

THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

My talk this morning about the research university is contextualized on the concern of the Philippines' lack of strong research universities.

I divided my talk into four parts, namely:

1. Regional and National Situationers on Research Productivity;
2. The Idea of Research University;
3. The Landscape of Philippine Higher Education and the Research University;
4. Learning from the American Model of Research University and from the California Master Plan.

INTRODUCTION

I based my lecture this morning on two papers that I wrote, namely:

1. “A Humboldtian Critique of the University of the Philippines as the Flagship of Philippine Higher Education,” a co-authored journal article; and
2. “De La Salle University’s Transition into a Research University,” a book chapter.

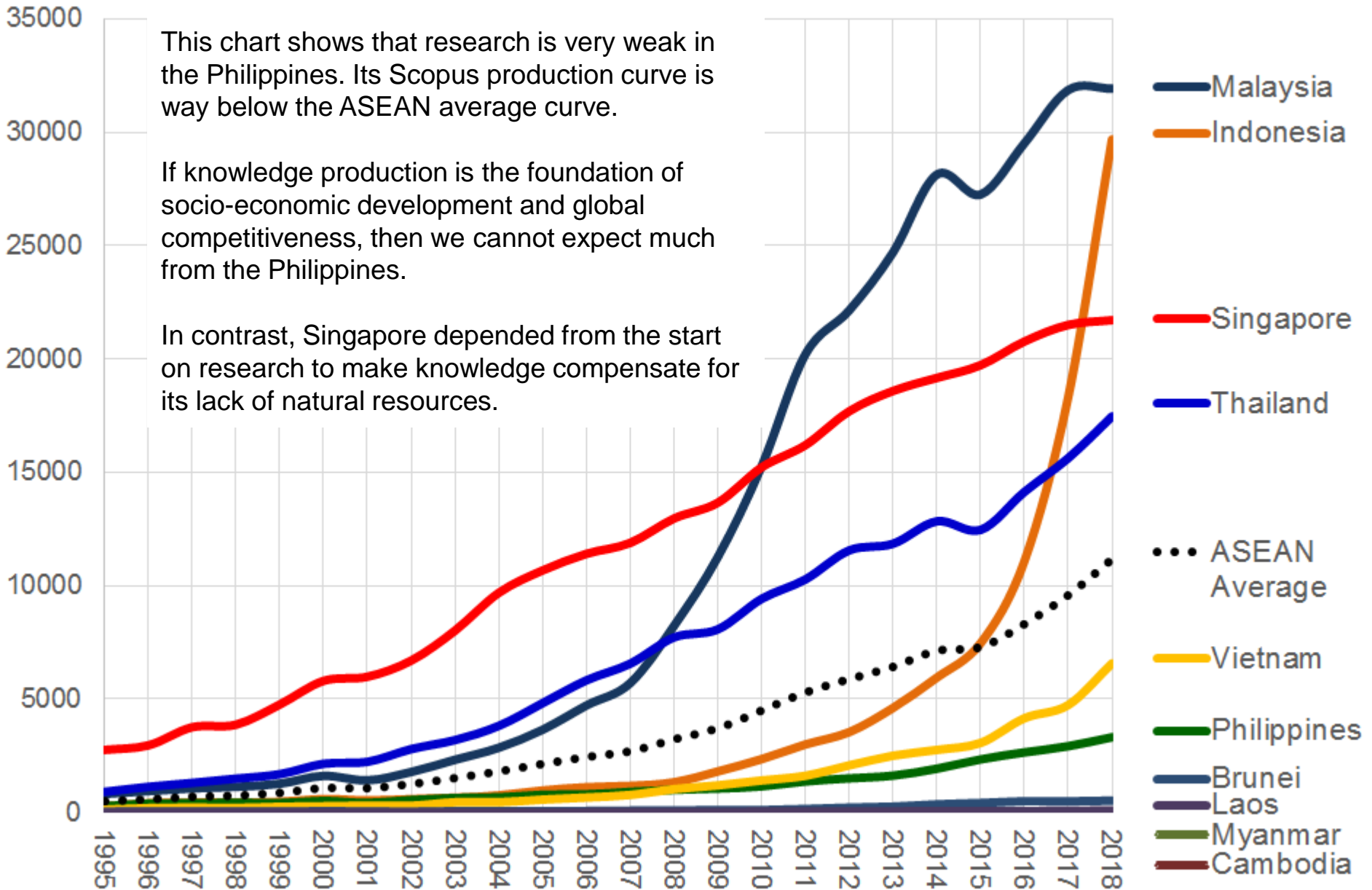
You may email me later if you are interested in having copies of these articles.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SITUATIONERS

This chart shows that research is very weak in the Philippines. Its Scopus production curve is way below the ASEAN average curve.

If knowledge production is the foundation of socio-economic development and global competitiveness, then we cannot expect much from the Philippines.

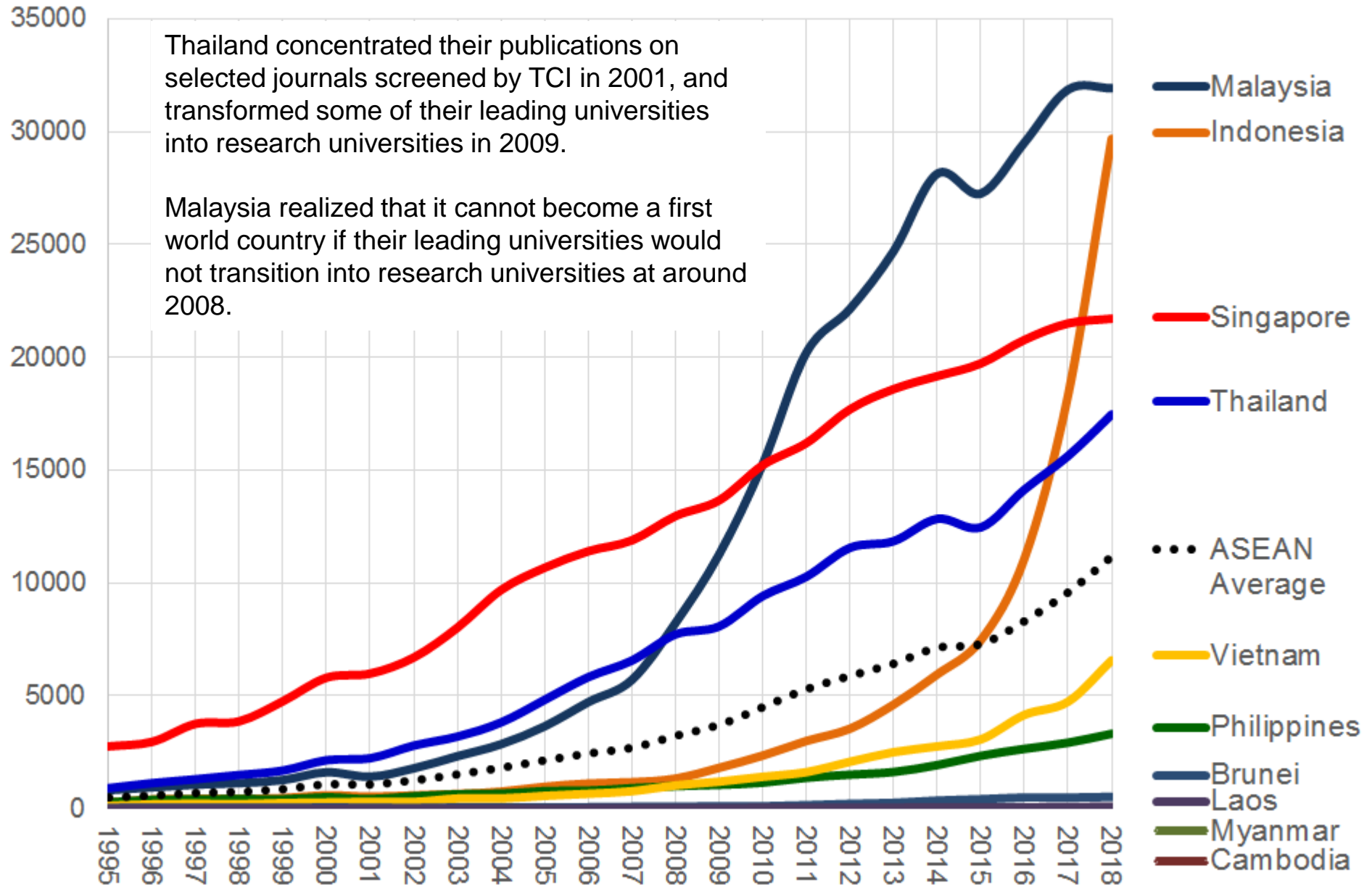
In contrast, Singapore depended from the start on research to make knowledge compensate for its lack of natural resources.



REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SITUATIONERS

Thailand concentrated their publications on selected journals screened by TCI in 2001, and transformed some of their leading universities into research universities in 2009.

Malaysia realized that it cannot become a first world country if their leading universities would not transition into research universities at around 2008.

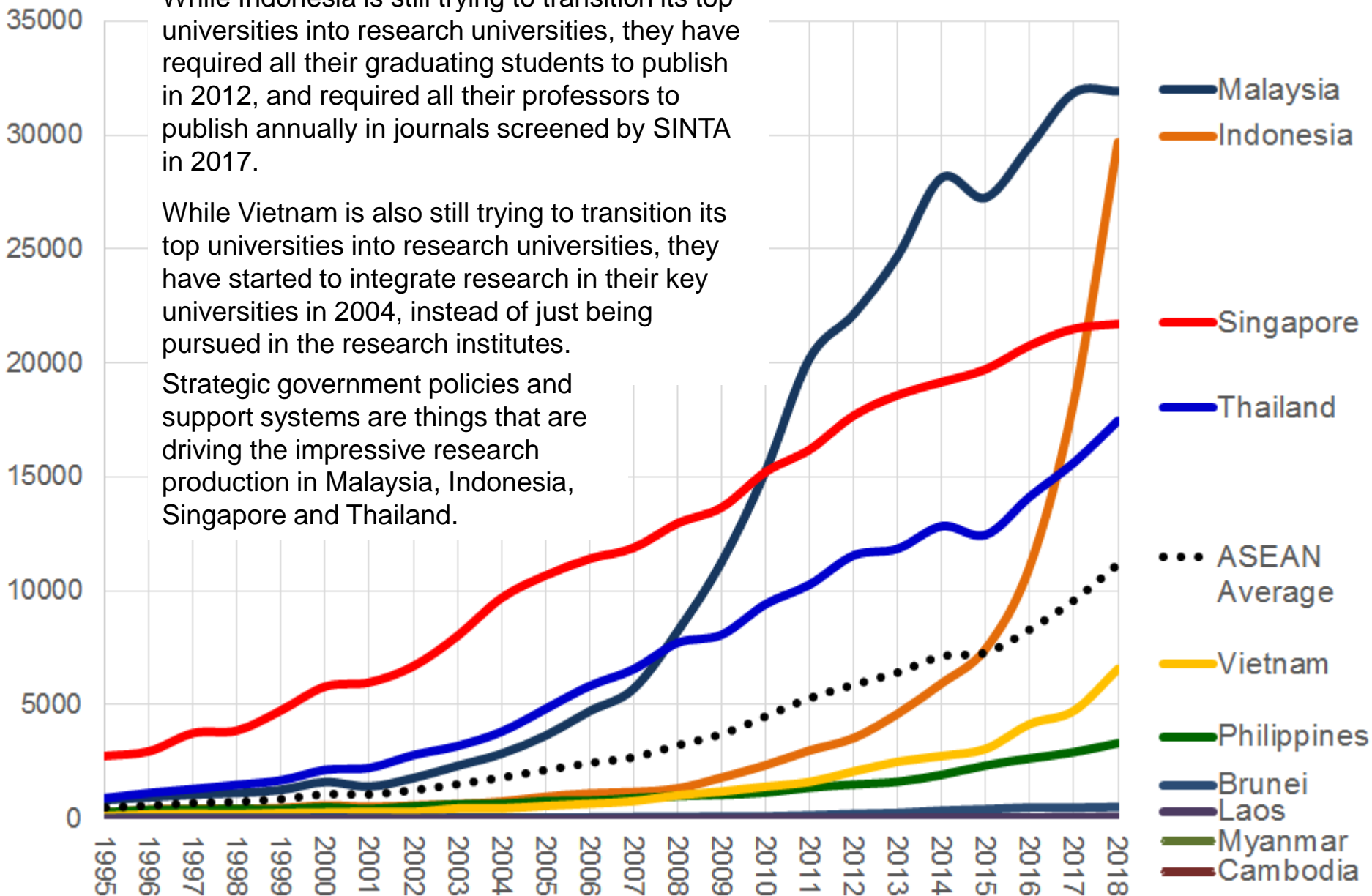


REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SITUATIONERS

While Indonesia is still trying to transition its top universities into research universities, they have required all their graduating students to publish in 2012, and required all their professors to publish annually in journals screened by SINTA in 2017.

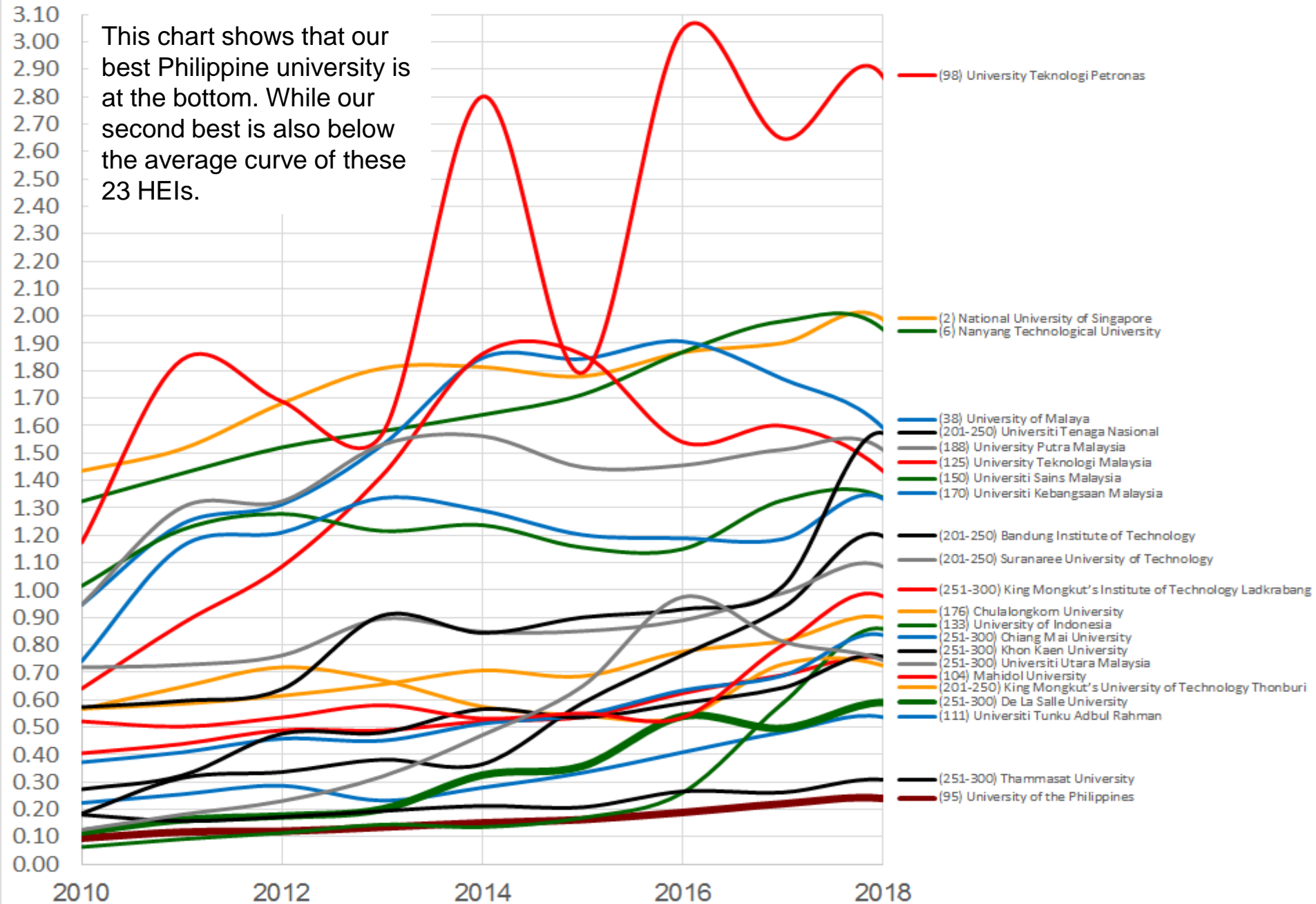
While Vietnam is also still trying to transition its top universities into research universities, they have started to integrate research in their key universities in 2004, instead of just being pursued in the research institutes.

Strategic government policies and support systems are things that are driving the impressive research production in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand.



REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SITUATIONERS

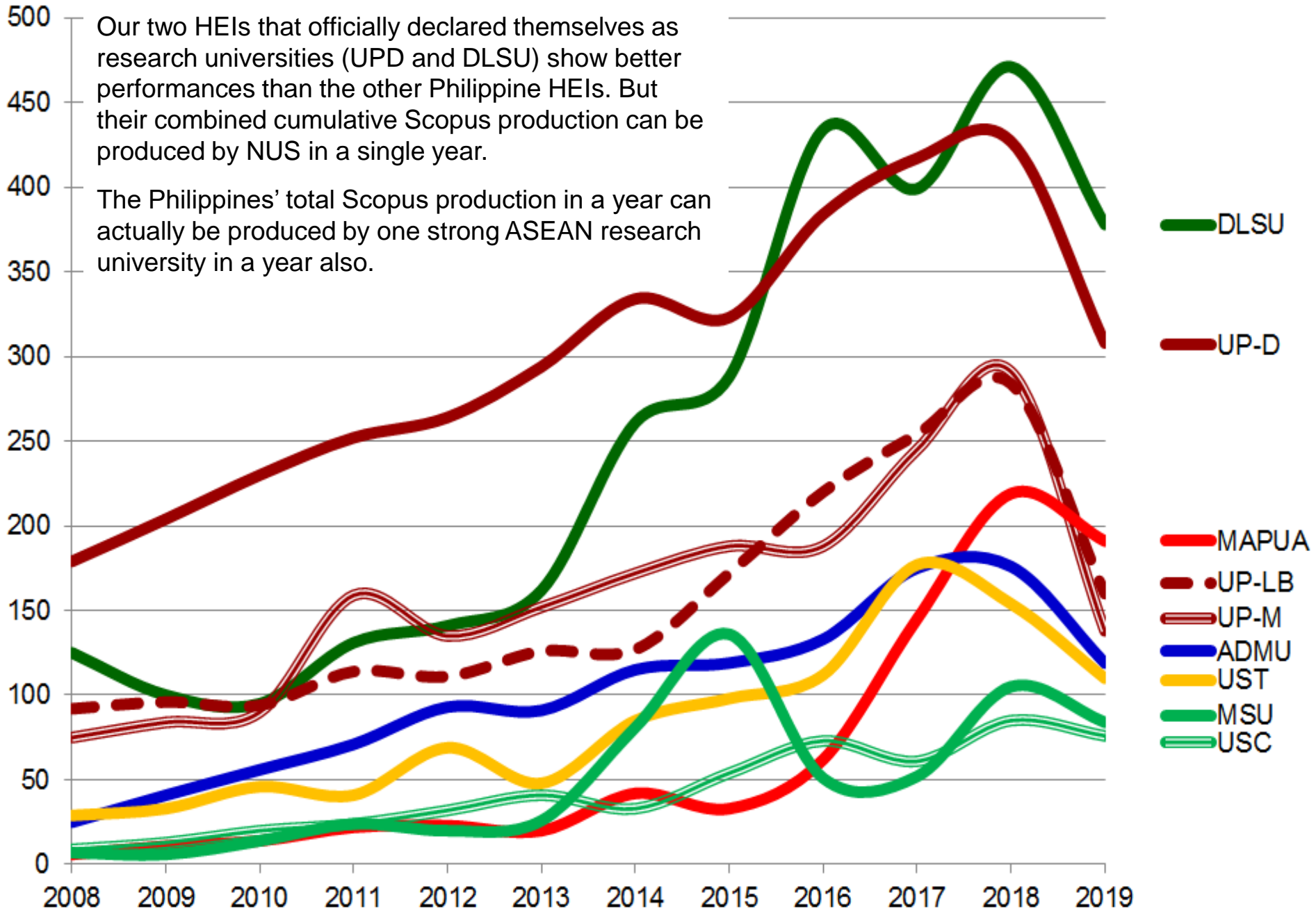
This chart shows that our best Philippine university is at the bottom. While our second best is also below the average curve of these 23 HEIs.



REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SITUATIONERS

Our two HEIs that officially declared themselves as research universities (UPD and DLSU) show better performances than the other Philippine HEIs. But their combined cumulative Scopus production can be produced by NUS in a single year.

The Philippines' total Scopus production in a year can actually be produced by one strong ASEAN research university in a year also.



REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SITUATIONERS

The three charts that I just presented all point out that the Philippines and its leading universities are not doing enough knowledge production.

This deficiency is not something that is only hurtful to our national pride but moreso make our country's future precarious, as such will limit our capacity for socio-economic development, as well as our global competitiveness.

Such deficiency will condemn us to forever depend on imported goods and export only cheap human labor.

THE IDEA OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

The deficiency of the leading Philippine universities in knowledge production is rooted on the fact that we failed to notice and take advantage of the educational revolution ignited by Wilhelm von Humboldt in Prussia in 1810.



In 1810, the Philippines was deep under the Spanish colonial power. It would be unthinkable for Spain to invest on a research university for the Filipinos.

THE IDEA OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

First, having a research university will only imperil the Spanish colonial domination of the Philippines (knowledge is power).

Second, the Spanish Empire at this time and for the following decades was rocked with revolutions in Latin America, and changes of royal houses, from Bourbon, to Bonaparte, to Bourbon, to Savoy, to being a republican, and finally back to Bourbon.



Spain was both unwilling and unable to provide the Philippines with a research university.

THE IDEA OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

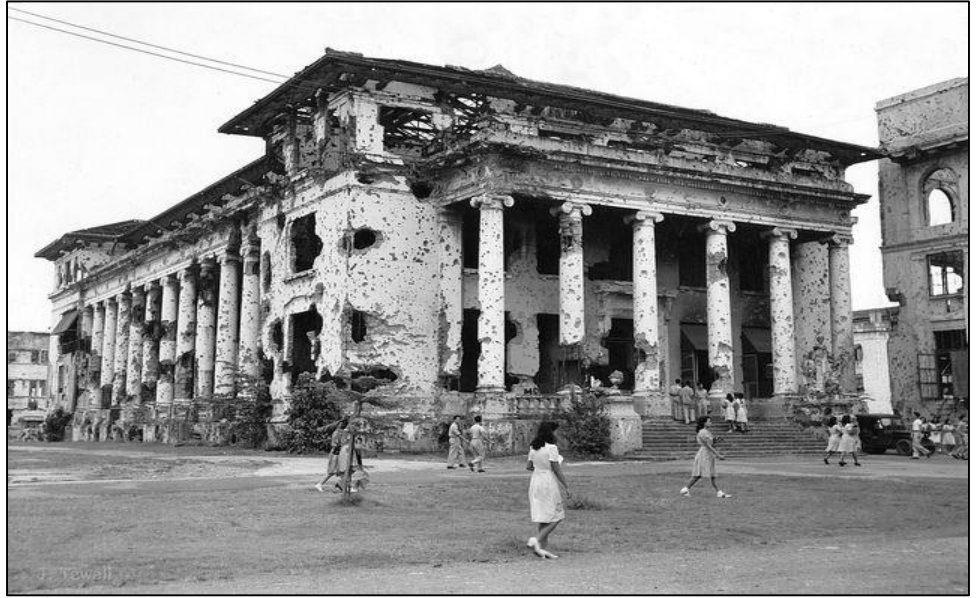


When America colonized the Philippines, they set up the University of the Philippines. Even if they had professors who were trained in German and other western research universities, the Philippines was simply not ready for a research university.

The Americans might had a plan to eventually transform the University of the Philippines into a research university, but the institution was simply too busy producing the professionals that the country needed at that time.

THE IDEA OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Then the great depression happened, followed by the Second World War, and then by the granting of independence to the Philippines which at that time was a war torn zone.



The initial intention of transitioning the University of the Philippines into a research university was simply lost in the rubble.

THE IDEA OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

The University of the Philippines will rediscover the idea of the research university only in the 21st century, probably while interacting with the research universities from other places of the world.

But what is a research university? Why is this such an illusive concept of the Filipinos?

As Humboldt conceptualized it, the research university is a pact between the state and a given HEI: the state will fully support such an HEI, but such an HEI will produce not only knowledge and innovation for the state, but more so graduates who can produce more knowledge and innovation.



THE IDEA OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

The research university is also a cooperation between professors and students for them to collaboratively create knowledge and innovation.

The research university is radically different from the traditional university. If in the traditional university, students were taught knowledge; in the research university the students are taught how to produce knowledge by actually producing knowledge together with their professors.



THE IDEA OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

In the research university, research and teaching are no longer separate obligations for the faculty to undertake. Instead, research and teaching become one.

Professors teach by doing research with their students, and professors research while teaching their students how to actually do research.

Thus, even if in a given HEI the professor are doing tremendous amount of research, that HEI will not just evolve into a research university.

Rather, in order for that HEI to become a research university it has to undergo a structural change to support the systemic collaboration between professors and students.

THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

There are three ways to create a research university: 1) by building it from the ground as a research university (example, University of Berlin), 2) by transforming a traditional university into a research university prior to the age of massified education (example, Harvard University), and 3) by transforming a traditional university into a research university during the age of massified education (examples, the Malaysian research universities).

Since the Philippines only got wind of the research university very late into the 20th century, it only had two choices left: choice number 1 and choice number 3.

THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

But knowing the priorities and lack of vision of our politicians, choice number 1 would not be pursued.

Instead, our country opted for the more difficult choice number 3, and without even benchmarking on the success story of Thailand and consulting with the contemporaneous plan of Malaysia.

The University of the Philippines nominally transitioned into a research university in 2008. But after a decade of transitioning, there are no signs that such transition will be completed soon.

Such supposedly dramatic transition did not even have an impact on the university's Scopus production curve.

THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

The template of graduate education established by the University of the Philippines more than half a century ago, remains the same template, where students take their academic units, then comprehensive examinations, and then finally pursue their research, instead of plunging immediately into research with their professors.

The University of the Philippines has become too big, it had expanded into all sorts of undergraduate degrees, and it could not make up its mind of whether to prioritize producing Filipino professionals, or producing Filipinos who are capable of creating knowledge and innovation.

Enormous political will and enormous sums of money are needed to transform this huge HEI into a real research university.

THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

It is not even clear if the University of the Philippines is transitioning into a research university as a whole system, or if it is merely transitioning its research intensive autonomous units (UPD, UPM, and UPLB) into “research universities.”



De La Salle University nominally transitioned into a research university in 2011.

THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY



It got the idea of research university from a different circuit from that of the University of the Philippines: through Brother Andrew Gonzalez, who studied at the University of California Berkeley during the tail end of Clark Kerr's presidency (one of the leading American theorists on the research university).

THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

But for some reasons, Brother Andrew Gonzalez did not articulate the model of the research university that De La Salle University should eventually adapt.

Hence, up to now De La Salle University is actually groping in the dark on how to complete the almost decade long transition.

Even if the professors of De La Salle University are producing so much research, the structural reforms to support systemic collaborations among professors and students have to be effected in order for this HEI to become a real research university.

THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

The main challenge for DLSU is to come up with a working model of a privately-owned research university, in a third world context, and at a time of massified education.

While the University of the Philippines and the De La Salle University are wobbling through their self-imposed transition into research universities, the other state universities and colleges (there are more than a hundred of them) are seemed to be lured with the idea that they too will undertake the transition.

I highly doubt if these state universities and colleges have a clear idea of what a research university is. But I am certain that they did not bother to ask the University of the Philippines and the De La Salle University how difficult it is to transition into research universities.

THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

The landscape, therefore, of Philippine Higher Education with respect to its having or not having a research university is very bleak.

On the one hand, if the two nominal research universities will not complete their transition process, the country will not have a real research university at all.

On the other hand, if all the state universities and colleges (over a hundred of them) will start seriously transitioning into research universities, there will not be enough national resources for them to use.

It is either we will have nothing, or too many that would make us end up with nothing still.

LEARNING FROM THE AMERICAN MODEL OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY AND FROM THE CALIFORNIA MASTER PLAN

I am not sure whether the University of the Philippines already has a masterplan in completing its transition into a research university.

But last year at De La Salle University, we started our series of conversations with stakeholders and more or less agreed that we move towards the direction of the classic American model of the research university, where the undergraduate education would remain teaching university style, and initially pursue the research university at the graduate level.

De La Salle University's pathway towards completing its transition into a research university is to open more and more graduate programs by research.

LEARNING FROM THE AMERICAN MODEL OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY AND FROM THE CALIFORNIA MASTER PLAN

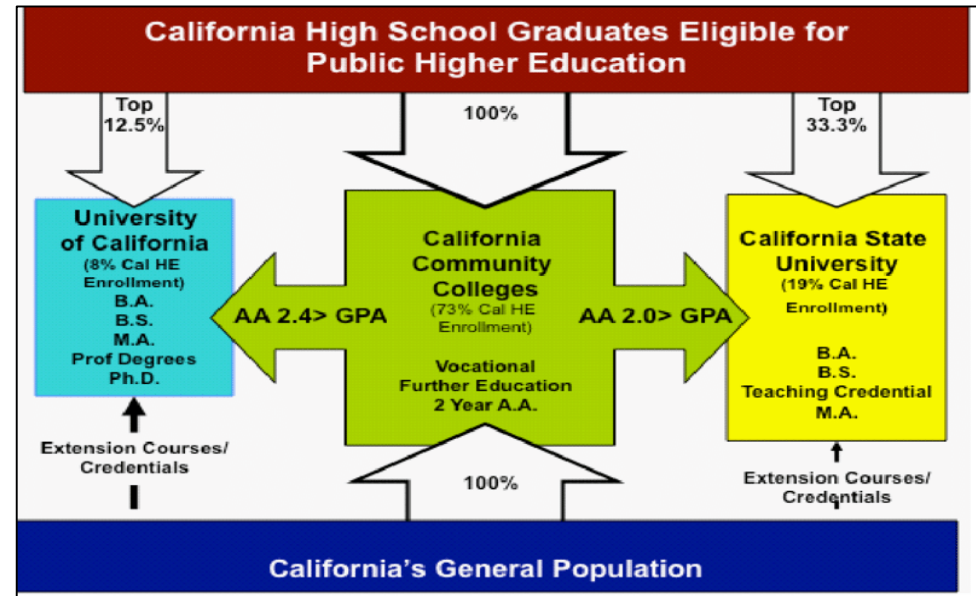
As to the state universities and colleges (over a hundred of them) that are gearing towards transitioning into a research university, CHED should step in and realistically screen which of our state universities and colleges are really capable of becoming research universities.

Maybe our government can only afford to have one or five real research universities.

The others can be research-intensive teaching universities, or simply teaching universities. There is really nothing wrong with remaining a teaching university, as long as our country has a handful of research universities to take care of knowledge and innovation production.

LEARNING FROM THE AMERICAN MODEL OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY AND FROM THE CALIFORNIA MASTER PLAN

A California Master Plan-like approach has to be made in order to organize the Philippine HEI landscape. The California Master Plan was designed by a group of educational leaders headed by Clark Kerr to rationalize and interlock the various HEIs of the State of California.



LEARNING FROM THE AMERICAN MODEL OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITY AND FROM THE CALIFORNIA MASTER PLAN

Hence, CHED should come up with markers and metrics to identify a research university from a traditional university. A clear concept of a research university is not yet in the vocabulary of CHED at present.

CHED should stipulate that:

- 1) Only research universities can offer PhD degrees;
- 2) Only research universities and research-intensive universities can offer MA and MS degrees;
- 3) More and more graduate students should be given full scholarships with stipend so that they can pursue their graduate studies full time; and
- 4) Only professors with clear research track records can teach at the graduate levels.

CONCLUSION

I hope I was able to present to you this morning the:

1. Regional and National Situationers on Research Productivity;
2. The Idea of Research University;
3. The Landscape of Philippine Higher Education and the Research University; and
4. Learning from the American Model of Research University and from the California Master Plan.

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End of Presentation



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