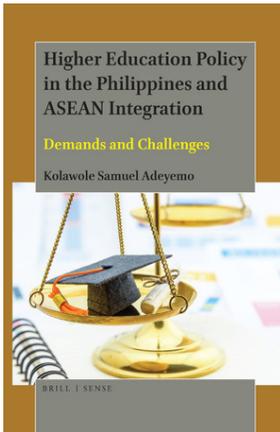


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Higher Education Policy in the Philippines and ASEAN Integration: Demands and Challenges

Kolawole Samuel Adeyemo, Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Sense, 2019. 142pp.
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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) includes 10 member nations (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) and is an integrated sociocultural, economic, and political community established in 1967. There are more than 6,500 higher education institutions (HEIs) and about 12 million students in ASEAN. One area of the association's vision for 2020 highlights economic development through education. This vision is meant to be operationalized through research cooperation, credit transfers, student mobility, and degree recognition.

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Adeyemo applies the lens of globalization to analyze ASEAN higher education integration policy. The publication evaluates the Philippines' higher education policies and policy implementation in the context of political symbolism that shows the distance between policy ideas and practical outcomes. The author provides an insightful and comprehensive understanding of the Philippines' higher education system. He also suggests approaches to improve the country's educational outcomes. Readers may extend their knowledge about educational policy implications and challenges the Philippines faces in balancing the nation's human resources needs and the region's integration policy.

The book consists of eight chapters. Chapter 1, “Philippines Higher Education in the Era of ASEAN Integration” provides a broad view of ASEAN education, evaluating student mobility in the region and education supply and demand in the Philippines. The author argues that the Philippines does not equally benefit from the ASEAN integration of higher education because regional policy formulation and implementation are based on the assumption of similarity and commonness, yet the Philippines has cultural and socioeconomic uniqueness.

Chapter 2 addresses “A Review of the Philippine Quality Assurance System.” The author describes various definitions of quality in higher education and indicates the Philippines’ issue of overproduction of skills-gap graduates. The Philippines focuses on three perspectives of quality including “fitness for purpose,” being “exceptional,” and “developing a culture of quality” (p. 31). Although there are quality regulations, quality compliance remains a challenge, especially the quality of teaching and learning as well as research capacity in the majority of the Philippines’ HEIs. Only six out of 2,300 HEIs in the Philippines are in the QS Asia University Rankings. Moreover, the majority of private HEI owners have little or no relevant education background or experience in managing HEIs, while private HEIs account for 88% of all institutions. Private HEIs are voluntarily accredited and there is a disagreement of the role of the Philippines Commission on Higher Education (CHED) role in terms of quality assurance among HEIs. The author recommends a standardized framework to systemize the country’s quality assurance.

Chapter 3 focuses on “Quality Improvement of Private Higher Education in the Philippines for ASEAN Integration.” Along with the privatization of higher education trend globally, the for-profit HEIs have mushroomed in ASEAN. The private institutions have approximately 80% of college and university students in the Philippines, but only a few institutions have been accredited. These institutions have inadequate funding to hire full-time lecturers/professors or afford facilities suitable for learning. The CHED regulates private HEIs satisfying the minimum requirements for program and institution registration only. Adeyemo calls for proper regulatory measures to ensure and sustain high quality and standards of postsecondary education.

Chapter 4 explains “Predictors of the Use of Quality Management System (QMS) Processes for the ASEAN Agenda.” ASEAN nation members determine integration strategies on their own, including whether to adopt QMS processes. The author details the QMS processes that the Philippines’ higher education sector would need to undertake in order to achieve institutional improvement and align with ASEAN integration goals. The author also presents an empirical study of institutional administrators’ readiness to use quality management tools, in which he found that higher education attainment and specialization in management fields among administrators predicted how QMS was implemented at their respective HEIs.

Chapter 5 describes “Total Quality Management (TQM) and the ASEAN Skills Development Agenda.” The author introduces the history of TQM and its application in higher education. Adeyemo specifies the role of the CHED and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority to develop indicators for

quality delivery using TQM principles. These indicators aim to address skills development needs and institutional performance in a bid to increase the Philippines' competitive advantage. The author suggests a comparison between applied TQM versus non-TQM applied institutions in the Philippines to gain the benchmark of quality assessment. The author emphasizes the importance of leadership for TQM successful applications.

Chapter 6 concentrates on "Measuring Research Performance of ASEAN Higher Education." The author applies Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml's Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL-1985) to discuss a method for improvement in the research performance of the Philippines' HEIs in contrast to other ASEAN state members. The author identifies research productivity issues in the Philippines as due to both (a) insufficient funding and training to develop and retain academics and researchers, and (b) researchers' low rate of publications in high-impact journals. Adeyemo indicates that SERVQUAL needs to be modified for the context of Philippines and suggests initiatives to enhance HEIs' research performance that meet the ASEAN's goals.

Chapter 7, "Cultural Barriers to ASEAN Integration Policy Implementation," highlights ASEAN policies on student mobility, credit transfer, and degree recognition. The CHED offers grants for institutions to develop the culture of quality in research and international cooperation between the Philippines' HEIs and other institutions in the region. The expected outcomes from these grants are increased international publications and collaboration within ASEAN. In terms of student mobility, strong institutional cultures in areas such as language of instruction affect the implementation of ASEAN policies. As English is not the instructional language in most institutions, international students are driven away. Also, restriction on student visas and credit transfer are major challenges in attracting international students to the Philippines. Only 26 institutions have joined the academic mobility and credit transfer system. The author critiques decentralized ASEAN policies for not guiding the implementation of academic exchange, like the Bologna process in Europe, which in turn affects the quality of ASEAN higher education integration.

Chapter 8, "Implications of ASEAN Integration for the Philippines Higher Education Policies," offers a synthesis of previous chapters. The challenges and demands of the Philippines' higher education sector include increasing domestic access to tertiary institutions, rising competition from other countries to recruit high-grade Filipino students, low international ranking of HEIs, and the need for overall quality improvement. Adeyemo recommends establishing a governmental priority reform of the higher education sector with an eye toward revamping funding and initiatives for HEIs to achieve the national goals, which would result in reaching regional needs.

This book compellingly argues that ASEAN higher education integration contributes to regional socioeconomic development, but that "concentrating on growing ASEAN countries and on smaller academic systems immediately raises the spectra of inequality" (p. 16), particularly for a developing country like the Philippines. Adeyemo provides a critical exploration of ways to improve the quality of the Philippines' higher education and suggestions for institutional

improvement. The book may be useful for policy makers, administrators, researchers, and educational faculty to gain an overall understanding of ASEAN higher education integration and the postsecondary education of the Philippines in particular. There are, however, questions that the book does not address. These include: What professional development do faculty need to enhance their competence? Which industries do the Philippines prioritize for the country's economic development and regional competitiveness that require postsecondary education? Does the Philippines have policy or plan for developing English-taught programs at HEIs?

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