

Adopting a Culture of Entrepreneurship in Public Higher Education Institutions in the Philippines : Putting the System on Target

By

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Summary : Corporatization is the process of involving the private sector as a strategic partner in the utilization of government assets or interests in state-owned enterprises or organizations through divestment, asset management, or a combination thereof. This has been adopted by a number of public higher education institutions in other countries due to the following : (1) departure from the traditional practice of heavy reliance on government funding ; (2) need to free the universities from the cumbersome bureaucratic processes of the civil service ; (3) greater financial and administrative autonomy for the universities ; and (4) more efficient and flexible implementation of a decentralized system of managing public resources. In order to increase the chances of success of corporatization, the following must be carefully considered in the formulation of structure, design and arrangements for corporatization of SUCs in the Philippines : (1) an environment of steadfast support from the organizational hierarchy beginning at the top ; (2) a strong and fluid organizational structure with well-defined standard operating procedure ; (3) a highly competent project development unit that is responsible for market scanning and positioning, assessing investment ventures and financing, and formation of strategic business alliances ; (4) hiring of qualified and competent personnel ; (5) regular capacity building ; (6) competitive compensation packages ; (7) adequate financial support base ; and (8) implementable and effective monitoring and evaluation system that could ensure performance and accountability.

Key words : corporatization, State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), critical design features

1. Introduction

The recent wave of policy reforms put greater credence on the virtues of the market or price system in allocating society's resources. Shrinking the size of government participation through privatization programs and elimination of policies that become ready source of rents in a factional state while getting prices right, have become key policy prescriptions. Liberalization, deregulation and privatization of state assets are buzzwords in the reform agenda that seeks to achieve higher efficiency and a more robust economic growth pattern. Critics argue that it would be a mistake on the part of the government to try to do too much in pursuing development. It simply cannot afford to carry all the overheads entailed by the provi-

sion of public goods and the extensive systems of social services.

In the case of higher education institutions, a possible structural reform is the corporatization of the existing State Universities and Colleges (SUCs). Corporatization is the process of involving the private sector as a strategic partner in the utilization of government assets or interests in state-owned enterprises or organizations through divestment, asset management, or a combination thereof. Through this approach, the SUCs can be expected to generate additional income to augment the budgetary appropriations from the government. Besides presupposing the beneficial role of the private sector as a strategic partner in the development, management and productive use of the SUC assets, the prevailing paradigm reckons that market competition in

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the private sector is a more efficient way of doing things and offers wider choices even as the public sector is faced with increasing pressure to rein in its spending.

Corporatization of SUCs is premised on the idea that aside from being centers of higher learning they could be self-sustaining entities as well. Historically, SUCs have been treated as institutions for the creation of knowledge requiring support from the government. Recent developments, however, call for the opening of SUCs to market forces, that is, SUCs could pursue feasible investments that would allow them to generate resources and enable them to relate better to larger communities and clientele.

Corporatization is being touted by many proponents not only as an alternative strategy to relieve the already strained public sector finances but also as a mechanism in attaining efficiency and more flexible implementation of a decentralized system of managing public resources. However, there are reservations as to the plausibility of success of corporatization in the Philippines. Aside from the fact that many SUCs lack physical resource endowments, there is also a lingering impression of the paucity of expertise in managing a business within the academic community. Needless to say, a clearer grasp of the current state of SUCs, particularly in terms of resource availability and generation would provide useful insights into the feasibility of corporatization. Arguably, this may later prompt greater efficiency in the use of resources without necessarily sacrificing the quality of higher education.

In general, this paper aims to determine the level of awareness of and receptiveness to corporatization of state universities and colleges in the Philippines and to identify the factors that could prove valuable to the success of corporatization of SUCs in the country.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Factors Affecting SUC's Corporatization

In order to examine the factors that facilitate or constrain the process of corporatization and its outcome, the paper puts forward a framework that shows the prospective interrelationships of these factors, shown in Figure 1.

It is widely known that many SUCs have, at their disposal, assets such as land, buildings, professional expertise, technology, and other intellectual properties that can generate a stream of cash flow for their use. Together with the private sector, these assets could be transformed into productive use, but this nascent partnership has yet to be sorted out and sustained. SUCs continue to rely heavily on the annual appropriations from the national government to finance their expenditures for personnel services, maintenance and operating components and capital outlays.

The capacity of SUCs to generate and disburse incomes for their own programs and projects is contingent on a number of factors. These factors pertain to (1) policy environment, (2) profile of the SUCs specifically in terms of their structure and functions, and (3) market condition.

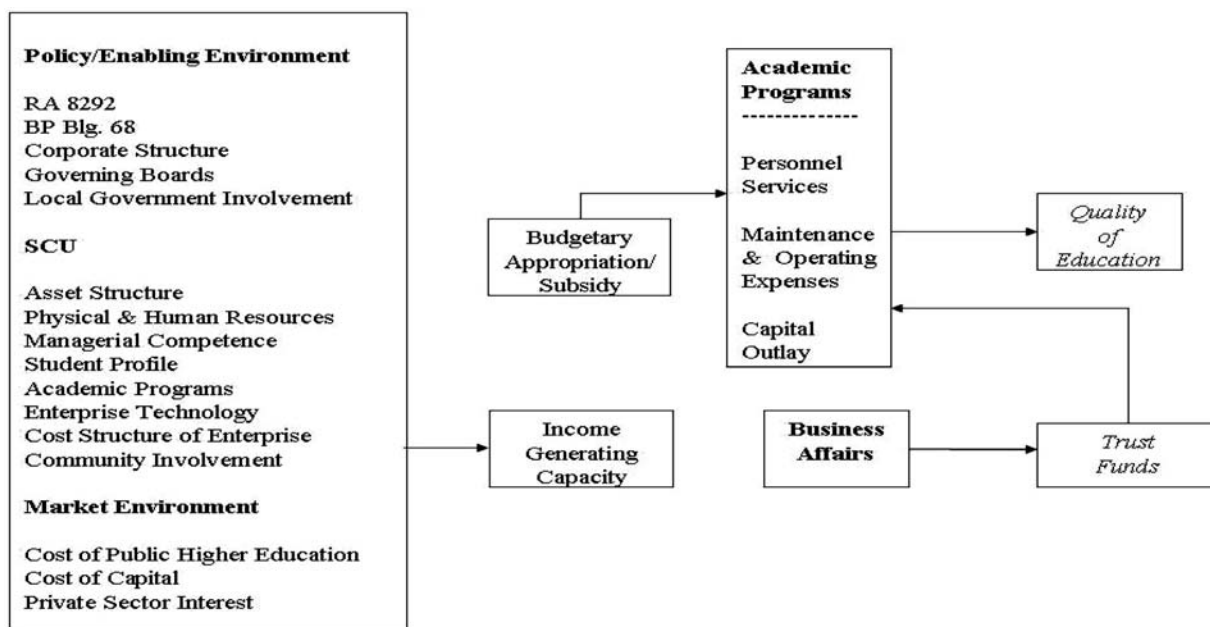


Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Policy/Enabling Environment

The policy environment constitutes the structures and mechanisms that would enable SUCs to promote active private sector participation. In 1997 a crucial piece of legislation, RA 8292 or the Higher Modernization Act of 1997 was enacted. The statute provides the means by which SUCs can retain and disburse incomes and exercise the powers granted to a Board of Directors of a corporation under the Corporation Code of the Philippines (BP 68). At the more micro level, a potent structure is the SUC Governing Board. The capacity of an SUC for resource generation is heavily influenced by how the governing board, in their policy decisions, is able to carry out the mandate and functions of the SUC. An equally significant entity at the micro level is the Local Government Unit (LGU) where the SUC is located, which could bring about a propitious environment for the SUC to be able to carry out its functions.

2.1.2 State University and College Profile

A number of variables associated with the profile of the SUC have a bearing on its capacity to effect success in corporatization. One of these variables is the asset structure where an SUC endowed with ample underutilized assets would have better prospects to generate earnings needed to pursue its mandate. Another variable is the quality of its human resources particularly with managerial skills. A pool of highly trained and qualified SUC personnel is likely to achieve the objective of generating adequate income. However, managerial expertise may not necessarily come from within the SUC but could be outsourced instead.

Another variable that may influence SUC performance is soundness of its academic programs and the dynamism of its student population which could heighten the chances of success. Meanwhile, higher average cost of education puts a drag on the SUC capacity to provide quality education given an income constraint. In terms of the type of enterprise the SUC is engaged in, having the appropriate and low-cost technology as well as economies of scale in its operation would improve the likelihood of success. Finally, the support of the community-at-large in its undertakings could facilitate the attainment of the SUC goals.

2.1.3 Market Environment

In terms of the market, the ease of entry and competitive positioning in relation to output prices, trade practices and strategic business alliances could buttress a financially viable and sustainable operation, other things being equal. Moreover, this could stir up higher private sector interest and participation in a business undertaking with the SUC that would likely result in more efficient operation.

3. Data Sources and Selection of Cases

In carrying out the objectives of the study, both primary and secondary data collections were done in 2004–2005. While the primary data collection aimed at establishing benchmark information on corporatization of SUCs, the secondary data collection focused more on the evolution and progress so far made in corporatization and similar undertakings in the different countries.

Having considered the stage of adoption of corporatization of SUCs and certain track record of success of this scheme in Malaysia and Thailand, a number of universities in these two countries were selected as cases for this study. These included the University of Malaya and University of Putra Malaysia in Malaysia, and Chulalongkorn University and Kasetsart University in Thailand. The interviews were exploratory in nature and were conducted to serve as a benchmark in determining the viability of corporatization of SUCs in the Philippines. Moreover, the lessons derived from the survey have served as the departure point for determining the crucial elements and necessary conditions for a successful corporatization of SUCs in the Philippines.

The approach for the primary data collection was patterned after the mini-Delphi method which recognizes the value of experts' knowledge, experiences, intuitions and opinions. This method was used to obtain a consensus among experts on a central theme—the potential of corporatization of SUCs and the necessary preconditions for success. Hence, the respondents purposively chosen for this study were those who occupied key executive positions and who had wide familiarity with and/or experience in corporatization as a scheme or mode in managing the existing university assets. Twelve (12) experts from the abovementioned universities were carefully selected and were asked about their experiences and views on corporatization using a pre-tested questionnaire. The interviews specifically covered the nature, stage and pattern of corporatization, crucial factors essential for the success of corporatization and the constraints that must be preempted with appropriate preventive measures to thwart any potential damage during implementation. It should be emphasized that conflicting views and those responses with low frequency of mention (less than 50%) were subsequently filtered out in the analysis.

After the interview in Malaysia and Thailand, the next step was to determine the potential adoption of the corporatization scheme by SUCs in the Philippines. Six (6) representative SUCs from the three major is-

lands of the Philippines ; namely, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao were surveyed particularly in terms of the level of awareness on and receptiveness to the corporatization of SUCs in the Philippines. These included Benguet State University, West Visayas State University, Aklan State University, Misamis Oriental State College of Agriculture and Technology, Bukidnon State University and Central Mindanao University. These SUCs were purposely selected to reflect geographical differences, nature of the SUC, disparity in the levels of resources and types of projects during the time of survey.

The initial results of the study, which were earlier peer reviewed, were presented to the respective Presidents or Heads of various SUCs in the Philippines during a workshop organized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Republic of the Philippines. The final stage of the study was the presentation of the results to another group of external reviewers, panel of administrators of higher education institutions and related agencies in the Philippines. The findings and recommendations of this study were accepted during the said forum.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Origins of the Malaysian Experience

Malaysia formally initiated privatization in 1983 on account of the poor performance of state-owned enterprises. There was a need for (1) redefinition of the public sector's role in economic development, (2) increase in efficiency and quality of goods and services produced in the economy, and (3) contribution towards meeting the distributional objectives of the New Economic Policy (Salleh in Ramanadham, 1995 as cited by CABANDA, 2002).

A major reform in the country's higher education sector was the corporatization of all eight public universities, starting with the University of Malaya (UM) in 1998. The reform was prompted by the increasing demand for higher education associated with the introduction of universal secondary education over the past decade. Other grounds for the reform were : (1) the need to free the universities from the cumbersome bureaucratic processes of the civil service ; (2) greater financial and administrative autonomy for the universities ; and (3) reduction of financial dependence on the government (LEE, 1998).

With corporatization, the government still retained ownership of the universities' existing assets while providing development funds for new programs and capital projects. However, the universities were to put up a major portion of their operating costs. For alter-

native funding sources, they could acquire and hold investment shares, borrow money, set up companies, get into business ventures, and raise funds through income-generating activities (IGPs). Income-generating activities include increasing student enrollments, conducting consultancies for industry and government, raising tuition fees, renting out facilities, and running short-term courses for the private sector's needs (LEE, 1998).

4.2 Origins of the Thai Experience

Privatization became a major concern for public universities in Thailand stemming from the Asian financial contagion in 1997. The Thai government wanted to privatize all 23 state universities as part of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions for recovery (VARGO, 2000) and this has been discussed for more than three decades in the country until the public universities finally agreed in 2002. The reform was accelerated by the financial crisis which reduced government funding for state-owned universities by about 20 to 30 percent. The budget cut affected operating expenses, faculty research and further training (VARGO, 2000).

The cited advantages of the reform included : (1) more financial and administrative autonomy for public universities from government restrictions ; (2) more public accountability by the universities ; (3) and higher quality (ATAGI, 1998 as cited by VARGO, 1998). However, there were also disadvantages cited by certain people in the country's education sector. First, there was a drop in the proportion of the population who could afford higher education, owing to the considerable increase in tuition fees following privatization. Second, most students securing low-interest loans would be unable to pay back given the present economic conditions. Third, generous scholarships from private institutions cannot fully match the extent that a national system can. Education is a common good that requires more national commitment than private goodwill. Universities could not be easily grouped among state-owned enterprises that could be divested in a crisis. Without an integral development of the nation, privatization of public universities could be an example of short-term gain and long-term loss (VARGO, 1998).

4.3 Awareness and Insights on Corporatization in Malaysia and Thailand

Universities such as University of Malaya and University of Putra Malaysia in Malaysia, and Chulalongkorn University and Kasetsart University in Thailand were aware of and receptive to the idea of corporatization. The receptiveness to corporatization is based on

three reasons. First, the departure from the traditional practice of heavy reliance on government funding is deemed inexorable. In a rather tight economic scenario, repeated budget cuts could be anticipated resulting in operational levels below the desired scale. Second, lower income levels can be expected due to the sub-optimal operation. This situation eventually exerts pressure on the universities to finance the demands of competition. Quality curriculum is, by and large, the product of highly competent faculty and staff. Furthermore, faculty and staff retention has been long recognized to be not only a function of competitive salaries but also of the availability of excellent facilities. The threat of limited funds, if not timely addressed, would bear on the quality of degree offerings. Third, privately-operated establishments have established track records in profitability and sustainability. Their entry into the SUCs will not only bring in fresh and creative ideas on resource management but could also catalyze a wider network and more business tie-ups.

4.4 Stages of Corporatization in Thailand and Malaysia

The various universities selected as cases for the study differed in the progress made on corporatization. Compared to the Philippines, autonomy in universities in Thailand is not as widespread. In fact, there were only three autonomous universities operating during the period of study. These were King Mongkut Institute of Technology Thonburi in Bangkok ; Suranaree Technology University in Nakornratchasima and Walailak University in Nakornsrihammarat.

On August 19, 2003, the Thai government delineated principles for strict adherence of all future autonomous universities to be recommended by the National Education Council. This was aimed at enabling good governance, providing flexibility and resiliency in operations, accountability in carrying out the tasks, quality, efficiency, effectiveness, consistency with development needs and government policies, and auditing and monitoring universities on a continuing basis (ACHAVA-AMRUNG, 2003).

In financial matters, operating budgets were to be allocated by the government and concurrently the government was required to supply the supplementary budgets when the allocation was insufficient and the universities were unable to seek financial backing elsewhere. Also, university incomes were retained and not remitted to the Ministry of Finance, giving them flexibility in using the income to finance their operations and needs subject to rules on university budgetary process. Concomitantly, these would tend to minimize

red tape, making university operations prompt and more efficient.

Reforms were also in progress in the University Malaya and the University of Putra Malaysia as both universities recognized movement toward openness, university-industry-government cooperation and the challenge to create more opportunities to boost income. Alongside the trend toward corporatization was the restructuring of the university policy framework toward a market driven environment. Implementing guidelines included initial budget allocations to serve as seed money for income generating ventures, and the empowerment of the University Board of Directors to create and manage Business Holding Companies. These gave school administrators the wherewithal and flexibility to strategize revenue generation and self-finance university programs and development.

These Universities reckoned that the private sector, through the corporatization process, can be instrumental in transforming assets into productive and profitable use, particularly in the long run. During the time of the study, most of the budget (about 97%) was sourced from annual appropriations by the Ministry of Education. Of the total annual disbursement, Maintenance and Operating Expenses (MOE) accounted for roughly 20 percent. In the next five years, University of Malaya envisions 30 percent self-sufficiency through the help of the corporatized system of asset management.

To partially offset budgetary reliance, universities either put up income-generating projects or forged strategic business deals with the private sector in the development, management, and productive use of their assets. This was a situation very similar to the universities interviewed in Thailand. Strategically, the qualified private-sector managers were brought to the forefront of the SCU businesses through a privatizing management system. The privatizing management option took any or a combination of the following modes : (1) lease of assets ; (2) issuance of management contracts ; (3) concessions ; and (4) business centers. In some instances, SCUs offered incentives to potential private investors to transfer management of assets to the University.

At the University of Putra Malaysia, a University Business Center (UBC) has been established with the following operational units : business development unit, consultancy unit, technology commercialization unit, training and continuing education unit, multimedia unit and technology unit. These units had their own distinct business jurisdictions and functions and were said to be all functioning effectively.

4.5 Success Factors of Corporatization in Thailand and Malaysia

The study revealed that for a strong symbiotic relationship between the SUCs and potential business partners to prosper, the following are requisites : (1) sufficient funding to serve as seed money during the initial implementation of corporatization ; (2) firm, clear and consistent agreement between the SUCs and business collaborators particularly on resource sharing and benefit distribution ; (3) competent and dependable core of business experts to manage SUC assets and income generating projects (IGPs) ; (4) an implementable and effective monitoring and evaluation system that could ensure performance and accountability ; and, (5) an empowered Board of Trustees that can act decisively on the business fortunes of SUCs.

4.6 Patterns in Corporatization of SUCs in the Philippines

In assessing the likelihood of adoption and successful operationalization of corporatization of SUCs in the Philippines, a characterization of SUCs was carried out particularly with respect to the nature, structure and pattern of income-generating endeavors, level of awareness of and receptiveness to corporatization and other related features. The following were the major characteristic findings of the study :

- (1) Over the past several years, SUCs responded to financial crunch either by lobbying to at least maintain appropriations at their current levels or by imposing user charges or engaging in income-generating projects (IGPs) to complement their annual operating budget whose real values have deteriorated over time.
- (2) Production activities have been partly incorporated into school mandates alongside the conventional instruction, research, and extension functions. The SUCs were involved in various IGPs whose performance was primarily determined by the assets on hand, both physical and human.
- (3) Organization, planning and management of IGPs were intrinsic in the University's organization structure, usually under the direct supervision of the President or Vice President for Administration. Consequently, a line function has been added to the school's organizational structure to reflect this integration.
- (4) Staffing of IGPs was drawn from existing university personnel. The IGP manager was typically a trusted associate of the head of the university or somebody high up in the administrative hierarchy whose primary qualification rested on academic

credentials for teaching or research and not necessarily for the management of an enterprise or a set of enterprises. Furthermore, the operations of the IGPs were sometimes hampered by lack of qualified personnel, since staffing was typically limited to the existing plantilla, whose responsibilities became diffused between their academic load and business involvement.

- (5) Financing of the operations of the projects was usually sourced internally, i.e. from the income generated by the projects themselves, and was insufficient to launch the desired type and scale of IGPs. While all the interviewed SUCs expressed high propensity to venture on corporatization, sufficient start-up capital was reported to be a necessary condition.
- (6) It is highly plausible that the IGP books of accounts were mixed with the university's maintenance and operating budgets, thereby precluding a straightforward appraisal of the cost and performance efficiency of the IGPs.
- (7) There was very high level of awareness on corporatization but limited knowledge on the available alternative schemes. In turn, the private sector participation in the various projects was limited especially in financing, operation and management of the projects.
- (8) Some respondents were aware of the danger of corporatization because of the possibility of universities being trapped by the call of profit in lieu of being able to exercise the basic tenets of education. Some feared the consequences of highly educated and trained faculty members spending more time on income generation rather than their primary function of teaching. Under such a situation, corporate value overtakes the goal of quality education, which would eventually defeat the very essence of establishing academic institutions.

The current status of SUCs with regard to corporatization suggests that, by and large, the SUCs were in an antecedent stage of wholly engaging the private sector in the utilization of its assets, notwithstanding the provisions of law granting their Board of Regents/ Trustees corporate powers under *Batasang Pambansa Blg. 69 (Corporate Code of the Philippines)*. While SUCs were able to generate and utilize income from certain projects, the very structure under which these projects were managed and operated did not lend enough flexibility and latitude for private-sector participation.

4.7 Critical Design Features

Intuitively, this study reveals that corporatization of

SUCs has a good chance of success in the Philippines. However, certain preconditions must be sufficiently satisfied to insure success and sustainability. The following must be carefully considered in the formulation of structure, design and arrangements for corporatization of SUCs in the Philippines :

Steadfast Leadership. Corporatization can be initiated and sustained only in an environment of steadfast support from the organizational hierarchy beginning at the top. School administrators must be convinced, ready, and highly organized to meet the challenges of corporatization. Commitment bridges openness and receptivity to the constantly changing market environment. In the same manner, any impediment to the corporatization initiatives can readily be dealt with given a strong and committed leadership.

Clear Standard Operating Procedures and Protocols. Success of corporatization has repeatedly emphasized that in order for synergy and growth to go together, a strong and fluid organizational structure with established standard operating procedure is a precondition. Functional area competencies and maximum resource productivities have higher likelihood of success when proper standard operating procedures and protocols are institutionalized, made transparent and religiously adhered to. Any ambiguity would likely dampen initiative as it usually results in loss of predictability and focus in long-term investments. Any uncertainty in standing policies and agreements would cast doubts on the ability to recoup investments especially for long-gestation projects.

Project Development Outfit. This unit shall be responsible to the university administration on investment related matters. It is expected to be highly competent in market scanning and positioning, assessing project bankability, including financing strategies and formation of strategic business alliances. SUC-public-private networks are expected to be vital components in launching competitive business centers.

Human Resource Development Strategy. Corporatization requires the appointment of qualified and competent personnel. Central to SUC's human resource development strategy, therefore, is a personnel audit, i.e., matching of personnel qualifications with the present and future manpower needs. Capacity building can also play a pivotal role in SUC's competitiveness.

Competitive Compensation Packages. Key to hiring and employment relocation decisions is the level and form of remuneration and incentive structures. Therefore, rationalization of the incentive package of personnel is in order.

Resource Sourcing and Mobilization Strategy. Busi-

ness plans can only be executed well with adequate financial support base. Aside from allowing activities to be launched at the desired scale of operation, ample funding is a prerequisite of strengthening the existing carrying capacity of the business. Hence, a resource sourcing and mobilization strategy is needed to generate start-up capital for new projects and additional capital flow for expanding the scale of operations of current projects.

Monitoring and Evaluation. A Monitoring and Evaluation system is necessary to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the contract with the private sector and address performance issues pertaining to effective delivery of service and proceeds from the project.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

In the midst of chronic fiscal deficits in the past, most SUCs were under pressure to generate more revenues to finance their vital expenditure items. A new governance approach is required to address the challenges facing SUCs and corporatization has been reckoned to be a promising option.

A corporate structure may have to be set up by the SUCs as a step toward gaining flexibility in generating and managing any surplus resources, without the bureaucratic rules and constraints associated with the use of public funds. Corporatization, in the form of a corporate foundation, would not only allow the SUCs to create capital buildup fund to finance future expansion and diversification particularly on academic-related concerns but also would minimize, if not totally avoid, the tradeoffs between income generation and quality education. Such a setup will permit the school to keep its staff on their regular academic load and at the same time hire more qualified and professional managers to administer the operation of the school enterprises.

While corporatization may eventually lead to lesser public-sector financing in the long run, the initial stage, however, puts more pressure on the part of the government to set aside massive initial capital outlay. Most universities support corporatization, provided the prerequisite of ample endowment is met. Henceforth, central to the corporatization's take-off is the availability of trust funds to finance investments and other development programs.

Corporatization of SUCs in the Philippines will have a better chance of success given the following requisites in place : (1) an environment of steadfast support from the organizational hierarchy beginning at the top ; (2) a strong and fluid organizational structure with well-defined standard operating procedure ; (3) a highly

competent project development unit that is responsible for market scanning and positioning, assessing investment ventures and financing, and formation of strategic business alliances ; (4) hiring of qualified and competent personnel ; (5) regular capacity building ; (6) competitive compensation packages ; (7) adequate financial support base ; and (8) implementable and effective monitoring and evaluation system that could ensure performance and accountability.

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フィリピンの公立高等教育機関における企業家精神の導入：目標としてのシステムの形成

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要約：企業化とは国有企業や団体にある政府資産の回収や資産管理あるいはそれらの組み合わせに関する戦略パートナーとして民間企業を関与させる過程である。そして諸外国では多くの公立高等教育機関において企業化が取り入れられている。その理由は(1)政府補助金への大きな依存という伝統的な慣行から脱却すること；(2)公務員の官僚的な手続きから大学を解放する必要があること；(3)大学の財政的及び行政的自治権を拡大すること；(4)分権による公的な資産管理のより効率的および弾力的に実施すること、である。

企業化の成功確率を高めるためには、フィリピンにおける国立大学とカレッジの企業化に対して構成や企画、準備に関する要件を慎重に検討しなければならない。それらは次の通りである。(1)上から順に組織階層が力強い支援をする環境；(2)標準業務手順書が明確であり、強力的及び流動的な組織構造；(3)市場監視とボジショニングやベンチャー投資と融資の評価、ビジネス分野での戦略的な協力体制の開発に対して責任がある有能なプロジェクト開発部；(4)有資格者の採用；(5)定期的なキャパシティー・ビルディング；(6)競争的な給与体系；(7)適切な財政支持基盤、(8)性能と責任を確保でき、効果的実現可能な監視と評価システムである。

キーワード：企業化、国立大学とカレッジ (SUCs)、クリティカル・デザイン・フィーチャ

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