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THE PROPOSED CREATION OF UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IN THE PROVINCE OF ILOCOS SUR, PHILIPPINES

Abstract: This study aimed to determine the level of acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of the three Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur. It employed the descriptive method of research. The respondents of the study are the 3rd and 4th year AB Political Science and BSE major in Social Science students and the 4th year BEED students of North Luzon Philippine State College. The statistical tools used in the treatment of data in this study are Frequency and Percentage, Weighted Mean and Pearson Product Method of Correlation. The conclusions of this study are the following: The proposed amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur, Philippines would offer wider opportunity in the administration of the State Universities and Colleges. It is recommended that: There should be proper forum or symposium on Amalgamation for a better understanding on how to enhance the value and recognition of student qualifications in the local, regional and national setting in the proposed amalgamation or university system in the province; In order to strengthen linkage opportunities of the three Public Higher Education Institutions in the province with the Local Government Units and National Government Agencies, a close working relationship and partnership should be initiated; and similar study should be conducted by other researchers to find out the level of acceptability of the proposed Regional University System in Region I and in other regions in the country.

Keywords: Amalgamation, State Universities and Colleges, Ilocos Sur.

Introduction

There are at present three (3) public higher education institutions in the province of Ilocos Sur, Philippines. In the second district of the province, there are two state colleges and these are the North Luzon Philippines State College (NLPSC) and the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC). NLPSC is situated in Candon City with only one campus while the main campus of ISPSC is situated in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur and it has campuses in Candon City, Narvacan, Santiago, Tagudin and Cervantes. The 3rd public higher institution in the province is the University of Northern Philippines (UNP) located in Vigan City, part of the first district of the province.

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In 2014, an Inter State Universities and Colleges Task Force was created composed of the Presidents, Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and Amalgamation focal persons of the three public HEIs to draft a plan to amalgamate the said Public Higher Education Institutions of UNP, ISPSC and NLPSC and create a Provincial University System. The proposed creation of Provincial University System is in consistent with the Commission on Higher Education's program to restructure the higher education system partly through the amalgamation of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) into a Regional University System (RUS) and to the Public Higher Education Roadmap of President Benigno administration.

According to the blueprint of the proposed Provincial University System, there would be clustering of campuses in the proposed provincial university system. These are the South Ilocos Sur Campus or SISC (Tagudin, Cervantes, and Candon City) which will lead the flagship program in Tourism, Hotel and Restaurant Administration, Teacher Education and Agro-Industrial technology; the Mid Ilocos Sur Campus or MISC (Santiago, Lididda, Santa Maria and Narvacan) will lead courses in Agriculture, Fisheries, Information Technology and Industrial Technology; and North Ilocos Sur Campus or NISC (Vigan City, Sto. Domingo and Sinait) will lead Accountancy, Business and Public Administration, Nursing, Law, Social and Natural Sciences, BS in Criminology, Engineering, among others.

The proposed provincial university system shall be governed by a single board responsible for the formulation of system-wide policies and programs and to address system-wide governance, there shall be a central administration to be headed by the University President who shall be back staffed by five (5) Vice Presidents such as the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Planning, Administration and Finance, Vice President for Research and Development, Vice President for Students Affairs and Services and Vice President for Public and Internal Affairs.

The administration of each constituent university is vested in the Chancellor insofar as authorized by the Board and the President of the University. They are the former presidents of the constituent institutions and will have four (4) vice chancellors such as the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Vice Chancellor for Student and External Affairs, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration and Vice Chancellor for Research and Extension. The different campuses shall enjoy financial autonomy with respect to their budget coming from the national government. They can disburse the same without interference from the central administration. However, 30 percent of their income shall accrue to the central administration for its operation and management.

Programs and activities of the three amalgamated SUCs in the province shall undertake activities, such as crafting of policy instruments to foster mutual recognition of academic programs leading to a system of inter-institutional credit transfer of units earned by the students; Inter-institutional collaboration in the areas of research, extension and production; faculty and staff development training; and resources and facilities sharing, toward the transition into Provincial University System. On the pipeline are unified admission tests, common admission and retention policies, and uniform programs and policies that will address the undersubscribed courses.

Public consultations for the Provincial University System was held on November 19, 2014 at ISPSC Sta. Maria Campus (morning) and NLPSC campus (afternoon) and on November 25, 2014 at the Sto. Domingo People's Coliseum (morning) and in UNP Gym (afternoon) attended

by the faculty, staff and students of the 3 Public HEIs, LGU officials from different parts of the province, DepEd teachers and students, CHED officials, and parents purposely to disseminate the aims and objectives of the proposed creation of the provincial university system in Ilocos Sur.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the level of acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the student- respondents of NLPSC in terms of:
 - a) Sex,
 - b) Average Monthly Allowance,
 - c) Kind of Scholarship Privilege (if any),
 - d) Religion, and
 - e) Place of Residence?
2. What is the level of acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur as perceived by the student- respondents of NLPSC for the welfare of:
 - a. Students,
 - b. Faculty and Staff, and
 - c. Community
3. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of the student- respondents of NLPSC respondents and their perceptions on the level of acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur?
4. What is the impact of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur to the realization of Roadmap of Public Higher Education Reform Agenda of President Benigno Aquino administration?

Theoretical Studies

Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that “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). Section 3, Article XIV further provides that the State shall enhance the right of teachers to professional advancement. Non-teaching academic and non-academic personnel shall enjoy the protection of the State.

In order to improve the quality of higher education in the country, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Strategic Plan and the national policy on higher education pointed to the need to restructure public higher education institution through amalgamation of state universities and colleges (SUCs) and provide institutional arrangement for the implementation of a Regional University System (RUS). The objective of RUS is to restructure the higher education system specifically the public component to improve efficiency in the delivery of quality programs, minimize duplication and promote complementation between and among public and private HEIs. (ched.com.ph)

Imperial (2012) stated that Public Higher Education Institutions amalgamation or consolidation into single organizational corporate entities is envisioned to effect more simplified and

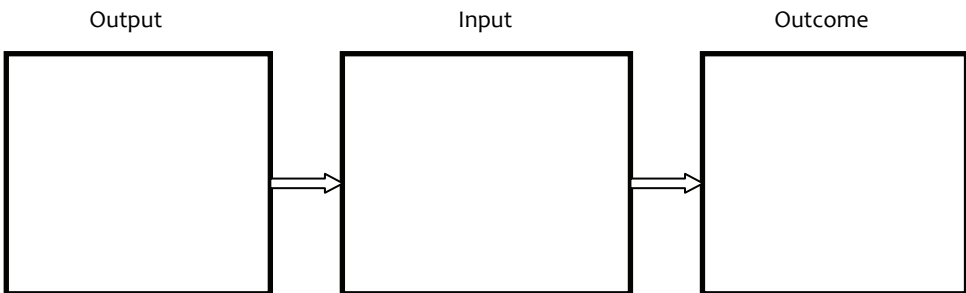
rationalized external governance and shared quality assurance management. Besides being an instrument of fiscal prudence, this major reform is expected to render greater efficiency and economy by spreading opportunities and resources as well as promoting greater synergy among component institutions or units in the performance of their instruction, research and extension functions. Higher Education Reform Agenda investment will be focused on the logistical, financial and social preparation for the big organizational changes as well as on the provision of the substantial institutional requirements needed for the new institutions to comply with global standards once the full amalgamation is in place.

According to Abuan (2012), amalgamation of SUCs is best opportunity for a wider student access to a variety of university programs and courses. An example of successful amalgamation of SUCs transpired in the Province of Rizal where the University of Rizal System (URS) resulted from the merger of two state colleges and a university extension campus – the Rizal Polytechnic College, Rizal State College, and the Rizal Technological University Antipolo Annex. The approval of Republic Act 9157 on Aug. 11, 2001 established the URS with URS Tanay as the main campus. It has satellite campuses in Morong, Pililla, Rodriguez, Angono, Binangonan, Cainta, Antipolo, Cardona, and Taytay.

However, Pascua (2013) mentioned that optimized utilization of academic policies and administrative structures without restricting academic freedom and institutional mandates would be a futile advocacy. In region I, there are currently six existing SUCs: Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU), University of Northern Philippines (UNP), Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU), Pangasinan State University (PSU), Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC), and the newly created North Luzon Philippines State College (NLPSC). UNP, ISPSC, and NLPSC are all located in Ilocos Sur.

Research Methodology Conceptual Paradigm

The study revolved on the following research diagram:



The paradigm shows that the profile of the respondents such as sex, average monthly allowance, kind of scholarship privilege, religion, and place of residence may influence their perception on the acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur. The outcome of the input is the impact of the proposed amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur.

Research Design. This study used the descriptive research with the questionnaire as the main instrument in gathering data.

Population and sample. The respondents of the study are the 3rd and 4th year AB Political Science and BSE major in Social Science students and the 4th year BEED students of North Luzon Philippine State College as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1

PROGRAM	Population
3 rd and 4 th Year AB Political Science Students	35
3 rd and 4 th Year BSE major in Social Science students	15
4 th year BEED students	20
TOTAL	70

Data Gathering Instrument. The questionnaire was formulated by the researcher. The questionnaire was composed of two parts: first is the personal profile of the respondents such as sex, average monthly allowance, kind of scholarship privilege, religion, and place of residence. The second part is the indicators on the acceptability of the proposed provincial university system in Ilocos Sur for the welfare of students, faculty and staff, and community.

The range of values for the numerical rating used is indicated by the descriptive rating and their equivalent as follows:

Rating Scale	Range of Value	Descriptive Rating
5	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)
4	3.41 – 4.20	Agree (A)
3	2.61 – 3.40	Neither Agree or Disagree (NAD)
2	1.81 – 2.60	Disagree (D)
1	1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree (SD)

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher floated the questionnaire personally to the respondents and then the same questionnaires were retrieved after the respondents had answered and accomplished said instrument. After gathering all the questionnaires, tallying, coding and interpretation of data were done.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The following are the statistical tools used in the treatment of data in this study:

1. Frequency and Percentage was used to determine the profile of the respondents.
2. Weighted Mean was used to determine the perception of the respondents on the acceptability and impact of the proposed amalgamation of public higher education in Ilocos Sur.
3. Pearson Product Method of Correlation was used to determine the significant relationship between the personal profile of the respondents and their perception on the effectiveness of environmental education of NLPSC. In this study the statistical program for social science (SPSS) was employed.

Findings of the Study

Question 1. What is the profile of the student- respondents of NLPSC in terms of sex, average monthly allowance, kind of scholarship privilege, religion, and place of residence?

Table 1.a
Profile of the Student-Respondents in Term of Sex

Sex	F	%
Male	20	28.57
Female	50	71.43
Total	70	100.00

Majority of the respondents are female (50 or 71.43%) as compared to the male respondents which is only 20 or 28.57 percent.

Table 1.b
Profile of the Student-Respondents in Term of Average Monthly Allowance

Average Monthly Allowance	f	%
Less than P 1,000	14	20.00
P 1,000 – P 2,999.00	27	38.57
P 3,000 – P 4,999.00	25	35.71
P 5,000 or more	4	5.71
Total	70	100.00

There are 14 or 20.00 percent respondents who have a an average monthly allowance of less than P1,000.00, 27 or 38.57 percent have P1,000.00 – P2,999.00, 25 or 35.71 percent have P3,000.00 – P4,999.00 and four or 5.71 percent have P5,000.00 or more. Many of the respondents have an average monthly allowance of P1,000.00 to 2,999.00.

Table 1.c
Profile of the Student-Respondents in Term of Scholarship Privilege

Kind of Scholarship Privilege	f	%
Barangay Official Scholar	3	4.29
Candon City Scholar	7	10.00
CHED	3	4.29
NCIP	4	5.71
None	53	75.71
Total	70	100.00

There are three or 4.29 percent respondents who are barangay official scholars and CHED scholars respectively, seven or 10.00 percent are Candon City scholars, and 53 or 75.71 percent have none no scholarship privileges. Majority of the respondents have no scholarship privileges.

Table 1.d
Profile of the Student-Respondents in Term of Religion

Religion	f	%
Catholics	59	84.29
Non-Catholics	11	15.71
Total	70	100.00

Majority of the respondents are Catholics (59 or 84.29 %) as compared to non-Catholics who are only 11 or 15.71 percent.

Table 1.e
Profile of the Student-Respondents in Term of Place of Residence

Place of Residence		
Candon City	28	40.00
Outside Candon City	42	60.00
Total	70	100.00

Majority are residents outside Candon City (42 or 60.00%) as compared to residents of Candon City which are only 28 or 40.00 percent.

Question 2. What is the level of acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur as perceived by the student- respondents of NLPSC for the welfare of students, faculty staff, and community?

Table 2.1
Level of Acceptability of the Amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur for the Welfare of the Students

A. Welfare for the Students	\bar{x}	DL
1. Enhance opportunities to access quality professional education training in various areas of specialization	4.28	SA
2. Enhance the value and recognition of student qualifications in the local, regional and national setting	4.29	SA
3. Enhance access to resources through the combined strengths of the library and information resources	4.35	SA
4. Access to an enhanced and more efficient set of student services	4.37	SA
5. Enhance the access to upgrading of qualifications and lifelong learning	4.34	SA
MEAN	4.33	SA

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 - Strongly Agree (SA)

The student-respondents of NLPSC strongly agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur is favorable for the welfare of the students with the mean value of 4.33.

They strongly agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would enhance opportunities to access quality professional education training in various areas of specialization ($\bar{x}=4.28$), enhance the value and recognition of student qualifications in the local, regional and national setting ($\bar{x}=4.29$), enhance access to resources through the combined strengths of the library and information resources ($\bar{x}=4.35$), access to an enhanced and more efficient set of student services ($\bar{x}=4.37$), and would enhance the access to upgrading of qualifications and lifelong learning ($\bar{x}=4.34$).

This implies that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would be best opportunity to advance quality education in the province. This is in support to the statement of Abuan (2012) that Amalgamation of SUCs is best opportunity for a wider student access to a variety of university programs and courses.

Table 2.2
Level of Acceptability of the Amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur for the Welfare of the Faculty Staff

B. Welfare for the Faculty and Staff	\bar{X}	DL
1. Opportunity to work with a larger student body providing more opportunities for teaching and research	4.11	A
2. Longer term viability of a stronger institution aligned with Government education priorities for collaboration	3.92	A
3. Enhance professional development and career opportunities	3.83	A
4. Enhance opportunities to engage with Government and other agencies, both national and international	4.02	A
5. Enhance national and international linkages with other tertiary institutions, and academic and professional bodies	4.03	A
MEAN	3.98	A

Legend: 3.41 – 4.20- Strongly Agree (SA)

The student-respondents agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur is favorable for the welfare of the faculty and staff with the mean value of 3.98.

They agreed that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would be an opportunity to work with a larger student body providing more opportunities for teaching and research ($\bar{X}=4.11$), that there would longer term viability of a stronger institution aligned with Government education priorities for collaboration ($\bar{X}=3.92$), would enhance professional development and career opportunities ($\bar{X}=3.83$), would enhance opportunities to engage with Government and other agencies, both national and international, in research and contract work ($\bar{X}=4.02$), and would enhance national and international linkages with other tertiary institutions, and academic and professional bodies ($\bar{X}=4.03$).

This implies that in terms of the welfare for the faculty and staff, amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would somehow offered a wider opportunity in the administration of the State Universities and Colleges which is responsive to the argument of Pascua (2013) that optimized utilization of academic policies and administrative structures without restricting academic freedom and institutional mandates would be a futile advocacy.

Table 2.3
Level of Acceptability of the Amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur for the Welfare of the Community

C. Welfare for the Community	\bar{X}	DL
1. Collaboration into quality institution	4.32	SA
2. Combined SUCs' resources for community service and information	4.37	SA
3. Enhance the SUCs ability to community needs	4.25	SA
4. Expand the SUCs resources to meet the educational needs of urban, rural and international students and communities	4.34	SA
5. Strengthen linkage opportunities with the LGUs and NGAs	4.18	A
MEAN	4.29	SA

Legend: – 5.00 - Strongly Agree (SA)

The student-respondents strongly agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur is favorable for the welfare of the community with the mean value of 4.29.

They strongly agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would be an opportunity collaboration into quality institution ($\bar{x}=4.32$), would combined the SUCs' resources for community service and information ($\bar{x}=4.37$), would enhance the SUCs' ability to community needs ($\bar{x}=4.24$), would expand the SUCs resources to meet the educational needs of urban, rural and international students and communities ($\bar{x}=4.34$), and would strengthen linkage opportunities with the Local Government Units and National Government Agencies ($\bar{x}=4.18$).

This implies that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur is an opportunity to have a greater academe-stakeholder relationship to serve the students and community in general which is responsive to objective of the Commission on Higher Education to strengthen Higher Education and other major stakeholder.

Question 3. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of the student-respondents of NLPSC respondents and their perceptions on the level of acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur?

Table 3

Correlation Analysis between the Profile of the Respondents and their perception on the Acceptability of Amalgamation of Public HEIs in Ilocos Sur

Variables	For the welfare of Students	For the Welfare of the Faculty & Staff	For the Welfare of the Community
Sex	-.070	.100	-.025
Average Monthly Allowance	.074	-.084	-.091
Kind of Scholarship Privilege	.005	-.078	.049
Religion	-.171*	-.046	.044
Place of Residence	-.099	-.020	-.038

Legend: * - significant at .05 level

As revealed in the table, profile of the respondents that are found to be significantly correlated with the acceptability of amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur are the respondents' religion ($r = .171^{**}$). This could be mean that Catholic students have a higher level of perception on the proposed amalgamation of Public HEIs in Ilocos Sur. Other indicators on the profile of the respondents are found to be not significantly related to their perception on the acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of Public HEIs in Ilocos Sur.

Question 4. What is the impact of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur to the realization of Roadmap of Public Higher Education Reform Agenda of Pnoy administration?

Table 4.
Impact of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur to the realization of Roadmap of Public Higher Education Reform Agenda of Pnoy administration

<i>Realization of Roadmap of Public Higher Education Reform Agenda</i>	\bar{x}	DL
1. More efficient public higher education	4.32	SA
2. Upgraded quality of public higher education to international standard	4.38	SA
3. Re-engineered governance and administrative structures to the greatest advantage without restricting academic freedom and institutional mandates	4.42	SA
4. More responsive to regional and national development thrusts without neglecting local needs	4.63	SA
5. Inter-institutional collaboration in the areas of research, extension and production	4.52	SA
MEAN	4.45	SA

The student-respondents strongly agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would result a great impact to the realization of Roadmap of Public Higher Education Reform Agenda of Pnoy administration with the computed mean value of 4.45.

They strongly agree that through amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur, there would be more efficient public higher education ($\bar{x}=4.32$), upgraded quality of public higher education to international standard ($\bar{x}=4.38$), re-engineered governance and administrative structures to the greatest advantage without restricting academic freedom and institutional mandates ($\bar{x}=4.42$), responsive to regional and national development thrusts without neglecting local needs ($\bar{x}=4.63$), and an Inter-institutional collaboration in the areas of research, extension and production ($\bar{x}=4.52$).

This implies that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would greatly help in the performance of President Aquino to its objective in making education the central strategy for investing in our people, reducing poverty and building national competitiveness and responsive as well to the constitutional mandate which provide that “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”.

Summary, Findings, Conclusion and Recommendation

Summary

This study aimed to determine the level of acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of the three Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur. It employed the descriptive method of research with the questionnaire as the main data gathering instrument.

Specifically, it sought to find out the profile of the student-respondents of NLPSC in terms of their sex, average monthly allowance, kind of scholarship privilege, religion, and place of residence; the level of acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur as perceived by the student-respondents of NLPSC for the

welfare of students, faculty and staff, and the community; whether there is a significant relationship between the profile of the student- respondents of NLPSC respondents and their perceptions on the level of acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur; and the impact level of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur to the realization of Roadmap of Public Higher Education Reform Agenda of President Benigno Aquino administration.

The respondents of this study are the 3rd and 4th year AB Political Science and BSE major in Social Science students and the 4th year BEED students of North Luzon Philippine State College in Candon City, Ilocos Sur. The variables considered in the study are the profile of the respondents and the level of acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur for the welfare of students, faculty and staff, and the community in general. The impact of the proposed amalgamation of the Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur to the realization of Roadmap of Public Higher Education Reform Agenda is also considered in this study.

The statistical tools used in the treatment of data in this study are Frequency and Percentage, Weighted Mean and Pearson Product Method of Correlation.

Findings

The findings of this study are the following:

Majority of the respondents are female (50 or 71.43%) as compared to the male respondents which is only 20 or 28.57 percent.

There are 14 or 20.00 percent respondents who have a an average monthly allowance of less than P1,000.00, 27 or 38.57 percent have P1,000.00 – P2,999.00, 25 or 35.71 percent have P3,000.00 – P4,999.00 and four or 5.71 percent have P5,000.00 or more. Many of the respondents have an average monthly allowance of P1,000.00 to 2,999.00.

There are three or 4.29 percent respondents who are barangay official scholars and CHED scholars respectively, seven or 10.00 percent are Candon City scholars, and 53 or 75.71 percent have none no scholarship privileges.

Majority of the respondents are Catholics (59 or 84.29 %) as compared to non-Catholics who are only 11 or 15.71 percent.

Majority are residents outside Candon City (42 or 60.00%) as compared to residents of Candon City which are only 28 or 40.00 percent.

The student-respondents of NLPSC strongly agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur is favorable for the welfare of the students with the mean value of 4.33. They strongly agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would enhance opportunities to access quality professional education training in various areas of specialization ($\bar{x}=4.28$), enhance the value and recognition of student qualifications in the local, regional and national setting ($\bar{x}=4.29$), enhance access to resources through the combined strengths of the library and information resources ($\bar{x}=4.35$), access to

an enhanced and more efficient set of student services ($\bar{X}=4.37$), and would enhance the access to upgrading of qualifications and lifelong learning ($\bar{X}=4.34$).

They agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur is favorable for the welfare of the faculty and staff with the mean value of 3.98. They agreed that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would be an opportunity to work with a larger student body providing more opportunities for teaching and research ($\bar{X}=4.11$), that there would longer term viability of a stronger institution aligned with Government education priorities for collaboration ($\bar{X}=3.92$), would enhance professional development and career opportunities ($\bar{X}=3.83$), would enhance opportunities to engage with Government and other agencies, both national and international, in research and contract work ($\bar{X}=4.02$), and would enhance national and international linkages with other tertiary institutions, and academic and professional bodies ($\bar{X}=4.03$).

They strongly agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur is favorable for the welfare of the community with the mean value of 4.29. They strongly agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would be an opportunity collaboration into quality institution ($\bar{X}=4.32$), would combined the SUCs' resources for community service and information ($\bar{X}=4.37$), would enhance the SUCs' ability to community needs ($\bar{X}=4.24$), would expand the SUCs resources to meet the educational needs of urban, rural and international students and communities ($\bar{X}=4.34$), and would strengthen linkage opportunities with the Local Government Units and National Government Agencies ($\bar{X}=4.18$).

The profile of the respondents that are found to be significantly correlated with the acceptability of amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur are the respondents' religion ((r .171**).

The student-respondents strongly agree that amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would result a great impact to the realization of Roadmap of Public Higher Education Reform Agenda of President Benigno Aquinno administration with the computed mean value of 4.45. They strongly agree that through amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur, there would be more efficient public higher education ($\bar{X}=4.32$), upgraded quality of public higher education to international standard ($\bar{X}=4.38$), re-engineered governance and administrative structures to the greatest advantage without restricting academic freedom and institutional mandates ($\bar{X}=4.42$), responsive to regional and national development thrusts without neglecting local needs ($\bar{X}=4.63$), and an Inter-institutional collaboration in the areas of research, extension and production ($\bar{X}=4.52$).

Conclusions

Based from the findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

Majority of the respondents have no scholarship privileges, majority of the respondents are Catholics (59 or 84.29 %) as compared to non-Catholics who are only 11 or 15.71 percent, majority are residents outside Candon City (42 or 60.00%) as compared to residents of Candon City which are only 28 or 40.00 percent.

The proposed amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would be best opportunity to advance quality education in the province. This is in support to the statement of Abuan (2012) that Amalgamation of SUCs is best opportunity for a wider student access to a variety of university programs and courses.

In terms of the welfare for the faculty and staff, the proposed amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would somehow offered wider opportunity in the administration of the State Universities and Colleges which is responsive to the argument of Pascua (2013) that optimized utilization of academic policies and administrative structures without restricting academic freedom and institutional mandates.

The proposed amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur is an opportunity to have a greater academe-stakeholder relationship to serve the students and community in general which is responsive to objective of the Commission on Higher Education to strengthen Higher Education and other major stakeholder.

Catholic students have a higher level of perception on the proposed amalgamation of Public HEIs in Ilocos Sur. Other indicators on the profile of the respondents are found to be not significantly related to their perception on the acceptability of the proposed amalgamation of Public HEIs in Ilocos Sur.

The proposed amalgamation of Public Higher Education Institutions in Ilocos Sur would greatly help in the performance of President Aquino to its objective in making education the central strategy for investing in our people, reducing poverty and building national competitiveness and responsive as well to the constitutional mandate which provide that "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".

Recommendations

The researcher made the following recommendations based from the findings and conclusions.

1. There should be proper forum or symposium on Amalgamation initiated by the Commission of Higher Education to students of Public Higher Institutions in Ilocos Sur for a better understanding on how to enhance the value and recognition of student qualifications in the local, regional and national setting in the proposed amalgamation or university system in the province.
2. Enhance professional development and career opportunities for faculty and staff should look into by the academic leaders of the three public higher education institutions in the province in the event that the proposed amalgamation will take place.
3. In order to strengthen linkage opportunities of the three Public Higher Education Institutions in the province with the Local Government Units and National Government Agencies, a close working relationship and partnership should be initiated even before the implementation of the proposed creation of provincial University system in the province.
4. Similar study should be conducted by other researchers to find out the level of acceptability of the proposed Regional University System in Region I and in other regions.

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