

QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGIES: TYPOLOGY AND OUTCOMES-BASED TEACHING INNOVATION EXPERIENCES IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

Quality assurance has been a global quest for institutions of higher learning. In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), has designed a new strategy, an approach geared toward developing competent and high-level human resources and generating knowledge and technologies needed for advancing the country's national development and competitiveness. This study presents experiences of three academic institutions of higher learning in Southern Philippines in its implementation of the new quality assurance strategy; present the quality assurance framework of the Commission on Higher Education; discuss the innovative instructional strategies (Outcomes-Based Education) mandated by the quality assurance framework; describe the experiences of three Southern Philippines universities; and, present personal analysis of the realizability of the quality assurance framework. The quality assurance framework includes the categorization of the institutions of higher learning as University, Professional Institution and College, all with their corresponding nature and tasks in the educational process. It is in the fulfillment of their tasks that they could be sustainable as higher education institutions. Further, quality assurance mandates the shift to innovative teaching strategies known as the Outcomes Based Education in which outcomes are the indicators of quality. The outcomes are classified as Institutional Graduate Outcomes, Program Outcomes, Course Outcomes and Learning Outcomes. Based on the experiences of the three institutions whose implementation are being studied, there are difficulties experienced because the change necessitates the matching shift in instruction, in the policies and behavior of faculty. However, despite the difficulties, generally, the schools are slowly making the quality assurance framework work in their schools.

Keywords: *Innovative Teaching Strategies, Quality Assurance, typology, Outcomes-Based Education*

I. Introduction

Throughout the world, quality has always been a constant quest. The need for quality pervades all aspects of life such as health, agricultural production, engineering, education and others. Schalock (1995) coined the term quality revolution and which refers to quality of life, quality enhancement techniques, total quality management techniques and quality assurance.

In Indonesia where higher education is an instrument for social structural change (Baswedan, 2012), a "national qualification framework has been developed to provide for a stronger basis for establishing standards and there is a national higher education assurance system to be implemented by individual schools (Moelidihardjo (2012). In India, higher education now emerges as a treasure of power. Many knowledgeable and skilled workers have come home to India with various degrees from different quality

higher education institutions in different parts of the world. The challenge now is to make graduates in this country competitive and to revolutionize the educational system in the country to include parameters such as higher education policies and practices, institutional design and strategies, upgrading of curricula, among others.

As a strategy for quality assurance in the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), has designed a new road map geared toward developing competent and high-level human resources and generating knowledge and technologies needed for advancing the country's national development and competitiveness (CHED Road Map, 2012).

The Commission on Higher Education is the regulatory organization for higher education in the Philippines. It saw the need for redirection and refocusing to attain the higher education objectives especially along the line of addressing the development needs of the country and based on the capacities customized according to type of institution.

Along the road map, CHED mandated through Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order 46, the typifying of HEIs and the adoption of innovative teaching strategies as manifestation of commitment to developing competency-based learning standards that comply with existing international standards when applicable to achieve quality and enable a more effective integration of the intellectual discipline, ethos and values associated with liberal education (Handbook on Typology and OBE, 2012).

This outcomes-based education is associated with transformative teaching strategies and which would differ from country to country, depending on context. Innovative teaching is very crucial and challenging. In the words of: Steve Jobs, Co-founder of Apple Company:

“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work and the only way to do great is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking, and don't settle, as with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it”

In the light of the ASEAN Economic Community, it has an impact on both economic and education practices. It is high time for higher educational institutions in the ASEAN to work together and share the best innovative teaching strategies as practised in the respective countries.

It is timely that innovative teaching practices are given impetus in this International Education Conference (IECO) with the theme “Innovative Teaching practices in ASEAN Economic Community: Teachers Challenges and Chances” wherein

teachers of different Asian countries are given the chance to share their innovative teaching strategies such as the research-based instruction, to other participants in the ASEAN region.

Objectives of the Study

This paper highlights the developments in the Philippine Educational System in terms of new approaches. This also includes experiences of three Southern Philippines schools. Specifically, this intends to attain the following objectives:

1. Present the quality assurance framework of the Commission on Higher Education
2. Discuss the innovative instructional strategies (Outcomes-Based Education) mandated by the quality assurance framework
3. Describe the experiences of three Southern Philippines universities
4. Present personal analysis of the realizability of the quality assurance framework

II. Methods

This study uses the qualitative design. The data were gathered through document analysis and interview. The document used is the CMO 46, s. 2012 issued by the Commission on Higher Education. The respondents were school administrators of three HEIs in Region XII, Philippines; Notre Dame University, Cotabato City, Sultan Kudarat State University, Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat and Notre Dame of Marbel University, Koronadal City.

III. Results and Discussion

The Quality Assurance Framework of the Commission on Higher Education CHED supervises the baccalaureate and the graduate education and usually, it does its functions through regional and national conferences and memorandum orders, popularly called CHED MEMOS. Its current major concern is ensuring that the Philippines Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are attuned to globalized

education. This is in recognition to the reality that the Philippine HEIs have to be competitive in the regional and global arena where borders are starting to disappear.

The competitive advantage of Philippine HEIs and in many cases, their survival, is premised on their ability to offer degree programs that meet world-class standards and produce graduates with lifelong learning competencies. HEIs are expected to develop “human resources with various types of knowledge, competencies, and expertise, especially in support of the social, economic, and development needs of the Philippines. With the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) characterized by free movement of goods, services, investments, skilled labor and free flow of capital, there is a high demand to align HEI programs to these realities. The Philippine HEIs have to beef up to increase the percentage of Filipinos in the ASEAN workforce.

Recognizing the need to beef up, CHED supports the development of HEIs into mature institutions by engaging them in the process of promoting a culture of quality. It encourages institutional flexibility in translating policies into programs and systems that lead to quality outcomes, assessed and enhanced within their respective internal quality assurance (QA) systems.

CHED issued MEMO ORDER NO. 46 s. 2012, describes two typologies; the horizontal and the vertical, and mandates the alignment of HEIs to the two. In both, quality is premised on the alignment and consistency of the learning environment with the HEIs VMG; (a) demonstration of exceptional learning and service outcomes; and, (b) development of a culture of quality.

The first element is related to the horizontal type of the HEI while the last two are related to level of program excellence and institutional quality. Program Excellence is manifested through Accreditation, Centers of Excellence and Development, and international certification. Institutional Quality is manifested through institutional accreditation, Institutional Sustainability Assessment (ISA), or other evidences in the areas of governance and management; quality of teaching and learning; quality of professional exposure, research and creative work; support for students, and relations with the community.

It is through the vertical typology that the overall quality of the HEI could be assessed. Bases for assessment are institutionalization and documentation of

systems and processes, and the quality outcomes that contribute to program excellence. Based on these, there are three types to which HEIs could be aligned:

“Vertical classification is based on the assessment of the HEI’s Commitment to Excellence and Institutional Sustainability and Enhancement. Commitment to Excellence mainly considers program excellence while Institutional Sustainability and Enhancement is largely based on institutional quality.” Autonomous HEIs (by Evaluation) 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 (COE) and/or Development (COD), and/or international certification. In particular, they show evidence of outstanding performance consistent with their horizontal type, e.g., research and publications for universities; creative work and relevant extension programs for colleges; and employability or linkages for professional institutes. Deregulated HEIs (by Evaluation) 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 COEs/CODs, and/or international certification. In particular, they show evidence of very good performance consistent with their horizontal type. Regulated HEIs are those institutions, which still need to demonstrate good institutional quality and program outcomes.”

“Vertical classification is based on the assessment of the HEI’s Commitment to Excellence and Institutional Sustainability and Enhancement. Commitment to Excellence mainly considers program excellence while Institutional Sustainability and Enhancement is largely based on institutional quality.” Horizontal typology typifies HEIs as Professional Institution, College University. This allows HEIs focus. The bases for the differentiation are the desired competency of the graduates, kinds of academic and co-curricular programs, qualification of faculty, learning resources and support structures, and the nature of their linkages and outreach activities.

CMO No. 46 also describes the roles of the HEIs in the national development. Professional Institutions contribute to nation building by providing educational experiences to develop technical knowledge and skills at the graduate

and undergraduate levels, which led to professional practice, e.g. Engineering, Medicine, Law, Information Technology, Management, Teacher Education, and Maritime Education. Professional Institutions develop adults who will have the technical and practical knowhow to staff the various professional sectors that are required to sustain the economic and social development of the country and the rest of the world, as well as, to contribute to innovation in their respective areas. They are required to have: (a) Full-time, permanent faculty members who have relevant degrees as required by CHED, as well as professional licenses and/or professional experience in the subject areas they handle; (a) Degree programs in professional fields that develop graduates with specialized skills; (b) learning resources and support structures that are appropriate for developing professional knowledge and skills, (c) including sustained program linkages with relevant industries, professional groups, and organizations that support professional and development programs; and, (d) outreach programs involving all students in social development oriented experiences that allow them to develop the service orientation in their professions.

Colleges contribute to nation building by providing educational experiences to develop adults who have the thinking, problem 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. They are required to have: (a) Full-time faculty members who have the relevant graduate degrees as required by CHED and/or experience in the subject areas they handle; (b) degree programs characterized by a core curriculum that holistically develops thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, communication, technical, and social skills in line with the mission of the College; (c) learning resources and support structures that are appropriate for developing knowledge and skills in the specific natural science, social science, humanities, and professional disciplines offered by the college, including laboratories, books and journals, and ; (d) links with the community that would ensure the development of relevant academic and extension programs as well as the application of their learning outcomes; and, outreach programs involving

students in social development oriented experiences that allow them to contextualize their knowledge within social and human experiences.

Universities contribute to nation building by providing highly specialized educational experiences to train experts in the various technical and disciplinal areas and by emphasizing the development of new knowledge and skills through research and development. The focus on developing new knowledge is emphasized from the basic post-secondary (i.e., baccalaureate) academic programs through the doctoral programs; thus, a research orientation is emphasized in the Bachelor, Master's and doctoral degree programs. Universities contribute to nation building by producing experts, knowledge, and technological innovations that can be resources for long-term development processes in a globalized context. In order to attain its mandate, Universities should have:"

The requirements for universities are the following: (a) faculty members with relevant degrees in their areas of specialization as required by CHED, and who participate in research and development activities in their respective disciplines as evidenced by refereed publications, and other scholarly outputs; (b) comprehensive range of degree programs in all levels, from basic post-secondary to doctoral programs; (c) viable research programs in specific (disciplinal and multidisciplinary) areas of study that produce new knowledge as evidenced by refereed publications, citations, inventions and patents, and others; (d) comprehensive learning resources and support structures (e.g., libraries, practicum laboratories, relevant educational resources, and linkages with the relevant disciplinal and professional sectors) to allow students to explore basic, advanced, and even cutting edge knowledge in a wide range of disciplines or professions; (e) links with other research institutions in various parts of the world that would ensure that the research activities of the university are functioning at the current global standards; and (f) outreach activities that allow the students, faculty, and research staff to apply the new knowledge they generate to address specific social development problems.

The different typologies require transformative educational strategies. CMO 46 also provides guidance for the Outcomes-Based Education. This is premised on the idea that if CHED wants to look at the outcomes as bases for the typology, then

the HEIs should design their system with focus on the graduate outcomes they intend. Typology and OBE reflect consciousness on education results and quality that are aligned to national and institutional goals.

Outcomes-Based Education is an approach that focuses and organizes the educational system around what is essential for all the learners to know, value, and be able to do to achieve a desired level of competence. The development of the graduates in OBE is about aligning everything inside the educational system to what the institution declared for itself the kind of graduates they promised to society. All members of the educational community are missionaries of the institution and are responsible for the development of the graduate; (a) academic faculty/professionals (b) administrative personnel; and, (c) administrators.

The outcomes are classified as *Institutional Graduate Outcomes, Program Outcomes, Course Outcomes and Learning Outcomes*. Institutional Graduate Outcomes refer to the competencies, qualities and values of the graduates of the school when leaving the school. Program outcomes are the sets of competencies (related knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that all learners are expected to demonstrate. Institutional or program outcomes may also emphasize lifelong learning. For instance, HEIs could describe the attributes of their ideal graduates which they expect to see five years after graduation. These desired outcomes have to be translated to what the students learn in specific courses. The HEI should ensure that at the level of the courses, the desired course and learning outcomes are attained with the proper content, methodologies, and student performance assessment. Learning outcomes may result from a specific lesson, although it is sometimes used interchangeably with course outcomes.

Thus, in the hierarchy, learning outcomes are seen as building blocks toward course outcomes, which in turn, support the program outcomes. Implementing OBE further translates to the quality and orientation of the faculty members in charge of the courses. This may be more crucial than a total change of systems and structures, that is, education managers and faculty internalize the attitude that the core mission of teaching HEIs is to build the learning competencies and the ability to continuously learn of the students, as well as to mobilize resources and methods, including conventional pedagogies (e.g., lectures), that would enhance learning.

In the OBE paradigm, there is a shift in the focus of education from an inputs-based, teacher-centered “instruction” paradigm to an outcomes-based, learner-centered educational paradigm. OBE starts with: (a) revisiting the institution’s Vision and Mission; (b) clear understanding of the institution’s Vision and Mission and Core Values (c) clear alignment of institutional graduate outcomes to institution’s Vision, Mission and Core Values.

OBE is based on Cognitive and Constructive Philosophy. The difference between the traditional and OBE is that in the traditional, if students fail in the exams, there is no way they can get high grades. In the OBE, the chance to succeed at excellent levels is the entire semester. If students encountered problems in the midterm, the teachers and the involved students cooperate to do something about the problems in order that the latter pass within the semester.

In the OBE, there are implications: (a) Students can learn. Each student is different and therefore has different pace in learning; (b) Success leads to success; (c) Student’s success is a driver for them to succeed further. Failure may lead to another failure; and, (d) The focus of every teacher/professor is to make sure that students succeed.

Many school administrators in the country complain about the difficulty complying with the requirements of CHED. One respondent from a neighbor institution revealed that their first difficulty was the requirement of master’s degree to be qualified to teach in the tertiary level. Another, a head of a university in a neighbor city complained about the stiff requirements in the different areas such as research, extension, physical plant and others. Several schools in the region aspire to become a university but the requirements are so difficult to attain. There is also this requirement that 20 percent of the faculty should be PhD holders. It would be difficult for schools to send their faculty altogether for master’s or doctoral degrees because this could entail the hiring of substitute teachers whose employment shall be terminated as soon as the regular ones come back after their study.

In addition, the administrators said infrastructures cannot be easily put up as this would require millions. Even state schools would encounter difficulties because in the Philippines, infrastructure projects have to be legislated either in the two legislative bodies; the House of Representatives and the Senate. A bill may take

two or more years to be approved. What compounds this is that, even if the law has been approved, release of funds could still take time as government regulations require three bidding processes.

Implementing OBE in these schools has been a painstaking process. No impact study has been conducted yet but these schools are on the track already. Syllabi reconstruction proved to be difficult, as revealed by one faculty member of these schools. The syllabi should not contain only the subject matters but also the clear description of the processes required, and the expected learning outcomes which should be contributory to the program outcomes.

IV. Conclusion

The Commission on Higher Education has been generous to come up with a paradigm for transformation of the educational system. CMO 46 was conceived out of the massive consultations on the ground regarding the problems of higher education in the Philippines. Valdez (2011) described the higher education situation before the advent of CMO 46. She said that there was lack of overall vision, and common framework. She observed the deteriorating quality of education and limited access to quality higher education. She noted that there was a large mismatch between training in the schools and the skills needed by the actual industries such as communication, technical and numerical skills.

CMO 46 is comprehensive. It gives a mandate of how should higher education institutions behave and what should they do in order to give justice to their clientele. It designed a control mechanism to prevent schools from commercializing education that is, limiting the capital resources but intending to get profits.

CHED imposes discipline to schools to enable them to produce graduates that could be useful in nation building (RA 7722) and not graduates who would add to the already ballooning number of unemployed in the country. However, this poses a great difficulty to schools especially those that could not come up to the expectations of CHED, those that could not pass its quality assurance standard and those that cannot pass the standards of accrediting institutions approved by the commission.

However, I agree with the respondents that CMO 46 makes things difficult for tertiary schools administrators. Cotabato City State Polytechnic College (CCSPC), the school of which the researcher is president, experienced hardships for around two years already. The accreditations for every programs has been difficult to achieve but because of hard work by all members of the school community, the school is almost about to attain its university status. CHED required that the school should have two programs in the graduate college accredited Level III, and two in the undergraduate colleges. The implementation of OBE started two years ago. A series of seminars have been conducted to keep the teachers abreast with the OBE requirements.

V. References