



PHILIPPINE NORMAL UNIVERSITY
The National Center for Teacher Education

POLICY BRIEF SERIES

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 8 | 2025

PRINT ISSN: 2984-9063

ONLINE ISSN: 2984-9071

Breaking the Cycle: Rethinking Academic Inbreeding in Philippine Higher Education

Allen A Espinosa, Arlyne C Marasigan, and Levi E Elipane



<https://ioe.hse.ru/en/news/1044715550.html>

Academic inbreeding—the practice of hiring faculty graduates within the same institution—is a prevalent yet under-addressed phenomenon in Philippine higher education. While often seen as a benign or even beneficial practice, global evidence shows that it undermines institutional innovation, restricts academic mobility, and perpetuates conservative academic cultures. This policy brief draws on comparative data from eight countries and examines how academic inbreeding persists due to institutional traditions, lack of academic labor markets, and informal hiring norms. It argues for systemic reforms in recruitment, professional mobility, and research incentives to create a more dynamic and inclusive academic workforce. Key recommendations include establishing anti-inbreeding hiring policies, incentivizing external experience, and fostering inter-institutional mobility to align Philippine higher education with international best practices. Addressing academic inbreeding is not simply a matter of correcting hiring practices but of rethinking the entire academic ecosystem to prioritize excellence, openness, and relevance in a rapidly globalizing world.

Recommended Citation:

Espinosa, A.A., Marasigan, A.C., & Elipane, L.E. (2025). Breaking the Cycle: Rethinking Academic Inbreeding in Philippine Higher Education. *Policy Brief Series* 9(8), pp. 1-4. Philippine Normal University Educational Policy Research and Development Office.



PNU Educational Policy Research and Development Office
(+632) 317-1768 loc 750 | eprdo@pnu.edu.ph | www.pnuresearchportal.org

Introduction

In Philippine universities, particularly State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), the hiring of graduates into faculty positions has become an institutional norm. While this may be motivated by good intentions—such as loyalty to one’s own graduates or efficiency in hiring—international studies consistently show that academic inbreeding leads to intellectual stagnation and reduced research dynamism (Horta, 2012). This practice has been observed in numerous countries including China, Russia, Spain, and Japan, where universities hire their own PhD graduates as faculty members without requiring significant external experience. In the Philippines, this often occurs immediately after graduation, with limited exposure to external academic environments. The rationale commonly offered is that these graduates are already ‘socialized’ into the institution’s culture and are more likely to be loyal, manageable, and aligned with the institution’s goals. Li and Huimin (2020) provide a comprehensive review of the definitions and systemic roots of academic inbreeding, highlighting its persistence in systems with weak labor mobility.

However, as highlighted in the international study by Altbach, et al. (2015), inbreeding leads to homogeneity in perspectives, hinders curricular and institutional reform, and diminishes opportunities for the cross-pollination of ideas. It often results in entrenched power dynamics, with senior faculty hiring and promoting their protégés, further consolidating their control over academic departments. In a knowledge economy that rewards innovation, interdisciplinarity, and global outlooks, academic inbreeding is not only outdated but detrimental. This policy brief argues for a paradigm shift in how faculty are recruited, evaluated, and incentivized. By addressing academic inbreeding at both the institutional and systemic levels, Philippine higher education can nurture more diverse, competitive, and globally engaged academic communities.

Key Issues

1. **Entrenchment of Conservative Academic Cultures**
Academic inbreeding creates closed-loop intellectual environments. Faculty members who are trained, mentored, and then hired by the same institution tend to replicate the ideologies and methods of their mentors (Balyer & Bakay, 2022). This results in the preservation of status quo thinking, discouraging critical inquiry and alternative pedagogical approaches. Over time, this erodes the institution’s capacity for renewal and relevance, especially in fields undergoing rapid theoretical or technological change.
2. **Limited Research Productivity and Global Engagement**
Inbred faculty members tend to be less active in international research networks and are more inclined to publish in local or institutionally-affiliated journals. While this may support national relevance, it limits the global visibility of research and reduces the institution’s standing in international rankings. Studies show that non-inbred faculty with diverse academic trajectories tend to produce higher-impact publications and attract more external funding (Horta, 2012). For instance, a recent study on ecological science faculty in China found that academic inbreeding significantly reduced both publication quality and research output, underscoring the performance gap between inbred and non-inbred researchers (Chen, et al., 2024).
3. **Informal Hiring Practices and Lack of Transparency**
In many universities, open hiring processes are only formalities. Committees are often composed of insiders who favor candidates already embedded in the institution. Even when public job postings are issued, the outcome is frequently pre-determined. Entrenched internal hiring often reinforces informal networks that undermine transparent faculty recruitment, as observed in various international contexts (Altbach, et al., 2015). This erodes meritocracy and undermines the credibility of academic recruitment processes, leading to frustration among external applicants and junior scholars.
4. **Barriers to Academic Mobility**
The absence of well-developed academic labor markets and inter-institutional mobility pathways discourages academics from seeking positions in other universities. In fact, those who attempt to move between institutions are often viewed with suspicion or considered disloyal. Promotion systems further reinforce this dynamic, as preference is often given to individuals who have established roots within their institutional networks, rather than those who demonstrate merit through scholarly achievement. Without policies that encourage and reward mobility based on academic performance, universities risk becoming echo chambers that reinforce parochialism and insularity.
5. **Misalignment with Global Standards**
Leading global universities actively discourage academic inbreeding. Institutions like Peking University and Oxford have policies requiring faculty to have experience outside



their home institution. In contrast, Philippine universities continue to normalize internal hiring, often without assessing candidates' external experience or networks. This misalignment hampers efforts to internationalize Philippine higher education and diminishes competitiveness in regional and global arenas.

Policy Recommendations

1. Institutionalize Anti-Inbreeding Hiring Policies

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and university boards should mandate that new hires must demonstrate at least two years of academic or research experience at institutions other than their alma mater. This can be done through formal teaching positions, postdoctoral fellowships, or international research collaborations. Exceptions should be rare and justified with evidence of merit and competitive recruitment.

2. Create Mobility Grants and Fellowship Schemes

CHED, in partnership with research councils and international organizations, should fund mobility programs that support early-career academics in pursuing study or work experiences in other institutions, both domestic and international. These grants should be tied to performance benchmarks and considered in faculty promotion and tenure decisions. To ensure fairness and reduce institutional gatekeeping, faculty members should be given greater autonomy in initiating memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and fellowship applications. This empowers scholars while helping to avoid management biases that often restrict access to such opportunities.

3. Strict Observance of Standardized Transparent Hiring Protocols

Universities should adopt standardized, transparent hiring procedures that involve external reviewers, publicly available scoring rubrics, and clear documentation of decisions. Job calls should be widely circulated, and evaluation processes audited periodically to prevent cronyism and favoritism. Additionally, selection processes should not proceed unless a minimum threshold of diversity is met in the applicant pool—for instance, ensuring at least one candidate from another institution, one female applicant, and, where possible, one from a marginalized sector. These safeguards help ensure fairness, broaden perspectives in academic staffing, and reduce the insularity of internal hiring cultures.

4. Redesign Academic Incentives and Evaluation Metrics

Promotion and tenure guidelines should emphasize external research engagement, publication in indexed journals, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Institutions should reward faculty who gain experience abroad or who publish with international co-authors. Metrics should be aligned with global standards while remaining sensitive to local contexts—encouraging research that connects local issues with international scholarly conversations. To maintain fairness and prevent patronage, evaluation committees should also be regularly rotated to avoid entrenched influence and ensure diverse, impartial assessment. Hou (2022) developed an index showing that faculty with more diverse academic backgrounds tend to have higher research productivity.

5. Support Cross-Institutional Graduate Training

Graduate students should be encouraged to pursue degrees outside their undergraduate institutions. CHED and HEIs can offer joint programs, credit transfer schemes, and scholarships that promote academic diversification. To foster a stronger sense of Filipino academic identity, such initiatives could be branded under culturally rooted names like *The Bayanihan* or *La Solidaridad*—our local counterparts to international models like *Erasmus Mundus*. This would not only reduce academic inbreeding but also promote intellectual exchange, national pride, and innovation grounded in shared cultural values.

Conclusions

Academic inbreeding is more than a hiring practice—it is a structural phenomenon rooted in tradition, convenience, and institutional inertia. If left unchecked, it risks perpetuating intellectual stagnation, limited research impact, and insular academic cultures in Philippine higher education. The country's universities must rise to the challenge of building vibrant, inclusive, and globally connected academic environments. This requires bold reforms in recruitment, evaluation, and professional development.

Policymakers, academic leaders, and faculty themselves must acknowledge the limitations of inbreeding and commit to transformative action. While institutional loyalty and cultural continuity have their place, they should not come at the cost of innovation, quality, or global relevance. A strategic shift toward mobility, meritocracy, and openness will ensure that Philippine higher education remains competitive and responsive in an increasingly interconnected world.



REFERENCES:

- Altbach, P. G., Yudkevich, M., & Rumbley, L. E. (2015). Academic inbreeding: Local challenge, global problem. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 16(3), 317–330. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-015-9391-8>
- Balyer, A., & Bakay, M. E. (2022). Academic inbreeding: A risk or benefit for universities? *Journal of Education and Learning*, 11(1), 147–156. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v11n1p147>
- Chen, J., Liu, Y., & Feng, G. (2024). Academic inbreeding reduces the scientific performance of ecologists. *Biologia*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11756-024-01741-2>
- Horta, H. (2012). Deepening our understanding of academic inbreeding effects on research information exchange and scientific output: New insights for academic-based research. *Higher Education*, 65(4), 487–510. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-012-9559-4>
- Hou, N.-M. (2022). Academic inbreeding revisited: A unified index integrating educational background and mobility and a quantitative study of academic outputs. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4100546>
- Li, F., & Huimin, J. (2020). On the definition, causes, and impacts of academic inbreeding: A review. *Science & Technology Progress and Policy*, 37(6), 154–160. <https://doi.org/10.6049/kjbydc.2019100803>

Declaration

This policy brief includes sections that were edited or refined with the assistance of ChatGPT-4o. The AI tool was used solely for language enhancement—such as improving clarity, coherence, and tone—and not for generating original ideas, arguments, or policy recommendations. All AI-assisted content was carefully reviewed and revised by the authors to ensure it meets ethical and scholarly standards. The authors assume full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and academic integrity of this work.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Allen A Espinosa is a professor of Science Education at the College of Advanced Studies and a fellow at the Educational Policy Research and Development Office of the Philippine Normal University. His research covers a wide range of topics, including policy research in education, teacher education, information disorder, and social justice in education.

Arlyne C Marasigan is a professor of Educational Leadership and Management at the College of Advanced Studies and a fellow at the Educational Policy Research and Development Office of the Philippine Normal University. Her research interests include rural, environmental, and science education.

Levi E Elipane is an associate professor of Mathematics Education at the College of Advanced Studies and is currently designated as deputy dean of the same College. His research interests include lesson study, teacher education (pre-service and in-service), and mathematics teacher education.



The PNU Educational Policy Research, and Development Office

The EPRDO is a specialized research center in the University focused on policy research and studies on teacher education. It is established to provide research-based policy recommendations to policy makers. It also serves as the clearing house for all data relevant to teacher education in the Philippines and beyond.

Vision

The Philippine Normal University through the EPRDO aims to be an innovation hub of teacher education research and educational policy studies.

Mission

To strengthen the culture of excellence in teacher education research and educational policy studies.

Objectives

The EPRDO shall manage the University's research production, enhance human resource capabilities, and share expertise to other Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in the area of teacher education research

Strategies

1. Establish and maintain a web-based university research portal that facilitates automated research management systems, and which also serves as the database of teacher education policies and teacher education research in the country and Southeast Asia.
2. Share research expertise and competence in teacher education research with other TEIs throughout the country;
3. Develop and disseminate the University research agenda
4. Design and implement the research capability program for faculty and staff;
5. Manage University's research production particularly the conduct of educational policy studies in education and teacher education; and
6. Serve as the implementing arm for research incentives and research ethics review.

Values

SYNERGY (Working collaboratively as a team)
 EFFICIENCY (Delivering research services efficiently)
 EXCELLENCE (Achieving high quality research outputs)
 PRODUCTIVITY (increasing research production of the University)

The **Policy Brief Series** aims to provide observations, analyses, and insights by PNU faculty and researchers on various educational policy issues. The views contained in the policy briefs are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the University.

The **Policy Brief Series** is published monthly by the **Philippine Normal University Educational Policy Research and Development Office** (PNU-EPRDO). The PNU-EPRDO oversees the editing, compiling, and printing of the policy brief.

Editors and Reviewers

Term 1, SY 2025-2026

Heidi B Macahilig, PhD
Director

Allen A Espinosa, PhD

Nikolee Marie A Serafico-Reyes, PhD

Arlyne C Marasigan, PhD
Fellows

Bhejay L. Molera

Seth R. de Guia

Neil Franco Abad

Christian Jonel Enclonar
Support Staff

Address

Room 205, Pedro Orata Hall
 Philippine Normal University, Manila, Philippines 1000

<https://www.facebook.com/pnueprdo>

