



## Determining the Research Capability of the Higher Education Institutions in One Province in the Philippines

Susan S. Janer<sup>1</sup>, Ritzelda A. Deri<sup>2</sup>, Gerry A. Carretero<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Sorsogon State University, Philippines

<sup>1</sup> ORCID 0000-0003-0483-1752

<sup>2</sup> ORCID 0000-0002-5001-5185

**ABSTRACT:** This descriptive study aimed to determine the research capability of the private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in one of the provinces in the Philippines. The inputs were derived from the profile of the schools, their research engagements, and the challenges they encountered in doing research. The survey, interview, and FGD methods were employed to gather data from among the agency heads of the four PHEIs in the province. The findings revealed that these schools are composed of middle-aged, permanent faculty, who are Bachelor's degree holders and are still new in the service. These schools offer courses that are almost similar and have recorded fluctuating annual enrolment rates. All the PHEIs showed to have a low capability in terms of research generation, let alone paper presentations and publication. Considering that HEIs are expected to do research, these results suggest that these schools should take initiative to enhance the capability of their personnel and eventually their research capability. They may collaborate with other research institutions and seek technical assistance like trainings on research writing or mentorship.

**KEYWORDS:** Higher education institution, Research Capability, Sorsogon, Philippines.

### INTRODUCTION

Every higher education institution in the Philippines is expected to include research as part of the functions of the faculty. It is part of the mission statement of every learning institution. Schools are expected to take a lead in research to its clientele and to the community it serves. In like manner, the Sorsogon State University is mandated by virtue of RA No. 11088 to conduct research that would assist the society through the programs and projects that the local government may formulate with reference to the institution's research findings. This goal of the university was made more aggressive by the stringent research requirements of the different government or private organizations tasked to evaluate the performance of the state college and universities in the country.

Knowledge being the central product of universities (Enders & Jongbloed, 2007), and also colleges are being delivered through research. The new bunch of knowledge generated from several research may help in the advancement of the socio-economic well-being of the country. The extension, on the other hand, serves as the mode for dissemination and utilization of the research outputs, which are intended to improve the quality of human life. Extension activities are forms of social responsibility, of giving back to the community and to the environment what they ought to receive.

Research is a springboard towards progress. Hence, every learning institution must capacitate their personnel and students in understanding, learning and doing research and extension through in-service and pre-service trainings respectively. Article II, section 7 of MORPHE 2008 provides one of the four objectives of the higher education that is "to advance the frontiers of knowledge through research work, and apply the technology gained for improving the quality of human life and to responding effectively to changing societal needs and conditions". As such, HEIs are expected to produce graduates that are research-oriented, would be leaders, and assets of the society. In the Philippines, the state recognizes the complementary roles of the public and private schools' systems. It clearly connotes that collaboration between and among HEIs is significant. This is the main ambition of this study, to forge partnership between and among the private HEIs in the province and the Sorsogon State University. However, to realize the partnership, it is a must to gather information on each of these institutions to determine the areas for collaboration. Hence, the present study looked into the demographics of the institutions and their research capability as possible areas for complementation and extending support or assistance. Research capability is operationally defined in this study as the capacity of the higher education institutions to generate, present, disseminate, publish, and utilize research findings. By assessing the demographics and research capability of the institutions, it can reveal each of the institution's strengths and weaknesses to establish the main business of



partnership. At the end, this study hopes to propose the establishment of a consortium among the higher education institutions in the province to provide avenue to upgrade the expertise of the faculty not only along instruction, but most especially, to research expertise.

This research project was conceptualized in response to the pressing demands imposed on SUCs on research requirements to attain its goals to become a research institution. Moreover, this project is also an opportunity to reach out to the PHEIs in the province to establish collaboration and network to further enhance one's capabilities in research and extension.

## OBJECTIVES

This study generally aims to determine the research capabilities of the HEIs in the province as bases in creating a consortium that would allow collaboration and network among them. Specifically, this looked into the following: a) profile of the schools like graduate courses, enrolment, and personnel demographics; b) research capabilities of the HEIs in terms of completed research, paper presentations, publications, and research trainings attended, and 3) challenges encountered by the faculty in the conduct of research activities.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a descriptive research design involving four PHEIs. Out of six invitations, only four institutions responded to the request and participated in the study. Of the four PHEIs involved, three are located in Sorsogon City while one situates in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District of the province. These PHEIs are represented by the agency head or their assigned alternate. For ethical reasons, the four PHEIs are regarded in this study as HEIA, HEIB, HEIC, and HEID. The first HEI, or HEIA, is an 18-year old, non-profit, private education institution offering IT-related programs, senior high school, and technical-vocational trainings recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and Department of Education. Meanwhile, HEIB is an 83-year-old Catholic school catering programs from pre-elementary education up to advance education. Owned by a prominent Sorsoganon, HEIC came to existence in the year 1999 and currently provides basic education and higher education services. Finally, HEID is also a catholic school that provides senior high school and higher education. These institutions are further described by their profile in terms of graduate courses offered, enrolment, and personnel demographics.

Several methods were employed to gather the data among the respondents such as survey, interview, and focus group discussions (FGD). Survey was conducted through the use of a two-part questionnaire. The first part is about the profile of the PHEIs in terms of graduate courses, enrolment rate, and personnel demographics. Meanwhile, the second part tackled the capability of the HEI along research. On the other hand, interview and FGDs were utilized to determine the challenges encountered by the faculty in conducting research activities. The interview and FGDs happened during the meetings called by the University.

After the data collection and presentation, analysis and interpretation were made. The profile of the PHEIs were analyzed through the use of frequency and percentage. The challenges encountered by the faculty in the conduct of research were interpreted qualitatively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section introduces the profile of the four PHEIs involved in the study and their involvement in research. Tables and graph were used to present the data.

**Graduate Courses.** The Republic Act No. 10931 defines graduate courses as higher education programs leading to a certificate, diploma, master's, or doctorate degree, as may be authorized and recognized by CHED. The graduate courses offered by the four HEIs are revealed in Table 1. The table shows that 75% of the HEIs offer teacher education (TEd) courses both the Bachelor in Elementary Education (BEED) and Bachelor in Secondary Education (BSED) with Mathematics and English as the common fields of specialization. In like manner, three-fourths of the HEIs also offer business education programs and computer-related programs.



Half of them also offer other programs. HEI B serves BS in Hospitality Management while HEI D caters programs related to Agriculture and Criminology.

**Table 1.** Graduate Courses Offered by the HEIs

Courses	HEI	HEI	HEI	HEI
	A	B	C	D
Teacher Education		/	/	/
ICT related	/		/	/
Business Education		/	/	/
Other Programs		/		/

The data show that the TED program is a graduate course common among the PHEIs in Sorsogon suggesting that they have complied with all the program requirements stipulated in the Manual of Regulations for Private Higher Education. Besides, it also implies that these institutions conformed with the conditions set forth by CMO No. 74, series 2017 for the BEED program and CMO No. 75, series 2017 for the BSED program. Specifically, it indicates that these HEIs have satisfied the entire conditions to serve TED, particularly on administration, faculty complements, school facilities, library holdings, and other necessities. Hence, it is plausible to assume that HEIs who run TED programs successfully corresponded to the mandates of the CMOs. On top of these, however, the big number of elementary and secondary schools in the province could have also been the root cause why these institutions opted to offer teacher education courses. Based on 2021 data, there are 517 elementary schools (Janer & Deri, 2021) and 107 secondary schools in the province (Renovalles, Janer, & Deri, 2022), both public and private that greatly justifies the need for TED graduates. With this number of schools, the graduates are almost ensured of job opportunity after graduation.

Moreover, the growing computer technology elucidates why HEIs generally offer computer-related courses. This program has also become appealing and benefits those students who have the knack for computers. The offering of computer-related programs like BS Computer Science, BS Information Systems, and BS Information Technology is governed by CMO No. 25, series 2015. Therefore, the data denote that HEIs serving such programs have likewise qualified as per criteria outlined in the memorandum.

Meanwhile, business education is also a distinct graduate course among HEIs in the province. In this study, business education refers to a BS in Business Administration and BS in Entrepreneurship. CMO No. 17, series 2017 governs the operations of BS in Business Administration while CMO No. 18, s. 2017 for BS in Entrepreneurship. The advent of the Accountancy and Business Management (ABM) strand as a senior high school academic track is the turning point for business education courses to flourish. Furthermore, this course has turned out to be more responsive to the booming economy of Sorsogon as corroborated by the foundation of different businesses such as commercial establishments, hotels, the increasing number of banks, development of eco-tourism, and improvement of road networks. This progress is also a factor why other HEIs provide services related to hospitality management, agriculture, and criminology.

**Enrolment.** Figure 1 illustrates the enrolment trend in the HEIs from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018 comprising the enrolment data in the second semester of every academic year from 1<sup>st</sup> year to 4<sup>th</sup> year. The graph summarizes the comparative enrolment trend among the four private institutions. The largest number of enrolment comes from HEID, followed by HEIB, HEIA, and HEIC. Hence, among the 4 HEIs, HEIB and HEID constitute the bulk of enrolment while HEIA and HEIC have the least. These findings show a connection to the other programs that HEIB and HEID offer, apart from the typical programs.

Also, the graph presents the increasing enrolment trend from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018. In an interview with the HEI representative, the researchers learned that the enrolment is generally shared by the new entrants and enrollees in programs that are uncommon among the four HEIs. Meaning, there are many enrollees in those programs which are not available in other HEIs.

The school year 2017-2018 is the advent of free tuition in public higher education in the country as promulgated through the Republic Act 10931 that, among others, intends to give priority to students who are academically able and who come from poor families. For less-fortunate families, this government initiative provides them gainful access to college education, whereas, for the



PHEIs, this effort is a form of educational setback. This setback primarily threatens the enrolment in the PHEIs. And obviously, the graph shows that in the same academic year, an abrupt decrease in the enrolment trend among the HEIs was recorded. However, this observation seems different for HEI A since the enrolment drop is negligible by about 1% only.

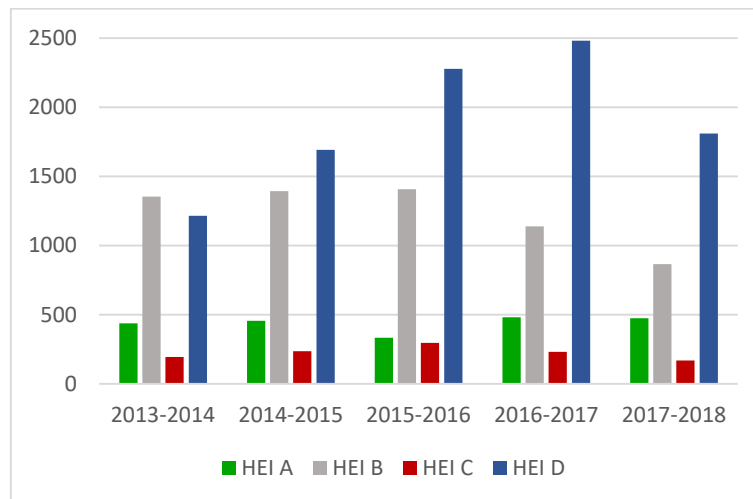


Figure 1. Enrolment in the PHEIs

Corollary to this, the results indicate that the families of the incoming freshmen opt to seek access to the SUCs to avail of the opportunity to enroll in the college for free. Currently, the province has two public HEIs or SUCs, namely, Sorsogon State University and Bicol University Gubat Campus. This indicates that during the 2017-2018 school year, the new entrants flocked in these two SUCs. Meanwhile, the Act also provides tertiary education subsidy for private education and basically, the benefits or privileges are the same. Yet, while this is true, still more new entrants preferred admissions in SUCs due to the diverse programs that appeal to them. For instance, the SSU, apart from teacher education, ICT-related courses, and business education, they also serve engineering, agriculture-related, fisheries-related, and technology-related graduate courses and many others.

Nevertheless, the negligible decline in the enrolment for HEI A during the school year 2017-2018 tells that approximately the same number of new entrants got admitted as the previous years. Aside from this, it is not only HEI A that caters to ICT-related courses. There are also other private institutions in the province that serves similar programs, like the SSC in Bulan Campus.

**Personnel Demographics.** Table 2 reveals the personnel profile of the schools. However, one of the four PHEIs did not disclose the information on the age and length of service of their faculty. The table shows that majority of the faculty of the PHEIs are 26-35 (f=55, 29%) years old; followed by 36-45 years old (f=43, 22%). Very few (f=5, 10%) of the faculty are 46-55 years old. On the other hand, in terms of education, it reveals the faculty are mostly bachelor’s degree holders. Only 14 (7%) have doctorate degrees while 28 (15%) have master’s degree. Majority of them (f=119, 62%) are permanent while only 11 (6%) are in probationary status and predominantly, have been in the service for 5 years and below. Five faculty (3%) have been teaching in the PHEI for 16 years and above.

Based on the findings, it reflects that most of the teaching personnel of the PHEIs are middle-aged, permanent faculty with Bachelor’s degrees and are still new in the service. The educational levels catered by these schools aptly justify the profile of the faculty. The four PHEIs are commonly offering basic education, which is why most of their faculty are bachelor’s degree holders and are fresh graduates. In one of the meetings with the PHEIs, the representatives disclosed that these fresh graduates aside from being a full-time faculty in the basic education, they are also allowed to teach part-time for minor subjects or courses that do not require license and its equivalent. They also said that those faculty who teach major subjects are only those who possess the necessary license or certification like the national competency (NC). For instance, the licensure examination for teachers is a requirement to teach in teacher education programs (CMO No. 74 series 2017 and CMO No. 75 series 2017).



**Table 2.** Profile of the Faculty

Categories	f	%
<b>Age</b>		
25 & below	22	12
26 – 35	55	29
36 – 45	43	22
46 – 55	10	5
56 & above	23	12
No data	39	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
PhD/EdD holder	14	7
With doctorate units	6	3
MS/MA holder	28	15
With MS/MA units	28	15
Bachelor’s degree	116	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Permanent	119	62
Part-time	62	32
Probationary	11	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Length of Service (years)</b>		
5 & below	109	57
6 – 15	39	20
16 – 25	1	1
26 & above	4	2
No data	39	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>100</b>

Moreover, the profile also tells that the faculty of the PHEIs are dynamic and trainable, denoting tha the schools must be ready to provide them capability-building activities that would develop or enhance their instructional competencies and also research skills. To ensure this, the PHEIs needs to initiate strategies to recruit more enrollees and overcome the stiff competition between and among schools in terms of recruitment, let alone there is the existence of a free-tuition state college in the City which is accessible for all new college entrants.

**2. Research Capability of the HEIs**

This section reveals the research projects and paper presentation activities of the HEIs. Merely half of them have involvement in research. HEI A had completed six self-funded school-based projects for the past three years. Remarkably, one faculty barely studied the entire six projects that predominantly generated policy research outputs. Consequently, these outputs turned into policy guidelines of the school. Unfortunately, none of these projects had gotten any conference for presentation. On the other hand, HEI D has lone ongoing school-based and school-funded research related to a solid waste management program that intends to generate an extension project proposal. Luckily, the researchers presented this project at a conference in Tagbilaran City, Bohol in 2018. The rest of the HEIs have not gone through any research let alone attending paper presentations.

Research is a common requirement for HEIs as stipulated in MORPHE (2008) and the various memoranda (CMO No. 74, series 2017, CMO No. 75, series 2017, CMO No. 25, series 2015, CMO No. 17, series 2017, and CMO No. 18, series 2017) that govern



the offering of the graduate courses served by the PHEIs in this study. However, the results showed that these schools are quite short in terms of research as evidenced by the small number of project generated for the past three years. In the interview conducted, the HEIs explained that they are encouraged to conduct research in their respective school, but the problem is on the capability of the faculty to do research. They said that their know-how is limited as compared to those in the SUCs where research is a mandate. This is also the reason why they decided to join in the consortium which this study proposes. They believed that the future collaborations between and among HEIs in the province would lead to the development or further enhancement of the research skills of the faculty.

This research scenario in private HEIs can still be enhanced based on the curricular programs they offer, their enrolment rate, and the profile of the faculty. Based on the profile, these institutions can capitalize on the trainability of the faculty, thus, they may provide allocations for faculty training and workshops to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills in doing research. They may also take some initiatives to collaborate with the different research centers and national agencies to seek technical assistance on research writing that may eventually pave the way to forge partnerships. Moreover, their curricular programs and annual enrolment rate, though unstable, is still a viable resource to generate funds for research. The institution has to strategize, though, in order to promote and attract enrollees.

### 3. Challenges Encountered by the faculty in the Conduct of Research Activities

The respondents showed to have encountered common challenges in research. These challenges are explicitly connected to one another.

**Limited knowledge in the conduct of research and extension.** The respondents explained during the FGDs that most of the tasks of the faculty center on instruction which means their main concern is to develop their mastery on the subject content and continuous enhancement of their pedagogical skills. Though MORPHE requires PHEIs to conduct research and extension, yet their limited knowledge along these areas hinder them from these kinds of engagement. However, though they are short in knowledge, the PHEIs still displayed their interest and willingness to learn these areas which is one of the reasons why they decided to participate in this study.

**Lack of attendance to research- and extension-related activities.** This problem provides the cause to the former, the limited knowledge of the faculty to do research and extension activities like trainings and paper presentations. According to HEIB, most of the activities they attended are related to instruction and those related to research and extension are too seldom or almost nil. If there are available trainings, the usual attendees are the agency heads or their representatives. Faculty are never sent on these kinds of trainings, unless they are willing to assume the expenses incurred in these activities. Echoing the trainings attended by the participants to disseminate and share the new knowledge gained are not at all times conducted.

**Limited budget.** This challenge seem to have caused the other two challenges. The respondents of the study gave the same information in terms of the PHEIs budget prioritization. They said that the bulk of the annual budget allotted by these institutions are intended for curriculum and student development and at times, to physical facilities development. A little portion of this budget goes to teacher development allocations. That is why the trainings that the teachers were sent became selective for instruction purposes.

## CONCLUSIONS

Determining the research capability of the private higher education institutions is the main objective of this study. The profile of the HEIs, their research engagements, and the challenges they encountered along research were also documented.

Based on the findings, most of the PHEIs cater teacher education and business education courses in response to the demand for teachers in the province due to the big number of private and public elementary and secondary schools in Sorsogon. Their enrolment showed an increasing trend from school years 2013-2017 and an overwhelming decline in the school year 2017-2018 in the advent of the free tuition in the government HEIs. In terms of the teaching personnel, the PHEIs are mostly composed of new breeds of faculty who are yet to establish their own practice in terms of tertiary education instruction and familiarizing the culture of the school. Their being young in an educational institution whose teaching personnel are mostly engaged to teaching explains why the institution fell short in terms of achievements in research. These new breeds of faculty, however, with their dynamism and willingness to receive different capability building activities suggest that they are trainable to become potential researchers in the



future. Meanwhile, the conduct of research in these institutions are wanting let alone paper presentations and publications which are all due to the limited budget resources each PHEI has. While there are several research-funding agencies that exist in the country, it is a fact that these organizations impose stringent requirements that a neophyte teacher may find difficult to comply. Generally, the results imply that the PHEIs in the province are inadequate in terms of research generation let alone their dissemination, utilization, and translation to extension projects.

## RECOMMENDATION

The results of the study strengthen the need to establish the consortium among the PHEIs and state colleges and universities (SUCs) in the province of Sorsogon. This consortium specifically aims to pool together the various HEIs in the province to forge partnership and establish a network to develop or enhance one's research capabilities. It also intends to collaborate with the provincial government to assist in all their developmental efforts and initiatives. This consortium will provide venue not only for collaboration and partnership, but importantly, to help and assist one another to come up with fundable and promising research undertakings. Through a consortium, trainings, coaching, mentorship, and even technical assistance can be made possible. With this, the host institution may therefore, expedite the entire process to establish and operationalize the consortium. They may also scout potential partners from other line agencies to ensure more inclusive research to realize the vision, mission, and goals of the province. On the other hand, the member institutions must also be steadfast in their commitment to become part of the consortium by manifesting active participation in the various activities that may be spearheaded by the host institution in the future.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express their sincerest gratitude to all those who helped in the completion of this humble work. They also would like to thank the school heads and/or their representatives for their cooperation and support to this study.

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*Cite this Article: Susan S. Janer, Ritzelda A. Deri, Gerry A. Carretero (2022). Determining the Research Capability of the Higher Education Institutions in One Province in the Philippines. International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 5(10), 4004-4011*