

# Surmounting Top-Down and Bottom-up Higher Education Challenges in the Philippines: The Ifugao State University Experience

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**Abstract:** *The changing facets of higher education institutions with regards to their mission are evident. It follows that the operationalization of mission statements of universities focuses more on profitable gains rather than being a mere school of thought. Conduct of research has been introduced in universities as one major selling feature to advance their capacity, quality, and ranking status. With the demand for quality graduates needed by the job market along with the increasing international branch campuses by higher education institutions, universities and colleges in the Philippines need to embrace some policy changes so as to deliver expected deliverables in higher education in preparation for ASEAN 2015. The objective of this paper points to a discourse about higher education in the Philippines and the government's response to the challenges pressed from the global and local standpoints. The discourse is preceded with trends and challenges on higher education from the international, regional, national, and local levels. Comprehensive analyses of the trends and challenges in higher education based on secondary data are the methodology employed in this paper. The Ifugao State University, a public higher education institution in the Philippines located 314 kilometers north of Manila will be cited after presenting the arguments so that impactful policy recommendations will be drawn. The key issue to be addressed in this paper is how to surmount local, national, and global challenges for a solid strategic direction towards national development.*

**Keywords:** top-down higher education challenges, bottom-up higher education challenges, ASEAN 2015

## 1. Introduction

Higher education institutions have long been recognized as among the most stable and change resistant social institutions since the University of Bologna opened in 1088 (Lawton et al, 2013). These institutions have effectively developed and transmitted the store of knowledge from one generation to another and they have fulfilled this responsibility in the midst of political and social upheavals, economic development, and technological advancements while remaining essentially unchanged in structure and method (Gibbons, 1998).

However, the changing facets of higher education institutions with regards to their mission are evident (Marginson, 2008). It follows that the operationalization of mission statements of universities focuses more on profitable gains rather than being a mere school of thought. Newman's description of a university as a teaching institution that covered all intellectual fields is no longer the central functions of universities. It is rather suitable to describe present universities as Kerr's (1963) 'multiversity' status which considered several communities serving the need of a society to include research innovations (Marginson, 2008). Conduct of research has been introduced in universities as one major selling feature to advance their capacity, quality, and ranking status. This argument has been further attested by several authors including Lawton, et al (2013) wherein their team predicted a profound impact of massive open online courses (MOOCs) and transnational education (TNE) for all universities worldwide by 2020. Their prediction precipitates from various facts as follows: first, the demand for qualifications from the main higher education exporters will hold up in the foreseeable future even as their shares of the global student market continue to decrease. Second, demand for international student mobility will soon decrease due to

the increase in domestic higher education capacity with TNE and MOOCs as among the strategies to be strengthened. And third, establishment of international branch campuses will continue unabated as it already started in the Middle East expanding in Southeast Asia and the Philippines.

The objective of this paper points to a discourse about higher education in the Philippines and the government's response to the challenges pressed from the global and local standpoints. The discourse is preceded with trends and challenges on higher education from the international, regional, national, and local levels. Comprehensive analyses of the trends and challenges in higher education based on secondary data are the methodology employed in this paper. The Ifugao State University, a public higher education institution in the Philippines located 314 kilometers north of Manila will be cited after presenting the arguments so that impactful policy recommendations will be drawn. The key issue to be addressed in this paper is how to surmount local, national, and global challenges for a solid strategic direction towards national development.

## 2. Present Status of Higher Education in the Philippines

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), established in 1994, is the agency in charge of overseeing higher education institutions in the Philippines. In 2013, a total of 2,299 higher education institutions (HEIs) are operating in the country wherein 656 are public HEIs and 1,643 are private HEIs (Commission on Higher Education, 2013a). These institutions are composed of state universities and colleges (SUCs), local universities and colleges (LUCs), exclusive government institutions, and private universities and colleges. Enrollment in private HEIs is higher with a 57.74 percentage share or 1,751,922 enrollees as compared

to public HEIs' 42.26 percent share. However, the turn-out rate is only 16.43 percent with 498,418 graduating students out of 3,033,967 enrollees in 2012.

The top universities in the Philippines are: University of the Philippines, De La Salle University Manila, and Ateneo de Manila University (Ranking Web of Universities, 2014). However, these institutions fared poorly in world rankings as compared to its neighbors in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Taiwan. With the rapid growth of technology-driven courses performed by borderless schools, only few universities in the Philippines have fully embraced such trend. The government, through the Commission on Higher Education, is trying its best to modernize the HEIs by providing competency-based policies to ensure attainment of quality education in all universities and colleges in the country. One strategy that CHED employed in recent years is to reward performing HEIs by providing additional financial assistance while those underperforming HEIs are warned of austere regulation.

### **3. International and Regional Trends and Challenges in Higher Education**

Around the world, the importance of tertiary (higher) education policy is increasingly important due to its major impact on economic competitiveness in the era of knowledge-driven global economy (Santiago, Trenblay, Basri, & Arnal, 2008a). Accordingly, the main trends of higher education nowadays are as follows: a) remarkable expansion of higher education systems in recent decades with an annual average growth rate of 5.1% from 1991-2004; b) diversification of higher education institutions in terms of program offerings, private provisions, and modes of learning; c) heterogeneous student bodies with more female enrollees and growing participation of mature students; d) diversified funding provisions through performance-based public funding and expansion of student support systems from other countries; e) adoption of quality assurance systems by policy makers to ensure provision of quality education and accountability; f) change of perspective for academic leaders due to their increasing roles as managers, coalition-builders, and entrepreneurs; and g) strengthened global networking, mobility, and collaboration among higher education institutions with emphasis on industry partnerships with collaborative endeavors in research.

The booming world schemes in higher education at present are the a) massive open online courses (MOOCs) where universities can serve international students via technology-driven mechanisms and b) transnational education (TNE) with the goal of expanding delivery of higher education by establishing branch campuses (Lawton, et al., 2013b). For instance, Coursera, an MOOC platform launched by Stanford academics in 2012, reached 3.8 million global students in 2013. Despite skepticisms with MOOCs, global students increasingly flock the Coursera platform due to its open and online features along with its 386 course offerings and 81 partner institutions.

Along with the expansion of higher education, global universities continue to enhance their focus especially in the field of research. To level up their rankings fairly, smaller

universities from developing nations are forced to diversify their mission statements and adopt research as one of their core functions. According to Marginson (2008), research universities are those that pursue local, national and global agendas by combining teaching, research, and service functions that work across a range of fields of study and professional training to produce a range of public and private goods.

With the trends mentioned in this paper, the challenge now for universities and governments around the world is how to cope with these trends especially with increased economic competition between and among nations. One major challenge that governments should take into careful policy planning is how to ensure efficient spending of public resources being provided into higher education with the expectation of investment returns contributing to economic and social objectives. Many countries are now in a transition from a focus on quantity to a greater emphasis on the quality, coherence, and equity of higher education (Santiago, et al, 2008a).

In Southeast Asia, the region, perceived to be one of the promising growth markets in the world, has taken bold steps in addressing global challenges. The 10-member region has declared in 2003 a regional economic integration subsequently called as the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008). The 10-member countries include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The major objective of the ASEAN as stated in its Blueprint is to transform the region with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labor, and free flow of capital by 2015. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is characterized by the following key points: single market and production base, competitive economic region, equitable economic development, and integration into the global economy.

What then is the role of higher education in achieving the AEC objective? According to Mamat (2014), five key points are encouraged to be embraced by all higher education institutions in Southeast Asia, to wit: 1) develop national skills framework in ASEAN Member States as an incremental approach towards an ASEAN skills recognition framework; 2) promote greater mobility of students by developing a regional catalogue of information materials of education offered in ASEAN Member States; 3) support greater mobility of skilled workers in the ASEAN region through regional cooperation mechanisms among ASEAN Member States to be accompanied by efforts to safeguard and improve educational and professional standards; 4) develop an ASEAN competency-based occupational standard aimed at supporting the development of ASEAN human resources that are regionally and globally competitive and meet the needs of industries in coordination with the ASEAN Labour Ministries' (ALMM) process; and 5) encourage the development of a common standard of competencies for vocational and secondary education as a base for benchmarking with a view to promote mutual recognition. These key points are feasible to be achieved but operationalizing them would take enormous efforts not only

from higher education institutions but also from the government and the private sector.

#### 4. Local Challenges in Higher Education

In the Philippines, some local challenges in higher education have been identified by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the main agency overseeing and regulating all public and private higher education institutions in the country (CHED, 2001), to wit: large enrollment with low graduation turn-out rates, imbalanced distribution of financial assistance, underinvestment, poor quality, mismatch between programs and graduates, mismatch between employment and society needs, and underdeveloped graduates. Mismatch is the keyword and a major challenge in Philippine higher education. The problem on quality has also been put under scrutiny by OECD countries and its effect to economic growth in the 1980s. To address the problem, governments embraced the New Public Management (NPM) approach taken from the private sector that puts emphasis on leadership principle, incentives and competition between public sector agencies and private entities to enhance the outcomes and cost-efficiency of public services (Santiago, et al., 2008c).

In terms of research, most universities in the Philippines are way behind target due to some factors including faculty credentials, time constraints, and budget. Among the faculty in the 110 state universities and colleges, only 19.57 percent have a PhD degree in 2012 while 43.73 percent finished master's degree and 36.70 percent are just baccalaureate degree holders. The data implies that only few are capable of doing research. Hence, government must do more on improving faculty credentials to be at par with other countries. Furthermore, to be able to have more time to do research and extension activities, one must reach any of the professorial ranks (Professor 1 to 6 and College/ University Professor) where he/she is entitled some 60% of his workload for doing research. Instructors (hiring position) are prescribed to do teaching all the time. Promotions to higher academic ranks requires series of systemic evaluations embodied in the National Budget Circular No. 461 (NBC 461) issued by the Department of Budget and Management in 1998. The prescribed rules and regulations governing the common criteria for evaluation of faculty positions specified five faculty ranks with each being divided into sub-ranks, namely, Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor, and the highest level being a College/University Professor. With the cycle of evaluation undertaken every three (3) years coupled by tough criteria for obtaining points, it is both difficult and takes a considerable time for academics to gain full professorship in the Philippines.

Time to do research is also a problem in most higher education institutions in the Philippines. Only big universities like the University of the Philippines have considerable time in their workload devoted for research. Added to time is the provision of research staff to assist them in doing research. For the other 110 state universities and colleges, faculty have heavy teaching load that they are left with very little time to devote for research aggravated by the absence of research staff. Academics in public higher education institutions in the Philippines are responsible in

teaching over 1.08 million students. For the private universities, academics are even given much bigger task of teaching more than 1.6 million students. Combined altogether, the number of students enrolled in the Philippines (total of 2.68 million) is even much higher than Australia's 1.2 million students. These scenarios in the Philippine higher education system affect the overall capability of universities to do research activities. With research being one criterion in allocating funds to state universities and colleges, the call to be more involved in research is very challenging. The pursuit of excellence in terms of research does not just fulfill the funding agency's interest but also to meet standards set by the government. Despite the evolving trend for innovations, the economic and social impact of research in the Philippines seems to be as bad as in other countries. As asserted in the report on mapping Australian higher education in 2013, what universities remain good at is producing published research findings. With the increasing expectations, academics in the Philippines are under pressure to increase their publications which is being criticized for emphasizing more on the quantity rather than on the quality of outputs. Finally, with limited funding from government, academics are again challenged to partner with R&D funding agencies if they are to get funds to advance their research endeavors.

Aside from the challenges enumerated above, other challenges do exist in which universities are considered as one of the prime movers in strengthening economic and social development of a community where the university is strategically located. This has been driven by high expectations from the local stakeholders for the preservation of indigenous knowledge, culture, and environment while keeping at pace with foreign pressures. Although previous government administration initiated reforms to address these challenges, more needs to be done to level the playing field with other ASEAN countries in preparation for the ASEAN Economic integration.

Under the Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016, it outlined three long-running weaknesses of Philippine higher education: lack of overall vision, framework and plan for higher education; deteriorating quality of higher education; and limited access to quality higher education by those who need it most and have potentials to maximize its benefits.

#### 5. National Strategies to Address Higher Education Challenges

In response to the international, regional, and local challenges, the Philippine government has renewed and instituted unified agenda reforms in 2011. The reform initiatives will pursue the roles of higher education in national development outlined in the Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016 to eliminate poverty and to be a vehicle for technologically-driven national development and global competitiveness. Bold steps were taken into by the government in 2011 onwards including the Roadmap for Public Higher Education Reform signed by Presidents of all State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and His Excellency, President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III. There are four objectives outlined in the Roadmap:

1. Improve efficiency: rationalize the public higher education system. Under this objective, the strategies to be employed are as follows:
  - a. Rationalizing the number, distribution and growth of SUCs and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) by way of mapping institutions and their program offerings to align with priority disciplines identified in geographic areas;
  - b. Rationalizing the program offerings by SUCs/LUCs by implementing typology of higher education institutions to minimize duplication of programs offered in one geographic location. Typology has been developed which classifies and defines the roles of degree level institutions; and
  - c. Rationalizing resource utilization and maximizing resource generation by SUC through the expanded implementation of the Normative Funding Formula (NFF) in the allocation of budget. The NFF applies a set of prescribed objective criteria and norms that are designed to promote and reward quality instruction, research, and extension services, financial prudence and responsibility. It takes into account quality indicators (low quality programs receive less funding), and government priorities for national development.
2. Upgrade quality of public higher education. The strategies to be employed are as follows:
  - a. Strengthening quality assurance in SUCs and LUCs by conducting intensive monitoring and evaluation of programs to ensure compliance with minimum standards;
  - b. Upgrading quality of faculty/academics by providing more scholarships to enable an academic to pursue and finish his/her graduate degree; and
  - c. Upgrading leading state universities to international standards by concentrating public resources in a few institutions in order to achieve critical mass and create appreciable impact such as establishing research centers.
3. Enhance access to quality higher education  
The strategies to be employed are as follows:
  - a. Modernize facilities in developing SUCs particularly those that are located outside the highly urbanized areas; and
  - b. Strengthen student financial assistance programs by increasing the number of slots under the programs to cater not only merit-based scholarships but also need-based, grants-in-aid, and loans.
4. Cross cutting: executive development program  
The strategies to be employed are as follows:
  - a. Strengthen public HEI management through the Executive Development Program to enhance the capability of managers of public HEIs to implement the above reforms and initiatives; and
  - b. Establishing a Higher Education Academy and institutionalization of an Executive Career System for SUCs.

As the agency in charge of the Philippine higher education system, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has to strategize their mandate to realize the government's objective as mentioned above. CHED has instituted programs and projects as stated in their Strategic Plan, to wit: 1) Job-skills matching programs by encouraging the offering of courses that are in demand and responsive to the needs of

industry both domestic and international; 2) Relevant and responsive research, development and extension programs with the aim of generating, adapting, and applying new knowledge and technologies for the promotion of productivity, livelihood, peace, women empowerment, environmental protection, disaster reduction, and poverty alleviation; 3) Gender and development programs by advocating gender sensitivity especially to women; 4) Typology and mapping of HEIs and courses by classifying HEIs based on their mandates and functions vis-à-vis national development goals along with the establishment of geographic information system (GIS) map; 5) Amalgamation of HEIs and courses by restructuring SUCs, LUCs and other government schools into a Regional University System (RUS) to improve efficiency in the delivery of quality programs, minimize duplication and promote complementation; 6) Quality assurance projects by strictly monitoring implementation of policies, standards, and guidelines (PSGs); 7) Quality improvement projects through increased faculty scholarships, more training for HEI managers, establishment of research centers, identification of program centers of excellence and development, strengthening agriculture and fishery projects, and assistance to basic education especially its K+12 and Grades 11 & 12 transition; 8) Strengthen participation in international and regional networking to foster academic cooperation and linkages of local HEIs with their counterparts in other countries as well as with international organizations; 9) Strengthen scholarship programs for students to improve access to quality higher education; 10) Promote alternative learning systems through the expanded tertiary education equivalency and accreditation program and ladderize education program; 11) Initiate reforms in governing SUCs through rotation of chairs in SUC boards, enhance search and appointment system for SUC presidents, adoption of good governance, and implementation of guidelines in the utilization of income; 12) Strengthen IT systems to simplify frontline services; and 13) Modernization of facilities through the installation of CCTV cameras.

Furthermore, to ensure maximum participation of all sectors involved in the Philippine educational reforms, the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) was launched in 2012 that aligned the country's qualifications framework with that of its fellow ASEAN neighbors in preparation for the ASEAN Economic Integration in 2015. The PQF clearly stipulated the qualification levels that each graduate is expected and entitled to after completion of certain years of schooling. For example, a graduate of grade 10 and 12 is expected to have acquired knowledge and skills equivalent to Level 1 and 2 qualifications respectively as required by certain job markets. The PQF also clarifies the link and relationship between basic education under the responsibility of the Department of Education (DepEd), the diploma and training programs under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and that of higher education programs under the regulation of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

## **6. Top-down and Bottom-up Challenges as Applied in Ifugao State University**

In line with the trends and challenges in the international, national, and local mainstreams, managers and Chief Executive Officers of public higher education institutions in the Philippines conducted series of consultations and workshops to revise their own targets and align with the goals and objectives of the Philippine government under the Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016, Roadmap for Public Higher Education Reform and in consonance with the Strategic Plan 2011-2016 of the Commission on Higher Education and the Philippine Qualifications Framework.

For the past 11 years, there were significant improvements in the physical structure, status and performance of the Ifugao State University, a public higher education institution located in the northern part of Manila, Philippines. The quest for university statehood, a milestone achievement made possible by the collective efforts of the stakeholders of the university, is one of the institutions' developmental sagas (Clark, 1972) that captivated all its stakeholders. It excited, united, and focused all administrators, employees, students, community and political leaders to the daunting task of transforming the Ifugao State College of Agriculture and Forestry (ISCAF) into a state university. The present leadership is just too fortunate and privileged to have presided over this significant historic change. Founded as a Farm Settlement School by the Americans in 1920, our institution metamorphosed into a state college in 1983. Being the only institution of higher learning in the province, it carries the province's name (Ifugao) manifesting the expectations and hopes for education by the Ifugao people, mostly belonging to the so-called Indigenous Peoples (IP). The institution is nestled amidst valleys and mountains of Ifugao where one of the country's famous landmarks is located, the Rice Terraces of the Cordilleras, declared by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a world heritage site.

The quest for university statehood started in 2003 with the crafting of ISCAF's 8-year development plan that embodies its vision, mission and 8 major development goals distributed among its four-fold thrust of Instruction, Research, Extension and Production services in line with national development goals. It was a collective and democratic desire of the institution's stakeholders coming out from a series of consultations which the present leadership has presided upon its assumption as the President of ISCAF in February 23, 2003.

Armed with a clear plan, the stakeholders dedicated, committed and focused themselves in developing the institution in all fronts, from putting up the needed requisites for quality in teaching and learning to the needed support infrastructure and systems for the conduct of research and extension programs, projects and activities. Everybody has contributed his or her own share for the development of this institution. Accreditation of curricular programs was prioritized and urgently undertaken to ensure quality of programs, faculty development aggressively pushed and supported through expanded scholarship opportunities to

IFSU academics, linkages and support networks established with national and international agencies.

This development saga united and inspired all stakeholders of the university to work towards its successful attainment. On June 21, 2007, the efforts and sacrifices started to be recognized with the formal declaration by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) that ISCAF had moved up from being a SUC Level I to SUC Level III. The state of development of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the country are categorized as Level I to Level IV depending on the state of their development, with Level I being the lowest and Level IV the highest. Students started to shine in regional and national competitions, graduates topped board examinations and shine in their areas of specializations.

Inspired by an overwhelming mandate and the elevation of ISCAF into SUC LEVEL III, Honorable Solomon Chungalao, a member of the Philippine Legislature (House of Representatives), filed House Bill No. 926 known as "An Act Converting the Ifugao State College of Agriculture and Forestry and all its Existing Extension Campuses, all in the Province of Ifugao into a State University to be Known as Ifugao State University (IFSU), and Appropriating Funds Therefor". Correspondingly on the same date, Senator Aquilino Pimentel Jr. filed in the Senate of the Philippines Senate Bill No. 1224 of similar title. The ISCAF students, employees, and community people and the Board of Trustees (BOT), the governing board of the university, endorsed the bills. Through strongly worded resolutions, the local government and provincial government units (LGU's/PLGU) of Ifugao expressed their support. The proposed legislation went through the rigors of legislative process from 2007-2009 backed up by assessments made by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines attesting to ISCAF's readiness to be a university.

Thus, on October 14, 2009, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo signed Republic Act (RA) No. 9720 ushering the elevation of the Ifugao State College of Agriculture and Forestry (ISCAF) into Ifugao State University (IFSU), the only state university in the Cordillera Region enacted by congress. RA No. 9720 is otherwise known as "An Act Converting the Ifugao State College of Agriculture and Forestry in the Municipality of Lamut and all its Existing Extension Campuses Located in the Province of Ifugao into a State University to be Known as the Ifugao State University and Appropriating Funds Therefor".

The new law capped almost seven years of relentless effort and struggle to establish a university in the Province of Ifugao with expanded scope of services. The Ifugao people are truly blessed to have a university of their own. They are forever grateful to the many people who made it happen. They are challenged and committed to make it work. This development saga is one of the most significant accomplishments of the present leadership. It definitely helped facilitate development. The present IFSU administration betted on the right direction that ushered a lot of positive change both in the physical structure of the institution and in the intangible character and work attitude of employees and support of stakeholders.

Today, the Ifugao State University continues to shine as it strives to give quality service to a rapidly increasing population of students and community of Indigenous Peoples whose expectation of service is nothing but the best. They are determined to sustain the development direction as they prepare the university to exploit the opportunities and surmount challenges of the ASEAN economic integration by 2015 (ASEAN 2015).

Since performance is the major consideration by the Commission on Higher Education in allocating public money to SUCs and project funds to both private and public HEIs, they all look at each other as competitors. However, competition is stronger between SUCs and private HEIs than in between SUCs. For SUCs in the entire Cordillera Administrative Region composed of six provinces, the relationship is more of cooperation than competition because they work more as partners complementing each other as they move to achieve their vision, goals and objectives. The Ifugao State University is the lead agency in the amalgamation initiative toward the formation of a Regional University System (RUS) as one of the reforms in higher education instituted by CHED.

For Ifugao State University to address the challenge of quality education, it aimed at intensifying strategies as follows: a) continue subjecting academic programs for accreditation; b) conduct screening of incoming students as one way of increasing passing rate in licensure examinations; and c) upgrade and strengthen the curriculum to suit the need of the job market both local and international needs.

To cope with the challenge of widening access to higher education, the strategies are as follows: a) increase scholarship privileges of students and encourage students especially those who belong to the indigenous groups; b) ladderize programs and offer relevant specializations to suit the need of the local community while remaining competitive in the global arena; and c) strengthen and expand its existing transnational education (TNE) programs to serve more students within and outside the country.

To address the challenge of mismatch between programs and needs of employment industry, the strategies are as follows: a) conduct extensive exposure of students to skills-based competencies; b) provide review classes; c) mix information technology systems with traditional teaching methods; d) conduct in-service training for academics on the latest trends in teaching techniques; and e) provide multi-media equipment in a well lighted and ventilated classrooms.

To cope with the challenge of underinvestment and prudent spending, the strategies are as follows: a) expand existing projects; b) search for partner agencies for joint business undertaking; c) institute income generating project (IGP) control system; d) increase personnel to manage IGPs; and e) institute mechanisms to cut monthly expenditures of the university.

To cope with the challenge in undertaking research as one of the core functions of universities, the Ifugao State University have instituted the classification of faculty members by way of assigning them as a research-based or teacher-based

faculty although the result in terms of research outputs is yet to be determined as very few of the academic members would choose the research-based classification. A research-based faculty means that the bulk of the job would be more on performing research endeavors. Other strategies are as follows: a) strengthen linkages with research agencies; b) participate in national and international research conferences and fora; c) develop programs for national development such as poverty alleviation, food security, global competitiveness, cutting edge science, sustainable development, and support to allied services; and d) address basic social necessities for agricultural enterprises that are economically feasible and environmentally sound.

To cope with the challenge of leadership and management transition in Ifugao State University, one of the strategies to be employed is to capacitate middle level managers to be prepared to take the mantle of leadership within the ranks of employees after my term ends in 2017. As per existing laws, the term of the President of Ifugao State University will end in 2017. Sending some employees to various trainings and workshops in the national level will better prepare the transition of university leadership.

Finally, to cope with the challenge of ushering economic development in the community, the university has instituted some strategies such as: a) strengthen partnership with local government officials to align, in some level, the university's direction with their mission, goals, and objectives; b) share university innovations to the community for them to be informed and apply the innovations; c) design preservation centers and museums where a store of knowledge from indigenous individuals will be created and cultural vis-à-vis environmental heritages will be kept.

## 7. Conclusion

Change is inevitable. Philippine universities need to adjust with the changing higher education systems and be prepared to diversify their functions to adopt and surmount new and changing challengers and milieus for them to survive. At the same time, competition will be at the forefront of universities between and among themselves hence the government needs to institute wider avenues where universities can focus on their mandate, where they are strong at and collaborate with others to increase their capacity. One positive outlook in the Philippine higher education is the amalgamation of universities wherein the Regional University System (RUS) concept is perceived to boost partnerships and maximize sharing of resources among SUCs. The Ifugao State University is chosen by the other SUCs in the region to lead them in amalgamation initiatives where the capacities of every SUC in the region is harnessed by working together under a spirit of collaboration and sharing of resources.

Research is still a challenge for Philippine universities and that more participation from the government, academe, and industry should be facilitated and strengthened to increase impactful research outputs. Participation from all sectors can be a key point towards successfully achieving strategies initiated by the government and the Commission on Higher Education and cascaded down into the strategic plans of universities.

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## Author Profile



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