



Internationalization in Philippine HEIS: Focusing on Readiness of Private Colleges in South Cotabato

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Abstract: *Globalization is putting more pressure on schools and universities, both public and private. Academic tertiary institutions typically respond to this by solidifying the expansion of higher learning both within and beyond national borders through internationalization. Compared to cross-border education, internationalization of higher education is a far more expansive notion. The purpose of this descriptive-survey study was to ascertain how prepared a subset of South Cotabato's private institutions were for internationalization efforts. It addressed, in particular, the goals, tactics, and methods these colleges used as well as the implications it had for the larger conversation around this issue. According to the survey responses from four (4) private institutions in South Cotabato, students there are actively encouraged to take part in international exchange programs. Additionally, they expressed agreement that their academic members should be provided with sufficient training and assistance to facilitate international cooperation. When it comes to approach, these private colleges, they readily utilized marketing materials that effectively showcase the institution's commitment to internationalization. But they also raise issues with defining precise plans for incorporating global viewpoints into research and teaching, assembling a committed team to carry them out, and promoting global conferences and cooperative research. Through the practical application of the study's recommendations, higher education institutions can establish a well-organized framework for internationalization planning and implementation that is defined by goals, tactics, and methods. As a result, there will be an academic climate that is internationally engaged and competitive, as well as improved institutional collaboration, worldwide visibility, international partnerships, and cross-cultural interchange.*

Key Words: *Internationalization, Motives, Strategies, Approaches, Private Colleges, South Cotabato*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Internationalization, as per definition is an intentional process, an empowering product and liberating mindset that infuses the international multicultural dimension into the purpose functions and delivery of postsecondary and continuing education while reinforcing the values, interests and goals of the institution, national development and ASEAN community building. It has been a core dimension in research, instruction, and external affairs of most universities and colleges around the world. Due to impeccable changes that brought to by historically acclaimed turned of events of the previous century has created a context for a more strategic approach to internationalization in higher education and became a top reform agenda of organizations such as the International Association of Universities, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural, and even the World Bank (de Wit, 2020). This phenomenon led Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to step on with various approaches in response to growing globalized population with main goals, globally, of connecting the educational systems across the world and improve the student's skills, reading, teaching and learning as well as developing future leaders (Wandschneider et al., 2015).

In fact, internationalization stands as a game player and key change agent in academe today but puts universities and colleges from developed world and also in emerging and developing societies to a pressure of coping with the globalized environment. The Philippine government has defined its necessity to embed internationalization in its educational system. By definition on CMO 55, s. 2016, "Internationalization of higher education involves the integration of international/intercultural dimensions to HEIs' purpose, functions, and/or delivery; it involves a process of interchange of higher education between nations, between national systems of higher education, and between institutions of higher education. It is the expansion of higher learning within and beyond national borders and centers of scholarly studies. Internationalization of higher education is a much broader concept than cross-border education." With all its goals, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) envision the outcomes of internationalization in (1) branding and reputation, (2) improved graduate qualification, (3) quality institutions, and (4) economic growth & national competitiveness.



Internationalization of higher education involves the integration of international/intercultural dimensions to HEIs' purpose, functions, and/or delivery; it involves a process of interchange of higher education between nations, between national systems of higher education, and between institutions of higher education. It is the expansion of higher learning within and beyond national borders and centers of scholarly studies. Internationalization of higher education is a much broader concept than cross-border education. HEIs must have a clear understanding of "why" internationalization is significant for the institution. A decisive motive should underlie the logic of a truly global academic institution which is not to teach the world but to learn from the world in order to enhance the institution's capacity to create new knowledge and develop truly global citizens (IJELS, 2013).

Further, this focuses only on academic and economic motives since these are higher education institutions based where benefits from internationalization are more apparent. Academic internationalizing rationales goes by the reasoning that by encouraging greater internationalization across teaching, research, and service activities, the quality of higher education can be enriched (Ghasempoor et al., 2015).

To keep up with the advancement of modern globalization, the Philippine Government decided to implement the K-12 program which adds 2 more years in the basic education system. With the new curriculum, the Philippines is now adhering to the global competitiveness of different countries. However, this advancement became a huge adjustment for students and professors who were used to the old curriculum. This change has affected mostly the pioneer batch of K-12 program as they were introduced to new methods of learning. For the professors, they were forced to move from Tertiary level to teaching in Senior High School because of the insufficient load in College level (Bernardo, 2013).

Moreover, CHED Memorandum Order 55, series of 2016 or the Policy Framework and Strategies for the Internationalization of Philippine Higher Education enumerates the rationale for internationalization in Philippine higher education which is mainly driven by several factors: institutional and academic mobility, recognition of degrees, quality assurance mechanisms, and comparability of qualifications. These are being done by adhering to the principles of reciprocity and international comity. The country shall also adhere to ASEAN cooperation and is committed to an ASEAN Sociocultural community that is people-centered and socially responsible for achieving enduring solidarity, union, and collective identity with the peoples of ASEAN. The Philippines is further committed to facilitating people mobility in ASEAN through higher education exchanges across member states, as embodied in the Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity for 2025. Hence, the Philippines is becoming more strategic in internationalization and focuses on economic gain, international positioning, and global citizenship, as discussed in CMO 55, s.2016. (Mak, et. Al 2013).

Under the Philippines' policy on the internationalization of higher education, Article XIV Section 4 (2) of the 1987 Constitution, Sec 123 of the Corporation Code, Foreign Investments Acts of 1991 as amended, and other applicable laws, rules and regulation. The national interest in internationalizing higher education consist of; *a.* building human capital and innovation capacity towards achieving the country's economic and social development goals, and the development of the Filipino nation as a responsible member of the international community; *b.* advancing learning and integrity of research, protecting academic freedom, promoting continuing intellectual growth, and developing responsible and effective leadership; *c.* promoting more equitable access to quality higher education; *d.* safeguarding the interests and reputation of the Philippine higher educational system, its students, academic staff, institutions and programs, and; *e.* ensuring the political, economic, social, and other strategic of national security are well protected all times (CHED, 2014).

However, internationalization is not an easy feat and posits challenges to higher educations of the world. Categorically, Saat (2007) named individual and institutional challenges in the implementation of internationalization such as lack of competency, negative attitudes and the latter subjects for lack of financial resources, scarcity of human resources, and educational structure. These challenges have strategically confronted Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) readiness to fully embrace the culture of internationalization in an effort of fulfilling the academes' function of teaching and learning process, research and scholarly activities, and service to society (Knight as cited by Zolfaghari, 2009).

The researchers wanted to study the concept of internationalization in Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) particularly on selected Private Colleges found in South Cotabato, Philippines to collect baseline data on its level of readiness of internationalization in the key elements of Motives, Strategies, and Approaches according to the conceptual framework of Knight (1997) and its implication to the internationalization efforts of Private Colleges in South Cotabato, Philippines. Particularly, this study sough answers to (1) identify the level of readiness on internationalization of selected Private Colleges in South Cotabato, Philippines in terms of *motives, strategies, and approaches*; and provide implication based from the result of the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

This section presents the related literature and studies which researchers find useful in the development of the study.

According to the Higher Education Commission (2013), the internationalization of higher education involves the integration of international/intercultural dimensions in the objectives, functions and/or provision of higher education institutions; it involves a process of higher education exchange between nations, between national higher education systems and between higher



education institutions. It is the expansion of higher education in and outside national borders and university study centers. Internationalization Higher education is a much broader concept than cross-border education.

In addition, CHED Memorandum Order 55, Series of 2016 or Policy Framework and Strategies for the Internationalization of Philippine Higher Education enumerates the reasons for the internationalization of Philippine higher education, which is mainly based on several factors: institutional and academic mobility, recognition of degrees, quality assurance mechanisms and comparability of qualifications. These elements are implemented in adherence to the principles of reciprocity and international cooperation. The Philippines also adheres to ASEAN cooperation and strives to create a people-centered and socially responsible ASEAN socio-cultural community to achieve lasting solidarity, unity and collective identity with the peoples of ASEAN. The Philippines is further committed to facilitating the mobility of people within ASEAN through higher education exchanges among member states as envisioned in the ASEAN Connectivity Horizon Project 2025. Therefore, the Philippines becomes more strategic in internationalization and focuses on economic, international benefits, global positioning and citizenship as stated in CMO 55, s. 2016 (Mak et al. 2013).

According to the Philippine Policy on the Internationalization of Higher Education, Article 1991 as amended, and other applicable laws, rules and regulations. The national interest in the internationalization of higher education consists of: a. to strengthen the human capital and innovation capacity in order to achieve the goals of the economic and social development of the country and the development of the Filipino nation as a responsible member of the international community; b. advance the integrity of learning and research, protect academic freedom, promote continued intellectual growth, and develop responsible and effective leadership; c. promote more equal access to quality higher education; d. protect the interests and reputation of the Philippine higher education system, its students, academic staff, institutions and programs, and e. ensure that political, economic, social and other national security is well protected at all times (Commission of Higher Education, 2014).

According to the study of Knight (2004), the international activities of higher education institutions are motivated by the components of internationalization; first, the reasons. The higher education institution must have a clear understanding of "why" internationalization is important for the institution. A decisive reason must be the foundation of the logic of a truly global academic institution, which is not to teach the world, but to learn from the world, to improve the capacity of the institution to create new knowledge and to train the real citizens of the world; second, approach. Internationalization reflects or characterizes "the values, priorities, and actions that emerge during the work of implementing internationalization." Identifying the school's approach will help the school to evaluate its internationalization processes; third, strategies may include international cooperation and development projects, institutional arrangements and networks, and international/intercultural dimensions of the teaching/learning process, curriculum and research. Clubs and extracurricular activities on campus, mobility of researchers through exchanges, field work and consultancy work.

Synthesis: The value of this study lies mainly in the evaluation of the potential of the processes observed in the relevant international activities of CHED. A thorough understanding of internationalization is essential for management to support internationalization efforts and preparation for higher education. This study aims to gather useful information for CHED decision-makers on their respective internationalization processes to guide them in their planning strategic. The teaching staff is essential for the realization of the internationalization at the level of the EES functions. However, it was noted that while the central role of the faculty cannot be questioned in internationalization, students also expect a university education that will prepare them to compete in an increasingly global world. In other words, the knowledge by teachers and students of internationalization in their institutions is essential for "the process of integration of a the international, intercultural and/or global dimension in the objectives, function (teaching/learning, research, service) and performance of higher education (Knight, 2003). It is therefore very important to assess their general attitudes towards internationalization, their views on the support of internationalization in the learning environment and the benefits they perceive.

3. OBJECTIVES / AIMS :

Generally, this quantitative study will identify the level of readiness of Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges-Marbel, Inc. and its implication to the internationalization efforts of HEIs in the said milieu.

Specifically, this study will seek answer to the following objectives:

1. To identify the level of readiness on internationalization of Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges-Marbel, Inc. in terms of:
 - a. Motives;
 - b. Strategies; and
 - c. Approaches
2. To provide implication based from the result of the study.

4. RESEARCH METHOD / METHODOLOGY :

This study utilized a descriptive-survey research design. This was the most apt design used in this study because in survey research method, data are obtained from people, and lastly, survey sample a part of population which is later used to generalize



the whole population, *i.e.* a section of a population is sampled to represent the whole population characteristics, viewpoint as well as opinion as the case maybe.

A survey questionnaire was used to acquire quantitative data on the level of readiness in internationalization of selected private colleges in South Cotabato from school administrators, faculty and staff, and students. The survey data provided a numeric description of the motives, strategies, and approaches. It followed the scale of 1:00-1:80 (Strongly Disagree), 1:81-2:60 (Disagree), 2:61-3:40 (Moderate), 3:41-4:20 (Agree), and 4:21-5:00 (Strongly Agree).

Problem 1 used the weighted mean to determine the level of readiness in internationalization on the bases of the selected private colleges' motives, strategies, and approaches. From the results, the researches drew implications in the internationalization capacities of the Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

5. RESULT / FINDINGS :

Problem 1. To identify the level of readiness on internationalization of selected Private Colleges in South Cotabato, Philippines in terms of:

- d. Motives;
- e. Strategies; and
- f. Approaches

1. MOTIVES

ITEM	5 STRONGLY DISAGREE	4 AGREE	3 MODERATE	2 DISAGREE	1 STRONGLY DISAGREE	AVERAGE WEIGHTED MEAN	DESCRIPTION
1. The leadership at Private Colleges in South Cotabato actively promotes and supports internationalization efforts.	26 (30.59%)	11 (12.94%)	21 (24.7%)	24 (28.23%)	3 (3.52%)	3.38	AGREE
2. The college recognizes the importance of globalizing the curriculum to provide students with a more diverse and well-rounded education.	24 (28.23%)	26 (30.58%)	20 (23.52%)	5 (5.88%)	10 (11.76%)	3.57	AGREE
3. There is a clear strategy in place for the integration of international perspectives into teaching and research activities at the college.	20 (23.52%)	10 (11.76%)	25 (29.41%)	16 (18.82%)	14 (16.47%)	3.07	AGREE
4. Faculty members at Private Colleges in South Cotabato express a positive attitude towards engaging in international collaborations and partnerships.	26 (30.58%)	21 (24.70%)	20 (23.52%)	13 (15.29%)	15 (17.64%)	3.71	AGREE
5. The college has established or is in the process of establishing partnerships with international universities or educational institutions.	34 (40%)	11 (12.94%)	23 (27.05%)	10 (11.76%)	7 (8.23%)	3.64	AGREE



6. Students at Private Colleges in South Cotabato are encouraged to participate in international exchange programs or study abroad opportunities.	36 (42.35%)	27 (31.76%)	11 (12.94%)	6 (7.05%)	5 (5.88)	3.97	AGREE
7. The administration actively seeks funding and resources to support internationalization initiatives.	32 (37.64%)	11 (12.94%)	3 (3.57%)	23 (27.05%)	16 (18.82%)	3.23	AGREE
8. The college has implemented measures to assess the global competence of its students and staff.	32 (37.64%)	18 (21.17%)	15 (17.64%)	5 (5.88%)	15 (15.64%)	3.55	AGREE
9. Private Colleges in South Cotabato actively participates in international conferences, forums, and networks related to education and research.	36 (42.35%)	20 (23.52%)	8 (9.41%)	12 (14.11%)	9 (10.58%)	3.72	AGREE
10. There is effective communication within the college community regarding the benefits and importance of internationalization.	29 (34.11%)	19 (22.35%)	24 (28.24%)	6 (7.06%)	7 (8.23%)	3.67	AGREE
						3.55	AGREE

Table 1 provides an overview of the internationalization aspirations of higher education institutions (HEIs) and includes important data from respondents of private colleges in South Cotabato. Regarding item number 6, which states that students in these universities are actively encouraged to participate in studying abroad or in foreign exchange programs, the highest average score of 3.97 indicates "Good". This shows a great commitment to expose students and provide experiences in foreign countries. On the contrary, for item number 3, the lowest weighted average is 3.07, or "Agree", which suggests that the institution has a well-defined plan to integrate international perspectives in its research and teaching. Although it is the lowest, this result indicates that a good agreement can still be demonstrated, which indicates an area for improvement in strategic integration. The overall weighted average of the reasons is 3.55, or "Agree," suggesting that people generally have a favorable view of internationalization efforts.

Knight (2004) argues that internationalization in higher education refers to the inclusion of an international, multicultural or global element in the objectives, operation or provision of post-secondary education. These results are consistent with Knight's definition. To improve the quality of education and global skills, other research also emphasizes the importance of strategic planning and active engagement in international programs (De Wit, 2013; Brandenburg & De Wit, 2015).

2. STRATEGIES

ITEM	5 STRONGLY DISAGREE	4 AGREE	3 MODERATE	2 DISAGREE	1 STRONGLY DISAGREE	AVERAGE WEIGHTED MEAN	DESCRIPTION
1. The institution has a well-defined and communicated	26 (30.58%)	27 (31.76%)	15 (17.64%)	2 (2.35%)	15 (17.64%)	3.55	AGREE



internationalization strategy.							
2. There is a dedicated team responsible for the development and execution of internationalization strategies.	26 (30.58%)	13 (15.29%)	11 (12.94%)	20 (23.52%)	15 (17.64%)	2.70	MODERATE
3. The institution actively seeks partnerships with international academic institutions.	34 (40%)	9 (10.58%)	7 (8.23%)	25 (29.41%)	10 (11.76%)	3.37	AGREE
4. Faculty members receive adequate training and support for engaging in international collaborations.	33 (38.82%)	11 (12.94%)	16 (18.82%)	5 (5.88%)	20 (23.52%)	3.35	AGREE
5. Faculty members receive adequate training and support for engaging in international collaborations.	30 (35.29%)	21 (24.70%)	27 (31.76%)	2 (2.35%)	5 (5.88%)	3.81	AGREE
6. There is a clear budget allocated for the implementation of internationalization initiatives.	27 (31.76%)	15 (17.64%)	28 (32.94%)	10 (11.76%)	5 (5.88%)	3.51	AGREE
7. The institution actively promotes a multicultural and inclusive environment.	38 (44.70%)	20 (23.52%)	11 (12.94%)	4 (4.70%)	12 (14.11%)	3.8	AGREE
8. The institution encourages faculty, staff, and students to participate in international exchange programs.	24 (28.23%)	19 (22.35%)	17 (20%)	15 (17.64%)	10 (11.76%)	3.14	AGREE
9. The administration demonstrates a commitment to fostering a global perspective in education.	27 (31.76%)	13 (15.29%)	18 (21.17%)	17 (20%)	10 (11.76%)	3.35	AGREE
10. The institution has a clear strategic plan that includes specific goals and objectives for internationalization.	32 (37.64%)	14 (16.47%)	13 (15.29%)	16 (18.82%)	10 (11.76%)	3.49	AGREE
						3.40	AGREE

The internationalization policies of higher education institutions (HEIs) are presented in Table 2. Regarding element number 5, "Faculty members receive appropriate training and support to engage in international collaborations ", the weighted average of the highest is 3.81, interpreted as "Agree". ". This suggests that the respondents see the support and training of teachers as very important in internationalization efforts. The second element, "Has a dedicated team responsible for the development and execution of internationalization strategies", on the other hand, has the lowest weighted average of 2. 70, which can also be translated as "moderate". This implies that there may be a perceived lack of specialized teams dedicated to internationalization, which may hinder the implementation of the strategy. The overall weighted mean for tactics is 3.40, which can be translated as "agreement", indicating that respondents moderately agree with the effectiveness of the strategies used.

According to the literature review by Altbach and Knight (2007), a committed team is essential to ensure that internationalization initiatives are successfully implemented. These teams are also essential for coordinating efforts between



different departments. Similarly, teacher training is essential for the development of global skills of academic staff members and international cooperation, according to Stohl (2007). These views support the findings of the study and highlight the need for HEIs to fund both specialized internationalization teams and large-scale faculty development initiatives. Without these elements, institutions may struggle to successfully achieve their internationalization objectives.

3. APPROACHES

ITEM	5 STRONGLY DISAGREE	4 AGREE	3 MODERATE	2 DISAGREE	1 STRONGLY DISAGREE	AVERAGE WEIGHTED MEAN	DESCRIPTION
1. The faculty at Private Colleges in South Cotabato is open to adopting new teaching methodologies that align with international standards.	27 (31.76%)	16 (18.82%)	18 (21.17%)	19 (22.35%)	5 (5.88%)	3.48	AGREE
2. The institution has sufficient resources (financial, technological, etc.) to support internationalization efforts.	25 (29.41%)	16 (18.82%)	7 (8.23%)	27 (31.76%)	10 (11.76%)	3.22	AGREE
3. Private Colleges in South Cotabato offers academic programs that are attractive to international students.	28 (32.94%)	13 (15.29%)	4 (4.70%)	31 (36.47%)	9 (10.58%)	3.23	AGREE
4. The curriculum includes global perspectives and cross-cultural elements.	23 (27.05%)	17 (20%)	21 (24.70%)	19 (22.35%)	5 (5.88%)	3.4	AGREE
5. The institution actively promotes student exchange programs with international universities.	22 (25.88%)	15 (17.64%)	25 (29.41%)	21 (24.70%)	2 (2.35%)	3.62	AGREE
6. Private Colleges in South Cotabato encourages faculty and staff to engage in international conferences, workshops, and collaborative research.	18 (21.17%)	16 (18.82%)	16 (18.82%)	15 (17.64%)	20 (23.35%)	2.96	MODERATE
7. The institution has established partnerships with international universities or organizations.	23 (27.05%)	16 (18.82%)	18 (21.17%)	2 (2.35%)	26 (30.58%)	3.09	AGREE
8. The institution has a strong online presence and utilizes digital platforms to reach a global audience.	30 (35.29%)	21 (24.70%)	19 (22.35%)	15 (17.64%)		3.77	AGREE



9. Marketing materials effectively showcase the institution's commitment to internationalization.	29 (34.11%)	30 (35.29%)	25 (29.41%)	4 (4.70%)	2 (2.35%)	4.1	AGREE
10. The institution promotes a culture of global engagement and cultural diversity.	27 (31.76%)	21 (24.70%)	11 (12.94%)	16 (18.82%)	10 (11.76%)	3.45	AGREE
						3.43	AGREE

Table 3 presents the internationalization tactics used by higher education institutions (HEIs) based on data collected from some private institutions in South Cotabato. The respondents think that the institutions' efforts to commercialize their internationalization strategies are successful and welcome. Statement number 9, "Marketing materials effectively show the institution's commitment to internationalization," has the highest weighted average of 4.1, which is interpreted as "Agree."

On the other hand, statement number 6, which says: "Private institutions in South Cotabato encourage teachers and staff to participate in international conferences, seminars and collaborative research," has the lowest weighted average (2.1) . 96), which is considered "moderate". This shows that while global engagement has some support, it is not as widely accepted or implemented as other strategies. The overall weighted mean for internationalization tactics is 3.43, or "agreement," indicating that most of the respondents consider the efforts of these organizations to be commendable.

In the context of internationalization, Knight (2004) emphasizes the need for strategic planning and alignment of institutional objectives with global trends to improve the quality and competitiveness of education. Effective marketing materials can significantly increase the global appeal of the institution and attract foreign partners and students, according to Qiang (2003), who also emphasizes the importance of communication and marketing in promoting internationalization. According to Bibliography, the development of a global academic network and the enhancement of an institution's reputation depend on research collaboration and participation in international conferences (Altbach and Knight, 2007). Based on the information provided, private universities in South Cotabato need to do more to encourage teachers and staff to fully participate in these types of international projects.

6. DISCUSSION:

The study on "Internationalization in Philippine Higher Education Institutions: Focusing on the Readiness of Private Colleges in South Cotabato" provides important insights on the current state and future implications of internationalization efforts in these institutions. The results highlight the strengths and weaknesses of private colleges in South Cotabato in terms of their preparation for international engagement. Universities and colleges in the Philippines are not sensitive to the challenges of internationalization, especially in terms of their level of readiness to accept the role of cross-border education played by international academia. This is not an easy task given the resources that may be at stake to carry out the strategic direction, implementation and sustainability of programs anchored in the mechanisms of internationalization. Therefore, internationalization in higher education institutions includes a wider range of implementation lines, activities aimed at integrating this dimension into the curriculum, professional commitment, research and service functions of the institutions of higher education. Philippine higher education.

Curriculum development today includes a global perspective that ensures that students are prepared for the complexities of the globalized world. The emphasis placed on the use of English in classroom teaching thus becomes a defining factor and a gateway to internationalization. Other schools' programs also offer a rigorous internship that allows students to complete on-the-job training abroad. Student mobility is a key aspect of internationalization. Currently, higher education institutions are increasing the opportunities that give students the opportunity to participate in exchange programs and study abroad. Through this initiative, higher education institutions in the Philippines create a multicultural campus environment that attracts international students and also increases students' cultural knowledge and global awareness and increases their employability in the global job market. This internationalism not only paves the way for an awareness the world of students, but also favors teachers by offering them numerous opportunities for professional development. The faculty can participate in international research collaborations, participate in global conferences, and engage in academic exchange programs.

This paves the way for greater engagement in academic travel for the possibility of sharing knowledge on the global stage. On the other hand, local institutions can also benefit from the recruitment of international professors who bring expertise and unique perspectives. Here, knowledge is not monopolized, but shared and consumed across borders. The materiality of internationalization arises from the awareness and desire of higher education institutions to engage in this path. Regardless of the benefits it brings to academics, it always comes with the challenges it presents. Knight (2004) develops an understanding of internationalization in a



way that includes the basic notions of motivations, strategies and approaches. It is clear that private universities correctly integrate the activities of internationalization in a cultured institution, even if they have shown that they have participated. The program must clearly demonstrate why internationalization is important. Academic rigor is enhanced when educational institutions integrate global perspectives into their programs, exposing students to a range of cutting-edge ideas and research. A strong global presence attracts top talent while increasing brand recognition and global rankings. Furthermore, by providing students with the knowledge and skills to function in a globalized society, internationalization promotes global citizenship and increases the employability of graduates.

To achieve these goals, private institutions must implement clear strategies, such as the creation of dedicated teams responsible for managing international initiatives. An international office coordinates activities, provides support services to international students and faculty, and ensures alignment with institutional goals. Faculty development programs provide training to integrate international perspectives in teaching and research, while incentives encourage participation in international collaborations. Student-focused strategies include developing strong exchange programs and facilitating international internships and study abroad opportunities. The internationalization approach often involves the creation of partnerships with international universities. These partnerships allow the creation of joint study programs and collaborative courses, fostering academic collaboration and enhancing educational experiences. Research collaborations leverage the strengths of partner institutions, leading to innovative and high-quality research. Formal exchange agreements promote the mobility of students and teachers, encourage intercultural learning and broaden the educational and research horizons of all actors involved.

In conclusion, while the desire of private colleges in South Cotabato to internationalize is evident, it is clear that there is a need for strategic improvements to fully use their potential. By filling the identified gaps and implementing the suggested implications, these institutions can strengthen their international engagement and contribute to the overall advancement of the Philippine higher education sector in the global arena.

8. CONCLUSION:

The results show a strong commitment from private institutions to improve students' global exposure, as evidenced by the high average grade of 3.97 to encourage participation in international exchange programs. This commitment aligns with the broader goals of the Philippine higher education system to adapt to globalization and improve the quality of education. The positive perception of marketing efforts aimed at emphasizing internationalization (weighted average of 4.1) also reinforces the idea that these institutions work actively to position themselves in the global educational landscape. The study, however, highlights critical areas for improvement. The lower scores for the integration of international perspectives in teaching and research (3.07) and the lack of teams dedicated to internationalization strategies (2.70) suggest that, although the internationalization generates enthusiasm, a more structured and strategic approach is needed. This gap indicates that institutions need to develop clearer frameworks and effectively allocate resources to strengthen their internationalization efforts. Therefore, higher education institutions in South Cotabato, Philippines should prioritize the creation of a dedicated team and a separate international liaison office that promotes innovations in internationalization.

This would facilitate a more coherent approach to integrating international perspectives into research programs and activities. It is essential to increase faculty engagement in international conferences and collaborative research. Higher education institutions must create incentives and support systems that encourage the participation of teachers in global academic dialogues. Furthermore, the results call for the development of comprehensive policies that articulate internationalization goals and strategies. This includes aligning institutional missions with international standards and ensuring that all actors are aware of and committed to these objectives. Making internationalization a priority in a changing environment, especially for institutions that benefit from human resources like the EIS, is no longer a choice, but an obligation to always be relevant in an already globalized world.

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