Centre for Global Higher Education Working Paper series

Internationalization of Philippine Higher Education: Between Nationalism and Co-optation[1]

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Working paper no. 103
December 2023

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Contents

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Abstract

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) officially released in 2016 the Philippines' key policy document on the internationalization of the country's higher education system. Vigorous efforts followed to promote internationalization activities, such as mobilities and bilateral partnerships. While many university leaders express their commitment to internationalization, many others from public and private institutions reject the policy due to concerns over fairness in access to government resources and the relevance of internationalization to their mandates. Against this backdrop, this study examined several national policy documents issued between 1994 and 2020 that are directly and indirectly related to the internationalization of higher education in the country. The author employed the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) developed by R. Wodak et al. as a methodology to reveal how the concept of internationalization is translated, articulated, and enacted in the Philippines, and how the country's colonial history and location in the periphery of the global higher education landscape impact the codification and institutionalization of internationalization policies. The research results indicate

an ambivalent ideology characterized by nationalism and co-optation. They also raise questions about the Western-centric understanding of internationalization and decolonization of internationalization of higher education.

Introduction

The Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) released its policy guidelines for internationalization in 2016, and then in 2019, former Philippine President Duterte signed the country's first law on transnational education. These policies provide direction, guidelines, and procedures for the engagement of Philippine higher education institutions with global stakeholders. In 2022, approximately 49,000 Filipino students studied abroad for their degrees (The Philippine Business and News, 2022). Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country received 35,000 international students. From June 2020 to July 2023, the number of international students increased to 62,621, with 54% coming from India (Bureau of Immigration, 2023). In 2023, sixteen Philippine universities featured in an Asian ranking league, compared to only four universities in 2015 (Quacquarelli Symonds [QS], 2022). Although these numbers are relatively small, they illustrate how the Philippines' pattern of engagement with the phenomenon of internationalization of higher education has changed in level, scope, and focus. Within eight years, the country's engagement in global higher education became vigorous and enthusiastic. The number of partnerships with other countries increased, and the focus has become varied, from mobilities, scholarships, and joint/dual degrees to capacity building of higher education institutions and leaders. The level of engagement is bilateral and regional, such as with the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Despite these developments, the Philippines remains on the periphery of global science, a situation attributed to a lack of a culture of science (Pertierra, 2004). Critics also point out that the internationalization of higher education and the education reforms associated with it not only sustain the country's labor-migration policy but also erode cultural identity, especially of the youth, and the long tradition of the liberal philosophy of education.

A considerable amount of literature on the internationalization of higher education (IHE) in the Philippines adopts the human capital theory as an analytical framework, which tends to reproduce the neoliberal and Western-centric discourses about internationalization (cf. Orbeta, Jr., 2002; Santiago, 2005; Symaco, 2012). Although many scholars have criticized the epistemic colonialism and the unequal power relations in global higher education, there

is still a lack of critical analysis of the internationalization policies in the Philippines (cf. Valdez & Steel, 2013; Balagtas et al., 2012; Dotong & Laguador, 2015; Rosaroso et al., 2015). In addition, public debates remain vague on how the purposes of higher education need to align with internationalization policies. This paper addresses these gaps by examining the discourse and discursive practices in the internationalization of the Philippine higher education system. This paper also offers one of the first critical analyses of the country's internationalization policy.

Conceptual Framework

 "Space-time is one of the social-material coordinates of higher education," it intersects with many variables, including hierarchies based on capital, class, ethnicity, and sexuality (Marginson, 2022, p. 1371). In this sense, social, cultural, and political relations produce space, and space makers are multiple agents from particular geopolitical locations (p. 1372). Similarly, IHE is a discursive space where competition for power and position amongst actors occurs. It implies the volition of political and non-political actors and their forms of (dis)engagements and acceptance/resistance/refusal of particular ideas. Thus, IHE is dynamic, contentious, conflicted, value-laden, and political.

Higher education

Higher Education is a dynamic system that constantly struggles to define itself and its purposes. They do not exist in a vacuum but are rooted in specific cultural contexts and intellectual traditions. Consequently, the values higher education institutions impart are grounded in different historical origins, cultural concepts, and aspirations of a society (Collini, 2012, p. 21). Pusser (2015, p. 62) suggested conceptualizing universities as political institutions and sites of power struggles. This means that it is necessary to examine the roles of higher education institutions from a policy lens. As Ordorika Sacristán and López González (2007, as cited from Ordorika & Lloyd, 2015, p. 133) noted, "the denial of politics is essential discourse for the exercise of power and the legitimation of dominant groups, as well as a basic element of the political nature of the university". Similarly, in policy-making, the inaction of crucial policy actors is a deliberate exercise of power (Hajer, 1993, p. 43). The politicized nature of higher education institutions becomes more visible when one focuses

on the fundamental transformations that impinge on them, and which emerge with the dynamics of globalization (Ordorika & Llyod, 2015, p. 131). This is especially true concerning higher education institutions' role in national development, the competition in the global knowledge economy, and the continuing tension between the public and the private purposes of higher education.

Considered important pillars of society, governance and institutional identities are crucial aspects of higher education. They encompass questions related to the modes of control and regulation, effectiveness, and legitimacy of policy goals and processes, as well as the structures of funding and support and the organization of autonomy (Austin & Jones, 2016). For example, in Europe, where most universities receive government/public funding, universities are also instruments of government policy that support particular values and ideologies (Collini, 2012). In other words, universities, particularly public universities, are political institutions of the State (Pusser, 2015, p. 62; Ordorika & Llyod, 2015, p. 130).

Higher Education Policy

Education is one area of public policy that receives considerable attention and one that the public has a direct and immediate experience. As such, education policy is aligned with national aspirations and reflects the allocation of resources in pursuit of specific values. The policy process is complex and one in which those affected and involved "with competing values and differential access to power seek to form and shape policy in their interests" (Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 2). Hence, it "goes to the heart of educational philosophy – what is education for? For whom? Who decides?" (Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 9). Policy refers to the fundamental questions in the society. It is a continuous discursive struggle of defining issues, (re)framing problems, articulating goals, identifying responses, acquiring public support, and defining the criteria for evaluation of effectiveness (Fischer & Gottweis, 2012, p. 7). The policy process reflects the competing/converging perspectives of policy actors or those individuals and groups, both formal and informal, which seek to influence the creation and implementation" of policy, from setting the agenda to implementing and evaluating outcomes (Cahn, 2012, p. 199). Policymakers do not only

include the state institutions that directly shape policy but also practitioners (e.g., university administrators and representatives of education organizations) who can influence the translation of policy into practice (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, pp. 5-6; Bell & Stevenson, 2006). From the education policy perspective, the internationalization of higher education has created new elements and networks of policy actors. These shifts have led to a new policy order that impacts the role of the State and higher education institutions, for example, regarding regulation, evaluation, or identification of policy goals (Jakobi et al., 2010, p. 2).

Policy text broadly refers to the policy contents of legal documents, speeches, press releases, policy papers, and other documents in any vehicle or medium that express policy intentions and have real consequences (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 5). This nature of the policy text raises questions about its production, and the policy text itself as a product of that process, such as the manner of articulation and framing of the aims, values, and prescriptions they explicitly and implicitly convey (Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 12). On the one hand, policy text as output gives materiality to the policy; it makes policy tangible and accessible. On the other hand, it is also an outcome because it defines purposes, aims, and goals that justify the need for policy and the impact that a policy has or should have (regardless of what the actual outcome may be). However, public policy process, outcome, and output are seldom straightforward. More importantly, public policy is about the desire to change or the perceived need to reform (education) systems. As such, it offers and articulates an imagined future, albeit eschewing the actual realities of practice (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 5). Given its level of generality, public policy can be understood as a framework or a general instruction instead of a blueprint. Consequently, it also leaves room for interpretation; it steers understanding and action in a particular direction without guaranteeing what practice it might produce. Hence, policies result in intended as well as unintended consequences (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, pp. 5-8; Jones, 2013, pp. 8-9). The phrase policy development captures the organic nature of the policy process without attenuating the powerful effects of social, cultural, or economic forces and the crucial role of human agency (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 9). Therefore, policy texts and policy analysis are contingent on the political landscape and the changing political agenda.

Methodology

The author's research is based on social constructionism as proposed by Berger and Luckmann in their work The Social Construction of Reality (1966). They suggested that habits that become routines and routines that become legitimized knowledge are crucial components in constructing a socially accepted reality. This accepted reality then leads to competition for legitimacy, which in turn creates inequity dynamics. As systems, processes, definitions, and identities are socially constructed, it is important to understand how they can be deconstructed. For this research, the author utilized Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as the research methodology. Borrowing from Ball (2015), the author views policy as text and discourse (p. 307). CDS offers a fertile ground for examining and analyzing textually oriented discourses, specifically regarding how social actors strategically utilize language in social practices and how language manifests ideological positions (Hyatt, 2013, p. 42; Martínez-Alemán, 2015). It is a problem-oriented and multidisciplinary approach to studying social problems and political issues. Moreover, CDS is a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting and explaining how discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities. Within the CDS framework, discourse is language used in speech and writing as a form of social practice (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). According to Mullet (2018), CDS rests on the notion that language use is purposeful, regardless of whether our discursive choices are conscious or unconscious. In policy research, discourse encompasses a broad set of concepts and ideas that impact argumentation and deliberation; it defines the range of possibilities with which people experience their world and which views about the world are legitimate and not (Fischer & Gottweiss, 2012, p. 10). For CDS, language is not powerful by nature, but it gains power through the language use of people whose power depends on their position within the social structures (Wodak, 2001, p. 10). Language is therefore an instrument of power; it signals power, expresses power, and challenges power. It is the means for articulating differences in power within social structures. As Halliday (2009) argued, the power of language is vested in the act and enactment of meaning; it is both a way of thinking about and acting on (other people in) the world. Thus, language construes and enacts (Halliday, 2009, p. 4).

In discourse, manipulation and control of power are evident through linguistic expressions and grammatical forms in a text and also through the genre of the text linked to social events or occasions (Halliday, 2009, p. 11). According to Reisigl and Wodak (2016), there are three constitutive elements of a discourse: macro-topic relatedness, plurality of perspectives, and argumentativity. Hence, discourse is fluid and porous by nature and its constitutive elements open a discourse to (re)interpretation. It is then critical that analysts are able to recognize the linkages and limits between discourses (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 27). As the term suggests, the DHA emphasizes historical anchoring, on examining the relationship between historical context and the discourse or discursive events. It aims to deconstruct the hegemony of discourse by deciphering and examining the underlying ideologies that serve not only to establish or reify but also to resist dominance (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 25). "Discursive strategies are located at different levels of linguistic organization and complexity" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 33). Depending on the resources available to the researcher, Reisigl and Wodak (2016) suggested moving back and forth several times between theory and empirical data. They also encouraged interdisciplinary approaches to theory, methods, and methodology. In DHA, the researcher needs to examine numerous genres, fields of action, public spaces, and the links between interdiscursivity and intertextuality. It is necessary to include history in the interpretation of data and to create elaborate categories for analysis. As DHA focuses on social problems, it also aims to communicate its research results to the public and propose solutions to the problem(s).

The DHA recognizes five discursive strategies: Nomination, Predication, Argumentation, Perspectivization, Intensification/Mitigation. Since this research aims to examine the ideologies that underlie the Philippines' internationalization policies, the author analyzed the argumentation strategies employed in the policy documents. In examining argumentation schemes, one asks: What arguments are employed to persuade the addressees of the validity of claims of normative rightness and truth? Following Toulmin's functional analysis, as simplified by Kienpointner, the warrant or conclusion rule is the central element that connects the argument to the claim. Reisigl (2017, p. 25) explained that the conclusion rule is an argumentation scheme also known as topos (Greek for place) or locus (Latin for place) that justifies the transition from the argument to

the claim (or conclusion) (italics in original). Topos belongs to the premise, ideas, and theories that build the basis of a statement or action. Since the usage of topoi is not always explicit, they need to be expressed as causal or conditional phrases, for example: 'if x, then y' or 'y because of x' (Reisigl, 2017, p. 75). However, as Grue (2009, pp. 289-290) argued, an analysis purely based on the functional model is insufficient for DHA because the deductive approach used in the functional model does not consider the contextual background.

In this research, the author borrows from Reisigl (2017) who defined Topos (plural: topoi) as abstract, general conclusion rules (in the sense of functional analysis), and at the same time, as content-related argumentation schemes drawn from the conclusions that were derived from the contents of the empirical data under examination (Rapp, 2020). The content-related analysis of argumentation approach formalizes recurring content-related warrant or conclusion rules specific to a particular field, discipline, social action, or theory. In contrast to a purely functional analysis of argumentation, content-related analysis follows the view that argumentation is always topic-related and field-dependent (Reisigl, 2017, p. 77). Thus, the concept of topoi is dynamic; it is a justification for a line of argument embedded in doxa or common knowledge (and thus requires less justification) and a rule of inference tied to concepts, not words (and thus can be potentially interpreted in different ways) (Grue, 2009, p. 289). This approach provides more insights into specific characteristics of a discourse (such as ideologies or justification strategies) than a purely functional analysis (Reisigl, 2017, p. 77).

Data collection

The data collection occurred in three phases. The first phase was an exploratory study from 2015 to 2017 with 18 interviews with the officers and staff of the CHED, and with university administrators and leaders. Two more interviews followed between 2017 and 2019. These interviews aimed to gain contextual understanding from the perspectives of policy actors. In the third phase, between 2018 and 2020, the author conducted archive research on three government websites that contain relevant policy documents: 11 CHED Memorandum Orders (CMOs), 28 CHED press releases, Executive Order No. 285 (2000), Republic Act 11448 (Transnational Higher Education Act) including

its explanatory notes, and what the author calls auxiliary policies or policies that are either mentioned in passing as applicable laws and regulations or as footnotes but are essential in understanding the policy trajectory. These include, for example, the Philippine 1987 constitution, the National Development Plans of the Aquino and Duterte governments, the Professional Regulation Commission Modernization Act of 2000, the Interagency Committee on Foreign Students, the National Security Policy, and other similar policy documents. All these policy materials do not only contain information to be examined (e.g., what does it say / not say) but also have their spheres of influence or impact (e.g., what does it do / not do).

Results and Discussions

The following five discursive and policy events have had a major impact on the Philippines' internationalization policy. In 2013, the Philippine government passed the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which reformed the entire education structure by implementing the K-12 system. Also called Republic Act No. 10533, this reform added two more years to the then 10-year basic education cycle. Under the American colonial regime, a similar plan to add one or two more years to the basic education structure was never implemented due to budget constraints and lack of political will. The Act of 2013 addresses the challenges of international comparability and questions of standards that Filipino graduates have often confronted when studying or working abroad. By making the basic education structure more comparable to international standards, the reform also addresses the anticipated ASEAN Economic Integration inaugurated on January 01, 2016. At the end of 2016, the CHED released its Memorandum Order (CMO) 56, the country's key policy framework and strategy for internationalization. Then, in 2019, the Senate approved the Transnational Higher Education (TNE) Act, which is the key policy document for TNE activities in the country. The corollary document issued by the CHED in 2020 provides detailed regulations, guidelines, and templates for TNE. Another key event is the ASEAN Higher Education Space envisioned for 2025. During the 15th SHARE Dialogue forum in Vietnam in July 2022, the ASEAN published The Roadmap on the ASEAN Higher Education Space 2025 and its implementation plan.

The author identified four major interrelated discourse strands: Marketization, ASEAN, Quality, and Nation. While the discourse strands on Marketization and ASEAN are tightly linked to a shared ASEAN Higher Education Area and shared market space, the ideas of reputation, control, and regulation characterize the discourse on Quality. Similarly, the discourse strand about the Nation intertwines with ideas of geography and boundaries, national security, national development, and reputation (the last two are discursively linked to Quality). There are no clear lines between these discourse strands; on the contrary, they are characteristic of entanglements that have their roots in the country's overall societal discourse.

Marketization

In the policy documents issued in 1994 and 1997 on the regulation of entry of foreign students, the policies aim to raise the profile of the country's higher education system as a center of quality education in the Asia Pacific region. The CMO 01 from 2000 on implementing linkages and twinning programs provides a nuanced understanding of such policy aims:

> […] to strengthen educational, cultural, social, economic, and political bonds between Philippine and foreign institutions of higher learning thereby fostering a vibrant exchange of cultures integral to a peaceful living within the global community (CMO 01, 2000, p. 1).

The statement above explains the reasoning behind linkages and twinning programs, which is based on foreign policy and a limited form of global citizenship. Although these concepts and the promotion of the higher education sector as a provider of quality education are present in all the documents studied in this research, the idea of globalizing the higher education sector based on neoliberal values became explicit in 2008. However, this does not imply that the CHED or the Philippine government only started referring to the discourse on marketization in that particular year. On the contrary, marketization of the sector historically developed as a response to oppressive practices of the Spanish colonial government. The discourse strand on marketization exhibits two central topoi: the Topos of 'Reality' emphasizes the

inexorable effect of globalization, and the Topos of Advantage or Usefulness of marketization of higher education.

Topos of Reality

Here, the Topos of Reality refers explicitly to a version of a social reality constituted by and through discourse. Social constructionism underlies its ontology. This reality must be understood as socially constructed reality in the tradition of Berger and Luckman (1966). In this sense, policy actors construct reality through discourse to justify a specific policy logic that instructs specific actions (*Handlungslogik*). The first policy that alludes to marketization is CMO 62 (2016), which enumerates the initial policies, standards, and guidelines for Transnational Education.

> The Commission on Higher Education recognizes that globalization, changing foreign policies, and trade liberalization in goods and services worldwide have created a climate for borderless teaching and learning and expanded opportunities for transnational education (CMO 62, 2016, p. 1).

> The Commission recognizes the Philippine commitments to bilateral, regional, and multilateral trade agreements such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services and the ASEAN Framework [Agreement] on Services (CMO 62, 2016, p. 2).

These paragraphs are part of the general principles of Transnational Education (TNE). The British Council (2013) defines TNE as a component of the wider phenomenon of the internationalization of education. Although there are different models of delivery and policy approaches, TNE is concerned with the mobility of providers and programs (see OECD/UNESCO, 2005). McBurnie and Ziguras (2007, p. 1) argued that TNE is the "evidence of the invisible hand of the market at work," because the vast majority of TNE programs are wholly funded by student fees. Thus, TNE operates as a business model designed to compete with local HEIs, particularly in disciplines or study areas where local HEIs cannot adequately meet demands. In the Philippines, TNE operations are limited to authorized local HEIs and are thus highly regulated by the government. Creating provisions for TNE implies that the CHED acknowledges the changing social, political, and economic realities brought about by

globalization and marketization and the need to engage with foreign stakeholders. The Philippine government expresses the same argument in R.A. 11448.

> The State recognizes that rapid development brought about by globalization, including liberalization of trade in goods and services and expanding use of information and communication technologies, has created a climate for borderless teaching and learning (R.A. 11448, 2019, p. 2).

In the Explanatory Notes to House Bill 04565, the policymaker who proposed the bill underlined the urgency of responding to the demands of globalization by opening the Philippine higher education system:

> In the age of globalization, there is a need to adapt to continually evolving international trends and standards. The methods and institutions that are the giants of the industries will eventually falter if they will not be able to keep up with the ever changing demands of the world (House Bill No. 4565, 2016, p. 1.).

The above statements stress how the reality of globalization serves as the broader context for formulating policies on TNE. This argumentation becomes an axiom, as will be evident in the subsequent discussions.

Topos of Advantage

The context and general principles of CMO 33 published in 2013 on University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) Credit Transfer Scheme (UCTS) begins with this phrase:

> The CHED recognizes the developments brought about by the internationalization of Philippine higher education in response to globalization and liberalization of trade in goods and services worldwide with expanded opportunities for student mobility and cross-border employability (p. 1).

As with CMO 62 on TNE, CMO 33 refers to the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS), reiterating and stressing the opportunities it presents, particularly its positive impact on the mobility of individuals. Here, student

mobility and labor mobility are presented as advantageous or desirable, thus employing the Topos of Advantage. The Topos of Advantage or Usefulness connects individual benefits of internationalization to positive, direct economic and societal outcomes resulting from market-oriented internationalization. Two interrelated ideas that imprint on the discourse strand on marketization stand out: mobility of individuals (both for study and for employment) and competitiveness.

Quality and Quality Assurance

The discourse strand on Quality is one of the significant and enduring topics in the Philippine education system. Dumlao-Valisno, former Secretary of Education, conducted one of the most comprehensive appraisals of the reforms initiated and implemented under the five Philippine presidents she served from 1965 to 2010. Her book, *The Nation's Journey to Greatness* (2012), succinctly summarizes the configurations of the metadiscourse about the Philippine education system. Embedded in the *nation's journey to greatness* is the discourse strand on Quality, so much so that Dumlao-Valisno hoped to contribute to "flame the enduring passion to improve the quality of Philippine education," so that the country could regain its once leading position in education in Asia (Dumlao-Valisno, 2012, p. 2 & 10). It also signals that quality is an integral element of the discursive and social practices entangled with other discourses and practices in the Philippine education system. According to Dumlao-Valisno, the country's education system has been "rocked continuously by the fault lines or pressure points, resulting in a tremendous and steady decline of the quality of Philippine education at all levels" (2012, p. 10). In simpler terms, these fault lines are various internal and external factors that cause a decline in the quality of education (p. 3). Three overlapping topoi characterize the discourse strand on Quality. These are the Topos of Burden, which points to the deficiencies in the Philippine higher education system; the Topos of Consequence, or the positive impact of quality improvements and quality assurance in relation to internationalization of higher education; and the Topos of Regulation, which legitimizes the quality assurance policy and strategy.

Topos of Burden

The Topos of Burden or weighing down is a specific form of the Topos of Consequence that states that if specific problems burden someone or something, one should act to mitigate these burdens (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 78). A primary burden that the country needs to alleviate is its slow economic development. This burden is evident in the following passage taken from the CHED's policy standard to enhance quality assurance in Philippine higher education:

> Section 4. The importance of quality and quality assurance is highlighted by the urgent need to move significant populations of Filipinos out of poverty and to address local, regional, and national development concerns by educating quality leaders, thinkers, planners, researchers, technological innovators, entrepreneurs, and the much-needed work force [*sic*] to launch the national economy (CMO 46, 2012, p. 2).

This passage amplifies two conditions. First, Philippine higher education institutions are mandated to contribute to national development; the CHED perceives them as a critical instrument to mitigate and support the country's development. Second, and in relation to the first, quality assurance must be established to support Philippine higher education institutions in developing their capacity to deliver quality education. The underlying assumption is that quality education will bring about national development. In the same policy document, the burden of quality further underscores the need to focus on quality assurance:

> [...] the reality of an ASEAN community by 2015 which will facilitate the free flow of qualified labor in the region and either open up opportunities for graduates of Philippine HEIs or *threaten their employment even in their own country* [my emphasis] (CMO 46, 2012, p. 2).

The above phrase thus links quality and quality assurance to the secured employability of Filipino graduates. In other words, quality assurance addresses

the burden of quality to diminish the threat of unemployment in the home country.

Topos of Consequence

The term quality occurs in several parts of CMO 55. Former Chairperson Patricia Licuanan stated in a press release that quality assurance (QA) is the cornerstone, the linchpin, that holds the country's internationalization strategies together (2017). Licuanan described the relationship this way: quality assurance is a requirement for internationalization, while internationalization is a mechanism for quality assurance (2017). One commonplace definition of the noun mechanism is a planned way of doing things or doing things as part of a system. Thus, one approach to understanding Licuanan's statement is this: internationalization is a way, a means, or a modus operandi to implement the quality assurance system and to improve the quality of the higher education sector; much as quality assurance is the necessary instrument to implement internationalization strategies. This statement shows an assumed positive link between internationalization and quality in higher education. This assumption is explicit in the goals of the internationalization policy:

> The internationalization policy for Philippine higher education has the primary goal of improving the quality of education which would translate into the development of a competitive human resource capital that can adapt to shifting demands in the regional and global environment to support and sustain the country's economic growth (CMO 55, 2016, p. 6).

The CHED trusts that internationalization will automatically result in quality improvements at all levels. For example, it expects graduates to become employable in domestic and international labor markets and develop global perspectives and adaptable mindsets (CMO 55, 2016, p. 6). In the long term, the CHED foresees that internationalization will "continuously upgrade and sustain the quality of Philippine HEIs" and achieve international standards (CMO 55, 2016, p. 6). For these improvements to transpire, "academic knowledge transfer" needs to occur and international standards must be met (CMO 55, 2016, p. 6).

19

Topos of Regulation

The Topos of Regulation is a derivative of the topoi discussed above: the Topos of Consequence (modified argumentation of cause) and the Topos of Burden. The Topos of Regulation indicates that regulation is necessary and sufficient condition for quality enhancement and internationalization (see Walton, 2013, p. 189). The Topos of Regulation is easily identified in the CHED's bi-focal regulatory and developmental roles (Chao, 2012; Licuanan, 2017; Malolos & Tullao, Jr., 2018). The first paragraph of the CHED's Memorandum Orders emphasizes these roles, referring to applicable laws and acts as its source, particularly Republic Act No. 7722 (RA 7722 or Higher Education Act of 1994), which created the CHED. The Topos of Regulation, in this sense, has neither positive nor negative connotations, but it does legitimize CHED's functions.

ASEAN

Embedded in the current history of the Philippines is the discourse strand on ASEAN. As one of ASEAN's founding countries, the spirit of ASEAN and its commitment to peaceful conflict resolution are significant to the country. The importance of ASEAN as a regional organization is also evident in the documents examined for this study. The CHED mentions ASEAN ten times in different locations in CMO 55: in the background and context of the policy, its guiding principles, and in Article V on academic mobility. It has issued three policies that specifically refer to academic mobility in ASEAN: CMO No. 33 (2013), CMO No. 11 (2014), CMO No. 19 (2015). ASEAN is also ubiquitous in the CHED's press releases, with nine press releases out of 28, or 32%, either mentioning or focusing on ASEAN and related terms such as *Southeast Asia*, *region*, and *regional cooperation*. In this discourse strand, the Topos of Reality is the basis for the Topos of Commitment and Topos of Advantage or Usefulness.

Topos of Reality

This discourse strand reflects the socially constructed reality of ASEAN as perceived by academics and policymakers in the Philippines. In one of the interviews conducted for this research, a senior CHED official explained that internationalization is the country's response to ASEAN integration, as ASEAN is the immediate environment in which Philippine higher education is actively

involved . Another interviewee, a senior administrator at a public university, explained that ASEAN is the space in which they can strategically position themselves. . The Topos of 'Reality' also relates to ASEAN as a discursive event in itself; that is, a discourse that influences the development of other discourses (Jäger & Maier, 2016, p. 124). In other words, being a part of ASEAN demands policy actions from the CHED and the national government. The following segments illustrate how the CHED articulates the Topos of 'Reality' in the ASEAN discourse strand found in the documents.

In an official statement released in 2014 on the CHED's standpoint on changing the academic calendar in the country, former Chairperson Licuanan stated:

> CHED believes that it is important to think about how Philippine higher education can best respond to ASEAN Integration in 2015 (CHED, 2014).

Licuanan raised two main issues regarding the ASEAN integration: the quality of education programs in the Philippines, thus, the quality of Filipino graduates; and Philippine's compliance with the requirements of the ASEAN Qualifications Framework. Both issues point to the employability and competitiveness of Filipino graduates vis-à-vis fellow graduates from other ASEAN countries. Additionally, this signifies the relevance of Mutual Recognition Agreements that promote the mobility of professionals in the region. In other words, ASEAN integration is the country's immediate reality; it foregrounds fundamental issues that necessitate a response from the Philippine higher education sector.

In CMO 55, the CHED mentions the ASEAN Economic Community in the background and context of its internationalization policy. For example:

> In particular, the integration of ASEAN Member States enlarges the economic space for its members by expanding markets for goods and services. The opportunities and challenges opened by this integration are the backdrop of the Philippines' comprehensive and far-reaching policy reforms, including the internationalization of higher education (CMO 55, 2016, p. 1).

> Against the backdrop of the ASEAN Economic Community, the country's national plans, the imperatives of labor and student

mobility as well as vigorous academic exchanges, internationalization is integral to the Commission on Higher Education's reform (CMO 55, 2016, p. 1).

These statements depict ASEAN as an extension of the country's economic space and the general condition that requires policy response, such as comprehensive education reforms that include internationalization. From this purview, it is evident that the ASEAN Economic Community plays a critical role in understanding the internationalization efforts in the Philippines. Although it is not the sole rationale for policy formulation, the CHED emphasizes its relevance as the immediate context and the general condition in which the reforms occur. In particular, individual mobility and institutional linkages in the region are the country's primary policy responses to ASEAN integration.

Topos of Commitment

Within the ASEAN discourse strand, the CHED uses the term commitment to highlight the relevance of ASEAN to its policy direction. Also, the CHED refers to specific internationalization initiatives and mechanisms as a sign of its commitment to ASEAN integration. The Topos of Commitment recognizes the delicate character of cooperation between the ASEAN member countries. For instance, in CMO 62 from 2016, on policies, standards, and guidelines on Transnational Education (TNE), the CHED expresses its commitment to its agreements:

> The Commission recognizes the Philippine commitments to bilateral, regional, and multilateral trade agreements such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services and the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (CMO 62, 2016, p. 1).

The above phrase also indicates intertextuality with the ASEAN Framework Agreement, which stresses the comparability of qualifications to facilitate the intra-regional mobility of skilled workers in selected professions. In CMO 11 (2014) specifying guidelines for participation in the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) program, the CHED stresses its commitment to its roles and functions in the regional integration:

The Commission, as one of the agencies responsible for the
Education area of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community – one of
the three pillars of the ASEAN Community 2015, reaffirms its role
in contributing to regional integration (p. 1).

In a follow-up policy document (CMO 19, 2015) detailing the operating
guidelines for implementing the AIMS program, the CHED also recognizes the
commitment by all ASEAN member countries (p. 1).

Topos of Advantage

The Topos of Advantage or Usefulness is also evident in the discourse strand
on ASEAN, particularly the topos subtype of *pro bono publico* (Reisigl & Wodak,
2001, p. 75). In this discourse, particular benefits and advantages for the public
good are perceived as concomitant to the ASEAN integration. This Topos
emphasizes the assumed benefits from a particular policy action. In this case,
it refers to the benefits of achieving ASEAN integration, particularly by
implementing intra-regional mobility mechanisms in higher education. This
assumption is also evident in CMO 11 (2014), which provides the guidelines for
participation in AIMS Program for selected higher education institutions.

Nation

The discourse strand on Nation is complex and requires several conceptual
explanations before it can be fully understood. References to the nation and
national development are commonly found in policy discussions on
internationalization, often appearing alongside concepts such as
competitiveness, lifelong learning, globalization, and citizenship. Policy
orientation that prioritizes the nation and national development seems to be a
global trend. This discourse strand is not only the most prominent found in the
data but is also the most fragmented, initially indicating 13 overlapping sub-
strands occurring in different spheres. It was necessary to untangle several
discourse knots by re-reading the text segments several times and then
combining the sub-strands based on the underlying topoi or argumentation
schemes. The discourse strand on the Nation can be found in all policy
documents, since it is typical of the genre of policy documents in the
Philippines. Two topoi mark the discourse strand on the Nation. The Topos of

Necessity, and the Topos of Threat or the need to mitigate the threats of internationalization.

Topos of Necessity

Goals, such as national development, national interests, and human resource development, characterize the Topos of Necessity. The goal components are articulated in various ways, so much so that one must closely examine the text fragments to recognize the policy intentions. Having said this, the Topos of Necessity is evident in all of the CHED's policy documents, but most prominently in CMO 55 (2016), the core policy document on internationalization; in CMO 46 (2012), which enumerates the guidelines for the quality assurance system; in R.A. 11448 (2019), which regulates TNE programs and services; and in Executive Order No. 285 (2000), which regulates the admission of international students. The location of this topos clearly illustrates the link between the overall national goal and the purpose of internationalization of higher education policies. National security goes hand in hand with globalization, modernization, and the need for socio-economic growth through human resource development.

For example, in CMO 55 (2016), the CHED reiterates the necessity of developing human capital. That is, it will:

> [....] guide the Philippine higher education sector's internationalization efforts bearing in mind Philippine national interest, security, and identity while also contributing to the improvement of the country's competitiveness [....] (CMO 55, 2016, p. 2).

This short statement illustrates a knot within the discourse: the discourse on Nation is tightly linked with the discourses on national development, national interest, national security, and national identity. The sections on scholarships, mobilities, and partnerships in the same document illustrate arguments using the Topos of Necessity:

> Publicly funded activities for outbound students shall prioritize diploma courses in the *high-need disciplines* at the graduate or postgraduate levels for beneficiaries who can potentially bring

higher returns to teaching or research upon their return. Scholarships, which cannot be provided adequately by local HEIs, will be supported in *fields and disciplines needed for economic development* or where there are opportunities elsewhere to significantly advance knowledge in these fields and disciplines (p. 14; my emphasis).

In line with the Philippines' aspiration *to become a competitive and knowledge-based economy*, HEIs shall be encouraged to focus on faculty mobility programs that are linked to research and creative work, particularly in *priority development sectors* (p. 15; my emphasis).

In these text segments, the explicit instruction is to allocate resources to fields considered vital to economic development.

Topos of Threat

This topos is adapted from the Topos of Danger suggested by Reisigl and Wodak (2001, p. 77) and Walton (2013, pp. 102-103). In the context of the discourse strand on Nation, the threat is most visible in the policy guidelines involving international students and foreign higher education providers (FHEP). This topos has implications for engagement with international students and entities at the policy and operational levels. The Topos of Threat is also implicit in text fragments that articulate the necessity to uphold the country's national security and the non-diminution of its sovereignty. It cautions against threats to independence and sovereignty through influence by foreign countries, institutions, and entities. In the Topos of Threat, the threat is any circumstance that could endanger national security, from individual infraction of specific laws (i.e., immigration) to threat of competition, to intrusion of foreign cultural values, to imposition of foreign entities. The Topos of Threat is multi-layered and is rarely readily discernable. It does not only imply a threat to national security but also the need for protection from such threats. Hence, the Topos of Threat and the Topos of Necessity (to control the threat and protect the nation) are tightly linked. For example, the general principles and strategies of the internationalization policy stipulate that:

While cross-border education shall be promoted as an important component of internationalization, the national higher education system shall continue to be entrusted with the preservation and promotion of cultural and social norms and values enshrined in the Constitution (CMO 55, 2016, p. 5; my emphasis).

The noun *preservation* implies the need to preserve, uphold, or protect, while the noun *promotion* implies to encourage, advance, or develop. The term *enshrine* has a double meaning: to preserve and to sanctify. These words imply the need to preserve Filipino cultural and social norms and values and encourage their practice and upkeep, as they are sanctified in the Constitution. The phrase quoted above emphasizes the importance of protecting the cultural and social norms and values of Filipinos from external influence. The Philippine Constitution's Article XIV (which covers Education, Science and Technology, Arts, Culture, and Sport), Section 3, highlights the values that should be preserved and promoted through education. These include patriotism, nationalism, respect for human rights, citizenship, ethical and spiritual values, moral values, discipline, critical and creative thinking, and academic and vocational development (1987 Phil. Const. art XIV § 3). However, relying solely on the Constitution as a source of information is problematic since it does not provide an in-depth explanation of these norms and values. Consequently, the Filipino values and norms are vulnerable to (mis)appropriation. For example, citing old and current state policies, the Duterte government summarized the core Filipino national values as: *maka-Diyos* (God-fearing), *makatao* (humane), *makabayan* (patriotic), and *makakalikasan* (pro-environment) (National Security Strategy, 2018, p. 16). These national values are integral elements of national interests that must be protected. Although internationalization is necessary to develop the higher education sector, the State, through the CHED and higher education institutions, must ensure that the Filipino norms and values defined in the Constitution, and by extension in the National Security Strategy, prevail. In CHED's memorandum order on Transnational Education signed in 2008, it is stipulated that:

There must be no instance, except when all education services are delivered purely via the Internet or postal/courier, where a

FHEP may be allowed to operate or establish a local presence without a partner (CMO 02, 2008, p. 12).

FHEP stands for Foreign Higher Education Provider. In this registration guideline, the CHED is mitigating the threat of competition. The partnership between authorized local HEIs and foreign entities is thus necessary to protect the interest of the Filipinos and local stakeholders. This protection of Filipino interests is also evident in Article XIV, Section 4.2. of the 1987 Constitution, which stipulates that the control and administration of educational institutions must be in the hands of Philippine citizens.

Conclusion

To summarize, two discursive superstructures frame these four discourse strands, and these superstructures act as dynamic forces that produce tensions not only in the policy process but also in the policy outcomes.

Marketization reifies the idea of globalization throughout the policy documents. The main argument is that globalization and its corroborating neoliberal logic are the country's unavoidable reality that requires specific policy action. Encapsulated within this trope are four discourse strands. These discourse strands construe globalization as a problem space (Collier & Ong, 2005) that does not only present opportunities but also challenges, risks, and threats that need to be resolved or managed by the State and its institutions. It legitimizes the mobilization of state power through policies that direct the Philippine higher education institutions on how to engage in internationalization, both at strategic and operational levels, so as not to compromise national interests and the reputation of the country's higher education sector and, at the same time, to reap the benefits that internationalization confers. Hence, the Philippine internationalization strategy for higher education implies complicity with the mainstream neoliberal discourse that limits the policy imaginary (Doherty, 2015, p. 395).

The second discursive superstructure is the discourse on national security, based on an imagined one Filipino nation and justified by the argument of threat or the need to defend the nation from all forms of threat. The ubiquitous use of the term national interest in the data implies that the policy framework should

be understood in the context of foreign policy and international relations or in relation to the State's external environment. It is a powerful terminology that invokes an image of a sovereign nation-state defending itself. Thus, the author argues that the discursive superstructure on national security is a form of resistance to discourses that question the power and authority of nation-states. In other words, it asserts the Philippine State's political authority and legitimacy. The discourse strand on the Nation in pursuit of national security is at the heart of the national discourse on education, and ingrained within it are the discourse strands on marketization, quality, and ASEAN.

The discursive superstructure on national security is a paradox in that it constructs the internationalization of higher education as both a threat to national interest and beneficial to national development. At the same time, the ideology of the nation found in the policy documents serves two competing purposes: one, it legitimizes the neoliberal ideology of globalization and marketization; and two, it justifies the State's instruments of control. In essence, the Philippine government understands higher education as an economic tool, a mechanism for producing knowledge for (technological) innovation to achieve national security. The Philippine government's view of higher education as a lever for economic development follows the neoliberal economic ideologies promoted by supranational organizations such as the WB, the WTO, and UNESCO, as well as the ASEAN regional bloc. Thus, the Philippine government's approach exemplifies what Bamberger et al. (2019) call neoliberal internationalization.

The Philippines articulates the internationalization of higher education in a way that accommodates or co-opts the globalization discourse while at the same time resisting it by attending to the country's concerns that are rooted in the nation's colonial history. Co-optation is done through the discourse on globalization and marketization, while resistance is covert and hidden in the problematic concept of the nation and the need to defend sovereignty and national interests. This ambivalence is similar to what Marginson (2022) calls the closeness and openness of the higher education space. In the Philippines, the author suggests that ambivalence is a strategic mechanism deployed at strategic points.

In a post-colonial or neocolonial country like the Philippines, it is necessary to embed the analysis within its historical context. Understanding policy as a response to what is perceived as real – real challenge, real opportunities, real threat – indicates agency and negotiation of one's position in relation to geo-cognitive spaces (Marginson, 2022) that one occupies and the geopolitics of knowledge or how knowledge is situated within the particular geopolitical context from which it emerges and travels (Mignolo, 2002). Understanding agency as *Handlungslogik*, or one's ability to imagine and re-imagine the discursive spaces, is critical. Decoupling from the West as a decolonial project is very challenging, and one does not have to reject everything that is or comes from the West. In the case of the Philippines, the first two essential steps are to examine the ideas circulated and created within geo-cognitive spaces and how they impact material realities, and to develop and nurture the indigenous knowledge system in different fields, not just humanities. The first requires critical reflection, while the second requires transforming curricula and pedagogy.

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