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EDITED BY

Sarfraz Aslam,
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Harvard Medical School, United States
Nomalanga Hamadziripi,
Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences
and Technology (MUAST), Zimbabwe

*CORRESPONDENCE

Nilo Jayoma Castulo
✉ nilocastulo@mail.bnu.edu.cn

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"Dress like the Global North and eat like the Global South": why do faculty contributions to university research productivity matter?

Arlyne C. Marasigan¹, Bonjovi Hajan², Nilo Jayoma Castulo^{3*}, Riomar Obliopas⁴, Gerry S. Digo⁵, Ombra A. Imam⁶, Jayson L. De Vera¹, John Michael Aquino⁷, Jovito C. Anito Jr⁸, Fernigil Colicol², Ma Laarni Buenaventura¹, Ishwar Koirala⁹ and Saddam C. Bazer¹⁰

¹College of Advanced Studies and Education Policy and Research Development Office, Philippine Normal University, Manila, Philippines, ²College of Education, Mindanao State University - Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, Bongao, Philippines, ³Institute of International and Comparative Education, Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China, ⁴Graduate School, Eastern Samar State University, Borongan City, Philippines, ⁵Graduate School, Sorsogon State University, Sorsogon City, Philippines, ⁶College of Islamic Studies and Graduate College, Cotabato State University, Cotabato, Philippines, ⁷College of Arts and Sciences, Laguna State Polytechnic University, Sta. Cruz Laguna, Philippines, ⁸College of Teacher Education, Jose Rizal Memorial State University, Dapitan City, Philippines, ⁹University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia, ¹⁰College of Education, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines

The long-standing disparity in research standards between Global South and Global North universities places immense pressure on higher education, affecting faculty research productivity and global competitiveness. This policy brief argues that aligning with the Global North standards to achieve international competitiveness and sustainability requires strategic policy interventions that address both human and financial constraints. Based on the evidence, the University of the Philippines, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, and Mindanao State University are the top three state-funded universities with the highest number of faculty members. Additionally, the University of the Philippines receives the highest research funding allocation and has produced over a thousand Scopus-indexed publications between 2020 and 2024, compared to other universities with fewer than 200 publications. The top ten challenges faced by Filipino faculty members in conducting research based on 58 respondents in a survey include time constraints, financial limitations, being overburdened with work, limited research exposure, coordination difficulties, lack of research training, family commitments, poor writing skills, lack of motivation, technical guidance, and publication pressure. Thus, this policy brief recommends that higher education institutions strengthen research governance and compliance, bridge research disparities for global competitiveness, and recalibrate research standards for sustainable growth. These policy recommendations not only blur research polarization but also advance knowledge sharing and data sharing to foster a sustainable research culture and faculty productivity, positioning the country as a key player in the global academic community.

KEYWORDS

Global North and South, faculty member, challenges, higher education, research productivity, EDCOM II, Philippines, faculty promotion

THE WHY: the prologue

“I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory, then a location for healing (hooks, 1994, p.59).” We came to theory because it is continually hurting, reflecting the injustices we experience stemming from the bureaucratic and administrative bloat in higher education, and more significantly, the polarization of the Philippine government in pointing the finger of blame at higher education, in its report of the education crisis caused by its “miseducation” (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2024). The Philippine government’s Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) report highlights critical priority areas in higher education, governance, and finance, reinforcing the pressure on university faculty to meet global “*publish or perish*” standards (Castulo et al., 2024; Castulo, 2024). Specifically, priority area 13 in the EDCOM II report (Graduate Education, Research, and Innovation) identifies key challenges, including a lack of capacity to produce high-quality research in universities and inadequate mechanisms for translating research into innovation and technology. Likewise, priority area 15 (Internationalization of Higher Education) addresses constraints on student and faculty internationalization, transnational education, and concerns over global university rankings (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2024). With the overwhelming issues in Philippine higher education similar to those in other countries in the Global South, we may find this policy brief as a location of healing. This policy brief argues that, if Global South university administrators aim to align with Global North standards and achieve global competitiveness in terms of efficiency and sustainability, they must ensure adequate investment in research, including both human and financial resources.

Interwoven dialogues: north–south and south–south voices

The increasing prominence of publications indexed in Scopus or Web of Science has become a pivotal element in the internationalization efforts of universities, particularly in the context of global rankings (Moldashev and Tleuov, 2022). Prior to this trend, universities conducted research independently, without the influence of globalization factors, such as world university rankings (Salmi, 2021). Consequently, if the research productivity of faculty in the Global South is assessed using standards established by the Global North, it is imperative that equivalent support metrics be provided. Only when universities in the Global South allocate comparable resources and institutional support for research and faculty productivity can standards of the Global North be attained.

Academic standards set by Global North universities challenge the faculty of the Global South. Publication pressure, resource limits, cultural and epistemological inequities, and infrastructure deficits are among these obstacles. English-language journals and publishers have made this problematic for non-English speakers (Horwood et al., 2021). Global South institutions struggle to receive funding for pricey journal subscriptions from the Global North, thus straining their budgets (Scherlen, 2020). Likewise, international research agendas

prioritize Global North themes and methodologies over Global South knowledge systems and priorities (Ahmed et al., 2023; Silveira et al., 2023).

Resource and infrastructure constraints exacerbate this problem. Many institutions in the Global South are underfunded, resulting in inadequate laboratory facilities, limited online resources, and inconsistent internet connectivity, which hinders high-quality research and education (Moshtari and Safarpour, 2024). Educators and students in the Global South often lack access to modern educational tools and technology, which worsens educational inequality (Abdelghaffar and Eid, 2025). However, systemic restrictions have hindered academic output and international scholarly involvement.

Cultural and epistemological gaps exacerbate academic inequality. Global North academic standards and methods often marginalize Global South knowledge systems and epistemologies (Ahmed et al., 2023). Moreover, colonialism still shapes academic collaborations, often sustaining power inequities in which Global North institutions set research partnership conditions (Gerlach et al., 2020). This restricts academic independence from the Global South and prevents diverse perspectives from entering dominant intellectual discussions. Global South educators encounter professional and social concerns in addition to structural issues. Career development sometimes hinges on publishing research in important Global North journals, reinforcing inequality (Kesande et al., 2024).

Listening to the data: what is it telling us?

This policy brief discusses an abridged version of the methodology section to provide the evidence to support our argument. The study utilized multiple methods by gathering publicly available data from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) statistics portal and the Department of Budget and Management websites. Initially, we identified the top 10 state universities with the largest number of faculty members. The only data available on the CHED website was for the 2019–2020 school year.

In addition, we carefully checked each National Expenditure Program document based on the research program budget allocation from 2020 to 2024. We selected a span of five calendar years due to the Commission on Higher Education Memo Order 15 series of 2019, which mandates that graduate students conducting research must publish in a peer-reviewed journal as a graduation requirement (CHED Memo No. 15, 2019). In addition, we checked the Scopus databases using Scival analytics to identify the number of papers based on the selected years. However, Negros Oriental State University has no Scopus affiliation as of April 22, 2025. Thus, we searched it by affiliation to track their published papers.

To understand the faculty’s challenges in producing research, we listed 20 challenges based on the literature on the challenges faced by faculty members (Castulo et al., 2025; Hakami, 2023; Khalil and Khalil, 2019; Kumar et al., 2023; Miller and Newman, 2005), and respondents were required to choose the top 10 challenges. The survey received 58 respondents. In the survey, the researchers included online consent to participate voluntarily, and they are Filipinos working in Philippine state universities. It was conducted anonymously using Microsoft Forms from April 20 to May 03, 2025.

TABLE 1 Top 10 state universities and colleges number of faculty by program level (academic year 2019–2020).

Rank	Public HEIs	BA/BS/B	MA. MS/M	PhD	Grand total
1	University of the Philippines	1,910	1,765	479	4,154
2	Polytechnic University of the Philippines	854	769	315	1,938
3	Mindanao State University (BARMM)	754	741	231	1,726
4	Cavite State University	990	384	134	1,508
5	Bulacan State University	728	512	89	1,329
6	Western Mindanao State University	719	480	103	1,302
7	Cebu Technological University	504	395	350	1,249
8	Negros Oriental State University	825	222	112	1,159
9	University of Southeastern Philippines	457	437	143	1,037
10	Cagayan State University	338	455	208	1,001

Source: [Commission on Higher Education \(2020\)](#). The researchers chose this year's data because the recently published Commission on Higher Education data was unavailable.

To ensure that the majority of the respondents are from state universities, we shared it with our institutional groups on different social media platforms. Thirty-six instructors, seven assistant professors, 10 associate professors, and five full professors completed the survey. The survey was shared using a Facebook post and shared with different groups. Moreover, the survey was an initial baseline data to support the argument of the difficulties of the faculty members in conducting the study.

Table 1 shows the faculty distribution across academic programs in the top 10 state universities and colleges in the Philippines for the academic year 2019–2020. Of the 2,396 universities and colleges, including satellite campuses in both the public and private sectors, the institutions in Table 1 represent the leading state-funded higher education institutions by faculty size. University of the Philippines tops the list with 4,154 faculty members, comprising 1,910 at the bachelor's level, 1,765 at the master's level, and 479 at the doctoral level. Other notable institutions include Polytechnic University of the Philippines (1,938 faculty) and Mindanao State University (1,726 faculty), with most universities showing a higher concentration of faculty at the undergraduate level compared to graduate programs. The data revealed variations in faculty composition among the top institutions. For example, Cavite State University has 990 bachelor's-level faculty but only 134 doctoral faculty members. In contrast, Cebu Technological University has a relatively balanced distribution with 350 doctoral faculty members despite its smaller total faculty size (1,249). To note, all faculty members, particularly in state-funded institutions, are required to perform in different key areas of instruction, research, extension, and professional development for their promotion as mandated by the Joint Circular No. 3 series of 2022 ([Department of Budget and Management and Commission on Higher Education, 2022](#)).

Table 2 displays the data that underscores the critical role of sustained and substantial research funding in driving Scopus-indexed publications. University of the Philippine dominance exemplifies this, while smaller institutions demonstrate varying degrees of efficiency or struggle with limited resources. Budget cuts often correlate with volatile research output, emphasizing the need for consistent investment to foster research productivity. UP

consistently leads both in research budget allocation and Scopus-indexed publications. Its budget is significantly higher than other institutions (e.g., PHP 626 million in 2020, peaking at PHP 1.16 billion in 2022), correlating with its substantial Scopus output (1,854 publications in 2020, rising to 2,751 in 2024). Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) and Mindanao State University (BARMM) show moderate budgets but notable increases in Scopus output over time (e.g., PUP's Scopus count rose from 59 in 2020 to 169 in 2024). This indicates efficient use of limited resources. Cavite State University and Bulacan State University exhibit budget fluctuations (e.g., Bulacan's budget dropped sharply in 2024), yet their Scopus output remained stable or improved, suggesting resilience in research productivity despite funding inconsistencies. Negros Oriental State University has the lowest Scopus output (as low as 4 in 2024) and minimal budget allocations (PHP 7.7 million in 2021). Western Mindanao State University and Cagayan State University show erratic budget trends and inconsistent Scopus numbers, highlighting challenges in sustaining research momentum. Cebu Technological University had a high budget in 2020 (PHP 86 million) but a sharp drop in 2022 (PHP 27 million), yet its Scopus output peaked in 2022 (95).

Figure 1 reveals a systemic challenge in academia, in which faculty members face mounting pressures that evolve with their career progression. The figure identifies “Time Constraints” (50), “Financial Constraints” (42), and “Overburdened with Work” (39) as the most frequent challenges, reflecting resource limitations and heavy workloads endemic to the profession. These issues are exacerbated by the tiered expectations shown in Table 3: junior faculty (Instructors I–III) dedicate 60% of their effort to teaching, leaving little room (10%) to develop research skills through professional development. In comparison, senior faculty (Professors I–VI and College/University Professors) must pivot sharply toward research (40–50%), which focuses on key administrative functions in the university. Challenges such as “Poor Writing Skills (23),” “Lack of Research Training (25),” and “Publication Pressure (21)” are associated with the identity of most of the faculty members who answered the survey, particularly at the instructor level, who are pursuing graduate degrees while serving as full-time faculty members.

TABLE 2 Top 10 SUCs by faculty—research budget and Scopus output (2020–2024).

Rank	Public HEIs	Research Program Budget 2020	Scopus Index 2020	Research Program Budget 2021	Scopus Index 2021	Research Program Budget 2022	Scopus Index 2022	Research Program Budget 2023	Scopus Index 2023	Research Program Budget 2024	Scopus Index 2024
1	University of the Philippines	626,306,000	1854	753,903,000	2211	1,167,820,000	2476	747,458,000	2360	766,780,00	2751
2	Polytechnic University of the Philippines	17,820,00	59	19,900,000	81	21,098,000	66	21,388,000	119	21,776,000	169
3	Mindanao State University (BARM)	89,373,000	36	121,003,00	42	104,585,000	34	107,546,000	50	120,704,000	65
4	Cavite State University	19,015,000	38	35,541,000	27	17,628,000	48	18,502,000	40	15,573,000	55
5	Bulacan State University	5,253,000	24	90,465,000	35	90,582,000	34	93,832,000	37	44,619,000	69
6	Western Mindanao State University	10,610,000	38	11,237,000	15	35,880,000	8	36,944,000	34	9,273,000	66
7	Cebu Technological University	86,472,000	57	80,963,000	71	27,577,000	95	28,600,000	85	47,140,000	139
8	Negros Oriental State University	29,050,000	8	7,730,000	7	7,551,000	7	7,812,000	14	15,802,000	4
9	University of Southeastern Philippines	10,865,000	9	33,815,000	15	7,613,000	28	7,890,000	26	12,890,000	37
10	Cagayan State University	13,584,000	23	48,492,000	26	49,263,000	13	16,942,000	20	25,203,000	16

The study collected the figures on Scopus for the number of publications and the budget allocations from the Department of Budget and Management; Negros Oriental State University has no Scopus affiliation as of April 22, 2025; Proposed (cash-based) Research Program Budget Based on the National Expenditure Program (DBM, n.d.; SciVal, 2025).

In addition, the strain is compounded for graduate student faculty, who must simultaneously meet their teaching obligations, publish under CMO No. 15, 2019, and complete their degrees. Community extensions and administrative duties (a fixed 20% across ranks) further dilute their capacity, fuel coordination difficulties, and time poverty. The figure’s “*Limited Research Exposure (28)*” and “*Family Commitments (24)*” underscore how these institutional demands clash with personal and professional development needs. Thus, the data paint a picture of a system where structural imbalances—disproportionate teaching loads, sudden research expectations, and rigid policies—create a cascade of challenges, disproportionately affecting early career faculty and hindering their progression into research-focused roles. In addition, these data correlate with the study of [Castulo et al. \(2025\)](#) education graduate students who faced insufficient time allocated for research, limited opportunities for research capacity development, scheduling conflicts between work and academic responsibilities, inadequate mentoring support, and prolonged expenses due to extended residency.

The manifesto for change: rethinking policy and practice

Developing a national strategy for research and innovation

To overcome institutional and structural barriers in SUCs, a national strategy should enhance faculty expertise through formal mentorship, specialized training, and balanced research access. Research consortia among leading and top-tier domestic universities facilitate collaboration, resource-sharing, and innovation ([Numprasertchai and Igel, 2005](#); [Oliver, 2022](#)). The research agenda should be aligned with national and regional development imperatives to ensure effective contribution to policy and industry. Criteria for evaluation need to be well-defined and contextualized to prevent biased research productivity judgments considering institutional differences. Thus, an equitable and sustainable funding arrangement must be established to finance routine research expansion, particularly among underfunded SUCs.

Strengthening research publication in the Global South

University administrators must encourage faculty members to use local or institutional journals, build a Global South journal identity, and internationalize faculty researchers to make local contexts competitive. Publicize local or institutional journals through Global South publication platforms to democratize university faculty publications. Thus, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) should create and disseminate a list of high-quality national, and international journals to avoid predatory publications. Publication venues must be expanded under CHED Memorandum Order 15, 2019 and the Department of Budget and Management and CHED Joint Circular No. 3, s. 2022. As an alternative, universities in the Global South should consider incorporating preprint servers like medRxiv, arXiv, bioRxiv, and

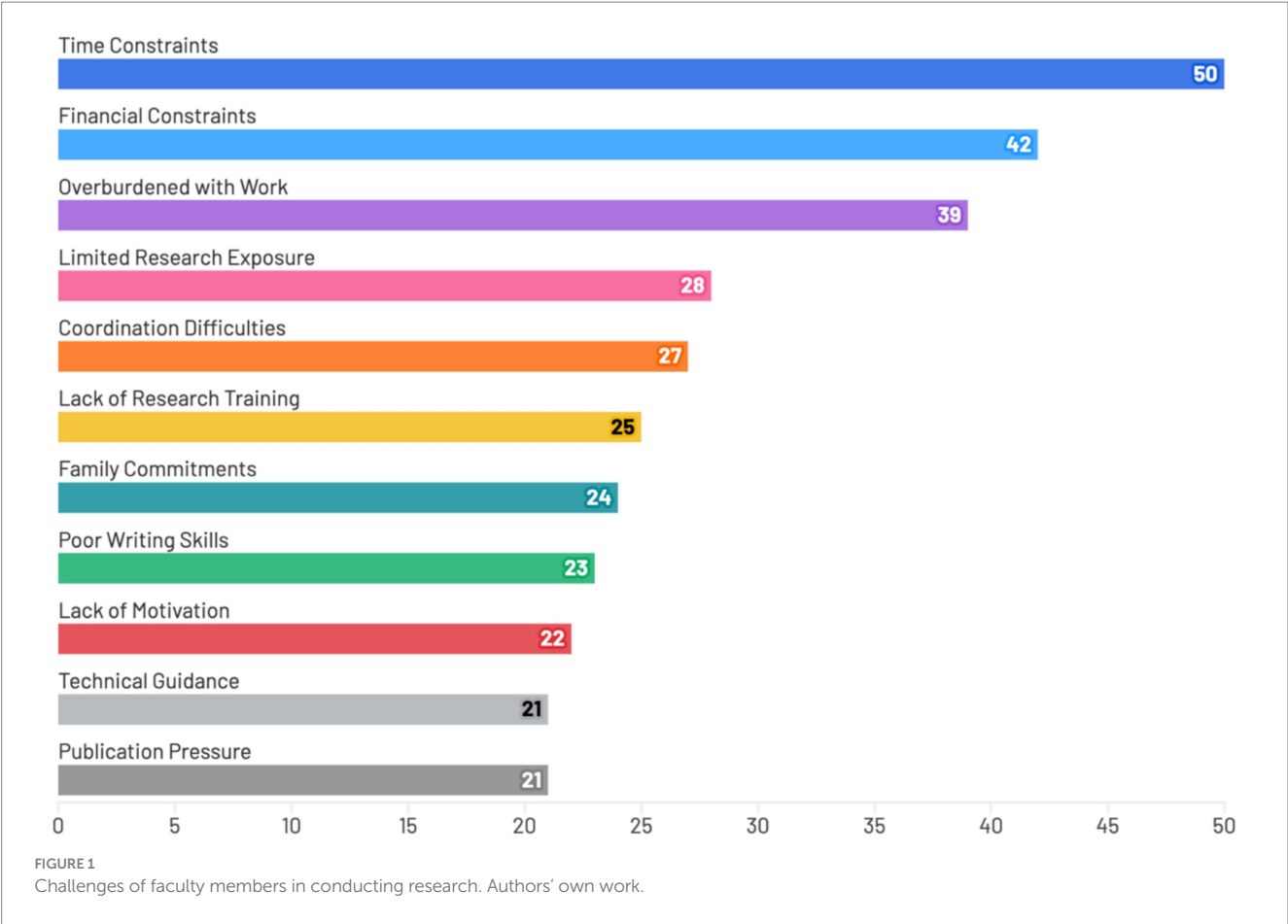


TABLE 3 Key results area weights per faculty rank.

Faculty Rank	Key result areas (KRAs)			
	Instruction	Research, innovation and or/creative work	Extension	Professional development
Instructor (I-III)	60%	10%	20%	10%
Assistant Professor (I-IV)	50%	20%	20%	10%
Associate Professor (I-V)	40%	30%	20%	10%
Professor (I-VI)	30%	40%	20%	10%
College/University Professor	20%	50%	20%	10%

Source: [Department of Budget and Management and Commission on Higher Education \(2022\)](#).

socRxiv into their strategies for recruiting and retaining scholars and faculty. The free and open-access nature of preprints can enhance the accessibility of research from the Global South and challenge the Global North policies that have been adopted by these universities.

Bridging research disparities in Philippine higher education

The gaps in Philippine universities' research production and publication performance present an overwhelming challenge in aligning with Global North standards. Therefore, university administrators must create and practice strong research collaboration through consortia (i.e., autonomous, center of

excellence, and center of development). Higher education in the Philippines should foster the creation of a structured and comprehensive mentorship program and research collaboration that links top-tier research universities to second- and third-tier HEIs. Such mechanism will shore up research into human capital and address perennial structural issues such as infrastructural deficiencies and resource limitations.

Enforcing research compliance into faculty core functions

Professors should reassess their core responsibilities to enhance research productivity. This vision should include faculty research,

instruction, extension, and production. Research is vital to education, extension, and production. Thus, academics should not consider research as separate, complicated, or time-consuming. The faculty can integrate research into instruction and extension by making all initiatives research-based. University administrators should support instructors by demonstrating their policies to support their upskilling and growth. Furthermore, both university administrators and faculty should regard research as a fundamental responsibility, which must be integrated into the criteria for tenure and promotion. Seeing research as essential to instruction and extension boosts faculty's research productivity.

Recalibrating quality assurance and research evaluation standards

The recalibration or reassessment of quality assurance standards, such as those provided by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), necessitates that universities adhere to these standards to ensure compliance. It is recommended that standards developed in the Global North be applied within that context, while institutions in the Global South should exercise caution when adopting these standards. Instead, they should consider developing and applying standards tailored to their specific contexts, considering multiple relevant factors. Moreover, like the creation of Global South citation indices, such as Bro. Gonzales, the Philippine Citation Index, the Chinese Social Science Citation Index, and the now-defunct Asian Citation Index play a crucial role in recognizing and amplifying regional research contributions. Moreover, a consortium could be established for peer reviewers from the Global South to ensure that the perspectives, knowledge, and experiences of this region are represented and emphasized.

Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) may focus on localized impacts through applied research and extension services, while State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) may align with national and global research standards. Research governance should be streamlined, with LUCs addressing bureaucratic challenges through dedicated research management offices and SUCs leveraging their autonomy to establish long-term agendas.

Contextualizing research metrics for institutional diversity

The ambiguity in certain evaluation metrics derived from the Joint Circular 3 s. 2022 (J. C. 3) results in inconsistent interpretations across institutions. For example, faculty in rural or less-funded State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) may face barriers in meeting publication and other requirements owing to a lack of access (i.e., Scopus or Web of Science) and other contextual factors. It is recommended that Philippine higher education universities be classified differently (i.e., small, medium, and comprehensive), as in China, for the creation of Double First-Class Construction to play the games of internationalization, particularly the world ranking, while prioritizing their metrics such as the Chinese Citation Index. Thus, each classification may use contextualized metrics.

Promoting diversity, inclusion, and epistemic equity in research

Diversity and inclusion linger through knowledge production. The voices, concepts, and framework of research privileges are unclear. Challenge the Global North's epistemologies and techniques, which rule academia and ignore local cultures, knowledge systems, and values. As education quality varies widely between countries, our main goal is to improve education in the Global South. Find and encourage promising scholars, and create frameworks based on the Global South setting. Researchers and institutions working together can reduce higher education inequity, disseminate research knowledge, support junior researchers, and balance power relations between the Global North and Global South.

Enhancing research culture, mentoring, and governance

Higher education administrators must serve as role models by fulfilling the core functions of the university faculty before assuming a vital position in the university to serve as a compass to their fellow educators and provide a clear direction for the university's future. The efficiency, effectiveness, and timeliness towards quality education are non-negotiable and can only be achieved if higher-education administrators can perform the functions expected of all faculty members. Higher education administrators, particularly those in leadership roles, should be academics who comprehend the workings of research, rather than business moguls or academic clowns. Therefore, fostering a research culture necessitates a top-down approach, starting from the highest levels down to the students.

Addressing faculty workload and research productivity

Academic faculties shape their knowledge through instruction, research, extension, and production. These four essential functions require time and effort, which can lead to excessive workloads that affect faculties' well-being and performance. Teaching and administrative activities can distract scholars from research productivity, which requires time and an intellectual focus. University task distribution must be flexible enough to allow academics to thrive in research, extension, production, and instruction. Balancing the four faculty-course duties increases efficiency and output. By reviewing regulations and implementing guidelines, higher education institutions can encourage academics to conduct high-quality research while performing other academic responsibilities.

Faculty well-being and institutional support

The adage "*You cannot give what you do not have*" aptly captures the realities of faculty life in higher education. While the 'publish or perish' research culture is demanding, it remains a crucial and rewarding pursuit for knowledge production and dissemination. Faculty research productivity may suffer if university health and

well-being programs are not implemented adequately. By providing strong support, administrators can help faculty members maintain their research production, motivation, and commitment. Clear and practical financial aid programs, excellent technology infrastructure, and moral encouragement may improve the well-being of academic researchers. Therefore, all necessary policies for research productivity, backed by both software and hardware infrastructure, must be properly agreed upon and consulted on before the ‘publish or perish’ imperative takes effect.

THE ANSWER: the epilogue

Multiple forces increasingly threaten the foundational elements that uphold the faculty's role in higher education (Nelson, 2010). One of those is that the university administrations have increasingly moved away from the principles of faculty governance, collegial collaboration, and professional autonomy, shifting toward a corporate management approach (Bousquet, 2008). The rise of bureaucratic and administrative bloat in universities has led to inefficient and unnecessary expenses, as an expanding administrative class prioritizes managerial efficiency, branding, and financial growth over core academic values (Ginsberg, 2011). Thus, universities must rethink their governance structures and empower professors and students over bureaucratic and noxious administrative controls to restore their academic integrity, knowledge production efficiency, and institutional efficiency. Faculty contributions play a vital role in enhancing university research productivity, which in turn strengthens institutional reputation, academic rankings, and innovation, while fostering a more globally competitive higher education system. Addressing the challenges imposed by Global North standards is crucial for Philippine higher education institutions to ensure the equitable recognition of faculty contributions to research productivity. However, the question remains: What is the endpoint of these metrics, and how can we ensure that the standards of the Global North do not overshadow those of the Global South?

Author contributions

AM: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. BH: Resources, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization. NC: Supervision, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Validation, Visualization. RO: Formal analysis, Resources, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Data curation, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization. GD: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Data curation, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Visualization. OI: Conceptualization, Writing – original

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