



Higher education, bridging capital, and developmental leadership in the Philippines: Learning to be a crossover reformer



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ABSTRACT

The article presents findings from a research project which explored how experiences of higher education supported – or not – the emergence of developmental leadership and the formation of networks among leaders of three political and social movements in the Philippines in the post-Marcos era. Based on life history interviews with key leaders, the study points to the importance of different forms of social capital, especially bridging capital, in navigating a stratified system within this oligarchical democracy. Experiences of higher education were important for leaders' development, but not necessarily in predictable ways.

1. Introduction

This article interrogates the relationship between higher education and 'developmental leadership' through a case study of the Philippines. It presents the findings of a research project¹ which explored how individuals' experiences of higher education supported – or not – the emergence of developmental leadership and the formation of networks among leaders of three important political and social movements in the post-Marcos era.

The study was based on life history interviews (2012–2015) with 41 elite members of three political or social reform movements in the post-Marcos era. The article begins with a brief overview of the concepts and evidence that underpin the study's exploration of the relationship between higher education and developmental leadership. The study's findings are shaped profoundly by the political and educational contexts of these times in the Philippines. The article therefore then sets out relevant milestones and shaping factors in the political, economic and educational development of the Philippines in the post-Marcos era, given the importance of these for understanding the positioning of these developmental leaders. The methodology is explained subsequently. Finally, the findings are presented within the context of the theoretical framework and the concept of crossover reformists.

2. The relationship between higher education and developmental leadership: concepts and evidence

The concept of developmental leadership bridges political science and development studies. It acknowledges the human agency of reformist individuals as a significant causal factor in social and political change, and signals the role of coalitions and networks in overcoming barriers to collective action and facilitating the achievement of shared goals (Leftwich, 2009; Lyne de Ver, 2009). Conversely, predatory leaders and their networks can thwart social and political progress, even under the most promising of material and structural conditions (Bavister-Gould, 2011). At some point in their life trajectories, individual developmental leaders need to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes that make their personal success as reformers possible, and they also need to form the networks and coalitions which allow them to exercise these. Given the well-documented correlation between education, aspiration and civic engagement (Campbell, 2009; Brannelly et al., 2011), study at university is likely to be a meaningful phase for developmental leaders in terms of their personal growth and also in relation to their accumulation of social capital of various forms. In general, higher education has the potential to promote social cohesion by, for example, creating opportunities to discuss sensitive issues and by modelling good institutional behaviours including tolerance, fairness and meritocracy. The realization of this potential, however, depends on good institutional governance as well as the nature of interactions

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facilitated by staff members.

Literature on developmental leadership offers considerable evidence that, on the one hand, there is a positive correlation between societies with higher rates of tertiary enrolment and good governance ingredients including voice and accountability, political stability and the absence of violence and terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (Brannelly et al., 2011). Additionally, there is evidence from studies in a variety of contexts that individual leaders who might be labelled as developmental are (with exceptions) much better educated than leaders who are not (Tadros, 2011; Jones et al., 2014; Sebudubudu, 2009; Brautigam and Diolle, 2009; Theron, 2011; Phillips, 2013).

Leftwich (2009, p 23) has argued that the thinking skills developed through high-quality higher education are key to this relationship.

Tertiary education – especially in the social sciences and law – enables participants to understand better the problems of collective action and that their resolution is essential for development. The capacity to think in terms of general concepts and relationships, and to understand, for example, the idea of public goods, beyond individual or group interests, appears to be one positive advantage of tertiary education. But above all is the capacity to analyse and understand complex socio-economic and political problems – what Stiglitz (2003: 77) refers to as ‘scientific’ ways of thinking – is one crucial benefit of higher education and a necessary but not sufficient attribute of effective developmental leadership.

In addition, leaders have to deploy ‘multiple framings’ for different audiences to ensure the compatibility of their messages with, for example, international conventions or religious frameworks or national constitutions. Higher education that promotes critical thinking, exposes future leaders to people who think differently from themselves, and develops debating and presentation skills can develop these (Jones et al., 2014). A survey of the above literature also suggests a further list of ingredients of institutions to facilitate a positive commitment to the values that underpin developmental leadership: meritocratic selection, a strong institutional ethos of patriotism and social consciousness, and close mentoring and role-model relationships between teachers and learners.

Beyond the skills for individuals, tertiary education can provide excellent opportunities for coalition building. Not only are developmental leaders more likely to be well-educated: case study research from a range of contexts suggests that there are benefits to them studying together (Leftwich, 2009; Phillips, 2011; Brautigam and Diolle, 2009; Jones et al., 2014; Grebe and Natrass, 2009). This develops deep levels of trust and facilitates future collective agency. Boarding schools in post-independence Ghana and Somaliland, for example, created a particularly intimate setting that concentrated the capacity to nurture future leaders, generating the label ‘nurseries’ for developmental leadership. In Ghana, for example, university was the source of the most important connections that developmental leaders had in their future professional lives (Jones et al., 2014).

It is not only a question of meeting future direct collaborators. The findings regarding the role of networks formed through higher education point specifically to the importance of social capital, with its benefits of generalized reciprocity, facilitation of co-ordination and communication, and amplified sense of self from ‘I’ to ‘we’ (Putnam, 2000). However, different forms of social capital bring different benefits to the individual and potentially different social impact. Putnam (2000) distinguishes between bonding capital and bridging capital. Bonding capital refers to relations between homogenous groups (such as family ties or close networks of people from similar socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds), while bridging capital refers to interactions across heterogenous groups (Putnam, 2000). Bonding capital among kinship networks or the disenfranchised can be important in societies where there is declining trust in political institutions, including post-conflict contexts (Fukuyama, 2002). However, very closely-knit social

and political organizations can be prone to cartelization and rent seeking (Olson, 1971), vertical patronage and exclusionary practices (Fukuyama, 2002). Bridging capital has the potential to widen the radius of trust (Fukuyama, 2002) and – as this study finds – extend the reach of individual actors across sectoral, tribal, clan, dynastic or traditional elite loyalties, as found in Somaliland (Phillips, 2011) Botswana (Sebudubudu, 2009), Ghana (Jones et al., 2014) and Yemen (Phillips, 2013). It also helps leaders to understand ‘the other’ – whether that ‘other’ is an ally or an adversary. It thus supports leaders in building consensus and understanding the possibilities and limits of compromise. In our study, leaders drew on both forms of capital, crossing between them pragmatically and strategically, just as they crossed over between different economic and social sectors. As well as drawing on the concepts of bridging and bonding capital, the paper therefore builds on Lewis’ (2013) notion of crossover reformist activities, acknowledging the limits of linear understandings of the processes of reform in the context of permeable boundaries between sectors, and noting the importance of ‘border crossing’ between sectors for the successful agency of developmental leaders. Higher education can potentially be a site for the development of social capital including bridging capital, and for the skill set of the crossover reformer.

However, while the evidence points to positive effects of HE and suggests a range of conditions under which it might facilitate the developmental leaders’ personal growth and diverse networks, the evidence is not unequivocal. Even the strong prevailing pattern of more education = better leadership is fraught with surprising national outliers (Brannelly et al., 2011). The conditions outlined above for the development of, for example, critical thinking, are not necessarily prevalent in typical HE institutions, and this may be especially uneven in less developed countries. Elite institutions may offer higher quality teaching and resources, but selection processes based on the ability to pay tuition fees or be prepared for particular forms of entrance examination can be exclusionary and create conditions for cronyism (Brannelly et al., 2011) and the worst excesses of bonding capital. The question of the quality of HE is threatened on a number of fronts in the current climate: the strong MDG-era emphasis on funding for primary education, and contemporary cost-cutting and efficiency measures which include ‘unbundling’ of HE to provide only specific functions (the extreme example being MOOCs which separate teaching and learning from all paracurricular functions) and massification leading to commodification and therefore more stratified systems which reserve the best HE for those who can afford it and therefore reinforce social divisions (McCowan, 2016).

In this paper, we explore these issues in context, and what it is about this phase of education that may or may not have influenced future developmental leaders in the particular conditions of the post-Marco, pre-Duterte Philippines. Drawing on the personal reflections of a selection of such leaders, the research challenges prevailing human capital arguments regarding how higher education contributes to development.

3. Political, economic and educational development of the Philippines

Since independence, The Philippines has had a tumultuous experience with democracy, which was interrupted when President Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law in 1972. Ferdinand Marcos ruled the Philippines for 20 years. His presidency ended in 1986 when the ‘People Power’ Revolution (also known as the EDSA Revolution) forced him out of office and into exile. People Power demonstrations began in 1983 and culminated in protests which took place in Quezon City from the 22nd to the 25th of February 1986. The demonstrations were a response to the government corruption that proliferated under Marcos. The People Power movement reflected the strong culture of political participation in the Philippines. Civil society in the archipelago has long been “relatively politicized (at least compared with countries in South

Asia such as Bangladesh and India), with close links existing between political parties and political positions and many NGOs (Lewis, 2013: 43”).

The final day of the People Power protest marked both the end of Marcos’ rule and the emergence of a democratic form of government, headed by the new president, Corazon C. Aquino. While those involved in the People Power movement may have expected positive changes to result from the protests, economic and political decline as well as social instability continued (Villanueva, 2010). Other elite groups have unsuccessfully tried to challenge this political settlement in the intervening years (Hedman, 2006).

At the time of the data gathering phase of the research (2013–2015) most of the political decisions and economic activity in the Philippines remained dominated by a relatively small group of elites. The prevalence of these elites in the control of institutional structures and electoral contests has led to the definition of the political system in the Philippines as an “oligarchical democracy” (Sidel, 2014). Apparent democratic institutions and processes coexist with massive concentration of material resources and power that are used to defend the economic and social position of these elites (Winters, 2011). At the local level, the rule of families has modified or even replaced formal state institutions. Hite (2012: 2) points out that “[i]n the Philippines, political and financial affairs are funnelled through channels of patronage politics – neighbourhood and clan-based political groups that offer unregulated financial services in return for political allegiance.” Regardless of class origin, Filipinos typically align themselves with dominant clans for the purpose of gaining access to power (Gutierrez et al., 1992).

The Philippines inherited the US system of checks and balances between Congress, the President and an independent judiciary. In principle, this should have prevented concentration of power. However, the weak party discipline and the prevalent influence of powerful family dynasties in Congress, makes it easy for these elites to block structural reforms that affect poverty and inequity levels (Anderson and Hipgrave, 2015). Vote buying and political patronage is common in The Philippines, and often to the detriment of investment in pro-poor policies and public service delivery (Khemani, 2013).

In the Philippines there is a long history of conflict, including religious, ideological, territorial and clan disputes. For the past 40 years, armed groups including separatist Muslim movement in southern Philippines (Mindanao) have remained active. Negotiations were successfully completed with the Mindanao-based Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1996, and peace processes are well underway. The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed on 27th March 2014 is a negotiated political settlement between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which is to establish a new entity to replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). It is hoped that greater autonomy, self-determination and power-sharing will bring a more lasting peace and democracy to the region.

The deeply embedded nature of oligarchical structures explains how diverging patterns of local political economy structures materialized in large regional inequalities and a wide range of religious, linguistic, ethnic and social cleavages that are reflected in on-going conflicts in the country. Poverty incidence and conflict are closely associated in The Philippines, with inequality in the country highest among the Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ADB, 2015), and poverty rates higher in conflict-affected provinces (42%) than in non-conflict provinces (22%) (Chua et al., 2013). ARMM is the only region where more than half of the population is poor (55.8% in 2012) (NEDA, 2015).

The intersection of socio-economic status, religion and politics is evident in education, and the higher education system is both horizontally and vertically differentiated (Teichler, 2008). Horizontally, there are many different types of institutions, in terms of structure, purpose and religious affiliation; vertically, these vary enormously in terms of their quality and reputations. Many children from elite families

enter private schools in Manila (or in larger cities within the country), most of which are Catholic denomination schools, reflecting both the prevalence of strong Catholicism in the population, and the marginalization of other groups, including Muslims. Some of these elite schools serve as ‘feeder’ schools for elite private Catholic universities, reinforcing the privilege of these elites, and securing their networks among the influential of society. In contrast, in ARMM, for the secondary level, NER is 33.7% compared to the country’s 61.2% (Symaco, 2014).

What can perhaps be considered as the elite HEIs in the country are the top ranking University of the Philippines (UP), University of Santo Tomas, Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University (QS university rankings, 2015). All but UP are private HEIs with strong Catholic orientation and affiliations to specific Catholic Orders (eg Jesuit, Franciscan). These are also very well-established institutions; Santo Tomas has the oldest university charter in Asia. Outreach and immersion programmes are characteristic of the three private HEIs. For instance, Ateneo works closely with communities through its immersion programme which aims for its students to experience the realities faced by marginalized sectors of society where “(i)n the spirit of the common good and preferential option for the poor, students will be genuinely moved to render action in living out a faith that does justice” (Ateneo de Manila University, 2016). The religious nature of these institutions can contribute to the development of bonding capital, and provides a moral framework for charitably-oriented outreach work. However, it could also be socially exclusionary for non-Catholics or those with more secular attitudes. UP has highly active student/academic organizations and fraternities and a history of campus activism. The General Education (GE) programme of UP also serves as the essence of UP’s liberal and secular education where students are expected to achieve a ‘broad perspective that would enable them, outside their own field of specialization, to engage with issues and realities of their own times’ (UP GE Task Force, nd).

4. Methodology

The first stage of the study involved choosing three movements from which to sample developmental leaders for interview. We concentrated on post-Marcos changes that promoted participatory democracy and good governance. Movements and reforms that engaged diverse actors (e.g., government officials, church leaders, civil society), interest groups and ideologies, that occurred at different times, and that were spread across geographic locations in the Philippines were selected in order to avoid a myopic or exclusionary view of social and political networks.

4.1. Three political/social movements

Through historical-political analysis of key political, educational, economic and democratic changes, and discussions with experts on the Philippines, three complementary areas were chosen:

4.1.1. Public sector procurement reform (PSPR)

The Government Procurement Reform Act was signed in 2003 and its implementing rules and regulations have been the centerpiece of the national reforms to combat corruption and promote good governance in the Philippines. The reforms aimed to reduce opportunities for graft and corruption; harmonize the procurement system with international standards and practices; and promote transparency, competitiveness, and accountability. In the words of President Arroyo, the objective of these reforms was “to address the public emergency borne out of the pervasive malady of graft and corruption that has long plagued the government procurement system, impaired public service efficiency, and stunted national capacity for economic growth.” (President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo cited by Campos and Syquia, 2006:26). From a liberal perspective, corruption in procurement contract awards, and corruption more generally, is the result of flaws in institutional governance

structures that obstruct market competition and distort prices. A competitive, transparent, fair, and efficient public procurement system is seen by these approaches as one of the pillars of anti-corruption and good governance reforms (Grindle, 2004), with significant effects on sustainable economic growth and development (Kaufmann et al., 2009). The PSPR consolidated and standardized procurement rules and procedures for all national government agencies including government-owned and/or controlled corporations and local government units, which apply to procurement of goods and services, including infrastructure projects and consulting services. Among the changes introduced are the use of the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System to promote transparency and competition, the adoption of open and competitive bidding in all levels of public procurement, the professionalization of procurement officials, the inclusion of penal clauses and civil liability, and the institutionalization of civil society participation in all stages of the procurement process to improve transparency.

4.1.2. Mindanao electoral reform (2012-present, MER) (embedded within the comprehensive agreement on the bangsamoro (CAB))

In 2010 President Benigno Simeon Aquino III's administration stepped up the pursuit of peace in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The ARMM is where the majority of the Philippines Muslim population resides, including the Muslim secessionist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Among Aquino's reform efforts was his attempt to mitigate election fraud and promote democracy through a voter re-registration programme and cleansing of the voter list. Electoral reform was considered to be a crucial part of support for democratization and good governance in the ARMM. This reform was particularly important in Mindanao owing to the prevalence of violence and intimidation during elections (Chua and Rimban, 2011). There were also problems with voter mobilization and de-mobilization as means to steer election outcomes. In addition, the computerization of voting in 2010 brought new challenges to the electoral process, namely fictitious or "ghost" voters – as well as whole ghost communities. Against this backdrop, a voter re-registration and election-monitoring programme was implemented in July 2010. It proved difficult to disentangle this reform from the wider peace negotiations and CAB, and so leaders from these processes were also interviewed.

4.1.3. Gawad Kalinga (1995 – present)

Gawad Kalinga (meaning 'to give care') is a social movement and NGO aimed at alleviating poverty, focusing specifically on helping the 'poorest of the poor' in slum and remote rural communities and those affected by natural disasters. GK works toward a range of development goals, aiming to 'share prosperity, to democratize governance, to promote sustainable development, to transform and preserve Philippine identity and culture, [and] to inspire youth' (Rodriguez and Lacundula-Rodriguez, 2009: ix). In some ways it works in parallel to government with some of the same developmental aims but working within a defined moral agenda reflected in its ethos and broad-based participatory approach. While its roots are Catholic, it works in all communities, including Muslim communities in Mindanao. Currently, Gawad Kalinga is active in virtually every province in the Philippines, across more than 2000 communities and in its own estimation affects 60,000 families (<http://www.gk1world.com/our-scale>). Construction of housing is often the starting point, based on the need for dignified shelter and security. Beyond this is the construction of communities and neighborhood associations, including the provision of values education and leadership development programmes. While it is not a legal reform, Gawad Kalinga (GK) was selected as a focus for this study because of its developmental aims in eradicating poverty, fostering active citizen participation, collaboration and cooperation among government actors, business leaders, and civil society (Brillantes and Fernandez, 2011).

For each reform, a longlist of key individuals involved was generated, in order to inform the shortlist of relevant interviewees. The

original longlist across the reforms consisted of 120 people or organisations; this was reduced to 30 to be contacted. Of these, nine responded to email or telephone contact. Attempts to contact people on the list were challenged for a number of reasons, including the death of key actors, but above all a culture of not responding to 'cold calls'. Therefore, while starting with the literature and this 'wish list' of interviewees, in this highly networked and particularistic society we also relied on the contacts of the Filipina member of the research team as an additional starting point. Then, further interviewees were identified during the fieldwork period through 'snowball' techniques, as interviewees and others on the ground recommended additional informants significant to the reform or movement. An interview protocol was designed for the primary interviews to explore aspects of key individual leaders' backgrounds and educational experiences.

4.2. Fieldwork and analysis

The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 min. 10 additional key actors and informants were also interviewed. In all 53 interviews were conducted. 41 were recorded with permission and transcribed for thematic analysis. We were fortunate to secure interviews with elite (and very busy) individuals and they were remarkably open on most subjects.

They seemed genuinely pleased to be the subject of study. All but one primary interviewee consented to be recorded and while confidentiality was offered, most interviewees did not request it. However, as this was not consistent, quotes are generally not attributed to particular individuals in the findings section, except where the identity of the respondent is important or not feasible to conceal and where they have given permission to be identified. Quotations are attributed to interviewees through codes that identify which of the three movements they are from, and gender markers (f-female, m-male).

The results of the initial qualitative analysis were compared across the three movements/reforms in order to generate shared codes and to gain a national overview. Data on educational backgrounds of the respondents revealed remarkably little overlap in terms of institutions attended, and within particular reforms, few of the interviewees firstly or primarily knew each other through education. This was somewhat surprising in the light of the intersection of an elitist education system with wider power networks, and also in the light of the findings of a study using a similar methodology in Ghana (Jones et al., 2014), but this highlights the particularities of the Philippines context and the boundary crossing nature of the work of these leaders.

5. Findings

The findings confirm the close links that exist in the Philippines between family and membership of political elites, which mean that education is rarely seen as uniquely determinant of attaining a leadership position. However, participants all saw their own education as having a significant role in their trajectory to becoming a leader, albeit sometimes in unexpected ways.

Our analysis pointed to a range of themes: **development**, and how leaders conceptualize development and good governance and how they assess the contribution of the reforms they were involved in; **leadership**, and how the interviewees grew into their roles, and how this intersects with gender, ethnicity, and family privilege; and the role of **networks** in the process of change and how leaders describe the importance and dynamics of coalition building and their strategies for collective action is the third theme. We drew out the implications of the role of **education** in all of these, from the perspectives of the interviewees and from our overall observations of the Philippines context. In this article we introduce a further level of analysis, and focus particularly on networks and how these reflect the workings of bridging and bonding capital, and the prevalence of crossing over between different types of relationships in different social, political and financial sectors.

Below we set out some of the key ways in which these developmental leaders were crossover reformists, steering a lifecourse and day-to-day existence which took them between sectors: public and private; government, the academy and civil society; and different religious perspectives and groups. We consider how different forms of social capital have enabled these boundary crossings. Finally, we reflect on the role of higher education in navigating these intersections.

5.1. Boundary crossing: sectors and capitals

It was evident that the reform leaders took advantage of – or perhaps generated – permeability between different sectors, and that this was central to the wide base of support which helped them to be successful in bringing about change. Just as they drew upon connections from different sectors, actors also made the most of both bridging and bonding capital-based networks, although their origins and purposes were different.

Several of the interviewees had experience of both the private and public sectors. In many ways, the PSPR is a technical administrative reform, and so many of the people involved had spent part of their career in corporate jobs where they were very well-paid for the technical expertise they possess. While this was lucrative, and also taught them a great deal about the challenges the country was facing, they felt they could do nothing to help the country from the private sector. For them, joining government or working for civil society organizations was an excellent opportunity for personal realization. In the private sector, one noted, ‘there was no passion in my job’ (PSPR, f); while another said about his work in civil society: ‘it is also personal, a passion...you work in your personal time’ (PSPR, m). While they had to renounce the economic benefits they could gain in business, they seemed satisfied with their choices.

For those who stayed in government, the reasons varied, but many of the leaders have their own rescue narrative where their participation in government can make a difference in the future of the country. From the MER movement, there were Muslim leaders who had started as activists and highly critical of government, but gradually came to realise that ‘...if I really want to effect changes in society, being in government would give you the authority and the powers to do that’ (MER, m). But government work is not a heaven of altruism: ‘After I joined government, I realized that there were few of us who really care and I could see many in government who just wanted to take advantage of the people you were supposed to help...I can help more if I stay here (PSPR, m). Similar narratives existed among those who had lucrative work overseas but chose to return to work in government in the Philippines: “I had the opportunity of staying (in the US) and being a small fish in a big pond, or come back and make a difference” (PSPR, m). Circumstances and opportunity also played major roles, not just their own motivations. Professional prestige and recognition play significant roles in being offered a high-level position in government or in the not-for-profit sector: ‘I was not invisible by this time’ (PSPR, f); ‘... there was a moment that certain opportunities and skills converged’ (PSPR, m).

Sometimes this boundary crossing was a gradual and iterative process, but not always. Among the GK interviewees, several, including the founder, had started their careers in well-paid positions in multi-national corporations such as Proctor and Gamble. More than one talked of a ‘quarter life crisis’ – a turning point in their trajectories where they realized a sense of mission. A desire to have a sense of ‘credibility and conviction’ and an opportunity to ‘harness their core’ (GK, f) prompted a radical rethink of what was important and how to achieve it. A different sort of crossover moment came to a female Muslim GK co-ordinator who went from active involvement in underground military movements in Mindanao to joining and ultimately progressing through GK: ‘So, I realized, ok, maybe this is what God gave me and I need to see, to study what is Gawad Kalinga; maybe this is something new, this is different’.

While the examples above signal permanent career changes in moving between sectors, there were also examples of those who continued to cross over at key points in their lives, and some even occupied dual roles simultaneously. For some PSPR interviewees, public-private partnership schemes made their return to the private sector possible and offered the opportunity to capitalize on the experience and knowledge gained during time in government: ‘I am working now in a public-private partnership administering a US grant for public procurement’ (PSPR, f). A highly-active GK board member was Philippines CEO of a major multinational oil corporation; he noted the importance of bringing a range of expertise and networks to the GK mission.

Of significance especially to the ARMM grouping are the bonds but also bridges concerning religion: religious networks and movements, especially for Muslims, have been crucial in the struggle for independence. But the quest for autonomy has meant the peace process and the organizations supporting it cut across faiths. For example, it is a Catholic organization that is spearheading electoral reform in Mindanao.

Ultimately, as one interviewee pointed out, it is not just about ideas, skills and motivation, making things happen requires being able to push through reforms which disrupt the status quo. ‘The reform does not end with a piece of paper. You start with a piece of paper but then you need to make sure the law gets passed...I mean it is really hard and frustrating’ (PSPR, f). Moving between sectors developed both networks and skills. Para-legal work done by some of the MER respondents signaled how these gave them credibility, but required investment of time and effort:

I was giving para-legal training to the Unions and farmers, so I would think because of my experience in different sectors, I was able to establish some sort of network. They look me up. It is easy in the sense that I might be acceptable to the different shades of the left, or even not the left, maybe a fair person to talk to. (MER, m)

Among some people who kept some personal distance from politics, there was still respect for ‘political wheels’ who know how to work the system, and who could protect them and their work. A well-respected GK founder who bridged the worlds of the Church, academia and activist politics described his ‘brokering’ role between these worlds, with different forms of authority bestowed upon him by his different hats.

While the diverse perspectives and skills that come from boundary crossing point to the importance of bridging capital, key individuals also exploited the advantages of bonding capital. Prominent Filipino Ed Campos spearheaded the PSPR from within his influential roles in the World Bank and USAID as well as national level. While all of these roles gave him both the legitimacy of international backers and the agency to act on it nationally, it is no coincidence that he was from an elite family in the Philippines and was able use this capital and prestige to bring support from national actors into the report. Local and dynastic structures of power are closely linked to traditional oligarchies nationally. One woman from PSPR argued that ‘the Philippines is a very small country. They (congressmen and senators) all come from the same school, the same family’.

5.2. The role of higher education

Much of the literature linking higher education to development is situated within a human capital logic which suggests that what matters most are the knowledge and the skills people acquire through the formal channels of teaching and learning. These, it is argued, are what students, their families and the state are investing in, with a view to increasing private and public returns through future productivity in the labour market. As a starting point, the concept of developmental leadership questions this understanding of how progress happens by highlighting the importance of individual leader agency and developmental coalitions in making positive change happen, over and above economic improvements through upskilling the labour market.

Certainly the findings of this study suggest that education in general and higher education in particular need to be seen ‘in the round’, with the networking and extra-curricular possibilities on offer clearly playing at least an equal role to the teaching and learning functions of institutions. The seeds for some of the boundary crossings mentioned above were planted through new kinds of relationships with different groups of people and through social conscientisation experienced at university.

Few of the interviewees were impressed by the formal education they had in schools and higher education institutions in the Philippines. For many of them, it was a case of developing higher order skills – leadership, critical thinking, analytical capability – through their own initiatives or outside the classroom. Indeed, many of the interviewees were quite dismissive of the pedagogies they experienced, and the nature of the curriculum, and felt that they had acquired the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for development leadership *despite* their formal education, rather than because of it. Rote learning was the normal order of things across a full range of institutions (‘what I remember most is just a lot of memorization’, said one female GK leader). One male GK respondent, still actively engaged in HE at high levels, noted disparagingly that ‘80% of what we did is useless’. In terms of the content of their studies, some useful technical skills were of course acquired and the degree from a prestigious university signaled this to employers. A substantial proportion of the interviewees, however, changed disciplines during their studies, again reinforcing the sense of boundary crossing and the importance of transferable skills as much as specialist learning.

Pedagogy generally encouraged passivity; more than one interviewee used the terms ‘exposed to’ when talking about key texts or ideas they learned while studying at university. In other words, they were not encouraged to engage critically with texts, but having them on a particular course syllabus meant that they were discovered by those who were inspired by them, rather than anything inspiring happening with them as part of their studies. Many were auto-didacts, some extremely so. Their own reading, and motivation to learn, were major shapers of learning. As one GK co-founder and HE leader said:

I had always been interested in social reform from a way back so I had read about the People’s Revolution. Then I had actually read a lot of Lenin and Mao Tse-tung and so forth beforehand, so I had some understanding both historically and theoretically of these things.

This particular leader was actually educated first in the seminary and then studied Mathematics overseas, and so this important reading was not part of his formal education. Also pointing to the narrowness of the curriculum and how it limits understanding, one leader within the Mindanao electoral reform process mentioned how his Catholic college had suppressed liberation theology rather than discussing it.

In the preparation years for higher education, leaders experienced a schooling system which was not always inclusive. Most of the Muslim leaders interviewed had attended Catholic schools as these were perceived by parents to be of higher quality. However, there were pitfalls. One GK leader from Mindanao reported experiencing bullying and spending most of her time in the library avoiding confrontations. Another way in which schooling processes perpetuate disadvantages and reinforce divisions is through language. Respondents who came from homes where English was regularly used noted the advantages this gave them in elite schools and then later in higher education, where English is the medium of instruction. Catholic schools are often segregated by sex, which, as one interviewee remarked, means that young people do not learn to deal with the opposite sex early in life.

However, by the time they reached university, while pedagogy may not have been particularly inclusive or inspiring, these leaders found that they were meeting a much wider range of people than at earlier stages of their studies. Over half of the interviewees attended elite higher education institutions. Most of them were not from elite

backgrounds, but either scholarships or family sacrifice had enabled them to reach this level. So for some of them, starting university meant, for the first time, they were mixing with people from other socio-economic strata. Given the tendency in schools to segregate by sex and religion, for many it was also the first time they mixed regularly with people of the opposite sex or other religions (with the exception of Muslim interviewees, many of whom attended Catholic schools). Given that elite universities are situated in Manila but attract students from across the Philippines, it was also an opportunity to learn how people live in other parts of the Philippines. In explaining their involvement in reforms, many participants talked about how education had enabled them to mix with people. One (MER, m) pointed out how Muslims have around 30 ethnic groups, with their own languages and cultures; he had to navigate ways to build friendships, which had been nurtured by early experience of appreciation of Muslim, Catholic and Chinese friends. Meeting students from all over the country as part of a ‘democratized culture’ was seen to open minds.

The sites for these interactions were rarely named as the lecture theatre or seminar room, where the prevailing pedagogies distanced students from each other. Rather, extra-curricular activities of all kinds created opportunities for interaction and for the exercise of leadership. These acted as platforms for personal development and conscientisation as well as exposure to political or in some cases underground movements. This took a range of forms. Even cheerleading (as in the case of one female GK leader) helped respondents to develop leadership and teambuilding skills with new and diverse contacts. Several interviewees served as year, disciplinary or student body presidents, or were involved in campus journalism or charitable organisations. As one GK leader summed up, such activities could be the first independent expression of one’s own interests and potential:

I think definitely my extra-curricular (activities) developed the most important aspects of myself that would help me as a leader. Everything is applied, and it is something that you choose. Education in the university of course you choose your course, but the requirements of that course are more or less imposed upon you and typically anyone would choose to want to go to college because that’s what society dictates or expects of one. But your parents are not exactly pushing you to join the student council, which meant that if it’s your own choice then you have to follow through on that decision.

Several leaders were heavily involved in student politics and wider political activism. One GK leader, for example, set up his own new student political party at university to avoid getting co-opted into traditional elites and all that was associated with them. Within the Mindanao group of leaders, rallies or protests about the ARMM, women’s advocacy organisations, chairing the Bangsamoro Student Alliance or joining a group called Samaha Propogandista (the movement of propaganda in the Philippines) were examples.

Many of the older leaders were at university during the period of unrest stemming from martial law in the late Marcos era. Even the Catholic Association was politicized, with prayers for democracy. References to the impact of this period of unrest were prominent across all three reforms. Student activism was a crucial period of socialization into public issues, and at UP, it was a distinct part of campus life. As one male Procurement Reform respondent noted: ‘it is difficult not to be an activist when you are in the UP’. Engagement with the People Power movement at this sensitive stage of development was central to their developing understandings of the injustices experienced by many, including fellow students, and of how to create change. At institutions where politicization was less encouraged, a particular ethos gave moral grounding to some: for one, the Jesuit motto of ‘being a man for others’, embedded in the ethos of Ateneo University, influenced activities and community work.

Many of these activities fostered a community orientation and also gave experience of mixing with people from different strata of society –

seen as important in their leadership orientation and sense of mission as well as the development of bridging capital. The one participant from the ARMM electoral reform who did not finish college, nonetheless had a legacy from her Catholic school times of community work and ‘active compassion’. But this was not just one-way charity, but also involvement. For some participants in PSPR, service learning opportunities offered by their elite institutions – such as voluntary placements in poor communities – were an important causal factor in their interest in social issues. Meeting the poor is seen as good preparation for working for government: ‘I really want our students to experience how it is...it is much like the Jesuit volunteers’ (PSPR, f). Even if coming from an existing political dynasty, in a democracy (however flawed) leaders have to engage with a wide range of people to ensure legitimation and support.

However, not all extra-curricular activities necessarily led to a stronger sense of justice, leadership skills, or greater independence, and the powerful role of sororities and especially fraternities at elite institutions is salient here. Initiation rites to some of these involve physical abuse (‘hazing’), promises of unquestioning loyalty, and vows of silence. These can then thwart anti-corruption measures later in the careers of the brothers. For the majority (but not all) of the developmental leaders in this research, fraternities were viewed as potentially non-developmental coalitions operating in the Philippines political and social landscape. Given their nature and the tendency to recruit from particular social strata or even kinship groups, they arguably constitute an example of some of the negative excesses of bonding capital. It is interesting that at a recent GK volunteer event involving a range of fraternities and sororities, the leaders symbolically presented their hazing paddles to the GK leader in the opening ceremony, indicating that in that space, those associations were abandoned for a wider solidarity.

It was in later life, once the trajectory to leadership and driving change was underway, that the accumulation of bridging capital at university bore fruit. Student experience in various activist movements gave lifetime bonds and fellowship. One participant was Chair of the National Union of Students in the Philippines and still in touch with both the ‘younger crop’ who asked him to speak, and with contemporaries who are pressing him to run for Senate, saying ‘We can help you’ (MER, m). Another revived an organization called the Political Science Club, with other majors in Political Science, and these alumni are now in Mindanao UP having created a similar organization. Such participants cited particular ‘batchmates’ (a term used in the Philippines for people who are of the same academic cohort) who are now part of their networks for reform, and the fact that people were batchmates means that ‘the network is still there and it’s easy for us to build alliances’ (MER, m). One female ARMM peace process leader had been in the same class as her husband studying Economics, and her husband’s vast business network could be drawn on: ‘I can cross over and ask them to help’. The same woman had also maintained an e-group from her time at the Kennedy School in the US, which was particularly valuable ‘because many of them have been in Cabinet, so that is a very strong network and when they support the peace process for instance it makes ripples all over the place’. Similarly, ‘it is only now,’ reported a female GK leader, ‘that I’m seeing these relationships intertwine with my professional life. I think now is the time that our batch is settling into their specific roles so now they are at a level where they could influence some decisions’.

Such networks have myriad functions. Funding is one of them. A leader in the ARMM reform still has lunch with her high school mates once a month and ‘begs money for projects’. Generally, there seemed to be little embarrassment about tapping into one’s networks, and the culture of the Philippines seems to expect it. Members are ‘lifetime friends’:

You never really move. You just expand. They are everywhere also, I mean the people in the university, my contemporaries...can be

found everywhere, in government, in the private sector; also some of them are still in the movement. But we keep in touch. It’s part of the fellowship that you feel for each other even if you don’t agree on many things (ARMM Peace Panel, f)

Beyond their own studies, several interviewees had sustained an ongoing academic role and crossed between their university positions and roles in government or civil society at different points in their lives. Structurally, the Philippines system facilitates this, with people holding several offices simultaneously, or secondments making it possible to move temporarily without permanent commitment or lost ground.

6. Conclusion

The amplifying power of networks depends largely on the capacity of the members of the network to mobilise resources of different types. In highly stratified societies, movements that are better connected to the centres of economic, political and symbolic power will be better able to achieve their goals than those that are not so well positioned in this hierarchy. On the other hand, the connections with established powers imply compromises of different kinds that those that promote structural or radical changes might be reluctant to accept (Tarrow and Tollefson, 1994). This is why social movements like GK, which aim to transform the values of society and dominant views on development, have to be very selective in their relationship with established powers. Other reformers, like the PSPR group, that pursue less controversial aims simply need to ensure that they have the most powerful allies in their network, in order to defeat political resistance from powerful actors. In the case of the MER, where the actors are transitioning from disruptive politics towards reformism and steady integration within the political structures of the system, the connections between the movement and the political authorities are crucial for the advancement of dialogue and the peace building process. In this study, across all three movements we find leaders able to draw on networks across centres of activity and power, who also themselves move between them in their lifecourse. While technology was not often indicated to be a strong force in facilitating this networking, except where contacts were overseas and not directly involved in the Philippines, ICT is likely to play an increasingly important role and will an agenda for future research.

This study suggests that in the Philippines, higher education experiences are important sources of the social capital which facilitates that resource mobilization. Prevailing evidence (Brannelly et al., 2011) and individual studies elsewhere (e.g. Jones et al., 2014) also point to the importance of higher education in providing opportunities for the proliferation of such networks. However, beyond the simple accumulation of this social capital, it is also the skill of working across these diverse networks and the cultivating of bridging capital as well as the exploitation of bonding capital that make a difference. The particularities of the Philippines as a diverse and stratified society make this especially important – but it is certainly not alone in these characteristics. It is not just the acquisition of this capital that is important, but the skills to mobilise it in ways that break through political blockages and build deep and broad support for developmental change. In this study, it was experiential learning – trialled and tested in extra-curricular activities during study and then refined and operationalized in cross-over activities in later career – that developed such skills.

Higher education is arguably a necessary but not sufficient condition for the nurturing of developmental leadership and such networks and skills. What is particularly intriguing about the perspectives of the developmental leaders in this study is that they shed new light on the purposes of higher education and the mechanisms through which it can contribute to development. The human capital arguments which drive much of higher education policy globally overlook other significant roles for universities: as sites of leadership development; as sources of bridging capital and the skills to acquire and use it; and as a workplace where leaders can spend part of their time or part of their career and

cross-fertilise skills and knowledge with other sectors. The formal teaching and learning functions of universities for students seemed to play relatively insignificant roles in these.

Just after the completion of this research – while the principal investigator was in the Philippines to present findings to the Philippines Association of State Universities and Colleges in mid-2016 – the new President Rodrigo Duterte was sworn into office. He is the first president from Mindanao to hold this office, and early signs are that his close networks are playing important roles in his Presidency. Most of his cabinet appointees are colleagues from Mindanao. He prides himself on a limited social network, though his background speaks of significant political capital with his father being a former mayor of Cebu and governor of Davao. His tenure so far is marked by extra-judicial killings and a questionable approach to human rights. Despite the controversies surrounding his tenure, his trust ratings remain high and he maintains a popular following among Filipinos who applaud his grassroots approach and disposition to eliminate poverty, crime and corruption in the country. He has pushed for a multi stakeholder agenda in consolidating peace in his own region and has highlighted the need to further develop Mindanao (and other parts of the country). He is presented as someone who is set to remove predatory leaders that hinder the country's development. How developmental leaders in the Philippines will respond to this, what spaces are opened or closed for progressive coalitions, and what the past and present roles of higher education will be, remain to be seen.

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