



Academic Governance Model for Internationalization of Public and Private Universities in Albay

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ABSTRACT

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Internationalization in higher education has become a pivotal aspect of academic governance, necessitating strategic and dynamic approaches to ensure effective engagement in the global educational landscape. This study investigates the current state of IZN operations of public and private universities in Albay, looking into academic governance structures with an emphasis on internationalized curriculum, exchange programs, research collaborations, grants and funding, and cultural integration. Adopting a lens informed by the Internationalization Theory, Strategic Intent Theory, and Dynamic Systems Theory, this study provides a comparative analysis of the academic governance strategies utilized in the universities of Albay. It embraces a comparative analysis that eschews direct ranking in favor of highlighting synergy and moves beyond the juxtaposition of institutional IZN outcomes to an intricate depiction of how these universities marshal their unique resources, capacities, and strategic orientations to cultivate a synergistic and internationalized academic environment. The findings offer a tapestry of engagement levels, with distinctive responses to challenges such as limited resources and policy constraints and the adept utilization of opportunities within each institution's respective framework. Informed by qualitative data, the research suggests that an ecosystem of diverse yet symbiotic approaches to IZN can amplify the international standing and effectiveness of the higher education sector in Albay. The study culminates in a robust academic governance model that advocates for comprehensive IZN infrastructure development, a concerted approach to collaborative network building, strategic policy advocacy, innovative resource mobilization, and an adaptable strategic planning that is attuned to the dynamic nature of international academic pursuits. Taken together, the study presents nuanced, actionable recommendations designed to elevate the international profiles of universities in Albay. It underscores the potential for diverse institutional models to coalesce into a coherent strategy that not only enhances the province's IZN capabilities but also contributes to the global discourse on higher education governance.

KEYWORDS:

Internationalization Strategy, Educational Leadership and Management, Global Trends, Higher Education, Institutional Governance

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Globalization refers to the interconnectedness and interdependence of nations, economies, and cultures, leading to a world that is increasingly integrated. It has affected almost every aspect of contemporary life over the past fifty years, having a significant influence on how people communicate, travel, and conduct business. As such, internationalization has

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emerged as a recurring subject in discussions about higher education (Taşçia et al., 2022). As globalization has intensified in recent years, higher education systems, including universities, have turned to internationalization as a way of responding positively to meet the demands of increased globalization (Zhu, 2021).

Internationalization in higher education is a complex and multifaceted concept that goes beyond simply expanding geographic reach. It involves incorporating global perspectives into research, curriculum, and collaborations. This dynamic process takes on a unique form at each institution, shaped by its specific mission and environment. While internationalization offers benefits like knowledge acquisition, improved curriculum, and economic advantages,

it also presents challenges such as policy support, teaching methods, digital delivery, and academic recognition disparities (Al-Agtash & Khadra 2019).

1.2 The Problem

The research delves into specific dimensions of internationalization operations to unravel the multifaceted landscape of internationalization. Specifically, the study answers the following questions:

What is the status of the internationalization operations of selected universities in Albay in terms of:

- a. internationalized curriculum
- b. exchange programs
- c. research collaborations
- d. grants and funding
- e. cultural events and activities
- f. other study programs (i.e., dual degree programs, study abroad, etc.)?

What are the academic challenges and opportunities confronted by universities in Albay with respect to internationalization operations?

What strategy can be proposed to address the academic challenges and opportunities confronted by universities in Albay with respect to their internationalization operations?

1.3 Related Literature and Studies

Anent governance and leadership in internationalization, universities are adopting entrepreneurial models to address funding constraints and integrate graduates into the job market (Ayad et al., 2021). As such, effective internationalization requires top-level administrators with global business acumen and strategic vision (Sinjumasak & Mhunpiew, 2022). Intentional planning incorporating leadership vision is crucial for successful internationalization (Cornelius, 2012).

As regards institutional strategies, internationalization at home fosters global engagement without physical mobility. Consortiums serve as a framework for international collaboration (Indraswari, 2018). Institutional internationalization aligns with national economic and strategic development goals (Jamil & Jaffar, 2023). Diversification of internationalization efforts, including campus-based initiatives, is crucial for adapting to evolving situations (Lai, 2022).

Looking into the national context, the Philippines views internationalization as an economic tool for innovation and national security (Eder, 2020). Tier 4 HEIs in the Philippines are increasingly committed to internationalization (Vibar & Rosales, 2021). State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) recognize the benefits of internationalization but face challenges in implementation (Arceo, 2022). Internationalization efforts in the Philippines are shaped by the country's economic aspirations (Eder, 2020; Zhu, 2021).

The review emphasizes the importance of leadership, strategic planning, and alignment with national goals for successful internationalization in higher education. It also acknowledges the growing focus on diversified approaches beyond traditional student mobility.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

There are three theories which the researcher considered in the proposed study. These are the following: Internationalization Theory, Strategic Intent Theory, and Dynamic Systems Theory.

The Internationalization Theory of Knight (2005) emphasizes integrating international perspectives throughout the university (systematic integration) and ensuring these are reflected in teaching methods (evidence of IZN). This aims to internalize internationalization within academic leadership and management. On the other hand, the Strategic Intent Theory by Hamel and Prahalad (1989) focuses on setting ambitious internationalization goals "strategic intent" and establishing mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and adaptation to learn from successes and failures. Finally, the Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) as applied by Zhou (2016) and Nuepane (2019) views internationalization as a complex, evolving process that fosters "novel practices, collaborations, and learning outcomes." Universities engaged in internationalization, like complex systems, exhibit emergent properties – unanticipated positive outcomes arising from interactions.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework of this study integrates three key theoretical perspectives—Internationalization Theory, Strategic Intent Theory, and Dynamic Systems Theory. Private and public universities in Albay serve as the subjects of investigation, with a focus on assessing their internationalization status, identifying challenges and opportunities, and analyzing strategies utilized.

The subject of investigation encompasses both private and public universities in the specified region, acknowledging the potential variations in their internationalization approaches. The three primary variables under scrutiny are the status of internationalization operations, the challenges and opportunities faced by these universities, and the strategies employed to navigate the complexities of internationalization.

The chosen methodology for this study is qualitative data analysis, emphasizing an in-depth exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and practices related to internationalization. Through qualitative data analysis, the researcher aims to unravel the nuanced and context-specific aspects of internationalization in Albay.

The envisioned output is the development of an Academic Governance Model, tailor-fitted to the unique contexts of private and public universities in Albay. This model is

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designed to provide a comprehensive framework for optimizing internationalization operations.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative method. This approach used in-depth, non-statistical data collection to explore the complexities of internationalization in the chosen universities. Following Merriam's (2009) guidelines, data was gathered through detailed narratives, observations, and document analysis. This method goes beyond numbers and allows for a deeper understanding of the values, beliefs, and structures that shape the universities' international operations. The research was conducted ethically, with formal approvals from both universities. Data collection involved a two-step process: first, examining internationalization documents to gain a comprehensive understanding of existing initiatives. Second, focus group discussions were conducted as a crucial component of the research.

The comparative analysis looks beyond mere juxtaposition. While these universities operate within the same regional and regulatory context, their approaches to IZN showcase a rich diversity of practices, challenges, and accomplishments. By examining each institution's unique operations and implementation of internationalization, there arises a comprehensive understanding of how these endeavors co-exist. It does not aim to rank or directly compare the outcomes of the public and private institutions. Rather, it aspires to reveal how each university's individualized approach to internationalization can be synergistic, contributing to a cohesive and enriched internationalized academic community.

This methodology acknowledges the challenges inherent in data collection within the academic sector, where programs and collaborations are often sustained over multiple years, and data consistency is subject to the ebb and flow of educational cycles and administrative priorities.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 The Status of the Internationalization Operations of Selected Universities in Albay. The findings below reveal varying aspects of IZN engagement among the private and public universities in Albay.

Table 1: Status of IZN operations

IZN Component	Status of Operations
Internationalized curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> acknowledgment of English as lingua franca of IZN presence of a well-defined credit transfer system availability of program offerings that cater to international students

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> incorporating international content and perspectives throughout the curriculum continuous review and enhancement of curriculum to ensure alignment with international standards
Student exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advancement of student and faculty mobility availability of exchange opportunities by partnering with exchange program organizations
Research collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> involvement in joint research projects participation in international conferences, seminars, workshops, and colloquia establishing linkages with international research partners membership in international research organizations
Grants and funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TNE programs and scholarships
Cultural events and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development of English language proficiency programs that incorporate a strong cultural immersion component presence of the Bikol Studies Center
Other study programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include transnational education and specialized training courses in identified fields

3.2 Academic Challenges and Opportunities Confronted by Universities in Albay with Respect to IZN Operations.

Table 2: Challenges and opportunities of IZN

Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> infrastructure constraints human resource limitations partnership competition maintaining loyalty staffing regulations bureaucratic obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> global recognition strategic positioning dedicated personnel focused internationalization goals academic prestige data-driven decisions sustainable development influence

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unestablished IZN Policy and Strategic Framework • absence of a centralized IZN unit • inadequate department-level IZN integration • institutional culture and global focus • exposure and comfort with internationalization • comparative offerings and competitiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong top management directive • department-level efforts • human resources • flagship programs • international memberships and networks • strategic planning.
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3.3 Strategy to Address Academic Challenges and Opportunities Confronted by Universities in Albay with Respect to IZN Operations.

The development of an Academic Governance Model for Internationalization of Universities in Albay is imperative in light of the discerned challenges and opportunities. The model offers a comprehensive yet adaptable framework for universities in Albay to navigate the complex yet promising journey of internationalization. The framework is not particular to either of the public or private universities as it has integrated best practices and insights to improve the internationalization operations of universities in Albay. Moreover, it accounted for the findings in each statement of the problem as complementary and supplemental inputs to build the framework rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive or even contradictory. It is applicable to both universities as it acknowledges unique needs and contexts. Universities can leverage the model's core principles and customize them to address their specific issues and aspirations.

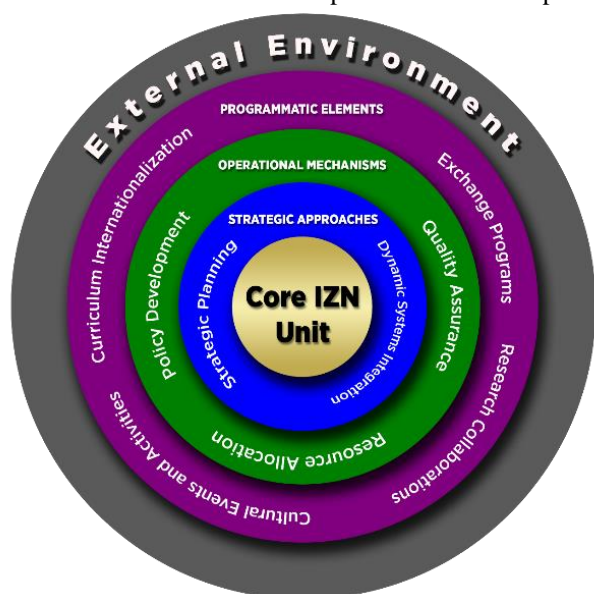


Fig. 1. Academic governance model for IZN

4. DISCUSSION

The Academic Governance Model for Internationalization is structured in a layered diagram where each component is interconnected, represented by a series of concentric circles. It demonstrates how each element of the model is integral to the whole and how they interact with one another. As concentric circles share the same center point but have different radii, the model shares the same center circle with three layers and a surrounding ring.

In this circular model, the closer a component is to the center, the more it involves direct governance and strategic decision-making. Moving outward, the elements become more operational and programmatic.

The model stages the comprehensive and integrated nature of a robust academic governance framework for internationalization, demonstrating the systemic and synergistic approach necessary for effective implementation internationalization operations.

- a. **Core IZN Unit.** The core of the model is the Core IZN Unit, highlighted in gold, which is the central governing body overseeing all internationalization activities. It should include representatives from various departments and support offices for a holistic approach, fostering collaboration and ensuring department-level efforts are aligned. This unit's success relies on clearly defined roles and responsibilities as identified in the second problem statement, empowering departments while maintaining central oversight.
- b. **Strategic Approaches.** This encompasses the inner layer of the model, featuring two other elements namely: (1) Strategic Planning and (2) Dynamic Systems Integration. It is presented in blue as the said color is associated with depth and stability, and signifies planning, organization, and strategic thinking required for long-term success.

Drawing on Strategic Intent Theory, *Strategic Planning* focuses on setting clear goals aligned with the university's overall mission. This includes developing a distinct vision and establishing ambitious yet achievable SMART goals. However, Strategic Planning goes beyond goal-setting. It aims to cultivate a university culture that embraces internationalization by promoting a global perspective, fostering intercultural understanding, and encouraging participation in international activities. Strong leadership is crucial for successful implementation, and Strategic Planning helps translate aspirations into actionable steps and allocate resources effectively.

Complementing Strategic Planning within this core layer is *Dynamic Systems Integration*, informed by Dynamic Systems Theory. This concept emphasizes the model's ability to adapt and respond

to changing contexts. It achieves this through robust assessment and feedback mechanisms, gathering data on internal activities, external trends, and stakeholder feedback. These insights are then used to refine strategic plans, identify areas for improvement, and adjust practices to remain competitive and relevant. Dynamic Systems Integration also tackles challenges like "IZN discomfort" and fosters strong partnerships, crucial aspects identified in the problem statement. In essence, it acts as the model's "adaptive muscle," ensuring continuous improvement and agility in the ever-evolving world of international education.

- c. Operational Mechanisms.** The middle layer of the model is showcased in green symbolizing growth and development, appropriate for action-oriented operational mechanisms. This layer stages three important aspects namely: (1) Policy Development; (2) Resource Allocation and; (3) Quality Assurance.

The foundation of the model's operational mechanisms is *Policy Development*. This involves creating a comprehensive set of policies that actively support internationalization activities within the university while aligning with national priorities outlined in CHED Memorandum Order No. 55. Universities are also encouraged to develop clear policies governing specific aspects of internationalization and participate in broader policymaking circles to shape a more conducive environment for international collaboration.

Resource Allocation sits alongside Policy Development, acknowledging the critical role of financial and material resources. This includes establishing a dedicated budget, seeking external grants, and identifying existing university strengths "flagship programs" to attract partnerships.

The final pillar is *Quality Assurance*, ensuring internationalization activities uphold high standards. This involves internal assessments, benchmarking against best practices, and collecting feedback from stakeholders. The model also encourages seeking international accreditation and participating in university rankings to enhance global credibility and recognition. Finally, it emphasizes compliance with regulations for transparency and trust.

By addressing policy, resources, and quality assurance, universities can create a strong foundation for successful internationalization efforts.

Overall, this element addresses challenges and opportunities such as comparative offerings and competitiveness, global recognition, and academic prestige.

- d. Programmatic Elements.** This outer layer comprises the following aspects: (1) curriculum

internationalization; (2) exchange programs; (3) research collaborations; and (4) cultural events and activities. It is staged in purple, conveying creativity and wisdom, suitable for the diverse programmatic elements.

This layer is mainly characterized by the findings from the first statement of the problem where the status of internationalization operations was sought for by the researcher. Considering the uniqueness of the proceedings of the inquiry from each university under study, one-to-one correspondence is not a suitable approach for data analysis. Hence, the discussion in this model of prominent and practical practices along the identified programmatic elements.

Curriculum internationalization begins with embracing the English language as the lingua franca for IZN where courses are primarily taught in English, the internationally recognized academic language. This fosters an inclusive learning environment for students from diverse language backgrounds and makes the curriculum globally accessible. Such finding echoes the study of Altbach (2008) and Knight (2008) where it was said that "recognizing the global prominence of English as a medium of instruction and communication not only facilitates the integration of foreign students into their academic landscapes but also to position the universities themselves as attractive destinations for international education."

The model prioritizes a well-defined credit transfer system with partner universities for exchange programs. This system ensures international recognition of the university's curriculum, acknowledging the equivalent quality and rigor between institutions. By streamlining credit transfer, the model fosters seamless academic mobility and enriches the educational experience for students participating in exchanges.

Universities can showcase their commitment to internationalization and diverse student populations by offering programs tailored to international students. This includes specialized courses on Philippine culture or history, or even establishing degree programs with a strong international focus, all adhering to Bureau of Immigration regulations. Curriculum Internationalization goes beyond language. It emphasizes incorporating a global perspective throughout the curriculum, using case studies from a worldwide context, offering specialized international courses, and utilizing diverse learning materials. Forging international connections through conferences and forums further exposes students to the global academic world. The

model goes even further, encouraging universities to continuously review their curriculum to ensure it aligns with international employment standards and scholarship requirements. Equipping students with these globally-demanded skills strengthen their candidacy for international opportunities and even future transnational education programs offered in partnership with universities abroad.

Exchange Programs on the other hand promotes the active participation of students and faculty to participate in both inbound and outbound exchange programs. To expand exchange opportunities, the model emphasizes establishing partnerships for international student and faculty mobility. This multifaceted approach involves points to three pathways: (1) partnering with exchange program organizations; (2) direct school partnerships and; (3) independent program development.

Universities can forge partnerships with organizations that specialize in facilitating international exchange programs. These partnerships connect universities in Albay with a wider network of institutions around the world, providing students and faculty with diverse exchange options. In addition to partnerships with program organizations, the model encourages direct collaboration with schools offering exchange programs. This allows for the creation of tailored exchange experiences. Universities can identify institutions with complementary academic strengths, program offerings, and cultural contexts to create mutually beneficial exchange programs. Direct partnerships can also streamline communication and administrative processes for students and faculty participating in the exchange. While partnerships are valuable, the model also acknowledges the potential for universities to independently develop and offer their own exchange programs. This allows for the creation of unique exchange experiences tailored to the specific strengths and focus areas of the universities in Albay.

The model emphasizes *research collaborations* as a driver of innovation and academic excellence. This is achieved through several strategies. Firstly, establishing joint research projects with international partners allows researchers to combine expertise, access unique resources, and tackle complex challenges with a broader perspective. Secondly, the model encourages active participation in international conferences, workshops, and seminars. These events provide valuable platforms for researchers to share findings, learn about advancements, and network with international colleagues, fostering knowledge exchange and

sparkling new collaborations. Building strong research networks is another key strategy. This may involve collaborating with individual researchers, research groups, or institutes at universities abroad. These networks facilitate ongoing communication, joint publications, and the exchange of research materials and methodologies. Finally, membership in international research organizations is encouraged. These organizations connect researchers with global peers, keep them updated on research trends, and offer opportunities for collaborative initiatives.

On *cultural events and activities*, the model recognizes the importance of fostering intercultural understanding and creating a welcoming environment for international students. One key strategy is the development of English language proficiency programs that integrate cultural immersion. This allows international students to not only improve their English skills but also gain a deeper understanding of Philippine culture, traditions, and customs. The model leverages the existing Bikol Studies Center, a resource for both universities along with other higher education institutions in the region, to promote cultural understanding and organize cultural events. This aligns with the research by Richards and Wilson (2020) suggesting that cultural initiatives resonate with international students seeking cultural understanding alongside academic opportunities.

- e. **External Environment.** The Academic Governance Model for IZN is not a standalone framework. As it is presented in gray, it depicts versatility and denotes the myriad of influences and interactions of universities with the external environment. It acknowledges that universities operate within a complex web of local, regional, and international contexts. This outermost ring surrounding the entire model represents these external influences that shape the universities' internationalization operations. Crucially, this ring also signifies the importance of awareness of these external environments, including the global movement towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations. This awareness is a fundamental aspect of navigating the challenges and opportunities that lie within.

The core theme throughout the model, symbolized by the concentric circles, is collaboration. It emphasizes the importance of building relationships across internal layers and with the external environment. These circles also represent communication channels for continuous improvement and the need for mutually beneficial

partnerships with international institutions for successful internationalization.

As the landscape of internationalization in higher education is inherently dynamic, the Academic Governance Model for IZN is designed to be a living document. It can be continually evaluated, refined, and adapted to ensure its ongoing effectiveness in the face of evolving challenges and opportunities.

5. CONCLUSION

Informed by the evidence and deliberations outlined in the preceding sections, the research establishes these conclusions:

Universities in Albay exhibit diverse yet complementary approaches to IZN, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all model is not applicable. Their collective efforts contribute to a more internationalized academic environment within the province, advancing Albay's educational stature.

Challenges persist, but so do opportunities for growth and development. Universities in Albay face a unique set of challenges and opportunities as they navigate the dynamic world of internationalization. This research underscores the complexity of internationalization and the need for a dynamic and adaptive approach in academic governance to successfully navigate and leverage IZN operations.

The academic governance model for IZN provides a forceful framework for universities in Albay to navigate the ever-changing landscape of internationalization. By embracing the unique contributions from diverse IZN experiences in the universities of Albay, and continuously seeking innovative solutions to challenges and opportunities, universities can leverage the model for better IZN operations.

6. DISCLOSURE

This study received no particular grants from public, commercial, or non-profit funding entities. Furthermore, the author acknowledges no competing interests. More importantly, this research is underpinned by a strong ethical foundation, marked by formal approvals and endorsements from the presidents of Bicol University and University of Santo Tomas-Legazpi, respectively. These endorsements signify a commitment to conducting the research in adherence to established institutional processes and guidelines.

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