ACCREDITATION OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS) PROGRAM: THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

With the current shift to learning through competency-based standards more known as “outcomes-based education”, the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offering LIS programs are now gearing to achieve and adhere to new policies, standards and guidelines set by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and other such organizations to standardize, revitalize and revolutionize LIS education and practice in the Philippines.

LIS Education has been around in the Philippines for 100 years now since 1914. As a duly recognized program by CHED, LIS education in both baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate has evolved from traditional instruction of Library Science into a technology-oriented discipline of Library and Information Science. As a regulated profession in the Philippines under the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians, HEIs offering LIS courses are being subjected to rigorous accreditation programs and standards by CHED and other accrediting bodies such as the Philippine Association of College and University Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA), the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools and Universities (PAASCU) and the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP) to ensure quality graduates and professionals are being produced in the country. A standardized assessment tool in monitoring LIS programs is currently in place to assess the quality of LIS education offered by HEIs in terms of 1) Organizational structure; 2) Administration; 3) Faculty; 4) Curriculum; 5) Instructional standards; 6) Library; 7) Physical facilities; 8) Students, and; 9) their performance in the
annual Licensure Examination for Librarians as measurements for the continuous operation of the program.

Today, LIS education enjoys significant attention with the CHED as one of the listed priority courses to spur national development, economic growth and prepare for the 2015 ASEAN integration. And with the creation of a National Competency-Based Standards for Filipino Librarians (NCBSL), the deputization of accredited HEIs to implement the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP), and the relentless efforts of Library Organizations to develop and modernize LIS as a discipline, LIS education in the Philippines is certainly headed to new heights.

**Keywords:** Accreditation, Library and Information Science, LIS Education, Higher Education Institutions, Standards, Filipino Librarians.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

This paper delves into the accreditation process of Library and Information Science (LIS) program under the Philippine education systems’ local governing bodies and accrediting agencies, further, a quick look at the history of LIS education, the librarianship profession as a regulated profession by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and the current developing strategies in adherence to the shift to learning through competency-based standards more known as “outcomes-based education”.

LIS Education has been around in the Philippines for 100 years now since 1914. As a duly recognized program by Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED), LIS education in both baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate has evolved from traditional instruction of Library Science into a technology-oriented discipline of Library and Information Science. However, the profession is facing a challenge, the supply and demand for librarians does not meet the need of the country to primarily fill-in the positions in the elementary, secondary and tertiary schools and further in top corporations, national and local government offices. With this, a roadmap of the Philippine librarianship has been crafted by the members of the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians (PRBFL). The roadmap aimed at two aspects, first is to have a clearer vision on the practice of librarianship towards national development and second, is to recognize and address the challenges and issues through formulation of policies and strategies for the betterment of the LIS education and the profession, per se.

2. **LIS EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Formal LIS education in the Philippines started when the University of the Philippines, the premier state university in the country, first offered library courses in 1914. The Philippine Normal College, now called Philippine Normal University, a state college offering teacher education, was second to open a library school in 1919. From 1914 to 1945, eleven (11) schools offered library science programs in the country which were closed during the Japanese occupation. The schools were reopened after the occupation and there are more than 140 schools offering variety of undergraduate programs in Library Science as of 2003. Meanwhile, since 1952, graduate programs in Library Science were also offered. As of 2003, the graduate programs were offered to more than 30 schools (David, 2015, p. 115; Perez, 2004).

Regulation of the practice of librarianship and of the quality of library education became more evident with the enactment of the Republic Act No. 6966 – The Philippine Librarianship Act: An Act Regulating the Practice of Librarianship and Prescribing the Qualifications for Librarians in September 1990. This was later repealed by another law making known the emerging roles of librarians in the national development of the country,
the Republic Act No. 9246 - The Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003: An Act Modernizing the Practice of Librarianship in the Philippines. The laws required passing of a licensure examination to practice librarianship. With the latter law, only graduates of Bachelor of Library Science and Information Science and Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) were allowed to take the required licensure examination.

The laws also created the PRBFL under the PRC. One of the functions of the PRBFL, as stated in Article 2, Section 8 item g of The Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003, is:

... to ensure, in coordination with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), that all institutions offering library, archives and information science education comply with prescribed standards for curriculum, faculty and facilities for course offerings of library science, or library and information science.

One of the realizations of the Act is the CHED’s issuance of the Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 8, Series of 2005 on April 4, 2005 with the subject Policies and Standards for Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) Program. Article V Section 7 of the CMO stated the description of the curriculum (Republic of the Philippines Office of the President Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2005a):

Provision of the mastery of the basic subjects such as Library and Information Organization and Management, including Laws and Related Practices and Trends, Information Technology, Selection and Acquisition of Library Materials, Cataloging and Classification, Reference, Bibliography and User Services, and Indexing and Abstracting, as called for in the [Librarians Licensure Examination]; Addition of subjects in vital information and communication technologies crucial in the LIS program, like telecommunications, networking, and database design; Enriched specialization component such as law, health and medical, academic, special, school and public librarianship; Provision for community exposure through field-based experiences through its library practicum subjects; and Total immersion in library and information science practice towards the end of the LIS program.

As of this writing, to cope up with the CHED’s call to shift to learning through competency-based standards more known as “outcomes-based education”, Policies, Standards and Guidelines (PSGs) for LIS programs has been revised. The revision will take effect in the Academic Year 2015-2016.

3. LIBRARIANS LICENSURE EXAMINATION

Before a graduate of LIS can practice the profession, he or she has to take the Librarians Licensure Examination (LLE). The LLE is a test regulated by the PRC, given to eligible applicants who meet the set qualifications of the governing body, with major consideration to its citizenship and educational requirements, thus a graduate of Bachelor’s degree in Library Science and Information Science. The LLE is a means of professionalizing librarianship in the Philippines that has come to realization through the enactment of The Philippine Librarianship Act of 1990 and its successor The Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003. The LLE assesses the readiness of LIS graduates in practicing librarianship and is a strategy by the CHED, PRC through PRBFL and accrediting agencies for evaluating and accrediting LIS schools.

The scope of the examination consists of the following subjects as stated in Article 3, Section 16 of The Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003:

1) selection and acquisition of multi-media sources of information; 2) cataloguing and classification; 3) indexing and abstracting; 4) reference, bibliography and information services; 5) organization, management and development and maintenance of multi-
media based library or information service, laws, trends and practices affecting the profession; and 6) information technology.

The examinee is considered to pass the LLE if obtained a weighted general average seventy-five percent (75%), and above fifty percent score (50%) in all the subjects.

From 2004 to 2014, out of 8,646 examinees, only 2,828 passed the LLE, with an average passing of 32%. The performance of examinees can be directly attributed to one of the challenges identified by the PRBFL as having a sub-standard quality of LIS education in many higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country (Nera, Ramos & Ananoria, 2012).

With the alarming result of the annual LLE, the PRBFL has created strategic solutions as pathways to success to improve the quality of LIS education in the Philippines, thus: 1) regular review of the BLIS and the Master in Library and Information Science (MLIS) curricula as a responsibility of the PRBFL and CHED through the Technical Committee on LIS, however an aspect contrary to the study of Majid, Chaudry, Foo, & Logan (2003) on the importance of different factors in the accreditation process; 2) study of non-performing LIS HEIs in the LLE, hence assist them in the challenges they faced; and 3) system of rewards and/or sanctions to those top performing and non-performing schools. (Nera, Ramos & Ananoria, 2012)

In a study of Majid, Chaudry, Foo, & Logan (2003), under the curriculum criterion, 41% identified the essentiality of the curriculum content to meet the market needs, while 25% expressed their opinion on the frequency of curriculum revision as less important. For the faculty criterion, two were regarded as more important which is the qualifications and number of academic staff, while there is least consideration on the areas of specialization.

4. GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION OF HEIS OFFERING LIS PROGRAMS

The CHED is an agency attached to the Office of the President and the key-leader in Philippine Higher Education System.

According to the CMO No. 08, Series of 2005, private HEIs and Local Colleges and Universities (LUCs) should seek authority from the CHED in order to offer LIS program(s) (CHED, 2005a). When authorized, the offered LIS programs are recognized by the CHED.

Before and during CHED recognition, assessment of the LIS program takes place. An instrument was being used to assess and evaluate its capability to offer the program. The assessment instrument have the following areas of evaluation: 1) Organizational structure; 2) Administration; 3) Faculty; 4) Curriculum; 5) Instructional standards; 6) Library; 7) Physical facilities; 8) Students, and; 9) performance in the LLE. HEIs which fail to comply with any area will be given sanctions or recommended to close of the program, depending on the degree of non-compliance to the PSGs.

5. ACCREDITATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

CHED (2013) defined Accreditation as, “a quality assurance mechanism wherein educational institutions and its academic program offerings are evaluated by an external body to determine if set standards are met. Accreditation is generally voluntary in nature.”

On February 15, 2005, CMO No. 1, Series of 2005 with the subject Revised Policies and Guidelines on Voluntary Accreditation in Aid of Quality and Excellence in Higher Education was issued. The CMO defined the functions of federations and networks of accrediting agencies (e.g. PACUCOA, PAASCU, AACCUP, etc.), the accreditation levels for program accreditation and benefits for program accreditation.

Once the program of the awarding HEI granted the highest level of accreditation, it carries the prestige and honor of offering such course, for which it is also perceived to provide quality education and world-class graduates.
5.1 Levels of Accreditation

Article IV of the CMO No. 1, Series of 2005 discusses the candidate status and the four accredited levels for educational programs. The levels will be the basis of awarding benefits. Candidate status will be granted to programs which are assessed by an accrediting agency as being capable of being accredited within two years after undergoing a preliminary survey. After a formal survey by the accrediting agency, Level I accredited status will be granted to programs effective for three years. Level II re-accredited status will be granted to programs which have been re-accredited by the accrediting agency effective for a period of three or five years based on the appraisal of the accrediting agency. Level III re-accredited status will be granted to programs which have been re-accredited and have met additional criteria/guidelines such as reasonably high standard of instruction, highly visible community extension program, highly visible research tradition, strong faculty development tradition, highly credible performance of its graduates in licensure examinations over the last three years, existing of working consortia or linkages with other schools and/or agencies, and extensive and functional library and other learning resource facilities. Level IV accredited status will be granted to programs which are highly respected as very high quality academic programs in the Philippines and with prestige and authority comparable to similar programs in excellent foreign universities. Programs with Level IV accreditation must have met additional criteria/guidelines which are excellent outcomes in research, teaching and learning, community service, evidence of international linkages and consortia, and well developed planning processes which support quality assurance mechanisms (CHED, 2005b).

5.2 Benefits of Accreditation

Article V of the CMO No. 1, Series of 2005 presents the benefits for program accreditation. For public sector institutions (i.e. state colleges and universities), accreditation level of programs will be used by the CHED and the Department of Budget and Management in recommending budgetary allocation aside from curricular and administrative deregulation and enjoying priority in terms of available funding assistance from CHED for scholarships and faculty development, facilities development and other development programs. For private sector institutions, benefits are available when certain accreditation level has awarded. The benefits for Level I and Level II are full administrative deregulation, financial deregulation in terms of setting of tuition and other school fees, authority to revise the curriculum without CHED approval, priority in the awards of grants/subsidies or funding assistance, and limited visitation, inspection and/or supervision by CHED. The benefits for Level III comprises of all the benefits for the lower levels plus authority to offer new courses allied to existing Level III courses without need for prior approval and privilege to apply for authority to offer new graduate programs, open learning/distance education, extension classes and to participate in the transnational education. The benefits for Level IV includes all of the those for the lower levels, grant of full autonomy for the program for the duration of its Level IV accredited status, and the authority to offer new graduate programs allied to existing Level IV courses, open learning/distance education and extension classes without need for prior approval (CHED, 2005b).

5.3 Accrediting Agencies in the Philippines – PACUCOA, PAASCU, AACCUP

The CHED’s recognized accrediting agencies are described in the succeeding paragraphs; hence, it aims in achieving a common goal of ensuring that universities and colleges are offering quality education only and produce globally competitive graduates.
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, thus (Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation, 2009):

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

The PACUCOA has included LIS among the programs it accredits and has developed survey instruments for both the undergraduate and graduate programs. Two schools located in Manila have been visited by the PACUCOA, the University of Santo Tomas and University of the East; while the University of Mindanao in Davao City has been visited for the graduate program.

Another agency is the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU), a service organization that accredits academic programs which meets standards of quality education and is authorized by the CHED to certify the levels of accredited programs for the purpose of granting progressive deregulation and other benefits (Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities, 2014). LIS is not included in the programs it accredits.

Lastly, the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP), Inc. functions as an agency for accreditation of curricular programs in the Philippines, particularly for state universities and colleges. It aims to develop a mechanism of, and conduct the evaluations of programs and institutions including LIS (Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines, 2014).

5.4 The Accreditation Process

The accreditation is applied by the HEI that usually starts by submission of application letter or letter of intent to the accrediting agency. The process follows different stages and involves tedious activities of preparing the supporting documents and other evidences which can strengthen the application status and indicate the readiness of the HEI.

Table 1 Criteria/Areas of Assessment for Program Accreditation for LIS

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<th>Accrediting Agency</th>
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<td>Criteria/Area</td>
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<td>1. Philosophy and Objectives</td>
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PACUCOA and AACCUP prescribe a survey instrument which aims to evaluate the criteria and/or areas essential to assessing the sustainability of the LIS program, as seen in Table 1. Included in the evaluation is looking through the performance of graduates in the LLE as measurement for the continuous operation of the program.

For each accreditation level granted to the HEI, the provision of the status lasts for a given number of years. Moreover, the various requirements and policies of the three accrediting agencies are available on their websites for a better understanding of the process.

6. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LIS EDUCATION

6.1 LIS as a Priority Course

Upon the issuance of CMO No. 01, Series of 2014 on January 9, 2014, the Bachelor in Library Science & Information Science has been announced as a priority course by the CHED from Academic Year (AY) 2014-2015 to AY 2017-2018. The inclusion of the program in the priority courses list was based on the national development plans manpower demands for the Academic Year 2014-2015 and Jobs Fit 2020 Vision of the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). The benefit for the inclusion was to prioritize enrollment of the beneficiaries of the CHED Student Financial Assistance Programs (StuFAPs) who were taking up the priority course (CHED, 2014).

6.2 Shift to Outcomes-Based Education

The issuance of CHED Administrative Order No. 01, Series of 2014 tasked the revision of the CMO No. 08, Series of 2005 or PSGs for LIS programs to reflect the shift to outcomes-based education. As of this writing, the proposed PSGs for the BLIS program by the Technical Panel for Library and Information Science was patterned primarily on the Guidelines for Professional Library/Information Education Programs of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). The proposal includes program outcomes based on internationally-accepted body of knowledge and skills being subscribed to by the Special Libraries Association, and the National Competency-Based Standards for Filipino Librarians. The salient features of the curriculum under the proposal were: (1) the provision of core courses such as Library and Information Center Organization and Management, Collection Management of Information Resources, Organization of Information Resources, Information Resources and Services, Indexing and Abstracting, as well as Information Technology as required in the LLE; (2) the integration of Ethics in librarianship in the related courses; (3) the addition of information and communication technology application courses crucial to the BLIS program, such as Information Processing and Handling, Web Technologies in Libraries, Digital Libraries and Resources, Programming Fundamentals, Systems Analysis and Design, as well as Database Design for Libraries; (4) provision of special courses such as School/Academic Librarianship, Special/Public Librarianship, Preservation of Information Resources, Philosophies and Principles of Teaching, Educational Technology, Indigenous
Knowledge and Multiculturalism, as well as Foreign Language; (5) the provision of a thesis/research project as a requirement for graduation; and (6) a one-year practicum totaling 400 hours towards the end of the LIS program.

6.3 Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program

The CHED deputizes HEIs to award a college degree to individuals who have worked in the field or industry yet hasn’t conferred the appropriate college degree through the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation (ETEEAP). The ETEEAP is defined by CHED (2015b) as “a comprehensive educational assessment program at the tertiary level that recognizes, accredits and gives equivalencies to knowledge, skills, attitudes and values gained by individuals from relevant work”.

With the appropriate accreditation level, a LIS school may offer an ETEEAP program to allow individuals working in public and special libraries to obtain a LIS degree and be eligible to take the LLE. Thus, the ETEEAP is a strategy seen by the Council of Deans and Heads of Library and Information Science Schools (CODHLIS), organized by the National Library of the Philippines (NLP), to increase the supply of librarians. As of December 2010, two deputized HEIs were offering LIS programs via the ETEEAP. These were (1) University of La Salette; and (2) Ateneo de Zamboanga University (CHED, 2010).

7. CONCLUSION

Accreditation of LIS programs in the Philippines greatly involves the state. The CHED sets policies, standards and guidelines in offering LIS programs to HEIs. The CHED also assesses the capability of HEIs intending to offer or already offering LIS programs in terms of organizational structure, administration, faculty, curriculum, instruction, library, facilities, students and performance in the LLE. Meanwhile, the PRBFL under the PRC assesses the outcomes of LIS graduates through the results of the LLE. The PRBFL recognizes performing HEIs and identifies non-performing HEIs for the CHED to regulate. Lastly, accrediting agencies such as PACUCOA and AACCUP ensures the quality assurance of HEIs offering LIS programs by surveying the HEIs, granting accredited status to capable HEIs and giving recommendations for improvement of the LIS programs offered.

Upon the certainty of reaching new heights, the prioritization of LIS in CHED’s StuFAP, the shift to outcomes-based education curriculum, the adoption and prescription of NCBSL to LIS curricula, the deputization of accredited HEIs to offer courses via ETEEAP, and the relentless efforts of Professional Library Organizations to develop and modernize LIS as a discipline contributed in the improving quality of LIS education. The current developments makes certain that the Philippine experience on accrediting LIS Programs will ultimately improve the standards of LIS education in the country.

8. REFERENCES


