

Operationalizing Dynamic Filipinism: Interpreting Higher Education Institutional Philosophy through Alumni Legacies

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Abstract

Universities sustain institutional identity not only through mission statements but also through the graduates they present as exemplars of public service. This paper operationalizes Dynamic Filipinism – National University's (NU) philosophy of citizenship formation – by tracing its continuity from Camilo Osias's 1921 framing of Filipinism compatible with world progress and universal culture to NU's contemporary institutional definition. It then proposes an alumni-legacy approach that renders institutional philosophy empirically discussable through recognizable public legacies. Using four NU alumni as illustrative cases – Presidents Carlos P. Garcia (Filipino First Policy), Diosdado Macapagal (agrarian reform), and Fidel V. Ramos (Philippines 2000), alongside National Artist N.V.M. Gonzalez (Philippine literature in English) – the paper interprets these legacies through a triadic lens of intense nationalism, democracy, and evolving internationalism. Rather than claiming causality, the paper shows how alumni legacies can function as interpretive indicators of institutional philosophy in public life.

Keywords: *Dynamic Filipinism; National University (Philippines); Camilo Osias; Higher Education Institutional Philosophy; Alumni Legacies.*

1. Introduction

Institutional histories of universities are often written as timelines of founders, presidents, and milestones. Yet universities also function as civic institutions: they shape public life by training professionals, forming values, and producing graduates who enter government, industry, education, and community work. National University (NU), founded in 1900 and elevated to university status in 1921, is frequently described in narratives as an institution built to provide accessible education and to respond to the needs of its time (Villegas & Garcia, 2022).

A key concept for interpreting NU's contribution to Philippine society is Dynamic Filipinism, articulated most explicitly by Camilo Osias during his early presidency of NU. Osias described a civic-ethical formation grounded in national principles, law, liberty, justice, truth, and service, while also remaining compatible with "world progress" and "universal culture" (Osias, 1921; Claudio, 2015; Villegas & Garcia, 2022). Beyond the NU case, this paper also speaks to broader scholarship on university identity, institutional mission, and alumni meaning. Studies of higher education identity suggest that institutions articulate themselves through shared values, historical legacies, and public representations, while alumni may serve as carriers of institutional culture and as public extensions of the university mission (MacDonald, 2013; Steiner et al., 2013; Brandsma, 2019; Albritton, 2012).

This paper, therefore, asks: *How can Dynamic Filipinism, understood as NU's institutional philosophy of citizenship formation, be operationalized through alumni public legacies?* More specifically, it examines how selected cases from governance and the arts may serve as interpretive indicators of intense nationalism, democracy, and evolving internationalism. The paper contributes to higher education scholarship by proposing an alumni-legacy approach to operationalizing institutional philosophy in a short-form analytical study.

2. Dynamic Filipinism as Educational Philosophy and Institutional Identity

National University's current institutional description presents Dynamic Filipinism as a citizenship-forming orientation: it calls for "internalizing all that is best in the Filipino," with "time-honored values" and "deep spirituality" shaping education for Philippine citizenship that remains compatible with global progress, kinship, and universal culture, and guided by intense nationalism, democracy, and evolving internationalism (National University, n.d.).

This institutional summary can be traced directly to Osias's inaugural framing of NU's mission in 1921. In the speech, Osias states his belief in placing "a stamp of intenser Filipinism and deeper spirituality" upon education for Philippine citizenship, explicitly describing this Filipinism as compatible with "world progress" and this spirituality as admitting "universal culture and kinship" (Osias, 1921). In other words, the modern definition is not a new invention; it largely condenses Osias's own wording and retains his core balance: Filipino grounding without intellectual isolation.

The institutional summary can be traced directly to Osias's 1921 framing of NU's mission. He called for "intenser Filipinism and deeper spirituality" in education for Philippine citizenship, while insisting that such citizenship remain compatible with "world progress" and "universal culture and kinship" (Osias, 1921). He also linked higher education to democratic life, describing it as a training ground for leaders guided by reason and responsibility, and he emphasized international consciousness as part of civic formation. NU's later institutional language and historical overview preserve this triad of nationalism, democracy, and

internationalism (Villegas & Garcia, 2022). Claudio (2015) further situates Osias's outlook as a form of nationalist internationalism shaped by pragmatic educational thought. For this paper, Dynamic Filipinism is therefore treated as a formation philosophy with three linked dimensions: intense nationalism, democracy, and evolving internationalism.

3. Operationalization Through Notable Alumni Exemplars

Methodologically, the paper uses a qualitative interpretive design, combining close reading of institutional texts with interpretive analysis of selected alumni legacies. Dynamic Filipinism is reconstructed from Osias's 1921 formulation and NU's current institutional definition, then operationalized through a triadic lens of intense nationalism, democracy, and evolving internationalism. The four cases – Garcia, Macapagal, Ramos, and Gonzalez – were selected purposively as publicly prominent NU alumni whose legacies are already visible in institutional memory and public record, and who together provide cross-sector illustrations from governance and the arts. The coding used here (N, D, and I) is heuristic rather than quantitative; it indicates the relative prominence of each dimension in the case under discussion.

For this paper's approach, Dynamic Filipinism is operationalized through three linked dimensions that are explicit in both Osias's speech and NU's institutional summary:

- N = Intense nationalism (public responsibility): civic loyalty expressed in service and nation-building rather than self-interest
- D = Democracy (civic habit and leadership): competence, reason-based leadership, and responsibility formed through school life and higher education
- I = Evolving internationalism (openness with Filipino grounding): compatibility with world progress and universal culture/kinship, without narrow anti-foreign nationalism

President Carlos P. Garcia's Filipino First policy offers the clearest illustration of intense nationalism as a concrete policy stance. Scholarly discussion of Filipino First treats it as a form of economic decolonization, describing how the policy prioritized Filipino participation in the economy and asserted greater Filipino control amid postwar conditions of perceived external dominance (Takagi, 2014). In Dynamic Filipinism terms, this is nationalism that becomes visible not merely as patriotic rhetoric but as state policy that explicitly centers Filipino economic agency. At the same time, Filipino First can also be read as indirectly democratic in the sense that it frames national development as widening Filipino participation (though not necessarily as electoral democracy), while its internationalism is best understood as "negotiated internationalism" – economic nationalism pursued within a world of international trade, foreign exchange, and external constraints rather than in isolation (Takagi, 2014). Filipino First can be read as an institutionalized attempt at "internalizing what is best in the Filipino" in the economic

sphere, placing Filipino agency at the center of national development rather than treating progress as primarily externally driven. Code: N+++ / D+ / I+

President Diosdado Macapagal's agrarian reform can be operationalized as a double-strong illustration of both democracy and intense nationalism. The Agricultural Land Reform Code is explicit in its reform intent: it institutes land reforms and includes the abolition of tenancy as part of its policy framework (R.A. 3844, 1963). As "democracy," agrarian reform can be coded as justice-oriented citizenship through law and institutions, an attempt to correct long-standing structural inequalities and redefine rural relationships through legal transformation. But it is also coherent to code agrarian reform as intense nationalism because it treats the countryside as a foundational national problem: national development and stability require restructuring agrarian relations and strengthening the nation's productive base. In other words, it is nationalism expressed through internal reconstruction, strengthening Filipino capacity and national cohesion from below. Its internationalism is present in a lighter sense: agrarian reform belongs to a broader mid-20th-century modernization horizon, but because the core evidence in this study is the law itself, internationalism is treated as secondary unless additional policy texts or diplomatic alignments are introduced (R.A. 3844, 1963). Agrarian reform illustrates how citizenship formation guided by nationalism and democracy can be expressed through "time-honored values" of justice and social responsibility, strengthening the nation by transforming the material conditions that shape Filipino civic life. Code: N++ / D+++ / I+.

President Fidel V. Ramos's Philippines 2000 serves as the clearest illustration of evolving internationalism within the Dynamic Filipinism triad, with nationalism and democracy as supporting layers. Philippines 2000 is explicitly framed to demonstrate the country's capacity to compete globally, and the program narrative emphasizes recovery, expanded exports, and modernization, foregrounding "global progress" as a national goal (FVR Legacy, n.d.). This makes it a strong illustration of internationalism that remains compatible with Filipino nation-building: it is not internationalism as cultural surrender, but internationalism as strategy – repositioning the Philippines in a competitive global environment while pursuing national development. The nationalism dimension appears as "competitive nation-building" (strengthening the Philippine economy and institutions), while democracy can be read through the reform language of governance capacity and public responsibility, though these are not the central emphasis in the Philippines 2000 framing used here (FVR Legacy, n.d.). The Philippines 2000 closely mirrors NU's emphasis on citizenship "compatible with global progress," showing how national development can be pursued through outward-facing modernization while retaining a Filipino-centered development agenda. Code: N+ / D+ / I+++

A fourth illustration may be drawn from the cultural field through N.V.M. Gonzalez, whose career is widely recognized for major contributions to Philippine literature, and who was proclaimed National Artist for Literature (Proclamation no. 1116, 1997). Read through the Dynamic Filipinism triad, Gonzalez's legacy makes visible intense nationalism as cultural

nation-building: by writing fiction in English that centers rural and everyday Filipino life, his work functions as a sustained articulation of Filipino experience and sensibility within a modern literary form (Colorado State University Department of English, 2017). At the same time, his literary career demonstrates evolving internationalism, as his work circulated beyond Philippine borders through translation and broader readerships, making Filipino realities accessible to a wider community of letters (Oliver, 1999; Proclamation no. 1116, 1997). In this illustration, Gonzalez's "internationalism" is not a departure from Filipino grounding; it is precisely the widening of audience through a global language and transnational circulation, while keeping Filipino life at the center (Los Angeles Times, 1999). Among Gonzalez's most acclaimed works are the novel *The Winds of April* and major short-story collections such as *Seven Hills Away*, *Children of the Ash-Covered Loam and Other Stories*, *Look, Stranger, on This Island Now*, and *Mindoro and Beyond*, which are frequently cited in biographical and retrospective accounts of his literary legacy (Colorado State University Department of English, 2017; Inquirer.net, 2018; Oliver, 1999.). Code: N++ / D+ / I++

Operationalizing Dynamic Filipinism through these alumni illustrations makes the concept legible as a pattern of civic orientation across recognizable public legacies rather than as a purely philosophical claim. Garcia's Filipino First policy foregrounds nationalism as economic assertion and decolonization. Macapagal's agrarian reform foregrounds democracy as justice through law while also functioning as nationalist nation-building through rural reconstruction. Ramos's Philippines 2000 foregrounds internationalism as a form of global engagement compatible with national development. Extending the operationalization beyond governance, N.V.M. Gonzalez illustrates how cultural production, particularly Philippine literature in English, can articulate Filipino experience while reaching broader audiences, aligning nationalism with an outward-facing internationalism. Taken together, these cases show how NU's philosophy of Dynamic Filipinism can be empirically discussed through well-known public programs and cultural contributions, while remaining anchored in Osias's insistence that citizenship education must preserve Filipino grounding while remaining compatible with world progress and universal culture (National University, n.d.; Osias, 1921). Thus, by examining these cases, it can be inferred that the main dimensions of Dynamic Filipinism – nationalism, democracy, and internationalism – are evident across alumni legacies in both governance and the arts, suggesting continuity between NU's institutional philosophy and the public orientations expressed in these contributions.

4. Limitations

This paper offers a deliberately compact operationalization of Dynamic Filipinism, with results intended to be read as illustrative rather than exhaustive. First, the operationalization is restricted to a single analytic channel: alumni public legacies, specifically, major policy programs associated with three presidential exemplars and a cultural illustration through a

national artist. This focus enables clarity, but it necessarily excludes other variables that would be needed for a fuller operationalization of Dynamic Filipinism at the institutional level, such as NU's program offerings, curriculum development, student-formation practices, co-curricular life, community extension initiatives, institutional partnerships, and the everyday mechanisms through which values are transmitted and reinforced. In other words, while Dynamic Filipinism is framed institutionally as a comprehensive philosophy of citizenship formation, this paper operationalizes only one pathway through which that philosophy can be "made visible" in public life. Future studies may examine these other institutional variables and test whether the same triadic dimensions of nationalism, democracy, and evolving internationalism are articulated consistently across curricula, program design, and student outcomes.

Second, the paper uses well-known alumni legacies as interpretive anchors; however, national policies and cultural production are shaped by many structural and political factors beyond any single university's formative influence. Accordingly, the analysis does not claim causality (that NU "produced" these programs or works), but rather uses public legacies as a manageable analytic channel through which institutional philosophy may be discussed beyond mission statements alone – as a way to render NU's triadic language empirically discussable through public exemplars – an approach consistent with scholarship that treats university identity as historically shaped and publicly meditated and alumni as meaningful carriers of institutional culture. Further, because the paper focuses on highly celebrated alumni, it does not claim that these figures are representative of all graduates. Rather, they are treated as exemplary cases through which NU's institutional philosophy is publicly projected. Future studies may test the framework against less prestigious, less curated, or even disconfirming alumni cases to assess its broader robustness.

Third, the tracing of Dynamic Filipinism relies on the continuity between NU's institutional definition and Osias's foundational framing, but a longer institutional history would benefit from additional internal documents (e.g., board resolutions, presidential reports, curricular memos, speeches, and program outcomes data) to clarify how the concept was institutionalized, interpreted, and transmitted over time (Osias, 1921).

5. Conclusion

This paper set out to make Dynamic Filipinism analytically workable by shifting it from an abstract institutional philosophy to observable dimensions of intense nationalism, democracy, and evolving internationalism, and by illustrating these through selected NU alumni legacies in governance and the arts. NU's current definition of Dynamic Filipinism can be traced to Osias's 1921 formulation of citizenship education as deeply Filipino in grounding yet compatible with world progress and universal culture (National University, n.d.).

Using this continuity as an interpretive baseline, the paper showed how Garcia, Macapagal, Ramos, and Gonzalez render the triad empirically discussable through recognizable public legacies. The main value of the approach is methodological: it offers one manageable way to operationalize university philosophy through public-facing exemplars while avoiding strong causal claims. More broadly, the paper suggests that institutional philosophy in higher education may be studied not only through mission statements and curriculum design, but also through the alumni legacies universities elevate as exemplary.

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