

QUALITY INDICATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS:IMPLICATIONS TO GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract: Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines are at the crossroad with respect to quality indicators set by local accrediting organizations and the international sectors that conduct annual world university ranking. In spite of the Education Criteria for Performance Excellence set by the local accrediting bodies, still HEIs in the Philippines did not make it in the ranking of Times Higher Education (THE). Only the four leading schools in the country which include University of the Philippines (UP), Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), University of Santo (UST) and De La Salle University (DLSU) made it to Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Top 500. This paper examined the criteria used by local accrediting bodies and international agencies. Major findings revealed that local accrediting bodies and international sectors use different assessment criteria, resulting to Philippine HEIs lagging behind rankings for universities in Asia and worldwide. Local accrediting agencies such as Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) and Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) gave more attention to the following quality indicators such as the physical facilities of the institution, its contribution to the local community and the credentials of the professors and administrators. On the other hand, international accrediting agencies such as Times Higher Education (THE) and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) gave a huge percentage on the institution's popularity based on academic peer review and the international exchange of faculty and students. This juxtaposition indicates the discrepancy in defining the quality in higher education. Country can achieve global competitiveness by improving its quality of education system in higher education which is one of the efficiency enhancers (World Economic Forum). Philippines is currently between the factor-driven and efficiency-driven stage of development. Quality of higher education is crucial for economies that want to move up the value chain beyond simple production processes and products (Kremer, 1993).

Keywords: Quality Indicators, Quality Assurance, Accreditation, Global Competitiveness, Higher Education Institutions

Introduction

Quality of education is defined by UNICEF (2000) as outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. Quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept (Brennan, Vries, Williams, 1997) that looks at the quality of a whole institution. Educational quality can be measured by means of indicators (Scheerens et al., 2011) which include educational input, process, outcome and context indicators. Education indicators provide information about the health of the educational system (Kaagan and Smith, 1985).

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are regarded as one of the crucial factors in developing excellent manpower in a country. HEIs in the Philippines are either public or private colleges and universities which are licensed, controlled and supervised by the Commission of Higher Education (CHED). It is the government agency responsible for the formulation and implementation of plans, policies and program for the development and efficient operation of higher education system in the Philippines.

Most HEIs in the Philippines were subjected to the process of voluntary self-regulation carried out by local accrediting. Educational accreditation is a type of quality assurance process under which services and

operations of an educational institution or program are evaluated by an external body to determine if applicable standards are met. Should standards be met, accredited status is granted by the agency (PAASCU, 2008). In the Philippines, two major accrediting agencies exist – Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) and Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA). These accrediting agencies are under one umbrella – The Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP).

Aside from the local accrediting bodies, some HEIs opted to obtain accreditation and certification for Quality management system (QMS) through ISO. Quality management system (QMS) is a set of policies, processes and procedures required for planning and execution (production/development/service) in the core business area of an organization. It integrates the various internal processes within the organization and provides a process approach for project execution. It enables the organizations to identify measure, control and improve the various core business processes that will ultimately lead to improved business performance (Baldrige, 2008). Unlike ISO, educational accreditation is a “formal recognition of an educational program as possessing high level of quality excellence based on the analysis of the merits of its educational operations in attaining its objectives and its role in the community it serves” (PACU-COA Manual of Regulation, 2006).

International organizations such as Times Higher Education and Quacquarelli Symonds provide ranking to the HEIs from all over the world that met their criteria. Based from the data of world rankings, Philippine HEIs did not make it to the top 100 Universities in the world, not even the top 10 in Asia, still HEIs in the Philippines did not make it in the ranking of Times Higher Education (THE). Very few of these schools made it to Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Top 500.

The Problem

With the aim of understanding the gap between the quality indicators used by local and international agencies in evaluating the performance of HEIs, this paper sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the objectives of the local and international agencies and organizations in conducting accreditation and university ranking?
- What are the criteria used by the local and international agencies in evaluating the HEIs?
- What is the methodology used by the local and international agencies in assessing the HEIs?

Philippine Accrediting Agencies

Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU). PAASCU is a private, voluntary, non-profit, non-stock corporation and service organization that accredits academic programs which meet standards of quality education. It is also one of the three founding members of the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP), which was established in 1977 and is authorized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to certify the levels of accredited programs for the purpose of granting progressive deregulation and other benefits.

PAASCU has been a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). As of 2005, INQAAHE is composed of 150 accrediting agencies coming from over 60 different countries. These agencies have also created regional networks, one of which is the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), with PAASCU being one of its active members. PAASCU also has linkages with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a private, non-profit national organization that coordinates accreditation activity in the United States, as well as with the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA), which is based in Washington, D.C.

PAASCU'S Objectives:

1. To stimulate and integrate the efforts of institutions in elevating the standards of education in the Philippines.
2. To strengthen the capabilities of educational institutions in providing service to the nation.

3. To identify educational institutions which meet or exceed the stated educational quality criteria.
4. To encourage and assist institutions which have the potential and interest to improve through continuing evaluation and self-surveys.
5. To provide counsel and assistance to developing institutions and programs.
6. To provide basis for institutional relationships, particularly in the transfer of students
7. To provide guidance to students and parents on their choice of institutions and programs.
8. To attract financial aid from government and other sources intended for schools applying for accreditation and accredited programs.
9. To assist schools in their quest for local and international recognition of their academic programs.
10. To create network with national and international organizations involved in quality assurance.

PAASCU'S Standards. The Association does not impose arbitrary standards. The survey forms developed by PAASCU identify principles and practices which are found in excellent institutions. The statements in the survey forms are more qualitative rather than quantitative. The Association does not have specific formulas to apply or particular patterns of organization to follow. The criteria and survey instruments are merely tools to help the school measure educational quality. They are intended to serve as a guide for institutions as they strive for excellence and for accreditors as they assess institutional achievement. The standards reflect a realistic appraisal of the school's resources and their efficient utilization to help the institution achieve its goals.

Much emphasis is placed on the formulation of the school's purposes and objectives. Only when its goals are clear can the school discover the extent to which such purposes and objectives are being achieved. The self-made survey by an institution applying for accreditation is essential in the accreditation process. The said survey is an analysis by the institution's own staff, educational resources and effectiveness in relation to its purposes and objectives. PAASCU judges an institution not by comparison with other institutions but primarily by the degree to which each institution's avowed purposes are matched by actual practice in various areas being evaluated. Thus, a school is judged on the basis of the "total pattern" presented.

During the survey visits, the following areas are evaluated: (1) College/School Community Involvement, (2) Faculty, (3) Curriculum and Instruction, (4) Library, (5) Laboratories, (6) Physical Plant, (7) Student Services and (8) Administration. (PAASCU Primer)

Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA). The Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) is a private accrediting agency which gives formal recognition to an educational institution by attesting that its academic program maintains excellent standards in its educational operations, in the context of its aims and objectives.

PACUCOA's Objectives:

1. To identify schools whose competence and performance in a particular field warrant public and professional recognition.
2. To guide students in choosing quality schools, colleges and universities that will meet their individual needs.
3. To help learning institutions achieve maximum educational effectiveness through self-evaluation and self-discipline.
4. To enlist the cooperation of learning institutions and professional associations in the mission of advancing the interest of education.

PACUCOA Accreditation. Accreditation is a concept of self-regulation which focuses on self-study and evaluation and on the continuing improvement of educational quality. It is both a process and a result. As a process, it is a form of peer review in which an association of schools and colleges establishes sets of criteria and procedures to encourage high maintenance of standards of education among its affiliate members. As a result, it is a form of certification granted by a recognized and authorized accrediting agency to an educational program or to an educational institution as possessing certain standards of quality which are over and above those prescribed as minimum requirements for government recognition. Accreditation is based upon an analysis of the merits of educational operations in the context of the institution's philosophy and objectives. Areas evaluated by PACUCOA accrediting team are (1) Purposes and Objectives; (2) Faculty; (3) Instruction; (4) Library; (5)

Laboratories; (6) Physical Plant & Facilities; (7) Student Personnel Services; (8) Social Orientation and Community Involvement; and (9) Organization and Administration. (http://www.pacucoa.ph/about_pacucoa.htm)

International Standards

Times Higher Education (THE) World University Ranking. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings conduct international ranking of the world's top universities published by Times Higher Education (THE). The Times Higher Education (THE), formerly Times Higher Education Supplement (THES), is a weekly British magazine based in London reporting specifically on news and other issues related to higher education. Figure 1 shows the weighting scheme used by Times Higher Education to produce World University Ranking. It can be gleaned that there were 13 indicators used group into five broader categories.

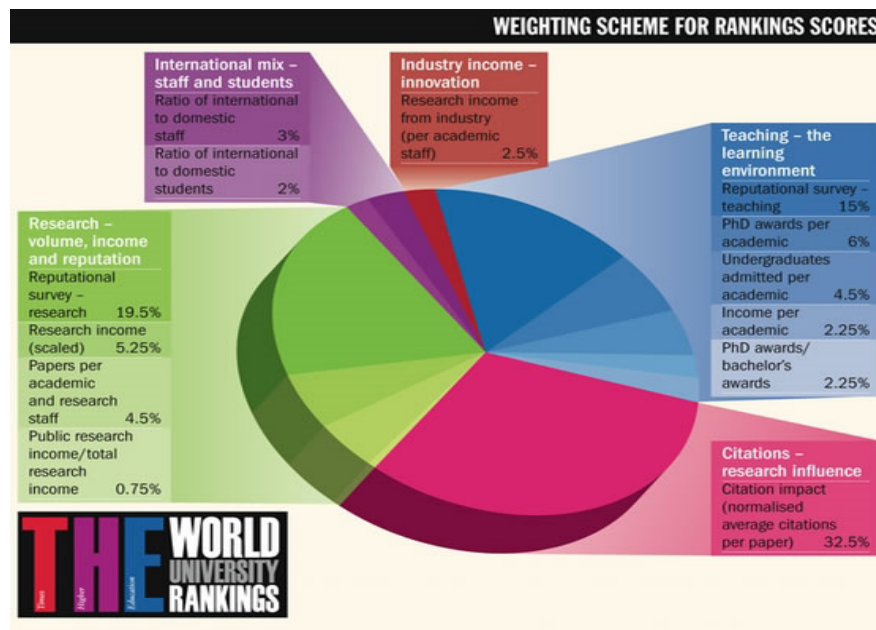


Figure 1. Times Higher Education (THE) Weighting Scheme for Ranking Scores
(<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2010-11/world-ranking/analysis/methodology>)

THE Weighting Scheme for Ranking Scores. High weightings are given where consultation has shown unmistakable enthusiasm for the indicator as a valuable proxy and clear confidence in the data we have. Lower weightings are employed where confidence in the data or the usefulness of the indicator is less pronounced.

1. Industry income — innovation (2.5 percent of the overall ranking score). This category is designed to cover an institution's knowledge-transfer activity. It is determined by just a single indicator: a simple figure giving an institution's research income from industry scaled against the number of academic staff.

2. Teaching — the learning environment (30 percent). This broad category employs five separate indicators designed to provide a clear sense of the teaching and learning environment of each institution, from both the student and academic perspective. The flagship indicator for this category uses the results of a reputational survey on teaching. This broad category also measures the number of undergraduates admitted by an institution scaled against the number of academic staff. A form of staff-to-student ratio is essential. This measure is employed as a proxy for teaching quality — suggesting that where there is a low ratio of students to staff, the former will get the personal attention they require from the institution's faculty. The teaching category also examines the ratio of PhD to bachelor's degrees awarded by each institution. The final indicator in this category is a simple measure of institutional income scaled against academic staff numbers.

3. Citations — research influence (32.5 percent). This is measured by the number of times its published work is cited by academics. It has the largest of the broad rankings categories which reflects the relatively high level of confidence that the global academic community have in the indicator as a proxy for research quality.

4. Research — volume, income and reputation (30 percent). The most prominent indicator in research volume, income and reputation is based on the results of reputational survey. The research environment category includes a simple measure of research volume scaled against staff numbers.

5. International mix — staff and students (5 per cent). This category looks at diversity on campus — a sign of how global an institution is. The ability of a university to attract the very best staff from across the world is the key to global success. The market for academic and administrative jobs is international in scope, and this indicator suggests global competitiveness. The ratio of international to domestic students is a sign of an institution's global competitiveness and its commitment to globalization.

Universities were excluded from the World University Rankings tables if they do not teach undergraduates; if their research output amounts to less than 50 articles per year; or if they teach only a single narrow subject (<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/>). With these criteria, most HEIs in the Philippines are excluded because their research output is less than 50 articles per year. A study on the status of research outputs in various HEIs in the Philippines showed a low turnout (13,859 research reports submitted to the ZRCs from 1996-2001). Among these studies, those conducted by individuals (72%) far exceeded collaborative and institutional research. About 69% of these individual studies were done by graduate students (master's and doctoral) as part of their degree requirements (Vicencio, Bualat, et.al, as cited in Salazar-Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta, 2007).

Quacquarelli Symonds World University Ranking. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) is a company specializing in education and study abroad. The company was founded in 1990 by Wharton School MBA graduate Nunzio Quacquarelli. QS launched the World University Rankings in 2004, in cooperation with the Times Higher Education Supplement. QS and THE ceased their business relationship after the publication of the 2009 Rankings.

Quality Indicators

1. Academic peer review (40%). This is the most controversial part of the QS World University Rankings. Using a combination of purchased mailing lists and applications and suggestions, this survey asks active academics across the world about the top universities in fields they know about.

2. Recruiter review (10%). This part of the ranking is obtained by a similar method to the Academic Peer Review, except that it samples recruiters who hire graduates on a global scale.

3. Faculty student ratio (20%). These indicators attempt to measure teaching commitment.

4. Citations per faculty (20%). Citations of published research are among the most widely used inputs to national and global university rankings. The QS World University Rankings used citations data from Thomson (now Thomson Reuters) from 2004 to 2007, and since then uses data from Scopus, part of Elsevier. The total number of citations for a five-year period is divided by the number of academic staff in a university to yield the score for this measure, which accounts for 20 percent of a university's possible score in the Rankings.

5. International orientation (10%). This indicator is intended to capture their internationalism: 5 percent from their percentage of international students, and another 5 percent from their percentage of international staff. (<http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings>)

Comparative Analysis

Standards and criteria are defined and explicated by local accrediting agencies and international bodies in different ways. Figure 2 shows the comparison of the assessment criteria used by local and international agencies.



Figure 2. Venn Diagram showing the Comparison of Local and International Assessment Criteria

It can be gleaned from the Venn diagram that Philippine accrediting agencies (such as PAASCU and PACUCOA) have their own set of established performance criteria that universities or colleges need to meet in order to qualify and gain recognition. These criteria are far different from the indicators used by international organizations such as THE and QS. Based on the above presentation, local accrediting agencies focused more on the instruction, community involvement, faculty profile, library collections, laboratory facilities and administration. On the other hand, international organizations such as THE and QS give more emphasis on the citations of published research articles and international aspects. Apparently, local and international agencies have different set of criteria used in their assessment.

Status of HEIs in the Philippines

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) defined a higher education institution (HEI) as an institution of higher learning that primarily offers degree program which leads to a specific academic credential such as a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, or doctorate degree (The Revised CHED Data Element Manual, 2005). The HEIs in the Philippines are classified into State University/College (SUCs), Local University and College (LUCs), Other Government School (OGS) and Private HEIs. State University/College (SUCs) - State University/College (SUCs) is a chartered public higher education institution established by law, administered, and financially subsidized by the government. Local University and College (LUCs) is a public higher education institution established by the local government through an appropriate resolution/ordinance and financially supported by the local government concerned. Other Government School (OGS) is any public secondary and post-secondary education institution, which is usually a technical-vocational education institution that offers higher education programs. Private HEIs are classified into private non-sectarian and private sectarian. Private non-sectarian (PN) is any private higher education institution duly incorporated, owned and operated by private entities, which are not affiliated to any religious organization. Private Sectarian (PS) is any private higher education institution, usually non-stock, non-profit, duly incorporated, owned and operated by a religious

organization (Glossary of Commonly Used Terms in Education Statistics). Figure 3 shows the distribution of HEIs in the Philippines.

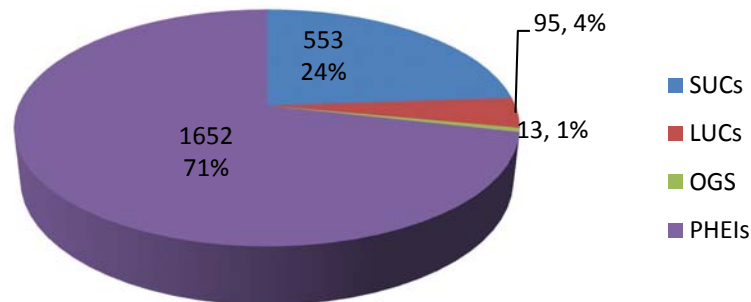


Figure 3. Distribution of HEIs in the Philippines

(<http://data.gov.ph/infographics/ched-higher-education/d1/2/2012/2013>)

The leading universities in the Philippines include University of the Philippines (UP), Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), University of Santo (UST) and De La Salle University (DLSU) are included in international academic circles based from the ratings done by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS). Except for UP, these top universities are considered private catholic HEIs. Figure 4 shows the ranking of these leading universities in the QS University Ranking in Asia from 2011-2014. Both UP and UST have PACUCOA accredited programs as of April, 2013 (<http://www.pacucoa.ph/accredited%20institutions/ncr/ncr.htm>) while DLSU and ADMU have PAASCU accredited programs. The Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) awarded De La Salle University-Manila (DLSU-M) Level IV status. DLSU-M is the first university to be given the highest accreditation (http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/offices/iaa/articles/dlsu_paascu.asp).

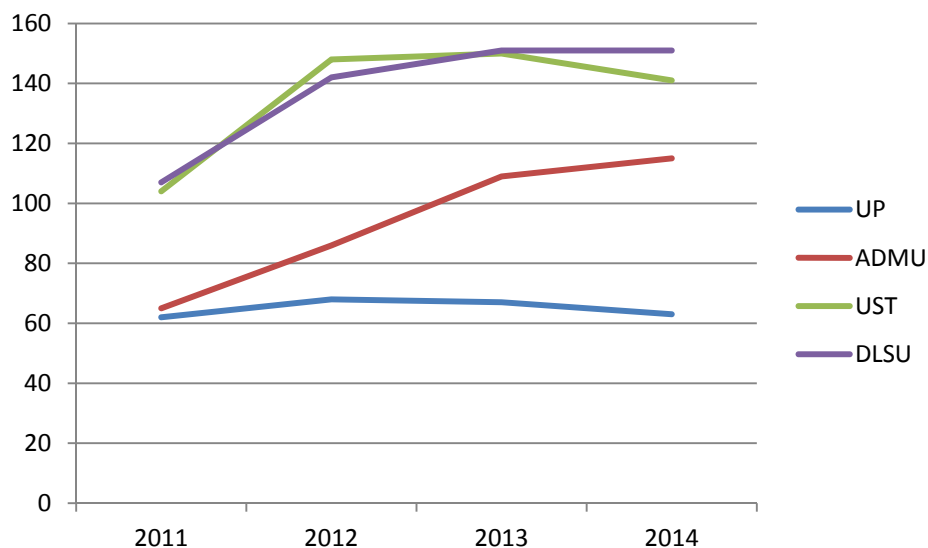


Figure 4. Philippine HEIs included in the QS University Ranking in Asia from 2011-2014

(Data from <http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/asian-university-rankings>)

Global Competitiveness

In the World Economic Forum, global competitiveness is defined as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country. The level of productivity, in turn, sets the level of prosperity that can be earned by an economy. Global competitiveness have 12 pillars (Figure 5) which is clustered into three categories such as basic requirements, efficiency enhancers and innovations and sophistication factors. Among the six pillars included in the efficiency enhancers is the higher education and training which is one of the key factors for efficiency-driven economies. Quality of higher education is crucial for economies that want to move up the value chain beyond simple production processes and products (Kremer, 1993).

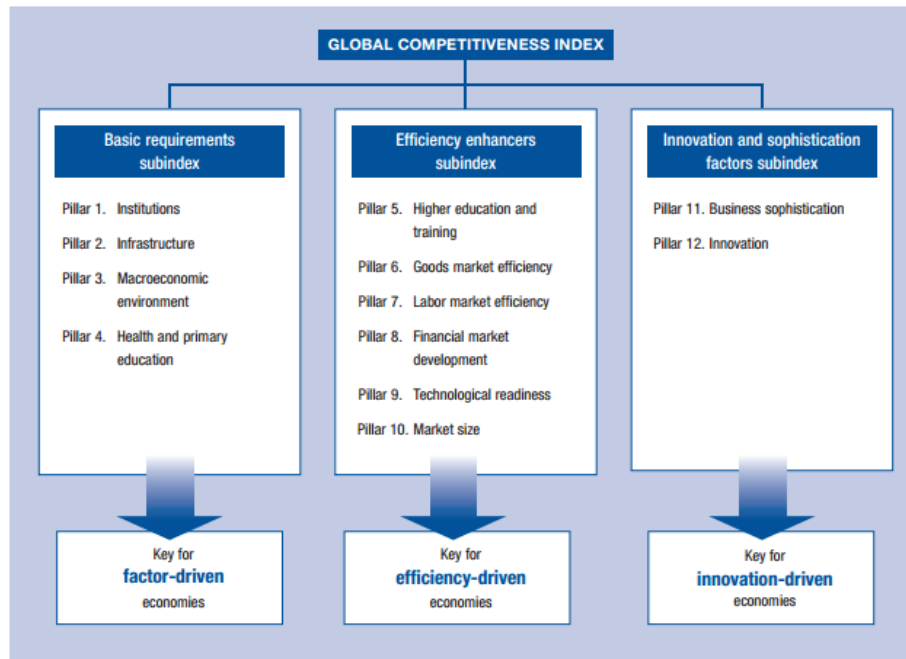


Figure 5. The 12 Pillars of Competitiveness

(http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2014-15.pdf)

The Philippines is the "most improved country overall" in terms of global competitiveness in the last four years wherein it climbed 33 notches since 2010 (Rivera, 2014). The country's gain of 33 places since 2010 (Figure 6) is the largest over that period among all countries studied. The results suggest that the reforms of the past four years have bolstered the country's economic fundamentals. Nevertheless, Philippines is between the economies which is factor-driven and efficiency-driven stage of development. Quality of higher education is one of the pillars in efficiency enhancers.

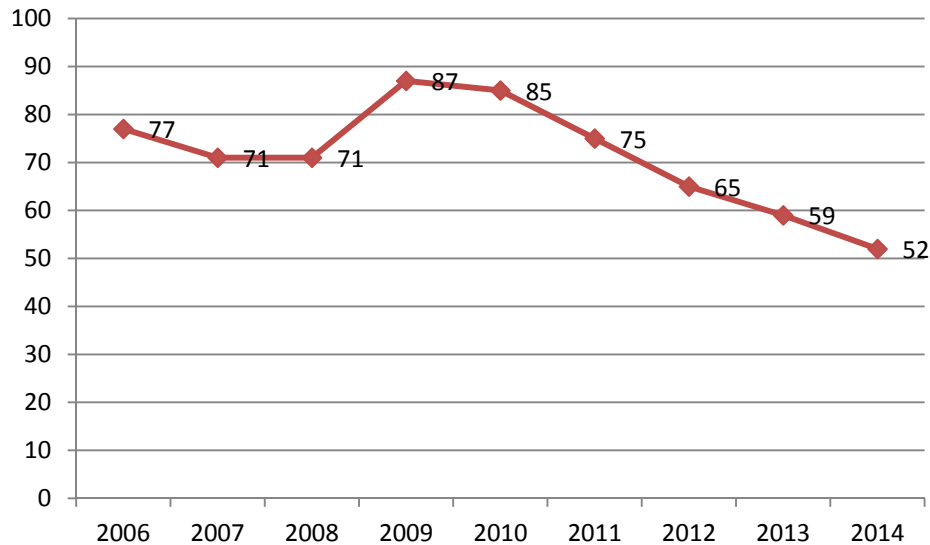


Figure 6. Philippines Global Competitiveness Index 2006-2014
(<http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-report>)

Conclusion

Accrediting agencies are established to ensure quality education and student satisfaction among institutions worldwide. Major findings revealed that local accrediting bodies and international sectors use different assessment criteria, resulting to Philippine HEIs lagging behind world rankings for universities in Asia and worldwide. Local accrediting agencies (such as PAASCU and PACUCOA) gave more attention on the physical facilities of the institution, its community contribution, and, credentials of faculty and administrators. On the other hand, international accrediting agencies (such as THE and QS) gave a huge percentage on an institution's popularity based on academic peer review and its international exchange of faculty and students. With the mentioned juxtaposition, it leads to the conclusion that Philippine HEIs do not meet the emerging challenges for global competencies of graduates-professionals due to differences of performance criteria. More importantly, an urgent recommendation should be addressed immediately by the Commission on Higher Education to close the growing gap in terms of educational standards.

Recommendations

The annual Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) published by the World Economic Forum includes higher education institutions (HEIs) as one of the 12 pillars of competitiveness, providing a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world at all stages of development (<http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-competitiveness>). Thus, it is imperative for every nation to develop an excellent higher education system that will improve knowledge of the labor force to become globally competitive. Grassroots efforts should start from each HEI in the Philippines by repositioning their strategies to the concept of globalization. Furthermore, local accrediting agencies for Philippine HEIs may consider the performance indicators used by the international agencies such as THE and QS. This may help in preparing Filipino graduates to be globally competitive.

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