

MOBILITY WITHOUT MOVEMENT
APEC CROSS-BORDER EDUCATION WORKSHOP
Panel Discussion
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Founded in 1932, The Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (PACU) holds the distinction of being the country's oldest existing educational association. Among its members are some of the leading and most reputable colleges and universities in the Philippines, then and now.

Through the years, PACU has dynamically evolved to become a strong, effective, eloquent and united group of educational institutions whose goals and commitments involve espousing academic freedom, protecting the private higher education sector, and molding minds and values toward productive citizenry and meaningful lives.

Today, more and more schools continue to join PACU because of the principles it stands for. PACU supports and embraces not only private non-sectarian universities and colleges but also religious and other institutions of higher learning. In so doing, PACU schools have successfully formed consortia to share research projects and activities beneficial to them and the communities.

Ever since its foundation, PACU has always played a crucial role in promoting school and program accreditation, in the establishment and management of significant organizations within the private education sector, and in crafting landmark legislations and implementing rules and regulations. PACU has, in fact, been instrumental in the passage of landmark legislations that were beneficial to Philippine education and in the repeal of some government policies that were deemed unfavorable to the growth and freedom of private education.

Through its programs, public advocacy, publications and various endeavors, PACU provides a powerful and effective voice for Philippine colleges and universities. Year after year, PACU works to restore and reinforce academic democracy and distinction at both national and local levels and to help individual member-schools sustain a high quality of teaching and student-learning.

Reaction:

Mobility without movement is an oxymoron that makes sense for emerging economies such as that of the Philippines. As it starts to integrate with the larger ASEAN community, the Philippines is embarking on various initiatives to raise its level of global competitiveness and to spur inclusive growth. Government has

committed to put **education** as the central strategy for investing in the Filipino people, reducing poverty and building national competitiveness.

The Philippines is in the brink of implementing major educational reforms that bode well for regional integration – i.e. K-12 Law; Outcomes-Based, Typology-Based Quality Assurance (OBTBQA); institutionalization of a Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) with reference to ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, among others.

The Universal Kindergarten Law and K-12 Law mandate the implementation of universal kindergarten for children aged 5 years followed by 12 years of basic education whose curriculum would prepare high school graduates for college and/or vocational tracks. A new GenEd curriculum developed according to college readiness standards as well as major curricular changes (program standards and guidelines for higher education courses) are in the offing. The CHED initiated OBTBQA mechanism serves as an impetus for HEIs to transform their programs and adopt outcomes based, competency-based or learner-centered education to align its curriculum with the demands of industry and global standards. The PQF is in its stages of finalization by technical working groups focused on the creation and establishment of Qualifications Register (TESDA), Pathways and Equivalencies (CHED), Quality Assurance (ChED), Information advocacy (DepEd), and International Agreements/Comparability benchmarking of Philippine qualifications with other countries and pursuit of MRAs with professional organizations (PRC). Starting initially with 8 disciplines (engineering, nursing, architecture, accountancy, survey, medical, dental practitioners and tourism professionals), the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is being harmonized and the Philippine's PRC play a big role in this endeavor.

I shall not dwell on the details of these reforms as these are being addressed internally by and among the various stakeholders in Philippine education. But the gist in all these is that the country is in the crest of willful positive change – “a perfect storm” as ADB's Norman LaRocque would state it – in the country's education landscape that present opportunities to build and create a skilled workforce, globally competitive professionals.

Evidence has shown that the Philippines has a high literacy rate of 92% and a large population of educated, creative, expressive and service-oriented human resource. The country is the third-largest English speaking country—with reputedly the highest business fluency in the global BPO industry—in the world and produces 400,000 university/college graduates every year.

Another phenomenon that presents itself is the demographic window of opportunity that the country is about to experience. The Philippines is the last major ASEAN economy to benefit from this demographic window called “youth bulge” where bulk of the population (55%) is in the working age of 16-60 years and this will last for at least the next 30-50 years.

From a pragmatic perspective, mobility as a mark of internationalization is a key ingredient towards a more globally competitive education. We all know that a physical exchange of students and faculty can only happen on a limited basis given our present state of development. Only as we move up the prosperity index can we scale up the conventional 'physical' exchange of students, faculty, researchers.

MOBILITY without MOVEMENT THEN MAY BE a KEY OPTION!

For the Philippines to be competitive, we welcome this concept of mobility at this early stage of inception. Much can be gained by *harnessing technology* to bring internationalization or globalized education to a wider reach of students, faculty, professionals and HEIs in the country.

A two-way exchange can be created between partner schools in a more efficient way allowing for virtual mobility with a structure that will eventually evolve according to the desired outcomes of such partnerships "in the cloud".

I see this option to be very useful as we put greater emphasis to post-graduate and continuing education where access to research advances is crucial.

The opportunities for virtual mobility (without movement) seem limitless at this point. A more formal structure or purposive mobility without movement is critical in transforming higher education by way of a virtual space – more fluid exchange of knowledge, content and education resources.

As private education plays out its role in the national development agenda, we should ask ourselves: What ought to be in our mobility wish list? MOOCs, OREs are various options in the "mobility without" movement game. Other forms of technology-aided, virtual exchange (free or not) whilst maintaining human and social interaction (as David aptly put it) "in the modern world" (Rory) could evolve as we go along.

In the final analysis, what will dictate the adoption of mobility (in its various forms) is the desire for true collaboration among member nations. Moreover, it is leadership at all levels, from the very top to the level of the institution that will determine the success of any undertaking, from governance structures and policies to implementation.

THE END

Notes:

The three government agencies handling the Philippine education sector are:

CHED: Commission on Higher Education

TESDA: Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

DepEd: Department of Education (basic education)

The agency overseeing all professional board examinations is

PRC: Philippine Regulatory Commission