ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study is to analyze the vision and mission statements of universities in the context of their alignment with the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to provide insights for strategic direction development in higher education institutions. Theoretical Reference: This study is grounded in strategic planning theory and its application within higher education, focusing on how institutional vision and mission statements can guide universities towards sustainable development.

Method: A meta-synthesis approach is employed, synthesizing findings from multiple qualitative studies. Data collection includes a comprehensive literature review on higher education trends, best practices, and challenges, along with document analysis of vision and mission statements from various universities. Thematic analysis is utilized to identify key themes, trends, and challenges.

Results and Conclusion: Key findings reveal current trends such as digitalization, globalization, and the integration of technology in teaching and learning. Emerging challenges include financial sustainability, accountability, and alignment with labor market demands. Best practices in vision and mission development emphasize stakeholder engagement, alignment with institutional values, concise and inspirational language, and adaptability to changing circumstances. The proposed vision and mission statements for the state university reflect aspirations for global recognition, interdisciplinary collaboration, innovation, entrepreneurship, ethical leadership, and fostering sustainable and inclusive communities.

Implications of Research: The study underscores the importance of strategic planning and innovation in higher education. Engaging stakeholders and fostering collaboration are identified as critical strategies for addressing the highlighted challenges. These findings provide evidence-based recommendations for the state university's strategic direction, ensuring it remains adaptive, resilient, and aligned with both global and national goals.

Originality/Value: This research offers a novel synthesis of qualitative studies on strategic planning in higher education, providing valuable insights into effective vision and mission development. It contributes to the discourse on aligning university strategies with global sustainability objectives, offering practical recommendations for higher education leaders.

Keywords: strategic direction development, higher education institutions, vision and mission statements, stakeholder engagement, sustainable development goals (SDGs).

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1 INTRODUCTION

Universities have been around for a long time as educational institutions that conduct scientific research, provide solutions for problems countries face, train qualified workforce in required fields, and play a leading role in the development of democratic principles and free thinking. In this sense, universities are considered to be institutions that lead efforts for social transformation. As they transform the society, universities themselves are at the center of change, for they need to be the initiators of change. The development of the institution of university throughout history is best told as a narrative of the emergence of three different structures of university and their transformation into one another. These three stages are represented by the Church Centered University of the Middle Ages, the university of the nation-states (Humboldt University), and the University of the Information Society (Multiversity, Entrepreneurial University) (Tekeli, 2003; Türel, 2004).

The change observed in university models throughout history has diversified the functions universities are expected to play, and transformed some of the existing functions. From the mid-20th century onwards, universities started to provide, besides their main function of education, social functions such as applied research, counseling, and adult education (Kavak, 1990). Sönmez (2003) lists the main functions universities are expected to play as conducting scientific research, developing solutions for national and universal problems, training the labor force the country needs, spreading the knowledge, skills, and insights it has gained to other people, publishing, and setting an example in all fields. According to Karakütük (2006), universities’ functions include producing knowledge via research, teaching on the basis of this knowledge, publishing to spread the knowledge, training a highly qualified workforce for the development of the society, contributing to the creation of education policies, being a center of criticism, providing counseling to various institutions, and serving the society. Gasset (1998) emphasizes the somewhat latent cultural function of the universities besides scientific research and professional education.
The VMGO serves as the foundation of a university’s strategic plan, guiding its decisions, operations, and the allocation of resources. A well-articulated VMGO can align stakeholders around strategic priorities, communicate the university’s goals and strategies, and engage, motivate, and retain both internal and external audiences. Conversely, a poorly formulated or implemented VMGO can lead to inefficiencies, wasted resources, and missed opportunities.

Despite the critical role of the VMGO in university governance and management, there is limited research on the strategic revision of the VMGO, particularly in the context of state universities in the Philippines. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the process of reviewing, developing, and implementing a new VMGO at NEUST. It will examine the level of awareness and participation of various stakeholders in the VMGO, the extent of its dissemination, and the level of its integration into the university’s policies, programs, and activities. The study will also identify any gaps or challenges in the implementation of the VMGO.

The findings of this study will contribute to the literature on strategic planning in higher education and provide valuable insights for NEUST and other state universities in the Philippines as they strive to fulfill their mission and vision in a rapidly changing educational landscape.

2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 TRENDS, ISSUES, AND CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Higher education institutions face various challenges and must adapt to ongoing trends to remain relevant in today’s rapidly changing landscape. Key trends include globalization, digitalization, demographic shifts, and changing student expectations (Altbach & De Wit, 2019). These trends pose challenges such as increased competition for students and faculty, financial pressures, and the need for innovative teaching and learning methods (Marginson, 2016).

Furthermore, issues such as access and equity, quality assurance, and the role of technology in education are critical concerns for higher education

(Teichler, 2020). For example, the widening gap in access to higher education between different socioeconomic groups highlights the importance of equity in educational policies and practices (Buchmann & Sacchi, 2018). Additionally, ensuring the quality of education while embracing technological advancements presents a balancing act for institutions (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2019). Trends provide a unique insight into the approaches that universities are taking to differentiate themselves in the fast-evolving educational environment, giving an overview of the state of the art of higher education (Westine et al., 2019). We operationalize trends as broad predominant directions in which higher education is developing and transforming.

Various reports identified in our study detail the current trends in higher education related to technology-enhanced teaching and learning, such as “The Changing Pedagogical Landscapes Study” (Henderikx & Jansen, 2018), which cites technology as a means to “solve problems higher education is facing today and ... offer new opportunities for teaching and learning” (p. 3). The main trends reported include leadership and institutional strategy, gradual innovation at the course and curriculum levels, incentives for digital education, increased (scalable) continuous education and continuous professional development offerings, massive open online courses (MOOCs) as enablers for innovation, increasing internationalization of higher education, and the important role of governments. Moreover, institutions’ capacity and resistance to implement technology were investigated, revealing that a lack of digital and media competences, absence of necessary institutional policies, and infrastructural limitations were the principal difficulties facing pedagogical innovation. The report suggests that blended learning methods are a trend driven by students’ and teachers’ digital skills, coupled with increased capability and reduced costs of the technology itself. Furthermore, the use of blended methods is recommended to complement, rather than replace, existing methods, as they improve quality while reaching a larger, more diverse population. Therefore, institutional policies and trends must adjust to the demand and be student-focused rather than teacher-focused forms of active learning.
Similarly, the Internationalization in Higher Education for Society publication (Brandenburg et al., 2020) addresses the crucial role that digital learning plays as a catalyst for the internationalization and mobility of both instructors and students. Its study references collaborative online international learning via technology-enabled virtual mobility as a key trend. Technological transformation is a vital factor in bridging the gap between universities and society, making the institutions more accessible to the wider public, including vulnerable communities, and it can extend education within the local society and beyond to national and international levels. Internationalization in higher education should focus on economic developmental models as well as taking into account factors such as economic growth, technology transfer and innovation (Brandenburg et al., 2020), reinforcing the importance of internationalization of digital learning, which in itself is considered a strategic issue in higher education development (De Wit et al., 2015).

The 2020 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report (Brown et al., 2020) focuses on five categories of trends: social, technological, economic, higher education, and political. Technological trends include advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), next-generation digital learning, and analytics and privacy questions. The authors discuss the economic impact of the trends, stating that institutions “will need to adjust their courses, curricula, and degree programmes to meet learners’ needs as well as the demands of new industries and an evolving workforce” (p. 10). Technological advances respond to students’ needs as they increasingly seek nontraditional routes to education, underlining that “higher education institutions are moving to new models for online programmes, such as assessment (competency) and crediting (micro-credentials and digital badging)” methods (p. 11).

Finally, it is necessary to reiterate that the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a new major trend in that it has increased higher education’s dependency on the use of technology for teaching and learning as emergency online courses have been implemented without the necessary time frame to prepare for this move (Hodges et al., 2020). Nonetheless, merely moving traditional-style classrooms online is not enough to deliver a consistent quality of education (Gasevic, 2020). The aforementioned trend reports argue that...
technology provides a viable solution to designing and supporting more flexible educational models, which are adaptable to educational, social, and economic needs as they arise. As such, the current debate on the future of the university system questions the foundations of the institution as it is compelled to adapt to a social context where technology plays a predominant role. This does not mean that existing teaching models should be replaced but rather that universities use technological advances to enhance traditional forms of pedagogy expanding the pedagogical possibilities thanks to the affordances of technology (Wick & Lumpe, 2015).

2.2 ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIS) IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth by the United Nations. The SDGs encompass a wide range of global challenges, including poverty eradication, gender equality, quality education, climate action, and sustainable cities and communities. HEIs contribute to these goals through research, teaching, community engagement, and institutional practices that promote sustainability.

HEIs serve as hubs of knowledge creation and dissemination, driving research and innovation aimed at addressing sustainable development challenges (Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, Huisingh, & Lambrechts, 2013). This includes interdisciplinary research on topics such as renewable energy, environmental conservation, social justice, and economic development. Through partnerships with governments, industry, and civil society, HEIs can translate research findings into practical solutions and policy recommendations to advance the SDGs (Wiek, Withycombe, & Redman, 2011).

In addition to research, HEIs have a vital role in educating the next generation of leaders, professionals, and global citizens. By integrating sustainability principles into curricula across disciplines, HEIs can equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to contribute to sustainable development (Barth & Rieckmann, 2012). Experiential learning
opportunities, such as internships, fieldwork, and service-learning projects, allow students to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts and engage with communities to address local sustainability challenges (Wals & Jickling, 2002).

Moreover, HEIs serve as living laboratories for sustainable practices, modeling environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic viability. Sustainable campus initiatives encompass energy and water conservation, waste reduction, green building design, and sustainable transportation (Leal Filho et al., 2020). By adopting sustainable operations and management practices, HEIs demonstrate leadership and inspire broader societal change towards sustainability (Borén & Hassler, 2016).

2.3 PHILIPPINE HEI LANDSCAPE

The landscape of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines reflects the country’s diverse educational system, characterized by a mix of public and private institutions offering a wide range of programs and specialties. As of 2020, there were over 2,300 HEIs in the Philippines, comprising universities, colleges, technical-vocational institutions, and distance learning providers (Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2020).

The Philippine HEI landscape is shaped by historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. Many HEIs trace their origins to the Spanish colonial period, with established institutions such as the University of Santo Tomas, founded in 1611, and the Ateneo de Manila University, founded in 1859 (De Mesa, 2003). Over time, the HEI sector has grown significantly, responding to the increasing demand for higher education and the diversification of academic disciplines and fields of study.

Public HEIs, such as the University of the Philippines and the Philippine Normal University, play a central role in providing accessible and quality education to a broad spectrum of students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds (CHED, 2020). Private HEIs, on the other hand, contribute to the diversity and innovation of the educational landscape, offering specialized programs and catering to niche markets (Calingasan & Polintan, 2019).
The Philippine HEI landscape faces various challenges, including limited resources, infrastructure constraints, and disparities in quality and access across regions (CHED, 2020). Despite these challenges, HEIs in the Philippines have made significant contributions to national development, producing skilled graduates, conducting relevant research, and engaging with communities to address social, economic, and environmental issues (Bautista, 2014).

Furthermore, Philippine HEIs have increasingly recognized the importance of sustainable development and have integrated sustainability principles into their academic programs and institutional policies (Nograles, 2020). Initiatives such as the Green Universities program, led by CHED, promote sustainability practices among HEIs, encouraging them to reduce their environmental footprint, promote social responsibility, and contribute to local development (CHED, 2020).

2.4 BEST PRACTICES IN VISION AND MISSION DEVELOPMENT

Effective vision and mission statements are essential for guiding the strategic direction of universities. Best practices include engaging stakeholders, aligning with institutional values and goals, and being concise and inspirational (Gallagher & Lundberg, 2017). Universities that involve diverse stakeholders in the development process tend to have more ownership and commitment to the vision and mission (Egeberg, 2018).

Moreover, successful vision and mission statements are dynamic and adaptable to changes in the higher education environment (Marginson, 2016). They provide a clear sense of purpose and direction while allowing flexibility for innovation and growth (Pearce & David, 2018). For example, institutions like Harvard University have continuously revised their mission statement to reflect evolving priorities and challenges (Harvard University, n.d.).

2.5 SYNTHESIS

Based on the synthesis of literature, proposed vision and mission statements for the state university should reflect its commitment to
excellence, inclusivity, and innovation. The vision should articulate the institution's aspirations for the future, while the mission should outline its core values and purpose (Gallagher & Lundberg, 2017).

For example, "To be a globally recognized center of academic excellence, fostering innovation and inclusivity for the betterment of society" could serve as a visionary statement. Meanwhile, "Our mission is to provide accessible, high-quality education that empowers individuals to thrive in a rapidly changing world" encapsulates the institution's values and goals (adapted from Harvard University, n.d.).

2.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. Evaluate current trends, emerging issues, and challenges within the landscape of higher education institutions, with a focus on those relevant to the state university's strategic direction;
2. Analyze and critically assess the best practices employed by leading universities in formulating and implementing their vision and mission statements, considering factors such as adaptability, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with institutional goals;
3. Conduct a meta-synthesis of the identified trends, issues, and challenges in higher education, synthesizing insights from existing literature, expert opinions, and empirical data;
4. Develop evidence-based recommendations for the state university's strategic direction, including proposed vision and mission statements that reflect the institution's unique identity, values, and aspirations, while addressing the identified challenges and leveraging opportunities in the higher education landscape.
3 METHODS AND PROCEDURES

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employs a meta-synthesis approach to explore the strategic direction development of a state university. Meta-synthesis involves synthesizing findings from multiple qualitative studies to generate new insights or interpretations.

3.2 DATA GATHERING PROCEDURES

1. Literature Review. Relevant literature on higher education trends, best practices in strategic planning, and challenges in the HEI landscape is collected from academic journals, books, reports, and reputable online sources. Keywords such as "higher education trends," "strategic planning in universities," "challenges in HEIs," and "best practices in mission and vision statements" are used to conduct comprehensive searches. A systematic review approach is employed to ensure the inclusion of studies that meet specific criteria related to the research objectives;

2. Document Analysis. Vision and mission statements of various universities are collected and analyzed to identify common themes, terminologies, and strategic priorities. Reports, strategic plans, and other relevant documents from state universities and higher education institutions are examined to understand their strategic direction development processes.

3.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA

1. Thematic Analysis. Data gathered from the literature review and document analysis are subjected to thematic analysis. Key themes, trends, best practices, and challenges are identified and categorized based on their relevance to the research objectives. Thematic coding is
used to organize and analyze the data, allowing for the identification of patterns and insights;

2. *Synthesis of Findings*. The synthesized findings from the thematic analysis are integrated to develop a comprehensive understanding of the strategic direction development in higher education. Commonalities and differences across studies are explored, and overarching themes are identified to inform the formulation of recommendations and conclusions;

3. *Cross-Validation*. The synthesized findings are cross-validated against existing literature and empirical evidence to ensure accuracy and reliability. Any discrepancies or conflicting interpretations are addressed through further analysis and discussion.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 CURRENT TRENDS, EMERGING ISSUES, AND CHALLENGES WITHIN THE LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

4.1.1 Current Trends in Higher Education

The evaluation of current trends in higher education reveals several key developments that are shaping the landscape of institutions worldwide. One prominent trend is the increasing emphasis on digitalization and technology integration in teaching and learning (Daniel, 2018). With the rise of online education, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and digital learning platforms, institutions are leveraging technology to enhance accessibility, flexibility, and engagement for students (Allen & Seaman, 2017). This trend has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted rapid adoption of remote learning solutions (Hodges et al., 2020).

Another significant trend is the globalization of higher education, characterized by internationalization initiatives, cross-border collaborations, and mobility programs (Knight, 2017). Universities are increasingly seeking to attract international students, faculty, and partnerships to enrich their
academic environments and enhance their global reputation (Altbach, 2017). Globalization also entails competition among institutions for talent, resources, and research prominence (Marginson, 2016).

4.1.2 Emerging Issues and Challenges

Despite the opportunities presented by current trends, higher education institutions face several emerging issues and challenges that demand attention. One pressing issue is the financial sustainability of universities, exacerbated by declining public funding, rising costs, and changing demographics (Altbach & Salmi, 2011). Many institutions are grappling with budget constraints, tuition affordability concerns, and the need to diversify revenue streams (Ehrenberg, 2018).

Additionally, there is growing scrutiny and demand for accountability in higher education, with stakeholders increasingly questioning the value and outcomes of a university education (Ewell, 2010). Issues such as student debt, graduate employability, and the relevance of curricula to workforce needs are driving discussions about the return on investment in higher education (Hillman & Weichman, 2016). Institutions must respond by enhancing transparency, demonstrating educational quality, and aligning programs with labor market demands.

4.1.3 Relevance to State University’s Strategic Direction

These trends, issues, and challenges have direct implications for the strategic direction of the state university. As it formulates its strategic plan, the university must consider how to leverage digital technologies to enhance teaching and learning while ensuring equitable access for all students. This may involve investing in infrastructure, faculty development, and support services for online and hybrid education (Bonk & Khoo, 2014).

Moreover, given the university’s position within the local and global higher education landscape, internationalization efforts should be prioritized to attract diverse talent, foster cultural exchange, and strengthen research efforts.
collaborations. Strategic partnerships with overseas institutions can provide opportunities for faculty and student mobility, joint research projects, and knowledge transfer (Green, 2019).

Financial sustainability will be a key focus area for the state university’s strategic direction. Strategies may include diversifying revenue sources through philanthropy, industry partnerships, and continuing education programs. At the same time, the university must demonstrate value to stakeholders by aligning its programs with societal needs, fostering innovation, and producing graduates equipped for the workforce of the future (Harvey, 2018).

The evaluation of current trends, emerging issues, and challenges within the landscape of higher education underscores the importance of a strategic approach for the state university. By addressing these factors in its strategic planning process, the university can position itself for success in a rapidly evolving environment while fulfilling its mission of providing quality education and contributing to societal development.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF BEST PRACTICES IN VISION AND MISSION DEVELOPMENT

The analysis of best practices in vision and mission development provides valuable insights into how leading universities craft meaningful and impactful statements that guide their strategic direction. Several key practices emerge from the literature, which can inform the state university’s approach to formulating its own vision and mission.

4.2.1 Stakeholder Engagement

One of the most critical best practices is engaging stakeholders throughout the vision and mission development process (Egeberg, 2018). This includes faculty, staff, students, alumni, community members, and other relevant stakeholders. Involving diverse perspectives ensures that the vision and mission reflect the values, aspirations, and needs of the entire university community (Gallagher & Lundberg, 2017).
4.2.2 Alignment with Institutional Values and Goals

Effective vision and mission statements are aligned with the institution's core values, strategic priorities, and long-term objectives (Pearce & David, 2018). They should capture the essence of what the university stands for and where it aims to go in the future. This alignment provides clarity and direction for decision-making and resource allocation (Gallagher & Lundberg, 2017).

4.2.3 Conciseness and Inspirational Language

Vision and mission statements should be concise, memorable, and inspirational (Gallagher & Lundberg, 2017). They should communicate the university's purpose and aspirations in a compelling manner that resonates with stakeholders and motivates them to action (Egeberg, 2018). Using language that is clear, positive, and future-oriented can inspire pride and commitment among the university community (Pearce & David, 2018).

4.2.4 Dynamic and Adaptive Nature

Leading universities recognize that vision and mission statements should be dynamic and adaptable to changing circumstances (Marginson, 2016). They should not be static documents but living expressions of the institution's identity and values. As the higher education landscape evolves, universities may need to revise their vision and mission to stay relevant and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities (Egeberg, 2018).

These best practices provide a framework for the state university to develop its own vision and mission statements that effectively guide its strategic direction. By engaging stakeholders from across the university community, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and external partners, the university can ensure that its vision and mission reflect the collective aspirations and values of its stakeholders.

Furthermore, aligning the vision and mission with the institution's strategic priorities and long-term goals will help provide clarity and focus for
decision-making and resource allocation. This alignment ensures that the university's efforts are directed towards achieving its desired outcomes and making a meaningful impact on society.

Crafting concise and inspirational language for the vision and mission statements will be crucial in capturing the imagination and commitment of stakeholders. By articulating a compelling vision of the future and a clear sense of purpose, the university can inspire its community to work towards common goals and objectives.

Finally, recognizing the dynamic and adaptive nature of vision and mission statements emphasizes the importance of continuous review and revision. As the higher education landscape evolves and new challenges and opportunities emerge, the state university must be prepared to revisit its vision and mission to ensure they remain relevant and effective in guiding its strategic direction.

By following these best practices in vision and mission development, the state university can create statements that serve as powerful tools for aligning its efforts, engaging stakeholders, and driving positive change in line with its strategic objectives.

4.3 META-SYNTHESIS OF THE IDENTIFIED TRENDS, ISSUES, AND CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION, SYNTHESIZING INSIGHTS FROM EXISTING LITERATURE, EXPERT OPINIONS, AND EMPIRICAL DATA

The synthesis of identified trends, issues, and challenges in the higher education landscape provides valuable insights into the complex and interconnected factors that influence the strategic direction of universities. By analyzing existing literature and research findings, several overarching themes emerge, which can inform the state university's strategic planning process.

4.3.1 Interconnectedness of Trends

The synthesis reveals that trends such as globalization, digitalization, demographic shifts, and changing student expectations are deeply
interconnected and mutually reinforcing (Altbach & De Wit, 2019). For example, the globalization of higher education has led to increased international student mobility, facilitated by digital technologies (Knight, 2017). These trends, in turn, create new challenges and opportunities for universities, such as the need to provide culturally responsive education and support services.

4.3.2 Emerging Issues and Challenges

Key issues and challenges identified in the synthesis include financial sustainability, access and equity, quality assurance, and the demand for accountability (Marginson, 2016; Teichler, 2020). These challenges cut across national, regional, and institutional contexts, highlighting the complexity of the higher education landscape. For instance, while digitalization offers opportunities for expanding access to education, it also exacerbates existing disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity (Altbach et al., 2019).

4.3.3 Strategic Implications

The synthesis underscores the importance of strategic planning and innovation in addressing the identified challenges and leveraging emerging trends (Marginson, 2016). Universities must adopt a forward-thinking approach that anticipates future developments and prepares for potential disruptions. Strategic partnerships, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a culture of continuous improvement are essential for navigating the complexities of the higher education environment (Altbach & De Wit, 2019).

4.3.4 Community Engagement and Stakeholder Collaboration

Engaging stakeholders and fostering collaboration within and beyond the university community emerge as critical strategies for addressing the identified trends, issues, and challenges (Egeberg, 2018). By involving diverse
stakeholders in the strategic planning process, universities can ensure that their responses are inclusive, responsive, and sustainable (Gallagher & Lundberg, 2017).

The synthesis of identified trends, issues, and challenges provides a holistic understanding of the higher education landscape and its implications for the strategic direction of the state university. By recognizing the interconnectedness of trends and the complexity of emerging issues, the university can develop a strategic plan that is adaptive, resilient, and forward-looking.

Strategic planning efforts should prioritize initiatives that address the root causes of challenges while capitalizing on emerging opportunities. For example, initiatives aimed at improving financial sustainability may include diversifying revenue streams, optimizing resource allocation, and exploring innovative funding models (Altbach & Salmi, 2011).

Moreover, the state university should actively engage with its stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, government agencies, industry partners, and community organizations. By fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility, the university can mobilize collective efforts to tackle complex problems and achieve its strategic objectives (Egeberg, 2018).

In conclusion, the synthesis of identified trends, issues, and challenges provides valuable insights that can inform the state university's strategic direction. By understanding the dynamics of the higher education landscape and proactively addressing key challenges, the university can position itself for long-term success and impact in serving its mission and stakeholders.
Table 1

Focused Areas of Vision and Mission Statements of Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focused Areas</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Relevant SDGs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Innovation</td>
<td>Commitment to fostering new ideas, methodologies, and technologies to drive progress.</td>
<td>SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Globalization</td>
<td>Engagement with diverse cultures, perspectives, and global challenges.</td>
<td>SDG 4: Quality Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sustainability</td>
<td>Dedication to environmental responsibility, social equity, and economic resilience.</td>
<td>SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 10: Reduced Inequality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Digital Transformation</td>
<td>Leveraging technology for teaching, research, administration, and student support.</td>
<td>SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</td>
<td>Creating an inclusive environment where all members feel valued and supported.</td>
<td>SDG 10: Reduced Inequality, SDG 5: Gender Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Interdisciplinary Collaboration</td>
<td>Breaking down silos between disciplines to address complex issues.</td>
<td>SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Community Engagement</td>
<td>Working closely with local, national, and global communities to address societal needs and challenges.</td>
<td>SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>Supporting learners at all stages of life and promoting continuous education.</td>
<td>SDG 4: Quality Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Entrepreneurship and Innovation</td>
<td>Cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset to drive innovation and economic development.</td>
<td>SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Health and Well-being</td>
<td>Prioritizing the physical, mental, and emotional health of the university community.</td>
<td>SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Adaptability and Resilience</td>
<td>Navigating and thriving in an ever-changing landscape, including technological and societal shifts.</td>
<td>SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Experiential Learning</td>
<td>Providing hands-on, immersive learning experiences to prepare students for real-world challenges.</td>
<td>SDG 4: Quality Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility</td>
<td>Active participation in civic life and addressing pressing social issues.</td>
<td>SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Data-Driven Decision Making</td>
<td>Utilizing data and analytics to inform strategic planning and improve operations.</td>
<td>SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Cultural Competence</td>
<td>Understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures and perspectives.</td>
<td>SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table presents a comprehensive overview of key terminologies commonly found in university vision and mission statements, reflecting their core values and strategic priorities. Innovation, highlighted as a commitment to fostering new ideas and technologies, is crucial for addressing complex challenges and driving progress. Globalization emphasizes universities’ engagement with diverse cultures and global issues, preparing students for an interconnected world.

Sustainability reflects institutions’ dedication to environmental responsibility, social equity, and economic resilience. Digital transformation enables universities to leverage technology for teaching, research, and administrative efficiency, while diversity, equity, and inclusion ensure an inclusive environment for all members. Interdisciplinary collaboration encourages holistic problem-solving, and community engagement fosters partnerships to address societal needs.

Lifelong learning supports continuous education, and entrepreneurship drives innovation and economic development. Health and well-being initiatives prioritize the physical and mental health of the university community, while adaptability and resilience enable institutions to thrive in a changing landscape. Experiential learning prepares students for real-world challenges, while civic engagement and social responsibility instill a sense of community involvement.

Data-driven decision-making ensures informed strategic planning, and cultural competence promotes diversity and understanding across cultures. These terminologies align with various Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing quality education, industry and innovation, reduced inequality, sustainable communities, and partnerships for societal goals.
5 DEVELOP EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STATE UNIVERSITY’S STRATEGIC DIRECTION, INCLUDING PROPOSED VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

5.1 PROPOSED VISION STATEMENT

Drawing from the insights gathered through the meta-synthesis conducted in this study, the researchers have formulated the following vision statement:

A globally\(^1\) renowned comprehensive\(^2\) university of interdisciplinary collaboration\(^3\), fostering innovation\(^3\), entrepreneurship\(^3\), and ethical leadership\(^3\) for a sustainable\(^4\) and inclusive\(^4\) communities.

Table 2

Proposed Vision Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Trends/Key Drivers in HEIs</th>
<th>Relevance to Global and National Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Globally Renowned</td>
<td>With reference to the new branding- NEUST GLOBAL</td>
<td>Global recognition is increasingly important for universities to attract students, faculty, and funding from around the world.</td>
<td>Relevant to SDG 4 - Quality Education, as globally renowned universities contribute to quality higher education that is accessible and recognized internationally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This signifies international recognition and reputation, which is crucial for attracting global talent, partnerships, and opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>As used in the bill for the renaming of NEUST to NESU</td>
<td>Many universities are expanding their offerings to address multidisciplinary challenges and meet diverse student needs.</td>
<td>Aligns with the Philippine Development Plan’s goal of providing quality education and promoting research and development in various fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive universities offer a wide range of academic programs and research opportunities across various disciplines.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary Collaboration</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary collaboration promotes innovation and addresses complex societal challenges by bringing</td>
<td>Increasingly, universities are breaking down silos between disciplines to foster collaboration and</td>
<td>Supports multiple SDGs by promoting cross-cutting solutions to global challenges, such as poverty, health, and climate change.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Fostering Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Ethical Leadership</strong></th>
<th>Innovation, entrepreneurship, and ethical leadership are key drivers of sustainable development and societal progress.</th>
<th>Many universities are prioritizing programs and initiatives that encourage innovation, entrepreneurship, and ethical leadership among students and faculty.</th>
<th>Relevant to various SDGs, including SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth; and SDG 16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainable and Inclusive Communities</strong></td>
<td>Universities have a responsibility to contribute to the sustainability and inclusivity of their communities through education, research, and outreach.</td>
<td>Sustainability and inclusivity are increasingly emphasized in university strategic plans and initiatives.</td>
<td>Directly supports SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities and SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities, among others, by promoting social, economic, and environmental sustainability and inclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proposed vision statement for Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) reflects its aspiration to become a globally renowned institution known for interdisciplinary collaboration, innovation, entrepreneurship, and ethical leadership in fostering sustainable and inclusive communities. By emphasizing global recognition, comprehensive academic offerings, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a commitment to innovation, NEUST aims to play a significant role in addressing complex societal challenges and contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Philippine Development Plan. Through these key concepts, NEUST seeks to position itself as a leader in higher education, driving positive change locally and globally.

### 5.2 PROPOSED MISSION STATEMENT

In addition to the proposed vision statement, the researchers have formulated the following mission statement based on the comprehensive meta-synthesis conducted in this study:
Leading¹ through Knowledge² and Innovation³ to Inspire Globally Outstanding Graduates⁴, Transform Communities⁵, and Foster Sustainable Futures⁶.

**Table 3**

*Proposed Mission Statements based on the Synthesis Conducted*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Trends/Key Drivers in HEIs</th>
<th>Relevance to Global and National Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leading</td>
<td>Guiding and influencing towards a desired direction</td>
<td>Emphasis on leadership development programs, strategic planning, and effective governance structures in HEIs</td>
<td>Important for achieving SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals, as strong leadership is essential for collaboration and effective implementation of development plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Information, skills, and understanding gained through study</td>
<td>Shift towards knowledge-based economies, interdisciplinary research, and digital learning technologies in HEIs</td>
<td>Supports SDG 4 - Quality Education by providing inclusive and equitable education opportunities, and contributes to the goal of building a skilled workforce outlined in the Philippine Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Introduction of new ideas, methods, or products</td>
<td>Focus on innovation ecosystems, entrepreneurship, and technology transfer in HEIs</td>
<td>Integral to achieving multiple SDGs, including SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, and SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth, as well as promoting innovation and competitiveness in the Philippine Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globally Outstanding Graduates</td>
<td>Highly skilled and competitive individuals with global perspectives</td>
<td>Increasing focus on internationalization, global partnerships, and cross-cultural competency development in HEIs</td>
<td>Contributes to SDG 4 - Quality Education by producing graduates who can compete globally and supports the Philippine Development Plan’s goal of developing a globally competitive workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transform Communities</td>
<td>Bringing about significant positive change in society</td>
<td>Emphasis on community engagement, service-learning, and social entrepreneurship initiatives in HEIs</td>
<td>Directly supports various SDGs, including SDG 1 - No Poverty, SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being, and SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, as well as promoting community development in the Philippine Development Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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¹ Leading
² Knowledge
³ Innovation
⁴ Globally Outstanding Graduates
⁵ Transform Communities
⁶ Sustainable Futures
Foster Sustainable Futures | Encouraging long-term environmentally and socially responsible practices | Integration of sustainability education, research, and campus operations in HEIs | Aligns with multiple SDGs, including SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production, and SDG 13 - Climate Action, as well as promoting sustainability in the Philippine Development Plan

The proposed mission statements underscore the state university's commitment to quality education, diversity, inclusion, knowledge advancement, student empowerment, and technology-driven accessibility. By fostering dynamic learning environments that cultivate creativity, critical thinking, and innovation, promoting diversity and equity to create supportive communities, advancing interdisciplinary research to address societal challenges, empowering students as ethical leaders and global citizens, and leveraging technology for accessible education, the university aims to prepare students for the future while contributing to SDGs such as quality education (SDG 4), reduced inequality (SDG 10), industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16).

6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has provided a comprehensive examination of the strategic direction development for a state university, focusing on evaluating trends, best practices, and challenges within the higher education landscape. Through the analysis of relevant literature, synthesis of identified trends and issues, and the formulation of suggested vision and mission statements, key insights have been generated to guide the university's strategic planning process.

The evaluation of trends in higher education institutions revealed the importance of embracing innovation, globalization, sustainability, digital transformation, diversity, equity, and inclusion. These trends underscore the need for universities to adapt to an evolving landscape and prepare students for the challenges of the future.
Best practices in developing vision and mission statements emphasized the significance of promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, community engagement, lifelong learning, entrepreneurship, and social responsibility. These practices align with the university's role in addressing societal needs and contributing to sustainable development.

The synthesis of identified trends, issues, and challenges highlighted the complexity of the higher education landscape, including financial sustainability, access, quality assurance, and demand for accountability. Addressing these challenges requires a strategic approach that prioritizes innovation, partnership, and continuous improvement.

The suggested vision and mission statements provide a clear direction for the state university, emphasizing its commitment to fostering innovation, diversity, equity, sustainability, and social impact. These statements reflect the university's aspirations to empower students, advance knowledge, and contribute positively to society and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In conclusion, by aligning its strategic direction with the identified trends, best practices, and challenges, the state university can position itself as a leader in higher education, driving innovation, inclusivity, and societal impact for the benefit of its students, faculty, and communities.
REFERENCES


