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**Discourse Analysis of Communication Interactions Between
Senators and Resource Persons during Committee Deliberations:
The Case of RA 10931 (The Free Tuition Law)**

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Acceptance page

This thesis titled "Discourse Analysis of Communication Interactions Between Senators and Resource Persons During Committee Deliberations: The Case of RA 10931 (Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act or the Free Tuition Law)" is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Development Communication.

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Biographical Sketch

Jade dela Cruz Miguel, 25, graduated *cum laude* with a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Broadcast Communication from the University of the Philippines Diliman in April 2013. A month after her graduation, she landed her first job as Program Researcher for GMA-7's *Unang Hirit* where she honed her production skills and had her news and feature stories pitches aired at the major network's morning show. In 2014, she had her stint as TV Reporter for the government TV station, People's Television Network (PTV-4) where she was given an assignment in the Senate beat. She also anchored PTV-4's *Newsbreak* during Saturdays and became a guest host in *Good Morning Boss*, PTV-4's morning show during the Aquino administration. At present, she is currently the Media Relations Officer for Senator Joel Villanueva wherein she is in charge of writing the senator's official statements, press releases, and social media materials as well as coordinating with the media with regard to the senator's interviews and press conferences.

Aside from her experience in the field of media and politics, Ms. Miguel is also fond of travelling where she lets herself immerse in a place's culture, food and people. Locally, she has already travelled Batanes, Ilocos, La Union, Baguio, Sagada, Palawan, and Bicol in the Luzon region; Cebu, Antique, Capiz, Iloilo in the Visayas; and even Zamboanga, Butuan, and Jolo in the Mindanao region. Abroad, she has already been in most countries in Southeast Asia namely—Thailand, Cambodia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Taiwan.

In the future, she wants to explore more interesting and colorful provinces in the Philippines as well as other countries around the world. Apart from her personal travel goals, Ms. Miguel also plans to teach communication students and be able to share her knowledge and experience in the field of communication, media and politics after she earns her Master's degree in UPOU.

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Dedicated to:

my family

friends

students

everyone interested in policymaking

ABSTRACT

Miguel, J.D. (2018). *Discourse Analysis of Communication Interactions Between Senators and Resource Persons During Committee Deliberations: The Case of RA 10931 (Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act or the Free Tuition Law)*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of the Philippines Open University.

This study aims to determine the extent of power play among legislators and resource persons during the committee deliberations of the proposed Free Tuition Law by looking into the communication interactions among them and the scope of influence of resource persons in this specific part of legislation—Senate committee level.

Since the study focuses on the communication processes in legislation, literature gives a closer look at committee hearings and how it encourages participation and interaction between lawmakers and resource persons.

By employing discourse analysis as research design and Dyadic Power Theory (DPT) as theoretical lens, the study forms an inductive data-driven analysis of the transcript during the committee deliberations of the specific bill.

Results of the study show that legislation is a communication process. Lawmakers and resource persons interact with each other and communicate their interests, suggestions, and reservations on the proposed bill—a discourse that is instrumental for the passage of the measure into law.

More importantly, the study reveals that senators are keen to pass the then Free Higher Education Act despite the reservations of resource persons. While minor suggestions of resource persons were taken into account as reflected in the bill passed by the Senate, important issues raised by the former were not considered in the bill's final draft. The recommendations to grant free tuition subsidy only to poor students and to address the lack of quality education in public educational institutions on top of the bill's goal to increase accessibility of tertiary education were apparently not reflected in the law. The study also highlights the underlying flaws in the Free Tuition Law which puts into question if the law indeed promotes equitable access to college education despite having untargeted beneficiaries and merit-based selection of students.

Keywords: legislation, power play, free tuition, resource persons

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Rationale and Background of the study

Policymaking is a democratic process of solving problems in a society (Smith, 2005). It is through this process when a certain problem is identified, discussed, and resolved. It is being participated by various actors including policymakers, technical experts, interest groups, and even the ordinary people.

Catherine Smith explains that public policymaking has three basic components, namely the problem, the policy, and the process. The problem is the issue or something that is perceived as wrong in a society or its environment. The process is the system in which the participants take part in discussing the problem and proposing solutions to a specific social ill. The policy is the decision made and mutually agreed upon by the participants.

This study aims to discuss the communication processes that transpire in one specific kind of policymaking—the legislation. The study narrows down its research on the legislative process being done in the Senate.

Based on the second paragraph of Section 1 of the Senate Rules, the Senate may initiate inquiries that concern the:

- a. The execution or review of any statutory law or appropriation of public funds;
- b. Any proposed legislation or the formulation of, or in connection with future legislation
- c. That which will aid in the review or formulation of a new legislative policy or enactment
- d. Any and all matters vested by the Constitution in Congress and/or in the Senate alone.

This study focuses on the legislative processes that review or formulate a new legislative policy or enactment, as the study will focus specifically on the discussions behind the passage of the Free Higher Education Act or the Free Tuition Law.

In the Senate, the following are the processes in passing a law:

1. **FIRST READING** - After a bill has been filed in the Senate and assigned a number, (e.g. Senate Bill No. 1304 or the "Free Higher Education for All Act"), the bill undergoes first reading which consists of reading the title and author/s and its referral to the appropriate committee. The first reading signifies that a bill is officially recognized by the Senate and will be prioritized for discussion.
2. **COMMITTEE HEARINGS** – Before a bill advances to second reading, it has to be scrutinized first in a committee hearing or series of committee hearings by the appropriate committee to which the bill was referred. Here, technical experts, advocates and other stakeholders of the bill are invited to express

their position on the bill and give their advice and/or technical information with regard to the contents of the bill and its possible effects should the bill be passed into law.

- i. TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG) MEETINGS – After the chairman of the committee decides to adjourn the hearing, TWG meetings are conducted to ‘polish’ the bill prior to the release of committee report on the measure. Technical experts are also invited here to delve into the technicalities of the proposed measure. These are discussed with the senators and their staff, but unlike committee hearings, TWG meetings are done in private.

3. SECOND READING – This is the stage when a bill is sponsored in the plenary and the sponsor discusses the contents of the bill. The bill then will be subject to debates if there are senators who signify their interest to interpellate or present amendments to the bill. After the interpellation, the sponsor will refer the bill back to the committee for further refinements based on the suggestions and/or new information collated from the debates. The bill will then be redrafted and scheduled for third and final reading.

4. THIRD AND FINAL READING – The final draft of the bill is discussed and members of the Senate are invited to clarify some points regarding the bill. If there is none, then the bill is subjected to a vote via roll call. If the bill gets the vote of the majority of the members, it will then be forwarded to the bicameral

conference committee. Otherwise, the bill gets archived or the sponsor of the bill will further revise the measure before it gets subjected again to the third reading.

5. **BICAMERAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE** – The committee consists of representatives of both Houses –the House of Representatives and the Senate. This is where they settle the differences of their respective version of the bill. Debates ensue until a compromise has been reached. A bicameral report will be drafted and released. This report will then be ratified separately by both Houses before the final version of the bill is sent to the President for signing.

6. **SUBMISSION TO THE PRESIDENT FOR SIGNING** – Once the Office of the President receives a copy of the final version of the bill. It can take one of the three routes:

a. **Approved** – If the President signs the bill into law, it becomes a Republic Act and takes effect 15 days after its publication in the Official Gazette or at least two major daily newspapers of general circulation.

b. **Vetoed** – The bill is referred back to the Congress for further revision. The Congress may choose to override the President's veto by gathering a two-thirds vote in each Chamber.

c. **Lapsed into law** – This happens when a President fails to act on the bill within 30 days after receiving it. It takes effect 15 days after being publicized.

To limit the scope of the study, the author only seeks to analyze the communication processes during committee hearings and the interaction among the participants in this specific stage of legislative process—the resource persons and the senators.

Committee hearings operate as “little legislatures” and they determine the fate of most proposed laws (Senate of the Philippines, n.d.). It is during the committee level when the bills undergo the sharpest scrutiny. Also, it is during committee hearings when a bill gets approved or rejected, rewritten, amended, and/or recommended for consideration.

As to its nature, committee hearings are being done publicly, and sometimes televised depending on how controversial a particular measure is. According to the Congressional Research Service (2010) of the United States, “hearings give citizens an opportunity to participate in the policy process and help build public record.” It is during committee hearings when resource persons coming from various agencies, groups, or organizations gets invited to express their opinion or comment on the proposed measure.

Hence, the objective of this study is to determine the level of participation and influence of resource persons in committee hearings and how their contributions aid the lawmakers in decision making. It is also important for this study to determine the respective roles and communication strategies of both resource persons and senators in communicating their positions, interests, suggestions, and recommendations for the proposed measure.

Statement of Research Problem

Communication plays a crucial role in policymaking. It produces information, proposes solutions to certain problems, and allows interaction between lawmakers and resource persons. According to Smith (2005), the useful information produced by communication has four major characteristics—it solves problems, it is action-oriented, it is mindful of the consequences, and it should be publicly accessible.

Since the necessity of communication in policymaking is an understatement, this study zeroes in on specific aspects of legislative work that are crucial in crafting a policy. The study also aims to determine the extent of power play that the participants wield in these legislative processes. Thus, in general, the study attempted to answer the following theoretical inquiry: What is the extent of power play among legislators and resource persons in passing a proposed measure?

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How are communication interactions among resource persons and senators during committee hearings carried out; and
2. What is the scope of influence of resource persons in a specific setting: committee hearings

Objectives of the study

In general, the study aims to find out how power is exercised in the communication interactions among senators and resource persons during the deliberation of RA 10391 in ensuring the passage of the bill into a law.

Specifically, the study attempts to:

1. describe the extent of power play among legislators and resource persons in passing a proposed measure;
2. analyze the communication interactions among resource persons and senators during committee hearings; and
3. examine the scope of influence of resource persons in a specific setting: committee hearings

Significance of the study

This study is conducted to provide an insight on how legislators, with the participation of resource persons/experts, pass a proposed law from the perspective of communication.

The literature of communication, politics, and government has provided very little discussion on the role of communication in legislation. There have been publications tackling public opinion, mass media's role in elections, public relations

and the government, and the effect of mass communication on political behavior, but research showed that there is not much literature that actually gives focus on communication interactions that influence policymaking. Hence, this study responds to that research gap as it aimed to thoroughly shed light on the significance of communication in the legislative process and to look into the factors as well as the negotiations being made before a bill gets a nod from lawmakers.

This study further responds to the call of Chaffee (1975) that “communication...should presumably be studied in connection with changes over time in the state of a system, or of individuals within a system.” (p.86)

The author was also inspired to pursue the study as communication, according to Chaffee, is rarely seen as an important cause in analyses of major systemic shifts.

Henceforth, this study provides a glimpse especially to students and future lobbyists on a certain part of legislative process and the crucial role communication plays in this context. Overall, the study highlights certain factors that affect the success of a bill's passage—communication strategies/ interactions, power play, influence, and negotiations, crucial steps in the policymaking process.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review is divided into two sections. The first section gives a closer look at the importance of committee hearings being an essential part of the legislative process. It tackles the inner workings of the committee and how this democratic process involves the people. The second section embarks deeper on the people's participation in legislation and gives an insight as to how participatory this process claims to be.

Closer Look at Committee Hearings

Committee hearings are an essential part of the legislative process. Hearings decide the fate of a proposed bill. Before a bill becomes a law, it has to undergo the committee level where legislators, experts, and stakeholders scrutinize the measure.

According to The University of Chicago (2018), a hearing is defined as “a meeting or session of a Senate, House, joint, or special committee of Congress, usually open to the public, to obtain information and opinions on proposed legislation, conduct an investigation, or evaluate/oversee the activities of a government department or the implementation of a Federal law.”

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Walter Oleszek (cited in Sachs, 1982) emphasizes the importance of committee hearings:

“The decision to hold hearings is a critical point in the life of a bill. Seldom is a measure considered on the floor without first being subject to hearings. The sanctity of the committee decision is based on the assumption that the experts in committee have carefully scrutinized a proposal. Hearings provide a demonstrable record of that scrutiny.” (p.3)

The process being conducted in the United States congressional hearings is almost the same as how Philippine congressional hearings are done.

In his thesis, Garcia (1989) describes the committee work as the “work horse” of the parliament. In fact, he attributes 60 percent of lawmaking in the committee level since it is during this time when the fate of a bill is decided upon.

The process was clearly explained by the late Assemblyman Estanislao Fernandez (as cited in Garcia, 1989) where he said that most of the legislative work is being done in the committee level:

“In any deliberate body, I would like to place on record that the real work is not here in the Batasan session. The real work is in the committee meetings. There, the Members meet, public hearings are called, the opinions of experts are submitted and heard, decisions are arrived at and like food, by the time a bill is presented here (session hall) it is almost cooked.” (p. 26)

Committee hearings do not always get publicized as the media determines which committee hearings to cover depending on the media's perception of newsworthiness.

As published in the *Bulletin Today* on July 28, 1981 (cited in Garcia, 1989), it says:

"In fine, the various committee of the Batasan deserve the appellation of 'workshops' of the body. As in other legislative bodies elsewhere, the committee members work unobtrusively, and consequently, their work does not sometimes get publicized, but just the same, the public becomes the ultimate beneficiary of such work." (p.26)

However, Douglas Cater (cited in Yap, 1995) expresses a rather skeptical view in the conduct of public committee hearings saying that legislators are "more after the publicity" they can get from conducting committee inquiries.

Whatever the reasons are, agenda or interests a legislator has in handling committee hearings, people's participation as mandated by law is required in the legislative process. It is through the cooperation of the people where passage of the laws of the land can truly be inclusive and beneficial to the people.

The Powerful Role of Communication and Participation in Legislation

People's participation in the legislative process cannot turn into fruition if not for the communication as a means to relay their insights to the legislators.

In the words of Dan Nimmo (1978), communication has a role in "creating political realities." In this study, communication is seen as a powerful tool in legislation that goes unnoticed. Communication has been instrumental in almost any decision not only in legislation but in every basic situation an individual is in. Lasswell (1979) said that a man, when utilizing his environment, seeks to maximize his preferred events such as power and wealth. This study then looks into the way senators and resource persons utilize their own resources—knowledge, power, influence, and the like, in advancing their interests in the passage of a bill into law. Communication, when applied to the notion of Nimmo (1978), is something of a "self-action" that forces an individual to act "under their own powers". Nimmo further noted that these powers include conscious and unconscious motives, attitudes, impulses, drives, capacities, and others. In the study, the author examines conscious actions made by legislators and resource persons in their interactions during committee hearings.

Legislation is made possible not only through communication but also by the participation of the citizens. Wilbur Schramm (1963) emphasizes that two-way

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communication is essential to “maintain a sense of nation-ness, a sense of participating”:

“...to maintain a sense of nation-ness, a sense of participating, there must be a two-way communication. There must be a channel by which the needs and concerns and achievements of a local community can be communicated upward and outward...the political system, if it is to carry information, must make efforts to get reports from its local representatives.” (p.39)

The statement above manifests what transpires in a committee hearing. The political system allows the participation of citizens in legislation to show inclusivity through two-way communication.

Schramm added that the need for communication increases when a nation is in the process of development. He emphasized the need to have more avenues for criticism of policies and practices and opportunities to have discussion and debate. Such kind of communication, he said, is instrumental for a developing nation.

The same should be the state of legislation in our country. It should continue to be open for criticisms and suggestions if we were to legislate a law that can aid in nation development.

Galnoor Itzhak (1982) noted that the impact on steering the polity depends on several factors and one of them is access to communication network. For someone to gain influence in policymaking, one has to have the will to communicate and be able to acquire access or networks to penetrate the system of policymaking. The following shows a logical sequence that presents the preceding factors that determine an individual or group's capability to create an impact in decision making:

Individual Mobility → Access to Communication Network → Sense of Efficacy → Participation (responsive or committed) → Impact on Steering

According to Itzhak, one of them may not occur if the preceding conditions are not met. He further defined sense of efficacy as a "belief that access can be translated into political action and influence." Based on the sequence, it can be said that sense of efficacy may be a precondition to participation. However, Itzhak argued that sense of efficacy is "not an absolute precondition for translating access into participation. It is more of an indication of the 'democratic mood' of the citizens." (p.329)

Apart from two-way communication underscored earlier by Schramm, Gandy (1982) argued that persuasive communication and the extent of it influences a decision:

“In that persuasive communication has as its goal the production of influence over the decisions of others, such communications may be characterized according to the strategies they employ, as well as by their relative success. Strategies may be classified in terms of their focus on various stages of the decision process, and the techniques used to influence the conclusions arrived at in each one of those stages.” (p.23)

Gandy said that policy actors or those who participate in the policy process provide “information subsidies” and such action is a rational move that influences the decision making. In the study, the author determines the influence of these policy actors by analyzing the impact of their insights and suggestions as reflected in the provisions passed in the law.

The power of persuasion as a communication strategy has a capability to “alter every political premise” (Lipmann cited in McNair, 1995). Lipmann further argued that creating consent among the governed is an important part of popular government. Such is what happens in a legislative process like in a committee hearing where legislators get the consent of citizens in passing a law by inviting stakeholders and asking their insights on the measure. However, it is one of this study’s objectives to determine if these stakeholders or resource persons are indeed influential in this particular legislative process.

Lasswell (1979) cited the actions of Congress in the internal affairs of the United States as a part of the political process wherein persuasion is instrumental or

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the “accepted mode” in resolving differences. He also described the people of the United States or its citizens as participants of the “worldwide political arena.”

Similar to the earlier notion of Lasswell, this study looks into a specific process in Congress where participants communicate anchored on the objective of resolving the conflicting insights on the proposal to grant free tuition subsidy to students of SUCs. The study zooms in on the interactions of legislators and resource persons in committee hearings which has been an avenue where people coming from different social backgrounds, interests, and affiliations can participate in legislation.

Chaffee (1975) said that the actions of individuals serve as foundation to the structural properties of political systems.

These individuals, more importantly if formed as a group, has the power to steer the political system. According to Itzhak (1982), the activities of citizens that aim to create an impact in the political system is considered as political participation:

“Unlike access, which is more attitudinal, participation is expressed in acts that transmit information and utilize the political communication network. Individuals and groups transmit political information in order to signify their preferences, to influence, and to exert pressure...This emphasis on citizen’s initiative is based on the assumption that voluntary political participation creates political knowledge. In modern democracies, the axiom that citizens

know their own interest best must be supplemented by the corollary that they often do not know what their interests are until they participate.” (p.328)

McNair (1995) said that these people who participate in political affairs “compete alongside the established parties for influence and political efficacy.” He further said that these groups or organisations which exist on the margins of the political mainstream have learned to “use channels of mass communication to further their objectives.”

These groups or individuals have become influential in the political field to the point that they are being consulted by policymakers. In the study, the author highlighted the influence and resources being utilized by these political actors which we refer in this study as resource persons.

Furthermore, the participation of citizens in matters concerning political affairs define the kind of governance a nation has. Wignaraja & Sirivardana (2004) argued that good governance employs macro-economic management by “increasing participation and decision-making and resource allocations, especially for the poor.”

In committee hearings, communication through public consultations help build common ground among stakeholders that could result to understanding and agreement in resolving a societal issue, particularly in passing a proposed law that promises to address or improve the living condition of the people.

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In *Creating a Democratic Public: The Struggle for Urban Participatory Democracy During the Progressive Era*, Chalmers (as cited in Mattson, 1998), emphasized the importance of institutions in educating the people and preparing them for political decision making:

If no institutions facilitated popular education and prepared citizens for political decision making and power...public opinion would be left ineffective (p.15).

In the local context, institutions such as the Senate of the Philippines has its way in involving the people in public legislation. "The Constitution mandates that the people be consulted during hearings and the right to lobby allows the public to directly deal with the legislators and push for certain laws" (Yap, 1995, p.4).

Former Assemblyman Jose T. Tumbokon (cited in Garcia, 1989) described the participative nature of committee hearings:

"How many Filipinos are aware that it is in the various committee where most of the action is? It is also in the committee stage of action where the fate of most bills are decided. For there, the proposed measures are weighed, evaluated, and dissected through the crucible of public hearings participated in by representative segments of society. How does labor feel about this bill? Their feelings were articulated in the committee hearings and their suggestions considered there" (p.26).

The same thing happens in TWG meetings where technical experts and advocates are invited to scrutinize a bill before a committee report is released to the public and presented in the plenary for discussion. Technical experts give information and advice while advocates suggest or even pressure the legislators to immediately pass the measure catered to their interests. These advocates usually come from interest groups such as non-government organizations (NGOs) or active concerned citizens.

In her thesis, Yap (1995) discovered that legislation is a communication process composed of a myriad of sources, messages, channels, and receivers that form an interplay at several stages of lawmaking.

Yap aimed to determine how participatory the legislative process is and centered her study on two assumptions: either the people are not interested in comprehending the legislature through participating in the policymaking or the legislative process itself does not allow for people's participation. She further emphasized that sustaining a democracy entails an open and free communication between government and people.

In the words of Nicholas Graham (cited in Yap, 1995), "public communication lies at the heart of the democratic process; that citizens require, if their equal access to the vote is to have any substantive meaning, equal access also to sources of information and equal opportunities to participate in the debates from which political decisions rightly flow."

In the 1974 Rural Developmental Information Program, the defunct Department of Information (cited in Yap, 1995) added that “the flow of information must not, however, be towards one direction alone. It must take a two-way course to reflect the sentiments and ideas from the bottom so that the felt need and reaction of the people be fully understood.”

In this study, the author does not simply look at the level of people’s participation in legislation, but on their influence in advancing their respective interests in the proposed law while participating in a process that is political in nature.

This echoes the definition of Frank MacKinnon (cited in Yap, 1995) of participatory democracy as “Social action, including that of a political nature, to which the people affected by that contribute their ideas effectively and with growing perception, and, in so doing, increase their own and other people’s personal relevance and collective happiness.” The study further questions if people’s participation in legislation is really influential and contributory in the final output—the law.

Theoretical lens

The study uses the Dyadic Power Theory (DPT) as lens in examining the power play among legislators and resource persons in committee hearings. This theory developed by Rollins and Bahr (1976 cited in Dunbar, 2004) explains the role of power in relationships and discusses concepts such as perceived resources, legitimate authority, and control. Power is defined here as the capacity to produce

intended outcome, and the ability to influence the behavior of another person (Bachrach & Lawler cited in Dunbar, 2004).

Experts in communication and related fields have considered power as a fundamental construct in the study of human relationships (Burgoon & Hale cited in Dunbar, 2004). Moreover, power is identified as the “fundamental concept in social science...in the same way that Energy is the fundamental concept in physics,” (Russell cited in Dunbar, 2004).

The Dyadic Power Theory is usually being used as framework in looking at familial relationships, but was later expanded to consider other kinds of relationships in addition to marriage. In DPT, power is an integral part of *any relationship* as it determines how the partners relate to each other and how decisions are made (Dunbar, 2004). The research then aims to examine how power is exercised and perceived by both legislators and resource persons whenever they have to come up with a decision in a context that demands them to scrutinize a particular proposed law.

Among the propositions of DPT are: a) perceptions of legitimate authority to make decisions and access to a variety of resources increase individuals' perception of power compared to their partner; b) those who have greater perceptions of power increase the likelihood of them using dominant communication behavior in an attempt to control the interaction; c) those who have greater control attempts have greater chance to gain influence over decisions; and d) relational satisfaction in relationship is achieved if there is relatively equal distribution of power.

These propositions serve as anchors in determining the power play among legislators and resource persons.

According to Molm (cited in Dunbar, 2004), people depend on one another to attain a certain goal and this dependence creates power. Power becomes especially relevant if their goals are in conflict yet power is equally important even when there are no conflicts to begin with (McDonald, cited in Dunbar, 2004). In the study, it is assumed that legislators and resource persons have the same goal—to pass a law that caters to their interests and that of stakeholders, but it cannot also be denied that conflicts arise when these interests are in conflict.

The DPT further classifies power into three kinds: manifest power, latent power, and invisible power. Komter (cited in Dunbar, 2004) explained that manifest power is visible and can be seen through verbal and nonverbal strategies used to achieve certain ends. Latent power is the one that is not overtly expressed such as when a powerful person's needs are met while the less powerful ones refrain from conflict when negative results are expected. Invisible power is influenced by cultural and societal norms and does not necessarily surface in either overt or latent behavior such as when a person of authority is already perceived as more powerful than an ordinary person.

In the study, kinds of power the legislators and resource persons do to advance their respective interests shall be described.

Meanwhile, the DPT also classifies power into three domains: power bases, power processes, and power outcomes.

Dunbar (2004) defined power bases as those resources such as rewards or knowledge that may be a basis of control over others. These include reward power and coercive power, which represent a person's right to reward and punish; legitimate power possessed by those with high status position in the society; referent power acquired by those who are admired and emulated; and expert power possessed by those who have knowledge in a certain field. Eventually, power bases such as informational power and credibility were also added. In the study, it is assumed that legislators possess legitimate power while resource persons like technical experts utilize their informational power in influencing the former.

The second domain, power processes, are the specific strategies used in exercising power in interactions such as decision making, problem solving, and conflict management. Body gestures like making eye contact, leaning forward, stonewalling or withdrawal are some of the dominance behaviors which can be part of the strategies in advancing an individual's interest. However, the study did not delve into this domain since the study was limited to analyzing the transcripts of conversations among legislators and resource persons in determining the power play that existed in the chosen contexts.

The third domain, power outcomes, is defined as the result of decision making based on the influence one has placed on others' thoughts, beliefs, and actions.

The aforementioned domains also serve as the study's guide in analyzing the texts gathered from the series of conversations that transpired during selected committee hearings.

Assumptions

The propositions of the Dyadic Power Theory form as basis for the study's assumptions. First, it is assumed that legislators and resource persons utilize their own power bases in advancing their interests during decision-making. Second, the legislators have greater perceptions of power due to their position in the society, but resource persons especially technical experts have the ability to control the interaction and influence the decision-making process due to their informational power that legislators need in refining the proposed law. Third, there is no equal distribution of power among legislators and resource persons since the former always have the final say in deciding what amendments of the law he or she intends to push. There is only a perceived increased participation of the people/ resource persons due to their presence and contributions in certain legislative processes, but the legislative process itself provides more power for legislators to pass a law that would be more agreeable and amenable to their interests.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employs discourse analysis in scrutinizing the data gathered in research. Discourse analysis is “the study of the ways sentences and utterances are put together to make texts and interactions and how those texts and interactions fit into our social world” (Jones, 2012). Since the study analyzes conversations among legislators and resource persons, the use of discourse analysis fits as research design to determine the power play that exists in the chosen context.

According to Rodney Jones (2012), discourse analysis helps to understand people’s interaction, why they interact the way they do, and how they exert influence and power over another. He added that discourse analysis is not just a study on the use of language, but “an indirect study of politics, power, psychology, romance, and a whole lot of things.” (p.5)

For Shanthi, Lee & Lajium (2015), discourse analysis looks into the use of language during interpersonal and social interaction. It aims to gain an understanding of people's behavior and/or experience in a rich and complex setting that is exclusive to a particular group of people (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009 in Shanthi, Lee & Lajium, 2015). In this study, the setting were the committee hearings where data was interpreted in describing the influence of resource persons and legislators in these specific settings.

In discourse analysis, there is a general idea that "language is structured according to different patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life" (Androutsopoulos, 2011 in Shanthi, Lee & Lajium, 2015). Examples of discourse are 'sociological discourse,' 'political discourse,' 'medical discourse,' etc. The study zeroes in on the 'legislative discourse' where the Senate of the Philippines serves as the specific social context.

The study analyzes patterns in language that transpired in the said settings, and attached meanings to these uttered words. According to Silverman, 1999 (cited in Shanthi, Lee & Lajium, 2015), utterances do not simply describe a state of action but perform an action. Therefore, the study analyzes activities that transpired in the chosen settings and interpreted the meanings of these actions.

Data Gathering

In discourse analysis, the researcher, as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, has the agency to decide on the number or size of data that he or she will subject to the study (Merriam, 2009 in Shanthi, Lee & Lajium, 2015).

To analyze communication interactions among legislators and resource persons in committee hearings, the spoken text of the said participants were gathered by looking into the transcripts which are publicly accessible government information. However, the study focuses only the transcripts produced during the committee hearings in legislating the Free Higher Education Act in the Senate or RA 10931.

In determining the sample size of data for the study, discourse analysis has the concept of saturation wherein the process of data gathering reaches a point of saturation by the time when there are no more emergent patterns in the data (O'Reilly and Parker in Shanthi, Lee & Lajium, 2015).

A set of criteria was prepared to determine saturation. The data or transcripts chosen must represent patterns of influence and participation among resource persons and legislators to determine the presence or absence of power play in the legislative processes.

The criteria for determining saturation are:

- No additional data that can further develop properties of the category (Glaser and Strauss cited in Saunders et al., 2017)
- Same codes, but no new codes occur in the data (Urquhart cited in Saunders et al., 2017)
- No additional data that led to new emergent themes (Given cited in Saunders et al., 2017)

- No additional issues are identified and the codebook begins to stabilize (Hennink et al. cited in Saunders et al., 2017)
- Informational redundancy (Sandelowski cited in Saunders et al., 2017)

When saturation is reached, it could mean the termination of analysis instead of collection of new data (Urqhart, 2013; Birks and Mills, 2015 cited in Saunders et al., 2017).

The author adopts inductive thematic saturation which focuses on the identification of new codes or themes. According to Saunders et al. (2017), this model is confined to the level of analysis. When analyzing the transcripts, the author highlights themes that represent influence, power, and participation of senators and resource persons until no new themes emerged in the data. The point of saturation then signals that the author may start data analysis and generalization of data gathered.

Research Instrument

The 110-page transcript serves as the research instrument of the study. It contains the series of dialogues during the committee hearings done in aid of legislating the then proposed Free Higher Education Act. This transcript is important in the analysis of exchanges among legislators and resource persons in the discourse analysis process.

Data Analysis

The study analyzes the data by doing a conversational analysis, a variant of discourse analysis. According to Jack Sidnell (2010), "conversation analysis is a set of *methods* for working with audio and video recordings of talk and social interaction." It is basically a study of the talk produced in ordinary human interactions.

The data collected which is in form of transcription was used to perform inductive data-driven analysis with the goal of finding recurring patterns of interaction.

Coding was employed which "can range in magnitude from a single word to a full sentence to an entire paragraph of a text" (Saldaña in Shanthi, Lee & Lajium, 2015). Furthermore, Saldaña explained that a "a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes, and thus, attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purpose of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytic processes." (p.167)

When all the data has been coded and categorized, discussion and interpretation of the content of the data ensued.

The main purpose of coding was to break down the data, rearrange and group it into categories and subcategories which will allow comparison and interpretation of the data gathered (Saheen and George in Shanthi, Lee & Lajium, 2015).

While coding, emergent coding was used where there is no prior set of coding categories, but instead, allows the categories and new insights to emerge from the

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data (Konracki & Wellman in Shanthi, Lee & Lajium, 2015). Thus, an inductive way in data analysis was employed.

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Committee Hearing

The Senate Committee on Education, Arts and Culture held a hearing on October 26, 2016 to discuss six proposed bills that sought to grant full tuition subsidy for students enrolled in state universities and colleges (SUCs).

The six proposed bills are:

- Senate Bill No. 962 – An Act Providing for a Full Tuition Subsidy for Students Enrolled in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), Appropriating Funds Therefore (by Senator Pangilinan)

- Senate Bill No. 198 – An Act Providing for Full Tuition Fee Subsidy for Students Enrolled in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), And Appropriating Funds Therefor (by Senator Gatchalian)

- Senate Bill No. 177 – An Act Providing for Full Tuition Fee Subsidy for Students Enrolled in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), And Appropriating Funds Therefor (by Senator Aquino)

- Senate Bill No. 158 – An Act Providing for a Full Subsidy for Students Enrolled in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), And Appropriating Funds Therefor (by Senator Ejercito)

- Senate Bill No. 61 – An Act Providing for a Full Tuition Subsidy for Students Enrolled in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), And Appropriating Funds Therefor (by Senator Recto)

- Senate Bill No. 133 – An Act Establishing a Mechanism to Enable Poor Filipino Families to Have at Least One College Graduate by Institutionalizing the Expanded Students Grants-in-Aid Program for Poverty Alleviation (ESGP-PA) and Appropriating Funds Therefor (by Senator Angara)

These bills are then consolidated into one bill and sponsored by the committee chairman before the bill was subjected to plenary deliberations. However, the study will not discuss these processes as the study focuses only on the proceedings that happened during the committee hearing.

The author chooses to analyze the 110-page transcript of a single committee hearing as the data needed by the author to conduct this study already surfaced in more than a hundred pages of transcript. Furthermore, the data has reached a point of saturation wherein all the needed information are exhausted and no new additional pieces of information surfaced in the course of data analysis.

Attendance

For ethical purposes, the author decided not to name the participants in the hearing. Participants are thereby referred to as the following:

Senators:

- THE CHAIRMAN – Chairman of the Committee on Education
- COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR – Vice-chairperson of the Committee on Education

Resource persons:

- RESOURCE PERSON 1 – from the business-education sector
- RESOURCE PERSON 2 – legal counsel of the association of private HEIs
- RESOURCE PERSON 3 – government official in the higher education sector
- RESOURCE PERSON 4 – from the government think tank
- RESOURCE PERSON 5 – head of the association of private HEIs

- RESOURCE PERSON 6 – from the implementing board of government scholarships and financial assistance
- RESOURCE PERSON 7 – from the association of SUCs
- RESOURCE PERSON 8 – former top government official in the higher education sector
- RESOURCE PERSON 9 – interim head of the implementing board of government scholarships and financial assistance

The Proceedings

I. Call to Order

The committee chairman calls the hearing to order to signal the start of the committee hearing. Here, the senator greets everyone and introduces the agenda of the hearing wherein he enumerates the bills that will be tackled and acknowledges each resource person present. The senator also acknowledges the presence of his fellow senator and committee vice-chairman.

II. Opening Remarks

The chairman delivers an introduction on what to expect in the hearing and the succeeding inquiries. He emphasizes the importance of tackling the measures and dictates the order of sequence in the presentation of resource persons.

III. Presentation

The chairman acknowledges the resource person that will give a presentation or present a position paper. The duration of the presentation depends on the prerogative of the chairman since committee hearings are limited by time constraint and also to ensure that all resource persons will be heard.

After being acknowledged by the chairman, the resource person introduces himself or herself, shares the thrust of his or her organization/group/agency, and proceeds on his or her presentation. Here, he or she presents the position of the organization/group/agency he or she is affiliated with coupled with the facts, technical information, suggestion, and recommendations on the bill. The expert or the resource person also presents the problems at hand and proposes solutions that could address the aforementioned issues.

IV. Discussions

After every presentation is done, the chairman asks questions and clarifies information which will then be answered by the resource person who the chairman addressed his question or clarification to. The chairman may also let other members of the committee to ask questions or give his comments. At this point, discussion becomes in depth.

The chairman may ask the resource persons of additional information which may or may not be readily available. In the latter case, the resource persons are asked to submit the needed information to the committee at a later date. Meanwhile, as a protocol, the resource person may also pose questions to other resource persons but the questions must be addressed to the Chair.

V. Closing

The chairman allows resource person to express their concluding remarks, if there's any. He also summarizes the highlights of the hearing and enumerates the specific points that the committee will discuss in the future hearing/s. It is at this point when the chairman decides to suspend or adjourn the hearing. In this case, the committee chairman suspends the hearing pending several issues to be discussed and considering the differing views of the resource persons on the proposal.

Communication Interactions

Using discourse analysis, the study examines the spoken text in a 110-page transcript and discovered the following communication dynamics that transpired among senators and resource persons during the committee hearing of Free Tuition Act.

Resource Persons

Establishment of credibility

Whenever resource persons are asked to present their position, what they do first is to introduce themselves and speak of the thrust and vision of the organization/agency/group they are affiliated with. In this way, their credibility as resource persons is established thus giving them the right to express their support or reservations on the bill.

One example was when the committee chairman asked a resource person from non-profit organization to discuss the employability of college graduates.

THE CHAIRMAN. *All right, we'll go to our friends from [REDACTED]. They will also give an overview. I guess this is the employability, regarding the employability of our graduates.*

RESOURCE PERSON 1. *Yes, Your Honor.*

THE CHAIRMAN. *Yes, go ahead.*

RESOURCE PERSON 1. *Honorable Senators—excuse me, good afternoon. Thank you for having us.*

Let me just introduce TVET very quickly, and then give our position on the bills.

RESOURCE PERSON 1. *We are from business for education where we represent the business sector and education policy conversations. We work primarily in three areas: basic education reform, improving teacher quality, and workforce development.*

The legal counsel representing the private educational institutions in the country also emphasized the relevance of their association in discussing the measure especially on its effect in private higher educational institutions (HEIs) in the country.

THE CHAIRMAN. All right. We will go with [REDACTED] [RESOURCE PERSON 2] first. Sighe ho, Atty. [REDACTED].

RESOURCE PERSON 2. Good afternoon, Senators.

*I would present the collective position of the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the unifying voice of private education
in the country with five major associations also here present.*

For the resource persons, establishing their credibility is important to gain trust from the legislators and the stakeholders they represent.

Presentation of facts and information

As resource persons, they are invited to participate in a committee hearing to share their knowledge, experience, and study that will further enhance the bill and ensure a well-crafted legislation that will truly target its projected beneficiaries or stakeholders.

Discussing the state of higher education in the country, the resource from a non-profit organization cited the stigma against technical-vocational education and the perception that going to college is a 'singular pathway to success.' The resource person also provided information regarding the low participation rate of Filipinos going to college.

RESOURCE PERSON 1. *The way we see higher education now or education in general, it seems that there is really just a singular pathway to success. You go to college there is stigma against technical-vocational education. It's highly segmented between public and private. It's segmented also in terms of like basic ed, technical education, higher education.*

In terms of access, you only have 25 percent participation rate. Three point two million Filipinos are in college. Most of them, around 60 percent, are actually in private schools and 40 percent in public. And then for technical education that's the enrollment.

Next, please. Sorry, can you just go back? I just want to highlight that the OECD average for participation is actually 35 percent, so we are below that.

Here, we can see that the stand of non-profit organization aims to highlight the technical-vocational education as another path that students may take. It must be noted that such view comes from an organization that engages industry, academe and government in equipping students the competencies that industries need. Their goal is to produce graduates with the right skills and competencies that are in demand by sectors. In an article¹, this resource person said that graduating from college is "not enough for a successful postcollege life" and hence, suggested that the government might as well develop a system that will encourage students to choose the school and program that fit their needs, interests and future plans. This shows that this non-profit organization is more concerned on producing individuals that are employable and in demand.

Meanwhile, a resource person who is a top government official from the education sector presented the results of their study on the factors contributing to the decision of students to study in SUC.

¹ <https://businessmirror.com.ph/pbed-youth-groups-warn-public-of-pitfalls-of-free-tuition-initiative/>

RESOURCE PERSON 3. *We did a study before, funded by PIDS, I was the national team leader, and we studied the demand and supply for agriculture, forestry and natural resources and we did the tracer study of the students, those getting into the school all the way until they graduate. And one of the questions that we asked is, "Why did you choose this SUC?" You will be surprised by the results.*

THE CHAIRMAN. *And what was the result?*

RESOURCE PERSON 3. *There's asymmetry of information. Their number one source of information are their parents. And their parents have lower educational attainment than them, which means the parents don't provide the correct information about the school.*

The other one is cost. They said because the tuition is low and there's a perceived quality in the SUC. But that quality is—I don't know where they got that perception. So in terms of determinants of why they go to state universities and colleges, there is empirical data that was produced by a nationwide study that we did.

This goes to show that the resource person goes against popular opinion that cost of education is the primary reason how students choose the schools to enroll in. Parents play a role in choosing which institution they want their children to enroll in. Another factor is the “perceived quality in SUC”, which the resource person seemed to beg to differ since some public educational institutions in the country are criticized for lack of quality due to inadequacy of facilities, budget, among other things. This notion echoes that of another resource person from a government think tank when asked about his insight on the traditional form of teaching in SUCs and the lack of quality our public educational institutions are suffering from.

THE CHAIRMAN. *Just one quick question lang regarding the so-called fourth industrial revolution. When you talk about the readiness of our workforce for jobs that are, maybe we haven't even created yet, is the traditional educational path the answer? Or do you learn those skills through other alternatives? Maybe just briefly, [REDACTED]*

RESOURCE PERSON 4. *I think the fundamental thing if you talk about traditional is essentially being able to analyze things, the so-called cognitive competencies, being able to do the math, being able to do logical thinking, being able to communicate, those would be necessary. And I think we need to improve them given the current state of quality of our education.*

Problem/issue identification

With the necessary information at hand and experience in the field, resource persons know how to pinpoint a problem and relay these issues at the forefront of the discussion.

One of the issues that came up during the committee hearing was the migration of students from private institutions to SUCs and the overcapacity of SUCs to accommodate the students. The argument of a resource person who heads the association of private HEIs in the country briefly discussed the possible problem of migration which may have a negative effect on small private institutions.

THE CHAIRMAN. *...if you really think about it, the tuition fee of your private HEIs is probably already higher than your SUC tuition. Maybe, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] you could probably attest to this...mas mataas naman talaga iyong tuition fee ng mga pribadong institution, hindi ba? Obviously, it is higher. So the price sensitivity is already there because a lot of the SUCs in the provinces or outside of Metro Manila are charging a really low amount.*

May nakita ho kami parang P150 per unit or P200 per unit. I think that's quite far from some of the private institutions now. If I belong to underprivileged socioeconomic class and I'm willing to pay double or triple in a private institution at malayo na nga iyong diperensiya niyan. Kung mag-zero ito, I don't think they will automatically transfer. They're probably in the private institution for different reasons because if price sensitivity was the only concern, that would mean that

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the private HEIs probably have a tuition fee very close to the SUCs which I don't think is true and maybe later we can see some numbers there. Because if they were truly sensitive to the price and only price, then they probably would have transferred already.

So even that migration which we talked about, I'd like to also see maybe some more proofs to that, how that would actually happen.

, please go ahead.

RESOURCE PERSON 5. ... Thank you, Senator.

*I just like to comment in the context of what you said that private schools are differentiated in themselves. I'm sure you are aware of that. You have private schools that charge very much and a good number of private schools that charge very little. Many of these schools are mission schools, many of these schools are in the provinces, in remote areas. And I think the effect of free tuition in SUCs would affect not the higher charging schools but more the smaller schools. **And I think it's on that level where we can expect migration and it will be serious migration, with larger numbers going to your schools which may now already be overcapacitated.***

Here, we can see that the issue on providing free tuition to SUCs is not just a concern for public institutions but much more so for the private HEIs in terms of competition against the former. Since Resource V represents the views of private HEIs, they are more concerned on how the implementation of free tuition in SUCs will affect their businesses and thus, presented migration and overcapacity of SUCs as primary problems that they will encounter if the bill is passed into law.

On the other hand, the chairman of the committee, with the endgoal of pushing for the bill's passage, somewhat downplayed the issues presented by the resource person saying that the cost of education is not the only reason for students to shift to public schools, but also other factors like the distance of schools away from a student's residence.

Recommending solutions

Resource persons do not just state their position and present factual information, they also suggest solutions and recommend actions that could address issues surrounding the bill.

One particular example are the arguments raised by Resource Person 2 from the private sector in which he proposed that instead of granting free tuition to all students of SUCs, he suggested that a subsidy in the form of vouchers be made available to deserving students in both public and private higher educational institutions. He also recommended the UniFAST board to be in charge of determining qualified and deserving voucher recipients. The UniFAST board was formed pursuant to RA 10687 or the "Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education Act (UniFAST)" which is a harmonized financial assistance program that will speed up the delivery of government scholarships and other student financial assistance by targeting qualified beneficiaries and implementing uniform standards for selection and retention.

RESOURCE PERSON 2. ...Another major argument is that *the subsidy must be made available to all students in both public and private higher educational institutions and not only in the SUCs. A subsidy that is available to students in both public and private educational institutions would be more equitable and consistent with the complementarity between the public and private educational institutions. The subsidy to students may well be in the form of vouchers where they are given the power of choice where to enroll and this mode of subsidy to students has long been proven to be effective with the enactment of the GASTPE Law and the recent implementation of the senior high school voucher system under the K to 12 Act.*

And lastly, the power to determine qualified and deserving voucher recipients, the accreditation of participating higher education institutions and the applicable voucher values may be delegated by law to administrative bodies such as the UniFAST board.

In other words, instead of legislating it in the law, the law can actually delegate it to administrative body so that it would not be more stringent and whenever economic conditions change, it may easily be changed and we can always go back and look at the demographic, socioeconomic status of those who will be affected.

It can be surmised in this statement that private HEIs use the notion of “equity” in persuading lawmakers to subsidize students not only in public institutions but also in

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private schools to promote “complementarity” between the public and private educational institutions.

Aside from suggestions to use a voucher system, Resource Person 4 from the government think tank suggested that UniFAST law might be a better alternative to the Free Tuition Law as the passage of the latter might ‘preempt the allocation of funds intended for the proper implementation’ of the UniFAST Law.

RESOURCE PERSON 4. Yes. I'd like to talk about three things: one is my, shall we say, critique first of the tuition free SUC enrollment policy; then I would like to go to add my two cents' worth about the UNIFAST as maybe better alternative; and, third, I would like to say something about the possibility of having both at least as a transitional mechanism within the Duterte administration, and the rationale for it. But before going into those three topics, I just like to say upfront that given the binding education constraint, the implementation of the proposed tuition free issues enrollment policy could preempt—and this is my concern and our worry—the allocation of enough funds to UNIFAST for its proper implementation. Okay. So we believe that this result must be avoided because UniFAST is arguably a better approach which people have already articulated and to implementing the aforementioned constitutional provision on education.

Coming from the economic perspective, Resource Person 4 echoed the sentiments of the economic managers on their reservations in passing the Free

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Tuition Law –that the proposal may entail a much higher cost for the government and the latter may not be able to sustain it.

In an article², economic managers urged lawmakers to fully fund the UniFAST instead of granting free tuition to SUCs and pointed out that “in 2014, only 12% of the students attending SUCs belong to the bottom 20% of the family income

² https://www.rappler.com/nation/160940-economic-managers-unifast-free-tuition-sucs#cxrecs_s classification based on the Annual Poverty Indicators Survey.” They also said the tuition fee does not comprise the biggest share of college education cost in the country and is only one-third of the annual expenses of a student per year which includes living expenses and instructional materials.

Unlike the Free Tuition proposal, they said that UniFAST has target beneficiaries, applicable to both SUCs and private HEIs, and benefits poor yet deserving students.

Persuasion

Resource persons are not only experts in their field of expertise, they must also be skilled in persuading lawmakers to consider their arguments that will reflect in the development of the bill.

Possessed with crucial and technical information, these resource persons used these data to present a strong argument before lawmakers. In the discussion on the target beneficiaries of the Free Tuition Law, the resource person from the government body that implements state-funded scholarships cited that not all students in the bottom 20 percent are enrolled in college, and not all students belonging to the poorest of the poor are enrolled in SUCs as some of them are in private higher educational institutions (HEIs). Here, he raised concern on the incidence of benefit that would most likely benefit not just the poorest of the poor but other students above the preferred category or socio-economic class, thus calling the move “regressive.”

THE CHAIRMAN. [REDACTED] [RESOURCE PERSON 6], what is the total number of students in the bottom 20 percent?

RESOURCE PERSON 6. Iyong computation po is 150 thousand.

THE CHAIRMAN. Hundred fifty thousand. Iyan na ba iyong total universe of bottom 20 percent students? Definitely not.

RESOURCE PERSON 6. Iyon po iyong point that we made during the initial consultation.

THE CHAIRMAN. Kaunti lang naman sila in the SUCs?

RESOURCE PERSON 6. Hindi po, sir. Iyong bottom 20 is a quintile of the population. Pero po iyong seven percent of that are the only ones who make it to the tertiary level.

THE CHAIRMAN. So seven percent of the bottom 20 percent is about 150 thousand.

RESOURCE PERSON 6. Yes. They are the only ones who make it because basic ed pa lang po nalagas na because sobrang hirap.

THE CHAIRMAN. Yes.

RESOURCE PERSON 6. Iyan po iyong nangyari. So kaunti na lang po silang nakarating doon. Iyon po iyong message. Ang first option po na sinagest (suggest) po namin, if we really gonna do this, is mayroon na pong existing program that we can expand which is positive—which has gone through the motions ng consultation and ano po—and if we really just want to target it. The only problem—hindi naman po problem, but our concern is not just the amount of the benefits but also the incidence of the benefits. Kasi po if we do it through a different way, if we give the money, the same amount, for example, if we put the same amount in free tuition, iyong incidence po ng benefit will not happen for the poorest of the poor. It will happen for everybody which is highly regressive dahil nga po ang kaunti na lang noong mahirap, the rest will benefit also equally. So hindi po siya targeted, iyon po iyong ano—So it is not really a matter of how much it is but where the benefit accrues. Thank you po.

This statement from the resource person leads us to question who really stands to benefit from the Free Tuition Law. Resource Person 6 cautioned on the pitfalls of untargeted tuition subsidies by emphasizing the very low percentage of poor students enrolled in SUCs which means that the not-so-poor students and also those coming from middle and upper class comprise the bigger bulk of students

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enrolled in public educational institutions who will be subsidized by the Free Tuition Law.

On the other hand, we can see here that despite these concerns—migration of students to the detriment of private institutions, additional cost to the government, untargeted beneficiaries, among others—the lawmakers still strived to push for the bill's passage into law which leads us further to question if the measure is really intended for *all poor* students or only to students who will be qualified to enroll in SUCs which, as data presented by resource persons showed, come from not-so-poor, middle and high-income families.

Senators

Facilitation

Committee hearings are properly observed with the facilitation of senators specifically the committee chairman whose task is to observe protocols in conducting committee hearings and ensure that everything is in order. As previously discussed, a committee chairman calls the hearing to order, acknowledges fellow lawmakers and resource persons, and facilitates the order of discussion of several topics and issues surrounding the bills to be discussed.

The following shows the committee chairperson facilitating the start of the committee hearing:

THE CHAIRMAN. *Okay. Magandang magandang hapon po sa ating lahat. Good afternoon everyone.*

So, we are going to call this meeting to order. This is Committee on Education, Arts and Culture hearing joint with the Committee on Finance.

We'll be tackling today SBN 962, 198, 177, 158, 61 and 133. These are all concerning tuition free higher education, Free Higher Education Act, Free Higher Education for All Act and so on and so forth.

Today, we have guests whom I will be acknowledging. (Proceeds in acknowledging resource persons present.)

We'd like to acknowledge, of course, [REDACTED] who will be joining me today. He is one of the vice chairpersons for this Committee.

Today, we'll start with [REDACTED] (RESOURCE PERSON 4) who will be sharing with us some thoughts from [REDACTED]. We'll have [REDACTED] (RESOURCE PERSON 1), who will also be sharing with us some thoughts. And then later on, we'll hear from [REDACTED] (RESOURCE PERSON 3) and from [REDACTED] (RESOURCE PERSON 2) regarding some concerns and some comments on the bills and possibly models that we can also see.

Now, I don't think we will come to a full consensus even with numerous hearings but hopefully, at the minimum we'll be able to hear all of the different ideas regarding the bills that we are talking about as well as maybe come to a

consensus on most parts. So, we'll tackle that today and then later on, we'll call for probably a series of technical working groups to flesh out the models better.

So, with that, let me begin by asking [REDACTED] (RESOURCE PERSON 4) to start his presentation. [REDACTED] maybe 10 minutes' worth.

RESOURCE PERSON 4. *Yeah.*

THE CHAIRMAN. *Will this be about 10 minutes' worth? Okay. Please go ahead.*

As observed in the opening remarks and conversation above, it showed that the committee chairman has to acknowledge the resource person first before he is allowed to speak. The chairman also limited the discussion of the resource person to a specific time as the former's way of ensuring that all resource persons will be able to present their position at the duration of the committee hearing which usually lasts to two to four hours depending on the intensity of the discussion. This further shows that the senator who presides as the committee chairman is in control of the flow of hearing.

Inquisition/ clarification

In hearings, senators use this opportunity to clarify technical information presented by resource persons. Through their inquiries, clarifications are made and discussions are simplified so the public can have a general picture at the measures being tackled at hand.

In the following exchange, the chairman and a resource person from the education-business sector discussed the coverage of the benefit being proposed by the Free Tuition Law. In cases like this in which a bill proposes to grant full tuition subsidy to students of SUCs, resource persons present the numbers that will aid the legislators in seeing the whole picture of the amount of public fund that will be spent for the granting of full tuition subsidy. Consequently, the committee chairman clarified that the numbers presented does not include the amount which is already being subsidized by the government for the students in SUCs. Such clarification is important to guide the government and policymakers in the allocation of budget should the bill becomes a law.

***RESOURCE PERSON 1.** We attempted to kind of just run the numbers very quickly given this recommendation and we use the data—the costing of the SGPPA program of the CHED which says that 60,000 per year for total cost of higher education or 20,000 for just tuition.*

And so if we send all currently enrolled college students into all public HEIs, that would be around 102 billion for total cost and then for just tuition, 34 billion.

If we were to support all of those enrolled in public and in private HEIs, that would be around P200 billion. If we were only to support all those who are enrolled in SUCs and 20 percent in private HEIs, we use 20 percent here just to target the poor. That would be around P100 billion. And if we were to really just

focus on there's a need, so around 20 percent of the population of college students. That's how much it's going to cost, 43 billion.

But what [REDACTED] (RESOURCE PERSON 4) was saying that there might be a movement or actually, there might be an increase in the participation rate because of the free aspect of higher education. So we just accounted for that and doubled the 43 billion to 86 billion.

So this is just like a very rough estimate of how much is going to cost to actually have a voucher system for tertiary education that's portable. And so with that, we'd like to end our presentation.

THE CHAIRMAN. *Thank you.*

Can you go back to the previous slide? Iyan. Itong all in public higher education institutions, I don't think this takes into account the current subsidy already given to the SUCs because the total tuition fee collection is just about nine billion. At least for this year which we are already subsidizing, probably 25 billion worth.

Now, that's how I put the numbers together. Maybe CHED can elucidate later. But considering that the total tuition for SUC collection is only at nine billion and yet, the computation here is 34 billion, it just goes the show that we are already subsidizing a huge part of the educational cost for the SUCs.

[REDACTED] (RESOURCE PERSON 7), currently the tuition naman ho that the SUCs charge, hindi naman iyan full. Hindi ba? It's already highly subsidized. So when Carlos Hilado charges just whatever--P200 or P140 per unit-- it's because government is already providing maybe P800.

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So later on when we go into the numbers further although unfortunately DBM is not here, I think—Are they here already? Yes, ma'am, join us. Join us. Kayo ho yung tanong, the billion peso question will actually go to you eventually. But I think, that's one way to look at it.

... starting from zero, this is probably correct.

RESOURCE PERSON 1. Yes.

This exchange confirms the aforementioned concern of the resource person from a government think tank that the Free Tuition Law will entail more cost to the government. However, the chairman seemed to downplay the issue by citing that the computation made by the resource person did not specifically say that the state is already subsidizing a part of the tuition fees of students in SUCs and the budget for the Free Tuition Law will only add to the current amount of subsidy being given by the government.

Sharing of experience/opinion

While the resource persons share technical information in committee hearings, senators share their personal experiences in the discussion of policies. Some of these senators have years of experience in legislation and most likely, they have encountered similar problems and talked with several experts in addressing certain issues. For instance, the Committee Vice Chairman recalled the time when he was a congressman from the House of Representatives in which he asked an official from

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CHED regarding the same question that he asked on current CHED officials. Sharing these experiences has been a part of discussion in committee hearings as this give a personal touch or relevance to the policies being crafted at the committee level. Also, the following example in which the Committee Vice Chairman cited a case in his hometown, Valenzuela City, wherein some students were not accepted by public schools due to lack of capacity wants to show that the senator is in touch with the masses and knows the problem on the ground. Thus, since committee hearings are done in public, such sharing of personal experiences projects a good image on the part of the politician.

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *In line with that, Mr. Chair, gusto ko lang pong ipagpatuloy iyong line of questioning ninyo, I remember when I was in Congress and formulating this law, there's a very basic question that I wanted to—or basic data that I wanted to get. Tinanong ko CHED—I think si [REDACTED] [CHED official] yata iyong kausap ko at I don't know if he's still there—but tinatanong ko sa kanya, "Ilan ba ho ang nag-board exam or ilan ang nag-entrance exam, pumasa, pero hindi nakapasok dahil kulang ng capacity?"*

I've been trying to get that data because those who passed but did not manage to go into college because of capacity issue is a failure of the state. Problema ng gobyerno ho iyan. Dapat alam natin kung ilan iyon dahil problema ho natin lahat iyon na qualified sila, matalino sila, gusto nilang mag-aral, pero hindi sila nakapasok dahil kulang ng classroom. But that data seems to be missing.

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I don't know if you have that data right now because sa Valenzuela ho ganoon ang nangyari. Just to give you—mayroon kaming local university doon and we tried to solve that problem kasi binigyan namin ng target, marami kaming na-disenfranchise. Sabi namin, "In five years, because of budget constraint, we have to solve that problem."

Because it is unfair and it's the fault of the state for not providing capacity. But that data is crucial to this bill. But unfortunately, for many, many years, wala pa akong nakukuha. I don't know kung mayroon na ho tayo ngayon.

We can see here that on top of the low participation rate of poor students going to tertiary level, there is the issue on disenfranchisement of deserving students due to lack of capacity of SUCs to accommodate qualified students.

Argumentation

Discussions in committee hearings are like "mini debates" where not all have the same interests, opinion, or insight on a particular issue. There will be always be conflicting views which both resource persons and senators aim to resolve. A policy has to be strong enough to weather the criticisms it might be thrown against it and it is in committee hearings where these criticisms are heard and challenged.

At this particular instance, the committee vice-chairperson questioned the view of the resource person who is a top official in higher education sector that granting full tuition subsidy to all students of SUCs will result in massive migration of students from private to public HEIs. The resource person then suggested that such problem will be reduced at a minimal rate if the proposal would only target to benefit the students belonging to the poorest quintile. However, the committee vice chairperson challenged the said view of resource person and said that decisions must not be based on opinions alone, but rather on scientific information or study.

RESOURCE PERSON 3. *Let me first comment on the first issue, especially from what [REDACTED] (RESOURCE PERSON 5) mentioned, about the fear that there will be massive influx of students from private schools to SUCs. I would agree when you say "public HEIs," it's a range of those that charge a lot. The ones that will be hit are those in the rural areas, in upland areas established by pastors, by religious groups, etcetera. But then the way to address it is to target the assistance or subsidy only to the poorest quintiles. And if you do that, then the shift will not be as worrisome as perceived because the determinants of where you send your child to school is not purely a function of cost, it's a function of the perception also, of the quality of education in school, access from your house. There's no single determinant.*

So the fear is, if you make everything free, then that worry becomes bigger. But if you target the government subsidy only to the poor, then you don't get that perceived problem.

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *Pero perception iyon, Professor. Totoo bang may ganoon na problema? I know it's common sense but did we actually conduct a scientific method—surveying maybe students in the private schools na pag free itong SUC, iyong one kilometer na private school lilipat, mayroon ba ho tayong ganoon na survey or this is just common sense perception?*

It can be surmised in this exchange that the resource person is against the granting of full tuition subsidy to all students in SUCs. Not only will it entail unsustainable, additional cost to the government but will also defeat its purpose to benefit poor students as the current composition of students in SUCs, as discussed by resource persons, come from private schools. This then leads us to confront the bigger problem: the quality of education in public schools which the resource person considered as one determinant of students in choosing the schools they will enroll in. The other two determinants are cost and access from home.

On the other hand, instead of finding sense in the insights shared by the resource person, the lawmaker somewhat doubted these claims and questioned the resource person's basis. Dismissing such sensible remarks including the resource person's suggestion to subsidize the students belonging only to the poorest quintiles leads the author to question who the bill is really targeting to benefit and the openness of lawmakers in accommodating the aforementioned concerns of resource persons.

The abovementioned exchanges among senators and resource persons also showed how they interact or communicate with each other during committee hearings. The analysis further revealed that the way the participant communicates in this context depends on his or her role in the inquiry; his or her affiliation to a group,

agency or organization; and his or her intent and interests on the bill's passage. Every participant, whether he or she is a senator or a resource person, has an important role to play in the legislation. The succeeding analysis consequently showed the extent of power play present in the committee hearing, and the scope of influence of resource persons in the context.

The Power Play

The following analysis applies the theoretical framework used by the study, the Dyadic Power Theory (DPT), to the observations made upon scrutiny of the transcripts in the committee hearing of the Free Tuition Law.

The study divides the analysis on two parts—the first one discusses the role of resource persons and the influence they have in a legislative process; and the second one tackles the power of legislators and how it manifested in their interactions with resource persons.

Resource Persons: Knowledge, Expertise and Influence in Decision Making

Resource persons prove to be instrumental in the crafting of policies and laws being implemented in the country. Anchored with their knowledge and expertise, resource persons' role in committee hearings is crucial in ensuring that the bill, if

passed into law, will stand the test of time and will truly benefit its target beneficiaries as in the case of the Free Tuition Law.

Since the resources of these experts come in the form of knowledge, resource persons are considered to possess a power base that senators do not have. According to Dunbar (2004), power bases are the rewards or knowledge which a person has that 'form the foundation for control over others.'

In analyzing the transcript, it emerged that resource persons possess three kinds of power namely expert power, informational power, and credibility. As previously discussed, resource persons establish their credibility by introducing themselves and the thrust of the organization/agency/group they are affiliated with. It is because of their position and the credibility of the institution they work for that they are invited as resource persons for the committee hearing. Also, these resource persons present their findings and explain concepts that give them the upper hand to give suggestions or recommendations on the bill. They are also given the platform to raise their support or objection to the passage of the measure. Such is the power possessed by resource persons that comes to the point of influencing the lawmakers in deciding if the proposed measure is a necessity or a waste; or if it needs improvement.

One of the vocal resource persons is RESOURCE PERSON 3 who suggested that the granting of full tuition subsidy be given only to students belonging to the

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poorest quintiles to avoid the possible problem of massive influx of students from private to public schools.

RESOURCE PERSON 3. *Let me first comment on the first issue, especially from what [REDACTED] [RESOURCE PERSON 5] mentioned, about the fear that there will be massive influx of students from private schools to SUCs. I would agree when you say “public HEIs,” it’s a range of those that charge a lot. The ones that will be hit are those in the rural areas, in upland areas established by pastors, by religious groups, etcetera. But then **the way to address it is to target the assistance or subsidy only to the poorest quintiles.** And if you do that, then the shift will not be as worrisome as perceived because the determinants of where you send your child to school is not purely a function of cost, it’s a function of the perception also, of the quality of education in school, access from your house. There’s no single determinant.*

The abovementioned example also shows the exercise of manifest power by a resource person. Komter (cited in Dunbar, 2004) defines manifest power as a kind of power that “concerns the visible outcomes of power such as verbal and nonverbal strategies used to achieve certain ends.”

By raising an imminent problem that might be caused by the granting of full tuition subsidy to SUCs, RESOURCE PERSON 3 used this argument to support his suggestion to provide this benefit only to the poorest students of SUCs.

Furthermore, resource persons show dominance in committee hearings. Dominance is a manifest power in which in an interaction, "one actor's assertion of control is met by acquiescence from another" (Burgoon et al. cited in Dunbar, 2004).

In the following conversation, RESOURCE PERSON 3 made control attempts in response to the senator's display of disappointment due to lack of information on the capacity of SUCs to accept students. Control attempts are "attempts made by one person to change the behavior of another" (Molm cited in Dunbar, 2004). The resource person responded that such information can still be determined by looking at the per student cost of subsidy in a particular school, and also by looking at the student-teacher ratios in SUCs. It can be noticed that the previous resource person prior to the exchange between the committee chair and RESOURCE PERSON 3, Dr. Ricardo Rotoras of the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC), already acceded to the demand of the committee chair to produce the said information, but RESOURCE PERSON 3 managed to cover up his fellow resource person's shortcoming by proposing another means to determine the needed data.

THE CHAIRMAN. *All right, next question. Do we turn away anyone in our SUCs? Kasi ako wala pa po akong nami-meet na SUC president who told me that they turned away people in terms of not allowing them to enter the college.*

RESOURCE PERSON 7. *Many, Mr. Chairman.*

THE CHAIRMAN. *Mayroon per course pero hindi iyong lahat. Meaning, they may turn away people for certain courses but not necessarily for all courses.*

Meaning, mayroon ka pa ring course na more or less doon yung bagsakan ng hindi nakakaabot doon sa quota. Is that true?

RESOURCE PERSON 7. *Well, that we do not have yet—*

THE CHAIRMAN. *Can you find out kung totoo po iyon?*

RESOURCE PERSON 7. *Yes.*

THE CHAIRMAN. *Because I think a crucial data or crucial point in this discussion is what the capacity of our SUCs are. Pag sinabi nila, how many students can the state sponsor in terms of subsidies for our SUCs? To date, we cannot even give a definite answer which I think is shameful na we're in a policymaking body or also a policymaking body and we don't even have the proper data.*

Yes, Commissioner.

RESOURCE PERSON 3. *Mr. Chairman, there are proxy data that can give a glimpse of capacity. You can look at the per student cost of subsidy. In schools where the per student subsidy is high, that means the capacity is there, which means, they can probably absorb more students, mas kaunti ang estudyante. And you can look at student-teacher ratios in SUCs where student-teacher ratios are high, that means the capacity is probably, you know, close to overcapacity already. So there's a proxy data that is available for all SUCs.*

THE CHAIRMAN. *I agree, Commissioner, and in fact, I think we've been working on proxy data for the past years.*

Judging by these conversations, it can be said that resource persons can have control of the situation or the interaction despite the fact that senators have perceived legitimate power to make decisions and gain control over the situation.

Senators: Demands, Negotiations, and Assertion of Control

As elected public officials, senators have a different kind of authority compared to resource persons. If resource persons possess knowledge as power, the senators maintain legitimate power over the former. Legitimate power is one of the power bases that is "derived from holding a high status position sanctioned by society" (Dunbar, 2004). It is because of this power that legislators can hold committee hearings and summon experts to attend and help them in crafting a law.

As previously discussed, the chairperson of the Committee on Education, Arts and Culture is the one who facilitated the committee hearing. Several protocols arose from the analysis which show the display of authority, respect, and power to the legislators especially to the committee chairman.

At the start of the hearing, the chairman should be the first to speak and acknowledge the resource persons. He also dictates the sequence of their presentations. Also, resource persons cannot speak without being acknowledged by the chairman. After being acknowledged to speak, resource persons usually thank

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the chairman for letting them comment or raise their point. They also address the chairman as “Mr. Chair” or “Honorable Chairperson.”

THE CHAIRMAN. So, with that, let me begin by asking [REDACTED] [RESOURCE PERSON 4] to start his presentation. [REDACTED] [RESOURCE PERSON 4], maybe 10 minutes' worth.

RESOURCE PERSON 4. Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN. Will this be about 10 minutes' worth? Okay. Please go ahead.

RESOURCE PERSON 4. Thank you, Honorable Chairperson. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this very important hearing.

Not only are the resource persons obliged to address the chairman first before raising a question or clarification but also the fellow senators who attend the committee hearing. As a sign of respect to the committee chairman, the senator should also ask the permission of the chair so he or she can start asking questions or initiate conversation with resource persons.

THE CHAIRMAN. ...mayroon nga bang cut-off enrolment numbers na at this point talagang puno na iyong eskwelahan or does it really seem like it's unlimited?

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. Mr. Chair.

THE CHAIRMAN. Yes.

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *In line with that, Mr. Chair, gusto ko lang pong ipagpatuloy iyong line of questioning ninyo...*

Furthermore, senators exhibit latent power which is defined by Komter (cited in Dunbar, 2004) as a power that is “not overtly expressed” and happens when the needs or demand of the more powerful person are anticipated and met.

One example of which was when one resource person from the implementor of government scholarships and financial assistance anticipated that the committee might need to be briefed on the models and options in the implementation of the bill when passed into law. Along with their suggestion for it to be undertaken within the context and framework of the UniFAST Act, RESOURCE PERSON 9 also offered the committee to discuss the options they have in mind on how to implement the law, who should benefit from it and the pros and cons of every option.

RESOURCE PERSON 9. *So, Mr. Chair, given this, it is our wish that whatever form it may come, whether in a separate bill or an appropriation act gradually evolving as General Appropriations Act, kung pwede sana it will be undertaken within the context and framework and procedures of the UniFAST Act.*

We have discussed the models and options during the meeting. And we would like to know if the Committee would like to allow it, we will show you certain options of how to implement it, who needs it most, and that will be the

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consequences of certain options. We had a good discussion of that last week. But if you would like to have it presented again, then I will ask my colleague in the UniFAST to do a very brief presentation of these various options as to how both, either as a budget or as a separate bill, should be done.

But aside from latent power, senators also exercise manifest power which the resource persons also exhibit to achieve certain ends. In the case of senators, they assert their authority to get additional information from resource persons.

In the following discussion, the committee vice chair demanded a resource person to produce information on the income level or socio-economic class of students in the SUCs. The senator expressed his dismay because apparently not all SUCs in the country get this information from the students which is important to determine the financial capability of students who are about to benefit from the proposed law.

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. ... *Kung di ginawa itong bill na ito, di hindi pa natin malalaman kung ilang mahihirap, ilang mayayaman po sa schools natin. Hindi ba, policymaking body tayo but where's the policy?*

THE CHAIRMAN. [REDACTED] *[RESOURCE PERSON 7], hindi naman siguro iyan for next week pero maybe at some point, we can instruct the SUCs to provide that information. Mayroon ba iyon sa enrolment form, iyong family income?*

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *We don't have that but we can easily include that.*

THE CHAIRMAN. *For next school year.*

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *Next school year, we can definitely have that.*

THE CHAIRMAN. *And then we can ask the— anyway, 112 lang naman iyan, we can ask the schools to crunch the data and come up with a—I think even for UniFAST that would be very helpful, iyong actual data.*

RESOURCE PERSON 7. *All right. Yes, Senator.*

Apart from manifest power, senators display dominance and control. Their demands are usually met with compliance. As discussed previously, one of the contentious issues of granting full subsidy to all students of SUCs was the possible overcapacity of the schools. Likewise, resource persons did not have immediate information regarding this matter which prompted the legislators to request these data.

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *Professor, pero iyong na-disenfranchise, mayroon ba ho tayong data noon? Hindi ba ho nakokonsensiya iyong school? Kasi ako, noong mayor ho kami, may pumasa, hindi nakapasok, nakakakonsensiya na hindi nakakapag-aral itong ano. But hindi ba sila nakokonsensiya na—*

THE CHAIRMAN. *On the contrary nga, I think they don't turn away anyone—on the contrary.*

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *If that is the case, then that's the best case. But—*

THE CHAIRMAN. *Yes, but then the issue there is to the detriment of the quality of the educational standards.*

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *But I think more than that, Mr. Chair, is that those data...*

THE CHAIRMAN. *Kailangan natin iyan.*

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *...kailangan natin iyan.*

THE CHAIRMAN. *Yes, [REDACTED] [RESOURCE PERSON 7]*

RESOURCE PERSON 7. *Mr. Chairman, yes, I remember [REDACTED] [THE VICE CHAIR] asked that data and we're in the process of getting that information. We can get that information*

Another instance that shows the control of senators over resource persons was when RESOURCE PERSON 3 insisted that some SUCs do not get information from its students regarding their income level and other data that would determine their socio-economic standing. The resource person also claimed that it is difficult at present to produce data on the employability of graduates simply because some SUCs do not obtain such information. In the end, he admitted that those data are crucial and should be acquired by SUCs to help lawmakers determine the social and financial status of its students.

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *I think, Mr. Chair, kanina I saw Professor nodding his head but sayang iyong wealth of data. Twice a year, every semester, we can actually collect anything we want to know about the student. Right now,*

it's all numbers; 2.1 million students but we don't know kung mahihirap sila. We don't know kung they come from divorced family or separated family. We don't even know kung galing sila sa—hindi ba? All of this information can really help us come up with specific policy, specific legislation for our higher education institutions. Sayang, sayang.

THE CHAIRMAN. *Okay. Yes, [REDACTED] [RESOURCE PERSON 3].*

RESOURCE PERSON 3. *Mr. Chairman, generating data from students becomes a very contentious issue in many universities unfortunately. That's why there is reluctance often by university officials to do it.*

In UP the data is available because socialized tuition system has a very well-defined instrument. Just producing the instrument to generate the data on income, it is a very contentious process in many universities, that's why it is not done.

THE CHAIRMAN. *But, you know, since we are headed towards providing these benefits for students whether through UniFAST, through the ESGPPA or through this bill, I think we would need that. I mean, you could even, you know, case it na you would apply for financial assistance or whatever. Okay.*

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR. *Professor [REDACTED], I think because SUCs are in my estimate is there are about 70 percent subsidized already or the students are almost 70 percent subsidized, collecting basic information is just elementary. Parang basic lang, income level, their demographics. Para at least iyong ating decision making is much more robust and accurate. Sayang iyong data.*

RESOURCE PERSON 3. *That's also the reason, Mr. Chair, that we don't have across-the-board data on employability because some SUCs do it, some*

don't and they don't use the same instrument. So, when you talk about employability across-the-board, you cannot determine it because the best way is to do a tracer study to track the graduates where they went, who they employed with. But SUCs don't get basic information from graduates. Some of them, they just get the address of the student, the latest address and the phone number, so one year after graduation, when they change address, they change jobs, you cannot trace them anymore. So, yes, I agree that should be a serious exercise done by public HEIs.

The aforementioned response of RESOURCE PERSON 3 to the demand of lawmakers is a kind of control attempt as he tried to convince the senators that such information is difficult to obtain, but through the countercontrol attempts of both senators, he later acceded to the order of legislators to produce the said data.

The Verdict - Affordable Higher Education for All Act

After the committee hearings concluded, a committee report was released and presented to the plenary. The six bills that were heard in the committee hearings were consolidated into one measure, Senate Bill No. 1304 or the Affordable Higher Education for All Act. This bill was sponsored and consequently presented to the plenary for debate by the lawmakers.

Following the sponsorship of SB 1304, the bill was subjected to a series of interpellations and amendments before it was approved on second reading. On March 13, 2017, the bill was voted and passed on third and final reading garnering 18 affirmative votes.

The analysis below presents some of the contents of SB 1304 passed by the Senate and compares it with the suggestions and recommendations raised by resource persons. In this way, the study can determine the influence of resource persons and if their positions have truly made an impact in the way the bill was crafted.

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared that universal access to quality education is an inalienable right of the Filipino. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the State to make higher education accessible to all, especially to the financially disadvantaged but deserving students by recognizing the complementary roles of public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) and technical-vocational institutions (TVIs) in delivering quality education.

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Towards this end, the State shall renew its constitutionally mandated duty to make education its top budgetary priority by providing tuition subsidy and financial assistance to students in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), private HEIs and TVIs.

The provision above runs contrary to the position of Resource Person 2 representing the private HEIs in the country.

RESOURCE PERSON 2. *While the Constitution mandates the establishment of free public education in the elementary and high school levels, there is no such mandate which pertains to free higher education. Indeed, the Constitution recognizes the State's financial limitations in providing a free public education in the university or college level.*

Coming from the perspective of someone representing private schools, there seems to be an underlying reason why he does not support the granting of free tuition subsidy in SUCs as this will result to migration of students from private schools to public educational institution which might take a toll at their business. On the other hand, these concerns raised by the resource person were clearly disregarded in the bill that was passed by the Senate as the lawmakers supporting this bill argue that it should be the State's duty to provide accessible college education to its citizens—a political move that is clearly to the advantage of legislators, especially reelectionists, who supported this measure.

SEC. 4. Eligibility to the Full Tuition Subsidy. – *All Filipino citizens who are either currently enrolled at the time of effectivity of this Act, or shall enroll at any time thereafter, in courses in pursuance of a bachelor’s degree or certificate degree in any SUC shall qualify for a full tuition subsidy: Provided, That they pass a qualifying examination to be prescribed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and meet the admission and retention standards of the SUC: Provided, further, That the SUCs shall prioritize the admission of underprivileged but deserving students: Provided, finally, That all SUCs shall create a mechanism to enable students with the financial capacity to pay for their education in the SUC to opt out of the tuition subsidy or to make a donation to the school.*

In the first part of the provision—*All Filipino citizens who are either currently enrolled at the time of effectivity of this Act, or shall enroll at any time thereafter, in courses in pursuance of a bachelor’s degree or certificate degree in any SUC shall qualify for a full tuition subsidy*—it shows that the bill did not follow the recommendation of a top government official from the higher education sector which was presented at the earlier part of the analysis to grant free tuition subsidy only to students belonging to the poorest of the poor. Instead, the bill gives the said benefit to all students enrolled in SUCs.

The provision is also contrary to the suggestion of Resource Person 5 who serves as the head of the organization of private HEIs—to implement a mechanism that will classify poor students from those who can afford higher education.

RESOURCE PERSON 5. *I appreciate this very much and let me simply report to yourselves and the other senators here that when [we] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] met in the backdrop of free tuition for all, they understood it in the context of higher education for all. And the basic thing is those who are qualified for higher education should get it. But those who can pay for their higher education should pay for it.*

As a result, these recommendations fell into deaf ears. First, the bill qualifies *all* students enrolled in SUCs, but as data shows, most of students enrolled in SUCs came from private schools. In the University of the Philippines, as an example, the Philippine Collegian reported in 2016 that about 1,551 of the 1,558 UPCAT passers for academic year 2016-2017 came from private institutions according to the data obtained from the Office of Admissions. This scenario alone leads us to question if the Free Tuition Law lives up to its purpose to benefit the *poor and deserving students*.

Also, the law mandates SUCs to conduct entrance examinations to sort of *filter* students who may want to enroll in SUCs. This provision was included in the bill since resource persons were arguing that the free tuition subsidy will cause a dramatic influx of students from private to public schools and the latter might suffer from overcapacity issues and might not be able to accommodate all prospective students. However, this leaves an impression that the Free Tuition Law is really not for all as the system is still merit-based and only promises to benefit those who will be qualified by passing the entrance exam. This leads us to the bigger problem that begs to be resolved and that is the quality of public

education in the Philippines. Since there is a better of quality of teaching and facilities in most of private elementary and highschool institutions in the country, most of the students who qualify in entrance exams in SUCs come from these private schools, and because of this, the Free Tuition Law tends to benefit *not* the poor students, *but* the well-off ones.

SEC. 7. Administration of the Fund. – *The Fund shall be administered by the CHED, which shall have the following powers and functions:*

- a) Manage and administer the Fund;*
- b) Regulate and approve miscellaneous and other fees being charged by the SUCs;*
- c) Devise a reporting mechanism to be implemented by the SUCs which will detail the exact amount of tuition subsidy availed of by persons eligible for the full tuition subsidy under this Act;*
- d) Formulate and implement an efficient and transparent mechanism to ensure the payment of the tuition subsidy, utilizing money from the Fund, to the respective SUCs, pursuant to this Act;*
- e) Resolve and mediate disputes concerning the ineligibility or disqualification of persons from the full tuition subsidy under the provisions of this Act or any other provision of this law; and*
- f) Any other powers or functions necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this Act.*

In this provision, the bill mandates the CHED to administer the fund that will be used for the tuition subsidy. This did not follow the recommendation of Resource Person 2 to allow the UniFAST Board to administer the free higher education fund, much more to have a free higher education voucher system.

RESOURCE PERSON 2. ...we recommend that that lead agency, for lack of other body that may assume such function, it would be logically the UniFAST board because it is chaired by the CHED chair and other ex officio officials of other agencies which implement various student financial assistance programs.

And it is further submitted that the UniFAST board in consultation, not only with the members but multi-sectoral representatives which includes the private education and industry sectors specifically tasked to, number one, identify the priority higher educational programs that will be covered by the law and provide the guidelines in the selection and accreditation of participating higher education institutions in both public and private; provide the guidelines or criteria for students to qualify for free higher education vouchers; administer the free higher education voucher system and the free higher education fund.

Moreover, Resource Person 2 suggested that:

"...instead of legislating it in the law, the law can actually delegate it to administrative body so that it would not be more stringent and whenever economic conditions change, it may easily be changed and we can always go

back and look at the demographic, socioeconomic status of those who will be affected.”

However, these suggestions did not materialize as a law was indeed passed to provide free tuition subsidy and it did not delegate the responsibility to the resource person's preferred administrative body. Hence, the bill passed by the Senate disregarded the aforementioned suggestions of the resource person simply because the interests of lawmakers in passing the Free Tuition Law disadvantages the private HEIs. The passage of the Free Tuition Law is a good political move on the part of legislators, but a risky step to take that will hurt private HEIs especially the smaller ones whose tuition fees are not as high as other bigger private schools in Metro Manila.

SEC. 8. Requirements for SUCs.

b) In order to facilitate the tracking of students and their performance, adopt the learner information system established by the Department of Education (DepED) in accordance with guidelines to be developed by CHED;

Another issue that was raised by resource persons is how the bill will ensure that the subsidy will go only for the qualified and deserving students as stated by Resource Person 2:

RESOURCE PERSON 2. *Another major argument of [the association of private HEIs] [REDACTED] is that the subsidy must be for the qualified and deserving*

students. As opposed to a full free tuition subsidy to all students across the board, it appears that it would be more efficient to invest on poor and excellent students and expanding the subsidy to cover not only tuition and echoing [REDACTED] [RESOURCE PERSON 6] position, to cover not only tuition but also the full cost of living allowance, books and other incidental expense of students.

It is due to this concern that the bill included a provision mandating SUCs to adopt learner information system to track the performance of students. The bill also requires students to get a passing grade to continue being subsidized by the Free Tuition Law.

As stated earlier, the law is not as inclusive as it promises to be since the provisions it contains are conditional. Not only prospective students should qualify for the free tuition subsidy but also students who *are already enrolled* in SUCs are expected to maintain and fulfill specific requirements in order to benefit continuously from the Free Tuition law.

SEC. 8. Requirements for SUCs.

c) Submit relevant information as determined by CHED on school quality and performance to assist the Commission in implementing this Act;

Another concern raised by resource persons is how the bill will ensure the delivery of quality education in SUCs. A resource person who heads the association of private HEIs expressed this sentiment in the briefing:

RESOURCE PERSON 5. *Senator, I think I have communicated in the past that in the [REDACTED] conversations [between private HEIs and SUCs], part of the concern here was not only the possible increase in population of the SUCs but the current quality of the SUCs and the underfunding of the SUCs in order to be able to reach acceptable quality. So our desire is to support the SUCs in their desire for requisite quality funding and to underscore the need for a cap.*

In this regard, it can be said that the committee considered the concern of the resource person as valid. Hence, legislators created a provision that will mandate SUCs to submit information regarding their performance. It can be noted that such information was previously unavailable in some SUCs which was also discussed in the first committee hearing. Because of this concern pointed out by resource persons, SUCs are now required to evaluate their performance and submit it to CHED.

On the other hand, the call of resource persons to address as well the quality of education in SUCs has been apparent in their previous pronouncements, and the issue is clearly not the focus of the free tuition law. This concern was specifically highlighted in the following exchange between Resource Person 5 and the committee chairman:

RESOURCE PERSON 5. *Senator, I think while we're looking at the problem, I think one of the important things to consider is the quality of the SUC itself.*

Because you may be thinking in terms of the capacity of an SUC in terms of how many students can fit in classrooms? And what the teacher-student ratio is? But we are not looking at the quality of the teachers and the ability of the teachers really to bring about a higher education culture in a university. And I think that's the more serious question because you don't want to treat SUCs, higher education like glorified high schools. You really want to be able to target an ... of reflection of intellectual rigor of innovativeness that I think belongs in a higher education institute whether it is private or public.

THE CHAIRMAN. *No, we get that, [REDACTED]. In fact, I would probably say that if we cannot—obviously the bills on their face are really an access intervention. But we all know, it's access and quality, they go hand in hand, hindi puwedeng mawala yung isa. Now this is not the only bill we will pass and this is not the only intervention we are going to do. And I think it will be the same group of people who will be working on the initiatives for quality. Right now lang, it just so happens we're just talking about access but by no means are we stopping here. It just seems that this has a lot of support.*

From this exchange, it is apparent that the free tuition bill targets to address more of the accessibility of tertiary education rather than improving the state of the quality of education in the country. However, it remains questionable if the free tuition subsidy proposal indeed provides accessibility to poor students.

SEC. 9. Maximum Number of Students. – *For the initial implementation of this Act, the maximum number of students that SUCs may accept shall be equivalent to the total number of students that were enrolled in the school year prior to the effectivity of this Act. For subsequent years, SUCs may seek approval from CHED to increase the number of students that they may accept, subject to conditions and requirements to be set by the Commission.*

In this particular provision, it addressed the concern of resource persons on the issue of overcapacity that might burden the SUCs once students from private HEIs migrate to SUCs due to free tuition subsidy. The following was the statement of RESOURCE PERSON 5 regarding the issue on overcapacity and migration:

RESOURCE PERSON 5. *I think the effect of free tuition in SUCs would affect not the higher charging schools but more the smaller schools. And I think it's on that level where we can expect migration and it will be serious migration, with larger numbers going to your schools which may now already be overcapacitated.*

Clearly, the legislators accepted the valid point of the resource person that it placed a limit on the maximum number of students a SUC can accommodate. On the other hand, this puts into question the accessibility of the Free Tuition Law since it puts a cap on the number of students that a state college or university can accommodate. While it is arguable that the Free Tuition Law grants equitable access to poor students, the State has its reason for limiting the number of students to benefit from the law, and that is the limit on the allocation for the free tuition subsidy.

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However, based on the computation of a resource person from the business-education sector, it will only cost the government P43 billion if the free tuition subsidy will only cover poor students:

RESOURCE PERSON 1. ...so if we send all currently enrolled college students into all public HEIs, that would be around 102 billion for total cost and then for just tuition, 34 billion.

If we were to support all of those enrolled in public and in private HEIs, that would be around P200 billion. If we were only to support all those who are enrolled in SUCs and 20 percent in private HEIs, we use 20 percent here just to target the poor. That would be around P100 billion. And if we were to really just focus on there's a need, so around 20 percent of the population of college students. That's how much it's going to cost, 43 billion.

SEC. 12. Strengthening Student Financial Assistance Programs (StuFAP). –

The CHED, through UniFAST, shall strengthen all Scholarships, Grants-In-Aid, Student Loans, subsidies and other incentives, to other educational expenses and cost of living allowance that will be incurred by students pursuing higher education in SUCs and private HEIs and TVIs. StuFAPs shall also be made available to cover for the cost of tertiary education, fully or partially, to students who wish to pursue tertiary education in other HEIs or TVIs.

This provision is another result of the recommendation given by resource persons. During committee hearings, resource persons emphasized that students do not only

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spend on tuition fees but also on other expenses like transportation, books, dormitory fees, and the like. At the final briefing on the bill, a former top government official in the higher education agency is among the resource persons who raised this matter:

RESOURCE PERSON 8. *It's not just the poorest of the poor who need the extra help. I guess that's the point also we want to make that even for this that you are talking about targeting properly, tuition just covers 30 to 40 percent of the cost. So they will still need much more than just tuition.*

The crafting of the abovementioned provision shows that legislators considered the position of the resource person, thus, paving the way for the strengthening of UniFAST, or the government-implemented system that grants various financial assistance to students.

SEC. 13. Tuition Subsidy and Financial Assistance for Students in Private HEIs and TVIs. – *Students who wish to enroll in private HEIs and TVIs shall be covered by the appropriate StuFAPs in such modalities where they qualify as may be determined by the UniFAST Board. The subsidy up to the amount approved by the UniFAST Board shall cover tuition fees and/or any additional student financial assistance to cover the other cost of education in the private HEI and TVI of choice subject to its admission policies: Provided, That the amount of tuition subsidy and/or student financial assistance shall be based on the guidelines set forth by the UniFAST Board and on the annual budgetary appropriation for this purpose:*

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Provided, further, That the conditions stipulated under Section 5 of this Act shall also apply to students qualified under this section.

Lastly, legislators considered the recommendation of RESOURCE PERSON 2 to tap the UniFAST Board in determining qualified students deserving of financial assistance through StuFAP and the amount of subsidy to be given to qualified students. This suggestion was raised during the first committee hearing:

RESOURCE PERSON 2. *...the power to determine qualified and deserving voucher recipients, the accreditation of participating higher education institutions and the applicable voucher values may be delegated by law to administrative bodies such as the UniFAST board.*

And in this light, of course, we recommend that that lead agency, for lack of other body that may assume such function, it would be logically the UniFAST board because it is chaired by the CHED chair and other ex officio officials of other agencies which implement various student financial assistance programs.

And it is further submitted that the UniFAST board in consultation, not only with the members but multi-sectoral representatives which includes the private education and industry sectors specifically tasked to, number one, identify the priority higher educational programs that will be covered by the law and provide the guidelines in the selection and accreditation of participating higher education institutions in both public and private; provide the guidelines or criteria for students to qualify for free higher education vouchers; administer the free higher education voucher system and the free higher education fund.

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Even if the legislators did not consider the voucher system proposed by RESOURCE PERSON 2, they followed his recommendation to make the UniFAST board as the lead agency that will be responsible in managing the StuFAPs or financial assistance being given to qualified students.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY

The study which aimed to determine the extent of power play exercised by senators and resource persons as participants in a legislative process was analyzed through discourse analysis.

By doing a conversational analysis, a variant of discourse analysis, the author analyzed the data in the form of transcripts which served as spoken text to achieve the study's objectives: a) to analyze the communication interactions among resource persons and senators during committee hearings; b) to describe the extent of power play among legislators and resource persons in passing a proposed measure; and to examine the scope of influence of resource persons in a specific setting: committee hearings.

In order to satisfy the abovementioned objectives, the study only limited its analysis on the committee hearings in the Senate which transpired during the discussions conducted on the proposed Free Higher Education Act which has already been legislated into law, now commonly known as the Free Tuition Law (RA 10391).

Results of the study showed that in terms of power play, the conduct of committee hearings is both political and participative in nature; and legislation is communication. Laws are discussed, debated, and passed mainly because of communication among concerned parties—lawmakers, resource persons (stakeholders, civil society organizations, government agencies, NGOs, etc.).

According to Lasswell (1979), political power can be determined by discovering which groups are effective in framing legislation, and which are in opposing side.

Analysis showed that while majority of the suggestions made by resource persons reflected in the bill passed by the Senate, the fate of the measure still depends upon the decision of the lawmakers. By applying the Dyadic Power Theory which the study used as theoretical lens, the author confirmed her assumption that legislators have legitimate power as elected officials to decide which bills to pass at the committee level and which suggestions should be considered. Senators who have a committee chairmanship has the prerogative which bills under his committee will be prioritized. Also, a committee chairman decides which recommendations shall be accepted, and how many hearings it should take before it gets adjourned.

As manifested in the analysis of transcripts, it showed that senators are keen to pass the then Free Higher Education Act which was consequently signed into law by the President. The chairman of the Senate Committee on Education underscored

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that the bill got a huge support from lawmakers—a good political propaganda indeed especially for reelectionists who supported and even co-authored the measure.

With the said interest on the part of lawmakers in pushing for the passage of the bill coupled with their legitimate authority to filter the suggestions made by resource persons, analysis showed that there are several concerns on the bill which seemingly fell on deaf ears or were simply disregarded as reflected in the bill that was passed by the Senate. The foremost concern was the incidence of benefit to the supposed beneficiaries of the law. Since the Free Tuition Law covers all students in SUCs, the incidence of benefit goes to untargeted beneficiaries and not to the “poor but deserving students.” It was raised by resource persons that only a small percentage of the poorest of the poor make it to college due to other expenses on top of tuition fee. Hence, resource persons suggested that it might be better if the bill will only target those students who come from the poorest quintiles and instead strengthen the delivery of scholarships and financial assistance to finance the additional expenses of qualified students (rent, food, transportation, educational materials, among others).

Another concern of resource persons is the equitability of access on the free tuition subsidy. Since most students enrolled in SUCs nowadays especially in the Metro Manila come from private schools, it is questionable who really stands to benefit from the free tuition subsidy. Resource persons suggested that it is also equally important to address the quality of education in public educational institutions, particularly in elementary and high school, to be able to produce competent students

that will match the skills and knowledge of those coming from private schools. In response to that, lawmakers assured that other proposals have been filed to address the quality of education alongside the goal of the Free Tuition law to “increase accessibility” of education to poor students. This only goes to show that the priority of lawmakers is not so much in addressing the bigger problem which is the lack of quality education, but in “increasing accessibility” of college education.

However, equitable access remains an issue for the Free Tuition law. Not only to the fact that it tends to benefit well-off students and only a few poor ones, but also to the mechanism it placed to filter prospective students by mandating SUCs to conduct entrance examinations. Thus, the formal title of the law, “Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act,” seems to be an ironic one as the system it aims to promote remains selective and merit-based, and not “universal” or all-inclusive. While lawmakers put a cap on students that SUCs can accommodate due to limited budget allocation for this law, it was raised by resource persons that if the law will only target those students who come from poor families, the free tuition subsidy will not cost that much as compared to subsidizing all students enrolled in SUCs.

Overall, while it can be said that resource persons participated in the passage of the Free Tuition law at the committee level by raising their positions, reservations, and suggestions which target to improve the content of the proposal, the crucial provisions of the bill rest upon the decisions made by lawmakers.

On another note, seeing legislation as a communication process, it showed that the role of resource persons is instrumental in the bill's passage at the committee level. Apart from presenting their views and recommendations, resource persons also identified the problems surrounding the Free Higher Education Act and also engaged lawmakers in an intellectual discussion which is a crucial step in honing the bill.

Meanwhile, senators are the ones who facilitate the discussion, and welcome and challenge the ideas and comments of the experts. These interactions mirror the flow of communication among senators and resource persons. The relationship among the participants of this specific legislative process prove to be give and take as everyone is given a chance to speak or participate in the discussion.

Finally, analysis revealed that committee hearings show the communication dynamics of its participants. It showed that legislation is a discourse where senators and resource persons interact with one another in the crafting and enhancement of proposed laws. It is through communication where senators and resource persons engage with each other, have an intellectual discussion over the proposed law, and come up with a consensus that determines the fate and content of the bill.

CONCLUSION

The participation of resource persons in the committee hearing of the Free Higher Education Act was crucial in the passage of the then proposed measure at the committee level.

The scope influence of a resource person does not end in the fact that he or she gets invited to the committee hearing, present factual information, and relay his or her recommendation. It is also judged by how these information and suggestions are accepted by legislators and if these are included in the final output—the law.

The study found out that while there are suggestions of resource persons which reflected in the bill passed by the Senate, the crucial recommendations that might hurt the passage of the measure were not considered.

Based on the analysis, there are twelve issues that surfaced during the series of discussions conducted by the Committee on Education to which the resource

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persons gave their respective recommendations. The study showed that majority or seven of their suggestions reflected in the content of the bill passed by the Senate on final reading. These are the a) address of overcapacity issues by conducting entrance exams by SUCs; b) prioritizing underprivileged but deserving students in the admission process; c) adopting learner information system to monitor the performance of qualified students; d) ensuring the delivery of quality education by mandating SUCs to submit relevant information on their performance; e) address of the possible problem on migration from private HEIs to SUCs by implementing a cap on the maximum number of students that should be accommodated by SUCs; f) strengthening of StuFAPs or financial assistance to be given to financially disadvantaged students; and g) tapping the UniFAST Board in determining which students are qualified to receive assistance, and the amount of subsidy to be given to qualified students.

On the other hand, some important recommendations raised by resource persons were disregarded. These are the suggestions to provide tuition subsidy only to students belonging to the poorest of the poor, and to prioritize passing a law that will address the lack of quality education in public educational institutions. These are the major issues that the lawmakers somewhat neglected in their desire to immediately pass a law that will "increase accessibility" of college education to poor students. However, with the passed law benefitting all qualified students in SUCs, the so-called landmark legislation tends to benefit a huge chunk of well-off students from private schools whose quality of elementary and secondary education is much better than those of poor students from public schools—ironically, the ones which the law *should be benefitting*.

This only showed that the participation and scope of influence of resource persons was limited to presenting data on the state of college education in the country, identifying possible problems that may arise from the passage of the bill into law, and giving recommendations, which the lawmakers still have the power to decide which to accept and which to disregard. The participation of resource persons was instrumental in projecting an image that legislation is a democratic process, but the substantial decisions that are usually aligned with the interests of those in power are still determined by lawmakers themselves who have the upper hand and authority in the legislative process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It should be stressed that the study has been primarily concerned with determining the extent of power play in committee hearings by determining the scope of influence of resource persons and senators as well as the communicative processes or interactions that transpired during the committee deliberations on the passage of the Free Higher Education Act. The study gave a critical eye on how the measure was being crafted at the committee level, especially on the standpoints of resource persons and legislators who participated in the hearing. As such, possible areas for future research may further look into the status of the Free Tuition Law after it was implemented to determine if the policy has indeed fulfilled its objectives and improved the accessibility of tertiary education which the law aims to do. Communication students may also consider doing an analysis of interactions that happen in other legislative processes such as interpellations, lobbying, and other forms of policymaking initiatives.

It might also be a topic of interest for future research to do a study on the impact of communication in legislating much more controversial laws like Reproductive Health Law, K to 12 Law, and other landmark legislations that were either fully supported by some organizations or heavily criticized by opposition.

The author further deems that this study could explore deeper on the power play that happens in political discourses if future research will delve into: a) negotiations being made behind closed doors; b) personal accounts of legislators and resource persons; and/or c) interactions that transpire in other political or public events like press conferences or interviews involving public officials. Since the study is limited at analyzing transcripts of committee hearings, it may be best for future studies to adopt other methodologies and theoretical lens that could widen, diversify and provide new insights in addition to the findings provided by this study.

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