

■ HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH AND POLICY REFORM PROGRAM

STRENGTHENING HIGHER EDUCATION

By Examining the Partnership Between UP CIDS-HERPRP and EDCOM 2 for the UP PEJA Fellowship

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INTRODUCTION

This policy brief examines the ongoing partnership between the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies Higher Education Research and Policy Reform Program (UP CIDS HERPRP) and the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2). This partnership aims to tackle pressing challenges in the Philippine higher education sector. Through a combination of collaborative research, policy development, and capacity-building initiatives, this partnership leverages the academic expertise of HERPRP and its connections, and the legislative authority of EDCOM II to support data-driven reforms. Emphasis is placed on enhancing the accessibility, quality, and equity of higher education. Key policy recommendations for this partnership will highlight strategies for addressing the current issues through collaboration between both parties.

The UP CIDS HERPRP is a leading institution in educational policy research, aiming “. . . to chart a research agenda, systematically build an evidence base for policy analysis, and create a network of experts and researchers doing work in this sector. HERPRP also serves as a convening body seeking to

build partnerships and working collaborative networks among stakeholders” (UP CIDS, n.d.). Meanwhile, EDCOM 2 is tasked “with the mandate of conducting a “comprehensive national assessment and evaluation of the performance of the Philippine education sector to recommend transformative, concrete and targeted reforms in the sector with the end in view of making the Philippines globally competitive in both education and labor markets” in the next three years, from 2023 to 2025” (EDCOM 2, n.d.).

The University of the Philippines Foundation, Inc. (UPFI) supports the University of the Philippines (UP) system. According to the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (2025), it is established as a nonstock, nonprofit organization. UPFI’s primary mission is to manage and allocate financial resources for various academic and research initiatives. This foundation is pivotal in fostering the growth and development of the university’s educational and research capabilities.

One of the key contributions of UPFI is its sponsorship of UP President Edgardo J. Angara Fellowship (UP PEJA). This prestigious fellowship program is designed to support the research endeavors of distinguished fellows.

Through this initiative, UPFI has awarded a substantial amount of ₱500,000 to each fellow to fund their research papers.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In her article entitled “The Role of Flagship Universities in Developing Countries: The Case of the University of the Philippines,” Dr. Elvira Zamora, former Vice President for Development at the University of the Philippines, identifies the responsibilities of flagship universities. She wrote:

A flagship university should serve as a venue for high-level discussion and debate on major issues confronting the nation, and options for addressing these problems. . . . Faculty and other scholars of the flagship university should be able to serve as critics on topics of national, regional, and global significance. . . . It should be able to

stimulate discussion among institutions of higher learning by promoting alternative models, new concepts, new paradigms, and methodologies to guide thought and action towards the appropriate reforms. The UP and the EDCOM collaboration through the UP PEJA reflects the evolving role of flagship universities in developing countries (Zamora 2016). Douglass (2016, 1) further emphasizes that such institutions are pivotal “for socioeconomic mobility, for knowledge production, for generating economic and civic leaders, and for pushing innovation and societal self-reflection than in any other time in their history.”

The UPPEJA Fellowship is designed to foster high-level policy discussions and research such as governance and financing of education, digital transformation, decentralization, and the interplay between public and private education sectors (EDCOM 2 2023; Philippine Center for Integrative and Development Studies 2024). This initiative aligns with the “triple helix” model proposed by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1995, 2000), underscoring the importance of collaboration among universities, industries, and governments for knowledge-based economic development.

Moreover, this partnership responds to the increasing demand for evidence-based policymaking in education. Altbach and Knight (2007) noted that internationalization and collaboration are essential for enhancing the relevance and quality of higher education institutions (HEIs) globally.

CURRENT STATE OF COLLABORATION

The newest batch of the UP PEJA Fellowship, announced in 2023, focuses on the issues of the Higher Education landscape in the country (UP CIDS 2023). The Philippine higher education sector faces a lot of significant challenges in terms of overall funding, HEI capabilities, student retention, etc. The research questions posed to the UP PEJA fellows also included the current trends in education, such as the use of artificial intelligence (AI), the digital transformation of education, and other financial implementations for higher education. Their outputs will be published with the help of UP CIDS, and some selected research will be published in the prestigious *Philippine Journal for Public Policy (PJPP)*.

UP PEJA Research Papers

The 20 UP PEJA Research Papers have been grouped by the areas in which their research paper will have the most impact. These groups are: Higher Education Roadmap, Industry, and Agriculture, Higher Education Regulation and Tuition, Governance and Finance, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training and Lifelong Learning.

Table 1. List of the 20 UP PEJA Research Papers

HIGHER EDUCATION ROADMAP, INDUSTRY, AND AGRICULTURE	
John Paul Vergara, PhD	“Navigating the Generative Artificial Intelligence Era: Charting the Course for Curricular Reform in Higher Education in the Philippines”
Michael R. Cabalfin, PhD	“Economic Complexity and Human Capital Development in the Philippines”
Luis Rey. I. Velasco, PhD	“Strengthening Higher Agriculture Educational Institutions and Vocational-Technical Training Programs on Entrepreneurship”
Krista Danielle S. Yu, PhD	“Developing Regional Economic Complexity through Product Specialization”
Carmencita D. Padilla, MD, MAHPS	“Leveraging Higher Education to Resolve Healthcare Constraints”
Luis Sison, PhD	“Cultivating Innovation in the Philippines by Addressing Policy Gaps and Creating Pathways for Collaborative Progress between Academe and Industry”
GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE	
Elizabeth King, PhD	“Can Decentralization Improve Philippine Education? Lessons from Global Experience”
Maria Assunta C. Cuyegkeng, Dr. rer. nat.	“Systems Analysis of the Philippine Basic Education System: The Role of School Leadership”
Rosario G. Manasan, PhD	“Efficiency and Equity in the Financing and Delivery of Education in the Philippines”
Maria Regina M. Hechanova-Alampay, PhD	“Innovations and their Enablers and Barriers in Philippine Basic Education: Policy and Governance Implications”
Kenneth Isaiah Ibasco Abante, MA, and Riz Supreme Balgos Comia, LPT	“Kakayanin Natin: Empowering Citizens to Participate in Improving Education Governance in the Philippines”
HIGHER EDUCATION REGULATION AND TUITION	
Ma. Glenda Lopez Wui, PhD and Enrique Niño P. Leviste, PhD	“Governance Cultures, Perspectives & Practices in Philippine Basic Education Settings: Focus on Teacher-In Service Training and Development”
Dina Ocampo, PhD	“Aiming for Seamless and Integrated Lifelong Delivery in the Philippines”
Maria Mercedes T. Rodrigo, PhD	“Using Artificial Intelligence to Support Basic Education Teachers in Under-resourced Contexts”
Geoffrey Ducanes, PhD	“Exploring Socialized Tuition Models as Alternatives to the Free Tuition Regime”
Michael Alba, PhD	“The Economic Regulation of Philippine Higher Education”
Felicia Yeban, PhD	“From Pixels to Policies: GIS Analysis of Education Access Points and Disparities”
TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND LIFELONG LEARNING	
Lisa Grace Bersales, PhD	“Understanding Labor Market Outcomes of Graduates in the Informal Economy”
Carolyn Medel-Añonuevo, MA	“Navigating/Negotiating the Lifelong Learning Terrain in the Philippines: Path of Optimism and Caution”
Cleve V. Arguelles, MA and Joel Paulin Mendoza, LPT, MA	“Enabling Young Filipinos to Dream Big and Achieve Bigger: Centering Youth Aspirations in Education Reform”

Activities of the UP PEJA Fellowship

In June 2023, EDCOM 2, in collaboration with the University of the Philippines, opened applications for the UP PEJA Fellowship. In September 2023, the approved fellows, vetted by UP PEJA Fellowship Committee members, attended the award ceremony in the Philippine Senate. Furthermore, Senator Joel Villanueva sponsored Senate Resolution No. 812, giving recognition and commending the awardees of the UP PEJA Fellowship. All senators were made coauthors of the resolution.

As of this year, HERPRP, in collaboration with EDCOM 2, has successfully organized a series of impactful events for UP PEJA. Among these initiatives were the four UP PEJA Workshops conducted last May 2024, which served as a platform for presenting and deliberating on their preliminary research findings. These workshops provided an avenue for critical scrutiny and insightful commentary from distinguished members of the academe, government institutions, and development organizations, ensuring comprehensive and multidisciplinary feedback and review of their initial findings.

The UP PEJA Conference held last August was a significant event that showcased the fellowship's contributions to improving Philippine higher education. During the conference, fellows shared their latest findings from the 20 UP PEJA Research Papers with academic representatives, government agencies, development organizations, and other key stakeholders.

HERPRP as the UP PEJA Fellowship Secretariat

Throughout the partnership, HERPRP has assumed the vital role of serving as the Secretariat for the UP PEJA. By leveraging its extensive connections and resources, HERPRP has fostered open lines of communication between the fellows and EDCOM 2, ensuring a collaborative and productive working relationship. As a liaison, HERPRP has facilitated smooth dialogue and coordination among all parties involved in this significant initiative.

In addition to its mediating role, HERPRP has been instrumental in utilizing the current administrative framework and organizing fellowship activities. This effort includes developing a comprehensive set of principles and procedures to guide the program and future ones. It intends to create a framework that

supports current initiatives while also serving as a valuable resource for future participants in the UP PEJA Fellowship or similar research programs.

HERPRP and the Publishing of the UP PEJA Fellowship Papers

The rigorous review and editorial process for the 20 UP PEJA papers is designed to ensure that each research output meets high academic standards and contributes meaningfully to policy discussions in the Philippine higher education landscape. Upon completing their research manuscripts, fellows must submit their papers for copyediting and layout by UP CIDS and HERPRP. Once HERPRP's Convenor approves, the signal is given for the papers to be published in two avenues—one by UP CIDS and the other one by EDCOMM 2.

Following the review phase, selected papers will undergo a meticulous editorial process facilitated by HERPRP in collaboration with the *Philippine Journal for Public Policy (PJPP)*. This partnership ensures that the research is published and reaches a broader audience of policymakers, educators, and researchers. The editorial team works closely with authors to address necessary revisions, ensuring that each paper adheres to academic rigor and publication standards.

As of the time of writing, publishing the research papers is the top objective for both HERPRP and EDCOM 2 before the end of 2024. Both offices are in constant communication with all stakeholders to achieve this goal.

BENEFITS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The UP CIDS HERPRP and EDCOM 2 partnership aims to ground education policies in robust evidence, addressing challenges in Philippine higher education. Fostering collaboration between fellows and policymakers strengthens policy design and implementation.

Also, public engagement ensures policies reflect stakeholder concerns, while the partnership supports EDCOM 2's mandate to assess education sector performance. Ultimately, this collaboration seeks to improve enrollment, graduation rates, instructional quality, and global competitiveness.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The UP CIDS-HERPRP and EDCOM 2 collaboration offers significant benefits but faces key challenges. Limited resources hinder HERPRP's research and publishing efforts, requiring additional funding and staff to meet its goal of producing 20 research papers. The dual publication approach adds complexity, with differing timelines creating coordination difficulties.

Frequent personnel turnover at EDCOM 2 disrupts communication and alignment, as multiple contacts complicate collaboration.

Additionally, the unsigned UP PEJA Fellowship memorandum of understanding or agreement (MOU/A) prevents clear role definition, limiting operational efficiency.

Addressing these issues requires prioritizing resources, strengthening communication, and formalizing the partnership through a binding agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations for the betterment of partnerships of UP CIDS HERPRP or others like it in the future:

1. *Formalize the partnership: Establish an MOA/U between UP and EDCOM 2 or a partner agency, outlining the scope of the collaboration, roles, and responsibilities.*
2. *Prepare additional funding for future partnerships: Identify priority areas for resource and personnel allocation for the duration of the agreement.*
3. *Defining the partnership's objectives and goals: The partnership should be governed by a steering committee composed of UP CIDS and EDCOM 2 representatives. This committee would direct the activities, ensure coordination between the two institutions, and make key decisions regarding project planning and timelines.*
4. *Disseminate the output together: Organize online webinars, workshops, and/or seminars to disseminate research findings and advocate for legislative reforms from the outputs of the fellows since this aspect is not clear for the current partnership.*

CONCLUSION

The collaboration between UP and EDCOM 2 signifies a remarkable opportunity to spearhead Philippine higher education reforms grounded in robust evidence and guided by data-driven decision-making. The synergy between the two institutions holds immense potential to bring about transformative changes in the education sector, ultimately enhancing outcomes for students, educators, institutional stakeholders, and the broader educational community.

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Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

THE PROGRAM

The UP CIDS **Program on Higher Education Research and Policy Reform (HERPRP)** aims to chart a research agenda, systematically build an evidence base for policy analysis, and create a network of experts and researchers doing work in the Philippine higher education sector. The program also serves as a convening body which seeks to build partnerships and working collaborative networks among key stakeholders.

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