Philippines

Historically, the Philippine education system evolved out of a colonial cocoon and is patterned after the system of the USA. Until 1994, the governance of higher education was through a bureau of the Department of Education. However, Congressional reforms in 1992 led to the trifocalisation of the education sector into three governing bodies: the Department of Education for basic education; the Technical Education Skills Development Authority for vocational-technical and middle-level education; and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for higher education.

Since its creation in 1994, CHED has promulgated policies, standards and guidelines on academic linkages and twinning programmes, and recently, policies, standards and guidelines on transnational education and distance education, among others. It has also been active in promoting bilateral and multilateral agreements that support academic mobility, such as the following:

- Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Human Resource Development (APEC-HRD) academic exchange projects called the Universal Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP)
- ASEAN Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA’s) involving several professions (e.g. Engineering, Architecture, Accountancy and Nursing)
- ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand Free Trade Area’s development of an ASEAN Reference Qualifications Framework
- ASEAN’s emerging Quality Assurance Framework.

CHED continues to be an active participant of the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme, a flagship programme of SEAMEO-RIHED. This programme will facilitate student mobility and credit-transfers, as well as the internationalisation of HEIs.

Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications

CHED is the country’s clearing house for queries regarding formal qualification of foreign citizens for employment or study in the Philippines, and for inquiries about the qualifications of Filipinos working or studying abroad. The Commission works with foreign educational qualifications assessors reviewers, providing requested information and validating requirements of studies, diplomas and degrees obtained in the Philippines.

CHED’s International Affairs Services (IAS) Office attends to the information needs and the review of foreign qualifications in coordination with the Commission’s Office of Programmes and Standards. For incoming foreign higher education studies, diplomas and credential holders, CHED maintains references of authorised and recognised foreign higher education institutions from MOEs and UNESCO’s World List of Universities.

Issues and Challenges Concerning Foreign Qualifications Recognition

Access to accurate information

There is a need for better information sharing platforms through which information on accredited and recognised institutions of higher education can be sought in a timely manner.
Absence of a formal NIC with a dedicated staff
The period of verification in some instances might have been much shorter had CHED hired a staff fully dedicated to NIC-related functions.

The need for a Codified Manual of HEIs
A codified manual of HEIs would help identify recognised and accredited higher education institutions. It would also help provide relevant information on academic requirements and qualification recognition procedures.

Legal and institutional constraints
While the Philippines recognise foreign qualifications, legal and institutional constraints effectively prevent the Philippines from giving full recognition to foreign qualifications. Other constraints include separate licensing laws for professional degrees and the wide variation in institutional policies of higher education institutions (e.g. admission requirements).

Progress toward ratification of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention
The Philippines is currently working on the approval by the Office of the President of the UNESCO Regional Convention’s Instrument of Accession to commence the ratification of the new UNESCO Treaty on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in the Senate. It is hoped that this time around, the legislative process will take less than the five years it took to ratify the original 1983 Convention. CHED will proactively pursue the country’s ratification of the Convention. The groundwork will be laid in Congress as soon as the newly elected legislators assume their posts in July 2013.

Commitment to Information Sharing Mechanism
CHED will be laying the groundwork in 2013 for the establishment of a National Information Centre in collaboration with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and other relevant bodies.

CHED is in the process of reviewing its list of recognised Philippine higher education institutions and its accredited programs. It will be uploaded on the CHED website and subsequently onto the UNESCO-managed web portals, tentatively by the end of 2013 or early 2014. The information will, for example, include: general information on study, campus life and culture in the Philippines, higher education system, recognised higher education institution and programs, entrance requirements, duration of study, structure and content of programs, application procedures and accreditation level.

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