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## SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT OF THE LOCALLY – FUNDED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

Sustainability of the locally - funded higher education institution varies directly to the establishing local government unit's income classification and financial capabilities, budgetary allocation and personnel related operations. Using the exploratory narrative research design and Delphi technique in gathering vital information, the results reveal that the typical local government unit to establish higher education institution shall be a first class municipality or town. The study focuses on the institutional sustainability based on seven critical dimensions: admission, mission, and planning; curriculum; research and scholarship, operations, faculty, staff development and rewards, outreach and service and student opportunities.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Philippine government offers free education from elementary to tertiary education based on the newly implemented K to 12 basic education program of the Department of Education (DepEd) and Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2017-1 between Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). In an era when most high school students leave schooling, what is needed is a focus on the continuity of the students' educational experiences from school through college, along with greater emphasis on student achievement and the completion of educational programs (Callan, 2009). The government has the task to establish higher education institutions known as state colleges and universities through legislation. But there were high school graduates who cannot afford to study private colleges and universities or cannot qualify for nationally operated institutions. This prompted Local Government Units (LGUs) to establish local higher education institutions through an ordinance and Republic Act 7160 (the Local Government Code of the Philippines) enacted to operate a local college or a university with minimal tuition fees and offer courses

Similar to state colleges and technical and vocational courses. Through the enacted ordinance by the Sanggunian Bayan of the Local Government Unit (LGU) for the purpose of establishing and operating higher learning institutions, the LGU ensures full compliance from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Regional Office having jurisdiction of the area with the following requirements: feasibility studies that contains among others the need for local higher education institution in the area, human resources requirements of the industry to determine proposed program offerings, target clients, availability of qualified administrators, faculty and non – teaching personnel and financial capacity of the LGU to establish and sustain the operation of a local college, certificate of availability of funds by the treasurer of the LGU concerned as provided by the pertinent provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991, a project development plan to show that the LGU allocated a school site with appropriate size and location pursuant to the applicable provisions, and a five-year development plan duly approved by the Sanggunian which shall include but not limited to the following: a) annual budgetary allocation; b) organizational structure and composition of governing board; and c) plantilla of positions as provided for in Association of Local Colleges and Universities (ALCU) Unified Merit System duly approved by the Civil Service Commission (CMO No. 32, series 2006, Article V Section 2). These requirements in the creation or

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establishment of a local college ensure sustainability of a higher education institution. The establishment of a locally-funded higher education institutions must conformed with CHED Memorandum Order No. 32, Series of 2006, Subject: Policies, Standards and Guidelines on the Establishment and Operation of Local Colleges and Universities and in accordance with the pertinent provision of Republic Act (R.A.) 7722, otherwise known as the “Higher Education Act of 1994”, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) was created in pursuance of the policy of the State to protect, foster and promote the right of all citizens to affordable quality education. Carandang (2012) pointed out that resource generation scheme assessments by both respondents revealed that it has a great effect on instruction, moderate effect on extension, insufficient manpower in the implementation, and proposed to contain functional schemes to maximize the resource generation schemes of locally-funded colleges.

Most of the challenges that the local government will face in sustaining the established higher education institutions were the sources of funding for physical facilities, upgrading, maintaining quality control of the organization like human resources (qualified and quality faculty), meeting the minimum standards of the implemented policy, regulations and guidelines of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) towards quality education, results, and production. Dougherty and Reddy (2011) suggest based on the findings of their study on “the impacts of State Performance Funding Systems on Higher Education Institutions: Research Literature Review and Policy Recommendations” that tying funding to outputs has immediate impact on colleges in the form of changes to funding, greater awareness by institutions of state priorities and of their own institutional performance, and increased status competition among institutions.

The questions on the sustainability of the local HEIs could possibly be raised because it is dependent on the income classification and financial capability, annual budgetary allocations, and some other immediate concerns and priorities of the local government. However, despite the challenge of the local government in establishing HEIs they have seen the bright future of their community as well as their constituents who through higher education will be able to alleviate poverty. According to Allen (2007) “higher education improves an individual's quality of life. Studies show that, compared to high school graduates, college graduates have longer life spans, better access to health care, better dietary and health practices, greater economic stability and security, more prestigious employment and greater job satisfaction, less dependency on government assistance, greater knowledge of government, greater community service and leadership, more volunteer work, more self-confidence, and less criminal activity and incarceration.” According to Carandang (2012) “there is an indication that many high school graduates want to pursue their college degree to be able to have a brighter future. They are fully aware of the truth that education is the way to be free from poverty and illiteracy. The poor and deserving students are given priority by these locally funded colleges and universities.” The researcher, who has been working in one of the locally-funded higher education institutions, become interested to conduct a sustainability assessment of the locally-funded higher education institutions and aims to develop a model for local higher education institutions in the Philippines that shall serve as guiding tool to a sustaining and well – developed higher education institution.

## Framework

This study is mainly anchored on the theory of Riggan (2005), who developed what he termed a ‘complex program theory’ to guide the evaluation of community schools, a complex intervention involving a range of partnerships of organizations working together to achieve improved student learning and stronger families through services, supports and opportunities. Sullivan *et al.* (2003) stressed that the use of models such as these for evaluation assumes ‘a stable environment in which any indication of either theory or implementation failure would be capable of adjustment in line with available evidence’. As acknowledged in the study by Carandang (2012), it cannot be denied that it is a noble undertaking for an LGU to establish an institution of higher learning with programs designed to nurture and enhance their constituents’ socio-economic status, it does raise the delicate question how this institution can be made possible or by what means can the LGU pay for it. According to Newman (2013) the participation of the state in higher education was necessary to promote access of needy students who have demonstrated capacities for advanced learning. Ryckman (2008) said budgetary allocations are integral components to an annual financial plan, or budget, of all organizations. They indicate the level of resources an organization is committing to a department or program.

The income classification of Provinces, Cities and Municipalities serves, among other purposes, as basis for the determination of the financial capability of Local Government Units (LGUs) to provide in full or in part the funding requirements of developmental projects and other priority needs in their locality. Thus, in the preparation of project studies and proposals, the income class of LGUs is used as a factor in the allocation of national or other financial grants (Department of Finance, Department Order No. 23-08, 2008). The income classification of the municipalities or provinces funding higher education institutions refers to the average annual income actually realized during the last four (4) calendar years. Sherraden (2010) said that financial capability includes both the ability to act (knowledge, skills, confidence, and motivation) and the opportunity to act (through access to quality financial products and services).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized the exploratory narrative research design. Stebbins (2008) exploratory research or exploration refers to broad-ranging, intentional, systematic data collection designed to maximize discovery of generalizations based on description and direct understanding of an area. It is the descriptive research, as its name suggests, seeks to provide an accurate description of observations of a phenomena. The objective of much descriptive research is to map the terrain of a specific phenomenon. The exploration of new phenomena in this way may help the researcher’s need for better understanding, may test the feasibility of a more extensive study, or determine the best methods to be used in a subsequent study. The objective of exploratory research is to identify key issues and key variables (Isites - Harvard, 2014). Delphi technique was a method used to collate information taken from the subjects and forecast the transpired important information relative to the focused of the study. The descriptive research dealt with the profiling of locally – funded higher education institutions (HEIs) in terms of their income classification and financial capability, budgetary allocation, number of years of operations, courses offered with government authority,

employment status of the teaching and non – teaching personnel, faculty qualifications, number of employees and student population and the institution's accomplishments/compliances on seven critical dimensions of higher education: curriculum; research and scholarship; operations; faculty and staff development and rewards; outreach and service; student opportunities; and administration, mission and planning.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was generally conducted to explore and assess the sustainability of the selected locally – funded higher education institutions of Region VII, Philippines. Specifically, the study aimed to develop a sustainability model for locally – funded HEIs. It made use of the descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means to present and describe the descriptive portion of the study and used the adopted Sustainability Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) from the association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future (ULSF). Of the five local HEIs which participated in this study, two (2) of it were first class cities, another two (2) are third class municipalities, and only one (1) was first class municipality based on their average annual income classification and financial capability. On the annual budgetary allocations for HEIs, the study found out that two (2) Local Government Units (LGUs) allocated more than Php 12M for the operations of higher education institutions (HEIs) and these two LGUs were the two first class cities, one LGU allocated the amount between Php 9M to Php 12M, and the other two (2) LGUs allocated below Php 6M. More than half (n= 3, 60%) of the total number of local HEIs participated in this study were newly established institutions with 5 to 9 years of operations, only one (1) had in between 10 to 14 years of operations, and another only one (1) with above 14 years of operations but this local HEIs with more than 14 years of existence were first established as Technical Vocational College. The most common courses offered by the locally – funded Higher Education Institutions in this study were Education courses like: Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) and Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) and also Technology course like: Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT – Info. Tech.) where all of them were offered respectively.

There were two (2) or 40% HEIs which offered business related courses like Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA), or Bachelor of Science in Public Administration (BSPA), or Bachelor of Science in Office Management (BSOA), two (2) or 40% HEIs also offered Bachelor of Arts courses same number of HEIs offers Bachelor of Science in Criminology, and three (3) HEIs offered other courses like Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management (BSHRM), Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM), and Technical and Vocational (Tech. Voc.) short courses. More than half (n= 151, 61%) of the total number of faculty from the five local HEIs were probationary/full time instructors, about one – fourth (n = 71, 27.41%) were part time instructors, and only about a tenth (n = 30, 11.58%) were in regular/permanent instructors. Three – fourths (n = 188, 72.59%) of the faculty qualifications teaching local HEIs had units earned leading to their master's degree, about a tenth (n = 33, 12.74%) had a full – fledged master's degree, 20 or 7.72% had doctorate degree, and only 18 or 6.95% had earned units leading to their

doctorate degree. More than half (n = 3, 60%) had number of student population above 1,200, one (n = 1, 20%) HEI had number of students in between 801 to 1,200, and also one (n = 1, 20%) HEI had number of students in their institution below 800. More than half (n = 3, 60%) of the locally – funded HEIs participated in this study had an average number of graduates of more than 200 for the past two years, one HEI had it between 101 to 200 graduates, and also one (1) HEI produces an average number of graduates of below 100. It further shows that all (n=5, 100%) of the participating local HEIs had the rating in the past board exams specifically, Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) which is above the national passing rate. Administration, mission and planning had a mean of 2.75 and a qualitative description of “quite a bit” which means further that evidence showed good performance. Local Colleges A, B, C, and D were saying that their institutions' vision, mission, goals, and objectives is clear enough to prove that they committed to sustainability but Local College E said that they have to revisit their VMGO to align with the new mandates of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Outcomes – Based Education (OBE) Quality Assurance (QA). Further, different local colleges had the positions and committees on environmental council or task force based on their common answers it is integrated in their respective locality or Local Government Units since the college is part of the LGU. In their college, they have conducted orientation programs for sustainability for faculty and staff in the part of economic, social responsibilities, and environmental concerns during their student orientation before the regular start of classes and faculty orientation weeks before the regular start of classes. The locally – funded HEIs observes the observance of “earth hour” every year and attended and conducted trainings, seminars, workshops and conferences on sustainability.

The greatest strengths of the locally – funded HEIs in terms of sustainability is the presence of different student organizations/clubs that advocate sustainability while its weakness was the lack of adequate appropriations for sustainability. On the factors that accounts for resistance to or lack of responsiveness to the concern of sustainability, the local HEIs said that they have little idea on sustainability and some of their employees resist to change and some do not like to be out of their comfort zones. The “next steps” the local HEIs planned for their college to strengthen their commitment to sustainability, the aggressive promotion and dissemination of the projects and programs geared towards sustainability and integrate the idea they learned from this seven critical dimensions of higher education specifically tailored to the context of sustainability to their new strategic plans for the next three years that will be held this month of May 2015. The curriculum, the second critical dimension of higher education had the mean of 2.40 which is qualitatively described as “a little” which further means that evidence shows poor performance. The locally – funded HEIs views and treats its employees (such as staff and faculty involvement in decision-making, their status and benefits) and the basic values and core assumptions that shape the content and methods of the academic disciplines, these are the roles of the institution in its social and ecological systems to address sustainability identified by the participants. The participants rated 1.79 on the third critical dimension of higher education; the research and scholarship which is qualitatively describe as “a little” and further means that evidence shows poor performance. The findings reveal that only about 11% of the faculty members taught or did research on sustainability issues. The rating of

2.52 prevailed by the participants on the fourth critical dimension of higher education, the operations which is qualitatively described as “quite a bit” which further means that evidence shows good performance. The participants revealed that they were too far from the ideal campus in which most of the existing universities here in our country has already practicing for how many years and even encouraging and promoting their developed projects and researches that could help promote the clean and green program of the government. They added that maybe perhaps they could maintain the level of sustaining our full support with the existing projects of the government for us to be always aware of the environmental concerns of our community. The ratings of the participants on the fifth critical dimension of higher education, the faculty, staff development and rewards 2.10 which was qualitatively described as “a little” which further means that evidence shows poor performance. On the hiring procedure of the faculty, the participants made mentioned of the adoption of the newly imposed Strategic Performance Monitoring System (SPMS) of the Civil Service Commission that cuts across all ranks and the criteria for tenure and promotion is part and parcel of this system.

On the budget appropriations of the faculty and development programs, the participants revealed that there were but subject to the availability of funds and the urgency of needs. The participants rated 1.79 on the sixth critical dimension of higher education, the outreach and service which was qualitatively described as “a little” which further means that evidence show poor performance. A sustainable institution supports sustainable community development in its local area and in the surrounding region through projects and partnerships with primary and secondary schools, local governments and businesses. The participants revealed that they have attended trainings and conferences at regional and national level on sustainability. In their college, they had an office that was in – charge of linkages and placement; they have adopted barangay where they can work on their outreach programs. The participants rated 2.44 on the seventh critical dimension of higher education, the student opportunities which is qualitatively described as “quite a bit” which further means that evidence shows good performance. The participants revealed that students were directly involved in any activities through their organized Supreme Student Council, Go Green Project Teams, the existence of the different clubs recognized by the college.

## Conclusion

After thorough evaluation and perusal of the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn: income classification and financial capabilities of the LGUs is an important factor in operating and funding HEIs and by that, there is a guarantee of allocating appropriate budget for the operations of the college. More than half of the participated locally – funded HEIs are newly established institutions and only one was operating in more than 14 years. There are two (2) clusters of courses which are commonly offered by the five local HEIs these are education courses (BSEd and BEEd) and technology courses (BS Info. Tech or BS Indu.Tech.). More than half of the total number of faculty from the five local HEIs are probationary/full time instructors, about one – fourth are part time instructors, and only about a tenth are in regular/permanent instructors. Three – fourths of the faculty qualifications teaching local HEIs have units earned leading to

their master’s degree, about a tenth had a full – fledged master’s degree, only less than ten percent had doctorate degree, and only about five percent had earned units leading to their doctorate degree. More than half of the participating HEIs have a student of above 1,200, one participating HEI has number of students in between 801 to 1,200, and also one participating HEI has number of students in their institution below 400. More than half of the locally – funded HEIs which participated in this study have average number of graduates of more than 200 for the past two years, one HEI has an average number between 101 to 200 graduates, and also one (1) HEI produces an average number of graduates of below 100. It further shows that all of the participating local HEIs have passing rates in the past board exams above the national passing rate, specifically, Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET).

Among the seven critical dimensions of higher education; administration, mission and planning has the highest mean followed by operations, student opportunities, curriculum, faculty and staff development and rewards, research and scholarship, and the dimension with the lowest mean is outreach and service. Administration, mission, and planning; operations; and student opportunities are the top dimensions of the locally – funded higher education institutions which is qualitatively describe as “quite a bit” which means that evidence shows good performance by the college. While curriculum; faculty, staff development and rewards; research and scholarship; and outreach and service which is qualitatively describe as “a little” which means that evidence shows regular performance. Based on the results of the qualitative part of the study,

## The following are concluded

- VMGO of locally – funded higher education institution is aligned with the commitment to sustainability.
- Locally – funded HEIs views and treats its employees (such as staff and faculty involvement in decision-making, their status and benefits) and the basic values and core assumptions that shape the content and methods of the academic disciplines, these are the roles of the institution in its social and ecological systems.
- Only about 11% of the faculty members teach or do research on sustainability issues or other type.
- Locally – funded HEIs are far from the ideal campus in which most of the existing universities here in our country has already practicing for years and even encouraging and promoting their developed projects and researches that could help promote the clean and green program of the government. 5) Local HEIs adopts the newly imposed Strategic Performance Monitoring System (SPMS) of the Civil Service Commission that cuts across all ranks and the criteria for tenure and promotion is part and parcel of this system.
- On the budget appropriations of the faculty and development programs, the participants reveal that there is but subject to the availability of funds and the urgency of needs.
- The locally – funded HEIs supports sustainable community development in its local area and in the surrounding region through projects and partnerships with primary and secondary schools, local governments and businesses. The participants reveal that they have attended trainings and conferences at regional and

national level on sustainability. In their college, they have an office that is in – charge of linkages and placement; they have adopted barangay where they can work on their outreach programs.

- The students are directly involved in any activities through their organized Supreme Student Council, Go Green Project Teams, and the existence of the different clubs recognized by the college.

## Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations are derived: the typical Local Government Units (LGUs) planning to establish local higher education institutions (HEIs) shall have an income classification and financial capability of at least first class municipality or better, this could imply sustainability of the operations of the college. The typical courses to be offered in the newly established locally – funded HEIs are the education courses and technology related courses. There may be a security of tenure of the teaching and non – teaching personnel of the local HEIs and shall follow the implementation and guidelines for qualification standards (QS) of the government to assure quality teaching and quality education. A strategic plan for the faculty and staff development and rewards system of the institution may be developed recognizing the services rendered by each employee. Encourage the faculty to pursue their graduate and post graduate studies to meet the minimum qualifications for teaching in higher education.

A plan for marketing and promotion of the established local HEIs to address the problem on the number of enrollees per semester. In addition, graduate tracer study conducted to determine some important factors of employment and under employment and the need to realign the curriculum basing on the current trends and demands of the community. An action may be formulated to address the need in improving the institutions' performance of the licensure examinations. On the other hand, encourage and support the faculty to conduct researches related to sustainability in terms of its economic aspect, social responsibility, and environmental awareness. Furthermore, a research related to this study may be conducted to validate the findings of the study.

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