Overall Preparedness of Higher Education Institution to Offer International Programs: An Evaluation

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Abstract

Internationalization has been a global phenomenon in pedagogy today as it opens a wide range of opportunities from education to employment. International boundaries are not an issue anymore in acquiring high-quality education utilizing contemporary technology. Anyone from any point in the world can study and be professional in their chosen field. International institutions offer programs to their students to boost their personal growth, develop global competencies, and build global networks. The policies, standards, and guidelines implemented by the government agencies, and the higher education institutions must demonstrate that they can implement an internationalization program and promote the Philippines' reputation for providing quality instruction. Building, laboratory facilities, library, equipment, and learning management system as required to acquire government recognition are the relevant factors that the institutions must review to ensure their overall preparedness in offering foreign programs. This study aimed to provide West Bay College with recommendations for successful implementation using the data and information gathered from the survey and analysis and help decision-makers at higher education institutions improve their internationalization plans, strategies, and processes to extend their global competitiveness.

Keywords: internationalization of education, flexible learning, academic mobility, learning management system, policy framework, learning modalities, higher education instructions

1. Introduction

Knight, 1994 describes the internationalization of higher education as 'the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution.' This definition contains vital concepts, such as the idea of internationalization as a dynamic process rather than a collection of discrete actions, and integration as a means of ensuring the international dimension's long-term sustainability. Lastly, this description alludes to an institution of higher education's fundamental and universal functions, namely teaching, research, and community service. In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education, 2017 (CHED) has also acknowledged the need for internationalization as it prepares to fund major research on this topic, owing to the thousands of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that make up the country. The mandates of CHED include improving institutional quality assurance and directing all HEIs to put in place the required processes to make sure that graduates can find work locally and in the global market.

Internationalization can be achieved through understanding the institution's desire to adapt and adhere to the need of the global community. With the use of various techniques and approaches such as the program approach, rationale approach, ad hoc approach, policy approach, and strategic approach (Munusamy, M.Miandy & Hashim, Azirah, 2020). The program approach seeks to assess the institution's readiness in the implementation of the program offering including the budget, curriculum development and the teaching methods to be used. The rationale approach involves the different factors that would affect the preliminary planning and post-implementation stage of the internationalization initiative. The ad hoc and policy approach focus on the compliance of the institution with the government agency policy, standards, and procedures. And the strategic approach involves the tangible actions and plans that the institution and the government agency need to consider to elevate the standards for the implementation of the internationalization (Munusamy, M.Miandy & Hashim, Azirah, 2020).

Concerning the internationalization approach, the Commission on Higher Education, 2016 issued Memorandum Order No.55, entitled "Policy Framework and Strategies on the Internationalization of Philippine Higher Education." last November 11, 2016. The regulations on various internationalization criteria such as academic, program, and institutional mobility were laid out in the said CMO. This CMO is the basis for improving programs, policies, and standards for the internationalization activities of the learning institutions. According to Section 9, Specific Principles of CMO No.55, the CHED shall determine the fundamental conditions for Philippine HEIs to effectively implement internationalization programs. HEIs shall prove that they have the aptitude to implement an internationalization program and to uphold and promote the Philippines' reputation for providing quality higher education through the following: (1) an internationalization strategic plan; (2) the physical, financial, and human resources (budget allocation, facilities, and equipment, including a dedicated International Relations Office and International Student Center) with adequate personnel to sustain the program; and, (3) the administrative structure for quality assurance and governance

The maturity of the HEIs as an institution, as well as its quality assurance systems, as evidenced by well-documented business processes and quality outcomes that contribute to program excellence, will be taken into account by CHED. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to (Commission on Higher Education, 2020), Memorandum No. 4, 2020, created an urgent need to explore new creative learning approaches for flexible learning. According to Harris, 2000-2001 many educators believe that 'flexible learning' as a model for education is more suited than other acknowledged models when consumers need new program delivery ways. Flexible learning includes the supply of resources, the use of technology, and the provision of support and services to help students learn more effectively.

According to Commission on Higher Education, 2017 Joint Memorandum No.1 s.2017, streamlined rules and procedures governing foreign students were created in collaboration with CHED, the Bureau of Immigration, and other involved government agencies to support government policy in promoting the Philippines as a center of education in the Asia Pacific Region and to help boost the nation's economic growth. The Philippine Bureau of Immigration (BI) mandates that foreign students who wish to study in the Philippines should have a valid visa for study based in (the Philippines, 2000) Executive Order No.285 "Amending the guidelines governing the entry and stay of foreign students in the Philippines and the establishment of an inter-agency committee on foreign students for the purpose." In compliance with this Order, HEI shall not issue a Clearance for Confirmation to incoming international students (IS) without a valid and updated visa for study. According to E.O.285, only schools with programs accredited by the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP) or with the equivalent accreditation by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Bureau of Immigration (BI) shall be authorized by the Commission to admit international students. The CHED shall prepare, at regular intervals, an updated list of such schools, in consultation with the BI, taking into account their respective mandates under existing laws and regulations. Copies of the list shall be furnished by the BI, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA), and the schools authorized to admit foreign students. All schools so authorized shall establish a foreign student unit within their organization.

The recruitment of international students has become a significant source of revenue for educational institutions as well as a source of national economic interest. Many learning institutions in the Philippines are seeking to internationalize their institutions, much as West Bay College is planning to implement. Internationalization is defined as an institution's prepared response and/or reaction "to cope with the global academic environment" (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

The conceptual framework of this research was based on a literature review of the internationalization of higher education (Huisman & van der Wende, 2004). The framework concentrated on the different factors that affected the internationalization strategy of West Bay College as shown in Figure 1.
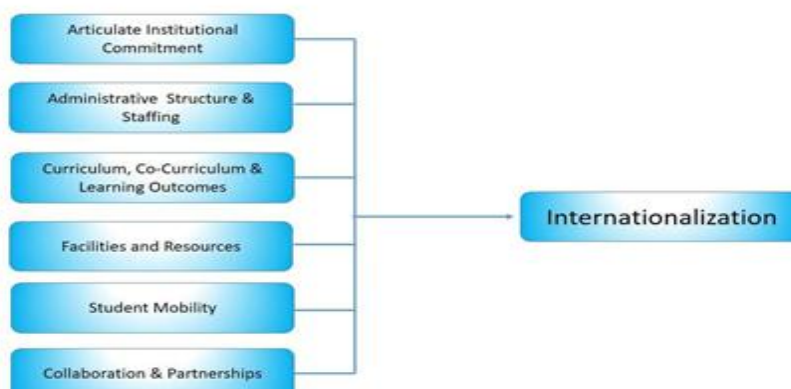
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This paper presents the findings of an evaluation study into the preparedness of a higher education institution in the Philippines to embrace internationalization. This research will assess if the school meets the requirement of the Commission on Higher Education, Bureau of Immigration, and other institutions. The institution is evaluated based on the various criteria set by the government regulatory bodies such as MORPHE, CMO 55 series 2016, and JMC 1 series 2017.

The Curricula are assessed to have a realization of the institution's educational objective and ensure that the learners acquire the necessary knowledge based on their chosen field. Thus, this research aims to answer: Do the Curricula obtain the minimum number of units required by the program? Is it aligned with the program outcomes identified by the CMO, and is it based on industry trends and needs?, Do the learning outcomes are observed and measured through knowledge skills and attitude of values using specific and measurable performance indicators.

The Library holdings refer to the number of libraries that have required a certain book title and serves as the major source of data for academic books and most scholars seek to obtain these materials for the research development. Is there a qualified library professional to administer the library department? Is there a sufficient and updated number of Library references and resources?

The site and building are assessed to check the condition, structure, safety, and security. Is the building structure abide by the law and regulatory bodies? Is it compliant with the safety measures and sanitation, waste disposal, and environmental hygiene?

Laboratory Facilities will serve as the venue for knowledge and skills acquisition. Is there enough space for the laboratory activities? Are the condition and atmosphere conducive to learning? Are there complete and functional tools and equipment?

Learning Management System will serve as the infrastructure or bridge on the learning delivery, where students learn at their own pace, and the teacher facilitates the learning. Do the Learning Management System is it functional? What are the features and their relevance to the flexible learning modality?

The COVID-19 pandemic provides the Higher Education institutions with an opportunity to offer international programs to foreign students. Offering international programs to overseas students may also present obstacles and barriers for the school. The findings of this study are expected to assist academics and administrative personnel in making relevant decisions and establishing techniques and strategies for implementing foreign programs successfully. Besides, the results of this study can help West Bay College officials to evaluate the program's strengths and weaknesses and to improve the school's ability to offer international programs.

2. Objectives

This study is intended to accomplish the following objectives:

1) To assess the compliance of the school-based evaluation criteria.

2) To determine the preparedness and capacity of the school in terms of building, facilities, equipment, supplies, and materials.

3) To assess the school's overall readiness to offer international programs and provide recommendations for successful implementation.

3. Materials and Method

This study used the descriptive method of research to determine the preparedness of West Bay College to offer international programs. The instrument was categorized into different factors such as the program administrator's profile, curriculum, library holdings, sites and buildings, laboratory, facilities, and learning management system which was adapted from the various evaluation criteria set by the government regulatory bodies such as MORPHE, CMO 55 series 2016, and JMC 1 series 2017. The technique used in collecting data and information was the cluster sampling technique to put those positions' identification as Administrative & Staff and, Faculty of West Bay College that are concerned with the preparations of the International programs. A total of fifteen (15) respondents were requested to answer the survey questionnaire prepared by the researcher and administered online. The questionnaire was sent via e-mail or thru a link that is uploaded to google forms and invited the respondents to answer the questionnaire.

The questionnaires retrieved were tallied and analyzed using appropriate statistical treatment. The data gathered were analyzed using the three basic steps: data validation, data editing, and data coding. Data validation to find out, as far as possible, whether the data collection was done as per the pre-set standards and without none bias. It will check whether the data is fraud or reliable, the second is to screen the responses for validity, and lastly to check procedures if they have been followed and checks on the completeness of all the information. The data editing will ensure that there are no such errors, thus it is advisable to conduct basic data checks, check for outliers, and edit the raw research data to identify and clear out any data points which will hamper the accuracy of the results. And also, data coding refers to grouping and assigning values to responses from the survey. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics using mean, median, mode, percentage, frequency, and range.

4. Results and Discussions

The respondents of the study are administrators, faculty, and staff of West Bay College that are concerned with the preparations of the international programs. In total, all faculty and non-faculty staff who answered the survey is fifteen (15) respondents.

Table 1 shows the summary of results from the collected and treated data. In the areas of evaluation, Curriculum ranked first with a weighted mean of 3.55 and a verbal interpretation of "Strongly Agree," which shows that respondents strongly agreed that the curriculum is based on the industry standards and compliant with the CHED Memorandum Order- and Policies, Standards, and guidelines of the program offerings. It shows that the curriculum is aligned with the CMOs, measurable, and based on the industry and needs. With a verbal interpretation of "Strongly Agree" and a weighted mean of 3.42, Safety criteria rated second, indicating that the institution has complete fire safety facilities, such as fire alarms, fire escapes, and an emergency plan, and that it meets all of the required fire safety standards. The institution provides a safe learning environment to the students. The School's building criteria received a weighted mean of 3.33 and a verbal interpretation of "Strongly Agree," indicating that the school meets the "National Building Code of the Philippines" set of criteria from the Commission on Higher Education, (2008) Manual of Regulations of Private Higher Education (MORPHE) section 26 and PD 1096. The building site and structure are well-maintained, free from hazards, and have sufficient space, furniture, and fixtures for the general needs of the administrative staff, faculty, and students, which contributes to improving the performance of students and teachers and the quality of education.

Table 1: Summary of Results

Areas of Evaluation	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Curriculum	3.55	Strongly Agree
Safety	3.42	Strongly Agree
School Buildings	3.33	Strongly Agree
Library Holdings	3.27	Strongly Agree
Laboratory Facilities	3.20	Strongly Agree
Sanitation, Waste Disposal, and Environmental Hygiene	3.13	Strongly Agree
Learning Management System	3.13	Strongly Agree
Overall Rate	**3.29**	**Strongly Agree**

Library Holdings got a weighted mean of 3.20 and a verbal interpretation of "Strongly Agree," showing that there is a professional librarian with a library assistant that administers the library holdings and there is adequate quality and quantity of books, references, electronic materials, and other learning resources. The institution meets the standards, policies, and basic resources required for a functional library. A verbal interpretation of "Strongly Agree" and a weighted mean of 3.13 indicate that Waste Disposal and Environmental Hygiene criteria for cleanliness, water supply, food handling, and sanitation are met. However, the school should ensure that there is adequate supply and equipment in the clinic, which got a 2.87 rate. Lastly, the Learning Management System got a weighted mean of 3.13 and a verbal interpretation of "Strongly Agree," which focuses on the flexibility of email, security of drop boxes and shared folders, and integration of full-featured e-portfolio tool, tracking tools, storage, and framework. Interactive tools, user interface, learning materials, customer support, and collaborations are important features for effective LMS.

Overall, the results depict that the institution was able to meet the minimum standard requirements about the CHED and BI criteria with an overall weighted mean of 3.29 and a verbal interpretation of "Strongly Agree," which is interpreted that the institution is overall prepared to offer international programs.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the data collected from the different areas of evaluation such as JMC No 01 series 2017, CMO No. 4 series 2020, and CMO 8 s 2020, it can be said that West Bay College is prepared to offer international programs. It demonstrates that the institution's curriculum adheres to CHED standards, focuses on the goals of international programs, and outcomes are monitored and reviewed regularly and based on the current educational trends. The architectural and structural plan and design of the school building comply with the standards and requirements to assure the comfort and safety of the school building's occupants and comply with fire safety regulations as well. A professional librarian manages the library, which is equipped with the materials and resources that students require. The laboratory facilities and equipment are well-maintained, functioning, and adequate to allow teachers and students to complete typical practical activities. The institution also adhered to the standards for sanitation, waste disposal, and environmental hygiene for proper sanitation and hygiene practices. The school's Learning Management System is easy to use, provides interactive tools, online databases, and resources, has a flexible system and real-time connections, and facilitates the implementation of an effective learning process.

Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement that can elevate the standards to meet the current international trends in education such as

Curriculum. The institution must revisit the existing curriculum and measure the outcome using performance indicators regularly. Conduct a graduate tracer study to test if all the indicators set in the curriculum are being achieved. The institution will have a better understanding of the curriculum's effectiveness and efficiency by assessing the graduates' employability. Next is to set up a forum or

collaborate with industry practitioners/experts to align the curriculum with the current and future trends and incorporate it into the implementation, then every three (3) years, conduct a curriculum review to ensure that the standards are updated with international education trends and to elevate the school's standards.

Library Holdings. Based on the survey conducted, shows that the institutions were able to meet the minimum standards of acquiring books and other learning resources. However, the institutions must revisit their inventory such as specialized collections, periodicals, electronic materials, online databases, internet access, and other multimedia resources. There should be a sufficient number of books and references based on the extent and nature of the kind of courses offered and the forecasted size of the enrolment. Another is to integrate the E-Library System into the institution's website for ease of access. An accessible Learning Guide or infographics that contain the procedures of navigating the E-Library System must be visible to all users and learners. West Bay College's library resources can be strengthened by improving on e-library to provide access to a wide range of educational resources for foreign students and to facilitate interactions between students and administrators.

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Learning Management System. The Learning Management System plays a vital part in the implementation of flexible learning particularly for foreign students, as they will be attending the classes while they are in their home countries. With the institution's Google Classroom as the official LMS, some areas need improvement. First is the connection of the LMS with the portal that is relevant to the institution's processes such as admission, enrolment, grades, student concerns, and LMS. In this case, the student can navigate and make use of all the features easily. Second is the availability of 24/7 LMS Support with a tracking system to follow the progress of issue resolution. The foreign students have different time zones, and their issues and concerns should be addressed immediately, which can be done via automated addressing systems like "AI Bot" where all frequently asked questions are listed and proposed solutions are given without human interaction. Post a schedule or announcement of when and where they can reach the LMS support. The third is to provide an LMS Starter pack where all essential information is included and learners can study on their own. Lastly, is to create an in-house Learning Management System that is aligned with all the minimum requirements by CHED and the institution's Vision, Mission, and Values. The school's global competitiveness will be enhanced by having a creative and unique learning management system. Online training and learning management systems play a significant role in skill-building activities and providing meaningful learning experiences to foreign students,

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