small network bound by political, economic and even educational reasons (Balagtas, Papango, Reyes, & Ubina, 2013). This similar system of the network also happens in the area of education as internationalization which is used in this study. Internationalization of Education has long been debated on its contribution towards brain drain and brain gain (Knight, 2011). Further, Knight (2011) espouses five myths about this internationalization: a) foreign students on campus produce internationalized institutional culture and curriculum; b)

university is international if the students, faculty, curriculum, research, agreements, and network memberships—the better its reputation; c) the greater the number of international agreements or network memberships—more prestigious and attractive; d) international accreditations from foreign external national quality assurance agencies; and e) university's internationalization efforts are to improve global brand or standing.

On the other hand, the CHED dictates the policy standards to enhance quality assurance fulfilling the state standards of the Philippine Higher Education Institutions in internationalization (CHED Memorandum Order 24, 2010; CHED Memorandum Order 46, 2012; CHED Strategic

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Plan for 2011-2016, 2014; CHED, 2008; CHED, 2012; Dahlman, 2007; Quezada, 2012; Schwab, 2013). More importantly, the National Higher Education Research Agenda 2-(NEHRA 2) 2009-2018 (2013), internationalization of higher education is considered to be a research priority area in education as well as that of the quality and standards in the context of international rankings and global benchmarking. All the HEIs registered under CHED are mandated “to provide technical support to the Department of Education (DepEd) in their programs and projects that chart policies and recommendation on teacher education, teacher training, teacher education curricula, professional development for teachers and educational leaders in the country” (Republic Act No. 9647, Sec 3a, 2009). Nevertheless, the mandate is checked by the accrediting agencies once in two years in the Philippines (Cansancio, 2008). For such an accreditation visit, the HEI prepares documents complying with the standards set by CHED with the support of the institutional research (CHED Memorandum Order 1, 2005; Saupe, 1990).

Institutional research scaffolds the institutional planning, development of policies and decision making through information collected from the research conducted within the higher education institution (Saupe, 1990). Minaaur (n.d.) expounds that in a complex institution like in higher education, it is affected by socio-economic, political, financial and technological pressures of the modern times. In the context of social pressure, the institutional theory attends to the deeper and more resilient aspects of social structure. Scott and Meyer (as cited by Scott, 2013; Scott, 1987) espouse an institutional theory as Symbolic and Behavioral systems with certain regulations put into action by a mechanism for the benefit of the actors and their actions. The question that rises above the discussion is whether the actors - the students

and the faculty of the higher education institution - are benefited. Further, Meyer and Rowan (as cited by Scott, 2013) expound that social actions could remain as rule framed only in policy and not in action.

In the institutional theory, social, political and organizational realms which shape behavior, perceptions and choices respectively cater to the systematic organization; however, institutions are not organizations. Institutions play its vital role in its structure and action (organizational isomorphism—relation between form, shape, and structure). To be precise, Scott (2013) states coercive isomorphism, normative isomorphism, and mimetic isomorphism works on regulative—compliance by expedience, rules, laws, and sanctions; normative—compliance by accreditations; and cognitive—compliance between faculty and the students respectively. The mimetic isomorphism is taken for granted by many institutions, in fact, all especially regarding allowing HEI faculty and the researchers being involved in research for the benefit of raising both the standards and the faculty of the HEI (NEHRA-2, 2013).

Additionally, the NEHRA-2 (2013) signifies the internationalization of higher education which equally caters to the faculty, researchers (both the faculty and the HEI students) into research and other areas of international competence. According to Balagtas, Papango, Reyes, and Ubina (2013), the HEIs can commit in knowledge creation and application; quality and excellence; the culture of shaping and service; and growth, efficiency, and accountability. Further, the institutional theory suggests ensuring the HEIs to maintain their social legitimacy and survival. Due to the current bombardment of issues over internationalization and its myths, the HEIs under the CHED supervision as well as the other institutions of the Philippines should look forward to establish internationalization in its

right track (CHED Memorandum Order 24, 2010; CHED Memorandum Order 46, 2012; CHED Strategic Plan for 2011-2016, 2014; CHED, 2008; CHED, 2012; Knight, 2011; NEHRA-2, 2013).

On the other hand, the Knowledge Gap theory identifies the difference among the stakeholders of education as diverging trends to the extreme (Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1970 as cited by Tomes, 2013). Further, Tomes (2013) expounds that the knowledge gap can result in an increased difference between people of lower and higher economic status. In the context of the HEIs in the Philippines, certain universities have attained higher status due to socioeconomic status. According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014 (Schwab, 2013), Philippines stands 79th in the global competition for institutions. The country also stands 7th in ASEAN level with 13.5% inequality in education (Human Development Report 2014, UNDP). These reports predict the inequality among the different HEIs within the Philippines. Yang (2002) identifies the difference between elite and mass institutions as salient. This situation could be due to many reasons; however, the question remains about the reach of knowledge for all the stakeholders of the Philippine HEIs in an equitable way. Many governments around the world, including Australia, have contributed to global networks, established global diasporic systems, and joined the global brain circulation by cutting down the knowledge gap in an equitable way (Herman, Zanna, & Higgins, 1986). The Knowledge Gap theory has the belief that the increase of information in society is not evenly acquired by every member of society; and this relates to the HEIs as well as Higher Education students (Tomes, 2013).

Yang (2002) also pointed out that the development of knowledge, which is brain gain, results in the growth of the country's economy. In the same line of thought, the international

competitiveness leads to a re-balance of the economy and the longevity of the economy (Durand & Giarno, 1987). The economic-social-environmental condition also leads to economic development policies of institutions and productivity and results in international competitiveness. For such a development, the interest of the HEIs should be identified. According to CHED (2014), only 484 (21.54%) of the total Philippine HEIs have subscribed for accreditation. In fact, of the 230 public HEIs and 254 private HEIs in the Philippines, only 1393 programs and 1392 programs are accredited, respectively (see Appendix A). As example, 303 HEIs in the Calabarzon area (229 private and 74 public) are accredited at different levels (CHED, as of April 29, 2013; see Appendix B). According to Coviello, Ghauri, and Martin (1998), accreditation plays a significant role in the quality assurance of the functioning of an HEI; however, it is the institutional research which regularly checks and contributes to the HEI that can address issues at the college level. Since the accreditation plays a significant role in international competitiveness and development of economy, the key indicators such as knowledge of the stakeholders need to be addressed. Hence, this study on the institutional research that identifies the area of access through mimetic isomorphism, and the stakeholders of the HEIs can access knowledge equally and empowered for international competitiveness.

## Context and Research Questions

Following the 1987 Philippine Constitution and Republic Act No. 7722 (Higher Education Action of 1994), the CHED considers the policies, strategies, standards and guiding principles in the Philippine Higher Education (Revised Draft Version: November 2015). Since the theories of institutional research, international competitiveness and the knowledge gap have

suggested normality of procedures in HEIs which can bridge the knowledge gap for international competitiveness through internationalization of standards. The institutional research plays a vital role in identifying such gaps in every HEI to alert the system to progress in the right direction. Further, institutional research is effective for decision making and implementation of policies for the betterment of the internationalization of standards of the Institution (Delaney, 1997). According to Yang (2002), there are four dimensions of possible indicators for HEI-internationalization. They are staff-student attributes, international relations, curriculum design and content, and curriculum delivery.

The purpose of this case study is to identify the in-depth perception of the academic administrators, faculty, and students of higher education institutions in Silang, Calabarzon Region (Region IV-A; see APPENDIX B) on the effects of internationalization and institutional research on state standards; further, it also aims to determine the effect of the internationalization of standards on bridging the knowledge gap of students for international competitiveness. The following research questions are also raised: a) How are the understandings of the HEI stakeholders about the effects of internationalization and institutional research on state standards in the Philippines?; and b) How did the effect of internationalization of standards bridge the knowledge gap of students for international competitiveness? Further, the study sought to unravel the possibilities of students and faculty of higher education to avail funds for research purposes. The theoretical approach of this study is informed primarily by the information institutional theory of knowledge reuse and knowledge gap (Belanger & Crossler, 2011).

## METHODOLOGY

The inductive nature of the qualitative research makes it the appropriate design as it envisions the purpose of this study. Further, Creswell (2013) emphasizes that the qualitative approach is appropriate when we need to hear the voice of the participants. Since representatives of each category of HEIs were involved as purposive sampling, the explorative case study approach became appropriate as agreed upon by Al-Qurtas and Zairi (2003), along with Hancock and Algozzine (2016). In determining the population, the study considered all the higher education institutions in Silang, Calabarzon Region (Region IV-A). Its purposive sampling involved one international higher education institution (private), one local higher education institution (private), and one public higher education institution; as well as one administrator, one faculty, and two students from each school were chosen to be the respondents. A total of 12 respondents participated in the study.

Upon approval from the Ethical Review Board of Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS) and the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2010), a consent letter was given to the respondents. After consent was granted, the interviews were initiated and collected data were coded and then decoded. Themes and trends were derived from the data using response analysis qualitative coding method.

## Findings

The study identified some significant themes and trends contributing to the mission of Philippine Higher Education towards ASEAN 2015 (Revised Draft Version: November, 2015). Hence, the CHED quality assurance framework and the process can consider enhancing its contribution

in accomplishing the three missions: 1) Produce thoughtful graduates for the 21st-century world; 2) Provide focused support to the research; and 3) Help improve the quality of life at all levels. The themes are categorized under the two research questions formulated for this study.

### **Effects of internationalization on standards in a college/university under CHED**

The NHERA-2 2009 expounds on internationalization of higher education standards to meet the demands of ASEAN 2015; it also commands the quality assurance of CHED to efficiently establish it in the colleges/universities in the Philippines. Based on the findings, some of the significant themes are discussed below.

#### ***International Competitiveness***

Internationalization of standards for the higher education opens ways for immense skills development in the competitive world. The rate of globalization is tremendous and to keep pace with it sometimes seems to be impossible. The knowledge development across borders is gigantic in relation with some of the areas in the Philippines (Altbach & Knight, 2007). To be precise, the technical skills that the international job market looks for could not be learned overnight or be presented in our institution as a particular course or program; but it needs to be improvised in the system of education. The NHERA-2 emphasis has placed HEIs in the spot to achieve this internationalization of standards for the knowledge development of the Philippines. The respondents of this study unanimously highlighted the significance of internationalization of standards to international competitiveness. Respondent A1 commented:

Having students from different parts of the world does not make our students internationally competitive; however, students being given situational learning [learning for multi-context], prepares them to be ready to work in any geographical context.

#### ***Institutional Preparation - Benchmarking and Association Linkages***

Most HEIs of the Philippines are under the direct supervision of the CHED; however, there are HEIs which prefer to implement certain standards based on religious and philosophical backgrounds. In fact, some HEIs under the radar of CHED have ambiguous guidelines in the implementation of the standards set by CHED. Though private quality assurance agencies work on HEIs, there is still a gap in assistance for the transition from the NHERA-1 (1999-2008) to the NHERA-2 (2009-2018). Institutions are mostly unaware of the significance of the policies offered by the CHED. Additionally, some of the institutions are overwhelmed with other challenges within the system resulting in inappropriate priorities on the agenda. Finally, the institutions could not quickly identify their fossilization of the system process, hence unprepared for the internationalization of their standards. Participant A3 points out that:

Some agenda of our institution are for the national development through innovation and project-based development. This objective is primarily the need for our institution to prepare the students for the development of our nation.

The internationalization of standards has set the tone for the significance despite insignificant rankings. The internationalization of standards has set the trend among the HEIs to establish linkages among international scholars, international institutions, and even multi-national associations. The expansion of educational ideologies has

prompted the HEIs of the Philippines to integrate global standards in the system of education, not necessarily relying on the trend. However, the internationalization of standards has provided the platform for such international associations and linkages. Primarily, the HEIs' administration is empowering the department heads to encourage the faculty to be part of international associations resulting in greater linkages with scholars across borders. This trend has inculcated internationalization not regarding nationalities, but for the knowledge development. According to F2:

We were asked by our department to attend international conferences and be part of international research association. Further, we are also asked to conduct some collaborative research with faculty from different universities.

### ***International Constructivism***

The discovery of knowledge is the trend of the competitive global market (Dahlman, 2007). The theories of education have shifted from behaviorism to cognitivism and now to constructivism. The 21st-century skills of the basic education have prepared students to an extent to expound within a limited area of study; however, there is a need of the HEIs to process towards international constructivism. The HEIs based on internationalization of standards are getting prepared to explore without any parameters both vertically and horizontally. This development results through the proliferation of HEIs involvement in establishing the internationalization of standards in the Philippines. Most of the respondents agreed with the idea of international constructivism and its evolvement from the other theories. According to F3:

The explosion of knowledge is unsearchable, and to attain the best use of it should be the focus of students in reaching out to the maximum in their learning stage.

### ***Cross Pollination of Ideas and Skills***

The institutions with higher education faculty from across the globe bring in vast knowledge, experience, and skills to share with the students. However, just being international does not make the standards internationalized. The cross-pollination of ideas and skills are framed when networks of international faculty or even the local faculty empower higher education students to contextualize in different ideologies, context, and places. Further, the cross-pollination delineates the concept of internationalization in preparing the skills of the future products of the Philippines to be ready for the global market. On the other hand, the influx of international students does provide ample opportunities for the HEI to evolve internationalization in the instruction and other learning experiences. Respondent A1 said:

[The] Presence of international students and faculty enrich the class experience through sharing ideas from different context[s].

### ***Broader Learning Experiences***

The learning experiences are highly competitive in many countries across the globe; however, only a few learning experiences address the need of the country. The NEHRA-1 (1999-2008) had limitations on learning experiences directed to the immediate need at the national level; however, the trend has shifted out to the broader learning experiences due to the internationalization of standards placed in NHREA-2. In the students' perspective, the learning experience not only meets the needs of the local set-up but also prepares them for



the competitive global job market. This view is based on the perceptions of the student about internationalization. Student S2 commented:

I was amazed at the knowledge experience that I gained during my class, just because my professor provided cases to be solved from different country's perspective.

### ***Orientation Change***

Due to the expanse of the naturally blue-bordered archipelago, Filipinos have highly unique cultural orientations which also influence the peoples' education. In today's context, the faculty members of the HEIs in the Philippines are classified based on what generation they belong to in correlation with their cultural orientation. The educational direction of the older generation profoundly influences a stagnant worldview. According to F2:

Some of the faculty who have experienced more than twenty-five years of teaching are not willing to budge on the demands of the department in conducting research. They are comfortable in their comfort zone.

This situation causes more challenges for the HEIs in bringing changes caused by internationalization among the most senior faculty in higher education.

### ***Academic Mobility of Students***

The mass exodus of higher education students in search of competitive scholarship is a trend in this 21st century. The grants offered by the HEIs in the Philippines are moderately acceptable to the standards of employability; however, the internationalization of standards is aiming to produce not just degree holders but highly competitive and employable degree

holders. This concern is still in its infant stage resulting in a mass exodus of students seeking such outcomes elsewhere in the world. On the other hand, there is a high influx of international students seeking easy access to professional degree programs in the Philippines. According to S3:

I was told that the university standards are changing and I believe I will get to learn as much as I can learn in a foreign university. Because of this promise, I have decided to stay back for my college education.

Further, the internationalization of standards sets an arena for developing competitive academic products to be well accepted across the globe, and also to set higher standards for international students accessing the educational system of the Philippines.

### ***Acceptance of Degrees or Diplomas***

The degrees or diplomas offered by higher education institutions in the Philippines are commended at few places across the globe. This condition can be enhanced by the influence of the internationalization of standards in the HEIs of the Philippines. The conditions developed based on these standards prepare the prospective graduates to be highly competitive in global context resulting in acceptance of the degrees or diplomas offered by the HEIs of the Philippines in the global arena. According to S1:

I am amazed at some of the credits offered at our university which has transfer credits without any question. And I believe it has to do with the standard set by our university against other world universities."

The global association of knowledge development seeks to identify the international benchmarking of HEIs for the recognition of the

degrees and diplomas. In response to this, the NHERA-2 has set the right tone by establishing internationalization of higher education standards among the accredited colleges/universities in the Philippines. Further, the ranking of the HEIs in the Philippines is expected to progress in the global ranking system influencing the wide acceptance of the degrees or diplomas.

### ***ASEAN Commitments***

The missions established as reform initiatives in the Philippine higher education, fulfilling the demands of the ASEAN 2015 are well guided by the internationalization of higher education standards (Revised Draft Version November 2015). In response to the three missions of higher education, the internationalization of standards is addressing the needs of higher education students to be competent in a global context, enhancement of research approaches, and community development. According to A3:

In our recent public hearing, many representatives of various higher education colleges [institutions] claimed to prepare the students globally [to be prepared in a local setting for the global competitiveness].

To articulate the commitment for ASEAN 2015, the internationalization of higher education standards has set the policy-driven approach in building the globally competitive knowledge base among the HEIs in the Philippines.

### ***Effect of institutional research on standards in a college/university under CHED***

According to Delaney (1997), the institutional research stands as a watchdog to the institutional system in regulating the functions in respective areas. Additionally, the institutional theory identifies the institutional system working on the

major three areas such as coercive isomorphism, normative isomorphism, and mimetic isomorphism for the normative, regulative, and cognitive areas respectively (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Some of the major influences of the institutional research are discussed below.

### ***Quality Control***

Evaluation is often seen as a positive approach to building the program which is being evaluated. The quality control of any organization or institution stands out by regular and consistent appraisal. In this context, the institutional research acts as the center of scientific evaluation of the institutional system time to time. The results of the institutional research continuously prepare recommendations of mending flaws of the system, resulting in quality control of the system. On the other hand, the progress of any HEI depends on its trend. This trend of progressive development can be assisted by the role of institutional research in the areas of concern. In many HEIs in the Philippines, the institutional quantitative research is done by collecting responses for closed-ended surveys; they interpret the results of the same not so meaningful changes in the institution. Due to the culture of resilience among the Filipinos, the responses of the students in the surveys are just for the teachers, class, and the administration fearing any repercussions. Hence, the quantitative research may not give precise results. According to S2:

Usually, by the end of the class, we are given survey forms to fill out. First of all, we don't have time to read everything. Secondly, we were told that some teachers react to the feedback; so we usually give good feedback to save our backs.

On the other hand, the qualitative



research approach would provide descriptive recommendations resulting in quality control after implementing change.

### ***Research Culture and Extension***

The cultural orientations (concerning research) are quite different in the basic education. Interestingly, the institutional research adheres to the standards of developing research culture with the people who are otherwise oriented. The research culture has to be formed among the faculty before the students could dwell in it. The institutional research identifies the needed area of research and involves student and faculty to have a critical study. In the context of research experience, the faculty and the students are given the privilege to identify priority areas declared by the NHERA-2 and avail grants to conduct do research. According to F1:

Some of the faculty come[s] from a different orientation towards research; however, few [who] would like to work with the students in doing some research for all scholarly benefits.

Further, the institutional research is meant to guide the administration of the HEI to reach the highest standards set at the projected level and also to develop a research culture among the faculty and the students.

### ***Publication Tracing***

The institutional research centers record research publications made by the institution, the faculty, and the students. However, the center does not play the role of repositories. The research center does keep track of the published research work to contribute to further studies and recommendations. The publications can also enhance the archives contributing to the

knowledge development of the HEI. According to F1:

The research publications are there for the students to further enhance their learning; however, there is a need for the research center to make it accessible for the students and other researchers.

The institutional research categorizes the publications about the contributions to the standards of the institution.

### ***Broadens Instruction***

The evaluative study done by the research center is to identify the areas for commendation and recommendation. In the context of the evaluation done on the performance of the faculty towards the end of a course, the students can provide valuable information. The institution can enhance the service offered by the faculty using this information. According to A2:

The research center should prepare informative instrument to bring the students to respond in a way that can give recommendations for the faculty to improve in their respective areas.

In the context of internationalization standards, the faculty can be guided to broaden the instructional approach in preparing the students for higher and globally competitive standards.

### ***Exposure of Reality***

The institutional research does not act as a whistleblower; however, the reality is addressed to the administration through proper documentation. In the words of F1:

The teachers should be ready for appraisal of any kind; that's what they are paid for.

The progressive administration heads to the scientific data and the results offered by the institutional research to orient the system into the right track of functioning. On the other hand, it is not necessary for all the administration to accept the study done through institutional research. The institutional research could be a great agent for change as it identifies and indicates the area of change in the institution.

### ***Right to Express***

Institutional research should be considered as a neutral avenue for improving the benefits of the standards and the factors leading to the fulfillment of the standards in the HEI. Similarly, it must uphold the values set by CHED in conducting institutional research instead of exposing data. According to F2:

In my institution, some of the students were penalized for the way they expressed their feedback about certain teachers. And they wonder how they knew what they said in the comments.

The institutional research should be given a voice to amplify the plea of the participants to improve the standards of the HEIs to match the standards set by CHED.

### ***Information Portal for Policy Framework***

The Institutional research on internationalization of standards provides a venue for a policy framework within the institution. The key to the institutional research is to provide guidelines through scientific data to envision the betterment of the standards of the school. The faculty and the students can also avail of

the information regarding collaborative research areas which can be funded by the research center. In the area of the policy framework, every HEI has a progressive approach to set the standards high. A2 commented:

The recommendations brought forth by the institutional research are at times overwhelming to amend some of the existing policies.

Exultingly, the values identified by the institutional research help the institution to frame appropriate policies to uphold the internationalization of standards.

### **Effect of internationalization of standards on bridging the knowledge gap between students, faculty and other stakeholders for international competitiveness**

Internationalization of higher education by setting the standards for global competitiveness prepares the HEIs of the Philippines to raise a flag in the global map of knowledge development. The ASEAN 2015 is based on three pillar communities: political and security, economic, and socio-cultural (Romualdo, 2014). The CHED falls under the third pillar which is a socio-cultural community. The internationalization of higher education can be established through the internationalization of standards. However, this study is not just focused on developing research standards but can provide a lead to implement a mechanism to attain it in micro level, and will further the initiation to achieve the ASEAN 2020 vision where the region should become a “concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and a community of caring societies” (Romualdo, 2014). This study in micro level identifies the significance of internationalization of standards

to bridge the knowledge gap to attain the vision. Some of the major themes that evolved into the study are discussed below.

### ***International Quest for Research***

The internationalization of standards allows more room for the researchers to identify the gaps. Spotting the differences and the problematization of such gaps are the best ways to identify the research gaps (Swansi & Fukofuka, 2015). Additionally, internationalization of standards opens the horizon for the infinite number of areas to be investigated, providing ample opportunities to develop their knowledge orientation. Higher education students are not limited to research within the local context; however, can use the platform of internationalization to explore the global setting in different cultural contexts. According to F1:

The researchers, be it be faculty or students ... they are exposed to a wealth of knowledge and their challenges. This further expands the horizon for the quest for more knowledge.

The knowledge can be narrowed down to a greater extent through this international quest for research.

### ***Research Standards***

The greater the reach in the global standards, the higher the quality of the research standards. The present standards of research can be enhanced by the active participation of researchers across institutions and nations. Further with the internationalization of standards in higher education, grants can be used for researchers to improve the standards. Though the grants are not directly correlated to research standards, they do contribute to a greater extent. The international

scholar collaboration in research can help local researchers be upgraded in research standards, to benchmark with global standards. According to F2:

Some of the faculty members are not exposed to collaborative research and they stick on to what they have learned in their college. I think, more the collaboration, the research knowledge will increase.

The furtherance of the investigation in collaboration enhances the results for global competitiveness and narrows the knowledge gap among the aspirants. The technology has reduced this gap largely with ease of access to resources.

### ***Investment in Research***

There is a fear of dilution of research standards; however, the fear is based on the traditional view. The reason is the scholarship stringent can be learned collaboratively as the internationalization of higher education has to connect the researcher to the global context with the other global researchers from the other side of the world. In the process, the scholarship stringent is learned; on the other hand, the bureaucratic stringent can be minimized with a high allocation of funds, and motivation can lead the young minds to rise beyond the horizon to add further knowledge investment in the research. According to F1:

Many times, we stop thinking about doing research as we keep on doing it [research] with our empty pockets, especially if the research involves travel.

The internationalization of standards does pave the way for young minds to invest time in knowledge building. As a result, it commends the spirit of collaborative group work in knowledge

enhancement equally for the competitive world.

### ***Intersection of Horizontal and Vertical Gap***

The gaps are certain among the higher education students as well as the system of HEIs. To be specific, the gap within a student is much interesting to diagnose as it addresses the vertical gap - the difference between knowing some areas and being completely ignorant in some areas of learning. On the other hand, the horizontal gap is the gap reiterated by an external force. For example, the students are exposed to different standards contributed by the various faculty members of the college/universities. This horizontal gap can be narrowed down only by the standardization of the faculty instructional approaches. When these two gaps intersect, a wider gap is created. According to S2:

Sometimes we focus so much on a particular area of study and neglect the other. To add on, all teachers have different expectation[s]. As a whole, we lose track of what we are supposed to do.

Hence, the internationalization of standards checked by institutional research empowers the performance of teachers as well as the students thus creating a narrow gap in the knowledge development.

### ***Acculturation***

Culture is dynamic; however, the pace of dynamism is highly correlated with the age. Most of the faculty of the older generation, based on their orientation remains as yellow papers (using the same old traditional approaches developing degree holders). There is a need of acculturation in the process of implementing the internationalization of standards in higher education. According to F3:

Some of the faculty members here at our institution stay the same as they were twenty years ago.

On the other hand, the acculturation among the students, faculty and the administrators of the HEIs can bring about knowledge development resulting in narrowing the knowledge gap for international competitiveness.

### ***Mobilization of Resources***

The information and communication technology has not only empowered learning online but also the access to ample amount of resources online. Further, a global collaborative effort through internationalization of standards has given great access to scholars for their resources. In the 21st century, there is no reason for a knowledge gap in the context of access to resources.

In another context, the brain drain phenomenon is highly threatening for the country's development. A3 mentions that:

The other side of the river [has been] always green; however, there is a paramount possibility to develop and access resources in this technology-dominated world.

Internationalization of standards can build enough reputation in knowledge development among scholars who may be able to compete internationally.

### ***Global Contributor***

Licensure examinations should be revised to enable international aspirants to meet global standards. This move can enhance a better relationship among international partners to accept professionals from other countries. The students and the faculty of higher education should

be motivated to fit in international standards equally with international partners to enhance the knowledge and reduce the gap. This effort would result in a more significant contribution of the prospective graduates from the Philippines to be global contributors. According to A1:

International members or expats should be given [the] privilege to appear for [the] licensure examination and in return, there will be acceptance of Filipino professionals elsewhere.

## DISCUSSION

This study on internationalization of Philippine HEIs is in line with the quality assurance of the same for state standards. Enhanced understanding of the data of this study has significantly contributed towards the role of institutional research in bridging the knowledge gap for international competitiveness. This is one of the ultimate goals of CHED in the Philippines; however, quality assurance lies in line with international benchmarking. Further, this study has presented the importance of internationalization of state standards in reaching quality assurance standards and the role of institutional research in attaining the goal.

The International Standard of Higher Education can be synonymous with international benchmarking (Helgason, 1997; Philipps, 2010). As the public hears of the proposal of CHED on Internationalization of Higher Education, the increasing trend in the internationalization of standards should be addressed with its contribution to benchmarking. The ASEAN 2015 commitments are towards international benchmarking, and this move is a positive step by the CHED (2008; 2012; Dahlman, 2007; Quezada, 2014, Schwab, 2013). However, the quality assurance body should keep the implementation mechanism viable in a short

timeframe considering the economic feasibility of the HEIs in the Philippines.

The standards are one of the prime foci of CHED (CMO 24, 2010; CMO 46, 2012; CHED Strategic Plan for 2011-2016, 2014). Quality assurance contributes to the quality control—in the context of CHED, the quality assurance can use the institutional research for quality control (Pijano, 2010). The three ASEAN communities (the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) were required to work in tandem with 2015 (Vision ASEAN 2020) where the quality assurance could be the speeding mechanism for quality control (Nicolas, 2014). When the Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) processes quality assurance with the appropriate mechanism—in this case, institutional research, the internationally competitive students could be the college graduates. This study adds on to the value of the quality assurance through institutional research as a strategy for the implementation mechanism for the same prime focus as mentioned by the CHED. Specifically, the contribution of mimetic isomorphism in institutional research for quality assurance with international benchmarking resulted in internationalization.

Additionally, this study expounds that the holistic and collaborative contribution to the internationalization of higher education results in internationally competitive graduates. Here, holistic means the cooperative effort of the administration, academic staff, and the students towards achieving the internationalization of standards in the HEIs that is checked through institutional research results in narrowing knowledge gap among the students (see Appendix-D).

This study identifies the perception of the administrators, faculty and the students about the internationalization of standards that can be

monitored through institutional research resulting in narrowing the knowledge gap between the students as well as among the faculty, students, and the administration. Nevertheless, this finding introduces three other issues:

- Some institutions lack human resource to handle this task of conducting institutional research on a regular basis.
- Unbiased institutional research should be allowed in the system for quality assurance purposes. This approach is highly political as the administration has the upper hand over the institutional research within their organization.
- Some of the institutions are far from national standards and implementing the internationalization of standards is a 'giant leap' in their academic setting.

### **Recommendations emanating from the study**

Based on this study, there are recommendations for the furtherance of the ASEAN Vision 2020 and the mission for ASEAN 2015 through the NHERA-2. This study envisioned to focus on a narrow area of study, but highly contributing to the policy proposal on internationalization of higher education this November 2015.

#### **Recommendations for HEIs under CHED**

1. Establish internationalization of standards in all HEIs under CHED supervision. The standards set by the quality assurance of CHED should be reverberating in all the functions of the institution checked by institutional research.
2. Require HEIs to develop institutional policies to check internationalization of standards. The scientific findings

of the institutional research should be transformed as a policy for the internationalization of standards equipping all the agents of the system.

3. Establish institutional research through research centers of the institutions. This system should be mandatory in establishing the institutional research. Further, the qualitative approach should be added along with the quantitative approach to the evaluation study.
4. Establish equity in grants to reduce knowledge gaps. The grants offered by CHED should be utilized for research purposes to bring the standards up to produce internationally competitive graduates.
5. HEIs should rally to improvise changes in the system to internationalization rather than politicize the institutional research.
6. Establish internationalization in the system. The proposal on the policy on internationalization of higher education should contribute to the knowledge development resulting in the narrowing down of a knowledge gap in students as well as faculty within the Institution.

#### **Recommendations for CHED and the Policy Makers**

1. Research grants for both the faculty and the students for collaboration and inter-institutional research. CHED should allocate region wide grants to seek balanced development all throughout the country.
2. Research resource portals and online access to libraries. The influence of technology is comparably high with the past; however, the educational



resources are not equally available. Hence, there is a need for online library facility for all the HEIs to access resources.

3. Accreditation policies based on internationalization of the institution. The accrediting agencies should emphasize on greater stringency over the criteria of internationalization.
4. Scholarship grants for HEIs for internationally competitive graduates. New strategies should be considered by CHED to inspire the HEIs to produce globally competitive graduates by mandating the publication of at least three research works (self-research, institutional collaborative research, and global collaborative research).
5. Information portals for the HEIs to establish NHERA-2. The study did identify the confusion and ambiguity in establishing a system to embrace internationalization within the institution due to lack of information. Hence, the HEIs of the Philippines require a data access portal.
6. Internationalization of standards should be the priority of the CHED. The world will not wait for the internationally competitive scholars out of the Philippines for its appointed time. The delay could be a downward trend affecting both economically and socio-culturally.

## CONCLUSION

Internationalization of state (CHED) standards in Higher Education through institutional research is highly possible with the support of the HEI's administration. If CHED mandates the presence of centers for institutional

research in all HEIs, which act neutrally and reports to CHED on a regular basis, internationalization of higher education can be expected. Further, the knowledge gap needs to be narrowed down to develop higher education graduates to be internationally competitive. From this research, institutional research is found to contribute to internationalization and bridges the knowledge gap between the students and the faculty, thus ensuring international competitiveness. This paper and relevant literature, however, have not explored what HEIs need to accommodate internationalization of Higher Education; hence, future research can be conducted to investigate.

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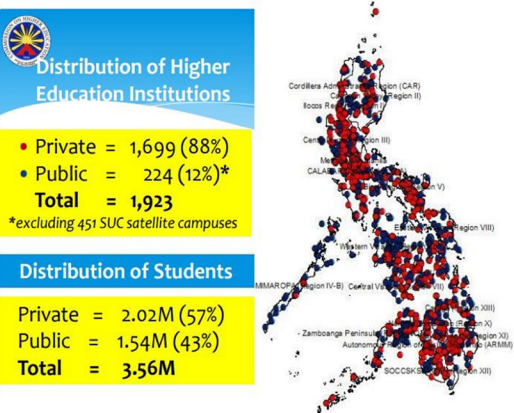
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APPENDICES

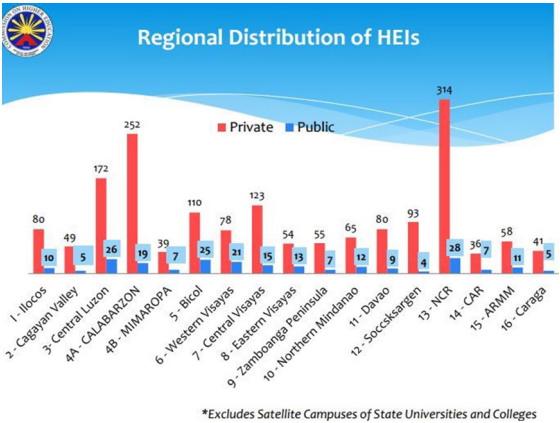
APPENDIX – A



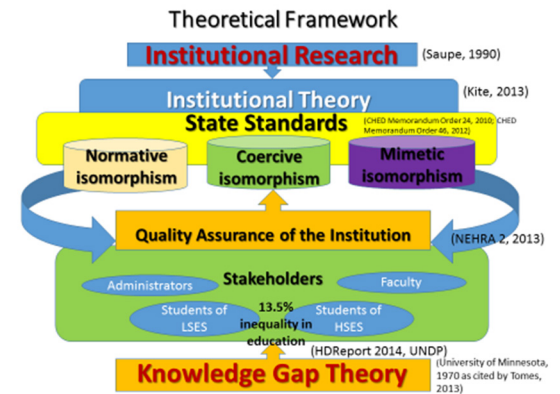
**Figure 1.** Distribution of Higher Education Institutions in the Philippines. Source: CHED (2013). *Infographics*. Retrieved from <http://www.ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Infographics-on-Philippine-Higher-Education-v1.pdf>

APPENDIX – B

Table 1 Regional distribution of HEIs



APPENDIX – C



APPENDIX – D

