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Submitted: 25 November 2019, Revised: 19 February 2020, Accepted: 9 March 2020

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Capacity of Higher Educational Institutions in Delivering Graduate Programs in Public Administration

Abstract

The concern on capacity has become an intriguing study to examine the capacity of state universities and colleges (SUCs) and local universities and colleges (LUCs) in the Philippines to deliver quality graduate programs. This paper is a comparative assessment on the capacity of to deliver graduate programs in Public Administration of four HEIs in the National Capital Region (NCR), namely: Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila (PLM), Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), University of the Philippines-National College of Public Administration (UP-NCPAG), and the University of Makati (UMak) using indicators in six capacity areas, to wit: *Human Resources, Knowledge Management Resources, Physical/Material Resources, Organizational/Leadership Resources, Networking/Linkage Resources, and Cross-border Services* employing a qualitative, multi-source case study research design such as direct observations, documents or archival records, verbal reports from key informants (key informant interviews or KII), survey questionnaire, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The results show that UP-NCPAG is *very strong* in four capacity areas; PUP is *strong* in all capacity areas; UMak is *very strong* in two capacity areas, *strong* in two capacity areas, but *moderate* in two capacity areas; and PLM is *very strong* in one capacity area, *strong* in three areas, but *moderate* in two areas.

Keywords:

capacity building; governance education; graduate programs in public administration

Introduction

To date, knowledge institutions in the Philippines have increased in number, and among them are higher educational institutions (HEIs) whether public or private. Public HEIs include State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), which total

111, and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), which number 107 in all, as of 2017 (Licuanan, 2017). SUCs have a charter based on a Republic Act enacted by Congress, while LUCs are created by their respective local councils or *Sanggunian* in the provincial, city, and municipal

local government units (LGUs). More numerous are the private HEIs, which total 1,710 all over the country (Licuanan, 2017).

It is worth noting that the graduate programs in the area of governance carry other names; when analyzing all other SUCs and LUCs in the list one by one, variant names such as *public management*, *public affairs*, *public affairs management*, *public service*, *government management*, *governance*, and *fiscal administration* among others begin to emerge. The reason behind this is that the HEIs concerned may have introduced innovative changes in the curriculum to tailor fit it to client needs or the local circumstances in the community or area in which it is located. Such multiplicity of names referring to the same or similar academic field thus warrants the use of the umbrella or generic term '*governance education*'. Accordingly, they may be all categorized as Governance Education Institutions (GovEd institutions), or GEIs, in short.

Licuanan (2017) pointed out gaps that need to be filled up as soon as possible in her report on the state of Philippine higher education. For example, she said that of the 107 LUCs, only 18 were CHED-recognized. Also, HEIs had a faculty profile of doctorate degree holders (13.32%), master's degree holders (40.37%), while the rest (46.31%) only have undergraduate degrees. HEIs received only 12.4% of the total budget allocated for the whole education sector. Moreover, persistent issues hound the HEIs, among them: 1) limited access to quality higher education for the poor and underprivileged, 2) commercialization due to the unchecked proliferation of HEIs and their programs, 3) deteriorating quality due to low productivity in research and development aside from a deficient science and innovation culture, and 4) questionable and corrupt practices. While the assessment is relatively wide in scope, many other compounding issues and concerns still remain that follow-through studies have yet to bring out into the open.

All HEIs are covered by two mechanisms to ensure quality standards in their programs/courses. First, CHED, as the supervisory authority over HEIs, requires them to have "high standards of instruction as manifested by the quality of (their) teachers," in addition to a "strong staff development... as evidenced by an appropriate budgetary allocation and/or systematic plan for staff development programs" (CHED Memorandum Order No. 09, series of 2003). Still, some HEIs are not able to keep up with the abovementioned CHED requirements. Second, their membership in an accrediting organization demands compliance by member-schools to prescribed standards and policies.

In other words, one significant issue stands out: SUCs and LUCs have differential capacities. It can be hypothesized then that some of them have high standards, others have standards that may be considered average, and still some have less than average standards. What may account for the variance? This brings into the picture a brief digression to discuss the twin phenomena of capability and capacity of institutions to deliver their programs successfully.

In agreement with the insights of analysts decades back – with Franks (1992), Goodman, et al. (1998), and Imbaruddin (2003) – capability refers to the individual knowledge, skills and attitudes of a person or group of persons, and their competence to undertake the responsibilities assigned to them. The existence of qualified faculty members who have masters and PhD degrees, as CHED requires, indicate capability. Imbaruddin (2003) cited Franks (1992) states capability constitutes one variable on which capacity depends.

In contrast, capacity is the "ability of an individual or group to actually carry out their responsibilities" (Imbaruddin, 2003). A qualified faculty may not translate to capacity if the teachers are not provided the resources and incentives for them to do their job. Capacity emerges when

resources are mobilized and allocated properly or adequately (Goodman et al., 1998). It may happen then that though capability contributes to capacity, it may also happen that capability may not lead to capacity.

The point to make is that HEIs may have the capabilities but may not have the capacity or readiness/preparedness to translate capabilities that are already there into actual capacities. Still, HEIs cannot have the same capacity. Maybe due to certain internal conditions, an HEI may only have less capacity or may not even have the capacity to deliver such programs. Standards could vary, in short, in that some GovEd institutions can deliver high quality programs/courses while some can only deliver lower than average programs/courses, which can be attributed to the differential capacities of these institutions. Lastly, while some GovEd services may be of good quality and some others of medium or of poor quality, other compounding factors oftentimes unexamined (that the GovEd sector is unregulated, that others do it for money-making reasons resulting in the proliferation of “diploma mills” in the country), build up a substantial justification to examine and analyze why this is so in the GovEd sector.

Up to this point, there is a relative dearth of studies on the existing capacities of GovEd institutions in the Philippines which offer graduate programs in governance, whether at the MPA or at the DPA levels. It would therefore be interesting to ask the following questions: What are the existing capacities of these GovEd institutions to offer graduate programs on the MPA and DPA levels? Do they have a high level of capacity, average level of capacity, or lower than average capacity to deliver GovEd programs/courses?

Moreover, what factors make for a higher level of capacity compared to those factors which effect a lower level of capacity among the GovEd institutions to be covered by the study? Also, in which capacity component(s) or aspect(s) are some GovEd institutions strong, and in which

capacity component(s)/aspect(s) are some lacking or inadequate? Certainly, to ask why this is so makes for a good analytic study.

If these GovEd institutions are aware of their strengths/weaknesses, what have they been doing to sustain their strengths and to remedy their weaknesses? What problems do they encounter in building up their capacities?

There are several definitions on what “capacity” is. For the purposes of the paper, the definition is limited to that of Goodman et al. (1998) and of Imbaruddin (2003, p. 12, citing Franks, 1992, p. 52). Goodman et al. defines it as “the ability to carry out stated objectives.” Imbaruddin says that it is “the ability of the individual or group to actually carry out their responsibilities.”

Grindle and Hilderbrand (1999) wrote that capacity can be attained through training activities, organizational performance, and administrative structure. In turn, these factors are brought about by strong organizational cultures, good management practices, and effective communication networks. To Goodman et al., (1998), leadership is vital in bringing about workforce development, organizational development, project management quality, and partnerships – all of which contribute to capacity. To both authors, capacity is enhanced especially if the leader sees to it that resources are mobilized and allocated effectively.

Many assessment frameworks have been forwarded on how capacity can be measured and monitored, as well as how the capacities of institutions and agencies may be assessed using the frameworks. The UNDP has its Capacity Assessment Framework but the scope is national and the focus is assessing the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in developing countries. The UNDP (2008) also counsels that its framework may need to be adapted to suit different contexts. It explains that the purpose of a capacity assessment is to analyze desired

capacities against existing ones to address those capacities that could be strengthened and to optimize existing ones that are already strong.

The UNDP's Capacity Assessment Framework has three dimensions:

1. Points of entry. Capacity resides on different levels – the enabling environment, the organizational, and the individual, with each becoming the point of entry for capacity assessment.
2. Core issues. There are four capacity issues most commonly found across sectors. They are: institutional arrangements, leadership, knowledge, and accountability.
3. Functional and technical capacities. Necessary for creating and managing policies, legislations, strategies and programs, the UNDP names five functional capacities: a) engage stakeholders, b) assess a situation and define a vision and mandate, c) formulate policies and strategies, d) budget, manage and implement, and e) evaluate.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 2011) presents its Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HCID) Assessment as a way to evaluate an agency's preparedness to carry out mandated activities. Its scoring of the indicators follows a 4-point scale from 1 to 4. A score of 1 means very little capacity, a score of 2 is interpreted that the organization can participate in the activity, 3 means the organization is capable of carrying out the activity with technical assistance, and a score of 4 is that it is capable of carrying out the activity at the appropriate level of quality on its own.

CHED has also been doing its part in coming up with an assessment of graduate education in the Philippines. In 2004, commissioned by the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE), CHED conducted the Evaluation of Graduate Education in the Philippines (EGEP) study. It reviewed and evaluated three graduate areas in the Philippines: Teacher Education, Business Education, and

Public Administration. All schools offering public administration and related courses were surveyed all over the Philippines, using a self-assessment form. Areas for assessment included: curriculum and instruction, faculty, students, institutional support, physical facilities and learning resources, and research and extension services.

Then, a CHED-PIDS research project assessing the state of graduate education programs in the country was completed in 2014 reviewing the quality assessment (QA) tools for graduate education (Ofreneo, 2014, pp. 1-5). From a total of 28 QA tools from 28 sources included in the review, a master list of sample indicators was content analyzed. Ten broad areas and indicators were found in the QA tools reviewed, namely:

1. Curriculum and instruction (curriculum program and content; teaching method, strategy, or pedagogy; teaching outcomes; academic policies – with quality of the curriculum as the most heavily assessed);
2. Research (research activities, publications, influence or citation);
3. Extension and linkages (contribution to society and the community and linkages with industry and external partners);
4. Faculty (faculty qualifications, competence or expertise, faculty count, faculty development and internationalization);
5. Students (selectivity, enrolment or student count, competence, completion, and internationalization);
6. Nonteaching staff (staff development);
7. Alumni (recognition and employability);
8. Support structure (governance, physical environment, facilities and equipment, instructional resources, support services);
9. Internal QA (evaluation and feedback mechanisms, systems of institutionalizing good practices through the creation and implementation of policies; policies for approving degree programs or setting the class size or faculty-student ratio); and

10. External QA (institutional responsibilities, accreditation, and reputation).

Lastly, there is also a Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) which sets the levels of educational qualifications and the standards for qualification outcomes. The PQF is useful for assessment researchers to align their frameworks with the levels and qualifications of staff and faculty in HEIs. The PQF sets eight levels and each level is described in terms of knowledge, skills and values; application and degree of independence (Philippine Qualifications Framework). A Task Force has been working towards an ASEAN Qualifications and Reference Framework (AQRF) which should be useful in the case of cross-border higher education services among the ten ASEAN member-countries.

There is a wide range of literature on capacity, capacity building, and the factors that influence capacity. Although each author or agency tackles similar issues and problems, they have different approaches on what to do and how to fix these problems. The largest differences lie, however, in subject content on what to teach because some participants may come from national line agencies, some from LGUs, some from educational institutions, and some from NGOs. Surely, these institutional contexts have a bearing on strategies, namely the content of the graduate programs and the thrust of the teaching in the area of governance education.

This study focuses on the capacity of HEIs to deliver graduate programs on both the masters and doctorate levels. The literature gives major insights on what to assess in the capacities of these HEIs.

Moreover, Morgan (2006) explores the concept of capacity full well, which may be adopted as the study's theoretical framework. It is apropos here to take up first his discussion on why organizations, systems, individuals, groups, and states are unable to act, that is, why they

lack capacity, or have a capacity gap. He says, for example, that government agencies may be leaderless and directionless, struggling with conflicting mandates and constituencies. They can be starved of resources or can be captured or controlled by self-interested groups. Many lack financial independence, and some cannot build linkages. Citizens can withhold their support, which lead to inaction; thus, powerlessness takes over. In such condition, there is sensible talk of unleashing capacity based on the assumption that the inactive or dormant human potential and abilities be brought out so that the system, the state, the people can act.

Morgan discusses how the "imprisoned" capacity can be unleashed. Here, there is a range of perspectives. Some see unleashing the capacity in terms of human resource enrichment and enhancement, focusing on skill development and training at the individual level. This is capacity as training or even continuing education perspective. On the other hand, others see capacity as beyond the usual training approach – as the ability to deliver or to implement better. Capacity is part of an effort to improve results and performance.

In both approaches, the idea of capacity is regarded as an input or as a means to achieve higher program development results. This idea is equated with effective performance management in the form of better service delivery. This is evident in many definitions of capacity. As defined Imbaruddin (2003) capacity is the "ability of the individual or group to actually carry out their responsibilities."

The six capacity areas of the study are described as follows:

The **Human Resources Capacity** comprises the capacity area that has to do with adequacy of staffing needs, number of staff, their level of preparation, expertise, skills, experience, personal skills, continuing professional development, level of commitment to the graduate program if not the whole GovEd area, staff performance assessment

conducted regularly, performance assessment reports are filed and fed back to the staff, etc. It also covers hiring, selection, retention, adequate job descriptions, clear roles and responsibilities, salaries, pay scales and upgrading.

The **Physical/Material/Financial Resources Capacity** refers to the acquisition and possession of advanced/modern facilities and equipment and the adequate space allocated to them, including the sufficiency of the budget and financial resources made available. This capacity area/dimension depends on the access of the HEI's staff to needed materials and supplies, technical assistance provided to them, funding support, adequacy of the agency's own facilities as venue for its GovEd programs, or whether the agency's entire infrastructure and facilities are attractive and comfortable as venues for GovEd programs to clients, etc. The more modern and attractive the facilities and equipment, the more the capacity to deliver successful GovEd programs/courses.

Knowledge Management is the capacity area that refers to the systems that relate to knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, and knowledge dissemination processes obtaining in organizations. The overall management of these processes is termed knowledge management. The foremost proponent of knowledge creation and conversion is Nonaka and Takeuchi (1996) defines knowledge creation as the "continuous transfer, combination and conversion of the different types of knowledge as users practice, interact and learn." Knowledge is created through practice, collaboration, interaction, and education, as the different knowledge types are shared and converted. The HEI concerned generates new and up-to-date knowledge and manages generated knowledge systematically for use/application.

Organizational-Leadership Capacity refers to the ability of the organizational environment/structure to promote and sustain policies, rules, and other arrangements on accountability, transparency and participation.

This environment/structure can only be mobilized via good leadership and good governance by the top executives who are supportive, providing faculty and staff with incentives/benefits.

Networking/Linkage Capacity is a capacity area that is based on the principle that no one or no organization can do it alone – especially in these times of globalization and rapid change in technology. According to McGuire (2006, pp. 33-43), networks are "structures involving multiple nodes-agencies and organizations with multiple linkages." Milward and Provan (2006, p. 9) also say that networks are "structures of interdependence involving multiple organizations or parts thereof". This capacity area assumes the preconditions built up by the first four capacity resources areas. To be able to have linkage and partner with other agencies or institutions, the staff/personnel must have the human resources capacity, the organization must have the physical and material resources, must have the knowledge creation and management resources, as well as the organizational-administrative leadership resources. One cannot be effective in linkage and networking without first building up the capacities in the first four components.

Cross-Border Services Capacity is interrelated with networking/linkages, particularly at present when ASEAN regionalization has called for cross-border services between and among the ASEAN member-nations. Among the various categories of cross-border services, the education sector falls under "other private services," which also includes financial services, insurance services, telecommunications, and business/professional/technical services.

Methods

The study made use of a qualitative, multi-source case study research design. It is multi-source because several data sources are relied on, namely: direct observations, documents or archival records, verbal reports from key

informants (key informant interviews or KII), rating perceptions from the survey questionnaire, and collective reports from participants assembled in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

Four HEIs (PLM, PUP, UMak, and UP-NCPAG) are selected as cases. A comparative case study design was utilized with within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. The consolidated data provide a triangulated evidence on the capacity of selected SUCs and LUCs to deliver graduate programs in GovEd.

The unit of study is the HEI engaged in delivering graduate programs in governance.

Results and Discussion

Human Resources Capacity. In terms of academic credentials of the faculty, number of faculty by degree attained, by specialization, by their quality of teaching, style, and accomplishments in research and extension, UP-NCPAG ranks first (3.70), followed by PUP (3.60), then PLM (3.45), and UMak (3.10). UP-NCPAG, PUP, and PLM have *strongly* given action to all concerns under this capacity area. UMak, however, has only *moderately* given action to these same concerns.

Just looking at one indicator most often used to represent human resources in an HEI, which is the number of faculty both full-time (*plantilla*) and part-time, UP-NCPAG has the most with 25 full-time professors (to include the professors emeriti) and 17 part-time lecturers. In contrast, PUP has 5 full-time professors and 23 part-time lecturers; PLM has 5 full-timers and 15 part-timers; UMak has 2 full-time professors and 8 part-time lecturers. This fact alone already shows how much capacity each HEI can deliver in implementing graduate courses in governance education. An HEI with 25 professors who can teach and are part of the *plantilla* can of course have the delivery edge than an HEI with only 2-5 faculty in the *plantilla*.

Physical/Material/Financial Resources Capacity. In terms of generous and timely support

to the faculty and staff by way of access to, use of, and comfort derived from school infrastructure, buildings, offices, classrooms, library, and other facilities as the faculty and staff go about their work; facilitation to avail of supplies and materials, equipment, vehicles, communication; and budget support as well, the four HEIs have all given *strong* action to this capacity area. In terms of degree of strong action, again UP-NCPAG ranks first, followed by PLM, then PUP, and lastly, UMak.

Inadequate physical and material resources may generate a sense of frustration among the faculty that may affect their morale and performance. UP-NCPAG is a model of a school that puts a premium on physical and material resources capacity. Its three buildings are close to each other to form a unit or compound. One structure is mostly devoted to the library space; the second structure consists of offices and classrooms, and the small structure at the back as canteen. In contrast, the PUP MPA and DPA programs are under the Graduate School whose Dean has a doctorate in Education. The MPA chair stays in a separate office and has assumed other posts and is doing other tasks. The same with the DPA chair who stays in another separate office. All three, the Dean of Graduate Studies, the MPA chair and the DPA chair are far apart from each other. Apart from that, the classrooms for the MPA and DPA classes are in another building very far from where the Dean and the chairs are located.

Except for PLM whose enrolment figures were unavailable, UP-NCPAG for SY2018-2019 has the highest enrolment (based on the first semester figures) for both MPA (281) and DPA (118) programs; for PUP (MPA, 217, DPA, 38); for UMak (MPA, 122, DPA, 19).

So far, the budget and enrolment figures reveal the following:

- All HEIs have increased their respective budget, except UP which suffered a 3.09% cut in 2019 relative to the 2018 budget.
- The respective Public Administration units of the four HEIs receive from the total budget

of the university ranging from a hypothetical 11% (most probably less than 6%) for PRMIG of PLM, 1.8% for PUP's Center for PA and Governance, 0.22% for UP-NCPAG, to 0.18% for UMak's CGPP.

- All the four HEIs' budget always allocated the greatest percentage to personnel services, and the least for capital outlay. This was also the same observation by JICA. Moreover, UP-NCPAG has no allocation for capital outlay for 2017 and 2018. The same with PUP in 2019 although in 2018 there was a capital outlay allocation. UMak experienced a decreased allocation for capital outlay between 2018 and 2019, but for PLM, the capital outlay was larger than the MOOE.

Knowledge Management Resources Capacity.

Knowledge management is the essence of quality instruction. HEIs are knowledge institutions and institutions of learning, so to speak, if not centers of intellectual and educational excellence. This capacity area consists of how knowledge is managed to serve the purposes of the MPA/DPA programs. This includes the formulation of the Vision and Mission statements, alignment of the programs to these statements, curriculum planning and review, courses to offer, option tracks for students to choose their specialization, class scheduling, syllabus, modes of teaching delivery, teaching load and de-loading, knowledge generation through research and extension services of the faculty, knowledge conversion into new products, publications, journals, manuals, and knowledge sharing in conferences, seminars, symposia, and colloquia. In this capacity area, UP-NCPAG ranks first (4.63) and has given it *very strong* action, followed by the three HEIs – UMak (4.17), then PLM (4.06) and PUP (4.03), which have given this capacity area *strong* action.

Organizational/Leadership Resources Capacity. This capacity area embraces the organizational structure, exercise of leadership

by the dean, chairs or coordinators, management styles, and supportiveness to faculty concerns and activities.

This area is revealing. UP-NCPAG ranks first (4.21) but close on the heels is UMak (4.20) and PLM (4.20), for a tie in second place. PUP now brings up the rear (3.91). UP-NCPAG, UMak and PLM have described this capacity area as *very strong* while PUP characterized it as having *strong* action.

Networking/Linkage Resources Capacity.

This capacity area consists of partnerships with public and private agencies, schools, LGUs, with other sectors of society, and with business and industry. It is manifested in collaborations between two or more HEIs, a kind of sharing of resources but actually the motivation springs from the fact that no one HEI can do it alone. They may collaborate by sharing their expertise with each other through invitations as guest lecturers, seminar-workshop speakers, and conferences. They may also bring the collaboration to the level of research, extension, and task forces as the need arises.

Networking and links with other sectors like government line agencies and LGUs is not a new area for HEIs with courses in PA. The school's dean and professors have often been invited by national and local governments in hearings, their comments solicited on pending bills and would-be policies, and even asked to chair or be members of a technical working group, task force, or committee to provide expert guidance on policies, programs, and projects.

In this vein, UP-NCPAG leads (4.33), characterizing this capacity area as having *very strong* action, followed by UMak (4.24) which has also rated it as having *very strong* action. PUP (3.86) rated this capacity area as having *strong* action, while PLM (3.25) characterized their response in this capacity area as *moderate*. UMak's second rank is not surprising as it has been on the forefront in pioneering academe-industry linkage,

and has developed innovative programs in making education accessible not only to first-time college enrollees, but also to graduate students who want to earn an MPA or a DPA in an alternative way.

Cross-Border Services Capacity. This capacity area is a relatively new area for HEIs. That is why the scores reveal little action by the HEIs, indicating little awareness or little information about exchange transactions between ASEAN countries' agencies, LGUs, and HEIs on exchange of professional services. This may be in the exchange of professors initially, but it may have to expand as regional complementation is expected to blossom among the 10 ASEAN member-countries. It is also sharing of knowledge and resources but the partners cross national boundaries in the form of research collaborations, extension partnerships, and other forms of cross-country collaborations and partnerships.

The HEIs covered by the study lowly rated themselves on this capacity area. Still, UP-NCPAG emerged at the top (4.54) characterizing this capacity area as having *very strong* action, followed by PUP (3.56) as having *strong* action. However, the last two HEIs have described this capacity area as getting only *moderate* action, UMak (2.94) and PLM (2.89).

The results of this research revealed that UP-NCPAG is *very strong* in four capacity areas (values of the six strong capacity areas are between 4.20 and 4.63) and *strong* in two capacity areas. It has no *moderate* capacity area. That is why its overall mean is 4.23.

Whereas, PUP is *strong* in all capacity areas (values of the capacity areas are between 3.56 and 4.038). It also has no *moderate* capacity area. That is why it comes second to UP-NCPAG given its overall mean of 3.78

Moreover, UMak is *very strong* in two capacity areas, *strong* in two capacity areas, but *moderate* in two capacity areas. Its overall mean of 3.70 also comes close to that of PLM. Meanwhile, PLM is *very strong* in one capacity area, *strong* in

three areas, but *moderate* in two areas. Its overall mean of 3.64 comes close to PUP's.

Conclusions

Capacity is a very important area of an institution, much more for educational institutions such as HEIs whose essential function is imparting/sharing knowledge to learners. This essential function depends on a strong capacity to do so. However, capacity is not only about one or two capacity areas. Capacity is a holistic development of six areas: human resources, knowledge management resources, physical/material/financial resources, organizational/leadership resources, networking/linkage resources, and cross-border services capacity. All six are needed. A strong capacity in just one or two areas does not suffice. It must be all six together, at the same time, for they are interlinked and their interrelationships are mutual and reciprocal.

Based on the findings, a Proposed Program Guidelines Framework (PGF), is the output of the study, which is a set of interlinked guidelines that serve not as standards in the sense of CHED Memorandum Orders and of relevant accrediting agencies, but a set of propositions to be able to understand the context in which different HEIs are embedded and to come to the realization that a "one size fits all" orientation such as uniform standards cannot be applicable to all HEIs.

There are five guidelines. Some may be interrelated but for emphasis, they are discussed separately.

Guideline 1: Appreciate Differences between HEIs. In psychology, it is a truism that no two persons are exactly alike; even twins are different from each other. In much the same way, no two HEIs are exactly alike. Everyone knows this surely, but it is disregarded when every HEI is subjected to the same standards, rules and regulations – to the advantage of those HEIs with large-scale resources and to the disadvantage of those with small-scale resources.

Guideline 2: Strategize in creating a niche without neglecting other capacity areas. Hilderbrand & Grindle (1997) expressed that even if institutions operate within a similar economic, social and political environment and governed by similar rules and procedures, they still will have differing capacities. Capacity is not just one capacity area. There are six capacity areas in this study. HEIs have to be strong in all six. Though not all capacity areas are to be equally strong, for that would be well-nigh impossible, all HEIs need to maintain strength in all six capacity areas to be able to deliver a satisfactory graduate program in PA. The existence of PLM and UMak points out that schools can have capacities that depart from the traditional emphasis on human resources and knowledge management resources. These two schools are the products of the changing landscape that give importance to locally specific factors. UMak also shows the same tendency of a vacuum being filled up by another substance or energy of the HEI concerned. Since UMak cannot compete with UP-NCPAG and with PUP, it tries to make the best out of a situation by “specializing” in networking/linkage resources.

Guideline 3: HEIs should take stock of their own capacities. HEIs do not know in which capacity areas they are strong and which ones they are least strong. In this case, each HEI must take an inventory of its stock of resources, either on an institutional level (for the whole university) or program level (for the PA program for example). The HEI, thus, must conduct a regular capacity assessment, updated once in two years, to sustain its strongest capacity areas and to improve its least strong capacity areas. The data are of utmost importance to planning its course offerings, professional development for the faculty, and other innovations.

Guideline 4: Everyone knows that living systems are dynamic and that change is the only constant. However, people think and do more on the basis of static rules and regulations, instead

of doing so in dynamic terms. The standards that CHED and the accrediting bodies impose in time may cause rigidity and constrain HEIs to be flexible, to be curious, to take risks, resulting in blocked opportunities to grow or missed opportunities to self-renew or self-adapt. The one standard that CHED must encourage is the standard of change and dynamicity.

Guideline 5: Strengthen capacity slowly but surely, and with institutional support. This is easier said than done because it is difficult to attain capacity in the delivery of programs in graduate PA. It takes time to build capacity truly, as the adage tells that Rome was not built in a day. It is important that CHED and the accrediting bodies may have to allow HEIs, especially those with small resources to rely on, some time to allow themselves to improve in all the requirements that CHED asks them to comply with, or for them to specialize in a program, and thus, create for themselves a niche. The presence of multiple universities and colleges is not a disadvantage. It is in principle a law of life, of diversity. Whether one likes it or not, differences will stay. In such a quality standard of change, CHED must play the role of enabler, facilitator, and supporter to nurture a conducive environment for HEIs to be able to achieve their educational objectives and goals.

Based from the conclusions, the study recommends the use of the proposed Program Guidelines Framework (PGF). This is to be regarded as a set of guidelines that may be limited to just the four covered HEIs. It may or may not be generalizable and replicable for other HEIs, whether SUCs or LUCs, and less so with private HEIs. In other words, the HEI concerned needs to exercise its insights in the use of the PGF. But the PGF is the labor of modern, evolutionary, and self-adaptive perspective that takes into account life’s realities: change, adjustments, renewal, and diversity.

It also recommends strengthening of capacity areas that are less emphasized. Thus,

if Human Resources are less emphasized, the HEI needs to expand its fulltime faculty with more PhDs in the *plantilla*. If Physical/Material/Financial Resources are less emphasized, the HEI must improve and upgrade its facilities as these lend convenience, comfort, and conduciveness for learners to have an optimum learning environment. If Cross-Border Services are less emphasized, the HEI must take advantage of this open opportunity for it brings with it many benefits among them status and prestige in the eyes of our ASEAN neighbors, besides giving professionals a chance to earn abroad.

Since, not all six capacity areas have to be equally strong. The optimum course of action for HEIs is to improve in all six but to organize themselves to cultivate some niche which their resources may allow it to do. The niche becomes then its source of comparative advantage or competitive edge. So far, all four HEIs have their respective locational niche (nearness to possible student clientele). UP-NCPAG banks also on its prestige and as a pioneer in PA. It has little problems with attracting possible students because it is well-known nationwide.

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