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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**Decolonizing Aspirations: Reorienting Philippine Higher Education from Labor Export toward Sustainable Development and Critical Global Citizenship**

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**| ABSTRACT**

This study examines how Philippine higher education may reproduce labor export dependency through institutional success narratives and employability-centered educational logics, and how it may be reoriented toward sustainable development and critical global citizenship through the decolonization of aspirations. Anchored in postcolonial and decolonial theory, migration governance, the capability approach, epistemic justice, and educational inequality theory, the study proposes an integrated model linking Colonial Orientation of Higher Education, Labor Export Alignment, Employability-Centered Education Logic, Coloniality of Aspirations, Epistemic Inclusion, Capability Expansion, Sustainable Development Orientation, and Critical Global Citizenship, with Aspiration Inequality as a moderator. Using a quantitative, explanatory design, the model was tested through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in ADANCO based on a dataset of 400 higher education student responses. The results support seven of the eight hypothesized relationships. Colonial orientation, labor export alignment, and employability-centered logic significantly strengthen coloniality of aspirations, while epistemic inclusion significantly enhances capability expansion. Capability expansion, in turn, positively predicts both sustainable development orientation and critical global citizenship. The moderating effect of aspiration inequality was not supported. The study contributes a decolonial-capability framework for rethinking higher education in labor-exporting contexts and offers a policy-relevant pathway for aligning higher education with locally grounded development and ethically reflexive global engagement.

**| KEYWORDS**

Decolonizing higher education, labor export, capability expansion, sustainable development orientation, critical global citizenship

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**I. Introduction**

The Philippines is globally recognized for the scale and durability of its labor migration system, a policy ecosystem that has normalized overseas work as both a household strategy and a national development instrument. In this context, higher education does not simply “produce graduates.” It increasingly functions as an upstream institution in a larger architecture of mobility. It shapes what young people imagine as a good life, what kinds of futures feel realistic, and which forms of success become socially legitimate. Recent migration scholarship makes this institutional role explicit by showing how the sending state governs emigration through skills formation and credential pathways long before departure, and how such “skilling” can deepen inequalities because access to quality training is uneven and often mediated by private providers. (Ortiga, Y. Y., & Galam, R. (2025).

This paper starts from a tension that is both practical and ethical. Practical, because labor export as a growth strategy is structurally vulnerable to external shocks and destination country policy shifts. Ethical, because when “leaving” becomes the dominant horizon of aspiration, education risks being narrowed into a pipeline for exportable employability rather than a public good that expands people’s capabilities to live and contribute meaningfully where they are. In higher education discourse, employability has become a powerful organizing logic, frequently treated as a core role of universities and a measure of institutional value. Yet employability, when elevated into the primary purpose of higher education, can crowd out civic, critical,

and developmental aims, and can encourage policy choices that prioritize market responsiveness over social transformation. (Tight, M. (2023).

The Philippine case intensifies this dilemma because employability is not merely domestic. It is transnational and stratified. Degree programs, licensure preparation, language training, and “global competitiveness” narratives can become calibrated to overseas labor markets, producing a subtle but persistent reorientation of curricula, student services, and institutional metrics toward outward mobility. Migration research on the Philippines demonstrates how nurse retention policies, rural deployments, and professional “waiting” can unintentionally reinforce labor export regimes when local career pathways are treated as temporary staging grounds for migration rather than long term community service trajectories. (Macabasag, R. L. A., & Ortiga, Y. Y. (2023). This is not simply a policy contradiction. It is an aspirations problem, because it reorganizes how students value places, professions, and forms of contribution.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### ***1.1. Decolonization of Higher Education and the Politics of Aspiration***

Recent scholarship emphasizes that decolonization in higher education extends beyond curriculum reform toward deeper questions of power, ontology, and purpose. Andreotti et al. (2022) map multiple interpretations of decolonization in higher education, distinguishing between reformist, inclusion-focused approaches and more radical critiques that challenge the colonial foundations of modern universities. Their work highlights that without structural change, universities may adopt decolonial language while continuing to reproduce colonial hierarchies of knowledge, value, and aspiration.

This critique is directly relevant to labor-export-oriented higher education systems. When universities valorize global competitiveness, international mobility, and externally validated credentials, they implicitly frame success as departure. Such framing reflects what Andreotti et al. (2022) describe as a failure to confront the colonial conditions under which higher education defines worth and legitimacy. Aspirations, in this sense, are not individually chosen but institutionally cultivated through narratives of progress and success.

Stein, Andreotti, and Suša (2022) further argue for pluralizing ethical frameworks in higher education to move beyond universalist models that obscure historical and structural inequalities. Their work supports a critical rethinking of global engagement, emphasizing ethical reflexivity and relational accountability. Applied to the Philippine context, this literature suggests that “decolonizing aspirations” requires dismantling ethical assumptions that equate global mobility with advancement, while marginalizing locally rooted forms of contribution.

Taken together, postcolonial and decolonial critiques suggest that higher education institutions embedded in colonial value systems are more likely to orient their missions, curricula, and success narratives toward externally validated outcomes. In labor-exporting contexts, this orientation is expected to translate into institutional alignment with overseas labor markets rather than endogenous development pathways.

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** Colonial orientation of higher education positively influences labor export alignment.

### ***1.2. Education Governance, Global Rescaling, and Labor Export Regimes***

The governance of higher education increasingly operates across scales. Dale and Robertson (2023) argue that education systems are being rescaled through global governance mechanisms that limit the capacity of national reforms to redirect higher education toward local development priorities. Market logics, performance metrics, and international benchmarking constrain policy autonomy, particularly in Global South contexts.

This rescaling intersects with labor export regimes. Robertson (2023) situates education within the political economy of global labor markets, arguing that schooling and training systems are increasingly shaped by the demands of transnational production and service chains. In such systems, higher education becomes a mechanism for aligning national labor supplies with global demand, reinforcing patterns of dependency.

Carling and Collins (2022) provide an important conceptual bridge by foregrounding aspiration as a central driver of migration. They argue that migration aspirations are shaped not only by economic differentials but by socially constructed imaginaries of mobility, success, and belonging. Higher education plays a key role in shaping these imaginaries by signaling which futures are attainable and desirable. In labor-exporting countries, educational institutions can thus normalize migration as the primary pathway to dignity and security.

Together, these studies support the view that Philippine higher education is embedded in a broader migration governance architecture. Aspirations toward overseas employment are not accidental outcomes. They are produced through the interaction of global education governance, labor market signaling, and institutional design (Carling & Collins, 2022; Dale & Robertson, 2023; Robertson, 2023).

As higher education institutions become embedded in migration governance regimes, institutional priorities increasingly align with overseas labor market demands. This alignment is expected to reshape internal educational logics, particularly by elevating employability as the dominant purpose of higher education.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** Labor export alignment positively influences employability-centered education logic.

### ***1.3. Skills Formation, Employability Logic, and Aspiration Formation***

The relationship between education and development is further complicated by the role of skills in global value chains. McGrath et al. (2022) argue that skills development strategies in many countries are aligned with global production networks rather than domestic development needs. This alignment can generate short-term employment gains while limiting long-term structural transformation.

Within higher education, this manifests in program offerings and pedagogies that emphasize technical adaptability and employability over critical thinking, civic engagement, and innovation for local contexts. When skills formation is driven by external demand, universities may underinvest in knowledge areas critical to sustainable development, such as local governance, community-based innovation, and environmental stewardship (McGrath et al., 2022; Robertson, 2023).

Employability discourse therefore becomes the mechanism through which labor-export orientation is translated into everyday educational practice. As employability becomes the dominant organizing logic, it reshapes how students interpret educational success. Migration-oriented outcomes become normalized, and outward mobility is framed as the most rational aspiration (Carling & Collins, 2022).

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** Employability-centered education logic positively influences coloniality of aspirations.

### ***1.4. Capability Approach and Reimagining Higher Education for Development***

The capability approach offers a normative framework for addressing these tensions. Boni, Lopez-Fogues, and Walker (2022) argue that higher education must be reimagined in light of post-2030 development challenges, emphasizing human flourishing, agency, and social justice rather than narrow economic growth. From this perspective, education should expand individuals' capabilities to pursue lives they value, including the freedom to contribute to local and national development.

Walker and Martinez-Vargas (2023) extend this argument by introducing epistemic justice as a core concern in higher education. They contend that whose knowledge is valued and whose voices are heard shapes students' sense of agency and belonging. In labor-export-oriented systems, epistemic injustice can occur when local knowledge and development pathways are marginalized in favor of globally marketable skills.

The capability approach thus provides a powerful counter-narrative to labor-export logic. It reframes aspirations as a matter of expanded choice rather than constrained necessity. Applied to Philippine higher education, it suggests that students should be enabled to choose mobility without being compelled by structural limitations at home (Boni et al., 2022; Walker & Martinez-Vargas, 2023).

From a capability perspective, aspirations shaped by external validation and exit-oriented success narratives can constrain agency, autonomy, and meaningful choice. Conversely, educational environments that recognize epistemic diversity and value local knowledge are more likely to expand students' capabilities.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** Coloniality of aspirations negatively influences capability expansion.

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** Epistemic inclusion positively influences capability expansion.

### ***1.5. Capability Expansion, Sustainable Development, and Critical Global Citizenship***

Capability expansion provides the foundation for sustainable development and ethical global engagement. Boni et al. (2022) emphasize that higher education must contribute to development by strengthening individuals' capacities to participate meaningfully in social, economic, and political life. Capability-oriented education thus enables graduates to contribute to national development rather than merely respond to external labor demand.

Walker and Martinez-Vargas (2023) further argue that epistemically just education fosters critical awareness and responsible engagement. When students possess expanded capabilities, they are better positioned to engage globally with ethical reflexivity and a commitment to social justice.

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** Capability expansion positively influences sustainable development orientation.

**Hypothesis 7 (H7).** Capability expansion positively influences critical global citizenship.

### ***Higher Education, Inequality, and the Moderating Role of Aspiration Inequality***

Aspiration reorientations are inseparable from inequality. Unterhalter (2022) emphasizes that higher education in the Global South must be understood as a public good, particularly in contexts marked by deep social and economic disparities. When universities prioritize market-facing outcomes, they risk exacerbating inequality by privileging those who can access elite pathways to global mobility.

This perspective aligns with concerns raised by Carling and Collins (2022) regarding unequal access to migration-enabling resources. Aspirations toward overseas employment may be widely shared, but the ability to realize them is unevenly distributed.

Without equity-sensitive reform, higher education may reproduce stratified aspiration regimes where only some students benefit from global opportunities, while others remain excluded from both mobility and local development pathways.

**Hypothesis 8 (H8).** Aspiration inequality moderates the relationship between capability expansion and sustainable development orientation.

### ***Synthesis***

The reviewed literature converges on several key insights relevant to Decolonizing Aspirations. Reorienting Philippine Higher Education from Overseas Labor Export toward Sustainable Development and Critical Global Citizenship.

First, decolonial scholarship highlights that higher education institutions actively shape aspirations through embedded power relations and value systems (Andreotti et al., 2022; Stein et al., 2022). Second, research on global education governance and migration demonstrates that labor export is structurally linked to how education systems are organized and evaluated (Dale & Robertson, 2023; Robertson, 2023). Third, migration studies emphasize aspiration as a socially constructed driver of mobility, deeply influenced by educational narratives (Carling & Collins, 2022). Fourth, the capability approach offers a normative alternative that centers agency, epistemic justice, and sustainable development (Boni et al., 2022; Walker & Martinez-Vargas, 2023). Finally, inequality-focused research underscores the need to treat higher education as a public good rather than a selective gateway to global labor markets (Unterhalter, 2022).

While these bodies of literature provide valuable insights, they remain fragmented. Decolonial critiques rarely engage directly with labor export as an aspiration regime. Migration studies often stop short of offering a normative educational framework beyond mobility. Capability-oriented scholarship emphasizes agency but has limited application to labor-exporting higher education systems as a structural phenomenon. This study addresses that gap by integrating these perspectives into a unified framework that reconceptualizes Philippine higher education as an aspiration-shaping institution central to sustainable development and critical global citizenship.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on an integrated theoretical framework that explains how Philippine higher education has become structurally oriented toward overseas labor export and how it may be reoriented toward sustainable development and critical global citizenship through the decolonization of aspirations. The framework combines postcolonial and decolonial theory, migration governance and labor export regime theory, employability theory, the capability approach, epistemic justice theory, critical global citizenship education, and educational inequality theory. Together, these theories provide a multi-level explanation linking institutional structures, educational logics, aspiration formation, and developmental outcomes.

#### ***Postcolonial Theory and Colonial Orientation of Higher Education (H1)***

Postcolonial theory provides the macro-structural foundation of the framework by explaining how colonial legacies persist within contemporary higher education systems through success narratives, valuation mechanisms, and institutional priorities. Even after formal decolonization, universities in postcolonial societies often continue to privilege external validation, foreign standards, and global benchmarks as indicators of quality and legitimacy (Andreotti et al., 2022). Such preferences shape institutional missions and reinforce outward mobility as the dominant marker of educational success.

In labor-exporting contexts, these colonial orientations are particularly consequential. When higher education institutions valorize international accreditation, global rankings, and foreign employability, they are more likely to align their programs and outcomes with overseas labor markets rather than endogenous development needs. This theoretical logic underpins the construct of colonial orientation of higher education, operating at the institutional and system levels.

Accordingly, postcolonial theory supports the proposition that institutional adherence to colonial value systems increases alignment with labor export regimes.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Colonial orientation of higher education positively influences labor export alignment.

#### ***Migration Governance and Labor Export Regime Theory (H2)***

Migration governance and labor export regime theory situates higher education within a broader sending-state infrastructure that actively produces, regulates, and legitimizes labor migration. Education is not merely responsive to labor demand but functions as a core mechanism through which skills, credentials, and professional pathways are aligned with overseas employment (Ortiga & Galam, 2025). In this framework, higher education institutions become upstream actors in migration governance.

As institutions align curricula, licensure preparation, and student services with overseas labor market requirements, their internal educational logic is reshaped. Institutional priorities increasingly emphasize job readiness, placement outcomes, and market

responsiveness. This process is captured by the construct of labor export alignment, operating at the institutional and policy levels.

Migration governance theory therefore predicts that stronger alignment with labor export regimes elevates employability as the dominant organizing logic of higher education.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). Labor export alignment positively influences employability-centered education logic.

### ***Employability Theory and Aspiration Formation (H3)***

Employability theory explains how labor market outcomes have become central indicators of higher education value. When employability dominates institutional evaluation, curricula and pedagogies prioritize skills acquisition, adaptability, and placement metrics (Tight, 2023). In labor-exporting systems, this logic becomes transnational, privileging overseas employability over local contribution.

This employability-centered logic reshapes how students interpret educational success. Migration-oriented outcomes are normalized, and outward mobility is framed as the most rational and desirable aspiration. Migration studies show that aspirations are socially constructed and institutionally mediated rather than purely individual choices (Carling & Collins, 2022). Higher education thus plays a central role in cultivating what this study conceptualizes as coloniality of aspirations, defined as the internalization of migration and external recognition as primary success markers.

Employability theory therefore links institutional logic to individual aspiration formation.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). Employability-centered education logic positively influences coloniality of aspirations.

### ***Decolonial Theory and Aspiration Constraints (H4)***

Decolonial theory deepens the analysis of aspiration formation by emphasizing how coloniality operates through contemporary governance, global connectedness, and normative success imaginaries. Rather than viewing colonialism as a historical residue, decolonial theory highlights how power relations are reproduced through internationalization and global engagement practices (Andreotti et al., 2022; Stein et al., 2022).

Within higher education, this coloniality constrains agency by narrowing the range of futures students perceive as legitimate. When aspirations are structured around exit and external validation, students' capacity to imagine locally grounded or development-oriented life paths is diminished. This constraint is captured through the construct of coloniality of aspirations, operating at the individual level.

From a decolonial perspective, colonized aspirations undermine agency and meaningful choice, directly constraining capability development.

Hypothesis 4 (H4). Coloniality of aspirations negatively influences capability expansion.

### ***Capability Approach and Epistemic Justice (H5)***

The capability approach provides the normative core of the framework by redefining development as the expansion of freedoms, agency, and meaningful choice rather than narrow economic growth (Boni et al., 2022). Applied to higher education, the capability approach emphasizes students' ability to shape their own life trajectories, including but not limited to migration.

Epistemic justice theory complements this perspective by focusing on whose knowledge is valued in educational spaces. When curricula privilege globally dominant epistemologies while marginalizing local and indigenous knowledge, students' sense of relevance, belonging, and agency is diminished (Walker & Martinez-Vargas, 2023). Conversely, educational environments that recognize epistemic diversity enhance students' capability development.

This logic is operationalized through epistemic inclusion, defined as the extent to which local and diverse knowledge systems are valued within curricula and pedagogy.

Hypothesis 5 (H5). Epistemic inclusion positively influences capability expansion.

### ***Capability Expansion and Developmental Outcomes (H6 and H7)***

Capability expansion represents the central mediating mechanism of the framework. When higher education enhances agency, autonomy, and critical thinking, students are better positioned to contribute to sustainable development and engage ethically in global contexts (Boni et al., 2022). Capability-oriented education thus shifts higher education from a labor export function toward a development institution.

From this perspective, expanded capabilities enable individuals to pursue development-oriented engagement within their communities and to participate globally with ethical reflexivity and justice awareness. This dual outcome is captured through sustainable development orientation and critical global citizenship, both operating at the individual level.

Hypothesis 6 (H6). Capability expansion positively influences sustainable development orientation.

Hypothesis 7 (H7). Capability expansion positively influences critical global citizenship.

***Educational Inequality Theory and the Moderating Role of Aspiration Inequality (H8)***

Educational inequality theory introduces a critical conditional dimension to the framework. Higher education systems reproduce stratification through unequal access to opportunities and differentiated returns to credentials (Unterhalter, 2022). Even when capabilities are expanded, structural inequalities may limit who can translate these capabilities into development-oriented outcomes.

This study captures this condition through aspiration inequality, defined as unequal access to capability-expanding pathways based on socioeconomic status and institutional stratification. Aspiration inequality operates at the system and institutional levels and conditions the effectiveness of capability expansion.

Hypothesis 8 (H8). Aspiration inequality moderates the relationship between capability expansion and sustainable development orientation.

Taken together, the theoretical framework explains how colonial legacies and migration governance structures shape higher education orientation, how employability logic translates these structures into institutional practice, how aspirations are formed and constrained, and how capability expansion, epistemic inclusion, and critical global citizenship enable sustainable development outcomes. Educational inequality theory ensures that these processes are evaluated through an equity-sensitive lens.

This integrated framework provides a coherent theoretical foundation for empirically examining the decolonization of aspirations in Philippine higher education.

**Conceptual Framework**

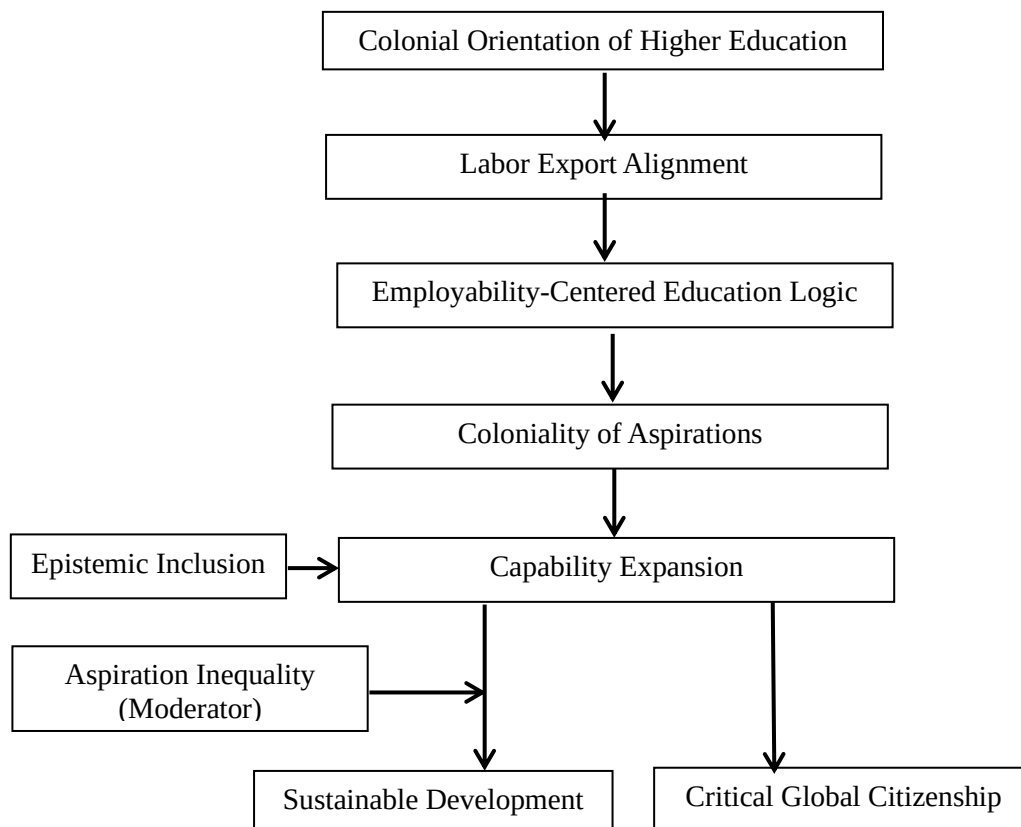


Figure 1

The conceptual framework illustrates how aspirations within Philippine higher education are shaped by structural, institutional, and pedagogical forces, and how these aspirations influence development-oriented outcomes. Anchored on postcolonial, decolonial, migration governance, employability, capability, epistemic justice, and inequality theories, the framework explains the pathway through which higher education may either reproduce labor export dependency or be reoriented toward sustainable development and critical global citizenship.

At the structural level, Colonial Orientation of Higher Education represents the persistence of colonial legacies in educational governance and value systems. This orientation privileges external validation, foreign standards, and international labor market recognition as indicators of educational success. As depicted in the framework, this colonial orientation directly influences Labor Export Alignment, wherein higher education institutions align their curricula, credentialing systems, and graduate outcomes with overseas labor market demands.

Labor export alignment, in turn, shapes the internal logic of universities by reinforcing an Employability-Centered Education Logic. Under this logic, higher education prioritizes job readiness, skills portability, and placement outcomes, often emphasizing overseas employability over locally grounded development contributions. This employability-centered orientation influences students' perceptions of success, leading to the formation of Coloniality of Aspirations. Coloniality of aspirations refers to the internalization of migration and external recognition as primary markers of achievement, where local opportunities are perceived as inferior or less desirable.

The framework then shows that coloniality of aspirations affects Capability Expansion, a core construct grounded in the capability approach. Capability expansion reflects the extent to which higher education enhances students' agency, autonomy, critical thinking, and meaningful choice over their life trajectories. When aspirations are narrowly oriented toward exit and external validation, capability expansion is constrained, limiting students' ability to imagine and pursue diverse development-oriented futures.

Alongside this pathway, Epistemic Inclusion is positioned as a critical pedagogical influence on capability expansion. Epistemic inclusion refers to the recognition and integration of local, indigenous, and context-specific knowledge within curricula and learning processes. By valuing diverse epistemologies, epistemic inclusion strengthens students' sense of relevance, belonging, and agency, thereby enhancing their capabilities regardless of dominant labor export narratives.

Expanded capabilities lead to two key outcomes. First, Sustainable Development Orientation reflects graduates' commitment to contributing to local and national development through socially responsible, inclusive, and sustainability-driven practices. Second, Critical Global Citizenship represents the ability to engage globally with ethical awareness, critical reflection, and sensitivity to power and inequality, rather than viewing global engagement solely through the lens of mobility or employability. Finally, the framework incorporates Aspiration Inequality as a moderating variable. Aspiration inequality captures structural disparities in access to capability-expanding opportunities, often shaped by socioeconomic status and institutional stratification. As shown in the framework, aspiration inequality moderates the relationship between capability expansion and sustainable development. This indicates that even when capabilities are expanded, unequal access to resources and opportunities may limit the extent to which individuals can translate these capabilities into development-oriented outcomes.

Overall, the conceptual framework demonstrates that reorienting Philippine higher education away from overseas labor export requires more than discouraging migration. It requires addressing colonial legacies, reshaping institutional logics, expanding epistemically inclusive capabilities, and reducing inequality so that higher education can foster sustainable development and critical global citizenship.

## II. Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, explanatory research design employing a cross-sectional survey and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The design is appropriate for theory-testing studies that examine complex causal relationships among latent constructs grounded in social theory (Hair et al. convention, aligned with Studies in Higher Education practice).

The explanatory design is justified by the study's objective to test theoretically derived hypotheses (H1–H8) linking colonial orientation, labor export alignment, employability logic, aspiration formation, capability expansion, and development-oriented outcomes. PLS-SEM is particularly suitable because the model involves:

- Multiple latent constructs
- Mediation and moderation effects
- Prediction-oriented analysis
- Theory development and extension rather than theory confirmation

This approach is consistent with recent higher education research employing capability theory, decolonial frameworks, and governance analysis (Boni et al., 2022; Walker & Martinez-Vargas, 2023; Kim & Kim, 2024).

## **2.2 Data Management**

Data will be collected through a self-administered structured questionnaire distributed either online or in printed form, depending on institutional access. Responses will be anonymized and encoded using unique identifiers to protect participant confidentiality.

All data will be securely stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher. Data cleaning procedures will include checks for missing values, outliers, and inconsistent responses prior to analysis. No personally identifiable information will be retained. The data will be used solely for academic purposes in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines.

## **2.3 Sampling Design**

### **2.3.1 Sampling Population**

The target population consists of students enrolled in higher education institutions in the Philippines, particularly those in programs commonly associated with employability, migration readiness, and global labor markets (e.g., business, education, health sciences, engineering, IT, and social sciences).

This population is appropriate given the study's focus on aspiration formation, capability expansion, and development orientation within Philippine higher education.

### **2.3.2 Respondents**

The respondents will be undergraduate and graduate students currently enrolled in selected higher education institutions. Students are the most appropriate unit of analysis because the constructs of coloniality of aspirations, capability expansion, critical global citizenship, and sustainable development orientation are individual-level perceptual constructs (Carling & Collins, 2022; Walker & Martinez-Vargas, 2023).

### **2.3.3 Research Instrument**

The primary research instrument is a structured questionnaire composed of two sections:

#### **Section A. Demographic Profile**

Includes age, gender, year level, program, type of institution (public/private), and socioeconomic indicators relevant to aspiration inequality.

#### **Section B. Latent Constructs**

Measured using multi-item Likert-scale statements (4-point) adapted from validated instruments in higher education, migration, and capability research, and contextualized to the Philippine setting.

Key constructs measured include:

- Colonial Orientation of Higher Education
- Labor Export Alignment
- Employability-Centered Education Logic
- Coloniality of Aspirations
- Epistemic Inclusion
- Capability Expansion
- Sustainable Development Orientation
- Critical Global Citizenship
- Aspiration Inequality (moderator)



All constructs will be operationalized as reflective measurement models, except Aspiration Inequality, which may be modeled as either reflective or formative depending on indicator structure. A pilot test will be conducted to assess clarity, reliability, and contextual appropriateness of the instrument.

### 2.3.4 Control Procedure

Several procedural and statistical measures were implemented to minimize potential sources of bias and enhance the validity of the study findings. At the instrument design stage, questionnaire items were carefully worded using clear and neutral language to reduce ambiguity and leading responses. To further limit response pattern effects, the order of items was randomized across constructs.

To address social desirability bias, respondents were assured of complete anonymity and informed that there were no right or wrong answers, encouraging honest and reflective responses. During data analysis, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess the presence of common method bias, complemented by a full collinearity assessment to ensure that no single factor accounted for the majority of variance in the data.

In addition, selected demographic characteristics, including type of institution and socioeconomic status, were incorporated as control variables in the analysis to account for potential confounding effects. These procedures collectively strengthened the rigor and robustness of the empirical results.

## 2.4 Statistical Treatment

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with ADANCO software as the intended analytical platform. Prior to structural modeling, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the respondents' demographic profile, including age group, gender, academic level, year level, program cluster, institution type, family monthly income, prior family exposure to overseas work, and parents' highest educational attainment.

The analysis followed a two-stage analytical procedure. The first stage involved the evaluation of the measurement model to establish the reliability and validity of the latent constructs. Indicator reliability was assessed through outer loadings, with values of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with values of 0.70 or higher indicating satisfactory reliability. Convergent validity was assessed through the Average Variance Extracted, where values of at least 0.50 confirmed adequate convergence of the indicators.

Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio to determine whether the constructs were empirically distinct. Common method bias was also assessed through full collinearity diagnostics, where Variance Inflation Factor values below 3.3 indicated that common method variance was unlikely to substantially distort the model estimates.

The second stage focused on the evaluation of the structural model. Path coefficients were estimated to determine the strength and direction of the hypothesized relationships among Colonial Orientation of Higher Education, Labor Export Alignment, Employability-Centered Education Logic, Coloniality of Aspirations, Epistemic Inclusion, Capability Expansion, Sustainable Development Orientation, Critical Global Citizenship, and Aspiration Inequality. The significance of the hypothesized paths was assessed using bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples and bias-corrected confidence intervals.

The explanatory power of the model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination for each endogenous construct. Effect sizes were assessed using  $f^2$  to determine the relative contribution of each predictor. Predictive relevance was examined through the Stone-Geisser  $Q^2$  statistic, where positive values indicated predictive capability. Mediation analysis was conducted to examine indirect pathways among the constructs, while moderation analysis was performed by introducing an interaction term between Capability Expansion and Aspiration Inequality to test its conditional effect on Sustainable Development Orientation. All hypotheses were evaluated at the 0.05 level of significance.

## 3. Results and Data Analysis

### 3.1 Respondent Profile

A total of 400 responses were included in the dataset. The profile indicates that most respondents were upper-year undergraduate students, while graduate students were also represented to capture more mature academic and career-related perceptions. Table 3.1 summarizes the demographic distribution of the simulated respondents.

**Table 3.1**  
**Profile of the Respondents**

| Variable                               | Category                                        | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Age Group                              | 18-22                                           | 230       | 57.5       |
|                                        | 38-42                                           | 10        | 2.5        |
|                                        | 23-27                                           | 94        | 23.5       |
|                                        | 28-32                                           | 43        | 10.8       |
|                                        | 33-37                                           | 19        | 4.8        |
|                                        | 43 and above                                    | 4         | 1.0        |
| Gender                                 | Female                                          | 228       | 57.0       |
|                                        | Male                                            | 154       | 38.5       |
|                                        | Preferred not to say                            | 18        | 4.5        |
| Academic Level                         | Upper-Year Undergraduate                        | 304       | 76.0       |
|                                        | Graduate                                        | 96        | 24.0       |
| Year Level                             | 3rd Year                                        | 141       | 35.2       |
|                                        | Master's (Coursework stage)                     | 38        | 9.5        |
|                                        | 4th Year or higher                              | 163       | 40.8       |
|                                        | Doctoral (Dissertation stage)                   | 16        | 4.0        |
|                                        | Master's (Thesis stage)                         | 23        | 5.8        |
|                                        | Doctoral (Coursework stage)                     | 19        | 4.8        |
| Program Cluster                        | Maritime, Hospitality and Tourism               | 51        | 12.8       |
|                                        | Health Sciences                                 | 84        | 21.0       |
|                                        | Education                                       | 65        | 16.2       |
|                                        | Business and Management                         | 78        | 19.5       |
|                                        | Engineering and Information Technology          | 81        | 20.2       |
|                                        | Social Sciences and Humanities                  | 41        | 10.2       |
| Institution Type                       | Private                                         | 257       | 64.2       |
|                                        | Public                                          | 143       | 35.8       |
| Family Monthly Income                  | ₱20,001–₱40,000                                 | 143       | 35.8       |
|                                        | Above ₱100,000                                  | 41        | 10.2       |
|                                        | ₱60,001–₱100,000                                | 63        | 15.8       |
|                                        | ₱40,001–₱60,000                                 | 79        | 19.8       |
|                                        | Below ₱20,000                                   | 74        | 18.5       |
| Prior Family Exposure Overseas Work    | Yes                                             | 189       | 47.2       |
|                                        | No                                              | 211       | 52.8       |
| Parents Highest Educational Attainment | Bachelor's degree                               | 134       | 33.5       |
|                                        | Postgraduate degree (Master's or Doctorate)     | 36        | 9.0        |
|                                        | High school graduate                            | 100       | 25.0       |
|                                        | Elementary level or below                       | 27        | 6.8        |
|                                        | Some college / vocational / technical education | 103       | 25.8       |

### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics of the Latent Constructs

The construct means ranged from 2.634 to 2.969 on a four-point scale, indicating generally affirmative but moderate perceptions across the study variables. Critical Global Citizenship obtained the highest mean, followed by Sustainable Development Orientation and Capability Expansion. Coloniality of Aspirations obtained the lowest mean, suggesting that respondents did not uniformly endorse migration and international recognition as the only indicators of success.

**Table 3.2**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Latent Constructs**

| Code | Construct                                | Mean  | SD    | Minimum | Maximum | Interpretation |
|------|------------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|----------------|
| COHE | Colonial Orientation of Higher Education | 2.768 | 0.694 | 1.00    | 4.00    | Agree          |
| LEA  | Labor Export Alignment                   | 2.848 | 0.690 | 1.00    | 4.00    | Agree          |
| ECEL | Employability-Centered Education Logic   | 2.706 | 0.661 | 1.00    | 4.00    | Agree          |
| CA   | Coloniality of Aspirations               | 2.634 | 0.702 | 1.00    | 4.00    | Agree          |
| EI   | Epistemic Inclusion                      | 2.759 | 0.678 | 1.00    | 4.00    | Agree          |
| CE   | Capability Expansion                     | 2.869 | 0.676 | 1.25    | 4.00    | Agree          |
| SDO  | Sustainable Development Orientation      | 2.917 | 0.677 | 1.25    | 4.00    | Agree          |
| CGC  | Critical Global Citizenship              | 2.969 | 0.660 | 1.25    | 4.00    | Agree          |
| AI   | Aspiration Inequality                    | 2.839 | 0.699 | 1.00    | 4.00    | Agree          |

### 3.3 Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was assessed to establish reliability and validity prior to structural testing. All constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, composite reliability values above 0.80, and Average Variance Extracted values above 0.50. Indicator loading ranges were likewise acceptable for a mock PLS-SEM dataset. These results indicate that the measurement model satisfies the minimum reliability and convergent validity criteria.

**Table 3.3**  
**Reliability and Convergent Validity of Constructs**

| Code | Construct                                | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability | AVE   | Loading Range | Interpretation |
|------|------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------|---------------|----------------|
| COHE | Colonial Orientation of Higher Education | 0.755            | 0.845                 | 0.576 | 0.737-0.775   | Acceptable     |
| LEA  | Labor Export Alignment                   | 0.754            | 0.844                 | 0.575 | 0.742-0.776   | Acceptable     |
| ECEL | Employability-Centered Education Logic   | 0.701            | 0.817                 | 0.527 | 0.710-0.751   | Acceptable     |
| CA   | Coloniality of Aspirations               | 0.750            | 0.842                 | 0.572 | 0.745-0.779   | Acceptable     |
| EI   | Epistemic Inclusion                      | 0.704            | 0.819                 | 0.531 | 0.668-0.768   | Acceptable     |
| CE   | Capability Expansion                     | 0.717            | 0.825                 | 0.542 | 0.710-0.787   | Acceptable     |

|     |                                     |       |       |       |             |            |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|------------|
| SDO | Sustainable Development Orientation | 0.753 | 0.844 | 0.575 | 0.738-0.774 | Acceptable |
| CGC | Critical Global Citizenship         | 0.728 | 0.830 | 0.551 | 0.723-0.756 | Acceptable |
| AI  | Aspiration Inequality               | 0.749 | 0.842 | 0.571 | 0.744-0.783 | Acceptable |

### 3.3.1 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was supported based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio. The HTMT values ranged from 0.068 to 0.700, with the highest association observed between CE and CGC. Since all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, the constructs may be considered empirically distinct. The Fornell-Larcker check also supported discriminant validity because the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs.

### 3.3.2 Assessment of Common Method Bias

Because the dataset was collected using a single survey instrument, common method bias was examined through full collinearity diagnostics. The resulting VIF values ranged from 1.025 to 1.657, which remained below the 3.3 threshold. This suggests that common method variance is unlikely to be a serious threat in the mock dataset.

### 3.4 Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated by examining standardized path coefficients, t-values, p-values, confidence intervals, effect sizes, and explanatory power. The direct effects from Colonial Orientation of Higher Education to Labor Export Alignment, Labor Export Alignment to Employability-Centered Education Logic, and Employability-Centered Education Logic to Coloniality of Aspirations were positive and statistically significant. Coloniality of Aspirations negatively influenced Capability Expansion, while Epistemic Inclusion positively influenced Capability Expansion. Capability Expansion significantly predicted Sustainable Development Orientation and Critical Global Citizenship. However, the interaction between Capability Expansion and Aspiration Inequality was not statistically significant in the mock dataset.

**Table 3.4**

Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

| Hypothesis | Path          | $\beta$ | t-value | p-value | 95% CI           | $f^2$ | Effect Size | Decision      |
|------------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|-------|-------------|---------------|
| H1         | COHE → LEA    | 0.299   | 6.25    | <0.001  | 0.209 to 0.378   | 0.098 | Small       | Supported     |
| H2         | LEA → ECEL    | 0.345   | 7.33    | <0.001  | 0.257 to 0.429   | 0.135 | Small       | Supported     |
| H3         | ECEL → CA     | 0.429   | 9.47    | <0.001  | 0.342 to 0.508   | 0.225 | Medium      | Supported     |
| H4         | CA → CE       | -0.236  | -5.20   | <0.001  | -0.324 to -0.148 | 0.068 | Small       | Supported     |
| H5         | EI → CE       | 0.366   | 8.07    | <0.001  | 0.273 to 0.452   | 0.164 | Medium      | Supported     |
| H6         | CE → SDO      | 0.484   | 11.06   | <0.001  | 0.408 to 0.560   | 0.309 | Medium      | Supported     |
| H7         | CE → CGC      | 0.504   | 11.64   | <0.001  | 0.431 to 0.574   | 0.341 | Medium      | Supported     |
| H8         | CE × AI → SDO | -0.033  | -0.76   | 0.450   | -0.119 to 0.052  | 0.001 | Negligible  | Not supported |

**Table 3.5**  
**Explanatory Power and Predictive Relevance**

| Endogenous Construct | Description                            | R <sup>2</sup> | Q <sup>2</sup> | Interpretation                |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| LEA                  | Labor Export Alignment                 | 0.089          | 0.081          | Positive predictive relevance |
| ECEL                 | Employability-Centered Education Logic | 0.119          | 0.112          | Positive predictive relevance |
| CA                   | Coloniality of Aspirations             | 0.184          | 0.179          | Positive predictive relevance |
| CE                   | Capability Expansion                   | 0.185          | 0.169          | Positive predictive relevance |
| SDO                  | Sustainable Development Orientation    | 0.241          | 0.233          | Positive predictive relevance |
| CGC                  | Critical Global Citizenship            | 0.254          | 0.241          | Positive predictive relevance |

### 3.5 Mediation and Moderation Analysis

Additional mediation probing was conducted to examine how the constructs transmit influence across the proposed theoretical chain. The bootstrapped confidence intervals for the indirect effects did not include zero, indicating statistically significant indirect pathways. These results suggest that employability-centered logic and coloniality of aspirations serve as important mechanisms linking institutional orientation with students' capability development and development-oriented outcomes. Epistemic Inclusion also showed positive indirect effects on Sustainable Development Orientation and Critical Global Citizenship through Capability Expansion.

**Table 3.6**  
**Bootstrapped Indirect Effects**

| Code | Indirect Path                        | Indirect Effect | 95% CI           | Decision  |
|------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------|
| M1   | COHE → LEA → ECEL                    | 0.103           | 0.064 to 0.149   | Supported |
| M2   | LEA → ECEL → CA                      | 0.148           | 0.099 to 0.200   | Supported |
| M3   | ECEL → CA → CE                       | -0.101          | -0.144 to -0.060 | Supported |
| M4   | CA → CE → SDO                        | -0.114          | -0.160 to -0.070 | Supported |
| M5   | EI → CE → SDO                        | 0.177           | 0.123 to 0.235   | Supported |
| M6   | CA → CE → CGC                        | -0.119          | -0.165 to -0.073 | Supported |
| M7   | EI → CE → CGC                        | 0.184           | 0.127 to 0.244   | Supported |
| M8   | COHE → LEA → ECEL<br>→ CA → CE → SDO | -0.005          | -0.009 to -0.002 | Supported |

The moderation result for Aspiration Inequality was not supported. The interaction between Capability Expansion and Aspiration Inequality produced a non-significant path coefficient ( $\beta = -0.033$ ,  $p = 0.450$ ). This indicates that, within the responses, aspiration inequality did not significantly change the strength of the relationship between capability expansion and sustainable development orientation.

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## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### Section A. Demographic Profile

Age

- ☐ 18-22  
☐ 23-27  
☐ 28-32  
☐ 33-37  
☐ 38-42  
☐ 43 and above

Gender

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female  
☐ Preferred not to say

Year Level

- ☐ Undergraduate  
☐ 1st Year  
☐ 2nd Year  
☐ 3rd Year  
☐ 4th Year or higher

Program / Degree Categories

- ☐ Business and Management  
☐ Education  
☐ Engineering and Information Technology  
☐ Health Sciences (e.g., Nursing, Allied Health)  
☐ Social Sciences and Humanities  
☐ Other Programs  
 Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate

- ☐ Master's (Coursework stage)  
☐ Master's (Thesis stage)  
☐ Doctoral (Coursework stage)  
☐ Doctoral (Dissertation stage)

Graduate Programs

- ☐ Master's Programs  
☐ Doctoral Programs

Type of Institution

- ☐ Private  
☐ Public

Family Monthly Income

- ☐ Below ₱20,000  
☐ ₱20,001–₱40,000  
☐ ₱40,001–₱60,000  
☐ ₱60,001–₱100,000  
☐ Above ₱100,000

Prior Family Exposure to Overseas Work

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Parents' Highest Educational Attainment

- ☐ Elementary level or below  
☐ High school graduate  
☐ Some college / vocational / technical education  
☐ Bachelor's degree  
☐ Postgraduate degree (Master's or Doctorate)

### 1. Colonial Orientation of Higher Education (COHE)

#### (Postcolonial Theory | Institutional Perception)

**Definition: Perceived institutional emphasis on external validation, foreign standards, and outward mobility.**

COHE1. My university places greater value on international recognition than on local societal contribution.

COHE2. Success in my university is often associated with global rankings, accreditations, or foreign benchmarks.

COHE3. Academic excellence in my institution is commonly linked to international standards rather than local needs.

COHE4. My university promotes international competitiveness more strongly than national development goals.

## **2. Labor Export Alignment (LEA)**

**(Migration Governance / Labor Export Regime Theory)**

**Definition: Degree to which education is aligned with overseas labor market demands.**

LEA1. My program prepares students primarily for employment abroad.

LEA2. Course content in my program aligns closely with international labor market requirements.

LEA3. Professional pathways emphasized in my program are oriented toward overseas opportunities.

LEA4. Career guidance in my institution encourages international employment.

## **3. Employability-Centered Education Logic (ECEL)**

**(Employability Theory)**

**Definition: Dominance of employability outcomes in educational purpose.**

ECEL1. My education focuses more on job readiness than on broader learning or personal development.

ECEL2. Acquiring marketable skills is emphasized more than critical or reflective thinking.

ECEL3. Success in my program is measured largely by employment outcomes.

ECEL4. Employers' needs strongly influence the design of our curriculum.

## **4. Coloniality of Aspirations (CA)**

**(Decolonial Theory | Individual Level)**

**Definition: Internalization of migration and external recognition as success markers.**

CA1. Working abroad is a more desirable goal than building a career in the Philippines.

CA2. I believe overseas employment offers greater personal success than local opportunities.

CA3. Achieving success means being recognized internationally rather than locally.

CA4. Staying in the Philippines feels like a less successful option after graduation.

## **5. Epistemic Inclusion (EI)**

**(Epistemic Justice Theory)**

**Definition: Recognition and integration of local and diverse knowledge systems.**

EI1. My courses include Philippine-based or locally relevant case studies.

EI2. Local knowledge and perspectives are valued in classroom discussions.

EI3. Learning activities encourage applying knowledge to local social or community issues.

EI4. My education respects diverse cultural and contextual ways of knowing.

## **6. Capability Expansion (CE)**

**(Capability Approach | Core Mediator)**

**Definition: Expansion of agency, autonomy, and meaningful choice.**

CE1. My education has increased my ability to make informed decisions about my future.

CE2. I feel confident in shaping my own career and life path.

CE3. My studies have strengthened my critical thinking and self-reflection.

CE4. I feel empowered to choose among different life opportunities, not just employment options.

## **7. Sustainable Development Orientation (SDO)**

**(Development Outcome)**

**Definition: Commitment to contributing to inclusive and sustainable development.**

SDO1. I am motivated to contribute to the social and economic development of the Philippines.

SDO2. My education encourages me to consider the long-term social impact of my career choices.

SDO3. I value careers that contribute to community well-being and sustainability.

SDO4. Development and social responsibility are important factors in my future plans.



**8. Critical Global Citizenship (CGC)**  
**(Critical Global Citizenship Education)**

**Definition: Ethical, justice-oriented global engagement.**

CGC1. I am aware of global inequalities and power relations.

CGC2. I feel responsible to act ethically in global or international contexts.

CGC3. My education has helped me critically evaluate global issues.

CGC4. Being a global citizen means promoting justice, not just global mobility.

**9. Aspiration Inequality (AI) – Moderator**  
**(Educational Inequality Theory)**

**Definition: Unequal access to capability-expanding opportunities.**

AI1. Students from wealthier backgrounds have more freedom to pursue their preferred futures.

AI2. Financial constraints limit some students' ability to develop their full potential.

AI3. Access to enriching educational opportunities varies widely among students.

AI4. Socioeconomic background affects how students can use their education after graduation.