

# REDEFINING “QUALITY” IN HIGHER EDUCATION: POLICIES AND CHALLENGES

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This paper is about the policies recently implemented by the Philippine government to improve the quality of higher education in the Philippines. As this paper discusses policies, it also tries to abstract the notion of quality. Hence, the first part is a presentation of the reasons for the urgent need for quality assurance in academic institutions in order to comprehend the demand for quality as well as come up with an understanding of quality. The second part is a discussion of the recent government policies in order for Philippine higher education to respond to the quality demands of a globalizing education. It also tries to present the notion of quality in each policy. The last part is a brief discussion of the challenges of these policy changes to higher educational institutions in terms of talent, governance, and funding.

## I. Global Developments and Quality Assurance

Recently, quality assurance became a major concern of academic institutions across the globe.<sup>1</sup> This increasing and growing concern on quality assurance is caused by the significant changes in the global environment that have direct impact on the role, functions and mode of operation of tertiary educational institutions and systems.<sup>2</sup> The global phenomena that are continuously shaping and changing higher education are the following: (1) emergence of worldwide labor market, (2) increasing importance of knowledge as a driver of growth, and (3)

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<sup>1</sup> Sajida Zaki and Mohammad Zaki Rashidi, “Parameters of Quality in Higher Education: A Theoretical Framework” in *International Journal of Social Science and Education*, 2013 Volume 3, Issue 4, ISSN: 2223-4934 E and 2227-393 X Print, p. 1098.

<sup>2</sup> *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*, Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 2002, p. 7.

the information and communication revolution.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the growth of cross-border higher education directly influenced the need for quality assurance.<sup>4</sup>

Quality assurance is essential in higher education in order to ensure that higher education produce graduates that possess skills needed by the global labor market and there is an alignment and connection between higher education programs, employers and industry needs.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, since higher education plays a vital role in economic growth by delivering research that can enhance innovation and productivity; it is the role of quality assurance to provide mechanism that there is a link between higher education research, research firms and industries.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, quality assurance is critical in cross-border higher education in order to protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provision and disreputable providers and to encourage the development of quality cross-border education that meets human, social economic and cultural needs.<sup>7</sup> The emergence of worldwide labor market and the growth of cross-border higher education give higher education no option but to improve the delivery of quality educational services and to implement quality assurance systems.

Based on these global developments, the requirement for quality assurance in higher education is not only rooted on its critical role in economic development or in achieving national development goals. It is not only rooted on its positive contribution to developing countries to become "more globally competitive by developing a skilled, productive, and flexible labor force and by creating, applying, and spreading new ideas and technologies."<sup>8</sup> It is also rooted on its desire to excel and need to survive in a competitive educational landscape. Quality assurance

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 1, 7.

<sup>4</sup>See the Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education (Paris: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005, p. 8). The same document defines cross-border higher education as mobility of students, academic staff, programmes/ institutions and professionals. It also includes the "situations where the teacher, student, programme, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders." This refers to the establishment of school campus abroad, on-line education and to the formal partnership and cooperation of universities from different countries or through bilateral or multilateral agreement signed by States.

<sup>5</sup>Putting Higher Education to Work: Skills and Research for Growth in East Asia, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2012, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Guideline for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>The Road to Academic Excellence: The Making of World Class Research Universities, eds. Philip G. Altbach and Jamil Salmi, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2011, p. 1.

is, therefore, an imperative for higher education to survive, to compete and to excel.

Southeast Asian nations are grappling to implement quality assurance systems in higher educational system in order to achieve the goal of ASEAN Community 2015 to become a “single market and production base, a highly competitive economic region, a region of equitable economic development, and a region fully integrated into the global economy.”<sup>9</sup> Higher education plays a critical role in achieving this goal. The ASEAN Charter states that one of its main purposes is:

*To develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and life-long learning, and in science and technology, for the empowerment of the peoples of ASEAN and for the strengthening of the ASEAN Community.*<sup>10</sup>

Based on this provision, education plays a utilitarian role of developing human resources, empowering peoples, and strengthening the ASEAN Community. Because of this, the Blueprint for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) lays down certain provisions on education in order to achieve the “ASEAN goal of being a people-centered and socially responsible regional community.”<sup>11</sup> These provisions call for the improvement of the quality and adaptability of education, the promotion of education networking in various levels of educational institutions, and the support for student and staff exchanges and professional interactions including creating research clusters among ASEAN institutions of higher learning<sup>12</sup> directly entail the need for quality assurance.

The ASEAN University Network (AUN) Quality-Assurance describes quality as similar to love:

*Everybody talks about it and everybody knows what they are talking about. Everybody knows and feels when there is love. Everybody recognises it. But when we try to give a definition of it we are left standing empty-handed.*<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Dr. Mohammad Naim Yaakub, Challenges in Education Towards the Realization of ASEAN Community 2015 ([www.site.rmutt.ac.th/cpscworkshop/materials/sp.pdf](http://www.site.rmutt.ac.th/cpscworkshop/materials/sp.pdf)), p. 1

<sup>10</sup>See Julio S. Amador III, ASEAN Regional Community Building and Higher Education Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>ASEAN University Network Quality-Assurance: Manual for the Implementation of the Guidelines, p. 8.

Quality is difficult to define. Coming-up with a universally accepted concept and framework of quality is a challenge. Even then the AUN comes up with concept of quality. It defines quality as achieving the institution's formulated mission and goals with the assumption that such mission and goals reflect the requirements of the stakeholders.<sup>14</sup> All planning initiatives, management efforts, policies, resources, and core activities in teaching and learning, research and community involvement must lead to the achievement of the mission and goals and satisfaction of stakeholders. In other words, the results and achievements of the institution must always be directly related to the realization of the mission and goals as well as the satisfaction of the stakeholders to prove quality.

## **II. The Philippine Policy Directions on Quality Education**

The Philippine government implemented policies to address the global and regional demand for quality education. These policies changed the quality standards set by the government.

### **1. The Philippine Qualification Framework**

The Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines issued the Executive Order No. 83 (EO No. 83) on the 1st of October 2012. It established the Philippine Qualification Framework (PQF). The objectives of the PQF are stated as follows:

1. To adopt national standards and levels for outcomes of education;
2. To support the development and maintenance of pathways and equivalencies which provide access to qualifications and assist people to move easily and readily between the different education and training sectors and between these sectors and the labor market; and
3. To align the PQF with international qualifications framework to support the national and international mobility of workers through increased recognition of the value and comparability of Philippine qualifications.

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<sup>14</sup>ASEAN University Network Quality-Assurance: Manual for the Implementation of the Guidelines, pp. 16, 18

EO No. 83 created the PQF National Coordinating Committee to be chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd) and with the following members: a) Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), b) Commission on Higher Education (CHED), c) Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and d) Professional Regulations Commissions (PRC). The said Committee is tasked to “issue the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the PQF, provide regular feedback on the progress and accomplishments to the Office of the President with respect to the implementation” of the executive order and to incorporate an eight (8) Level Qualifications Descriptions in the PQF defined in terms of the following: knowledge, skills and values, application, and degree of independence. Furthermore, it mandated the DepEd, TESDA and CHED to make “detailed descriptors for each qualification level based learning standards in basic education, competency standards of training regulations, and the policies and standards of higher education academic programs.” Lastly, the PRC and CHED were also tasked to review the “framework and contents of the licensure examinations of each of the profession and align them with the PQF.”

The PQF is vital for the improvement of quality in educational system. It recognizes the role of quality education in the achievement of “growth, creation of employment opportunities and poverty reduction.” The PQF is also critical in addressing the gaps between “education and labor sectors brought about by poor information” and the “continuing disconnect between educational institutions and employment/industry trends which has brought about the mismatch in jobs and skills.” The establishment of the PQF will benefit the various sectors and stakeholders of education and training by:

1. Encouraging lifelong learning of individuals;
2. Providing employers specific training standards and qualifications that are aligned to industry standards;
3. Ensuring that training and educational institutions adhere to specific standards and are accountable for achieving the same; and
4. Providing the government with common standards, taxonomy and typology of qualifications as bases for granting approvals to stakeholders.

Quality of education is defined in the PQF as conforming to national standards, achieving the levels of educational/learning outcomes, and aligning with international qualifications and standards. Quality of education is measured in terms of employability and opportunities of graduates, performance in licensure examination, international mobility of students, graduates, and teaching staff as well as in international recognition of the programs, learning outcomes, and educational qualifications.

## **2. Outcomes-Based and Typology-Based Quality Assurance**

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) issued Memorandum Order No. 46 (CMO 46) on the 11th of December 2012. It is entitled as "Policy-Standard to Enhance Quality Assurance (QA) in Philippine Higher Education Through an Outcomes-Based and Typology-Based QA." The "reality of an ASEAN community by 2015," Philippine government's commitment to the "evolving efforts to recognize and develop a system of comparable qualifications, degrees, and diplomas across the Asia-Pacific region," and the "acceptance of internationally-agreed-upon frameworks and mechanisms for the global practice of professions" are some of the reasons cited for the issuance of the new Memorandum Order and for the need to focus on quality and quality assurance. Quality assurance, therefore, is not only meant to improve the quality of programs and graduates, improve the quality life of the Filipinos, and address the problem and scandal of poverty. It is also vital in the international standing of Philippine higher educational institutions, graduates, and professionals.

CMO 46 defines quality as the "alignment and consistency of the learning environment with the institution's vision, mission, and goals demonstrated by exceptional learning and service outcomes and the development of a culture of quality." The vision, mission and goals are the reason for the existence of an institution. These are the soul of institutions that provide meaning and uniqueness to their existence. This definition of quality requires that the academic institution must be able to translate the soul of institutions into specific and concrete learning outcomes, programs, and systems. Such translation is the focus of

implementation and evaluation to ensure that it consistently and directly realized the vision, mission and goals. More than that, the learning environment, interaction, and practices must also be anchored on the vision, mission and goals. Secondly, quality entails having “exceeding very high standards” or “conformance to standards.” The programs, outcomes, systems, and practices of an educational institution must conform to very high national and international standards. It must measure its quality based on the requirements of certain standards that govern a particular discipline, profession, and system. It is important for an institution to update itself of the national and international trends and to be able to adapt to these trends and changes for its continuous existence and to sustain excellence. In order for institutions to conform to standards, it must pass accreditation requirements; it must have centers of excellence or centers of development; and must acquire international and institutional certifications. Lastly, quality also means “developing a culture of quality.” Quality is in itself a goal to be achieved and realized. It is an on-going process that educational institution deliberately practices; and as a process, it entails innovation or continuous improvement.

CMO 46 defines quality assurance as the establishment of mechanisms, procedures and processes in order to deliver the desired quality. Quality assurance constitutes an internal system that begins with the educational institution’s vision, mission and goals and “enters a quality cycle of planning, implementation, review, and enhancement.” It also constitutes external system that refers to organizations or agencies such as accrediting bodies and government agencies that assist the academic institution in achieving quality and evaluating quality. Based on CMO 46, quality assurance is developmental because quality can be developed gradually and long term. The realization of quality requires a development of culture of quality not just the establishment of mechanisms and procedures.

Consistent with its definition of quality as the ability of educational institution to translate its vision, mission and goals into exceptional learning outcomes, programs and systems, CMO 46 strongly advocates a shift from a teaching-centered paradigm to student-centered paradigm.<sup>15</sup> It explains that in the student-

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<sup>15</sup>See the Guidelines for the Implementation of CMO 46 Series of 2012 on the Policy-

centered paradigm, "students are made aware of what they ought to know, understand and be able to do after completing a unit of study."<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, student's learning activities and assessment are "subsequently geared towards the acquisition of appropriate knowledge and skills and the building of student competencies."<sup>17</sup> The focus of attention on this paradigm is the "students and the process that will enable the development and assessment of their learning competencies as defined by disciplinary and multi-disciplinary communities of scholars and professional practitioners."<sup>18</sup> In this context, the "development of learning competencies" is the "expected outcomes of higher educational programs."<sup>19</sup> Competencies refer to the identified and operationalized "outcomes that bridge the gap between education and job requirements."<sup>20</sup> Competencies also refer to "thinking, attitudinal and behavioural competencies as well as ethical orientations."<sup>21</sup>

CMO 46 adopts two approaches in the outcomes-based evaluation. The first approach is a "direct assessment of educational outcomes, with evaluation of the individual programs that lead to those outcomes." This approach assesses programs based on the existing policies, standards, and guidelines of the discipline. It assesses programs "at the level at which the inputs, methods, and execution produce the desired learning competencies for the graduates of that program as determined by the Technical Committees/Technical Panels and as measured by appropriate assessments."<sup>22</sup> The second approach is an "audit of the quality systems of an institution, to determine whether these are sufficiently robust and effective to ensure that all programs are well designed and deliver appropriate outcomes." This approach ensures that the whole institutional systems are functioning properly in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes. In this approach, the "vision and mission of the institution" must provide guidance to its "definition of desired outcomes, especially

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Standard to Enhance Quality Assurance (QA) in Philippine Higher Education Through Outcomes-Based and Typology-Based QA, p. 11

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 14.



its graduates' competencies and qualities."<sup>23</sup> The program and institutional approaches in the outcomes-based evaluation ensure that educational institutions offer programs that met national and international standards and equipped with functional and operational systems that will effectively and efficiently deliver the desired learning outcomes. Furthermore, these programs and the systems that support the achievement of learning outcomes are aligned with the vision, mission and goals of educational institutions. Hence, the evaluation of outcomes-based education is not only external but also internal. Quality, in other words, is not only determined externally by following standards but also internally by crafting and implementing programs and systems that are aligned with the institution's vision and mission.

CMO 46, consistent with its notion of quality, also creates a typology-based quality assurance. The typology based quality assurance takes into consideration the uniqueness of each educational institution as evidenced by their differences in vision and mission. It enhances "quality assurance and improve higher education system," because it replaced the "existing one-size-fits-all QA system." The existing one-size-fits-all QA system "imposes a common set of quality indicators for all Philippine higher educational institutions regardless of their mission." Such system results to inefficiencies, crisis of purpose, lack of focused of higher educational institutions; and it presumes that academic excellence is achievable only by universities.

The typology-based quality assurance is based on existence of program excellence, institutional quality, and internal AQ system maturity. The first one is demonstrated through "accreditation, Centers of Excellence and Development, and international certification."<sup>24</sup> Institutional quality is evidenced by "institution accreditation, Institutional Sustainability Assessment (ISA) and a manifestation of quality in the areas of governance and management, teaching and learning, research, support for students and relations with the community."<sup>25</sup> Maturity in internal QA system can be seen in the institutionalization, documentation

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-15.

<sup>24</sup>Handbook on Typology, Outcomes-Based Education, and Institutional Sustainability Assessment, Quezon City: Commission on Higher Education, 2014, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

and extent of implementation of systems and processes.<sup>26</sup>

The articulation of the typology-based quality assurance is horizontal and vertical. The horizontal typology-based is made up of three types of higher educational institutions that are differentiated according to "(1) the qualifications and corresponding competencies of their graduates; (2) the nature of the degree programs offered; (3) the qualification of faculty members; (4) the types of available learning resources and support structures available; and (5) the nature of linkages and community outreach activities." The first type of higher educational institution is the Professional Institutions. This type of institutions "contribute to nation building by providing educational experiences to develop technical knowledge and skills at the graduate and undergraduate levels which lead to professional practice." The second type of institutions is the Colleges. These institutions "contribute to nation building by providing educational experiences to develop adult who have the thinking, problems solving, decision-making, communication, technical and social skills to participate in various types of employment, development activities and public discourses, particularly in response to the needs of the communities they serve."

The first two types of institutions differ in terms of programs offerings. Professional institutions are expected to have at least sixty percent (60%) of the academic degree program offerings are in the various professional areas and seventy percent (70%) of the graduate and undergraduate enrolment is in the said degree programs.<sup>27</sup> For Colleges, on the other hand, at least seventy percent (70%) of undergraduate programs have a "core curriculum that develops thinking, problem solving, decision-making, communication, technical, and social skills in with its mission and vision and the geographic or imagined/virtual community it serves."<sup>28</sup> The nature of the linkages and outreach programs requirement is also different. Program linkages in the Professional Institutions must be relevant to the professional development of the students while outreach programs must develop in them the

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Guidelines for the Implementation of CMO 46 Series of 2012 on the Policy-Standard to Enhance Quality Assurance (QA) in Philippine Higher Education Through Outcomes-Based and Typology-Based QA p. 18.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

value of service.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, Colleges outreach programs must be “relevant in geographic or special communities towards which the College mission is oriented” and such programs “allow students to contextualize their knowledge within actual social and human experiences.”<sup>30</sup> Both institutions are required to have a core of permanent faculty members which possess the relevant educational and professional qualifications and to have learning resources and support structures that are appropriate to the institution’s technical or professional programs.<sup>31</sup>

The third type of institutions is the Universities. Such institutions “contribute to nation building by providing highly specialized educational experiences to trains experts in the various technical and disciplinal areas and by emphasizing the development of new knowledge and skills through research and development.” Universities are expected to train students as future professionals and/or researchers. Academic degree programs, graduate and undergraduate, must be research oriented. At least twenty percent (20%) of full-time faculty members must be actively engaged in research. Research activities are essential component of linkages and outreach programs must allow students, faculty members, and research staff to apply new knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

The vertical typology-based quality assurance refers to the “classification of higher educational institutions according to the three elements of quality: (1) the alignment and consistency of the learning environment with the institution’s vision, mission, and goals; (2) demonstration of exceptional learning and service outcomes; and (3) the development of a culture of quality.” There are three types of higher educational institutions based on the vertical classification. The first type is the autonomous higher educational institutions. These are the institutions that “demonstrate exceptional institutional quality and enhancement through internal QA systems, and demonstrate excellent program outcomes through a high proportion of accredited programs, the presence of Centers of Excellence and/or Development, and/or international certification. Deregulated higher educational institutions are the second type of institutions. These institutions

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 18, 19.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 20-21.

“demonstrate very good institutional quality and enhancement through internal QA systems, and demonstrate very good program outcomes through a good proportion of accredited programs, the presence of Centers of Excellence and/or Development, and/or international certification.” The last type of institutions is the regulated higher educational institutions. These are the institutions that “need to demonstrate good institutional quality and program outcomes.”

The horizontal and vertical typology-based quality assurance gives emphasis on internal quality assurance system, local and international accreditation of programs, national and international linkages and outreach programs, and student and faculty research and publication. These different components are vital for higher educational institution to assure the public of its commitment to quality education.

### **3. The New General Education Curriculum and the K to 12 Curriculum**

The Commission on Higher Education issued the Memorandum Order Number 20 (CMO 20) Series of 2013 entitled the “General Education Curriculum: Holistic Understandings, Intellectual and Civic Competencies” on June 28, 2013. It contains the new General Education Curriculum for higher education.

The new progressive general curriculum is aligned with CMO 46. It is evident on the design of the new curriculum which is competency-based, outcome-oriented and learner-centered. It identifies the competencies that the students or graduates must possess as intellectual, personal and civic, and practical responsibilities. The achievement of these outcomes is vital for the holistic development of the students. In order to achieve these competencies, authentic learning experience is required as an essential component of teaching pedagogy. Students must be introduced to higher-level reading, research, and writing.

The competencies identified and defined in the new curriculum will provide students a “set of learning competencies” that will enable them to perform their duties and responsibilities independently, and at the same time enable them to “sustain and expand capabilities and to acquire new knowledge and skills over

time.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, it will not only make them productive in their chosen profession but also provide them the enabling knowledge and skills that will make them life-long learners. For example, they have to “understand basic concepts across the domains of knowledge” and at the same time apply the “different analytical modes” in “tackling problems methodically.” That is why, it is essential that they should possess “critical, analytical, and creative thinking” skills.

Learning competencies are also called learning outcomes. Learning outcome is defined by Spady as “a culminating demonstration of learning: it is what the student should be able to do at the end of the course.”<sup>34</sup> Outcome is different to learning objective, because the latter refers to what the student should have learnt at the end of the course while the former refers to what the student should have performed at the end of the course.<sup>35</sup> The set of competencies identified in the curriculum include learning outcomes that are observable and demonstrable. For example, “proficient and effective communication (writing, speaking, and use of new technologies);” “capacity to reflect critically on shared concerns and think of innovative, creative solutions guided by ethical standards;” and “working effectively in a group.”

The intellectual competencies, personal and civic responsibilities, and practical skills that are clearly defined and identified in the new curriculum are not only meant to be comprehended by students but also intended to be performed and to be observed at the end of the course or program.

One of the key features of competency-based education is the integration of “multiple components, including knowledge, skills, and attitudes.”<sup>36</sup> Such is very clear in the design of the curriculum as “interdisciplinary” and broad enough to “accommodate range of perspectives and approaches.” Furthermore, in competency-based education learning strategies and assessment methods are organized around the competencies identified and defined in the curriculum; and there is an emphasis on “directed self-learning and

<sup>33</sup>Craig Campbell, et al., Competency-based continuing professional development in Medical Teacher, 2010, 32:657-662, p. 658.

<sup>34</sup>Margery H. Davis, et al., Case studies in outcome-based education in Medical Teacher, 2007, 29:717-722, p. 717.

<sup>35</sup>S. Mukhopadhyay and S. Smith, Outcome-based education: principles and practice in Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, November 2010; 30(8): 790-794, p. 790.

<sup>36</sup>Susan R. Swing, Perspectives on competency-based medical education from the learning sciences in Medical Teacher, 2010, 32: 663-886, p. 663.

formative assessment."<sup>37</sup> In other words, the teaching and learning strategies, approaches, and assessment of a competency-based and outcome-oriented curriculum is student-centered. Student-centered learning is "about optimizing the opportunities for our students to learn."<sup>38</sup> It means "figuring out the best possible ways to get the students to work."<sup>39</sup> It is a "learning by doing" approach. Students are actively engaged for them to optimize learning. The teacher does not monopolize the classroom. He/she shares the responsibility with his/her students. Student-centered is related to authentic learning that "allows students to explore, discuss, and meaningfully construct concepts and relationships in contexts that involve real-world problems and projects that are relevant to the learners."<sup>40</sup> It uses the methods utilized in the real world such as, teamwork, collaboration, technology, and professional presentation processes and solutions.<sup>41</sup> In order to achieve the competencies as well as the desired learning outcomes of the new curriculum, it is implied that the teaching and learning design must be student- or learner-centered where students learn actively as well as learn by doing things that will make them productive.

The new curriculum is also designed to be aligned with the K to 12 curriculum. The CHED explains that the integration of the general education courses of higher education in the senior high school core courses of the K to 12 curriculum paved the way for the crafting of the new curriculum. Since almost all general education courses being taught to current higher education students are integrated in the new K to 12 basic education curriculum, the Commission decided to craft a new curriculum that is heavily oriented to liberal education. The Commission explains its decision to adopt liberal education framework as a result of the "complexity of life" and the "massive explosion of knowledge" that require a "big-picture thinking," and no longer a "multiple-choice world."<sup>42</sup> The Commission further explains that to make sense of the complex world and massive explosion

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Terry Doyle, *Learner-Centered Teaching: Putting the Research on Learning Into Practice*, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2011, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 32

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>See Appendix B: Rationale for Change in CHED Memorandum Order No. 20 Series of 2013.

of knowledge, the perspectives of students “must be grounded in home realities and securely anchored on a sense of personal and national identity and self-understanding.”<sup>43</sup> For the students to be able to adapt to the changing conditions in a highly complex and fast phase world, their “horizons for understanding humanity, life and the world today in all their diversity and complexity” must be broaden.<sup>44</sup> They must be able to “conceptualize, reflect, analyze, and create solutions in a collaborative way” and be able to “connect developments and appreciate nuances beyond tailored responses to longstanding problems that metamorphose over time into new and possibly more injurious forms.”<sup>45</sup>

The Philippine government approved into law the K to 12 curriculum under the Republic Act No. 10533 (RA 10533) known as the “Enhanced Basic Education of 2013.” In the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 10533, the basic education program is defined as kindergarten education (one year), elementary education (six years), and secondary education (six years). The secondary education consists of four (4) years of junior high school and two (2) years of senior high school. The two (2) years senior high school prepares students not only to higher education but to work after completing the six (6) years junior and senior high school programs. The K to 12 curriculum redefines basic education in the sense that it prepares students to work. Unlike before, basic education was only seen as preparation for higher education.

The K to 12 curriculum affects higher education, and requires the latter to adjust, not only because of the integration of higher education general education course in the K to 12 curriculum, but also because of the enhanced design of the basic education curriculum. The enhanced basic education curriculum as defined by law is learner-centered, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate; relevant, responsive and research-based; gender- and culture-sensitive; contextualized and globalized; constructivist, inquiry-based, reflective, collaborative and integrative. Furthermore, it adheres to the “principles and framework of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

(MTB-MLE)" and uses the "spiral progression approach." Higher education needs to fine-tune its pedagogical approaches in order to meet the expectations of the new breed of graduates of the K to 12 curriculum.

### III. Challenges to Philippine Higher Education

Quality is the achievement of the institution's mission and goals as well as the satisfaction of stakeholders. Institutions must have the right pool of human resources, commitment and support from the leadership, and sufficient financial resources in order to demonstrate and sustain quality. Higher educational institutions in order to adapt to the national and international developments have no choice but to calibrate its systems and practices. Higher education institutions need to attune its talent (human resources), governance (leadership) and funding (financial resources)<sup>46</sup> as a response to changes brought about by the new policies and by the globalizing education.

Talent. Quality professors are of course central and vital to higher educational institutions.<sup>47</sup> Ideally, higher educational institutions must be able to attract and retain the best academic staff by providing favourable working conditions, security of tenure, and appropriate salaries and benefits.<sup>48</sup> Higher educational institutions must also provide opportunities for professors to conduct research and further develop as well as share their scholarship. Hence, "academic freedom and an atmosphere of intellectual excitement"<sup>49</sup> are critical in higher educational institutions. It is a challenge to all higher educational institutions to hire and retain quality academic and teaching staff. Hence, higher educational institutions must also invest in faculty development; particularly, in the retooling and retraining of faculty on the new pedagogical approaches as well as on conducting research that is publishable.

Governance. Governance is vital in any institution. One of the

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<sup>46</sup>This is adopted from Salmi's "three-sets-of-factors model." Please see Jamil Salmi, *The Road to Academic Excellence: Lessons of Experience in The Road to Academic Excellence: The Making of World-Class Research Universities*, Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2011, p. 326.

<sup>47</sup>Philip G. Altbach, *The Cost and Benefits of World-Class Universities in Academic Online* at [bcct.unam.mx](http://bcct.unam.mx), p. 2.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.



challenges to higher educational institution is the establishment of internal quality assurance system. Self-regulation and deep-rooted tradition are valuable to academic institutions. To preserve its identity and tradition, higher educational institutions must initiate its own quality assurance system. In instituting its own quality assurance system, it must have control over the central elements of academic life, and these are: admission of students, the curriculum, the criteria for the award of degree, the selection of the new members of the professoriate, and the basic direction of the academic work of the institution.<sup>50</sup> Higher educational institutions must regularly review its curriculum in the light of the PQF, CMO 46, and other existing national and international standards. They must have strong linkage with the industries to help them in the evaluation of curriculum and in defining competencies that are significant to the industries. The criteria for the hiring, ranking and promotion of faculty must also be stringent and attuned with the national and international standards. The strengthening of international linkages and collaboration in the areas of student and faculty exchange program and local and international accreditation of programs are some of the basic directions that academic institutions must undertake. These are critical in the development of its talents as well as in the international acceptance and recognition of its graduates, faculty, and programs.<sup>51</sup> Quality is built on reputation and perception; and international linkages and accreditation are best means to build reputation and perception as an excellent higher educational institution.

**Funding.** The main challenge to all of these innovations and changes is funding. Higher educational institutions need adequate funding to push and implement the reforms that they desire in order to survive, to adopt, and to excel. In the case of the Philippines, government funding for State colleges and universities is not enough. Private colleges and universities rely heavily on tuition fees. Much of the budget is allotted to salaries of the academic and non-academic staff. Funding for research and improvement of learning facilities and resources is a great challenge. Institutions

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>John Nilad, The Challenge of Building World Class Universities in the Asian Region in ONLINE Opinion at [onlineopinion.com](http://onlineopinion.com).

must look for other sources of funding in order to meet standards of recognition and accreditation. Since the reality is that financial resources is not enough, institutions must make priorities in spending. They must focus their limited financial resources on the core activities that lead to the achievement of the mission and goals and the satisfaction of stakeholders. These core activities are teaching and learning, research and community involvement. Furthermore, infrastructure, facilities and other resources that support the core activities must also be given priority.

#### **IV. Concluding Remarks**

Quality is deeply related to accountability. Students, for example, join a particular higher educational institution because they believe that the mission and goals of such institution will help them in becoming the professionals that they wanted to be. The satisfaction of students is not only anchored on earning a degree but on the education promised by the institution as articulated in the mission and goals.

Higher educational institutions are accountable to students and their parents and other stakeholders because of the promise of producing competent professionals who will contribute to the needs of the industry and of the economy in any part of the world. Higher educational institutions must deliver that promise by realizing their missions and goals and thereby satisfying the stakeholders.

Institutions do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of local and international eco-systems that are directly and indirectly related to one another in the process of delivering quality education and producing competent professionals. Hence, they must adhere to the norms and standards of these eco-systems in the realization of their mission and goals. These eco-systems are composed of government regulating bodies, private accrediting agencies, partner educational institutions, and industries. These larger eco-systems will help the institutions determine the realization of their mission and goals and satisfaction of their stakeholders in a manner that is acceptable to all.

Quality is accountability by being faithful to the promise (as articulated in the mission and goals) to the stakeholders. It is also

being accountable to the norms and standards of the larger ecosystem. Being accountable does not only mean conforming but operating more than the prescription of the norms and standards; and thereby, contributing to the further growth and development of the eco-system.

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