



Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**CHED BRIEFING PAPER ON THE STATUS OF PREPAREDNESS OF PHILIPPINE
HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY IN 2015**

Background Context:

Since the 1990s, the face of education and employment has changed profoundly. Rapid technological development and the debt crisis of the 1980s—which plagued even socialist countries—led to the global restructuring of the world economy and system of governance. As national boundaries became porous, regional political economies (e.g. the European Economic Community) emerged to facilitate the freer flow of people, goods and services. Set for formalization in 2015, the ASEAN Economic Community is among the newest regional economies.

The emergence of regional economies coincided with a major shift in the coordinates of development. This is reflected in the change in catch phrases, from “catching up with the West/North by developing agriculture, industry and the service sector” to “finding a country’s niche/niches in a globally competitive world”. In this context, higher education gained prominence because a small group of institutions—research universities—played the critical role of “training the professionals, high-level specialists, scientists, and researchers needed by the economy and in generating new knowledge in support of national innovation systems”¹. Since innovation systems have enhanced the market niches of countries in today’s globalized economy, the quality of research in universities has been presumed to boost national global competitiveness.

But global competitiveness is seen to be the result not only of research that translates into technological innovations but also of the efforts to develop a country’s human resources. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that globalization and rapid technological changes have transformed the world of life and work in the 21st century. In so doing, they have also altered perspectives on education. They have, for instance, made helping individual citizens cope with a rapidly changing world the education imperative. This reality largely explains the change in focus to individual learners and the development of their competencies including their competence to learn throughout life. It accounts for the paradigm shift, from “education” to “learning” and eventually to “lifelong learning”; from teacher or expert-centered to learner-centered education; from knowledge as input to learning competence as outcomes; from institutional inputs to institutional outcomes (e.g. efficiency, effectiveness); and from inputs to learner outcomes-based assessments and evaluations.

The importance given to learner competencies is in sync with the emergence of regional communities that promise greater mobility for citizens of member states, in particular for students, workers and professionals. In such a world, the comparability of qualifications is paramount. Hence, the emphasis given to the development of national qualifications frameworks in recent years—frameworks that are only as good however as a country’s assurance that education institutions or equivalent non-formal learning

¹ (Salmi, 2009, citing World Bank 2002. *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved on December 2, 2008, from <http://go.worldbank.org/N2QADMBNIO>).

environments produce graduates or learners with the stipulated qualifications for each level in the framework.

For this reason, the harmonization of higher education² in the ASEAN region has been a priority for the member states. A clear embodiment of this harmonization process is the creation of a Higher Education Common Space, a concept supported by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization - Regional Center for Higher Education Development (SEAMEO RIHED). It is also the reason UNESCO and other multilateral organizations initiated conventions for the recognition of comparable degrees and qualifications. UNESCO has particularly called for the establishment of National Information Centers that will provide listings of programs that meet quality standards and are comparable to those of other countries in the ASEAN, Asia-Pacific and even other regions of the world. Such comparability is essential to regional communities like the European Union and to our emerging ASEAN economic community and to free trade areas that it will form part of such as the ASEAN Australia New Zealand Free Trade Area or the AANZFTA.

It is in this context that countries all over the world are urged to develop their national qualifications framework. It also accounts for the vigorous efforts of regional communities and expanded trade areas such as the AANZFTA to develop a regional reference framework against which national qualifications frameworks will be referenced to facilitate the freer flow of people, whether they be students, workers and professionals.

Philippine Higher Education Sector and ASEAN 2015 in Broad Strokes

The initiatives in Philippine higher education to prepare for ASEAN 2015 ought to be seen against the above-mentioned backdrop of political economic and discursive developments. For purposes of this paper, they are organized around two of three missions of higher education³.

MISSION 1: Produce thoughtful graduates with a humanist orientation; analytical and problem solving skills; the ability to think through the ethical and social implications of a given course of action; and the competency to learn throughout life and work in the 21st century world of regional economies; and

With respect to the above mission, specific components of the Philippine Higher Education Reform Agenda are meant to strengthen the sector's capacity to provide quality education for Filipinos, which in turn, aims to leverage local and national development that would better prepare the country for ASEAN 2015. These include the following initiatives:

- A. The Inter-agency development of the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) and the lead role of CHED in establishing the system of quality assurance of the PQF; the development of its system of Equivalencies and Pathways; and the specification of qualifications and competencies for Levels 6 to 8 of the PQF;
- B. The issuance of CHED Memorandum Order (No 46 Series of 2012) that provides the legal cover for

² Harmonization of higher education is "essentially a process that recognizes the significance of regional education cooperation and the importance of establishing 'an area of knowledge' in which activities and interactions in higher education, mobility, and employment opportunities can be easily facilitated and increased." (Supachai Yavaprabhas, 2009)

³ The third mission is to help improve the quality of human life, respond effectively to changing societal needs and conditions; and provide solutions to problems at the local community, regional and national levels

- *The shift to learning competency based standards/learner outcomes-based qualifications in the disciplines.* The CMO is the basis for the ongoing revision of the Policies, Standards and Guidelines (PSG) for disciplinary and multidisciplinary programs intended to produce more competent citizens and professionals—(Note: the term competencies in the current parlance broadly refers to learner outcomes, i.e. knowledge, skills and proficiencies applied in context. They include the capacity for critical thinking and even the competencies to make ethical choices. Since the new PSGs will be learner outcomes-based, they will provide substantiation for Levels 6 to 8 of the PQF by disciplinary/multidisciplinary program;
 - *The development of Quality Assurance systems that are learner outcomes- and typology-based,* i.e. linked to the mission of the Higher Education Institution (HEI). The paradigm shift in education that underlie the focus on learner outcomes also entails outcomes-based processes and schemes that have the objective of assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing and maintaining and/or improving quality in higher education institutions and/or programs for the purpose of accountability or improvement.
- C. Revision of the General Education Curriculum for implementation in 2016 when K to 12 has been institutionalized. This revision aims to expose undergraduate students to various domains of knowledge and ways of comprehending social and natural realities, developing in the process intellectual competencies (e.g. critical thinking, problem-solving skills) and civic capacities. Although the GE curriculum is intended to hone holistic understandings, intellectual and civic competencies, it is interesting to note that employers surveyed in Asia as well as industry leaders in the Philippines deem such competencies to be what they are looking for in higher education graduates and not just the technical skills that they can further develop.
- D. Review of Graduate Education and Transnational Programs. The first review aims, among others, to address the proliferation of substandard graduate programs that reinforce a culture of credentialing, thus undermining in the process the focus on learner outcomes and spirit of lifelong learning in the PQF and AQRF. The second review, on the other hand, aims to position our higher education institutions for transnational education even as the Commission develops policies that will protect the country from the influx of substandard programs in the name of international and transnational education.
- E. In industry-oriented disciplines, close collaboration with industry in the specification of competencies as well as the training of teachers. The Commission on Higher Education has, for instance, embarked with the International Business Machines (IBM) on the development of Smart Analytics as a track initially within the Business Management and IT programs and eventually in other programs including the humanities and social sciences that have potential uses for it. The Commission has also partnered effectively with the Business Processing Association of the Philippines (BPAP) on a Service Management program.
- F. Further towards the ASEAN level, the Philippines, CHED's active participation in the AANZFTA Task Force for the **ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework** which the Philippines chairs in this round and in the inter-agency activities towards this end—the agencies being the Department of Labor and Employment; the Department of Education; the Department of Trade and Industry; the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority; and CHED. The AQRF is currently being designed to accommodate and support the various National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) of

ASEAN countries to promote the recognition of qualifications, facilitate lifelong learning, credit transfer and learner mobility, among others.

- G. Aside from our participation in the AQR, the Commission also supports the **ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN)**. This network aims to promote QA enhancement and sharing of best practices and assist in national capacity building among members. The network is open to accrediting agencies or agencies responsible for higher education quality assurance. For the Philippines, aside from the Commission, the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines, Inc. (AACCU), and the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) are part of AQAN.

The efforts to establish and strengthen the quality assurance system for higher education are geared towards preparing our institutions for ASEAN Community 2015. They are aimed at building a system that will produce globally-competitive students, graduates, and professionals who will first and foremost serve the country but whose competencies are recognized in the regional and international communities.

Key challenges remain, however,—e.g. the extremely difficult transition to learning competency-based education in a teacher centered culture and constraints to the creation of an enabling environment in which the country's ASEAN 2015-oriented undertakings will thrive. Nevertheless, considering the progress made so far in the areas of quality assurance and academic and professional mobility, the Philippine HEIs are on the right track towards ASEAN 2015.

MISSION 2: Provide focused support to the research required for technological innovation, economic growth and global competitiveness and for crafting the country's strategic directions and policies

With respect to this mission, higher education institutions, particularly the leading State Universities and Colleges, are enhancing their research but equally, if not more important, shifting the orientation of the research community from supply-driven Research and Development (R and D)—with research built around the interests and problems determined by scientists—to the systematic linking of research supply with demand from various stakeholders including technology developers and investors.

Towards this end, the Commission has also embarked on the Philippine California Advanced Research Institutes (PCARI), which aims to **develop the capability of selected HEIs to undertake high-end research and to mobilize and translate knowledge into technological innovations for greater productivity and economic growth.**

PCARI will establish two institutes: the Institute for Infrastructure Development and the Institute for Health Innovation and Translational Medicine.

The Institute For Information Infrastructure Development will work in the areas of

- Resilient infrastructure (e.g. Including disaster management and environmental monitoring)
- Energy (e.g. Alternative energy sources, energy efficient buildings)
- On-line education and E-government (e.g. Information infrastructure and applications;

The Institute For Health, Innovation And Translation Medicine, on the other hand, will focus on

- Health device development;

- Drug development
- Digital health and telemedicine
- Clinical research
- Cost-effective healthcare delivery & policy
- Global health & outcomes
- Administrative and collaborative support infrastructure.

In line with the second mission of higher education, preparations for ASEAN 2015 cannot simply focus on the development and leveraging of Filipino human resources alone but on the contributions of the higher education sector to strengthening the Philippine economy and society.

Philippine Higher Education and ASEAN 2015: A Sampling of Initiatives

Below are specific programs and projects that the Commission has undertaken in compliance with the specific action lines of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community⁴ Blueprint⁵:

A. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

A. 1 Advancing and prioritizing education

- v. **Promote education networking in various levels of educational institutions and continue university networking and enhance and support student and staff exchanges and professional interactions including creating research clusters among ASEAN institutions of higher learning, in close collaboration with the Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and the ASEAN University Network (AUN)**
 - 1. Addition of the Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology in the ASEAN University Network – Southeast Asia Engineering Education Development Network (AUN/SEED-Net)
 - 2. ASEAN 2015 Roadmap for Higher Education (UNDER STUDY/DEVELOPMENT):
 - i. Inclusion of additional Higher Education Institutions in the AUN
 - ii. The Philippine National University to be included as an ASEAN Center for Teacher Education
 - iii. The establishment of an ASEAN Higher Education Competitiveness Fund
 - 3. Hosting of the AUN Regional Conference
 - 4. Co-hosting of the 6th International Conference on Humanoid, Nanotechnology, Information Technology, Communication and Control, Environment, and Management, spearheaded by De la Salle University (12-14 NOVEMBER 2013)
 - 5. Co-hosting of the 1st ASEAN Future Teachers' Camp, spearheaded by the Philippine Normal University (14-17 DECEMBER 2013)

⁴ The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) aims to “enhance the well-being and livelihood of ASEAN peoples, with the goal of establishing ASEAN as a community which is people-centered, inclusive, harmonious, and socially responsible.” The Commission belongs within the purview of the ASCC community, with the DSWD as the Philippines’ ASCC focal agency. With this, the Commission follows and complies with the ASCC Blueprint.

⁵ CHED’s efforts usually fall under the areas of Human Development and Building ASEAN Identity, and may be contributory to multiple action lines.

xvii. Promote the options of university placements in an institution of higher learning in a second ASEAN Member State through “a semester abroad” or “a year abroad” programme

1. Participation in the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme (IN PROGRESS)
2. Training of International Relations Office staff of participating Private Higher Education Institutions in preparation for the commencement of the participation of PHEIs in the AIMS Program this A.Y. 2014 (IN PROGRESS)
3. Hosting of the 7th AIMS Review Meeting in May 2014 (PREPARATIONS ONGOING)

xviii. Support the citizens of Member States to become more proficient in the English language, so that citizens of the ASEAN region are able to communicate directly with one another and participate in the broader international community

1. Signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Academic Cooperation with Vietnam, which encompasses English language training and education
2. Signed the Agreement on Academic Cooperation between the Ministry of University Affairs of Thailand and the Commission on Higher Education of the Republic of the Philippines
3. MOU on Academic Cooperation with the Republic of Indonesia (UNDER NEGOTIATION)
4. MOU on Academic Cooperation with the Lao People's Democratic Republic (UNDER NEGOTIATION)

A. 2 Investing in human resource development

i. Undertake a survey by 2009 and work to strengthen the existing COEs in the field of human resource development in the ASEAN region

1. Framework for a typology-based quality assurance system for PH higher education
2. Reformulated Policies Standards and Guidelines within a learning competency/outcomes-based education framework
3. Participation in the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme (IN PROGRESS)
4. Inclusion of the Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology in the ASEAN University Network - Southeast Asia Engineering Education Development Network (AUN/SEED-Net)
5. Adoption of the University Mobility for Asia and the Pacific Credit Transfer Scheme (UCTS)
6. Implementation of the Philippine Higher Education Research Network (PHERNet)
7. A program for adoption of a school or college offering BS degree in Chemistry
8. 2010 CHED-UP Los Banos Summer School and Camp in Mathematics
9. Campaign for the implementation of the Special Program for Employment of Students (RA 9547)
10. Sustaining excellence in Biology instruction, research, and extension at the Institute of Biological Sciences, UP Los Banos (Manpower)
11. The CHED-IMSP Research Program for Excellence in Mathematics
12. Preparation and issuance of policies and guidelines on student internship in local and international companies

13. Sustaining excellence in Biology instruction, research, and extension at the Institute of Biological Sciences, CAS-UPLB (Adopt a School program)
 14. Faculty Development Program
- v. Develop gender-sensitive skills training programs for trainers in ASEAN members, in particular the CLMV, by 2010**
1. Gender and sensitivity training
 2. Gender and Development Planning and Budgeting
 3. Women Empowerment and Development towards Gender and Equality Training (WEDGE)
 4. Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines
- vi. Design and implement training programs to address the needs of high value-added industries that enhance ASEAN competitiveness**
1. Participated in the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework meetings (AQRF) and the workshops for the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) Economic Cooperation Work Programme (ECWP)
 2. Conducted workshop on ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)
 3. Conducted the APEC Diploma Supplement Workshop
 4. Participation in the development of Mutual Agreements in particular programs
 5. Policies Standards and Guidelines for Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) Prescribing Additional Electives on Service Management for Business Outsourcing;
 6. Agreement between CHED and IBM on the offering of the Smart Analytics program, a potential education niche for the Philippines

E. BUILDING ASEAN IDENTITY

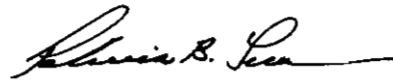
E. 1 Promotion of ASEAN awareness and sense of community

- vi. Support school activities promoting ASEAN awareness, such as by encouraging the observance of the annual ASEAN Day**
1. Celebration of the ASEAN Day in partnership with De La Salle University (7 AUGUST 2013)
 2. Co-hosting of the 1st ASEAN Future Teachers' Camp, spearheaded by PNU (14-17 DECEMBER 2013)
- x. Encourage the use of the ASEAN Anthem and other ASEAN Symbols to raise ASEAN awareness in ASEAN Member States**
1. PNU held a commemorative ASEAN flag raising ceremony during its Foundation Day (the International Affairs Service office of CHED will recommend that the same activity be practiced in all SUCs)

The above listing does not cover the various ASEAN-oriented activities of Philippine Higher Education Institutions. Nor do they exhaust the list of ongoing discussions with bilateral partners in the ASEAN on current and future collaborations.

The challenge remains. The Philippines needs to undertake the tasks ahead even as it carries out the reforms in higher education that will enable it to catch up with the much earlier preparations of its ASEAN partners.

The specific tasks include the development of an ASEAN 2015 Action Plan for Philippine Higher Education and the Internationalization of Higher Education policy framework; the inclusion of more Philippine universities in the ASEAN University Network; the commencement of Participation in the ASEAN International Mobility of Students Program and hosting of the 7th AIMS Review Meeting in May 2014; the development of the better credit transfer systems and the Diploma Supplement which will enable the comparability of Philippine higher education qualifications with those of other countries.



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