



Free Higher Education in the Philippines Towards the Advancement of Scientific Knowledge: The Case of Don Honorio Ventura State University

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Abstract

Quality education at all levels is one of the foundations of sustainable development. This is necessary in order to advance any Scientific Knowledge in any field of study. Last August 3, 2017, the Republic Act 10931 also known as the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education was enacted. It is anchored on the government's priority thrust of poverty alleviation and is aimed at providing all Filipinos with equal opportunity to quality tertiary education. Prior to its enactment, President Rodrigo Duterte's administration had already implemented an initial run of providing 'universal' access to tertiary education referred to as the '2017 Free Tuition Policy in State Universities and Colleges.' The purpose of this paper is to assess how this policy had been carried out administratively. A Qualitative Research was conducted which assessed the administrative efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of its implementation. Don Honorio Ventura State University (DHVSU), a state university in Pampanga mandated to provide advanced instruction and professional training in education, engineering, science and technology, arts and humanities, computer and other relevant fields of study, was used as a case study. The findings show that the provisions of the policy are administratively feasible despite the challenges encountered. A conclusion of the different lessons of DHVSU's implementation of the policy is presented, thereby, different administrative policies can be considered to ensure the successful implementation of universal access to quality tertiary education in the Philippines.

Key Words: Scientific Knowledge, Public Administration, Social Equity, Universal Education

Introduction

“On this battlefield, man has no better weapon than his intelligence, no other force but his heart.”
by Dr. Jose P. Rizal

“In our bid to accelerate human capital development, we should ensure lifelong opportunities by enhancing quality of and access to education and training programs.”
by President Rodrigo R. Duterte (SONA 2017)

The scientific knowledge, in general, has flourished as the history of the world progresses. The system of education in any country is a means towards the advancement of any field of study, including the natural and social sciences.

Education at all levels, which include tertiary education, is given importance in different international commitments and declarations. It is also considered as an inalienable right of all Filipinos as stated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, to wit:

“The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.”

Section 1, Article 14, 1987 Philippine Constitution

Indeed, education can cause progressive transformation not only in the life of an individual but also in his/her entire society and in the global community. However, according to the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2017, the Philippines ranked 74th out of 127 countries in tertiary education, compared to Thailand's 90th place. Still a long way to go to be on top (Cornell University, INSEAD, & WIPO, 2017)!

Higher education is crucial for economies to move up the value chain beyond simple production processes and products. The sub-pillar on tertiary education as elaborated in the GII aims at capturing coverage (tertiary enrolment); priority is given to the sectors traditionally associated with innovation (with a series on the percentage of tertiary graduates in science, engineering, manufacturing, and construction); and the inbound and mobility of tertiary students, which plays a crucial role in the exchange of ideas and skills necessary for innovation (ibid).

Sen (1999) posits in his classic *Development as Freedom*, the idea that development can be seen as a process of expanding the freedoms that people enjoy, that is, the expansion of a person's capability to choose a life one has reason to value. On the other hand, poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities. Therefore, if freedom is what development is about, then it makes sense to concentrate on that rather than on some of the means or instruments of achieving it. The ability to exercise freedom may be directly dependent on the education a person has received, and thus the development of the educational sector has a foundational connection with social development.

In these modern times, there is an unprecedented demand for and a great diversification in higher education, as well as an increased consciousness of its vital importance for economic and sociocultural development, and for building the future for which the next generations will need to be equipped with new knowledge, skills, values, and ideals. Furthermore, in addition to Instruction, the other core functions of any higher education institution, which are Research and Extension Services, direct the community of higher learning to continue to discover and produce new knowledge, with the aim of applying and disseminating the fruits of the intellect to benefit the greater community.

Globally, the higher education sector is characterized by the rapid pace of change, enhanced competition, and ongoing internationalization. Larger segments of populations worldwide require – and ask for – higher levels of education and training. Furthermore, socioeconomic demands mean that human capital formation is also changing, mainly characterized by an expansion of participation in education by people. The results of these trends is that education systems are continuously under

adjustment, with more emphasis on creativity and flexibility and a focus on the changing demands of a knowledge-based economy (Stephens, 2009).

As further discussed by Stephens (ibid), it is possible to identify the following major global trends that have shaped and continue to exert an influence upon the development of higher education:

- 1.) A massive increase in the demand for higher education;
- 2.) A real decline in public expenditure on higher education;
- 3.) An increase in cost recovery;
- 4.) An increase in the popularity of student loans;
- 5.) The mantra of privatization with the centrality of marketization and commodification; and
- 6.) Expansion through internationalization.

Investing in higher education contributes to inclusive growth (Canlas, 2016). Canlas (ibid) remarked that the benefits from higher education, however, are not automatically inclusive. One major factor behind this is that households, for the most part, finance higher education, especially before the introduction of the free higher education in public universities and colleges in the Philippines. A family must first accumulate funds to be able to finance college education. Entering college, therefore, depends not only on the ability to learn but also on the ability to pay the costs.

In addition to hurdling the challenges of access to tertiary education, as mentioned earlier, the colossal problems of unemployment, underemployment, and job mismatch are still prevalent (Orbeta Jr., Gonzalez, & Cortes, 2016; Usui, 2011, p. 17). Among the six major economies of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN- 6), the Philippines consistently has the highest unemployment rate (5.2% or 2.3 million in January 2019 according to the Philippine Statistics Authority or PSA) (CEIC, 2019). This explains the fact of the present times that many college graduates still comprise low-income earners. However, before facing the challenges of the availability of employment, the access to college education comes as a primary obstacle that needs to be overcome by Filipino individuals and family.

In the Philippines, the future would continually bring about vacillating events and changes not only among business and other economic related organizations but also among higher education institutions, both public and private. Specially now, as the country continuously transitions toward the stabilization of the K-12 curriculum in basic education, a significant consideration is necessary that moved colleges and universities to lay-out plans that would help them achieve stability amidst uncertainties.

Cuenca (2013) discusses the long-standing issues and concerns that beset the country's system of higher education. In particular, the higher education subsector is haunted by issues of: (i) limited and inadequate access to higher education; (ii) inequitable financing of public higher education; (iii) lack of overall vision, framework, and plan for higher education resulting in the proliferation of low- quality higher education institutions (HEIs) and programs, oversubscribed and undersubscribed programs as well as skills and job mismatch; (iv) deteriorating quality of higher education due to inadequate faculty credentials and as indicated by the declining performance of graduates in professional licensure exams; (v) crowding out of private provision; and (vi) underdeveloped innovation system.

In recent years, there have been significant increases in the budget of the national government to higher education. These increases are consistent with the financing framework for higher education which recognizes that: (i) since graduates of HEIs do internalize a significant portion of the benefits of higher education schooling in the form of a higher income stream in the future, it is but proper that graduates of higher education should contribute to the cost of their degree in the form of fees/user charges and some form of cost recovery even in public HEIs; (ii) equity concerns dictate the expansion of financial aid program to needy students as well as student loan programs to provide bridge financing to students and their families; and (iii) some national government subsidy to higher education is justified primarily because higher education has a public good element that creates benefits to society that go beyond the income and employment gains accruing to individual graduates (Manasan, 2013).

In the context of the present delivery of public higher education, some of the possibilities that all HEIs have to look into are: restructuring of Tertiary Education's landscape in which dramatic changes of fundamental rules and procedural implementation of things are taking place; the ever-changing demands of the workplace locally and globally which may subsequently lead to the revisiting of the learning environment and strategies by which students are taught and equipped; and the ever-challenging academic situation in which knowledge and orientation of the trends, updates, and issues confronting the field have to be at one's reservoir to be on a par with the standards. All these and more require focus and attention, not just from the academic community but the government encompassing, as it provides and regulates such important social service to its people.

Education can be considered as the "great equalizer." It can help fight poverty and even raise a person's income for every additional year of schooling. Acknowledging this fact, the government is banking on the education sector to transform the lives of its people by lifting the competencies of its workforce and enabling them to become globally competitive (Department of Budget and Management, 2018). However, education, the tool 'extraordinaire' for promoting development, is expensive (Carson, 1961). Despite of this, the Philippine government has shown political will in order to provide this very important social investment, making basic education free and accessible for a long period, and now has extended the same for higher education.

In an interview with Ms. Marife Lou Bacate, Technical Consultant of the UniFASTⁱ Secretariat, she provided the following information and data that served as rationale for the consideration and passage of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (RA 10931).

In 2016, there were 12,801,682 high school graduates (ages 16 – 30 years old) without tertiary degree. 9,648,453 (or 75.37%) are not in school. 3,346,993(or 26.14%) are Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET). Figure 1 shows that indeed, there is a large potential unmet need among the youths in terms of higher education.

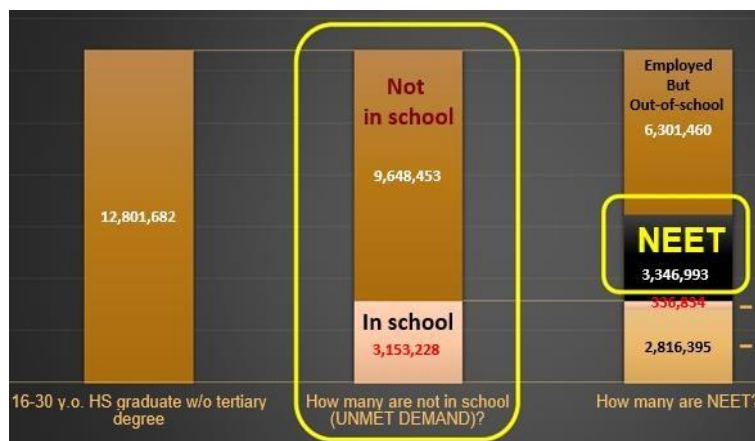


Figure 1 - Percentage of youth ages 16-30 years old who are Not in Education, Employment, and Training (NEET)

Culturally, the preference of the youths is to pursue college education. Appendix A shows that 90% of the poorest youth prefer to pursue college education (Higher Education) over Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET). This is consistent with the data gathered by the Department of Education before the full blown implementation of the K to 12 curriculum in 2014, and comparing it with the 2016 data (please see Appendix A).

Figure 2 shows that among the main reason why most of the poor high school graduates are not in school is the high cost of education. Other reasons include: looking for work, family matters, lack of interest, illness/disability, accessibility of school, and others.

It should be noted that these reasons vary across different socio-economic status (e.g. poor and their need to help at home), residential location, other student characteristic (e.g., has disability, extremely smart), and the type and quality of institution (e.g. public & high quality college, private & low quality college). The cost of studying in tertiary level include financing for school fees (e.g., tuition, miscellaneous, etc.), financing for other education-related expenses, living expenses, foregone income if student worked full-time, and psychicⁱⁱ cost of studying at tertiary level.

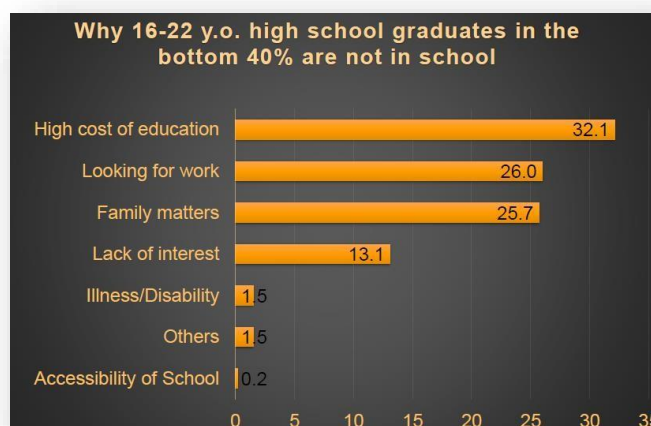


Figure 2 - Reasons Why High School Graduates are not in School

Figure 3 shows that out of the 57% secondary graduates (25+ years old), only 29% proceed to tertiary education, while 19% are tertiary level graduates. The poorest are less likely to go to college and less likely to graduate. Moreover, looking at the data of the same analysis with different age brackets, it is observed that intergenerational education is very slowly improving (see Appendix B).

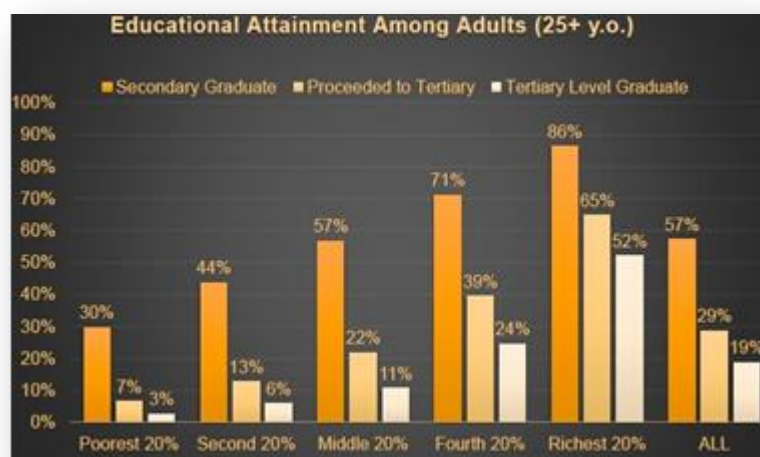


Figure 3 - Educational Attainment among Adults (25+ years old)

Appendix C shows that there has been improvement of access for the poor Filipinos in public colleges as the government has been providing such service through the state universities and colleges (SUCs) and local universities and colleges (LUCs). Therefore, the poorest are more likely to go to public HEIs over private HEIs (see Appendix D). However, the reasons mentioned above still hinder most of the youths from pursuing college education. Most SUCs need to do a lot of catching up in terms of availing resources from the national government as illustrated in Appendix E, which shows that the distribution of resources varies significantly between SUCs. Furthermore, Appendix F shows that the Average Per Capita Spending in SUCs increases as time progresses. On a further note, Appendix G shows the nationwide distribution of HEIs (A.Y. 2016 – 2017), wherein majority are private HEIs.

In consideration of these information, the Republic Act 10931 also known as the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education was enacted last August 3, 2017. It is based on the premise that quality education is an inalienable right of all Filipinos. It aims to provide all Filipinos with equal opportunity to quality tertiary education in both the private and public educational institutions (RA 10931, 2017).

Four (4) notable government programs are embedded in the said law to achieve its objectives. Three (3) out of the four (4) provisions are directly related to state universities and colleges (SUCs) and local universities and colleges (LUCs). The other one (1) is for technical vocational institutions (TVIs). These three (3) are the: 1.) Free Higher Education in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs); 2.) Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) for Filipino Students; and 3.) Student Loan Program for Tertiary Education (RA 10931, 2017). Please see Appendix H for the details of these three (3) provisions. With this RA, free tuition and other fees in SUCs and LUCs all over the country is institutionalized, giving underprivileged students a chance to

earn a college degree. Moreover, it would eliminate the need for political patronage before a student could avail scholarships and enroll in SUCs and LUCs.

Prior to the enactment of RA 10931, it should be noted that the present administration of President Rodrigo R. Duterte had already implemented an initial run of providing ‘universal’ access to tertiary education. The special provisions in the 2017 General Appropriation Act (GAA) and some conditional implementation orders by the Chief Executive were the basis of such grant (RA 10924, 2016). This was referred to as the ‘2017 Free Tuition Policy in SUCs’, as elaborated in the Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 2017-1 (CHED and DBM JMC No. 2017 - 1, 2017), later amended by JMC No. 2017-1A (CHED and DBM JMC No. 2017 - 1A, 2017) by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). The said priority expenditure in the 2017 GAA was anchored on one of the pillars of the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022, which is Inequality-Reducing Transformation “Pagbabago” (Accelerating Human Capital Development: Quality, Accessible, and Relevant Education).

As a pre-taste of the full blown implementation of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (RA 10931), it is thus proper to conduct an assessment of the performance of this program (i.e., 2017 Free Tuition Policy in SUCs) that is intended for the public good. This will therefore evaluate the level of how this policy has been carried out and analyze the factors that influence its effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy and appropriateness.

One (1) of the 112 SUCs in the country which implemented the 2017 Free Tuition Policy is the Don Honorio Ventura State University (DHVSU), formerly Don Honorio Ventura Technological State University (DHVTSU), based in Pampanga. The researcher used the implementation of the policy in this university as a case in the evaluation. This is what this paper is all about. In general, this aims to investigate and evaluate the research questions given below:

Research Questions

1. What administrative lessons can be learned from the implementation of the 2017 Free Tuition Policy in Don Honorio Ventura State University (DHVSU)?
2. What administrative policies can be considered and implemented to ensure the efficient, effective and equitable implementation of universal access to quality tertiary education in SUCs for the advancement of Scientific Knowledge?

Conceptual Framework

The Philippine Government is increasingly realizing that the entire educational system - from early childhood through tertiary education - must reflect the new social and economic needs of the global economy, which increasingly demands a better-trained, more skilled, and adaptable workforce. This is reflected with the passage of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, in addition to the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533, 2013).

Higher education constitutes an extremely significant institution in socio-economic development. This is because colleges and universities provide the base from where a ‘technological society’ takes off and develops. They are also the most powerful source of intellectual energy that shape a nation’s culture and ideology. Without higher education, which is committed to research and

innovation, no country can hope to advance or ultimately survive in our time (Arcelo, Cortes, Ibe, Sta. Maria, & Valisno, 1994).

The Input-Process-Output-Outcome (IPOO) model is used to outline the Conceptual Framework of this research. Fig. 4 shows that the ultimate long-term outcome of having a universal access to tertiary education are the inclusive growth in terms of social development and, likewise, the elimination of poverty. Improving access and quality of tertiary education are expected to lead to such goals.

This research focuses on the evaluation of the administrative implications of the 2017 Free Tuition Policy for SUCs. Figure 4 illustrates the Conceptual Framework explored in this paper. The emphasis is on the Input-Process-Output (IPO) part of the framework. The Inputs include: availability of public funds (Higher Education Support Program or HESF); manpower; stakeholders' participation and compliance; and roles of other government agencies (CHED and DBM). The Process pertains to the implementation of the policy. While the Outputs are: greater access to tertiary education; delivery of quality education; and other administrative considerations pertaining to the policy and its relations to the fulfillment of the mandates of SUCs.

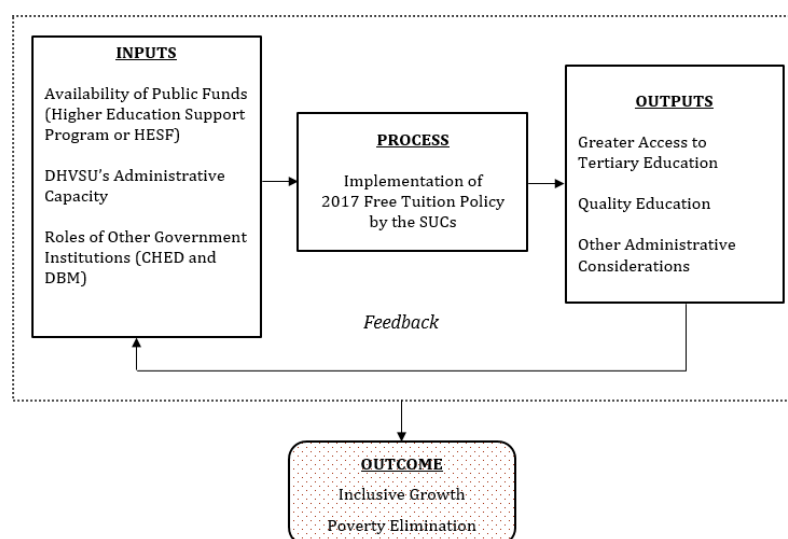


Figure 4 – Conceptual Framework

Methodology

A Qualitative Research was conducted. The Don Honorio Ventura State University (DHVSU), formerly Don Honorio Ventura Technological State University (DHVTSU), was used as a Case Study. Presently, it is one of the state universities in the province of Pampanga. Its main campus is based in the municipality of Bacolor, which was once ruined by the catastrophic Mt. Pinatubo eruption in the 1990s. It was converted into a state university in 2009, through the enactment of Republic Act 9832. As of now, it has four (4) satellite campuses located in the towns of Lubao, Mexico, Porac and Sto. Tomas.

Information were gathered from DHVSU's Office of the Executive Vice President (EVP), Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and the Research and Development Services Office (RDSO), the lead offices in the implementation of the 2017 Free Tuition Policy in DHVSU. Key informant interviews and documents analysis were conducted from the said offices, as

well as from other government agencies. These include the CHED Central Office and DBM Region 3 Office. Interview questions that were discussed are provided in Appendix I. In addition to these, an interview was also conducted in the UniFAST Secretariat Office in Quezon City which provided the information on the rationale and the details of the nationwide implementation of the policy.

Findings, Results, and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the guidelines of the implementation of the 2017 Free Tuition Policy is provided by the CHED – DBM Joint Memorandum Circular 2017 – 1 issued last April 20, 2017. This was later amended by the CHED – DBM Joint Memorandum Circular 2017 – 1A last May 18, 2017. Please see Appendices J and K for the excerpts of the said Joint Memorandum Circulars.

Section 1 provides the rationale of the said policy. The special provisions stated in the 2017 General Appropriations Act (GAA), as well as the Conditional Implementation ordered by President Rodrigo R. Duterte that are relevant to the policy are also elaborated. Section 5 elaborates the Student Prioritization in the entitlement and availment of free tuition. Students who are beneficiaries of nationally- funded Student Financial Assistance Programs (StuFAPs) shall be the first to be enrolled. After all StuFAPs beneficiaries have been enrolled, students shall be grouped into (1) continuing and (2) new enrollees and returning.

The major amendment provided by the CHED - DBM JMC 2017 - 1A was the removal of prioritization for continuing, new enrollees and returning students for the availment of free tuition. In the old JMC 2017 - 1, priority was given to students who are graduating, beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)ⁱⁱⁱ and those included in Listahanan 2.0^{iv}. In the new JMC 2017 - 1A, continuing students were given priority ranked according to their household income. If there were remaining Free Tuition funds, new enrollees and returning students were given the corresponding Free Tuition slots ranked according to their household income. Based on the interview with Ms. Marife Lou Bacate of UniFAST Secretariat, the reason for the amendment was the problem that most SUCs encountered in the submission of required documents by the students. Thus, to mitigate the further effect of this problem, a more ‘universal’ guideline was implemented in the prioritization of students.

CHED, in coordination with DBM, served as the regulating agency in the implementation of the policy. Funds are channeled through CHED after the SUCs meet all the needed required documentations. In the implementation of RA 10931 starting A.Y. 2018-2019, funds will still be channeled through CHED during the transition period of approximately two (2) academic years. Afterwards, funds will be allocated directly to the SUCs in the GAA.

One of the biggest, if not the biggest, issues related to the implementation of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (RA 10931) is fiscal feasibility. Indeed, investment in education is expensive. The fiscal sustainability of the program in the long run is a major consideration that the national government should give attention.

This is beyond the scope of this paper. As of now, the congress has considered the additional revenues that are generated through the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN)^v law. Priority in the list of the sectors that the Tax Reform should fund is education, which includes the provisions of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act. Another source of fund to be used for the Student Loan Program is the Development Bank of the Philippines. Sec. 8. of the

UniFAST Act (RA 10687, 2015) states that educational loan shall be sourced from the five percent (5%) of the total loanable portfolio of the Development Bank of the Philippines without prejudice to the creation of other Student Loan programs.

The Case of Don Honorio Ventura State University

Don Honorio Ventura State University (DHVSU), is one of the 112 SUCs that implemented the 2017 Free Tuition Policy. It has the highest allocation of the HESF in Region 3. Figure 5 shows that Php 187,302,000.00 (22% of the whole allocation for SUCs in Region 3) was allocated for the whole A.Y. 2017 – 2018, half of which was allocated for the First Semester (i.e., Php 93,651,000.00). The amount was based on the Estimated Tuition Income Stated by SUCs in the 2017 Budget of Expenditure and Sources of Financing. The total amount utilized for First Semester was Php 61,015,364.00 (i.e., 65.15% of the total budget), covering at least 83.99% of the total undergraduate students^{vi}.

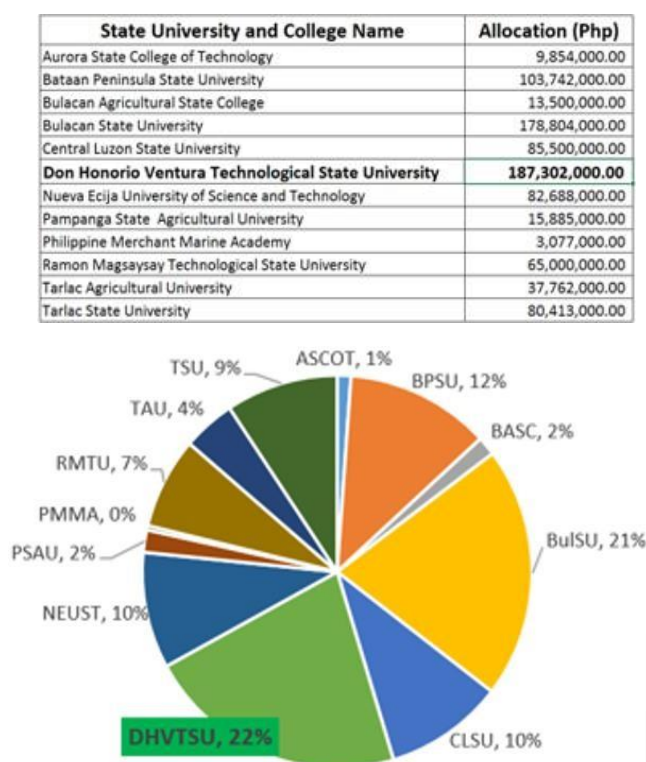


Figure 5 - HESF Allocations in Region 3

During the implementation of the policy, DHVSU had 14 Government Grant-in-Aid/Scholarship Programs (e.g., Scholarship for Athletes, Honor Students, Cultural Development, etc.). Because of the Free Tuition Policy, these were not granted anymore as students availing them need not to pay the Tuition Fees. There are 22 Externally-funded Scholarships (i.e., Scholarships provided by private companies/individuals, civil society organizations (CSOs), politicians, etc.). Instead of providing for tuition fees, these individuals and organizations were given the option to divert their scholarship funds as allowances or stipends to students (e.g. living allowance, book allowance, transportation allowance etc.).

In terms of admission, DHVSU implemented an Open Admission Policy. However, stricter screenings were conducted especially for courses with board exams. It followed the same retention policy. The administration had been consistent and had conducted a strict implementation of the Free

Tuition Policy based on the guidelines provided. However, one weakness that was encountered was the difficulty of some students to follow deadlines in the submission of needed documents. Most students cannot produce the proof of income (especially the poorest). Good thing, DBM and CHED changed the policy to a more 'universal' type of implementation.

The information from the key informant interviews with Engr. Rohel S. Serrano (DHVSU Executive Vice President), Engr. Reden M. Hernandez (DHVSU Vice-President for Academic Affairs), and Mr. Paolo Lumanlan (DHVSU Free Tuition Fee Coordinator), are summarized below. There are five (5) related areas of concerns. The positive and negative effects of these areas of concerns are identified. These are based from general observations and evaluations of the policy in DHVSU and assumed to be applicable as well with other SUCs. Moreover, proposed actions/recommendations are also discussed which can be considered in the implementation of RA 10931.

1. Institutional scholarships such as academic scholarships/financial assistance

Positive Effect: The policy had expanded the scope and coverage of students who could be given scholarships by the HEIs. The law literally defined the true meaning of "Iskolar ng Bayan." It also revolutionized the entire Tertiary Education System in the Philippines.

Negative Effect: It restricted the implementation of institutional academic scholarships/financial assistances being funded by SUCs, which encourage students' excellence in academic, sports, and other academic-related endeavors. SUCs, which are not so established financially and could hardly generate income internally are possibly in state of dilemma because the income derived from tuition and other charges are their only source of funds to support their operations.

Proposed Action: SUCs should provide explicitly how it can guarantee that academic scholarships and financial assistance could be continued to ensure that graduates would be globally competitive.

2. Performance/Membership of varsity players; arts and cultural scholars such as theater, choir, bands, and dance groups, etc.

Positive Effect: SUCs can now select best students through merit and fitness test. The budget for these scholarships can be diverted/used as stipends for their allowances, instead.

Negative Effect: The notion that athletes and talented students enroll just because of scholarships granted to them might be challenged. In relation to this, the performance of students involved in these areas might regress because of lack of motivation.

Proposed Action: Prioritization as mentioned in the law need to consider these students. Admission policy has to be flexible to encourage best players or best talents.

3. Externally-funded scholarships and financial assistance programs

Positive Effects: Congressional scholarship funds can now be used in other concerns like Health Care, Housing, and other Poverty Alleviation Programs; more low-income students have been given access to admission to the university; increase in enrolment is expected; drop – out rate is minimized; and students do not need to loan to be admitted/ retained.

Negative Effects: It might demotivate the CSOs' efforts to provide scholarships to stakeholders; students have some deficiencies in terms of some documents required for their admission/retention (e.g., proof of income); as students increase in number, more facilities such as classrooms and laboratories should suffice; and college education might not seem as important as before.

Proposed Actions: The UniFAST should further get financial supports from CSOs to stimulate a more effective implementation of the Law; there should be a wider information dissemination of the standards and the needed requirements for admission/retention; and measures should be taken in addressing the needed facilities to accommodate the increased number of students.

4. Admission and retention policies

Positive Effect: It challenged the admission and retention policies of the university to be revisited/updated/upgraded in order to be more competitive.

Negative Effect: Adjustments in the delivery of quality service has to be made, which require additional logistics.

Proposed Actions: Conditions should be set such as having a minimum grade requirement to still qualify for the free tuition fee so that students will be motivated to excel and prioritize their studies; and selective admission/retention can be implemented because the university might not accommodate all students who will enroll.

5. Financial operations/capability

Positive Effect: There is an expected increase in the allocations of SUCs from the national budget.

Negative Effect: The policy had negative impacts in the operations of the university especially in financing the salaries of contractual, part-timer, job order employees and some infrastructure development as these items come from internally generated incomes of the school.

Proposed Actions: The UniFAST need to assure the fastest way to pay SUCs so that there won't be delay in the provision of quality services to all clientele; Moreover, the capacity of the manpower of SUCs need to be revisited as additional workloads are added to some faculty and personnel who are/will be assigned in the processing of the documents of students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Scientific Knowledge has grown as the world's history is unveiled. Any nation's educational system is a strategic means to advance the natural and social sciences, as well as other fields of study.

Development is indeed a complex and multi-dimensional process. In attaining national development, it is important to look at the different theories, models and areas of development, not just the traditional way of focusing on economic terms, usually measured in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP).

In this paper, development is viewed in the perspective of Social Development. It is looking at development in terms of human process because human beings are the ones driving development. Moreover, human beings are the end recipients of all development efforts. 'Putting people first' is an important mantra of Social Development. From the perspective of the Capability Approach as coined by Amartya Sen, it is a process of expanding the freedoms that people enjoy, that is, the expansion of a person's capability to choose a life one has reason to value. The expansion of one's capability is

undeniably dependent on the education he/she has received, and thus the development of the educational sector has a foundational connection with social development.

The focus of this paper is on the provision of education services, particularly tertiary education, as a primary element in attaining inclusive growth and poverty elimination by advancing Scientific Knowledge. As discussed, there is indeed a large potential for the youth to be professional advocates of development (economic, social and political developments). The present Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017 -2022 gives importance to holistic social development as a major factor in attaining the aimed national development. In the area on Accelerating Human Capital Development (PDP, Chapter 10), it narrates, "equalizing opportunities for human development is an important part of the Philippine Development Plan. Under the pillar Pagbabago, the PDP recognizes human development not just as a means to an end (i.e., human capital as a factor of production) but also an end in itself" (NEDA, 2017). Thus, a holistic social development needs to be attained by overcoming, or at least improving the politics of redistribution, and reducing inequalities in order to improve the Filipino's ability to live decent lives, which include access to continual learning throughout their lives.

It is good that the principle of providing a 'universal' social service is applied in this new endeavor by the government to make tertiary education be widely accessible, especially by the poor. In universalism, social services are viewed as a 'social investment' to boost a country's productivity and capacity for innovation, not just in the short and medium term, but long term. Rather than just targeting and benefitting just the 'poorest of the poor', universalism is a powerful tool for redistribution and having social justice. Indeed, education is a form of social investment, which can generate positive societal impacts, both in the short and long term.

The implementation of 2017 Free Tuition Policy, wherein PhP8 billion was appropriated in the 2017 GAA by a Special Provision, has provided the platform to pilot-test RA10931. With the learnings from the implementation the 2017 Free Tuition Policy, the implementation of RA 10931 can be ensured and that most of the unintended consequences can somehow be mitigated.

In the experience of DHVSU, it can be concluded that the provisions of the policy is administratively feasible despite the challenges encountered. The access to the services provided by the university has been improved. Fiscal provisions did not hinder the implementation, as there was even a surplus in the budget. The five (5) areas of concerns discussed provide the qualitative evaluation of the program and derive some proposed actions for the improvement of the program, which can be considered in the implementation of RA 10931.

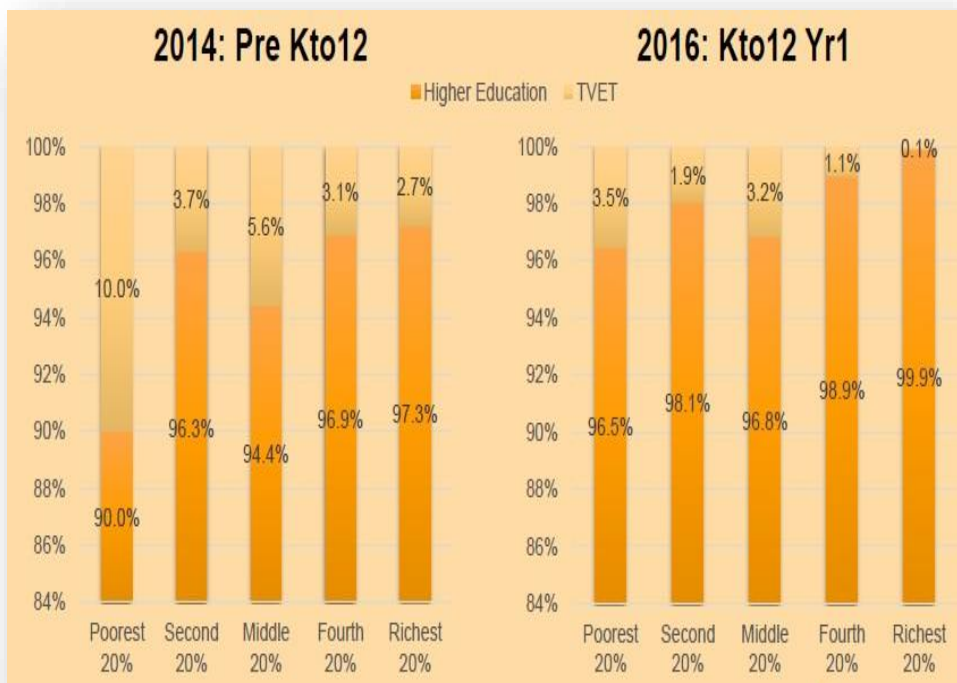
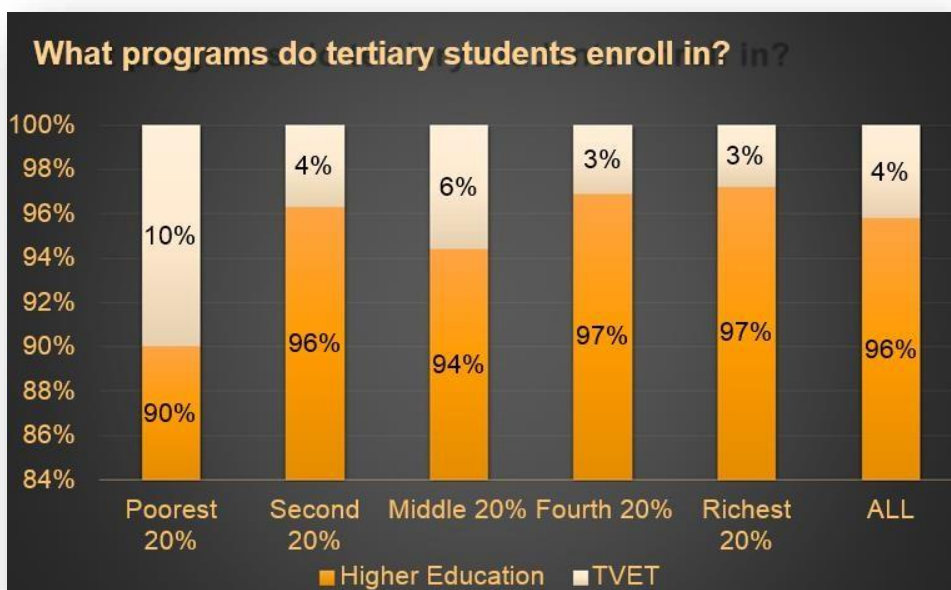
The Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act or Republic Act 10931, is a major education reform of the education system of the Philippines. While it is far from being a perfect law, the government has shown political will to implement it and the willingness to address any of its shortcomings. At present, both Houses of Congress have agreed to provide the appropriate amount required to implement the law. Fiscal and other administrative constraints should not be considered as hindrances but rather as challenges to be overcome by our collective bayanihan (united efforts). With this development in the education system, it is hoped that the Scientific Knowledge in any field of study will further be advanced as a means for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

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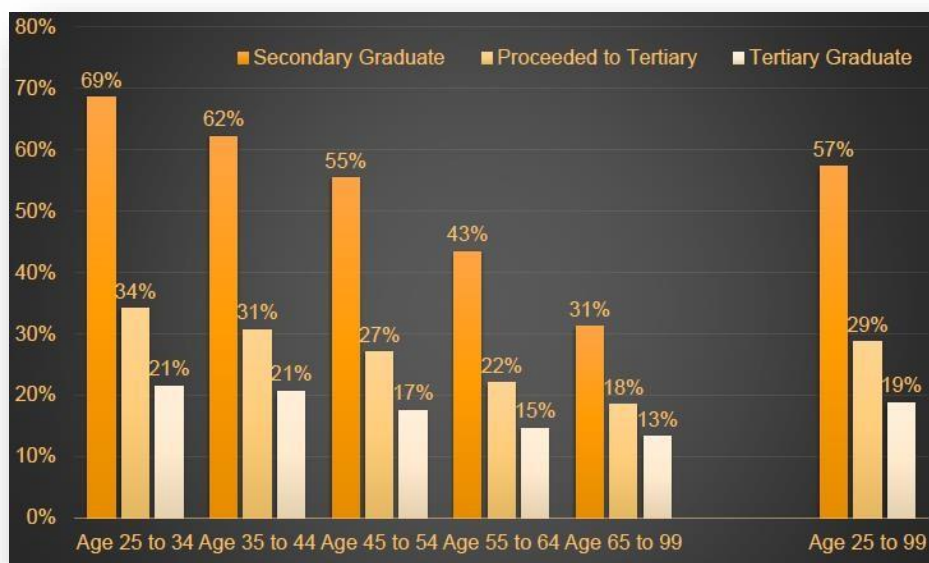
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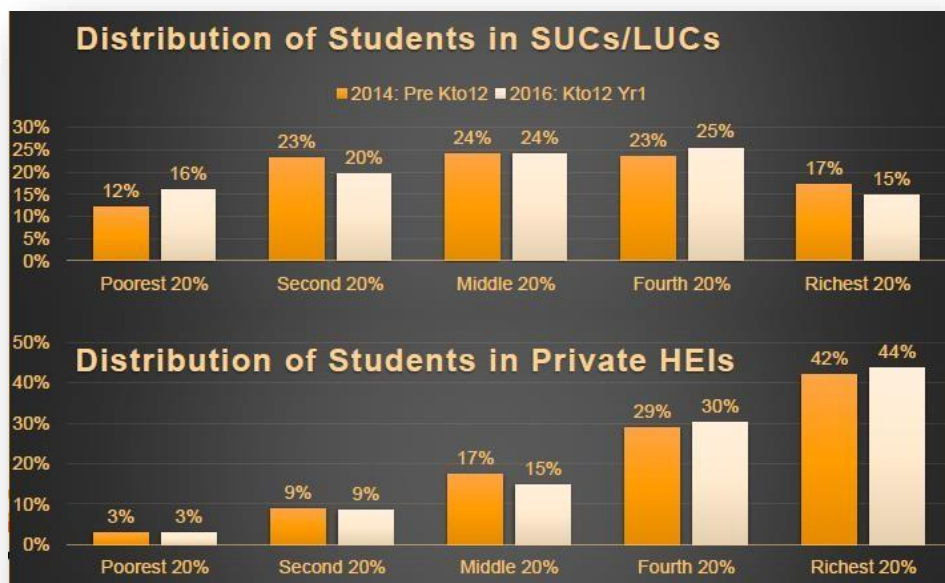
Appendix A - Preference of Students to Pursue College over TVET



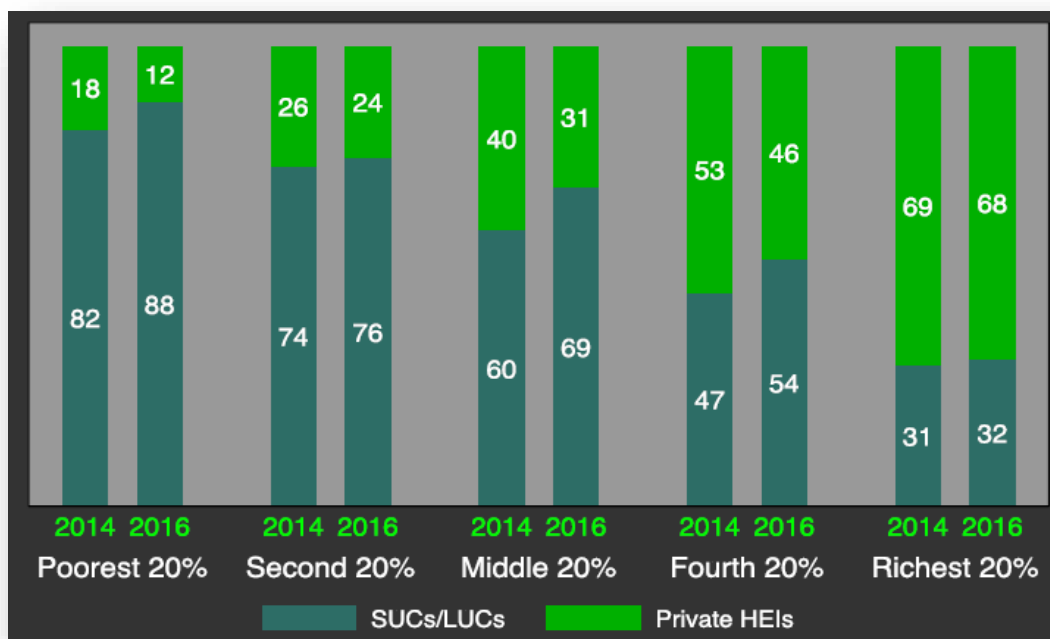
Appendix B - Intergenerational education is VERY slowly improving.



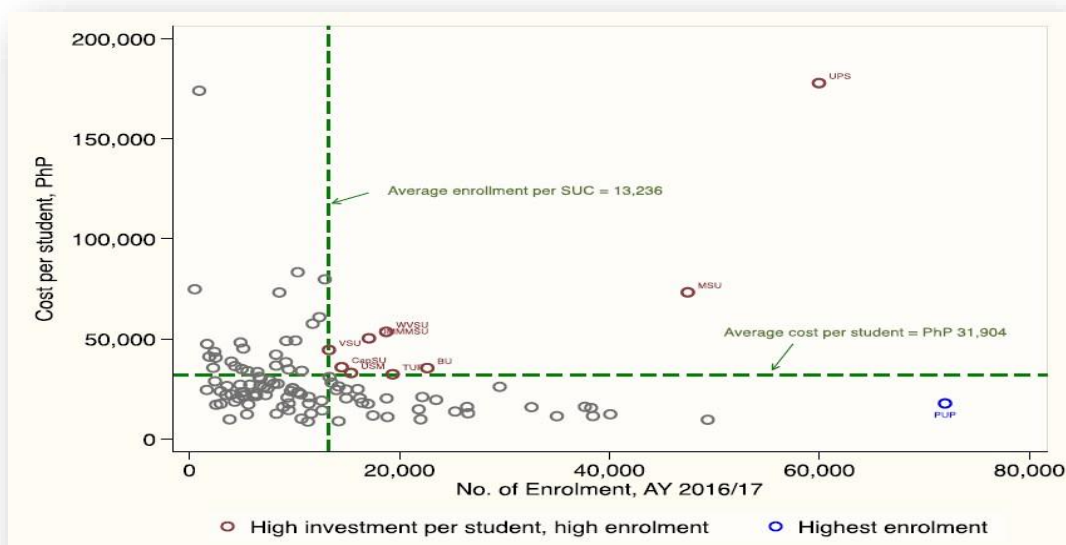
Appendix C - Improvement of access for the poorest Filipinos in public college



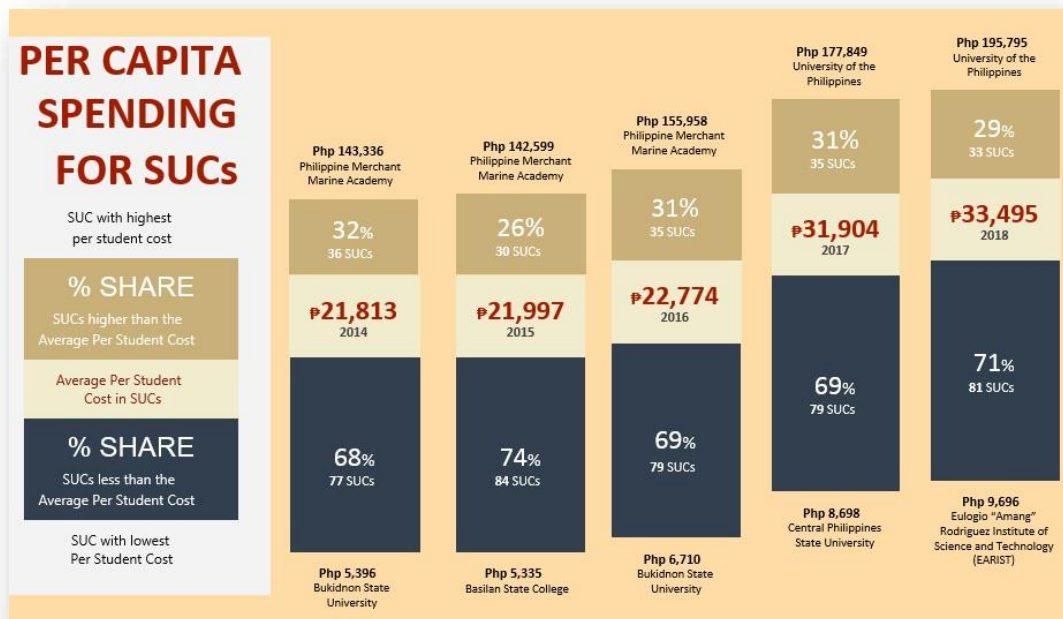
Appendix D - Preference to go to Public Colleges by the Poor



Appendix E - Variation in Distribution of Resources in SUCs



Appendix F - Per Capita Spending for SUCs



Appendix G - Distribution of HEIs (AY 2016 – 2017)



Appendix H - Provisions of RA 10931 Related to Higher Education Institutions

Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy – It is hereby declared that quality education is an inalienable right of all Filipinos and it is the policy of the State to protect and promote the rights of all students to quality equality at all levels. Therefore, the State shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

Likewise, the State hereby recognizes the complementary roles of public and private higher education institutions and technical-vocational institutions in the educational system and the invaluable contribution that the private tertiary schools have made and will make to education. For these intents, the State shall:

- (a) Provide adequate funding and such other mechanisms to increase the participation rate among all socioeconomic classes in tertiary education;
- (b) Provide all Filipinos with equal opportunity to quality tertiary education in both the private and public educational institutions;
- (c) Give priority to students who are academically able and who come from poor families;
- (d) Ensure the optimized utilization of government resources in education;
- (e) Provide adequate guidance and incentives in channeling young Filipinos in their career choices and towards the proper development and utilization of human resources; and
- (f) Recognize the complementary roles of public and private institutions in tertiary educational system

Sec. 4. Free Higher Education in SUCs and LUCs - All Filipino students who are either currently enrolled at the time of the effectivity of this Act, or shall enroll at any time thereafter, in courses in pursuance of a bachelor's degree, certificate degree, or any comparable undergraduate degree in any SUC and LUC shall be exempt from paying tuition and other school fees for units enrolled: Provided, That they pass the entrance examination and other admission and retention requirements of the SUCs and LUCs: Provided further, That all SUCs and LUCs shall create a mechanism to enable students in the SUC and LUC to voluntarily opt out of the tuition and other school fees subsidy or make a contribution to the school. SUCs and LUCs must report the tuition payments and contributions collected from these students to the CHED; Provided, finally, That the amount required to implement the free tuition and other school fees in SUCs and LUCs shall be determined by the respective governing boards of SUCs and LUCs based on the projected number of enrollees for each academic year, which shall be the primary factor in computing the annual proposed budget of SUCs and in the case of LUCs, the CHED for such purpose. This shall in turn serve as the baseline during the preparation of the annual National Expenditure Program (NEP) by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

Sec. 6. Exceptions to Free Tertiary Education - The following students are ineligible to avail of the free tertiary education:

(a) In SUCs and LUCs:

- (1) Students who have already attained a bachelor's degree or comparable undergraduate degree from any HEI, whether public or private;
- (2) Students who fail to comply with the admission and retention policies of the SUC or LUC; and
- (3) Students who fail to complete their bachelor's degree or comparable undergraduate degree within a year after the period prescribed in their program;

Students ineligible to avail of the free tertiary education shall be charged the tuition and other school fees, as determined by the respective boards of the SUCs and LUCs, and in the case of the state-run Technical Vocational Institutions (TVIs), to be determined by TESDA.

Sec. 7. Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) - To support the cost of tertiary education or any part or portion thereof, a TES is hereby established for all Filipino students who shall enroll in undergraduate post-secondary programs of

SUCs, LUCs, private HEI and all TVIs. The TES shall be administered by the UniFAST Board and the amount necessary to fund the TES shall be included in the budgets of the CHED and the TESDA: Provided, That **prioritization** shall be given to students in the following order: (a) students who are part of households included in the **Listahanan 2.0**, ranked according to the estimated per capita household income; and (b) students not part of Listahanan 2.0 **ranked according to the estimated per capita household income** based on submitted documentation of proof of income to be determined by the UniFAST Board; Provided, further, That such prioritization shall not apply to Filipino students in cities and municipalities with no existing SUC or LUC campus.

The TES may, among others, and to support the cost of tertiary education or any part or portion thereof, cover the following:

- (a) Tuition and other school fees in private HEIs, and private or LGU-operated TVIs, which shall be equivalent to the tuition and other school fees of the nearest SUC or state-run TVI in their respective areas;
- (b) An allowance for books, supplies, transportation, and miscellaneous personal expenses, including a reasonable allowance for the documented rental or purchase of a personal computer or laptop, and other education-related expenses;
- (c) An allowance for room and board costs incurred by the student;
- (d) For a student with a disability, an allowance for expenses related to the student's disability, including special services, personal assistance, transportation, equipment, and supplies that are reasonably incurred; and
- (e) For a student in a program requiring professional license or certification, the one (1)-time cost of obtaining the first professional credentials or qualifications, which may include the following: application fees, notarial fees, review classes fees, insurance premium fees and documentation fees: Provided, That the amount of subsidy shall be based on the guidelines set forth by the UniFAST Board and on the annual budgetary appropriation for this purpose.

Sec. 8. Student Loan Program for Tertiary Education - To support further the cost of tertiary education or any part or portion thereof, a student loan program for tertiary education is hereby likewise established for all Filipino students who shall enroll in a SUC, LUC, private HEI and Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) program in all TVIs registered under the TESDA. The loan program shall be administered by the UniFAST Board and the amount necessary to fund the program shall be included in the budgets of the CHED and the TESDA. Provided, That the UniFAST may offer short-term or long-term loans; Provided, further, That those who availed of the loan during their undergraduate degree may still avail of another cycle of student loan for their pursuit of graduate studies, including medicine and law after they have fully paid the previously availed loan; Provided, further That those who did not avail of the loan program during their undergraduate studies may avail of it to pursue graduate studies including medicine and law; Provided, finally. That those who did not avail of the loan program during their undergraduate studies may avail of the loan program for their review expenses for licensure examinations administered by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

Repayment shall be effected by incorporating a portion of the loan amount or a percentage thereof in the employee's monthly Social Security System (SSS) or Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) contribution, as the case may be, based on the reasonable schedule of repayment and interest rates, as may be formulated by the UniFAST Board.

Payment of the loan amount will commence once the beneficiary secures any gainful employment with compensation, remuneration or earnings that reaches the Compulsory Repayment Threshold (CRT).

The UniFAST Board, in consultation with relevant agencies, shall formulate loan repayment guidelines for loan beneficiaries whose earnings are not covered by the GSIS or the SSS programs, including those of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), emigrants, and self-employed persons and professionals (SEPs).

Sec. 15. Appropriations – The amounts necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act, specifically Sections 4, 5, 7 and 8 shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) and shall be appropriated under SUCs, CHED and TESDA in accordance with the provisions.

Appendix I - Interview Questions

1. What is/are your role/s in the implementation of the 2017 Free Tuition Policy in your SUC?
2. What do you think are the strengths and weakness of the initial implementation of the 2017 Free Tuition Policy in your SUC?
3. How much is the budget for your university for this semester (1st Semester, AY 2017-18)? Next Semester (2nd Semester, AY 2017-18)?
4. How many students have availed of the Free Tuition Fee?
5. How much of the budget has been utilized so far?
6. What problems have you encountered in the prioritization of students availing the Free Tuition Fee? In your opinion, how should this be addressed?
7. What are the roles of CHED and DBM in the implementation of 2017 Free Tuition Policy for SUCs? What is your assessment of the performance of such role/s?
8. What do you think are the possible effects (positive or negative) of the Free Tuition Policy in the following related areas of concerns in your SUC?
 - a.) Institutional scholarships such as academic scholarships/ financial assistance
 - b.) Performance/ Membership of varsity players; arts and cultural scholars such as theater, choir, bands, and dance groups, etc.
 - c.) Externally-funded scholarships and financial assistance programs.
 - d.) Admission and retention policies
 - e.) Financial operations/ capability of your university
 - f.) Quality of education (instruction, research and extension)
9. What other administrative areas do you think are/will be affected by the implementation of such policy?
10. What do you think are important considerations in drafting/finalizing the IRR of RA 10931 (Universal Access to Quality Education Act)?

Appendix J - Excerpts from CHED – DBM Joint Memorandum Circular 2017 – 1

1.0 RATIONALE

The guidelines on the grant of **Free Tuition 2017**, jointly issued by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), aim to ensure proper implementation of the **special provisions in the 2017 General Appropriations Act (GAA) subject to the Conditional Implementation ordered by the President.**

The specific statements in the 2017 GAA and the Conditional Implementation are as follows:

1.1 Special Provision No. 2 under Other Executive Offices (OEO)-CHED, Volume I-B, page 272

1.2 Special Provision No. 1 under SUCs, Special Provision(s) Applicable to the SUCs, Volume I-A, page 963

Tuition Fees and School Charges. SUCs are authorized to collect tuition fees and other necessary school charges in accordance with R.A. No. 8292; provided that **starting the first semester of SY 2017 – 2018, no tuition fee shall be collected from undergraduate students. The SUCs shall charge the Higher Education Support Fund in lieu of the income from tuition fees.**

All income from tuition fees and other school charges shall be retained and deposited by SUCs in an authorized government depository bank. In case there are no government banks in the locality, such income may be deposited in non-government banks, subject to BSP Circular No. 110 dated June 14, 1996.

Said income, including the amounts appropriated herein, shall be used primarily for programs and projects that directly support the core mandate of SUCs and the creation of additional positions as well as payment of magna carta benefits of public health workers subject to guidelines issued by the DBM, in coordination with COA and CHED. In no case shall said income be used for the payment of allowances and other benefits not authorized by law.

1.3 Conditional Implementation ordered by the President

The President, prior to signing the 2017 GAA on 22nd of December 2016, placed the foregoing special provisions under **CONDITIONAL IMPLEMENTATION**. Specifically, the content of the President's message is as follows:

...Yet as with all new programs, there is a need to **safeguard the proper implementation of the provision of free tuition fee**. It is important to underscore that we must still give priority to financially disadvantaged but academically able students. We must also acknowledge that the Constitution likewise provides that the right to choose a profession or course of study is still subject to fair and equitable admission and academic requirements.

Accordingly, the **CHED and the DBM shall issue the necessary guidelines which shall include, among others, the standards and procedure for entitlement and availment of free tuition by students of SUCs as well as proper mechanism for the SUCs to tap the Higher Education Support Fund**.

5.0 ENTITLEMENT TO AND AVAILMENT OF FREE TUITION 2017

5.1 Student Prioritization

The number of students who may avail of the tuition subsidy shall be determined by the estimated tuition income of the SUC stated in Table G of the 2017 BESF. **Only academically-able students** shall be considered for the Free Tuition 2017.

Students who are beneficiaries of nationally-funded StuFAPs shall be the first to be enrolled in the SUC, provided that the student meets the admission and retention policies of the institution. The tuition fees of these students shall be charged to the relevant allocation of the said StuFAPs, provided that the total annual benefit amount of these StuFAPs are more than PhP15,000. The tuition fees of students receiving StuFAPs with total annual benefit amounts of equal to or lower than PhP15,000 shall be charged to the Free Tuition 2017 allocation of the SUC and they shall continue to receive their regular StuFAP in addition to this tuition subsidy.

After all StuFAP beneficiaries have been enrolled, students shall be grouped into (1) **continuing** and (2) **new enrollees and returning**.

The **priority are the continuing students and shall be given the Free Tuition slots in the following order**, subject to the availability of the Free Tuition funds:

1. Graduating students with one semester remaining, regardless of household per capita income;
2. Graduating students with one academic year remaining, regardless of household per capita income;
3. Non-graduating students who belong to a household that is or was a beneficiary of 4Ps;
4. Non-graduating students who were never part of a household that is or was a beneficiary of 4Ps but still included in the Listahanan 2.0, ranked according to their estimated per capita household income; and
5. Non-graduating students ranked according to their per capita household income based on submitted documentation(s) for proof of income.

If there are remaining Free Tuition funds, new enrollees and returning students shall likewise be given the corresponding Free Tuition slots in the following order:

6. Graduating students with one semester remaining, regardless of household per capita income;
7. Graduating students with one academic year remaining, regardless of household per capita income;
8. Non-graduating students who belong to a household that is or was a beneficiary of 4Ps;
9. Non-graduating students who were never part of a household that is or was a beneficiary of 4Ps but still included in the Listahanan 2.0, ranked according to their estimated per capita household income; and
10. Non-graduating students ranked according to their per capita household income based on submitted documentation(s) for proof of income.

Appendix K - Excerpts from CHED – DBM Joint Memorandum Circular 2017 – 1A

**AMENDED GUIDELINES ON THE GRANT OF FREE TUITION IN STATE
UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017**

5.0 ENTITLEMENT TO AND AVAILMENT OF FREE TUITION 2017

5.1 Student Prioritization

The number of students who may avail of the tuition subsidy shall be determined by the estimated tuition income of the SUC stated in Table G of the 2017 BESF. Only academically-able students shall be considered for the Free Tuition 2017.

Students who are beneficiaries of nationally-funded StuFAPs shall be the first to be enrolled in the SUC, provided that the student meets the admission and retention policies of the institution. The tuition fees of these students shall be charged to the relevant allocation of the said StuFAPs, provided that the total annual benefit amount of these StuFAPs are more than PhP15,000. The tuition fees of students receiving StuFAPs with total annual benefit amounts of equal to or lower than PhP15,000 shall be charged to the Free Tuition 2017 allocation of the SUC and they shall continue to receive their regular StuFAP in addition to this tuition subsidy.

After all StuFAP beneficiaries have been enrolled, students shall be grouped into (1) continuing and (2) new enrollees and returning.

Continuing students shall be given priority in the Free Tuition slots ranked according to their household income based on submitted document(s) for proof of income, subject to the availability of the Free Tuition funds.

If there are remaining Free Tuition funds, new enrollees and returning students shall be given the corresponding Free Tuition slots ranked according to their household income based on submitted document(s) for proof of income, subject to the availability of the Free Tuition funds.

(NCA) to CHED shall be subject to the submission of a special budget request supported by the following:

- Physical Plan
- Financial Plan
- Monthly Disbursement Program

6.3 The SUCs shall bill the CHED for the total tuition subsidies awarded to students, subject to their budget ceiling per semester. The budget ceiling per semester shall not exceed 50% of the budget allocated to the SUC.

8.0 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All the reports required from SUCs, CHEDROs, and CHED in the Free Tuition 2017 Guidelines are summarized below:

Timeline	SUC	CHEDRO	CHED
Upon approval of the guidelines		Submit "Free Tuition 2017 Monitoring Work and Financial Plan" to CHED	Submit "Special Budget Request" with all attachments to DBM
Within one month after the end of 1 st semester enrollment period	SUCs to submit "Billing Statement" with all attachments to CHED before the 15 th of the month	Submit "Monitoring Accomplishment Report" to CHED	CHED offices and personnel tasked with monitoring Free Tuition 2017 to submit "Monitoring Accomplishment Report" to the Office of the Chairperson and to the CHED UniFAST Secretariat Post on the CHED website the amount of HESF funds disbursed to each SUC for the 1 st semester
March 2018	Submit "2017 Audited Financial Statements" to DBM Post on the SUC website the "2017 Audited Financial Statements"		CHED to submit "Free Tuition 2017 Accomplishment Report" to DBM CHED UniFAST Secretariat to submit "Free Tuition 2017 Evaluation Report" to the Office of the Chairperson

Endnotes

ⁱ UniFAST stands for Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education. It provides a comprehensive and unified financial assistance system to tertiary students in the Philippines as mandated by Republic Act 10687 (also known as the UniFAST Act). Currently, the UniFAST board consists of the heads of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA); one representative each from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA); and four representatives from associations of private higher educational institutions.

ⁱⁱ A psychic cost is a social cost that specifically represent the costs of added stress or losses to quality of life as an effect of schooling.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is a human development measure of the national government that provides conditional cash grants to the poorest of the poor, to improve the health, nutrition, and the education of children aged 0-18. It is patterned after the conditional cash transfer (CCT) schemes in Latin American and African countries, which have lifted millions of people around the world from poverty. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is the lead government agency of the 4Ps. (Reference: <http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/programs/conditional-cash-transfer/>)

^{iv} National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) or Listahanan 2.0 refers to the information management system of DSWD that identifies who and where the poor are in the country. The system makes available to national government agencies and other social protection stakeholders a database of poor families as reference in identifying potential beneficiaries of social protection programs (Reference: Section 4 of CHED – DBM JMC 2017 – 1A).

^v The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) is the first package of the comprehensive tax reform program (CTRP) envisioned by President Duterte's administration, which seeks to correct a number of deficiencies in the tax system to make it simpler, fairer, and more efficient. It also includes mitigating measures that are designed to redistribute some of the gains to the poor. (Reference: <http://www.dof.gov.ph/taxreform/>)

^{vi} The data were gathered as of the time of interview conducted with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Executive Vice President of DHVSU.