Level Of Internationalization Of State Universities And Colleges (SUCS) In CALABARZON, Philippines

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Abstract: This study aimed to determine the level of internationalization initiatives of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in CALABARZON. It involved administrative officials and heads of support units from four SUCs and those from University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) whose assessments were used as benchmark on the SUCs’ level of internationalization. The descriptive research was used using research triangulation. Key instrument to gather data was the validated instrument of Balagtas and Associates which provided the rubrics on determining internationalization. Statistical tool used was weighted mean. The SUCs were internationalized to a very great extent as to indicator of curriculum and instruction and internationalized to a great extent on facilities and support system and on diversity income generation. Assessments on indicators on research collaboration, academic standards and quality, mobility and exchanges for students and faculty, international student recruitment, cooperation and development assistance manifested internationalization initiatives were low. Comparative assessments on UPLB’s internationalization revealed that SUCs were way below to capture the wide accomplishments of UPLB, inferring much remains to be done by the SUCs in internationalization. Generally, it could be said that internationalization of SUCs was still on the internal system of developing competitiveness in their mandates, quality standards, and facilities and may take more time, commitment and will to realize successful implementation.

Keywords: CALABARZON, internationalization, state universities and colleges, internationalization rubrics

INTRODUCTION

Universities all over the world increasingly recognize the challenges of globalization and the pressures of internationalization. Most universities whether large or small and irrespective of their national market position have begun to recognize the importance of developing teaching and instructional programs that have both local and international relevance, both to recruit students in a global market and also to prepare all their students for lives in a globalized world.

Cognizant to this, as the world progresses into the 21st century, there is the realization that the interrelationship among higher education sectors in countries all over the world is a key factor to meet the challenges and development of a globally and highly technologically world. This calls for appropriate approaches on the management of internationalization and cross-cultural education and mobility, strengthening international research and external linkages and promoting extension services and outreach via international cooperation and support.

It is then important that there be rich understanding of what internationalization is so that the appropriate plan and approaches relevant to attaining it may be achieved, especially in higher education institutions.

As cited by Knight, internationalization as to be more extensively used dimensions of higher and post-secondary education of international dimensions. It covers international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers; international linkages; partnerships, and projects; and new, international academic programs and research initiatives; moreover, its delivery of education to other countries is handled through innovative arrangements such as branch campuses, franchises using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques; and curriculum and learning methodologies that are of international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions. For Knight, internationalization as a process of integration is geared towards enhancement of higher education which necessitates responsive engagement in the global academic community [1]. On a similar vein, internationalization is characterized to be an educational process situated in the international context of knowledge and practice and where societies are seen as subsystems of a larger world. In educational institutions, internationalization covers comprehensive multi-faceted programs of action which are integrated in all aspects of education [Shoormen] [2].

The concepts of internationalization carry the same meanings of change process from a national higher education institution into an international dimension to enhance the quality of learning and teaching to attain desired student-clientele competencies [Soderqvist] [3].

Along this concept, to work on internationalization is to study policies, processes and types of activities and reengineering the mandates of higher education institution in instruction, research, extension, and production. Locally, universities should work on their traditional internationalization and later, globalization (Bernardo) [4]. To achieve Bernardo’s thinking on traditional internationalization, universities must at first develop international perspectives in their system – that is, their goals are on-going, future-oriented, interdisciplinary, leadership driven. It means university leaders creating vision and encouraging their people in the faculty and student sectors to develop an institution-wide positive acceptance and understanding of other cultures and societies.

As posited by Qiang, the elements of internationalization include governance, operations, and support services. When translated into the academy the elements cover academic
programs, research and scholarly collaboration, extracurricular activities, and external services [5]. Internationalization is in higher education systems and services according to Van der Wende [6] that can also be viewed as any systematic, sustained efforts aimed at making higher education responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy, and labor markets. It can thus be said that internationalization is not merely an aim in itself, but an important resource in the development of higher education towards a system in line with international standards as well as an open and responsive initiative to its global environment.

In the context of Philippine higher education the key internationalization strategies are as follows the establishment of a quality assurance framework and processes that will strengthen the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of more than 1800 Philippine higher education institutions: enhancement of the country-wide and regional mobility of students, faculty and staff; and the establishment of an appropriate environment for international exchange/collaboration and for a sustainable Philippine international higher education sector (Licuanan, 2012) [7]. This study is then geared towards benchmarking on internationalization efforts of SUCs in the CALABARZON.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
This study is then geared towards determining the level of internationalization efforts of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in Region IV-A. In particular, this research answered the following questions: What is the level of internationalization initiatives of SUCs in CALABARZON based on the following domains and dimensions of internationalization:

1. Knowledge Creation and Application
   1.1 curriculum and instruction;
   1.2 research collaboration
2. Quality and Excellence
   2.1 academic standards and quality
3. Culture of Sharing and Service
   3.1 mobility and exchanges for students and faculty;
   3.2 international and intercultural understanding/ networking; and
   3.3 cooperation and development assistance,
4. Growth, Efficiency, and Accountability
   4.1 international students recruitment;
   4.2 facilities and support system; and
   4.3 diversity income generation?

METHODOLOGY
This study made use of the descriptive research which involved quantitative and qualitative methods in order to gather data. Research triangulation was used in comparing and analyzing the researcher’s observations, key informants’ interview responses and documents from the SUCs. According to Bell [8], triangulation is used to validate and confirm the findings of one method with those of another [47], a form of confirmation and validation to see important multiple meanings to maximize the validity of the study (Major & Baden) [9]. As cited by McMillan & Schumacher, triangulation is the cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods and theoretical schemes and supporting conclusions using evidence from different sources (Slavin) [10], [11]. For this purpose, the researcher made use of the rubric developed by Balagtas & Associates [12], the first instrument ever to be used in gauging the level of internationalization. The instrument allows internal and external evaluation of one’s institution in an objective manner; this being so, it can also be an alternative instrument in accrediting institutions particularly in the Philippines. The rubric clearly lists quantifiable and observable indicators per level of internationalization. Focus group discussion with research participants and documentary study and analysis of the SUCs’ annual reports, accomplishment reports and other relevant materials which concern the SUCs’ internationalization initiatives as well as documents from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) were also used. The subjects of the study were the administrative officials of the Office of the University President, Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Office of the Vice President for Research, Development and Extension, Administration and External Affairs, Finance and Resource Generation, International Linkages, Administration Services, Information and Communication Technology, Medical and Dental Services, Student Affairs and Services, University Librarian, and University Registrar and other Offices from each of the five State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in Region IV-A (CALABARZON) who provided the data on internationalization. In this study the SUCs were coded as follows: SUC1, SUC2, SUC3, and SUC4. One sampling limitation, however, was a University which should have been SUC5 but did not participate in this study due to their accepted limited internationalization initiatives. Internationalization initiatives of the University of the Philippines in Los Baños (UPLB) were also studied to serve as model institution on internationalization initiatives in CALABARZON. The level of internationalization is quantified along a 5-point scale rubric identified as 5-internationalized to a very great extent, 4—internationalized to a great extent, 3—internationalized to some extent, 2—internationalized to a little extent, and 1—not at all internationalized. Each scalar value in the indicators is given an equivalent percentage to quantify the extent of internationalization and to ensure common agreement and objectivity when the raters assess the initiatives. The instrument also provides the means of verification to facilitate the scarce of data. The domains and dimensions of internationalization were evaluated in this study. Each of the dimensions has a set of indicators which provide the different initiatives which are to be rated by the researchers/research participants.

The following is an example of how an indicator of internationalization is scaled.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Level of Internationalization among SUCs using UPLB’s Internationalization Data as Benchmark

The researcher likewise added UPLB for benchmarking using the same instrument so as to serve as frame of reference to gauge how far the SUCs have attained in their internationalization status. Figure 1 shows results.

Surveying the results in the figure, UPLB is in the highest notch among all the SUCs involved in the study. UPLB had several dimensions having the rating of 5 meaning these reflect internationalization was to a very great extent. There were in Curriculum and Instruction, International and Intercultural understanding, Cooperation and Development Assistance, and International Students’ Recruitment. UPLB also shows high internationalization in Academic Standards and Quality and in Facilities and Support System. Lowest rating was 4 but still reflecting internationalization to a great extent was on Mobility and Exchange for Faculty and Students. Evidently, the data show UPLB was way ahead in its internationalization status.

SUC₁ was internationalized to a very great extent (5) on indicators in Curriculum and Instruction, and in Diverse Income Generation and to a great extent (4) as to Facilities and Support System and internationalized to a great extent (4) as to Research Collaboration, Academic Standards and Quality, Cooperation and Development Assistance and Facilities and Support System.

Figure 2 shows the bar graph representation of the study of the internationalization of the SUCs in the CALABARZON. Evidently, UPLB stand out in all the dimensions. More importantly, the data infer the need for the SUCs to work on their internationalization goals so as to be able to respond to the call on excellence, quality, and service reflected in their graduates. The weaknesses of SUC₁ were on Mobility and Exchanges of Faculty and Students and International Students’ Recruitment.

SUC₂ was internationalized to a great extent in Curriculum and Instruction, to some extent in Mobility and Exchanges for Students and Teachers, International and Intercultural Understanding and Facilities and Support System. Lowest indicators were on Research Collaboration and International Students’ Recruitment. The summary of level of internationalization of the SUCs as against UPLB is shown in Figure 2.

SUC₃ was internationalized to a very great extent as to Diverse Income Generation and to a great extent (4) in Curriculum and Instruction and to a little extent in Research Collaboration, Academic Standards and Quality and in Facilities and Support System. Lowest rating was 4 but still reflecting internationalization to a great extent was on Mobility and Exchange for Faculty and Students.

SUC₄ highest level was on Curriculum and Instruction rated as internationalized as to a great extent and to little extent internationalized in Research Collaboration, Academic Standard and Quality, Mobility and Exchange for Students and Faculty and International Student Recruitment.
Knowledge Creation an Appreciation

As to curriculum and instruction. Both the SUCs and UPLB were internationalized to a very great extent on SUCs’ rating while UPLB had the highest assessment in the scale, which is 4. The result quantitatively describes that UPLB has met all the required indicators on curriculum which includes updated syllabi, curricular programs which are accessible and open to diverse kinds of learners and needs, offering of language courses, functional ICT and laboratories and delivery of programs in different modalities. Survey on initiatives of SUCs show that initiatives on curriculum and instruction were internationalized to a very great extent but indicators showed their weakest link was on delivery of instruction using varied modalities that would give access to foreign students to take their programs anytime and anywhere they were. UPLB, for its internationalization has five online programs while among the SUCs only SUC1 was the same as UPLB as to online programs while SUC2 had one program delivered online.

As to research collaboration. The UPLB was assessed as internationalized to a great extent while those of the SUCs were described as to a least extent. A survey of the documents of UPLB and interview with research participants revealed the institution led more than four research activities a year done in collaboration with educational institutions, agencies or industries in other countries. To address complex development and environmental concerns, SUC2 is pursuing inter- and trans-disciplinary programs and collaborative research. It involves local and international universities and research institutions, non-government agencies, and civil society organizations, starting from the member-institutions of the Los Baños Science Community. Connectedness has allowed collaborating internationally almost on real time and the dynamic and productive R & D sector provides impetus for more insightful and grounded teaching.

Involvement in R&D activities has enriched the experience of UPLB mentors allowing them more meaningful interactions with their students. It also accords the University the expertise to dispense technical advice in policymaking to lead in national R&D programs. As mentioned, the R&D mandate is oftentimes carried out in collaboration with member-institutions of the Los Baños science community such as the International Rice Research Institute, World Agroforestry Centre, International Potato Center, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau, Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development, and a host of non-government and civil society organizations.

UPLB was internationalized to a very great extent as to participation of faculty, students or administrative staff who participated in international studies as researchers garnering highest rate meaning the institution has at least 40 percent of the faculty, students or administrative staff who participated in international studies as researchers in the last five years. UPLB was also internationalized to a very great extent as to conduct of studies on international comparative education to understand differences between and among nations with highest rating which means at least four studies in five years on international comparative education. Most of the SUCs did not have any study on this except SUC4 which had two studies on this.

UPLB also was very highly internationalized as to international conferences with at least four international organized conferences held; along this concern SUC1 was very highly internationalized and SUC4 internationalized to some extent. Among the indicators, UPLB posted no internationalization at all as to participation of UPLB as respondents in international studies citing this was difficult to trace. Evidently, the SUCs were way low the internationalization rate of UPLB considering that the indicators either manifested internationalization was either to a least extent and the others, to some extent.

Quality and Excellence

Academic standards and quality. UPLB was rated as internationalized to a very high extent with almost all indicators having the highest quantitative rate. The UPLB offers more than 100 degree programs in various disciplines through its nine colleges and two schools. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has accredited units as Centers of Excellence and two as Centers of Development, giving the institution the largest number of Centers of Excellence (research and academic units combined) among all universities in the country. It has benchmarked its curricular or extra-curricular activities with national and/or international standards with at least five percent of its programs benchmarked with national and/or international standards. Moreover, the institution has been cited at least five institutions in the Philippines or abroad. UPLB also has faculty and administrators with high profile with at least 40 percent of the faculty and administrators are recognized for their expertise here and abroad. At least 75 percent of the administrators and staff have special trainings or exposures abroad and it is cited by at least recognized international societies/publications as a good institution for learning. It has 60 percent of the faculty and administrators recipients of scholarships, fellowships or grants abroad. While SUCs 1 and 3 are manifesting very high extent internationalization along accreditation, benchmarking of curricular/co-curricular activities vis-à-vis international standards and high profile of faculty, SUCs were low in internationalization initiatives in exposures training abroad and on recognition in international society. Further, no internationalization was found among SUCs as to being grantees of scholarships.

Culture of Sharing and Service

Mobility and exchange for students and faculty. UPLB’s efforts in general was to a great extent which was pulled down as only about four percent of its students were in foreign institution indicating internationalization was to a least extent, but was still higher to that of the SUCs which had internationalization on this aspect as to a least extent.

All other indicators on mobility in UPLB were described as internationalized to a very great extent with highest rating of four. Comparatively, the assessments of the SUCs on mobility were described to a least extent and no internationalization at all as to their students studying abroad.
International and Intercultural Understanding and Networking

International and Intercultural understanding. UPLB’s data show that all indicators received the highest rating inferring that UPLB was very highly internationalized international/intercultural networking, with more than four institutions in twinning programs with foreign universities and had participated in at least ten international assemblies, had established at least four multicultural activities and its members, active members of international organization, with some even serving as officers of international organizations. Moreover, UPLB was very highly internationalized as to establishment of venues/organizations for cultural interactions among students from different countries. UPLB has the International Center, Center for Gender and Peace, Education under Reproductive Health; Women’s Desk, Anti-Sexual Harassment Desk, and the Foreign Students’ Organizational Office of Institutional Linkages. Looking at the SUCs’ ratings on these indicators show that the SUCs were very highly internationalized on their part as being international partners/networking link and on the twinning programs with foreign institution. These show that internationalization is usually begun in improving curriculum and instruction as these become the tiers to reaching out to other institutions of higher learning. Evidently, SUCs cannot forge academic linkages and offer programs if their academic programs are not responsive, updated, relevant, and of quality standards. Similarly, SUCs will not be able to have twinning programs if the programs they offer are not aligned to their foreign partner-institutions’ needs. As what internationalization advocates say, SUCs have to start their internationalization at home base giving the students the international environment and the management and systems which are guided by vision, policies, high profile human resource, adequate support systems and funding which somehow stimulate the realities in international settings. Along the concern on curriculum and instruction and forming academic linkages, it can be said that the SUCs are slowly gaining ground. Along this concern, the survey of the results shows that SUCs 1, 2, and 3 are showing they are very highly internationalized. All other indicators were rated as either internationalized to some extent or to a least extent inferring SUCs were lacking in membership in instructional organizations, organizing curricular and co-curricular multicultural activities or establishing Centers for understanding of cultures of different nations. These could be because the SUCs have not yet reached the phase on having a number of academic institution partners from where they may have opportunities to have foreign students or organize a Center for them or even hold activities which could be prepared for local and foreign students’ cultural development.

Cooperation and development assistance. As revealed, all indicators on UPLB were described as internationalized with all scores having the highest score of four. To mention, UPLB had at most 54 institutions and 53 foreign universities in alliance with consortia and were commissioned by international organizations in development projects such as World Bank, UNESCO, ADB, Aus-Aid, ASFAF, among others. Internationalization was likewise to a very high extent considering funding for cultural understanding, international learning, or inter-religious activities.

On a similar observation, the SUCs were likewise internationalized to a very great extent as to their engagement with other countries and in involvement in formulating policies for academic, scientific, economic and educational purposes but were low when it comes to funding from foreign partners and no internationalization at all as to being commissioned in development projects and on being recipients of foreign scholarship grants.

Growth, Efficiency and Accountability

International students’ recruitment. The UPLB was internationalized to a very great extent as to online availability of it educational programs, course offerings, syllabi and policies for admission and retention of students with 90 percent of these available online; likewise, it offers online services of recruitment, enrolment, screening and payment of fees but was internationalization as to some extent responsively to inquiries online. This was because inquiries were only on weekdays. On the other hand, the SUCs generally were rated low as to their internationalization on online students’ recruitment described as to a least extent.

Facilities and support system. Generally, UPLB was very highly internationalized in its facilities and support system with almost all indicators having the rating of four which include library with complete and updated facilities, sufficient number of librarians, dormitory with different amenities, medical and dental support and facilities and other amenities as lounges, tutorial centers, bank, telephone booths, convenience store, bowling lanes, University Food Center.

UPLB however was internationalized to a great extent on classrooms equipped with state of the art technologies and to a least extent as to provision of a guidance counselor for local and foreign students. On the other hand, SUCs were likewise internationalized to a very great extent in most indicators but were low in internationalization on classrooms and were not internationalized at all as to licensed full time librarians, and guidance counselors.

Diversity and income generation. Both UPLB and the SUCs were internationalized to a very great extent as to budget from foreign countries; but SUCs were not as internationalized as to generation of other sources of income.

UPLB’s Internationalization Status

Using UPLB as benchmark for internationalization shows the great strides the SUCs have to take to attain internationalization status. For programs, UPLB offers 29 undergraduate, 79 masters, and 30 doctoral degree programs in its traditional fields of expertise as well as in allied and important emerging fields through its nine colleges and two schools.

Instruction at UPLB benefits from a multidisciplinary human resource and multi-institutional collaborations especially from the research and development institutions around it and the University continues to offer and propose new curricular programs for future and global needs.

UPLB instituted the Bachelor of Science degree in Agribiotechnology, Master of Veterinary Epidemiology,
Master of Management, major in cooperative management and the Ph.D. in Development Studies which shows the continued expansion of programs thus opening studying opportunities from other countries. All courses are taught by a pool of professors and mentors who are among the best in their fields in this country and in the Asia-Pacific region. To enhance the competitiveness of educators, UPLB embraces alternative paradigms of teaching and learning in multipractical modes. Pedagogy is more interactive and learner-centered to encourage ubiquitous learning among the new generation of learners and transforms professors into educators and facilitators in a digital age with an increasingly global classroom.

Collaboration is through partnership with other prestigious universities abroad in offering joint graduate degree programs. As nearly as 1989, UPLB had been a founding member and host of the Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and National Resources through the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA). Here, expertise, exchange students, and faculty members share knowledge and enjoy fellowships and scholarships to study in other members of the consortium.

The undergraduate students of UPLB are among the best high school graduates from all over the country and graduate students are carefully chosen from graduates and professionals who respond to the challenge of continuing and lifelong learning. Through these undergraduate and graduate curricular programs, the University nurtures individuals with the culture of scholarship and imbues them with the value of public services.

The UPLB as a community of scholars who live by honor and excellence have students who are dedicated to discovery and learning. Excellent mentoring and training hone them to become professionals who later would make up a country’s dynamic and productive human resource.

As a testament to the excellence of instruction and learning in UPLB, the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has identified a number of centers of excellence and centers of development at UPLB.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions:

Based from the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Internationalization is beginning to be a core part of SUCs’ organizational program development but is still in the initial phase, that is, SUCs are internationalizing within their own system.
2. Internationalization offers wide opportunities for SUCs’ growth beyond borders along its mandates but budget constraints, weak ICT and physical infrastructure, insufficient faculty experts, slow international student recruitment and faculty and student exchange program and lack of plan on internationalization.
3. There is a need for the SUCs to work on their internationalization goals so as to be able to respond to the call on excellence, quality, and service reflected in their graduates.

Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions generated from the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Internationalization model for SUCs in CALABARZON shall be proposed to enhance internationalization initiatives.
2. There shall be an Internationalization Plan which will ensure that policies, goals, human and material resources, budget and resource allocation as well as the dimensions are implemented, monitored, and evaluated.
3. The result of the study may be presented in national and international conferences.
4. The study may be published in refereed journal for wider dissemination.
5. A similar study be conducted to validate the findings but with international institutions and students as respondents.

References


Author Profile

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