

Gadamer's hermeneutics on dialogue and inclusive educator development in a global age

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Abstract

Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic theory provides a lens for examining educator development in higher education under globalisation, placing inclusivity at the centre of teaching practice. Through the fusion of horizons, dialogical hermeneutics offers ways to balance global standards with local traditions, addressing tensions revealed in Philippine scholarship on training, professional development, and educational technology, which highlight structural flaws, uneven implementation, and persistent challenges in integration. Pressures from global rankings exacerbate these issues, commodifying education and weakening holistic learning. To respond, this study employed qualitative content analysis enriched by a hermeneutic dimension, emphasising reflexive and collaborative interpretation that reframes contradictions as opportunities for dialogue. Findings show how educators can transform prejudices into bridges of meaning, reorienting development towards inclusivity, critical thinking, reflective practice, and dialogical approaches that ensure competitiveness in a global economy while remaining culturally grounded.

Keywords: *fusion of horizon, inclusive education, professional development, educational technology*

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, rapid changes in politics, society, and technology have significantly influenced higher education (Junger et al., 2025; Mena-Guacas et al., 2025; Brankovic & Cantwell, 2022; McCarthy et al., 2023; Zou et al., 2025; Kucirkova et al., 2026; Wolff & Ehrström, 2020). In this context, professors and university instructors must reconsider their practices and assume greater responsibility in addressing the widening gap between academic standards and institutional policies that are often grounded in weak or questionable assumptions (Marshall, 2024). At the same time, increasing pressure exists to design training programmes that prioritise education aligned with social expectations (Lapidot-Lefler et al., 2024). This situation makes it imperative to identify the specific training needs of educators, particularly new educators employed in both public and private institutions (Junger et al., 2025).

Today, educators are expected to possess not only technical and disciplinary knowledge but also a strong sense of ethical and social responsibility in order to develop pedagogical responses to the ongoing challenges in higher education (Bakar, 2021; Fernandes, 2024). However, educators' practices are simultaneously shaped by local and global demands, creating complex conditions for their preparation and professional support. According to Altbach (2015), at the local level there is increasing emphasis on rooted pedagogies that address community needs and draw upon indigenous knowledge. At the global level, institutions face pressure to conform to ranking metrics, learning outcomes, digital platforms, and benchmarks for “competitiveness.” The intersection of these forces creates dilemmas for educators who must negotiate between honouring local cultures and meeting global expectations of excellence.

This dual pressure calls for new strategies in teacher education and professional development that can address both community-based and international needs (Knight, 2013). Gadamer's theory of dialogical hermeneutics offers a useful lens for engaging with this tension. The concept of a “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer, 1975, 2004) provides an entry point for inclusive thinking, in which local traditions and global norms engage in dialogue rather than stand in opposition. From this perspective, institutions may pursue a synthesis that respects their local identities while enhancing their global competitiveness, and educators may develop as professionals capable of operating not only in local contexts but also in international settings.

This research explores the challenges faced by higher education instructors, including a shortage of suitably qualified educators, mismatched training expectations, and the ongoing need for continuous professional development. The study employs Gadamer's ideas on the ontology of dialogue and the fusion of horizons to examine the potential of dialogical hermeneutics to ease, if not entirely resolve, the tension between local pedagogical practices and the pressures of standardisation and internationalisation. Within this integrative perspective, inclusion becomes a matter of building bridges across differences in language, tradition, and meaning. Thus, the purpose of this research is to articulate ways of enabling educators to remain viable and competitive in the globalised higher education environment.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The study employed a hermeneutic approach, drawing on Hans-Georg Gadamer's work on integrating diverse perspectives to develop practices that involve broader participation. Within this approach, educators play a key role in linking pressures arising from international standards with the specific conditions of teaching in local contexts. Gadamer (2004) argues that understanding develops through dialogue among individuals, in which different interpretations of meaning intersect without one perspective simply replacing another. For educators, this suggests that their experiences, backgrounds, and professional engagements form the contexts in which tensions between international standards and local practices emerge, require response, and create opportunities for change. What may initially appear as preconceived views are, in Gadamer's analysis, not merely obstacles but necessary starting points for developing understanding. By recognising these perspectives, educators can participate more meaningfully in dialogues that generate new interpretations.

This research focuses on educators' experiences, examining how they respond to curricular requirements, diverse professional backgrounds, and institutional expectations as concrete examples of the interpretive process described by Gadamer. Through interactions with colleagues in various contexts, with students, and with institutional structures that establish policies, educators work to address differences and create opportunities for more inclusive practices. This ongoing engagement aligns with Gadamer's claim that dialogue remains open and oriented toward the continual development of new understandings (Davey, 2016). In this way, the study views educators as agents who facilitate inclusive practices

through dialogue, helping to bridge the gap between locally grounded teaching approaches and the broader demands of teaching within an increasingly globalised educational landscape.

2.2. Language as Dialogue: Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Continuity of Meaning

While Gadamer's hermeneutics emphasises dialogue as the basis of human existence, studies on professional development in higher education rarely examine how educators themselves engage in dialogical processes. Much of the literature focuses on measurable competencies or adherence to institutional standards, often overlooking the transformative potential of dialogue in reconciling local traditions with global demands. Within this perspective, dialogue serves as more than a tool used by individuals; rather, language appears as a primary condition of human existence.

This view differs from the position presented by Wittgenstein (1953, 2009), who describes language as a game governed by specific rules. According to Wittgenstein, such games arise within particular "forms of life," which are shaped by the communities that establish them. Gadamer, however, proposes a broader understanding of language. For him, language forms the basis of human life and extends across the human community. Its scope is global. Gadamer (1975, 2004) argues that nothing lies outside language, which establishes the space within which individuals can express meaning. This space situates human beings within tradition. Tradition itself appears as a living process, sustaining dialogue across time and carrying meanings from the past into the present.

Language thus provides the medium through which all understanding occurs. This understanding is not merely a practical function but reflects a fundamental aspect of the human condition. Human existence unfolds through language. Moreover, language reveals meanings that were not previously apparent. Through this process, it surpasses the limits that may seem to contain it. Heidegger (1947, 1998) describes language as the "*house of Being*," and Gadamer develops this idea further by suggesting that human relationships are mediated through language. In this sense, language houses these relationships. Speaking authentically therefore involves interpretation: the speaker interprets while also being interpreted. Understanding operates as a reciprocal process that moves in both directions, making dialogue inherently relational.

From this perspective, language offers more than a simple means of communication. While Wittgenstein (2009) explains language through the notion of language games, language

also exhibits features that extend beyond the game itself. It connects the speaker with speech, the interpreter with the text, and the self with the other. These connections occur through the medium that language provides. Dialogue is not a competition, nor does it involve individuals seeking dominance through rhetorical means. Rather, dialogue constitutes a shared activity through which meaning gradually develops and continues to evolve.

Lyotard (1979, 1984) observes that language games increasingly take on a scientific orientation, in which performance becomes the primary measure of legitimacy. In this framework, knowledge is validated through efficiency, and output becomes the basis of evaluation. Gadamer offers a different emphasis, suggesting that genuine conversation possesses particular characteristics. Such encounters occur spontaneously, though they are rare. They remain open and inclusive of all participants. These encounters reveal the inherently dialogical character of language. Language operates as a medium of meaning, and through this medium horizons expand. This expansion unfolds as an ongoing process that fosters authentic understanding among human beings.

Within this framework, practices such as interpretation, documentation, and translation should not be regarded as simple acts that merely reproduce existing material. Rather, they are activities that actively produce and shape meaning. Repetition without a search for meaning restricts the potential of language. Similarly, translation that removes context diminishes dialogue, and written records may introduce distortions depending on the perspective of the individual producing them. Gadamer (1975, 2004) addresses this issue by proposing the rehabilitation of prejudice. He argues that understanding always begins with preconceptions that precede the present moment, and that genuine insight develops through the humble sharing of thoughts and experiences with others.

Heidegger (1947, 1998), in a related but distinct approach, suggests that understanding is grounded in possibilities, ways of being, and must attend to the ordinary dimensions of everyday life (Polt, 1999). Such understanding recognises the reality of the present while remaining oriented toward what is yet to come. As Stambaugh (1996) illustrates in her translation of *Being and Time*: “*I am not just what I am; I am who I am not yet.*” Similarly, Kant (1781, 1997) situates reflection within spontaneity, shaped by the activity of free thinking that forms the foundation of knowledge. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that language operates as a form of continuity within an interpretive circle that turns without end. Language is neither a fixed system nor a static structure; rather, it is an ongoing process through

which meaning is continually recovered and reshaped. For Gadamer, this process represents the continuous transformation and deepening of relationships among individuals.

2.3. Inclusivity and the Hermeneutical Fusion of Horizon

Although Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons highlights inclusivity and the meeting of perspectives, research on educator development in the Philippines seldom applies this philosophical lens. Existing studies tend to emphasise structural issues or standardised frameworks (i.e., Sinsay-Villanueva et al., 2025; Chin et al., 2022; Ormilla, 2025; Angtud & Sasan, 2023), but they rarely explore how inclusivity and dialogue can reshape educators' identities and practices within culturally specific contexts.

The process that brings different perspectives together is inherently inclusive because it provides a means for viewpoints to meet and generate new forms of understanding (Gadamer, 1975, 2004). The act of recalling past events illustrates this interactive approach to understanding. Recollection does not simply reproduce what has occurred; rather, it involves interpreting and reinterpreting experiences over time. For example, two individuals who watch the same film may describe it differently, demonstrating that understanding is not fixed but evolves through interpretation and interaction (Davey, 2016). A similar dynamic occurs when a Chinese speaker who does not understand English attempts to communicate with an English speaker. Such interactions affirm Gadamer's view that language cannot be reduced merely to structural or formal rules. Instead, language functions as a medium for shared understanding rather than simply a system governed by rules.

Gadamer (1975, 2004) likens language to a reciprocating movement, similar to a sphere moving in directions that appear both predictable and unpredictable, thereby revealing the multiple possibilities of meaning and interpretation. Words often carry multiple layers of meaning. For instance, the concept of "love" appears in different linguistic forms, Ilocano *ayat*, Spanish *amor*, Latin *eros*, Greek *agape*, and German *sorge*, each expressing distinct nuances that keep the concept dynamic and continually evolving (Warnke, 1987). For Gadamer, understanding extends beyond memorising or clearly defining meaning. It often emerges through sudden encounters, such as engagement with works of art, that prompt individuals to move beyond previously held limitations.

This perspective suggests that educators can foster learning not only by examining the historical meanings of words but also by demonstrating how language and other symbolic

forms shape human experience. Even a simple symbol, such as the plus sign (+), exceeds its mathematical function of addition and can represent connection or the bringing together of elements (Grondin, 2003). Through such examples, language and symbols become sites where meanings expand and new understandings emerge.

2.4. A Hermeneutic Critique of Higher Education Rankings

The growing emphasis on university rankings and the expansion of institutional activities across national boundaries have significantly altered the approaches adopted by higher education institutions (Garo et al., 2025). In pursuing indicators that enhance international recognition, universities often adjust their policies and practices in ways that shift attention away from community-oriented education and the development of cultural dimensions. This emphasis on competition tends to transform education into a commodity, prioritising institutional visibility and market presence over the holistic development of students. Although rankings can shape public perceptions of an institution, they may conflict with educational aims that seek to promote transformative change and attend to the development of the whole person.

International ranking systems also generate considerable pressure for both educators and students, who are required to meet standardised criteria and performance indicators. Such demands may constrain student development by sidelining aspects such as creativity, recognition of individual differences, and the inclusion of diverse groups. At the same time, educators are often evaluated primarily through measurable outputs rather than their capacity to foster reflection, critical inquiry, and independent thought. Krishnamurti's concept of "right education" stands in direct contrast to this orientation, suggesting that education is not merely about accumulating information but about learning "*how to look, to listen, and to find out what is true*" (Krishnamurti, 1974, p. 6). By recasting educators as facilitators who support students in examining themselves rather than merely transmitting fixed knowledge, Garo et al. (2025) highlight the tension between the pursuit of international recognition and the deeper purposes of education, which involve transformative change and the development of the individual as a whole.

Although rankings and internationalisation can bring certain benefits, such as increased visibility, collaboration opportunities, and financial support, these outcomes may also undermine education's potential to foster intellectual freedom. Drawing on Krishnamurti's

ideas, Garo et al. (2025) propose that institutions should move away from curricula centred on rote learning and instead promote critical inquiry, emotional awareness, and experiential forms of learning. Such a shift would allow institutions to reduce their reliance on market-driven and neoliberal models while reorienting their core mission toward inclusivity (Garo, 2026), ethical educational practices, and the cultivation of students' capacity for critical reflection. Krishnamurti's perspective, which integrates different dimensions of education by bringing together feeling and thinking in a shared search for self-understanding, offers a strong foundation for resisting the commodification of learning and reaffirming the role of higher education in promoting genuine human development.

Despite these concerns, much of the existing research continues to focus on measurable competencies or adherence to standardised frameworks across contexts, reflecting the same performance-driven orientation reinforced by global rankings. Few studies examine the dialogical processes through which educators reconcile local traditions with global expectations. This gap is particularly evident in Philippine higher education, where professional development frameworks frequently adopt standardised indicators while overlooking the potential of inclusivity and dialogue to transform how educators understand their roles and professional identities. Integrating Gadamer's hermeneutics, particularly the concept of the fusion of horizons, into discussions of educator development offers a way to challenge the commodification of learning and to balance global competitiveness with meanings that emerge from local cultural contexts.

2.5. Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Contemporary Challenges in Education

While Gadamer and subsequent scholars acknowledge that bias cannot be eliminated but must instead be transformed through dialogue, current research on professional development often reduces bias to issues of compliance with external standards. Limited scholarship investigates how dialogical processes, grounded in hermeneutics, might support innovation while maintaining relevance to cultural contexts in Philippine higher education.

Husserl's work demonstrates that suspending bias, an approach that can occur in everyday experience, offers a way to examine phenomena as they appear in themselves (Husserl, 1931, 2012). However, achieving a complete suspension of bias is difficult. Consciousness always operates with a particular orientation toward certain aspects of experience. The process of phenomenological reflection attempts to reveal experience as it is

directly lived. Gadamer (1975, 2004) responds to this limitation by arguing that bias cannot be entirely removed. Instead, bias becomes a necessary condition for interpretation and judgment. Rather than being treated solely as a limitation, bias can also extend the range of what individuals are able to consider. This perspective places bias within contexts where understanding develops through engagement with others, allowing perspectives to change through dialogue.

For example, a reader encountering a work that differs from familiar conventions may initially reject it because of existing biases. Through deeper engagement and reflection, however, the reader may later recognise the work's value. In this process, bias is not eliminated; rather, it is transformed. Understanding evolves through interaction and through the contextual relevance that interpretation provides (Warnke, 1987; Grondin, 2003).

Bakar (2021) extends this perspective by examining understanding in relation to teaching approaches. The analysis suggests that educational methods must evolve to respond to changes associated with increasingly interconnected systems, ensuring inclusivity across diverse groups and meeting standards that apply across different contexts. These developments require educators to reconsider teaching practices that have remained unchanged for extended periods. They call for approaches that adapt to changing conditions while maintaining a focus on meaningful learning. Preparing individuals for teaching and providing continuous professional development for those already in the profession form the foundation of this transformation.

Institutions of higher education therefore face a complex challenge: they must preserve valuable traditions while simultaneously supporting innovative practices. At the international level, measures of educational quality often emphasise quantifiable outcomes, such as research visibility and measurable impact. At the local level, however, greater importance is placed on contextual factors, including the social and cultural dimensions of learning environments. Bakar (2021) argues that professional development for educators should address both the acquisition of specific competencies and the cultivation of understanding through collaborative exchange. Emphasising continuous professional growth can foster a sense of shared progress and relevance in higher education, encouraging educators to perceive their work as part of an ongoing and collective endeavour.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This research adopted a qualitative design and utilised content analysis as its principal analytical method. Content analysis served as a critical tool for identifying codes, themes, and recurring patterns that consistently surfaced within educators' narratives and across the reviewed literature. By systematically organising qualitative data, the method illuminated patterned meanings that underscored the tensions between global competitiveness and local relevance in higher education (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Within this framework, content analysis facilitated the identification of recurring discourses such as ranking pressures, inclusivity, indigenous pedagogy, and technological challenges, thereby providing a structured foundation for interpreting how these dynamics influence educator development in the Philippine context.

To enhance interpretive rigour, the study incorporated a hermeneutic dimension. Hermeneutic approaches emphasise reflexive and dialogical interpretation, requiring researchers to interrogate their own assumptions and address potential biases throughout the coding and thematic development process (Crowther et al., 2017). This ensured that the categories derived from content analysis were not treated as static classifications but as evolving horizons of meaning, consistent with Gadamer's philosophy of understanding. Through this combined approach, the study achieved both methodological credibility and philosophical depth, enabling the analysis of educators' narratives to remain transparent, critically engaged, and aligned with the overarching aim of advancing inclusive educator development within a globalised educational environment.

3.2. Data Collection

A structured search strategy was implemented to identify peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers from academic databases and institutional repositories. Keywords such as "educator training standards," "higher education challenges," "professional development," "educational technology," "dialogical hermeneutics," and "fusion of horizons" were used to locate relevant sources. The inclusion criteria prioritised studies published within the last five years (2020–2025) to ensure relevance to contemporary educational contexts. In addition, foundational philosophical works by Hans-Georg Gadamer, as well as related works

by other philosophers, were incorporated to provide theoretical grounding for the hermeneutic dimension of the study.

3.3. Data Analysis

The selected studies were thoroughly reviewed to extract relevant data, including findings related to challenges in educator training, tensions between local pedagogical practices and global standards, and the application of hermeneutic philosophy in educational contexts. A thematic analysis approach was employed within the broader content analysis framework. Extracted data were categorised into five major themes: (1) structural challenges in educator preparation, (2) inconsistencies in training standards, (3) professional development needs, (4) dialogical hermeneutics as a framework for inclusivity, and (5) the fusion of horizons as a reconciliatory practice between local identity and global competitiveness.

To evaluate the philosophical and practical implications of dialogical hermeneutics in addressing these challenges, the analysis considered factors such as conceptual coherence, applicability to pedagogical contexts, and alignment with principles of inclusivity. The synthesis of findings from the literature review informed the development of a hermeneutic framework aimed at addressing the challenges faced by educators. This framework emphasises the potential of dialogical hermeneutics, particularly Gadamer's concepts of the ontology of dialogue and the fusion of horizons, to balance educators' unique identities with the global demands of standardisation and internationalisation, thereby fostering inclusivity and meaningful engagement in higher education.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was not required for this study because it relied exclusively on previously published literature as its primary data source. In accordance with accepted standards for systematic literature reviews in qualitative research, the researchers adhered to principles of authenticity, honesty, and academic integrity throughout the study. Relevant studies were carefully reviewed and interpreted, with due attention given to avoiding fabrication and ensuring rigorous critical analysis (Burles & Bally, 2018).

All concepts and arguments presented in this study were independently developed and critically examined by the researchers. While artificial intelligence tools did not contribute substantive analytical insights, Microsoft Copilot was used to assist with tasks such as

literature searches, summarisation, and paraphrasing. All AI-assisted outputs were carefully verified, appropriately cited, and properly referenced to ensure transparency, maintain academic rigour, and uphold scholarly integrity.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Bounded Horizons and Digital Struggles: Hermeneutics of Educational Technology in Philippine Higher Education

Educators in the Philippines encounter significant challenges when integrating technology into higher education systems, particularly due to structural and infrastructural limitations. Issues such as unreliable internet connectivity, outdated equipment, and inadequate institutional support are compounded by the absence of coherent national ICT policies. These problems are further intensified by stark disparities in resource distribution between urban and rural areas, resulting in uneven access to technological tools for teaching and learning (Espinosa et al., 2023). As a result, higher education institutions often adopt fragmented approaches to online learning without a unified strategy. The weaknesses exposed by these infrastructural gaps highlight the limitations of technology integration in education and raise concerns regarding educators' preparedness. Resistance to change, stress related to technological adaptation, and constrained pedagogical approaches hinder the transition toward technology-enhanced instruction designed to promote interaction and collaboration among learners (UNESCO, 2023).

The conditions described here illustrate the limited scope of current educational practices. At the same time, they indicate the need to reinterpret the situation and adopt more substantial changes in approach. Viewing the educational landscape through a contextual lens offers a philosophical perspective on these challenges, framing them not merely as failures of practice but as conditions that can enable dialogue among participants. As Učník (2025), drawing on Patoka's work, observes, recognising the position an individual occupies within a particular context is a fundamental aspect of human life and experience. Gadamer extends this idea by suggesting that perspectives shaped by specific positions should not be regarded as fixed limitations. Instead, they are intrinsic conditions of human existence that develop and unfold through dialogue among participants.

This approach presents philosophy not as a finished product but as a process that unfolds over time. It cultivates humility among those engaged in education and encourages

openness toward others, texts, and traditions, thereby sustaining receptivity to diverse possibilities. Conceiving philosophy as an ongoing journey can inspire educators to view change as a continuous opportunity for growth. Gadamer's interpretive framework moves beyond the dichotomy between dialogue as interaction and domination as control, situating philosophical reflection within contexts where relationships and power dynamics among participants are present. In contemporary discussions within Philippine higher education institutions, particularly those concerning democratic values, this perspective underscores the need for interpretive approaches that extend beyond prevailing methods and engage participants in more inclusive and dialogical ways.

Heidegger identifies the human capacity to perceive conditions within specific contexts as a fundamental aspect of our nature (Sadler, 2002). From this perspective, meaningful educational reform requires those involved in the process to prepare for circumstances that are not yet fully known and to accept such uncertainty as part of the unfolding of change. When integrated in a comprehensive and thoughtful manner, technology in education can function as a communicative medium that benefits all participants (Ikhlas et al., 2025). Gadamer's hermeneutic perspective supports such integration (Rorty, 2011), enabling dialogue between institutions, such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and fostering alignment between global standards and locally relevant contexts. This alignment not only strengthens inclusivity within society but also promotes transformative change in education, representing a meaningful and significant form of reform.

4.2. Reconciling Training Standards and Global Demands in Philippine Higher Education

Cuevas (2025) investigates the issue of faculty members in medical technology programmes within higher education who do not meet the required qualifications. The study highlights that the CHED mandates that faculty teaching in professional fields must hold master's degrees directly related to their discipline. The findings reveal that institutions face considerable difficulty complying with this requirement. Data indicate that in School A, 55.5% of faculty members possess the required degree, while in School B only 27.2% meet the qualification. Both institutions therefore fall below the minimum threshold of fifty per cent established by CHED. This pattern suggests that the issue is systemic rather than isolated. Contributing factors include the limited availability of graduate programmes, insufficient

institutional support, faculty migration abroad, and financial and structural barriers that hinder faculty from pursuing advanced studies.

The analysis identifies additional factors contributing to the problem, including curricula that require revision and the increasing commercialisation of education. Weaknesses in institutional quality assurance also emerge from the study. These issues extend beyond simple non-compliance with regulatory requirements and produce broader consequences. The findings indicate a decline in the quality of instruction closely associated with patterns in faculty qualifications. Performance in licensure examinations likewise reflects these shortcomings, while institutional standing in accreditation processes appears diminished as a result. Overall, the study suggests that higher education institutions in the Philippines face substantial challenges in meeting global standards.

Gadamer's hermeneutic approach provides a valuable perspective for examining these contradictions. His conception of dialogue emphasises that understanding emerges through the interaction of perspectives rather than through the dominance of one viewpoint over others. Applied to faculty development, this insight highlights the tension between policy requirements and institutional practices, a tension that necessitates dialogue among multiple stakeholders—including faculty members, administrators, policymakers, and accreditation bodies. Such dialogue must consider the lived experiences of educators, the inequalities produced by structural conditions, and the cultural traditions that shape educational practice, while also remaining responsive to global demands for standardisation and internationalisation. Marx's (1996) observation that history is shaped by human action, yet should not be reduced to individual preference, underscores the importance of governance that balances responsibility and collective purpose. In this context, faculty development should not be pursued merely as a means of compliance but as a transformative process capable of advancing education and reshaping the system in meaningful ways.

An approach that integrates diverse perspectives offers a constructive way of examining differences in training standards. Such differences need not be regarded as problems but can instead be viewed as opportunities, particularly when traditions in educator preparation are aligned with contemporary challenges and future goals. Educational leaders must critically examine past practices, a process that helps guard against the risks associated with unchecked authority (Burger, 1977). Through such reflection, professional development becomes a strategic necessity rather than a formal requirement. Within this framework, the pursuit of

understanding and professional growth should not be driven solely by directives from CHED but by a genuine commitment to the needs of educators, cultivated through dialogue. This dialogical process enables the integration of locally grounded teaching identities with standards applied across broader contexts. By fostering meaningful dialogue and incorporating multiple perspectives, variations in training standards can become pathways toward inclusion. In doing so, institutions can preserve the distinctive identities of educators while simultaneously responding to the demands of competitiveness in international educational environments.

4.3. Reframing Teachers' Experiences in Higher Education: A Hermeneutic Dialogue of Identity, Practice, and Transformation

Merino et al. (2025) examine Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in science education, focusing on teacher development as a driver of change in response to global challenges such as climate change, sustainability, and the need for scientific literacy. The study identifies persistent patterns in teacher training that largely follow traditional models characterised by standardised approaches and rigid curricula. These curricula emphasise technical knowledge, often at the expense of local contexts, interdisciplinary teaching, and socio-scientific issues. The analysis further reveals that instructional materials frequently lack contextual grounding, presenting subject matter in isolated compartments. This compartmentalisation restricts teachers' ability to connect lessons with cultural realities, thereby limiting the broader relevance and impact of science education.

Such separation also weakens the connection between classroom instruction and environmental concerns, reducing the relevance of lessons to urgent global issues. The findings point to institutional resistance, resource constraints, and continued reliance on outdated teaching practices, all of which hinder innovation. These conditions result in educators who are insufficiently prepared to foster critical reflection, civic engagement, and holistic learning. Merino et al. (2025) therefore argue that Continuing Professional Development must be reconceptualised, not merely as a technical update but as a mechanism for social transformation. Through this reconceptualisation, educators can draw upon both local and global educational contexts, generating meaningful change within their communities. The study concludes that science education should be restructured in ways that significantly transform pedagogy, cultivating citizens who are both critically informed and actively engaged.

Gadamer's work on dialogue provides a valuable framework for interpreting these findings. His view that understanding emerges through the convergence of perspectives, rather than through the dominance of a single viewpoint, suggests that teacher development should not be confined to standards derived from a single context or restricted to practices rooted in one location. Instead, it should reflect the outcomes of interaction among diverse perspectives (Pertierra, 2020). From this standpoint, professional development in teaching may be understood as a circular and interpretive process in which educators critically examine past models while engaging with contemporary scientific, societal, and cultural issues. This dialogical process enables educators to approach science education in ways that respond to global expectations while remaining meaningful within local contexts.

Gadamer's (2004) claim that bias is an essential condition of understanding resonates strongly with Merino et al.'s (2025) critique of training systems bound to rigid standards. Rather than attempting to eliminate biases shaped by cultural contexts and disciplinary traditions, the hermeneutic approach calls for their transformation through reflective dialogue. Such transformation allows educators to recognise the limitations of their perspectives and expand them through engagement with others. In this way, professional development becomes more than a technical update; it evolves into a dialogical practice in which understanding emerges through interaction among teachers, their communities, and the broader demands placed on education across diverse contexts.

Gadamer's conception of bias as a condition for understanding further highlights the limitations of training systems that rigidly adhere to established standards. Educators inevitably carry assumptions shaped by their cultural backgrounds, disciplinary traditions, and institutional experiences. Rather than seeking to eliminate these influences, hermeneutic inquiry emphasises their reinterpretation through dialogue grounded in reflection and mutual understanding. In this sense, bias becomes a productive starting point that encourages deeper engagement, enabling educators to confront limitations, broaden their perspectives, and develop more inclusive approaches to teaching.

Professional development therefore extends beyond the conventional updating of technical skills, evolving into a dialogical practice in which meaning and transformation arise through interaction among educators, their communities, and the wider demands of education across multiple contexts. Viewed in this light, continuing professional development functions both as a source of innovation and as a means of sustaining tradition. It equips educators with

the capacity to balance the dual imperatives of international competitiveness and local relevance while cultivating pedagogical practices that remain critically informed and culturally responsive.

4.4. Inclusivity and Competitiveness in Philippine Higher Education

Pertierra (2020), in examining the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, demonstrates that his hermeneutical approach provides a framework for understanding culture as a system through which meaning develops. Gadamer argues that initial assumptions shape the context of interpretation, enabling rather than constraining it. The interplay of different contexts illustrates how dialogue influences understanding, recognising both elements that remain constant, maintaining continuity with tradition, and those that differ, allowing interpretation to evolve. Dialogue therefore extends beyond interpersonal communication to include engagement with texts and cultural traditions. Meaning emerges through openness to alternative perspectives and through the historical situations in which interpretation is embedded. By balancing sameness and difference, this approach avoids rigid positions while incorporating multiple viewpoints, affirming that authentic experiences occur within authentic contexts (Pertierra, 2020).

Gadamer's conception of dialogue offers a perspective that can foster inclusion within Philippine higher education. It addresses systemic challenges such as structures for educator preparation, variations in training standards, and the need for professional development across disciplines. These challenges are not viewed merely as problems but as situations open to interpretation. Dialogue involves engagement with traditions, texts, and cultural practices, with meaning emerging through openness to differing perspectives and awareness of historical contexts (Gadamer, 1975, 2004; Pertierra, 2020). The realities faced by educators, including structural disparities, mobility pressures, and resource imbalances, constitute legitimate contexts for understanding. Inclusion therefore arises not from eliminating these conditions but from transforming them through reflective and critical dialogue. Such engagement enables diverse groups to co-create meaning and develop approaches that respond simultaneously to local realities and global expectations. Institutions that cultivate genuine openness can transform differences in training standards into opportunities for inclusion. By integrating multiple contexts, higher education institutions can preserve the distinctive identities of educators while meeting international requirements. This approach supports educational

practices that engage with global conditions while remaining deeply rooted in local meanings (Manriquez, 2025).

5. Conclusion

Higher education in the Philippines faces significant challenges in reconciling global standards with local conditions. These difficulties manifest in several ways: faculty members often lack the required qualifications, professional development provides limited support, and digital infrastructure remains inadequate across institutions. Such issues hinder educators' ability to meet international benchmarks while addressing the cultural and economic realities of their communities. The dominance of global ranking systems and standardised measures frequently shifts attention away from inclusivity and learner-centred education, reducing education to a commodity rather than a transformative process. Gadamer's hermeneutical framework offers a valuable perspective for examining these issues by emphasising dialogue, inclusivity, and the integration of diverse perspectives in educator development. By reinterpreting prejudice and recognising cultural diversity as conditions for understanding, educators can critically engage with inherited practices and align them with contemporary demands. This approach allows innovation and tradition to coexist and evolve, supporting a more responsive and inclusive vision of education.

To address these challenges, institutions must embed dialogue as a central principle in teacher training and professional development. This requires creating spaces for meaningful exchange among educators, administrators, policymakers, and communities, where local teaching identities are recognised alongside global standards. Universities should also invest in digital infrastructure to ensure equitable access for all students and strengthen pathways for faculty to obtain appropriate qualifications. Continuing professional development should be reconceptualised as a dialogical practice rather than a mere technical update. Such reforms would enable educators to integrate socio-scientific issues, sustainability, and civic engagement into their teaching. In this way, higher education can maintain global competitiveness while remaining responsive to local contexts. By adopting Gadamer's approach to inclusivity and the integration of perspectives, Philippine higher education can cultivate professionals who demonstrate global competence while remaining grounded in their cultural contexts. Ultimately, this orientation promotes ethical teaching and learning that supports the transformation of both individuals and society.

6. Recommendations

The principal recommendation of this study is to embed dialogue within programmes for educator training and professional development. Universities should prioritise inclusivity by integrating local cultural contexts into their curricula while also preparing educators to meet global standards. Faculty development must move beyond regulatory compliance to foster genuine dialogue among stakeholders, ensuring that policies reflect the lived experiences of those they affect. Addressing systemic challenges also requires sustained investment in digital infrastructure and the promotion of equitable access to educational technology. Furthermore, continuing professional development should be reconceptualised as a dialogical practice that equips educators to engage with socio-scientific issues, sustainability, and civic responsibility in their teaching.

The study also suggests the need for a significant shift in post-initial teacher education, from approaches primarily driven by market-oriented priorities to those that emphasise ethical teaching practices and the inclusion of diverse groups. Drawing on Gadamer's dialogical framework and the integration of multiple perspectives, institutions can cultivate educators who are recognised across diverse contexts while remaining closely connected to the communities in which they work. Such development not only strengthens the professional capacity of educators but also contributes to the broader flourishing of individuals and the transformative potential of education itself.

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AI Declaration

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