

Case Analysis: Internationalization of Two Universities in Southeast Asia

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Abstract

This work explored how two institutions of higher learning manage their internationalization initiatives and attempted to identify their good practices in Internationalization. Case study was used as the research design with the participants composed of academic leaders, faculty, and students from both Universities purposefully selected. The Universities have established good practices as host institutions in terms of providing appropriate levels of provision to promote international students and faculty with their transition and adaptation. Nevertheless, since the initiatives are done virtually, a strong support on the establishment of both soft and hard infrastructures coupled with student and faculty capacity building may be considered for the sustainability of the programs. With the utilization of emerging technologies unfolding to these two Universities, they may consider expanding the collaboration from the student credit transfer and visiting professor program to research and development endeavors and/or to transnational education by developing joint, twinning, double-degree, or offshore programs together.

Keywords: Internationalization, Higher education, Virtual credit transfer, Visiting professor

Introduction

Universities and Colleges worldwide for years have ventured in doing Internationalization. These institutions find internationalization beneficial in the achievement of intercultural experiences (Li et al., 2018; Machwate et al., 2021) life-long learning skills (Francisco, 2022; Hénard et al., 2012) communication skills (Machwate et al., 2021) of the different key players in internationalization such as the students and faculty. Indeed, works of literature reveal that internationalization is an essential contributor to the achievement of the goals of these Universities and Colleges as they produce quality graduates who are ready and competent for the world of work (Jibeen & Khan, 2015). Knight (2015) states that internationalization is the process of incorporating

an international or intercultural dimension into the institution's teaching, research, and service functions.

According to Gao et al. (2015) internationalization was first understood at the institutional level, with a focus on activities like student and faculty mobility, international academic programs, and international initiatives. Also, Knight (1994) added that it is a process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into teaching, research, and service functions to institution. A process of organizational change, curriculum innovation, staff development and student mobility for the purpose of attaining excellence in teaching, research and the other activities which universities undertake as part of their function (Rubzki, 1998). Tadaki and Tremewan (2013) added that Universities are seeking to develop internationalization strategies and programs for a variety of reasons as part of their evolving institutional missions, and engagements with and through international consortiums.

Several programs of internationalization in tertiary education such as adopting internationally standardized curriculum, establishing branch campuses in other countries, staff exchanges, and joint degree programs to attract more foreign students, and implement international class as international credit transfer program (Galloway et al., 2017). To meet the need for excellent university graduates, several institutions have implemented English as a medium of instruction (EMI) policy (Aizawa & Rose, 2019; Floris, 2014; Hu & Lei, 2014). In Indonesian context, universities are believed to play a significant role in boosting a nation's competitiveness by achieving "world-class" status, therefore internationalization is a must (Dewi, 2019; Rosyidah & Rosyidi, 2020).

Since 2018, Universitas PGRI Madiun (UNIPMA), a private university in Java, Indonesia has implemented faculty and students' mobility such as guest lectures, students' exchange, and international credit transfer. This is likewise true with the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC), a state-owned higher education institution in the Philippines, which started its international initiatives in 2020.

As partners, UNIPMA and ISPSC have started virtually internationalizing in Academic Year 2020-2021. The first internationalization program they ventured together was the International Credit Transfer Program which they pioneered in their respective Teacher Education programs. 33 students, 16 from ISPSC and 17 from UNIPMA initially participated in the program. The following school year, 2021-2022 aside from the Teacher Education Department, the College of Business Administration also began sending students to participate in the program. To date, a total of 313 outbound and inbound students have participated in just almost three (3) years of implementation. The Virtual Visiting Professor program was also launched in the 2nd semester of 2021-2022 with 10 faculty members participating. In less than two (2) years a total of 68 faculty members have rendered services as visiting professors.

de Wit and Altbach (2021a) have seen that institutions developing internationalization initiatives from the West are challenged to face pressures such as revenue generation; competition for talent; branding and reputation; a need to focus on international research and publications; on recruiting international students and scholars; and on using English as a language for research and instruction. Ota (2018) on the other hand, contends that for the past three decades universities' comprehension of internationalization has shifted from being just an idea and pomposity to accomplishment and genuineness. Internationalization initiatives, too, according to Ota have changed from emulating or trying to catch up with other universities to mission-oriented initiatives based on their respective philosophies and strategic directions. Thus, internationalization becomes one of their core values.

In the Southeast Asian context, a limited number of literatures reveal the status of internationalization in the region. Most themes explored were on the learning experiences of the students and policies in internationalization in higher education. Alex (2021) proposes some areas that need contribution from researchers. First, the lack of information about the institutions in Southeast Asia. While Indonesia has consistent publications about its internationalization, the Philippines however, has not sufficiently disclosed and shared with the rest of the world. Second, comparative analyses are hardly seen among the publications. Majority of the papers tackle the experience of one country only. Third, lack of studies focusing solely on the mobility of both students and academic staff and exploring more into the roles of e-learning/online learning in internationalization.

These being said with regard to the status of researches published on internationalization in higher education institutions in Southeast Asia in general and in Indonesia and in the Philippines in particular, this work attempted to fill in this knowledge gap by trying to explore holistically but in-depth and in detail how internationalization is being implemented by the management of the two universities and how the initiatives have benefitted their student and faculty participants. The case analysis is anchored on the framework of Tanhueco-Nepomuceno (2019) for Internationalization of Higher Education in Southeast Asia which focused on the interactions of all the participants including their relationships revealed through their testimonies in order to understand how each functions to produce the desired outcomes which is for each University to “being” and “becoming” internationalized.

Objectives

1. to provide insights into the internationalization practices in Southeast Asian higher education institutions
2. to share common practices which the two universities find beneficial and effective in their respective contexts

Methodology

This study used case study design with the participants composed of six (6) academic leaders, seven (7) faculty and 27 student participants from both Universities purposefully selected. The 3 academic leaders (Rector, 2 Vice Rectors), 4 faculty members also designated as internationalization heads and 14 students from Indonesia were interviewed by the Co-Author. Meanwhile, the 3 academic leaders (President, 2 Vice-Presidents), 3 faculty members also designated as internationalization coordinators, and 13 students from the Philippines were interviewed by the Main Author. The semi-structured interviews were conducted face to face with consent and generally lasted for 20-30 minutes for each participant and 40 minutes to one (1) hour for the group interviews. The schedule of the interviews were set individually for the academics leaders and faculty members/internationalization coordinators/heads while group interviews were conducted for the students in their most convenient time. The academic leaders and faculty members were interviewed in their respective offices while the students were captured in a group interview held in vacant classrooms.

Researchers to have access to the necessary documents for analysis asked the permission of their respective administrators. To validate the data from the interviews, the Main Author conducted a focus group discussion with the student participants during her visit in Indonesia on October 2022. The FGD, composed of 12 female students from UNIPMA lasted for 40 minutes. Data from the FGD were cross checked with the data from the interviews of the Co-Author. It was found out that the findings were consistent with no new information disclosed from the participants. To squeeze the data from documents content analysis was used for each of the sources. Aside from the researchers, the assistance of two more coders, faculty from ISPSC and from UNIPMA who were not participants of the study, independently and manually coded the units and checked the inter coder reliabilities respectively. The Main Author and Co-Author had an online meeting to discuss the coded data sets in order to clarify understanding of the statements from both the Filipino and Indonesian participants. Data from in-depth interviews were analyzed thematically including the data from the documents using the proposed framework for Internationalization of Higher Education Institutions (Tanhueco-Nepomuceno, 2019). Anchored on this framework, this study looked into how ISPSC and UNIPMA manage its internationalization strategies in two perspectives: state of "Being Internationalized" which is comprised of the institution's planning, structure, operationalization, assessment; and state of "becoming internationalized" which is composed only of the perceived benefits. Other areas of the framework on this benchmark statement such as: perceived risks, antecedents of internationalization and consequences were not investigated by the researchers due to lack of time and resources.

Table 1 Data Collection Matrix

Research Questions (Based on Tanhueco-Nepomuceno's Framework)	Sources of Data	Data Collection Method
Being Internationalized Planning Structure Operationalization Assessments	Academic Leaders Faculty Members/ Internationalization Coordinators Students Copy of Strategic Plan, Annual Plan of Activities, Budget	Individual and Group Interviews Documentary Analysis
Being Internationalized Perceived Benefits	Academic Leaders Faculty Members/ Internationalization Coordinators Students	Individual and Group interviews FGD

Results and Discussion

The Planning Process

The intention to do Internationalization is part and parcel of the Strategic Goals of the President of ISPSC since he assumed position. The President envisions the College to be a University—and global positioning is part of the metrics for this transformation. As a College which renders and ensures quality education and service, Internationalization is a major vehicle for the College to hurdle with excellent standings in State Universities and Colleges (SUC) Levelling, Accreditation, World Rankings and Ratings. Hence, Internationalization takes a significant role in the College's yearly Strategic Planning. During the Planning which usually happens every December, the budget allotment for the fiscal year is provided and the Internationalization Officer prepares the Annual Program of Activities (APA) and the Project Procurement Management Plan (PPMP). The activities scheduled for the rest of the fiscal year are based on the monitoring and evaluation results of the previous year. The Internationalization Officer before the preparation of the APA meets the Coordinators for feedbacking. Results of which are integrated in the APA.

In the context of UNIPMA, the policy from Indonesian Ministry of Higher Education regarding Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (Independent Learning Independent Campus) to achieve Universities' Key Performance Indicators is the basis of the university to expand collaborations with other universities. The University has valued internationalization's significant contribution to the institution's accreditation, branding among other benefits even before it started any initiatives way back 2020. The Rector and Vice Rector issued some policies for several programs

for internationalization. It is implemented through the commitment of the Internationalization officers in running the programs. The Internationalization officers communicate and coordinate with the Head of Departments and Head of Faculty. The Internationalization Office collaborates with the Quality Assurance Bureau to evaluate and monitor the program. The results of the monitoring and evaluation are the basis of the Management's decision to cease the collaboration or form as basis to improve and sustain the programs.

The Management of both institutions are serious in their intention to Internationalize by setting the objectives and determining what actions to be done. The Management takes the responsibility in taking the lead by doing strategic planning which is based on the Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives (VMGO) of the current President/Rector but also do participatory approach by including not only those in the top and middle level management but the whole organization as well. What the Management is doing is similar to Hudzik (2015) "comprehensive internationalization" concept. He posits that internationalization is comprehensive when it becomes institutional which means it is permeated in instruction, research and extension activities of the higher education institution. Internationalization is also comprehensive when it is part of the VMGO and everybody in that higher education institution community has embraced it (Hudzik, 2011) just like in the case of ISPSC and UNIPMA's Internationalization.

Internationalization Manifested in:

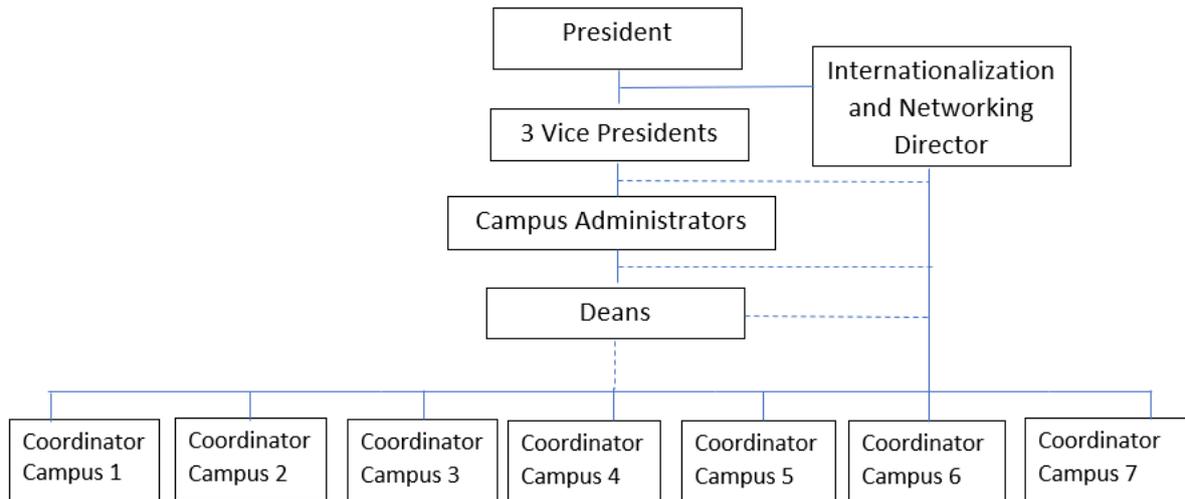
1. Structure

In ISPSC, the Office of the Internationalization and Networking Officer is under the Office of the President. Each program qualified to handle international programs is designated with a Coordinator. The Coordinator is a faculty from that specific department. The Internationalization Officer coordinates with the three Vice Presidents. The Internationalization Coordinators coordinate with their respective Deans. The Deans channel communication to the Campus Administrators. All incoming and out-going communications are directly channeled between the Office of the President and the Internationalization Officer.

The designation of a Coordinator who is also a faculty of the program with Internationalization is also seen as an advantage.

One pioneer Coordinator shares,

"If the Coordinator is a faculty of the Department, she/he knows the curriculum. So, when there is matching there is no need to always consult the program chairpersons. Like here in the College of Education, be it Elementary/Primary or Secondary, we can match."



Note. Legend: — line of authority - - - line of coordination

Figure 1 Organizational Structure of the Internationalization and Networking Office of ISPSC

In the case of UNIPMA, the Internationalization Unit is led by the Head of the Bureau of Cooperation and Public Relations under the Vice Rector for Partnership, Public Relation, Quality Assurance, Publication, and Alumni. The Head of the Bureau coordinates with the four Vice Rectors. For each internationalization program a coordinator is designated. The Coordinator directly collaborates with respective Deans and Head of Departments.

However, the set up in UNIPMA is quite different with ISPSC since in UNIPMA the designated Internationalization coordinator may not be a faculty from the concerned department. The Head of Bureau office justifies:

“Due to the limited number of faculty staff who can communicate well in English, one Internationalization Officer is responsible for two or three departments.”

The short bureaucratic process wherein both offices are directly under the Office of the President/Rector fast track transactions. All incoming and out-going communications are directly channeled within the Offices concerned hence, responses and feedbacks are prompt and direct. The less bureaucratic structure and tapping right people (especially those who can speak English well) to do the tasks have proven to ease doing Internationalization initiatives for these higher education institutions.

2. Policy

Before any Internationalization activity started in ISPSC, the Internationalization Office crafted policies on Student Exchange and Faculty Exchange. These policies underwent desk reviews, presented to the Academic, Administrative and Research Council and approved by the Board of Trustees. One of the Administrators notes:

“The policies make things clear to everyone, our what, where, why, how questions were answered with the existence of these policies.”

An Internationalization Coordinator affirms:

“We can determine and screen easily the prospective participants since we have the guidelines.”

However, another Internationalization Officer believes that the policies should be regularly reviewed and it should be resilient. This is what she says:

“Policies should be regularly visited since nothing is constant. They should also be resilient, pandemic or not these policies must be resilient, applicable and flexible.”

In the case of UNIPMA, policy regarding Internationalization is arranged by Partnership and Public Relations Bureau and consulted to Vice Rector for Partnership, Public Relations, Quality Assurance, Publication, and Alumni, and approved by Rector. The program implementation also refers to Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), for example SOP for Guest Lecture, International Credit Transfer, research collaboration, and Joint-research. Moreover, by having SOP, the program implementation will be more digressive.

Policy statements, annual planning, and review are element in Internationalization (Knight, 1994). The policy relating to the purpose, licensing, accreditation, funding, curriculum, teaching, research, and regulation of postsecondary education are included at the education sector or system level (Knight, 2004). Policies are the building blocks of the Internationalization initiatives. They provide direction and legal bases for the smooth implementation of the programs/projects and the realization of the objectives set. Hence, revisits of these policies are essential to make them reliable and relevant post pandemic and beyond.

3. Support

With regard financial support, the Internationalization Office has a budget allotted annually which is 12.5% of the Non-Fiduciary Funds. Internationalization during the pandemic flourished at ISPSC. Since classes were done virtually, there was a need for both hard and soft information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructures. A 15M-worth project, the “Cloud-Based Learning Management System” which will provide e-learning materials, Learning Management System and Classroom Management System software that will connect ISPSC for individualized self-paced or group learning flexibility was approved by the Board. Another 10M-worth project, “ISPSC Distance E-Learning Multiple User Virtual Classroom Program” which aims to acquire e-learning facilities on information and communications technology to upgrade it Bachelor’s Degree courses in Information Technology, Information Systems, and Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering was also approved. The limited funds did not hinder the Management to look for external funding to finance these various projects for online

teaching and learning. However, providing the infrastructure is not enough support, the Management must also ensure that faculty members and students are capacitated in using these technologies at the same time providing stable internet connectivity to the participants.

The university supports the internationalization program by giving budget for each program. To support online or self-paced learning for students, University develop the Learning Management System e-Learning UNIPMA (e-LMA). Also, the University prepared six (6) smart classrooms that can be used for blended learning. The University also commits to support the program by giving incentives for Internationalization officers, lecturers, and students. Also, for International Credit Transfer and Internships program that run offline, the university help 50% funding for students. It is in line that any of these plans are not possible without proper budget allotment and funding. Internationalization to materialize must have sufficient internal resources (Tanhueco-Nepomuceno, 2019).

Implementation of Internationalization Initiatives

The implementation starts with the meeting with the counterparts initially, agreeing about the intention to collaborate. There will be two to three meetings to finalize some details but the matching of courses to be exchanged will take time. Once, both parties agree, a MOA which is most of the time pro-forma shall be sent to the Commission on Higher Education International Affairs Staff (CHED IAS) for evaluation. Once positively evaluated, the MOA together with CHED IAS' evaluation shall be presented to the Board of Trustees for their approval. The Internationalization Officer notes:

“There is need for an intelligent forecasting of the activities. For example, for first semester which starts usually, August or September, May or June you should have the Board approval. It is difficult to start any program without following the protocol, we will definitely be reprimanded. Also, the Board will not approve any proposals once the documents are incomplete. These things you have to always remember. A time table is really a must.”

The implementation begins with the coordination meeting with partner, stating the program plan, what should both universities do, the timeline and other supporting agreement. Both parties need two to three meetings to share, discuss, and fix the element of program. For example, the ICT program, the topic discussion is related (total of students, kinds of subjects taken by students, requirements document for both universities students, the timetable, draft of MoA). After that, Internationalization officers will inform and coordinate with the Departments and prepare the students and curriculum that will be sent to the partners.

The Head of Partnerships and Public Relations Bureau, UNIPMA stated:

“Before discussing with partner universities, it is a must to discuss first to the Vice Rector 4 regarding program and Vice Rector 2 regarding funding of the program”.

After that Internationalization officers also can identify the time table in each program Plan, for example: for ICT program, it can be started in August-January and March- August and the preparation for the program is two months before the implementation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Student Exchange with Credit Program utilizes a monthly monitoring tool where ISPSC outbound students are rated using a 4-point Likert scale (excellent, very good, good, needs improvement) in terms of the quality of their submissions, behaviour and attitude and attendance by the Faculty in Charge for each of their subject/course taken in the University partner. Data from the monthly monitoring are digested and synthesized and form part of the feedback mechanism of the program. The students are also informed of their monthly performances based from their ratings in the monthly monitoring tool. At the end of the program duration ISPSC and the partner University will do an evaluation. In a nutshell, ISPSC Internationalization Monitoring and Evaluation Scheme follows a research-based approach that provides stable grounding for the continuity of the programs.

In UNIPMA, the monitoring and evaluation forms are prepared by the Bureau of Partnerships and the Public Relations Bureau and evaluated by Quality Assurance Bureau. Monitoring is carried out to ensure that the stages of work can be carried out properly and achieve the expected goals. Monitoring can be carried out by referring to the feasibility factors for a work implementation, so that each type of cooperation activity will have different feasibility factors.

Monitoring is done by using two instruments. First, by a questionnaire with 4-point Likert scale (excellent, very good, good, needs improvement). The questionnaire covers four items, as follows (1) faculty's explanation regarding content, (2) faculty's classroom management, (3) faculty's strategy in teaching, (4) the interaction between student-student and faculty-student. Second, by focus group discussion and interview to the inbound and outbound students. Inbound and outbound students are asked about their experiences in their subjects in UNIPMA regarding the quality of teaching learning process. The data of monitoring program will be evaluated by Internationalization Coordinator and shared to Departments.

In Implementation, a well-structured work plan with monitoring and evaluation must be established since there are uncontrollable factors which may intervene in the process. In monitoring and evaluating feedback mechanisms which are simple and short are seen as effective. Results of monitoring and evaluation results of the

previous year are tools of the Management in providing interventions, predicting future directions and making good decisions. It is also noteworthy to mention that since both Universities have established their own monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, they may also consider drafting a common pro-forma combining the good points from each other's tool.

Perceived Benefits of Internationalization

The benefits of Internationalization cannot be mind and undermined. In a previous study of Francisco (2022) found that even in virtual student exchange, the students were able to develop their 21st century skills. The students in unison affirm that indeed, through their exposure to the program, they were able to develop their social skills, flexibility, positive self-concept, and English communication skills.

The student testimonies affirm Francisco's (2022) findings as one Filipino female education student shares how she developed her social skills:

"We have the opportunity to study in a foreign nation though its virtual, mingle with a different race, and the most important is we make a way to meet in the middle. We are able to see the bigger world like we never see in ours, perceive new culture and meet new friends. Taking part of the program allows me discover our talents that I never know I had."

Another participant testifies:

"This program creates opportunities for participant to learn, to prosper, and to work with others and this led me to value the means of local and international collaboration, understanding and empathy. We are able now to see differences, experience new things and learn to appreciate the hidden skills that we never know we possess. It changes me in a way that it upgrades me to be a better version of myself. This program helps me to adapt a new environment and share in a diverse classroom where this could help me soon in educating my learners with different races, cultures and languages."

A female student notes how the program made impact to her as a future professional:

"This made me more determined to pursue my chosen career. Through the said program, it made me realize the importance of time management. I have learned to adjust and became creative to seek solutions for the struggles I am facing. I can say that I became more focused to my studies. As a future educator, all of my learning from this international activity will be beneficial to me and to my future learners. I can share what I have learned and I can inspire my future students with my experiences as an exchange student."

In addition, an Indonesian student who join the program in two semesters also gave her feedback:

“My English skill both speaking and writing improve. I used to read the content-material, give opinion, and accomplish assignment using English. I also enjoy in International class because classmates were welcome and we can work in groups even sometimes they use Tagalog in daily conversation”. I also learn their culture, their language, and their habits in learning. Therefore, it is best experience for me.”

The Filipino Science teacher shares how the program made her a better teacher. She narrates:

“This experience has helped me evolve from a good to a better teacher or maybe the best of what I can be in many aspects. It brought me to a higher level of expectations that drove me to strive better every day. I became creative and always looking for better resources and have constantly find ways to improve my strategies in teachers. I see opportunities coming out in the midst of this pandemic--- learning is beyond limits. Technology when used to the fullest can be the greatest potential for learning.”

An Indonesian guest lecturer contends:

“I can upgrade my ability in teaching content using English, also I learn a lot the characteristic of students in learning, and how they communicate and interact each other with home university students.”

While the faculty member from the Philippines sees the benefits of internationalization in improving her pedagogies, the Indonesian faculty confesses how his English-speaking skills improved. Also, In the Indonesian context, Abduh et al. (2019) stated that the student’s English skills improve by joining and participating in English Medium Instruction (EMI) classes.

On the other hand, the Rector of UNIPMA on the perspective of the top-level management posits:

“The implementation of International program can support the vision and mission of campus and support and implement the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) or Independent Learning-Independent Campus policy of Ministry of Education and Culture. Besides, it is our commitment that we can compete with other universities year by year, especially universities surrounding East Java.”

Head of Department angles the benefit to levelling up of their accreditation:

“By implementing international program, such as International Credit Transfer, students’ exchange, internships, and Guest Lecture, it really helps for Accreditation, the score of Students’ and lecturers’ activities will improve and get maximum score.”

It is in line with Abduh et al. (2019) that If a university does internationalization programs, it is as an effort to compete with other universities and aim to be a World Class University.

All academic members agree to the benefits brought by the Internationalization. The students' intercultural communication, time management and social interactions were some of the soft skills they developed. The faculty on the other hand believe their pedagogies especially on the use of emerging technologies were enhanced. Administrators on the other hand contend that the partnership placed some good credits to their respective accreditation standings and levelling and world ratings and rankings. The findings affirm to the contentions of Altbach and Knight (2007) that developing countries seek to attract foreign students to their universities in order to improve the quality and cultural diversity of their student body, gain prestige, and generate revenue. It is also in line with de Wit and Altbach's (2021b) argument that the most important benefits of internationalization are 'improved international cooperation and capacity building and improved quality of teaching and learning'. Indeed, Internationalization though done virtually created a new type of synergy which produced skills and competencies of the students and faculty while it provided an opportunity for each University to develop global presence and perspectives.

Conclusions

The two universities are in the states of "being" and "becoming" internationalized as academic leaders, faculty, and students learn and relearn together and have created a healthy organizational culture to back up quality execution of the programs. Both have established good practices as host institutions in terms of providing appropriate levels of provision to promote international students and faculty with their transition and adaptation. Nevertheless, since the initiative of the Universities are done virtually, a strong support on the establishment of both soft and hard infrastructures coupled with student and faculty capacity building may be considered for the sustainability of the programs. One of the drawbacks of this study is that it relies only to two instruments for qualitative data collection. More in-depth insights of the implementation of internationalization may be emphasized with the help of classroom observations about the particular activities at classroom implementation and analysis of quantitative data. With the utilization of emerging technologies unfolding to these two Universities, they may consider expanding the collaboration from the student credit transfer and visiting professor program to research and development endeavors and/or to transnational education by developing joint, twinning, double-degree, or offshore programs together.

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