

A Contextual Analysis of the University Research Agenda of Select Teacher Education Institutions in the Philippines: Policy Implications and Future Directions

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Abstract: With the promising developments in regional cross-border in South-East Asia, Higher Education Institutions chart a well-articulated and relevant research agenda because of the pivotal role in regional eminence and competitiveness. Using contextual analysis to unfold what characterises the University Research Agenda (URA) of the leading ($n=8$) Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), the findings revealed a *culturalist research agenda* characterised by a contextual trend toward sustaining institutional development and social transformation, expanding institutional linkages and network, and fostering university identity crafted in a multi-sectoral approach. In addition, an overwhelming number of external drivers on the research agenda compared to international drivers denote a domestic in-scope research agenda. The study contends that for TEIs to deter a regional *roadmap creep*, an *isomorphism* in the research agenda that espouses university identity infused with *regionalisation ideologies* to contribute to mapping the regional landscape of HE. The paper also draws implications on policy reforms, research agenda reframing, and suggestions for TEIs' future direction.

Keywords: Contextual analysis, Culturalist research agenda, Isomorphism, Regionalisation ideologies, Roadmap creep

1. Introduction and Background of the Study

The conflux of three facets in higher education-regionalism-ASEAN Economic Integration has stirred South-East Asian universities to rebrand their Higher Education (HE) for a competitive regional HE hub. This regional phenomenon may offer numerous opportunities and challenges for ASEAN member states. The highly developed ASEAN state members with highly globalised and internationalised HE continue to take advantage of the phenomenon by converting HE as one of the drivers of the economy, whilst those with developing economies still face numerous challenges in pursuit of HE reputation and aggression. As Buenestado-Fernandez et al. (2019), cited in Muftahu, Devisakti, & Xiaoling (2023), opined that governments of Asian countries have been focusing on boosting economic growth through higher education because it can generate income. Meanwhile, Philippine Higher Education, although labelled amongst the most vast in South-East Asian Higher Education, still hurdles perennial challenges in advancing its HE, particularly in institutional quality outcomes.

In a report by UNESCO, the country ranked second in South-East Asia with several universities (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2014). The existence of HEIs in the last few decades was insignificant in terms of quality education, as revealed in the recent ranking of top universities in Asia that only a

few universities in the country made it in the top-ranking universities, wherein most are coming from private and non-sectarian HEIs. Like any other country with an emerging economy, the Philippines continues to huddle similar challenges and issues in achieving global competitiveness, innovation, research, and development (R&D), which is critical for university ranking.

Research is primarily considered a core function of Higher Education. This primary role of HE places faculty at the forefront of generating new knowledge. However, this function is often neglected by university research talents and faculty due to issues surrounding research as one of their functions in the university. Sanyal & Varghese (2006) hinted that higher education institutions of nations with emerging economies are inclined to maintain strong academic functions and poor research production. In terms of R&D, Regadio & Tullao (2015) in their study reported that majority of the State Colleges and Universities (SCUs) demonstrated poor R&D and failed to optimise R&D funding by governmental agencies contrary to some privately owned HEIs despite the absence of support from the government, had remarkable contributions to R&D productivity of the country. Inigo (2017) asserts that the Philippines has a sophisticated system for guaranteeing the calibre of academic programmes but falls short in terms of research production. In contrast, a forecast study of Guido & Orleans (2020), the country ranked fifth amongst its ASEAN counterparts and is projected to sustain research productivity. Rongayan & Corpuz (2021) also echoed the same results and disclosed in their study a relatively high publication by state-funded institutions of higher learning but low productivity in publication in SCOPUS-indexed and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) accredited journals. Ocampo (2022) explains that crucial factors such as university support, incentive system, research funding, coaching and mentoring, and electronic information resources affect research productivity. But what makes state-funded universities mediocre in terms of research and innovation? Wa-Mbaleka (2015) conducted an exploratory investigation to determine the culprit of teachers' mediocrity in research work. The result showed that the most common factors were lack of capacity-building in conducting and publishing, low interest, laziness, limited funds, and poor institutional support. Whilst these results paint a bleak picture of state-funded universities' research culture, much-needed attention and exploration on University Research Agenda must be made as it is link to institutional research and innovation productivity already mentioned in previous studies. For instance, a definable research agenda is a predictive indicator of research productivity (Borocato & Mavis, 2005). Edwards (2018) concluded that research is pivotal aspect of academic excellence.

2. Brief Literature Review

2.1 Historical Background and Brief Literature Review of University Research Agenda

The HEIs in the Philippines can be classified as public or private. They can also be categorised as State Colleges and Universities (SUCs) funded by the national government, and Local Colleges and Universities (LCUs) operated and supervised by the local government unit (LGU), and obtain funds from it. Private colleges may either be "sectarian" or "non-sectarian." At present, there are about 2,299 HEIs in the Philippines. Of the 2,299 HEIs 656, or 28.53% belong to public HEIs, 547 are from State Colleges and Universities (SUCs), 95 of which are Local Colleges and Universities (LCU), as reported by CHED. Meanwhile, Teacher Education institutions are HEIs offering teacher education courses and programmes. Some TEIs were established, as provincial schools for training future teachers, also known as "normal schools" pioneered by the Thomasites during the first decade of the American Occupation Period in the country. The first normal school was established in 1901 in Manila, the Philippine Normal School and now the Philippine Normal University. A year later, two more normal schools were established in the Visayas region as provincial branches, the Cebu Normal School and Ilo-Ilo Normal School. Today, these public or state-funded leading TEIs, in collaboration with CHED have created a network among the original TEIs to address the emerging challenges confronting TEIs. Inspired by the Bologna Accord of Europe that paved the way for the emergence of "cross-border higher education, the National Network of Normal School (3NS), a local Erasmus Mundus Programme was launched by the Philippine Normal University in anticipation of the regionalisation and internationalisation of HE. Specifically, the network envisions the sharing best academic practices, extension programme services, and research partnerships.

2.2 The University Research Agenda and its Significance

University Research Agenda in this study is defined as the collective research ideas of the university stakeholders. In the Philippine context, a university research agenda is a document that guides all faculty researchers towards contributing to the attainment of the university VMGOs, local and national agenda through alignment of their research endeavours and projects that include personal or professional research with institutional research priorities. Accordingly, research agenda in the words of Hobbs & Aubry (2007), outline a clear foundation for future research activities, enquiries, and projects in addition to providing a precise framework for informed decision-making.

The significance of the research agenda to the university's overall research culture cannot just be underscored for it plays a crucial role in the research productivity of university research talents and faculty. It offers a *career map* [author's italic] for a researcher (Ertmer & Glazewski, 2014). In education, it identifies knowledge gaps and practice gaps and proposes research questions that are important for improving and impacting a particular academic field, discipline, or area of study (n.d., <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/promoting-social-learning-in-higher-education/88017>.) It is also significant for students to ensure congruence with their research work (Rogoniel, 2022). Nassir (2014) sums up by emphasising the importance of research agenda in teacher education, stating that the research agenda serves as an institutional guide and knowledge baseline in research and a foundation for performing research objectives and structure. Additionally, the results of research endeavours improve the educational practices in the macro and microsystem, particularly in transforming teachers to become effective leaders as well as to develop human potential, make informed choices that have been experimentally verified, and proliferate knowledge of the latest techniques.

2.3 Goals, Objectives, and Drivers of University Research Agenda

In the Philippine context of research agenda setting, various drivers influence the creation of such institutional documents that may be classified as internal and external drivers. One major driver is the NHERA or National Higher Education Research Agenda which outlines the goals that Higher Education should incorporate in their university research agenda such as (1) push the boundaries of knowledge in all of the country's selected higher education disciplines, (2) ameliorate instruction by making original contributions in specialist fields, so enabling students to become creative, innovative, and productive individuals, and (3) create unifying theories or models that can be turned into mature technologies to improve the quality of life of Filipinos within the scope of the country's academic institutions.

(https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/philippines_national_higher_education_research_agenda.pdf.)

Within the context of institutional politics, the establishment of research agenda is dependent on the appointment of the university president along with the institutional direction, the president together with the university research experts, research staff, and university leaders from different heads of office, establish either a short-term or long-term research agenda. To what extent the university stakeholders are being involved in the process of formulation of the research agenda in the Philippine HE? As institutional autonomy prevails in the state-funded HE, the process of creating research agenda begins with the university leaders and consultation with partner industries to give crucial inputs in the development of the research agenda before the stakeholders for consultation believed to offer an inclusive growth in the various sectors of the government and community. After the internal and external review, the finalisation of the crafted research agenda is refined by incorporating recommendations from stakeholders and then forwarded to the university's highest governing body, the Board of Regents (BOR) for approval before its dissemination and publication.

2.4 The Role of the Commission on Higher Education

The CHED, a governmental regulating body that carries multiple roles in the monitoring and supervision of Philippine Higher Education was established under Republic Act No. 7722, also known as the Higher Education Act of 1994. This legal basis mandates CHED to develop and arm HEIs' capacity to perform one of the trifocal functions, research work. Thus, a decentralised monitoring system for the CHED research management function was then formally introduced. This mechanism of CHED ensures research culture development among HEIs. Aside from a decentralised management system, Zonal Research Centres (ZRC) were created across different regions in the country to assist the research endeavours of other HEIs in the neighbouring region.

Research productivity is utilised as a criterion by CHED for awarding programme and institutional accreditation status. It is also used by CHED and other funding agencies to grant research aid to research talents of the university. It follows then that public HEIs must ensure in their respective systems a stimulating research culture not because research function is one of the main functions of academe but more so because it is a parameter in measuring the global competitiveness of a university. Many of the research findings are consistent in their results and implications of the critical role of coherent research agenda on R&D for global competitiveness. In this regard, some policy-makers and education reformists have recently admonished that URA should characterise relevance and coherence and where stakeholders take collective *ownership* of such documents.

2.5 Current Status of Teacher Education Institutions

In recent years, TEIs have been proactive toward regionalising HE in Southeast Asia. One of the country's leading TEI, the Philippine Normal University has been at the forefront of reshaping HE in Southeast Asia partnerships through the creation of the ASTen, Association of Southeast Asian Teacher Education Network. This initiative aligns with the ASEAN Community towards regionalising HE and Southeast Asian universities responded positively to this regional partnership through its membership of their leading universities in Teacher Education Institutions. These premier TEIs in the region operate within the principles of reciprocity, collaboration, partnership, and commitment toward addressing relevant and emerging issues, as well as challenges that confront ASTen members. Most recently, education leaders from the public and private HE sectors in the country, have expressed their commitment to revolutionising HE through The Manila Declaration on Higher Education during the 2014 Philippine Higher Education Presidents' Summit. The document outlines a few sets of principles by which HEIs are expected to adhere, like the necessity for creating innovative research, sharing resources, and the need for academe-industry-government partnerships.

In the Philippines, it remains unexamined regarding what characterizes the university research agenda of the leading TEIs pioneered by the Thomasites during the American Colonisation. There is a dire need to investigate what shapes the URA of the leading TEIs given a newly emerging phenomenon, regionalisation of HE. The findings of the present study may provide some implications for policy redirection and offer suggestions for future cohesive research agenda and institutional direction that is pivotal for attaining university eminence. Hence this study was conducted to unfold the trends of TEIs' research agenda aims and objectives and what drives their research agenda. As such, the research questions are as follows: (RQ): 1. *What characterises the institutional research agenda of the leading teacher education institutions?* (RQ): 2. *What policy implications and future directions can be drawn based on the significant findings of the investigation?*

3. Method

The present investigation used a *contextual analysis* approach to analyse the URA of select leading TEIs in the Philippines, more specifically in the aspect of (1) drivers of the research agenda and (2) its goals and objectives. Hartson & Pyla (2012) defined *contextual analysis* as an in-depth study and analysis of understanding existing work practice and context. Willems (2021) explains the importance of the method. Accordingly, it helps to locate patterns and subjects in unorganized information (contexts). Contextual analysis in some ways aids in bringing order out of disarray. The major goal of

contextual analysis is to determine when and how a social phenomenon is shaped by its context and vice versa. Hence, the method is appropriate for the current study as it aims to unveil what characterises Teacher Education Institutions' URA. From the results of the investigation policy implications are drawn and offer future directions for Philippine Teacher Education Institutions.

3.1 Sampling and Data Collection Procedure

The samples of the study included TEIs from different regions in the Philippines. These sample universities comprise the National Network of Normal Schools (3NS). Today, these original normal schools are considered the leading TEIs in the country for their quality teacher education programmes. The study utilised a purposive sampling technique whereby eight ($n=8$) original normal schools were involved and data were obtained from the university website. Campelle, Greenwood, & Walker (2020) expound on the importance of purposive sampling emphasising that it ensures good matching of the participants to the primary goals and objectives of the investigation. Therefore, it enhances the rigour of the investigation and the trustworthiness of the collected information and findings. In this study, the data-gathering process took over four months to download the URA of TEIs.

3.2 Data Analysis Approach

Data obtained from the samples were analysed using a *contextual analysis* approach to determine codes, cluster the patterns or themes that emerged from the analysis and identify associations between that cluster or categories. Contextual analysis is defined as a technique of data examination that considers the elements of the environment in which data were gathered and their impact on study units (n.d. <https://dictionary.apa.org/contextual-analysis>). This method is deemed appropriate for the present study for it unveils what characterises the research agenda of TEIs.

4. Findings and Discussions

This paper qualitatively investigates the leading ($n=8$) TEIs university research agenda in the Philippines, accessed through the institutional websites, and a contextual analysis was used to unravel what characterises their URA. Policy implications and future directions are discussed along with the results, implications, and suggestions for TEIs future directions in the subsequent sections.

4.1 Profile of Teacher Education Institutions

The table below presents the general information of the eight ($n=8$) sample leading TEIs from different parts of the country. It can be shown from Table 1 that only three normal schools have retained the word "normal" in their name as institutions of higher learning such as the Leyte Normal University (LNU), Cebu Normal University (CNU), and Philippine Normal University (PNU). This means that these sample universities take pride in their shared rich history. The rest of the sample universities were converted into comprehensive universities including Western Mindanao State University (WMSU), West Visayas State University (WVSU), Palawan State University (PSU), Bukidnon State University (BuKSU) and Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU). In terms of the location of the leading TEIs, two are located in the province of Mindanao, three are from the Visayas Region and three are from Luzon. Only one is from Central Manila. All leading TEIs offer both undergraduate and graduate programs.

Table 1. General information of the teacher education institutions

Institution	University type	Location	Level & Degree Programme
TEI A	State University	Central Visayas	Undergraduate & Graduate
TEI B	State University	Central Visayas	Undergraduate & Graduate
TEI C	State University	Eastern Visayas	Undergraduate & Graduate
TEI D	National University	Central Manila	Undergraduate & Graduate
TEI E	State University	Luzon	Undergraduate & Graduate
TEI F	Comprehensive	Luzon	Undergraduate & Graduate
TEI G	State University	Mindanao	Undergraduate & Graduate
TEI H	State University	Mindanao	Undergraduate & Graduate

4.2. Programme-based and Institutional Accreditation Status of Teacher Education Institutions

Of the eight sample universities included in this study, quality assurance-wise, TEIs are bent on ensuring quality outcomes as an overwhelming number of them had programme-based accreditation, as presented in Figure 1. A total of (four 4 or 50%) are designated as Centre of Excellence (COE) and three (3 or 37.5%) are identified as Centre of Development (COD), and only one (1 or 12.5 %) had no programme accreditation.

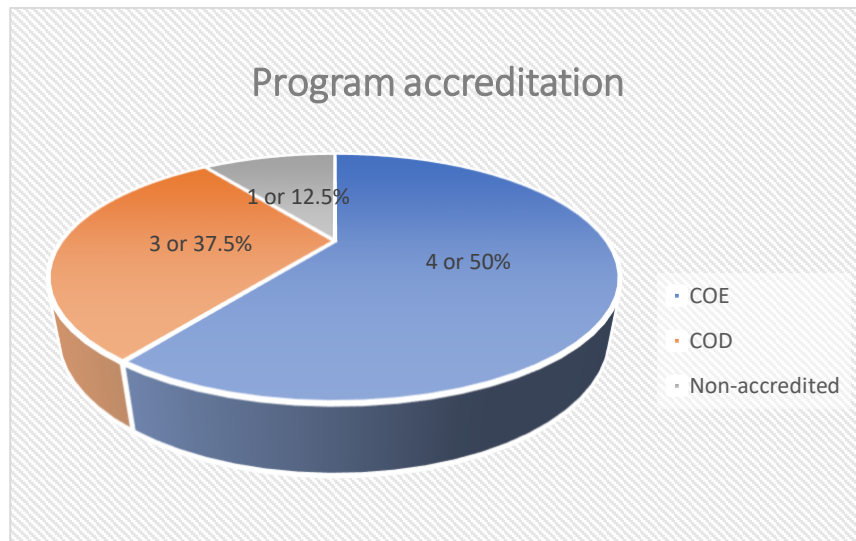


Fig. 1 Programme Accreditation Status of Teacher Education Institutions

In terms of institutional accreditation by the AACCUP, the majority of Teacher Education Institutions are Level III accredited, as reflected in Figure 2, five (5 or 62.5%) followed by Level 4 accredited, with two (2 or 25%) whilst only one (1 or 12.5%) had a Level I accreditation programme.

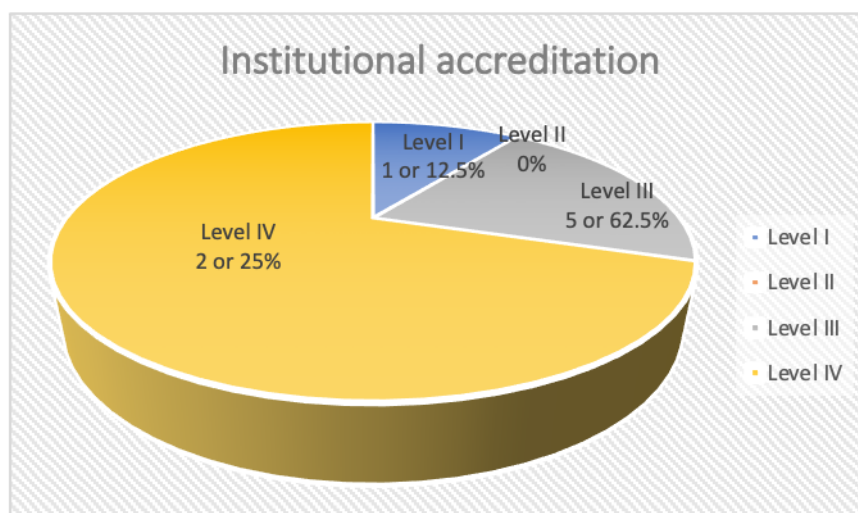


Fig. 2 Accreditation Status of Teacher Education Institution

Archival data on the programme and institutional accreditation of leading TEIs in the Philippines showed an overwhelming number of TEIs institutionally accredited and granted programme accreditation as Centre of Excellence and Centre of Development by CHED and AACCUP that indicate the leading Teacher Education Institutions' long commitment to quality teacher education programme. This finding also signals that TEIs see quality assurance mechanisms as pivotal in sustaining quality in the teacher preparation programme. It is no secret that the path to educational excellence is through quality assurance and programme certification.

4.3 University Research Agenda Drivers

The Table below presents the drivers of URA of the Teacher Education Institutions. As reflected in Table 4 below, Teacher Education Institutions' URA is anchored on 3 significant drivers categorised as external, internal, and international. It can be gleaned from the table that external drivers ranked priority with National Research and Agency (6 or 26.08%) ranked first, followed by Regional Research Agency (5 or 21.73%), ranked second, and National Development Plan (4 or 17.4%) ranked third. It can also be noticed that university VMGOs as the only internal driver with (4 or 17.4%) whilst for the international drivers, Millennium Development Goals or MDGs with (3 or 13.04%) ranked fifth, and International Agency with only (1 or 4.35%) ranked sixth respectively.

Table 4. University research agenda drivers

Research Agenda Driver	<i>n</i>	Percentage	Rank
External Drivers			
National Research Agency	6	26.08 %	1
Regional Research Agency	5	21.73 %	2
National Development Plan	4	17.4%	3.5
Internal Drivers			
University VMGO	4	17.4 %	3.5
International Drivers			
Millennium Development Goals MDGs	3	13.04 %	5
International Agency	1	4.35 %	6

The participation of various government sectors in creating the university research agenda is equally important as the research agenda itself. The inclusion of a good number of national and institutional drivers signifies a 'domestic' in-scope research agenda because it confines within institutional thrusts and missions and the national border. However, there's no doubt that such practise would contribute to local and national development as its emphasis on vertical alignment among

external, and internal drivers crafted in a *socio-political approach* of the various multi-sectors of the government. In addition, it shows that TEIs recognise the importance of contextually informed stakeholders and the role of a cohesive multi sectoral approach to agenda setting and formulation that is vital for a researching university. This approach to agenda creation contributes to the local and national progress of the country for it incorporates a wide-spectrum of national social issues. Within the context of the contemporary function of education, HE should ensure the development and transformation of human capital. Rusmar & Mustakim (2017), cited in Petancio (2020), advanced one explanation about the role of an '*appropriate system of education* [author's italics] would contribute to the development and transformation of a nation's vital resource, human capital.

Whilst, a domestic in scope characterises the URA of the leading TEIs, it is assumed to impact both local and national boundaries. Yet, the need to revisit, reshape, and revitalise their research agenda framework that transgresses beyond the national boundary is expedient as the AEC described as a region with fierce competition, equitable economic growth, and full integration into the global economy. Likewise, the ASEAN Economic Cooperation 2015 Integration envisions to bring the ten ASEAN member nations together into a single industrial base and market (<http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-economic-community>). This means that TEIs have to integrate regional and global thrusts such as sustainable development (SDG), MDGs, regionalisation, transnationalisation, and UNESCO education agenda that is less emphasised in the URA of the majority of the leading TEIs. The AEC will drive HEIs to be regionally and globally competitive by regionalising their HE without losing their university identity. It is therefore, crucial that TEIs and the government form a strategic research agenda that will make the leading TEIs aggressive towards regionalisation.

As the public-funded HEIs in the Philippines enjoy higher institutional autonomy and freedom to create their research agenda and institutional directions, there is an even more compelling reason for state-funded HE like the TEIs to deliberately consider ASEAN Community Integration as a guiding framework for the university research agenda. Envisioning teacher education preparation for the country that matches with ASEAN counterparts would be crucial not only for ensuring the quality of teacher preparations but also positions the country's TEIs to contribute to the regionalisation of teacher education programmes in the region. There is not much of a question that research agenda that crosses national boundaries will better prepare TEIs for the regionalisation of HE has given rise to higher cross-border student mobility, university research talents, internationalisation, and globalisation among Southeast Asian universities.

4.4 Research Agenda Goals & Objectives

Table 3 presents the emerging themes about the goals and objectives of the research agenda of the leading TEIs. The result indicated three emerging themes from the initial 26 broad categories. It can be observed that leading TEIs' research agenda on goals and objectives revolve around these three emerging themes, including sustaining institutional development and social transformation with (22 or 84.6%) rank 1 as indicated by the following broad categories of terms and phrases: *institutionalise research-based curriculum, commercialise research results and mature technology, produce research skilled graduates, institutionalise training and developments to develop R&D capability, build a culture of excellence in research, and enhance the research productivity to transition the institution as a research-oriented TEI*. This is followed by creating university linkages and networks with (2 or 7.7%) ranked 3.5 as supported by the following terms used: *promote linkages, research partnerships and collaboration, and provide policy makers with empirical data to support educational legislative body in the formulation of education reforms*. Last, fostering university identity with (2 or 7.7%) ranked 3.5 as shown in the following terms; *build a culture of excellence, develop innovative ideas for international distinction, conduct high impact research that will improve the quality of teacher education, improve the product of teacher education, advance teacher education for international competitiveness*. From this result, it can be inferred that TEIs are bent on performing their mandate as a driver of social transformation and social progress and development while also advocating university collective identity which is a contemporary function of Higher Education Institutions.

Table 3. Goals and objectives of the university research agenda

Goals & Objectives	<i>n</i>	%	Rank
Sustaining institutional development & social transformation	22	84.6	1
Expanding institutional linkages & networks	2	7.7	3.5
Fostering institutional identity	2	7.7	3.5

The university research agenda is crucial to the university research productivity. The Southeast Asian universities continue to regionalise HE and the need for alignment with global and regional standards are inevitable including research directions of the university should be heading toward this path. In this study, findings on the goals and objectives of the TEIs research agenda reflect institutional priorities and national thrusts integrating fundamental political, cultural, environmental, educational, social, and economic issues. This key result could be interpreted that the premier Teacher Education Institutions take significant strides in their mandate as chartered universities funded by the national government and their role in ensuring economic development and human capital transformation. However, TEIs should not just take a proactive role in reshaping their research agenda that addresses institutional and national concerns but most importantly endeavour to reflect visionary characteristics in their research agenda to create a visible impact on the emerging needs of the regional communities. Undoubtedly research agenda has been the central focus of world-class universities as a driver of institutional research productivity for global ranking and competitiveness. Viewed strictly within the national context of URA, TEIs should endeavour to spice their research agenda with *regional* and *glocal allure* without losing their university's unique identity. In other words, it should cultivate a research agenda flagship that embraces '*regionalisation*' of HE. TEIs, need to transcend their domestic orientation if it envisions to become regionally competitive to provide relevant teacher education programmes. These emerging themes on the goals and objectives of the research agenda paint a bleak picture of what TEIs should work hard to attain prestige and legitimacy in the region.

5. Conclusion, Policy Implications, and Future Directions

The study attempted to unravel what shaped the university research agenda of the leading Teacher Education Institution in the Philippines. Using a contextual analysis approach of the data downloaded from the URA published on the university websites, the findings revealed a *culturalist research agenda* characterised by a contextual trend toward sustaining institutional development and social transformation, expanding institutional linkages and networks, and fostering university identity crafted in a multi-sectoral approach. In addition, an overwhelming number of external drivers on the research agenda compared to international drivers denote a domestic in-scope research agenda. The study contends that for TEIs to deter a regional *roadmap creep*, an *isomorphism* in the research agenda that espouses university identity infused with *regionalisation ideologies* to contribute to mapping the regional landscape of HE. The paper also draws implications on policy reforms, research agenda reframing, and suggestions for TEIs' future direction.

The ASEAN Community Integration continues to create a bold impact. As a result, Southeast Asian universities are getting more driven to regionalise and internationalise their programmes, and curricular offerings, gain international accreditation, and reframe institutional policies. Several policy implications are drawn and elucidated in the subsequent section.

5.1 Relevant University Research Agenda

Change in leadership always brings new priorities and new directions and research agenda. This political reality creates a problematic situation since it impedes the improvement of HE research and development direction. The termination of the institution president's term goes with the termination of university directions and the newly installed president launches his vision for the university. This typical political practice can stagnate higher education development. Educational decision-makers and policymakers, university leaders should pursue a long-term roadmap for the university to ensure the

sustainability and productivity of the organisation resulting in a growing and sustained impact on the local community and national development.

Defining a clear, coherent, cohesive, and long-term URA is a critical thrust for universities because it affects university quality standards, institutional relevance, research culture, and institutional economic aspect. In this context, responding to issues, challenges, and trends confronting education requires an integrative, clear, and cohesive research agenda. The policymaker, educational decision-makers, and research practitioner should prioritise national and institutional policies that can potentially impact faculty research productivity and explore other pathways to institutional agenda development to bring embedded good practices on institutional development that will stimulate a *culture of innovation* for global competitiveness. They must reformulate the existing framework and model of the university research agenda to convert the research agenda of Teacher Education Institutions that nurture institutional research flagship. Additionally, a unifying institutional research agenda of TEIs would have a merger impact on raising the quality and standards of the educational system across all levels, for it will provide valuable insights to policymakers in crafting research-based, evidenced-based, and data-driven policies that will eventually impact educational practices.

5.2 Massive Capacity-building for University Faculty & Research Talents

Whilst it is believed that just as university faculty have a profound role in R&D, research is strongly linked between policy and practise. This direct relationship between R&D and policy practise purports university stakeholders for strengthened research capability-building in research and development programmes, and capability building not because they are the lifeblood of a research university but more so because their research work impacts both policy and practise. The idea of capacitating research of world-class universities in the West and Europe had not only generated social growth but likewise also economic prosperity. This result calls for a plea for the Philippine TEIs to design, develop, and embed institutionalised capacity-building within the university to incorporate a massive capacity-building for faculty, university research talents, and researching professors. Furthermore, implement policies that provide a supportive structure for research leadership and research undertakings by the academic staff and university research talents. And ensuring relevant capacity-building will push faculty to aggressively sustain research productivity, initiate reforms in research practise, and thereby contribute to the research productivity of TEIs. It might be more beneficial for the university's training and development centre to prioritise its faculty development (FD) plan for a massive research capacity-building programme that will address the research needs of institutional research talents. The absence of regular capacity-building for the university staff and faculty at the forefront of research work can create barriers and impede the institution from advancing its vision, mission, and research agenda.

5.3 Increase Government Funding for State-funded TEIs

Regionalisation of HE will impact the many facets of Southeast Asian universities in the regulations and procedures, mutual recognition agreements, modes of delivery of instruction, leadership governance, management system, and quality assurance mechanism are just a few to mention. A radical change of direction among Southeast Asian universities shall be towards regionalising the higher education system with regional dimensions, where Southeast Asian Universities fully embrace regional diversity for regional eminence.

Every institution of higher learning not because it's a mandate to become a generator of knowledge but because research work is linked to quality teaching and learning. Quality has been a perennial issue. The CHED has imposed numerous education reforms to address the continued decline of higher education from governance, quality assurance systems, and education initiatives that have been introduced but still with little impact. What could be the root cause? Under-investment is a contemporary issue in Philippine higher education. Reports and studies conducted have been consistent that a pattern of inadequate funding by the national government exists. In a more recent report, although education spending rose from 13.9 % to 15% from 1999-2011. Diola (2014) disclosed that it has not achieved the target which is 20% of the national budget. With the continuous population growth, access

to education quality is headed towards a *downward trend* in the years to come. As public universities were underfunded, it would be helpful for the institutions to generate new income as this could finance institutional research undertaking. The contextual realities of state-funded higher education institutions, such as poor research infrastructure, the low salary of teachers, poor research productivity, and lack of capacity-building for academic staff are results of the government under-investment in higher education. The government should rethink its role in advancing the country's higher education. Indeed much-needed attention on the funding aspects must be explored by lawmakers to revisit current funding systems and explore alternative funding models. With inadequate investment in higher education, HEIs particularly those that are state-funded would continually be likened to a "vessel sailing" uncharted without direction whilst the corporate and privately owned universities are heading towards globalisation and internationalisation.

In pursuit of the country's thrust of ensuring inclusive growth, economic development and human capital transformation through HE, the following future directions are suggested anchored on the significant results and conclusion of the present investigation.

5.4 Initiate Regional Alliances with Southeast Asian Universities

The challenges of regionalisation of HE due to ASEAN Economic Integration are universal. Most universities continue to regionalise, globalise and internationalise HE as a new paradigm shift in the research agenda will emerge. Fostering global competitiveness means that higher education institutions' culture must explore other modes of engaging partnerships with ASEAN counterparts. Higher education leadership particularly on research and quality teaching is needed as the ASEAN Community continues to change the landscape of the HE system. This is something that Teacher Education Institutions in the country should further focus. South-East Asia countries particularly the ones that have emerging economies such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand have proactive strategies towards internationalisation efforts. At an international level, the Philippine Normal University has established the ASTen. This international partnership has clearly indicated the country's TEIs' commitment towards formation of regional higher education. Internally, Philippine Normal School is a clear leader in educational initiative as it takes the lead role in reshaping teacher education in the ASEAN region through the recently organised ASTen. Finally, strengthening internationalisation and regionalisation efforts in higher education implies rethinking the role of the government in creating a research culture that matches the international standards. Whilst these missions are shared throughout the region in South-East Asia, it is particularly pertinent to developing nations in the region.

Whilst it is expected that the regional economic integration of the ASEAN member states will stimulate striking cross-border mobility of students and university research talents, competition among regional counterparts will become inevitable, and the need for re-branding of regional teacher education programmes such that curricular re-mapping, recruitment policies, and internationalisation effort with cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness guided by the strong partnership, cohesive collaboration, and synchronisation must be adhered. There is no better way to ensure a thriving university in a soon-to-be-regionalised HE than harmonising current URA with the regional counterparts to share best practises on the many aspects of HE, such as internal quality assurance practises, capacity-building models, and curricular programme twinning. There is also much-needed attention to reshaping the university research agenda that addresses problems and issues not only within the context of the national level but also at the regional on developing a *culture of innovation* to increase institutional, national, and regional relevance for global standing.

5.5 Reformulate TEIs' Research Agenda

It has long been recognised in literature and research that the university research agenda is considered a living document by which a university anchors its research endeavours and capacity-building for institutional research talents who also shape the research agenda. Focusing only on national development may engender *isolationism* among TEIs. Rethinking the Philippine Higher Education agenda is an overdue task. TEIs should remodel their research agenda that reflects congruency with their regional counterparts, if it plans to thrive in a highly regionalised HE in Southeast Asia. It is worth

noting that other Asian state members with strengthened internationalised and globalised HE will also come into the process of influence as they have an interest in marketing their HE in the region. Whilst it is formidable that countries with proactive strategies towards internationalisation, regionalisation, and globalisation in Southeast Asia countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand will become primary players in shaping regional higher education, other countries with little effort towards internationalisation initiatives will remain isolated. For Philippine higher education to become a teacher education institution hub in the region, a new form of higher education research agenda incorporating regionalisation, internationalisation and globalisation should be crafted.

5.6 Produce a New Breed of University Research Talents

It is often said that research endeavour is the ultimate expression of a university's creativity. In the Philippine HE, this function seems to be often neglected by the majority of the faculty due to numerous issues surrounding research work. One of which is the issue on overload work of tenured professors performing four-fold functions such as instruction, research, publications, and community extension services combined with the government inability to provide funding for research activities and incentives. In a paper presented by Clemena & Acosta (2007) their study found that of the 14 sampled TEIs in the country, respondents voiced that the research milieu in the university was viewed as not being that strong. Moreover, respondents also stressed that factors expedient to research productivity were time, positive beliefs in research work, healthy and stimulating research culture, and clear institutional research policy on reward and incentives. In a different investigation by Quimbo & Sulabo (2013), they explored five HEIs' research productivity. The study findings indicated that the 377 sampled faculty members mentioned educational qualification, research benefits, and incentives yielded as the best predictor for research. The study findings of Quimbo & Sulabo were echoed by Taguro (2015), who found that the institutional factors of research incentives, research forums, and administrative support, in addition to personal characteristics such as educational qualification attainment, research capability, capacity-building, knowledge, and abilities, had a significant impact on the research productivity of faculty. When policies are favourable, research flourishes. The institution should ensure a research culture that nurtures and stimulates a new breed of institutional research talents that commits to the university VMGO to attain the enduring thrust of developing human capital and pursuing sustained economic growth.

6. Limitations of the Study

The results of the present investigation should be viewed carefully as this is the first attempt to research a report on the URA of premier TEIs in the country. The research samples only represent state-funded institutions of higher learning. Hence, findings are not generalisable to the entire Teacher Education Institutions and Higher Education Institutions offering teacher education programmes.

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