

The Perception of Faculty in the Implementation of ASEAN Qualification Assurance for Higher Education (AQAFHE)

Carmencita L. Castolo^{*}, Diane Lee Tracy K. Chan
Polytechnic University of the Philippines Open University
^{*}Email: clcastolo@pup.edu.ph

Abstract

This paper defines the conceptual knowledge of faculty members on the level of awareness on the AQAFHE descriptors, its influence to the mobility of professionals among Filipino in terms of: quality, flexibility, and, timelines, the State University and Colleges (SUC's) priority to the requisite demands needed in the implementation, and the implications to the Philippine educational system. Seeking convergence in the diversity of standards in policies and transparent criteria in the ASEAN Qualification Framework poses challenges tall higher education system. The study design used the multi-dimensional perspectives of the respondents from the four (4) State Universities and Colleges in the National Capital Region based on the Five Dimensions of Perception: awareness, influence, reliability, priority, and agreement. The findings implied that implementation of the AQAFHE according to the 180 respondents reveal that faculty members are "Moderately Aware," on the level of descriptor but considered "Very Influential" to improve the mobility of the professionals while "the role and functions of the implementing bodies such as CHED, TESDA, PRC, and DOLE were perceived as "Completely Reliable" in the process. The initiatives of the faculty members are expected and considered needed to meet the AQAFHE requirements across the State Universities and College despite the lack of resources as "High Priority," to be able to adapt to the changing landscape in HEIs. Result highlights, "Continuing Professional development," "review international policies"; "New accreditation levels," Disparity of standards in the accreditation system, "access to information system" and "curriculum development, must be given attention. All these connotes issues of quality assurance and funding to qualify for the accreditation system, ranking in the region and the world. Lastly, the implications of AQAFHE "harmonization and regionalization" as an effective pathway to educational reform," is perceived by the faculty members as critical to be articulated in all higher education curriculum and instructions, faculty profile, student outcomes and assessment, and research and community network and partnership.

Keywords: ASEAN Qualification Framework, Five Dimensions of Perception, challenges in higher education system, and harmonization and regionalization.

Introduction

Attention to the Qualifications Frameworks (QF) are emerging and others are reviewing progress in implementation and reflecting on new dimensions of adaptation to a world in transformation. This diversity of standards in policies and transparent criteria in the ASEAN Qualification Regional Framework, poses challenge to higher education system in the Philippines. State University and Colleges (SUC's) are making new commitments toward promoting the quality and relevance of higher education in the region. These issues are strategic long-term priorities that Philippines that must be addressed if the country is to take full advantage of integration with ASEAN qualification across the island.

According to Briones (2019), the involvement of the Philippines in the Task Force on the development of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRf) under the ASEAN Australia New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) hastened the pace of PQF institutionalization. The PQF objectives as a quality assured national system for the development, recognition and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skills and values acquired in different ways and methods by learners and workers educated/trained in the Philippines. The descriptors describe the levels of educational qualifications and sets the standards for qualification outcomes across the ASEAN member countries. As defined in RA 10968, qualification refers to a formal certification a person has successfully achieved specific learning outcomes relevant to the identified academic, industry or community requirements. A qualification confers official recognition of value in the world of education and training, work, and job creation.

The PQF eight (8) Levels of qualifications differentiated by descriptors of expected learning outcomes along three domains: knowledge, skills and values; application; and degree of independence. The ASEAN University Network (AUN), as an academic network responsible for higher education, promotes the main objectives to strengthen the existing network of cooperation among leading universities in the ASEAN region since 1998 (Dela Salle University). The AUN member universities in the Philippines (Ateneo de Manila, DeLa Salle University and University of the Philippines), are promoting cooperation and solidarity among ASEAN academic scholars, developing academic and professional human resources, and promoting information dissemination within the ASEAN academic community. Thirteen (13) quality Networks and other consortium/associations have established its similarities in terms of: principles, 2) policies, and 3) qualifications, as a standard regional framework aim to build national systems-exchanges and good practices. According to the ASEAN Quality Network (AQAN), this would limit the borders of national Quality Assurance, such as the common background, social needs, economic and political needs of each member countries.

The promise to stimulate the growth of more developed higher education systems; foster greater need to recognize excellence; and ensure that in a globalized higher education world, weaker higher education systems are objectively assessed in the ASEAN comparisons based on a common set of standards.

To this note, however, the implementation raises questions about the prevailing rules and the underlying policies in which would systematically affect the present condition of an institution, particularly, the university and colleges in the public sector.

This paper explores to define conceptual knowledge and establish the understanding of faculty members on the AQAFHE. Specifically aimed to answer the following questions: 1) what is the faculty level awareness on the AQAFHE descriptors? 2) How would the AQAFHE influence the mobility of professionals among Filipino in terms of: a) Quality, b) Flexibility, and, c) Timelines? 3) How the implementing bodies warrant the full imposition of ASEAN Qualification Assurance Framework for Higher Education (AQAFHE); 4) What is the priority of the State University and Colleges (SUC's) in the requisite demands needed in the implementation of AQAFHE; and, 5) how the faculty perceived the implications of the AQAFHE in the Philippine educational system, specifically address in the SUC's?

Methodology

The research design used the Five Dimensions of Perception based on: 1) Awareness, 2) Influence, 3) Reliability, 4) Priority, and 5) Agreement. These multi-dimensional perspective of the respondents provide a more meaningful interpretation among the response variables. The study sur-

veyed Four (4) State Universities and Colleges in the National Capital Region: Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Marikina Polytechnic College, Rizal Technological University, and the Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology. Inclusion of respondents with 10 years teaching experienced were randomly selected in the higher education.

The statements along with its predefined series of questions used to collect information from respondents were validated and accorded based on the intent of the study as follows: Part 1, description of awareness on the competency levels of the faculty members as required in the AQAFHE. Part 2 were description on the Influences of AQAFHE's capability to improve the mobility of professionals among Filipinos in terms of: quality, flexibility and timeliness. Part 3, the Reliability of the roles of the implementing bodies (CHED, & PRC) to meet the requirements of the AQAFHE. Part 4, includes the priority level of SUC's on the requisite demands needed to measure to contemplate on the requirements of the AQAFHE. Lastly, Part 5, translated the "Agreeableness" of the faculty members on the potential implications of the AQAFHE to the education sector to become more dynamic considering the purpose and the issues that needs to be address. Average Mean, Frequency and ANOVA were used to analyze the data gathered.

Results

The implementation of the AQAFHE according to the 180 respondents reveal that faculty members are "Moderately Aware," while the level of descriptor index values was lower than 30% which indicates Moderately Acceptable.

The influence of the AQAFHE to improve the mobility of the professionals in the ASEAN Integration, perceived as "Very Influential."

While the implementing bodies such as CHED, TESDA, PRC, and DOLE was perceived as "Completely Responsible" in the process of AQAFHE implementation, exploration, installation, implementation and the monitoring. As stated, they are the "common reference point in the attainment of the ASEAN Integration in HEIs".

On the one hand, faculty members expected and considered initiatives needed to meet the AQAFHE requirements across the State Universities and College despite the lack of resources as "High Priority." Result of the study show that, "Continuing Professional development (M=4.07)," "Review international policies" (M= 4.02); "New accreditation levels (M=3.99)," "Disparity of standards in the accreditation system (M = 3.96), "access to information system (M= 3.93)" and "curriculum development (M=3.92). All these connotes issues of quality assurance and a considerable funding to qualify for the accreditation system and ranking in the region.

Lastly, the implications of AQAFHE to the educational system as perceived by the faculty members that "harmonization and regionalization" as an effective pathway to educational reform, undeniably, caught with doubts of the issues along with the AQAFHE implementation.

Conclusion

The ASEAN Economic Community demonstrates ideological imperatives that certainly affects the nature and direction of major movements in education and training among faculty members and ranking in the State Universities and Colleges. At this point of crisis in the educational system, uncertain policies and program efforts must be address as a concrete foundation to meet the need of the faculty and students. AQAFHE must serve the public welfare that will contribute benefits to the society and thus should be financially supported by the government. This conclusion follows, from the proof of Kaplow and Shavell (2009) that notion of fairness not based solely in individuals' well-being sometimes violates the Pareto Principle. The SUC's must be empowered. Applying quality

principles, educational leaders' encompassing leadership roles should focus more on the welfare of the SUC's which majority of students enrolled are underserved. In order to cope with the demographic diversity where it serves, the State University and Colleges should be given attention and budget needed and not limit to a very few who already made its position in the region.

While, AQAFHE have occupied the attention of policy makers and HE leaders, a wide dissemination of knowledge must be provided to the SUC's to campaign on the awareness of this changing educational landscape must be promoted. The implementation of the CHED minimum standards must be reconsidered. According to Hazelkorn (2015), "the 'schema of exceptional discipline' is transformed into 'what might be called in general the disciplinary society', whereby power is exercised, not in a direct manner and banal procedures, but through a subtle practice, series of complex relations and relationships 'enacted through a quality outputs and outcomes.

In light with the foregoing, fostering a deeper involvement and stronger capacity-building of all stakeholders in the AQFHE process should be part of the "senior and emerging scholars" in the field to address the tensions and challenges inherent in the "harmonization and regionalization" of higher education to assist local college or state universities. The crucial policy issues and the biggest challenges facing AQFHE in context, were discussed in several conferences and summits but the process remains vague for the directions in education and policy changes, relevant to democratic and empowering pedagogy in faculty qualification and institutional ranking among the SUC's.

It noteworthy to note that educational leaders need to pay attention on the welfare of the faculty members by increasing the awareness, implementing faculty mobility, expand individual qualification, effort to facilitate the essential development of academic exchange, facilitating other academic exchanges, including course exchange academic material exchange, co- seminar, and so forth.

to cope on the profound implications AQAFHE. Institutionalizing the PQF in context for the theory and practice of policy analysis. Further, research papers to embark on fairness analysis based and the grounded concern for the public sector is a must. Sharing information facilitate exchanges and mutual recognition of qualifications among the SUC's would open doors to a greater height of achievements for the institution towards education system reforms, expand opportunities for the students, greater competitive advantage for the country.

References

- Briones (2019). AQR Referencing Report of the Philippines. Dela Salle University
 Hazelkorn (2015). Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education. The Battle for World-Class Excellence. DOI:[10.1057/9780230306394](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230306394)
 Kaplow and Shavell (2009). Fairness Versus Welfare. *Harvard Law Review*. DOI:[10.2307/1342642](https://doi.org/10.2307/1342642)
 UNESCO (2021). Implementing the Vietnamese Qualifications Framework: Promoting Quality and Relevance in Higher Education