

# Hybrid Governance and De-Privatisation of Higher Education in the Philippines<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

While many higher education systems across the world have expanded through privatization, the Philippines is precisely doing the opposite. Unlike similar Asian countries with private mass higher education like Japan and South Korea, the Philippines continues to expand tertiary education enrolment through de-privatization. But little is known as to why and how this system transition is occurring. This paper analyses this decline in private higher education as it relates to the changing governance of higher education. The earlier effort to marketize public universities allowed for a higher education system that is now more functionally differentiated with private schools increasingly catering to specific demands of the market for migrant worker education. The shift to a hybrid governance model culminated with the provision of free state tertiary education that essentially subjected both private and public higher education institutions under greater control by the government.

Key words: higher education governance, policy instruments, role differentiation, higher education reforms, Philippines

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<sup>1</sup> Please do not cite/circulate. Draft for discussion purposes only. A revised version of this article is forthcoming with the Journal of Contemporary Asia.

## Introduction

Private higher education in Asia and across the world is expanding at a rapid pace (ADB, 2012). An intensifying societal demand for more education coupled with the unwillingness or inability of the government to meet such demands allowed for the untethered growth of private higher education (Altbach, 2005). The Philippines, despite its long history of private mass higher education, appears to be running against this ‘global revolution’. The share of private schools in higher education enrolment was 47% in 2018, significantly lower compared to 85% in 1985 (James, 1991). This persistent trend of ‘de-privatization’ occurs at the backdrop of contradicting trends. Public higher education institutions (HEIs) had grown significantly since the early 2000s through the creation of satellite campuses by state universities and colleges (SUCs) and the establishment of local universities (LUCs) funded by city and municipal governments (LaRocque, 2002). Yet, the private higher education market not only survives but it also continues to thrive. Private higher education generated an impressive PhP126 billion of revenues in 2016, a jump from PhP68 billion in 2007 (PSA, 2008, 2017). The declining number of enrolment also does not seem to curtail the growth in the number of private higher education institutions, increasing from 838 in 1985 to 1,076 in 2015 (CHED, 2019). As other countries make headways in deepening or maintaining private-sector market dominance in higher education, the Philippines is undergoing a puzzling transformation of vaster public provision amidst a growing private market.

This creeping ‘publicization’ at such scale remains largely “an untold story; it has received only rare and passing mention with little analysis” (Levy 2013, 25). Part of the reason for this is that most Asian countries with a history of mass private higher education experienced little change in the share in private school enrolment (see **Table 1**). Japan and South Korea managed to quantitatively expand private higher education while keeping quality high through strong regulation coupled with closely targeted subsidies (Chae and Hong, 2009; Yonezawa, 2014). Although Levy (2013) documented various global cases, most of the time these experiences show episodic decline in private education and eventual reversals to bigger public universities. In contrast, the Philippine case marks a steady and persistent decline of private higher education.

**Table 1 Percentage of enrolment in tertiary education in private institutions**

Country	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
Indonesia	63	61	61		59	62	67	65	61
Japan							78	79	79
Philippines	69	66	66		63	59	57	57	54
South Korea	81	81	80	80	80	81	81	81	80

Source: UNESCO (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/>). Years with no available data are left blank.

The paper is an attempt to describe this on-going proportional decline of private higher education in the Philippines through the changes in higher education governance. It builds on the concept of de-privatization, commonly found in Eastern Europe, as an enduring trend of “decreasing privateness” that often comes with a contracting higher education system (Kwiek, 2017, p. 260). The Philippine case offers an opposing example of de-privatization within an expansionary higher education system. As will be shown in the succeeding discussion, de-privatization occurred due to the expansion of public education (Levy, 2013). The introduction of marketization instruments allowed public HEIs to become ‘demand-absorbing’ institutions (Levy, 2013), which in turn enabled the continuous expansion in

public higher education. Because of the swelling public share in tertiary enrolment, the private HEIs kept their grasp on semi-elite education while venturing into a niche market for migration-related education. The recent institutionalization of free tertiary state education, however, consolidated government control over public and private HEIs. Such hybridity in the governance approach reinforces further de-privatization amidst an expansionary higher education system.

Drawing on the public policy and higher education literature, this paper proceeds as a contribution to the on-going broader discussion about the management of private-public policy mix in the delivery of public services. As the next section will show, governance with enough hybridity – one that features regulative and laissez-faire components – can sharpen role differentiation between private and public institutions. The role differentiation compels HEIs to manage multiple and often contradicting objectives that universities and colleges now face. The subsequent section establishes why the historical development of higher education has set down the Philippines towards the path towards “mass private and restricted public sectors” (Tilak, 1991). Given the dominance of private schools, it was conceived that the only possible way to reform the ailing sector was to provide a system of enabling policies for even deeper privatization (Gonzalez, 1989). As the discussion about the developments in higher education governance will show, higher education underwent a period of deregulation that infused market principles to how public HEIs operate that allowed them to respond more acutely to market demands. The more recent transition towards universal education folded them into the regulatory arms of the government, subjecting them to greater control of the state. It also created a germane environment for private HEIs to strengthen elite education and cater to new niche markets on migrant worker education. Through hybrid governance, the Philippine government indulged public HEI expansion and consequently, fostered the better differentiation of roles between public and private schools.

### **Higher Education Governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

“States are back,” declared Ramesh and Araral (2010, p. 1), albeit “hesitantly, even unwillingly...to rescue the market from itself”. New public management reforms that sought to minimize the role of the state have begun to unravel as instances of reverse privatization and the emergence of regulatory states suggest governments are taking back control of public service provision (Jayasuriya, 2005). These reforms however do not completely unravel and create legacies that allow services to maintain some degree of ‘privateness’. Some government agencies are influenced by ‘quasi-market’ forces created by these reforms while being increasingly subjected to more regulation. Tinkering with the degree of privateness or publicness of service delivery is done primarily through policy instruments governments adopt. Thus, as defined by Capano, Howlett, & Ramesh (2015, p. 313), the process of governing or governance fundamentally is about the “mode of government coordination exercised by state actors in their effort to solve familiar problems of collective action inherent to government and governing”. As the developmental states of East Asian have shown, the alignment of interests among policy actors can only be orchestrated by an activist state (Leftwich, 1993).

The same also holds true in higher education (Capano, 2011). Governance is about balancing private and public sector mix in the provision and financing of public services. It is rare that higher education provision and financing exists in pure public or private form. Rather than choosing between the state or the market, arriving at a right blend of private/public provision is key to ensuring higher education systems perform well. Finding the right combination can be challenging as higher education institutions (HEIs), regardless of their ownership, produce both private and public good. Thus, it is incumbent for

governments to “enhance those public goods that markets create, and to compensate for those public goods that markets tend to suppress from view and in effect” (Marginson, 2007, p. 321). Aligning the interests of various institutions that may have conflicting interests to achieve a common goal can be achieved through the deployment of governing instruments.

Historically, higher education is seen to be governed through either the rational model through command and control instruments or the self-regulation model through market-based instruments like monitoring and feedback (van Vught, 2009). This dichotomous view of governance models tend to be ideal types or ‘first-best design’ but what occurs in reality is often a “combination of market and state” or a hybrid in how the relationship between the government and HEIs is configured (Gornitzka and Maassen, 2000, p. 283). For instance, marketization instruments can be deployed to make public universities mimic corporate entities and to infuse competition for funds and rewards for private universities (Kitagawa and Oba, 2010). These instruments are often mixed and matched that makes as a means to resolve conflicting interests between the state and HEIs and to discriminate application of policies and guidelines according to different sectors of higher education (e.g. public vs private) (Jungblut and Vukasovic, 2013). The more recent trend of combining instruments into policy portfolios or bundles have led to emergence of hybrid models – performance-based, re-regulated and systemic goal-oriented modes – that are better equipped to deal with such contradicting institutional logics (Capano and Pritoni, 2019). In many ways, hybridity in the governance approach is a response to a changing, uncertain and sometimes conflict-laden policy environment.

The notion of de-privatization can thus be situated within this broader discussion about higher education governance. After all, the purposes that the private schools take on depend on “what roles public sectors do not undertake” (Levy, 2006, p. 226). Privatization in higher education often involves the “rolling back of the activities of the state,” particularly in terms of cutting down on direct provision, dismantling state subsidies and mounting deregulation (Le Grand and Robinson, 1984, p. 3). It is different but often occurs in parallel with marketization, a process of infusing market principles into state-funded or provided services that creates ‘quasi-markets’. Marketization incentivizes public schools responding to demands from parents and students (like certain social preference for courses). At the same time, state subsidies to private schools can also insulate them from market forces (Whitty and Power, 2000). As Marginson (1993, p. 178) revealed, “privatization does not in itself constitute market relations, it creates a potentially favourable environment for market activity”. The different combination of governing instruments adopted by the state can shape the extent to which private and public schools can exhibit privateness or publicness.

De-privatization in higher education refers to the “[proportional decrease of] private funding... or its [decrease in] privateness, over time” (Kwiek, 2017, p. 260). Of course, de-privatization is not limited to higher education and has been documented to occur in many sectors like utilities, basic education and transportation as a recognition of the limits of the market (Abbott and Cohen, 2016; Ohemeng and Grant, 2008; Painter and Mok, 2008). De-privatization can occur as internal (i.e. growing public funding within public institutions) or external (i.e. declining number of private schools) process of the unravelling of private sector dominance (Kwiek 2017). Just as privatization is used to expand higher education, de-privatization occurs within the context of a contracting higher education system. It is seen primarily as an outcome of broader social transformations, a “demographically-driven public-private re-balancing process” (Kwiek, 2016, p. 314). But Levy (2013) also identified ‘political factors’ such as government policy, extensive expansion of public HEIs and marketization and internal privatization of public higher education that drive the decline of private higher education.

De-privatization, as in privatization, should be understood as an institutional response to the transformations of the higher education system. Higher education systems are envisioned to undergo through a series of transition from elite education (up to 15% tertiary enrolment of eligible population), to mass education (up to 50%) and then universal education (more than 50%). These stages of development of higher education marks an important reckoning of the “related cluster of problems...[that] arise out of the transition from one phase to another in a broad pattern of development of higher education” (Trow, 1973, p. 1). The transition process involves the absorption of different functions of higher education from catering to the ruling class, to preparation of a broader set of population for a range of technical and economic roles (or massification), and to the development of the entire population to adapt to changing environment (universalization) (Brennan, 2004). Trow (2007) conceived these stages as ideal but overlapping markers of growth of the higher education system and its equivalent changes in functions of higher education. De-privatization is conceived to occur as one system matures towards universalization (Kwiek, 2016).

However, these transitions do not operate in a policy void, particularly since universities can serve as tools for pursuing broader societal goals and objectives. The role of governing instruments on systems transition is often ignored because transitions happen abruptly and in an uncoordinated manner. The surge in societal pressure for education often catch governments by surprise that leads to “private proliferation amid little state regulation,” as in the case for many developing countries (Slantcheva and Levy, 2007, p. 5). But governing instruments have also been used to effectively manage transitions through policy instruments. As Japan moves towards universalization, the policy mix in higher education governance has been reformed to allocate the different goals of higher education to the various types of HEIs (Kitagawa and Oba, 2010). The Japanese functional differentiation suggests that “national universities should meet the needs of the nation, public universities should meet the needs of the local communities that established them and private universities should be mainly responsive to the market” (Eades, 2005, p. 295).

The allocation of specific goals to be performed by private and public HEIs also holds true for much of higher education systems around the world. Publicly-funded national universities are often expected to serve as the “principal tool of modern nation-building,” and “closely tied to national purposes” while remaining globally connected (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002, p. 411). This is the case for many national universities in many East Asian tigers like Hong Kong and Singapore that produced ‘development workers’ with the right skills and knowledge needed to pursue the government’s development strategy (Morris, 1996; Sung, 2006). Private higher education institutions are better equipped to absorb societal demand and are invariably linked to the massification of higher education (Levy, 2006). They can exercise flexibility to market forces and thus, can establish and strengthen markets for cross-border student mobility (Ortiga, 2017b; Varghese, 2004). When public schools dominate higher education, private schools emerge to cater to specialized and niche topics like business schools, offering greater diversity and choice to students (Altbach, 1999). Regional and local universities are well-positioned to drive regional economic and social development by generating economic activity through entrepreneurship, and developing the regional economy through its research and teaching (Gunasekara, 2006). Being cognizant of these functions and the comparative advantages of various types of HEIs in performing these HEI objectives would allow for a greater degree of institutional differentiation, which “is a prerequisite for an effective higher education system” (Kitagawa and Oba, 2010, p. 522).

As the Japanese case highlighted, shifts in how higher education is governed can be conceived as a way for governments to pursue institutional differentiation. If one is to view higher education system as an integrated whole, institutional differentiation is a “process in

which different structures or functions develop from a formerly integrated whole” (Huisman, 1998, p. 78). Following Kitagawa and Oba (2010), it is desirable to functionally differentiate between HEIs with varying degrees of privateness as each institution would have their own comparative advantage at performing certain functions. Institutional differentiation through governance is mediated by the interaction between different instruments of control, coordination and allocation of autonomy between the government, professoriate and university management (Clark, 1983; Dobbins, Knill, & Vögtle, 2011). Governments tinker with the degree of privatization-publicization in higher education through various policy levers, such as institutional autonomy, funding mechanisms, the quality assessment of research and teaching, internal institutional governance and the changing role of the State (Capano and Pritoni, 2019; Enders, De Boer, & Weyer, 2013).

Thus, in understanding de-privatization, this paper focuses on the consolidation of policy instruments to govern higher education. This approach is a departure from existing studies of higher education in the Philippines that tend to focus on political cycles and their relationship with policy change. It relates more with discussions of policy design and the political economy of higher education that transcend political administration (Cabanda, 2017; Ortega, 2017a; Saguin, 2019a). While tertiary enrolment in private institutions has been on a decline since the 1940s, the decline became more pronounced in 1990s as government policies on public HEIs began to take fold. This suggest that just as mass private higher education is a function of political economy of the Philippines, de-privatization can be best understood by examining governance dynamics.

### **The Legacy of Mass Private Higher Education**

The remarkable private-led provision and financing of Philippine higher education can be attributed to the historical importance of private schools in responding to the social demand for education. Initially created largely for the propagation of the catholic faith during the Spanish colonial era, Catholic universities are the oldest and largest in Asia have been converted to large comprehensive universities. Sectarian private schools, such as Ateneo de Manila University, Silliman University, University of Santo Tomas, are known for their high-quality education but these are often semi-elite institutions offering expensive tuition fees (ADB, 2012). Non-sectarian, for-profit private HEIs, known mostly for their poor quality began to emerge during American occupation and even grew exponentially by 70% after the Second World War (James, 1991; Monroe, 1925). Unable to keep up with the social demand for education during reconstruction years, the government allowed for the massive proliferation of for-profit private HEIs. The subsequent growth in these private HEIs created problems for the sector that made its eventual governance very challenging.

Because of the historically significant role of private schools, what emerged was a mixed system of “mass private and restricted public sectors” in higher education (Tilak, 1991). Private HEIs has market dominance since Spanish independence and comprise 99% and 98% of institutions and enrolment in 1946, respectively (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Such an extensive private higher education sector essentially fulfils “the role in accommodating the bulk of demand for higher education” (ADB 2012b, 8). These private HEIs drove massification of higher education, bringing greater access to a large chunk of the students that public universities could not serve (Perlman 1978). Many of the for-profit schools charge minimal tuition fees to keep their costs down, choosing to offer courses that require minimal capital to run (James 1991, Bennet 1968). Since teaching was the primary concern of these private HEIs, research also never took root in the system making the “indigenization of knowledge impossible” (Gonzalez 1989, 121). Given the dominance of

private HEIs, the higher education system was oriented at providing mass education at the cost of other societal objectives of education.

**Table 2 Higher Education Profile by Institution and Enrolment**

Year	Number of Institutions				Enrolment (in Thousands)			
	Public	Private	Total	% Private	Public	Private	Total	% Private
1946	5	498	503	99	1	45	46	98
1955	26	251	377	93	7	177	184	96
1965	26	440	466	94	59	468	527	89
1975	126	528	754	83	106	660	766	86
1985	319	838	1,157	72	230	1,274	1,504	85
1995	272	1,014	1,286	79	487	1,530	2,017	76
2005	191	1,492	1,619	89	849	1,633	2,483	66
2015	228	1,706	1,934	88	1,885	2,220	4,105	54
2018	242	1,721	1,963	88	1,519	1,693	3,212	53

Source: 1946-1985: James 1991, 1995-2018: CHED 2019 Higher Education Facts and Figures. 2005-2018 data excludes satellite campuses of state universities and colleges

With mass education as the primary function of higher education, the Philippines became an international laggard despite early success in promoting adult literacy and diversity in higher education. Higher education performance in the Philippines deteriorated after the 1960s, owing in part to the inability of the education system to respond to the rapid rate of population increase and the lack of education planning (Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education, 1970). While tertiary education participation expanded from 28% in 2005 to 36% in 2017 (CHED, 2019), an equivalent improvement in quality of education did not accompany this impressive quantitative expansion. Only the state-owned University of the Philippines ranked in the top 500 of the QS global rankings of universities. In terms of research outputs, the country is only ahead of smaller economies like Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia in Southeast Asia from 1996-2018 (Scimago, 2020). More importantly, national objectives of the knowledge sector to support developmental strategies have always been poorly attained. The government acknowledged this problem in its most recent economic development plan. According to the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022, the Philippines is performing poorly in fostering innovation (ranking 74 out of 128 in the 2016 Global Innovation Index), producing researchers (81 researchers per million population versus 205 in Indonesia and 115 in Vietnam), and encouraging domestic knowledge production (28 out of 777 journals or 3.6 percent are listed under Thomson Reuters, Scopus, or both). While the government met its targets for improving passing rates in licensure exams, popular courses like nursing struggled to maintain its quality with passing rates significantly declining in the past 20 years (Brush and Sochalski, 2007; Herrera, 2014). Herrera (2014) attributed the decline in quality in nursing licensure exams with the aggressive expansion of nursing programs among private schools whose “teaching and training could not keep up with the volume of students” (Herrera 2014, 651). The government managed to raise the percentage of faculty with PhDs to 13% in 2016 from 9.7% in 2009 (see **Error! Reference source not found.**), but this figure still falls below the government’s target of 30%. Although there is optimism in certain aspects of its performance, these trends occur independent of presidents that come and go and, thus, are more reflective of broader governance approach that failed to functionally differentiate HEIs.

**Table 3 Government Indicators of Quality of Tertiary Education (in %)**

Indicator	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18
Passing rate in Licensure Exam (HEd) (over-all takers)	36.2	33.9	35.9	42.6	39.2	39.8	39.3	37.6	36.8	37.9
Passing rate in Licensure Exam (HEd) (first-time takers)	49.8	49.9	54.4	61.4	59.9	60.2	58.6	55.7	56.5	55.5
Faculty qualification with MS/MA degree/s	35.0	38.9	41.4	38.8	40.9	40.8	40.3	40.4	40.4	37.6
Faculty qualification with Ph.D. degree/s	9.7	11.1	12.7	11.5	11.7	12.5	12.6	13.3	14.1	16.6

Source: CHED 2019 Higher Education Facts and Figures

The singular concern for mass education and lack of development planning resulted in institutional homogenization or the convergence of the functioning of HEIs. The mass private higher education ushered the transition from elite education to mass education, as conceived by Trow (1973) but it came at a cost of failing to promote quality and non-attainment of other higher education objectives. Some form of institutional isomorphism is driving this homogenization characterized by oversubscription of programs because of a “convergence of supply and demand on low cost, low-quality courses” (Paqueo, Orbeta, & Albert, 2011, p. 55). Grunnar Myrdal (1968) lamented about the inherent difficulty of governing a mixed system of public and private HEIs with a ‘soft state’: “[a] rational and more equitable allocation of educational resources is difficult in a mixed schools system” (Myrdal, 1968, p. 1707). Given the natural limits of markets, governance of education must always be “accompanied by timely and limited interventions on behalf of certain deficit fields to keep adequate manpower available for the development of the economy” (Gonzalez, 1997, p. 281). As will be shown in the succeeding discussions, the institutional homogenization can be seen as a function of the inability of the government to control and coordinate HEIs. The lackadaisical higher education governance essentially led to a homogenized environment where all institutions, regardless of their abilities and comparative advantage, seek to contribute to expanding access without due regard to quality or responsiveness to the job market.

### **Governing Higher Education as a ‘Soft State’**

The lack of functional differentiation can be attributed to the “laissez-faire” approach to governance that has been permissive of the immense expansion of higher education (Gonzalez, 1989, p. 118). Prior to the 1970s, hardly any systematic effort existed to govern the sector. The attempts of the government to regulate the existence and development of private schools were not only driven by the need to enforce standards but also ensure that such regulation is sustainable. The Bureau of Private Education was responsible for regulating private schools until the education department was re-organized that brought together public and private school regulation under the Bureau of Higher Education in 1975 (Perlman, 1978). Laws to tax private schools were introduced and eventually reversed owing to strong political lobbying of private schools association (Salamanca, 1981). The government channelled resources towards primary education at the cost of public investment in higher education.

Despite early success in higher education, cracks in the system began to form as quality became a victim to quantity. High social inequality existed with significant variation in literacy rates with provinces from Mindanao performing significantly poorly (Bennett, 1969). A government-commissioned study in the 1970s found an overproduction of college

graduates that the economy could not absorb, mismatch between the skills demanded by the job market and the skills of the graduates and, abject lack of quality in many institutions, particularly smaller private HEIs (Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education, 1970).

Recognizing the adverse consequences of the laissez-faire model, greater regulation was introduced beginning the late 1960s but it “stymied the system through overregulation” (Gonzalez, 1997, p. 281). The tumultuous period that led to the imposition of Martial law was characterized by deep social unrest partially fuelled by lack of jobs and perceived inadequacy of the education system. To redress these grievances, Marcos introduced greater regulation of education, guided by a 10-year Education Development plan, which is the first of its kind despite a long history of higher education in the country. It included the creation of the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) that sought to regulate the flow of secondary graduates into higher education (Cardozier, 1984). Marcos’ government established the linkage between the uneasy relationship between higher education and labour exportation as an active economic development strategy through the formal adoption of an Overseas Employment Program in 1974 (Maca 2018). However, the greater command and control measures instituted have been cynically viewed as just a form of coercion “that can breed corruption” (Clarke, 1977). Owing to the need to maintain the tenuous ties of the post-EDSA people power coalition, regulation was reversed and “by 1992 deregulation was complete and laissez faire approach had come full circle” (Bray, 2000, p. 336).

Efforts to regulate often fail because of the lack of capacity of the Commission of Higher Education to govern the sector. While tasked to regulate and develop the higher education system, CHED suffers from chronic incapacity to provide policy directions owing to the sheer size of the sector. As one of the previous Commissioners conceded, “[t]he large number of private colleges and universities to be supervised and the limited budget and staff of CHED...hampered the achievement of quality standards in higher education” (Alcala, 1999). Within the context of limited state capacity, the only established pathway to meeting greater societal demand for higher education would have to be through greater privatization (ADB, 2012). The private sector’s immense role in higher education dictates that “there is no alternative except to use the private sector to bring about reform in higher education” (Gonzalez, 1989, p. 131). Since private schools picked up the slack in government policies, complementarity between private and public institutions must be sought and preserved and, was even institutionalized in the Philippine constitution. Such complementarity hides the long adversarial relationship between the state and private schools. “The principal site of social conflict”, as Abinales and Amoroso (2005, p. 104) argued, “was higher education” where the soft state was largely unable to manage the conflict between elites and the church when it comes to promoting the values of inclusion. Private schools seek to protect their market share in higher education as the government’s drive to universalize primary education crowded out the private schools (Jimenez and Sawada, 2001). They, particularly led by the large sectarian universities, have always sought to influence policies and emerged as an important and powerful political actor in Philippine politics (Salamanca, 1981).

The inability to intervene in the market comes also from the long-standing revolving door between CHED and private schools. In fact, the lack of capacity of CHED can be linked back to “many private school owners [having] their own political clout...[who] can readily use these connections to undermine the commission’s regulatory efforts” (Ortiga, 2017a). For instance, former Association of Filipino Private Universities and Colleges (now called Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities/PACU) President Camilo Osias was appointed Acting Director of the Office of Private Education in 1941. Before the tri-focalization of education, Armando Fabella, former PACU President and President of Jose Rizal College, served as the education secretary when the manual of regulations of private

schools was amended. Former administrators of large private universities have helmed CHED as the chairperson for 15 years since 2003 (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). This comes not as a surprise to casual observers given the extensive experience of many of these university presidents in education management. But this revolving door suggests regulatory capture, which has been observed as a cause of governance failure in basic education (Saguin, 2019a). One example where private schools exercise their political power to influence policies is the creation of the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE). As Salamanca elaborated, the channeling of post-Second World War damage fund to private education through FAPE (now called Private Education Assistance Committee) is seen as the fruition of a “compelling necessity” of facilitating government assistance to private education (Salamanca 1981, 8). Up to this day, PEAC is implementing various government-funded programs to aid private HEIs including teacher training. The President/Executive Director of PEAC also serves in the advisory board of CHED to “assist in aligning its policies and plans with the cultural, political and socioeconomic development needs of the nation and with the demands of world-class scholarship”. It would be hard to expect a government regulator to enact policies contrary to the institutions they manage, particularly since most of them return to practice after their time as CHED chairperson.

**Table 4 Chairpersons of CHED**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Years of Appointment</b>	<b>Position Prior to Appointment</b>	<b>Sector of Previous Position</b>
Ricardo Gloria	1993-1994	Secretary, Department of Education, Culture, and Sports	Government
Mona Valisno	1995-1996	Commissioner, CHED	Government
Angel Alcala	1995-1999	Secretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources	Government
Ester A. Garcia	1999-2003	Professor, University of the Philippines	Public university
Rolando Ramos Dizon	2003-2004	President, De La Salle University	Private university
Fr. Rolando dela Rosa	2004-2005	Rector, University of Santo Tomas	Private university
Carlito Puno	2005-2007	President, Philippine Christian University	Private university
Romulo Neri	2007-2008	Professor, Asian Institute of Management	Private university
Emmanuel Angeles	2008	President, Angeles University Foundation	Private university
Patricia Licuanan	2010-2018	President, Miriam College	Private university
J. Prospero De Vera	2018-Present	Professor, University of the Philippines	Public university

Deregulation as a mode of governance is consistent with preserving private sector interest as the increasing market-friendly reforms post-1986 witnessed the mushrooming of even more institutions buttressed by deregulation (Gonzalez, 1997). CHED began a system of accreditation of private HEIs to differentiate which among the institutions can be deregulated and made more autonomous. This builds on the long-standing self-accreditation process instituted such as the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and

Universities (PAASCU) to arrest the “rapid growth of privately-owned educational institutions many of which were...branded as ‘diploma mills’” (Corpus, 2003, p. 2). This created a bifurcated approach to regulating public and private HEIs. Private HEIs are directly regulated by CHED and are thought to be the subject of a much stringent regulation as standards and policies govern their establishment, internal organization including minimum faculty requirements. CHED subsequently introduced a system of

State universities and colleges (SUCs) on the other hand were subjected to greater marketization. The institutionalization of CHED representation in governing boards and the restrictions on recruitment and promotion of academics have resulted in some form of state control particularly in SUCs (Jarvis and Mok, 2019). Since SUCs rely on national government funding, CHED managed to introduce normative financing for maintenance and operating expenses beginning 1999 and more formally in 2004 as a means to encourage and reward teaching and research that are more responsive to the government’s programmatic thrusts and priorities (Manasan, 2012). Quality assurance schemes such as program-level accreditation and rewards systems linked to the Center for Excellence/Development program are already in full swing.

Although better positioned to serve the national objectives of HEIs such as promoting research, public universities and colleges, egged on by its commercialization in the late 1990s, quantitatively expanded although in a limited degree compared to smaller private HEIs. As CHED acknowledged, SUCs were created “to provide access to more affordable, good quality education for the poor and disadvantaged, to ensure equity of access to higher education while at the same time serving as instruments of development in their regional and national contexts” (CHED, 2011, p. 3). Congress pass legislations to establish SUCs and thus, carry the role of promoting social and political objectives like democratizing access to higher education, fostering equity by providing education to the poor or fostering agrarian development by innovating on agricultural technologies. However, most of the time, agricultural schools and regional colleges were converted into SUCs “without a well-conceived plan” (Recana, 1973, p. 65). Many of these SUCs expanded in the form of satellite campus that fall largely outside of the purview of CHED (LaRocque, 2002). From 249 satellite campuses in 2003, the figure almost double to 442 in 2013. LUCs also grew in a similar fashion: from 46 in 2003 to 95 in 2013. Partially a result of modernization of SUCs, they are encouraged to be more financially self-sufficient and eventually turned to business-like practices by offering less capital-intensive programs like teacher-training and commerce of questionable quality to save operational costs (Tan, 2011).

In other words, the marketization instruments of the government turned public universities to become demand-absorbing institutions like their private counterparts. Despite the inherent political objectives of SUCs, various studies have shown that they fall trap to the desire of quantitative expanding rather than fulfilling these objectives more effectively. SUCs can be seen to respond to market demands as evidenced by the growth in funding from tuition fees. Manasan and Revilla (2015) found a growth in the internally generated income of SUCs from 18% in 2003 to 35% in 2012, a bulk of which come from student fees including tuition. The authors also revealed subsidy from the national government to grow only at an average of 5% per year while internally generated income grew by 16% per year during the same period. They have fostered greater reliance on tuition fees by offering courses that appeal for mass education. Judging solely by the mandates prescribed by their charters, 40% of programs offered by SUCs fall outside their mandate and tend to duplicate the program offerings of private schools and other SUCs within the region (Manasan and Parel, 2014). SUCs have been found to be inefficient in using their resources (Cuenca, 2011) and in fact, do not necessarily provide services to lower income groups as intended (Manasan, Cuenca, & Villanueva-Ruiz, 2008). SUCs and LUCs are only marginally better in terms of passing rates

in licensure exams averaging about 39% compared to 37% of Private HEIs for 2013-2018 (see **Table 5**). While this indicator of performance does not fully depict higher education outcomes, it suggests the lack of differentiation in terms of performance between these institutions.

**Table 5 Average Passing Rate in Licensure Exams by Institution Type, 2013-2017**

<b>Institutional Type</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
SUCs	42.27	40.57	39.91	38.45	37.49	39.41
LUCs	43.79	42.88	41.44	36.63	34.99	36.39
Private HEIs	37.10	39.02	38.68	37.04	36.56	36.89
All HEIs	39.21	39.76	39.29	37.55	36.82	37.87

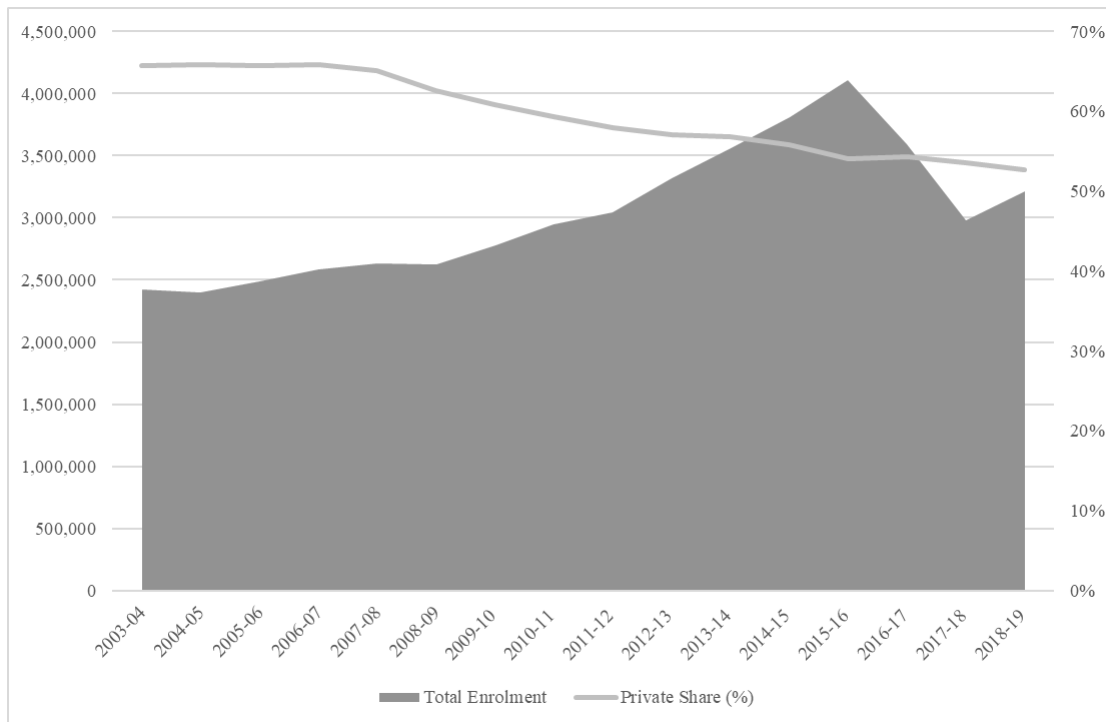
Source: CHED 2019 Higher Education Facts and Figures

### **Towards Universal Higher Education?**

Partially as a result of the expansion of public education, Philippine higher education system is now at the cusp of de-privatization. Government increased tertiary education participation to 37%, setting it towards the transition from mass education towards universal education. In terms of gross enrolment ratio, it is the lowest among ASEAN’s large economies at 23 while Thailand is at 53, Indonesia at 31 and Vietnam at 30 (CHED). Enrolment in higher education grew by an average of 4% from 2003 up to 2015 when participation dipped because the roll out of additional senior high school (SHS) created gap years in freshmen enrolment (see **Figure 1**). Much of the growth in enrolment was absorbed by public HEIs. In 1985, 85% of higher education enrolment came from private schools but this figure went down to 66% in 2005, and further to 53% in 2018 (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). From 2003-2015, the number of enrolments in public HEIs was growing by an average of 7% compared to 3% in their private counterparts. The downward trend in participation in private higher education continues even after the first SHS graduates entered higher education, despite the growth in number of private HEIs. From 838 in 1985, the number of private HEIs grew to 1,721, which was driven primarily by the increase in non-sectarian schools from periods 2003-2019 (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The number of public HEIs also grew but on a lesser pace despite earlier efforts to amalgamate them (Chao, 2012).

The past ten year witness the introduction of instruments that actually promote institutional differentiation between public and private HEIs. More broadly, the adoption of the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) through an Executive Order in 2012 and eventually a law in 2017 establishes national standards for outcomes of each level of education by identifying the desired competency expected of graduates. It was introduced to help “ensure that higher education supports the government’s efforts for nation-building and economic development” (Suarez, Chan, & Obieta, 2018, p. 5). CHED through the competency-based qualifications framework can adopt a developmental approach to quality assurance across HEIs. Thus, the PQF is way to differentiate policy measures between autonomous, deregulated and regulated private HEIs.

**Figure 1 Total HEI enrolment and share of private schools, AY 2003-2018**



Source: Commission on Higher Education Higher Education Data and Indicators 2019

The single-most important policy instrument employed by the government in deepening the role of public HEIs in providing mass education is the provision of free public higher education in 2017. The Free Tuition Law (or Republic Act No. 10931), signed into law by President Rodrigo Duterte, seeks to boost participation rates and to reduce drop-out rates in higher education by counteracting “a longstanding trend of increasing fees in higher education” (Lim, Lomer, & Millora, 2018, p. 22). It also serves as an important instrument for addressing inequality and providing greater access to tertiary education to poor and disadvantaged individuals by mandating the non-imposition of tuition fees among SUCs. The law features Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) that aims to aid financially needy students and Student Loan Program (SLP). These two components build on an earlier policy, passed in 2015 during the administration of President Benigno Aquino II (PNoy), that provides for a common framework of implementing Student Financial Assistance Programs (StuFAPs). The Unified Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (or UniFAST) provides scholarship for the bright, grants-in-aid for the poor, and loans for the rest and thus, provides “ample avenues for fulfilling the mandate of democratizing access to tertiary education” (Orbeta Jr and Paqueo, 2017, p. 5). The TES provides three tiers of benefits depending on the eligibility of the student and institutions they are enrolled in. Unlike the UniFast that includes scholarship for bright students, the TES only prioritizes students based on income and offers a) tuition fee subsidy, b) education-related expenses like book fees and boarding fees and c) professional certification fees like application fees for students enrolled in private HEIs while only benefits related to b) and c) are available to students in public HEIs. The SLP third component offers student loans for both public and private HEIs students enrolled in quality-assured programs.

The fact that the government enacted such reforms suggests an enhanced capacity to formulate policies that better manage the tension of different higher education objectives. The Aquino administration enjoyed high levels of political capacity in its early years to cohere societal actors that traditionally mount significant opposition to policies that allow the

government to consolidate more power (Saguin, 2019b). Universalism is consistent with Duterte's theatrical brand of populism and catches on the wave of the abrupt decay of Aquino's institutional liberalism that sought to privilege the poor (Curato, 2017; Thompson, 2017). In passing a law that bureaucratic elites resisted, Duterte cater to wishes of the populist publics that sought "kind of governance that delivers because not despite of cutting corners" (Arguelles, 2019; Webb and Curato, 2019, p. 61). However, in doing so, the reforms during the Aquino and Duterte administrations further reinforced greater capacity to channel resources into higher education governance. Due to the growing responsibility for governing education, CHED received its highest budgetary appropriations since its creation. From PhP 214 million in 2003, CHED budget grew to about PhP18 billion in 2017. The creation of UniFAST Secretariat provided much needed policy support and human resources to carry out new mandates that would have overwhelmed the already limited staffing of CHED. Although subsequent issues about the ability of the government to sustain free tertiary education as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, the enhanced capacity of CHED would now put in a better position to enforce its standards to ensure that HEIs contribute to the achievement of collective developmental objectives.

As public HEIs deepen its role in providing mass education, private schools face a threat of being crowded out. A study by the Philippine Institute of Development Studies found a leap in the share of freshmen enrolment in public HEIs to 75% in 2017 from a range of 57% to 59% from 2011-2016 (Ortiz, Melad, Araos, Orbeta, & Reyes, 2019). Although it is difficult to attribute the greater share of public HEI enrolment to the law, what appears to be evident is that CHED is exercising greater degree of control over public universities by prescribing criteria for SUCs and LUCs to qualify to provide free education. Only 78 of the 118 LUCs qualified to the standards of institutional recognition or receiving government authority for all their program offerings. By virtue of these interventions alone, the government is now better positions to re-align SUCs' thrusts towards state priorities and interests. Similarly, the Free Tuition Law also folded in private HEIs, the government is better able to consolidate its regulation function by imposing eligibility criteria to avail of the scholarships and loans being offered.

Some evidence that private schools have shifted from demand-absorbing to niche-catering institutions can be found in the strategies employed by these HEIs to cope with the lack of tertiary enrolment in 2015-2017. The mandatory additional two years in high school forced many private schools to adopt creative strategies to cope with minimal enrolment. The smaller private institutions have been able to re-orient their programs to producing globally competitive graduates. In the Philippines, such demand is particularly apparent in producing migrant workers, particularly since temporary contract migration forms a crucial part of the country's development strategy (Asis, 2006; Tyner, 2010). The country became a leading supplier of migrant workers including professionals like nurses and seaman as well as domestic helpers and this was buttressed by private schools enthusiastic to cater to popular courses. Higher education institutions have essentially turned themselves into "migrant institutions" that influence "the material and ideological conditions of migration" (Masselink and Lee, 2010, p. 168). The government made this happen with a mix of policy instruments that in one way or another resolves the competing interests between various actors in higher education (Cabanda, 2017). These 'migrant institutions' are often private, hyper-global HEIs or "flexible universities" that "seek to predict labor gaps in migrant destination countries and develop programs that would be appealing to aspiring migrants" (Ortiga, 2017b, p. 490). While such re-orientation inherently poses adverse consequences, such an approach to providing niche education and catering to global preferences responds to both the profit motives of these small private HEIs while contributing to the internationalization interests of the state.

Another example of private HEIs catering to niche taste is related to the construction of a 'global education hub' in the Asia Pacific. The country experienced growth in foreign student inflow particularly in English learning that prompted former Immigration Commissioner Ricardo David, Jr, to declare the Philippines as 'a new educational hub in the Asia-Pacific region' (Tubeza, 2013). English learning through non-degree courses catered to Koreans and Japanese have already been popular but a more recent trend however is the exponential rise in international students seeking undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Many foreign students went to large private universities including Centro Escolar University, University of the East, University of Sto. Tomas, De La Salle University (Bureau of Immigration, 2014). In 2015, foreign students taking degree courses increased to 16,400 from 3,005 in 2014 (Bureau of Immigration, 2018). This significant jump in degree-seeking foreign students coincided with the gap year imposed by the introduction of SHS. By 2017, another 14,848 foreign students were given student visas, sustaining a trend of more than 10,000 student inflows. Government data on foreign students remain inconsistent but the number of visa holders suggest an almost five-fold increase. Much of the flow in foreign students is driven by Indian nationals accounting for an average of 35% of new visas between 2015-2017. Many private schools took advantage of this state strategy of increasing international reputation for education while attracting "aspiring migrant workers" who "look towards successful labor-exporting countries to provide the training to fill labor gaps at 'home' or in popular migrant destinations" (Ortiga, 2018, p. 12). Not known for the highest quality of education, private schools have now turned their experience in producing migrant workers to producing foreign graduates. Foreign students tend to cluster in specific programs depending on their future mobility agenda. Indians tend to populate medical programs, Filipino-Americans cluster in nursing schools and Nigerians flock marine engineering programs (Ortiga, 2018). There is a history of American taking up medical and allied health courses in the Philippines driven in part by cheap costs and international accreditation (Hollie, 1981). In fact, in school year 1994-1995, 37% of American students in the Philippines were enrolled in medical courses (CHED 1995). However, the growth in the absolute numbers of foreign enrolments as well as diversity in nationalities suggest the inherent connection between the re-orientation of private schools towards 'education for export' and creeping reliance on foreign students.

When private schools can essentially influence the direction and success of reform, the hybrid form of governance becomes a product of the long history of the 'soft state' negotiating to enforce its demands for nation-building that may run in conflict with private interests (Myrdal, 1968). The dominance of private schools, particularly in providing mass education, served as a constraint to improving higher education sector performance. The untethered growth of private education that led to mass private higher education took place "at the bottom end of the system rather than at the top" because without sufficient government control, universities and colleges would forgo quality over quantity (Altbach, 2005, p. 2). As Myrdal (1968, p. 1820) reminded us long ago, "effective reform of almost every kind must assume a firmer governmental control of educational institutions". By exerting greater control of the SUCs, however, CHED fashioned a hybrid governance model – one that differentiates between the nature of institution – that came as a response to massive expansion of SUCs and LUCs. It is only through more expansive public provision of higher education that CHED can assert its policy directions: "the private and public higher education governance discrepancy is seen with CHED's limited control of the private higher education...in contrast to SUC's reliance on government financing and their individual charters directed missions" (Chao, 2012, p. 40). A higher education system with greater share for public provision not only relegates private HEIs to elite education and niche education market but it also subjects the higher education system to greater democratic control. This

provides opportunities to configure higher education that can serve the developmental objectives of the sector more acutely. Enhancing the role of higher education for development needs a change in the equilibrium of state-market mix in providing higher education.

## **Conclusion**

The paper set out to understand why the Philippines is going against the trend of greater privatization in higher education. Using the concept of de-privatization, the paper established the unravelling of private-sector dominance in higher education as a function of the hybridization of governance that fostered greater institutional differentiation between the types of HEIs in the Philippines. The government's policies, which transcended political administrations, egged on the expansion of public HEIs while inadvertently allowing private HEIs to cater to specific tastes in the higher education market. It contributes to the literature on higher education by examining how hybrid forms of governing instruments can shape institutional differentiation. It further contributes to the study of public policy in the Philippines by emphasizing the role of policy instruments in configuring how the government interfaces with various HEIs.

De-privatization is consistent with Levy's (2006) assertion that private schools take the slack of public schools. We can expect greater differentiation between private and public institutions. The smaller HEIs might be crowded out of mass private education and preferences for niche schools might allow them to survive. Public universities and colleges are now subjected to government's control and in a better position to serve national and local objectives. The University of the Philippines will continue its role of leading research and producing technocrats (Gonzalez, 1989; Tadem, 2015) while the rest of SUCs would be responsible for promoting equity and greater access to higher education through free tuition fee. If CHED is able to consolidate its regulation capacity, it is conceivable to see another transition to universal education, as Free Tuition Law would cement preferences for a bigger role of public schools in higher education, as Trow (1973) had earlier suggested.

Private sector decline can be seen as a transitional phase but the case in the Philippines suggests that deepening public sector expansion and reconfiguration of the functions of private HEI can lead to a lasting increase in state involvement. Reversal of the declining trend is still possible as the government is struggling to sustain the free tuition fees in state universities and colleges (SUCs); but the law creates a huge institutional inertia towards greater public higher education provision and financing. What remains clear, as Levy (2013) suggested, is that private HEIs are formidable institutions. As the growth in the number of private HEIs and its market, the paper adheres to Levy's argument that "sometimes dynamics that work against private growth operate simultaneously with dynamics that bolster such growth" and private HEIs "are not inevitably hapless sufferers; evidence of action includes reaching out to new kinds of students" (Levy 2013, 38).

The paper only provides a partial analysis of why such change occurred, and the role political and institutional context of the Philippines in shaping this trend should be a subject of further research. Further investigation is needed but one possible factor is instrumental learning (Lange and Alexiadou, 2010). As this paper suggested, the government became better capacitated at instituting regulations through its experience of regulating public HEIs. As CHED becomes more capable of regulating public HEIs, this kind of hybrid governance model establishes the further development and expansion of public universities and colleges as an alternative pathway to reform higher education. This process allowed the government to gain the much needed experience of deploying instruments beyond command and control. Another stream of research could examine the mobilization of state universities and colleges as an interest group. Apart from the big boost in the budget, SUCs also benefitted recently in

the establishment of the Philippine Higher Education Career System (Phil-HECS) that sought to “improve the quality of governance in Philippine higher education by strengthening competencies of SUC leaders and promoting individual accountability” (CHED, n.d.). As former CHED Chairperson Licuanan stated, “it was a training program [for senior executives], but it was also a program for giving certain credentials to aspiring executives of higher education institutions so that it also becomes less politicized” (Cepeda, 2018). Thus, SUC officials could emerge as a powerful lobbying group that further reinforces the decline of private HEIs.

What remains unclear is whether the government could sustain such gains. As Chao (2012) pointed out, policy reversals is commonplace given that private schools still play an influential role in policymaking. It also remains unclear whether such role differentiation would allow the different institutions to better contribute to the achievement of nation-building and development objectives of the country (Gonzalez, 1989). Knowing whether higher education would improve its performance as a result of these transitions is only a matter of time since there is much to improve. There are indications of weaknesses to sustain such a generous program as the government had announced budget cuts and already declared that no new scholars would be enrolled into the program in 2020. What these policy developments only suggest is that the government is now better able to systematically intervene in a sector traditionally left to the private sector. Further studies should examine what sort of outcomes would come out such institutional differentiation and greater government control of higher education.

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