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Challenges of BS Medical Laboratory Science Schools in the Philippines in PACUCOA Accreditation

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Abstract

Aim: This study sought to determine the challenges of BS Medical Laboratory Science schools in the Philippines in PACUCOA accreditation.
Methodology: A quantitative descriptive research was utilized in the study that aims to collect measurable data that can be used to analyze a population sample statistically. An adapted survey questionnaire from the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) was used. It is composed of different indicators such as Philosophy and Objectives, Faculty, Instruction, Library, Laboratories, Physical Plant and Facilities, Student Services, Social Orientation and Community Involvement, Physical Plant and Facilities, Organization and Administration from PACUCOA.
Results: In terms of philosophy and objectives, faculty, instruction, laboratory, research, library, student services, social orientation and community involvement, physical plant and facilities, and organization and administration, respondents of the study are moderately challenged with a composite mean of 2.76.
Conclusion: Some of the requirements as mentioned above exist but need to be updated based on PACUCOA requirements.
Recommendation: The researchers highly recommend the schools to establish a continuous improvement plan that will serve as a guide for PACUCOA Accreditation.

Keywords: Challenges, Bs Medical Laboratory Science, PACUCOA, accreditation

INTRODUCTION

In a knowledge society that is becoming more and more globalized, tertiary education is essential for competitiveness as well as economic and political progress. Expanding higher education, according to research, may encourage fast technological uptake and enhance the ability of a country to optimize its economic production (CHED, 2013). In order to meet these new requirements, tertiary education must modify its program structures, curricula, and teaching and learning techniques. Greater attention is being given to quality assurance as a crucial component in ensuring educational relevance in response to this challenge. Strong quality assurance systems must be established to solve today's challenges, according to the World Bank's Constructing Knowledge Societies: New difficulties for Tertiary Education (Ausa et., 2012).

According to Dumancas and Prado (2015), accreditation began as a private initiative and was formally established in the Philippines in 1957, 62 years ago. The Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU) served as the first accrediting body. After 20 years, there were two (2) more accrediting organizations: the Association of Christian Schools and Colleges-Accrediting Agency (ACSC-AA) in 1976 and the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities-Commission on Accreditation (PACU-COA) in 1973. These three accrediting organizations supposedly united to form the Federation of Accrediting Agencies in the Philippines (FAAP) in 1977, according to Corpus (2013). According to Cambel et al. (2012), accreditation is the declaration that a facility offers a high-quality education that the community has a right to expect, and that the educational community supports. With the help of this academic exercise, high-standard academic institutions can grow and develop and perform even better (Ngohayon et al., 2012). The broad need to improve program or educational quality, the need to find innovative

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solutions to severe financial restrictions, and the demands for responsibility from external constituents can all be linked to the increased concern in reviews and assessments of program quality (Adams, 2018). The lack of confidence that institutions of higher learning are preparing students for the difficult challenges of their current and future jobs, as well as the rising cost of higher education, which pressures institutions to become more accountable through quality control initiatives and program review mandates, are compelling explanations for the interest in the study of academic program quality (Caro, 2012).

According to Soliven et al. (2012), accreditation could be a crucial strategy for raising organizational quality. They concur that certification is a crucial instrument for enhancing organizational quality, raising employee engagement, fostering teamwork and collaboration, and aiding in the implementation of improvements. The quality of the programs increases with the institution's accreditation level.

As the foundation for awarding Centers of Excellence and Centers of Development among the programs in any higher education institution, accreditation gives various advantages to the school (Dumancas & Prado, 2015). They also mentioned the significance of attitudes in determining the efficacy of accreditation. Additionally, sentiments toward the advantages of accreditation were more favorable. Nevertheless, despite all these advantages of certification, research on institutional practices that influence teaching and learning has received much less attention. For instance, there is limited study on school accreditation, a process that affects a variety of institutional procedures, such as those governing academic content, financial demands, staffing requirements, student services, and administrative and professional development. The lack of research on accreditation can be attributed to the fact that it has an array of effects on different types of institutions (Ngohayon et al., 2012).

In addition, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a critical role in preparing a country for global competitiveness by producing skilled human capital resources and the concept of colleges and universities has changed, bringing about a new age for higher education (Bueno, 2017). There are also rising expectations for higher performance in terms of teaching and producing qualified graduates. The endeavor is challenging since the institution must routinely review itself from standards in place and stay current with labor market demands. This entails investing money in developing its faculty, research, and facilities. In the case of the Philippines, the quality of various higher education institutions has decreased over time, as seen by the quality of their graduates, among other things.

The Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) is a private accrediting agency that certifies that an educational institution's academic program maintains exceptional standards in its educational operations within the context of its purposes and objectives. The goal of PACUCOA is to identify schools whose competence and success in a specific field merit public and professional recognition. According to Belinda et al., (2016), the school must have a vision that all staff members understand as a common growth direction, something that motivates them to be better. This is to assist students in selecting high-quality schools, colleges, and universities that will fulfill their specific needs and to assist educational institutions and professional associations in their duty of advancing the interest of education.

In the realm of higher education, both private and public HEIs are presently in competition with one another. Due to the increased competition in the higher education sector, many private colleges, and universities struggle with difficult issues like declining student enrollment, poor strategic marketing planning, fierce competition between other private colleges or universities that offer the same courses, and low service quality (Pansiri & Sinkamba, 2017). Given that parents spend a significant amount of money on their children's education, the quality of the education is a key factor in drawing in new students and keeping existing ones. Higher education is today the topic of more attention and concerns about its effectiveness due to increased public demands and the necessity to spend resources in accordance with preset standards for accreditation. National and international organizations today frequently subject organizations to time-consuming accreditation procedures in order to assess the quality of institutions, research, and programs. The investments must be viewed as a part of a long-term transformation because the accrediting process is significant and involves the entire institution (Boon, Shukur, & Bassim, 2016). In addition, departments like human resources, finance, education, and research typically operate independently. Many people confuse readiness with the accreditation process, which evaluates and certifies the responsible administration of financial resources and the effective use of those resources. A higher education certification attempts to establish standards that are to be continuously maintained, which makes it an effective catalyst for internal reforms (Boon, Shukur, & Bassim, 2016). Moreso, people participate in educational processes for a wide range of objectives, including improving their personal financial situation, upgrading their standard of life, addressing career concerns, intellectual growth, and social upbringing. Countries strive to improve

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the human capital power in society, to bring about a higher degree of human development in society, to boost the country's production potential, to build a more wholesome, democratic society, and to achieve sustainable development (Yılmaz & Sarpkaya, 2016). Furthermore, teachers are more likely to be motivated when they see that their job is relevant and important, when they have a sense of ownership, and when the work has worth. Motivation helps to energize, direct, and sustain positive behavior over time. It involves working toward goals and tailoring activities to achieving this purpose. A motivated teacher is essential to a successful classroom because they will view teaching through a different lens and, in doing so, motivate their students in their learning as well (Boon, Shukur, & Bassim, 2016).

On the other hand, medical technologists play an important role in patient care, providing vital laboratory data for disease diagnosis, patient therapy management, and health maintenance. They carry out complex chemical, biological, hematological, microscopic, and bacteriological tests. Schools offering the BS Medical Laboratory Science Program must uphold the standards in order to continue producing outstanding students and good board exam ratings. Accreditation is one method by which HEIs maintain compliance with standards. To discover and identify gaps in their current processes, educational institutions that want to improve must look within themselves through self-assessment and introspection.

Furthermore, the institution is the one who starts the voluntary process of accreditation. It necessitates a thorough self-evaluation and an impartial, unbiased peer assessment of the general educational quality. Accreditation places a focus on quality assurance and a dedication to ongoing quality improvement. Aids in determining whether a facility meets or surpasses the minimal requirements for quality. In the Philippines, where BS Medical Laboratory Science programs are becoming more competitive, accreditation assists students in selecting schools that are suitable for enrolment. It makes it possible for graduates to take certification exams. Advisory boards, faculty, staff, students, and alumni are all included in the institutional evaluation and planning those results in the creation of goals for institutional self-improvement. An institution's branding has always been important, but it might suddenly be more crucial than ever. According to CEAP (2012), most higher education institutions are of low quality, as indicated by low board exam passing rates and a lack of approved programs. Raising the quality of higher education institutions is thus one of the reasons why government authorities like the Commission on Higher Education are continuously looking for solutions to the problem. To ensure resource mobilization and cost effectiveness, reforms such as simplifying the organization of public higher education and strengthening higher education budgets are being implemented (Yap, 2012). However, these reforms will be ineffective unless HEIs are consistently pushed to improve and raise their standards above the minimum.

With the country's expanding number of HEIs offering the BS Medical Laboratory Science Program in the Philippines and are not yet PACUCOA accredited, a continuous improvement plan must be developed to standardize the improvement through the whole organization of schools of medical laboratory science to continuously produce quality medical technology graduates. The result of the study will be significant to the BS Medical Laboratory Science Deans/Program Heads and faculty members in the Philippines in creating professional development program and enhancing the quality of instruction and increases the student achievement and learning.

Research Questions

This study determined the challenges of BS Medical Laboratory Science schools in the Philippines in PACUCOA Accreditation. Specifically, it sought to answers the following research questions:

1. What is the firmographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
   1.1 Location
   1.2 status of the institution for accreditation
   1.3 type of institution
   1.4 typology
2. What are the challenges of BS Medical Laboratory Science schools in the Philippines in PACUCOA Accreditation?
3. Is there any significant difference on challenges when grouped according to firmographic profile?

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METHODS

Research Design

The researchers utilized quantitative descriptive research that aims to collect measurable data that can be used to analyze a population sample statistically. It is a common market research tool that allows the researchers to gather and describe the demographic segment's characteristics. Moreover, descriptive research design aids in the collection of data that demonstrates correlations between variables without causing the environment to change (McCombes, 2020).

Population of the Study

The study utilized a total population technique with a total of 202 respondents. The respondents are BS Medical Laboratory Science Deans/Program Heads and faculty members in the Philippines during the Academic Year 2020-2021. Part-time and full-time faculty members who are not employed during Academic Year 2020-2021 are excluded from the study. The said respondents where came from the schools that are not yet accredited by the PACUCOA to determine their challenges, readiness, and attitudes towards accreditation. Total population sampling, a kind of purposive sampling, involves researching the entire population of interest. It works best in situations when the population as a whole is manageable, as in a well-defined subsection of a larger population.

Data Gathering Instrument

This study utilized an adapted survey questionnaire from the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA). The adapted data gathering instrument is composed of different indicators such as Philospohy and Objectives, Faculty, Instruction, Library, Laboratories, Physical Plant and Facilities, Student Services, Social Orientation and Community Involvement, Physical Plant and Facilities, Organization and Administration from PACUCOA instrument to determine the challenges of BS Medical Laboratory Science schools in the Philippines in PACUCOA accreditation.

Moreover, the research questionnaire of the study was validated by the experts and then measured its reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The researcher requested permission from the PASMETH (Philippine Association of Schools of Medical Technology) officers and to the management of the BS Medical Laboratory Science schools in the Philippines in the dissemination of the research instrument. The research instrument was created using Google forms and delivered via several internet channels, along with a message outlining the study's objective and assurance that any information they provide will be kept totally confidential. The letter of permission must be approved first by the management before dissemination. In addition, the replies were instantly delivered to the constructed google form and converted to the excel. Results were sorted based on the variables and then analyzed.

Lastly, the survey items employed a five-point Likert type scale to measure the challenges of BS Medical Laboratory Science Schools in the Philippines in PACUCOA accreditation (5 = " Strongly Agree", 4 = "Agree", 3 = "Moderately Agree", 2 = "Disagree", and 1 = "Strongly Disagree").

Data Gathering Procedure

The adapted data collection instrument is composed of several indicators from the PACUCOA instrument, such as Philosophy and Objectives, Faculty, Instruction, Library, Laboratories, Physical Plant and Facilities, Student Services, Social Orientation and Community Involvement, Physical Plant and Facilities, Organization and Administration from PACUCOA instrument to determine the challenges of BS Medical Laboratory Science schools in the Philippines in PACUCOA accreditation. Experts validated the study's research questionnaire, and Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess its reliability. In order to distribute the research instrument, the researcher sought approval from the PASMETH (Philippine Association of Schools of Medical Technology) officers and the management of the BS Medical Laboratory Science schools in the Philippines. A letter stating the purpose of the study and assuring participants that any information they provide will be kept completely confidential, which was created using Google forms and distributed over several internet channels. The replies were instantly delivered to the constructed google form and converted to excel. Results were sorted based on the variables and which were followed by analysis.

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Data Analysis

To perform data analysis, the following statistical tools were used. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the firmographic profile of the study. Weighted means and ranking were used to assess the challenges in accreditation in terms of philosophy and objectives, faculty, instruction, laboratories, research, library, student services, social orientation and community involvement,, physical plant and facilities and organization and administration. Mann-Whitney U test for two groups and Kruskal Wallis test for three groups were used as part of the non-parametric tests to determine the significant differences. The following Likert Scale was used in assessing the variables: 4.50 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree; 3.50- 4.49 = Agree; 2.50-3.49 –Moderately Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 –Disagree; and 1.00 – 1.49 – Strongly Disagree. In addition, all data were treated using a statistical software known as PASW version 26 to further interpret the result of the study using an alpha level of 0.05.

Ethical Consideration

Ethics has become a foundation for performing a productive and meaningful study. As a result, researchers' ethical behaviors are thoroughly reviewed to ensure that no ethical difficulties are overlooked. The researcher is responsible for safeguarding the respondents, which includes getting permission, confidentiality and privacy.

This study was guided by the Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Data privacy is an individual's right to not have his/her private information disclosed, and to freely live from surveillance and intrusion. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 is the policy of the State to protect the fundamental human right of privacy, of communication while ensuring the free flow of information to promote innovation and growth (National Privacy Commission, 2016). For this study, the ethical considerations include data privacy consent, collection, use, recording, storing, organizing, consolidation, updating, processing, access to transfer, disclosure or data sharing of the respondents' personal and sensitive personal information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Firmographic Profile of the Respondent

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of the Respondents Profile

Location	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Region I – Ilocos Region	10	5
Region II – Cagayan Valley	8	4
Region III – Central Luzon	8	4
Region IV-A – CALABARZON / MIMAROPA	127	62.9
Region V – Bicol Region	5	2.5
Region VI – Western Visayas	4	2
Region VII – Central Visayas	7	3.5
Region VIII – Eastern Visayas	3	1.5
Region IX – Zamboanga Peninsula	8	4
Region X – Northern Mindanao	5	2.5
Region XIII – Caraga	1	0.5
NCR – National Capital Region	14	6.9
CAR – Cordillera Administrative Region	1	0.5
BARMM – Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	1	0.5
Status of the Institution for Accreditation		
Not Yet Accredited	177	87.6

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Candidate	20	9.9
For Accreditation	5	2.5
Type of Institution		
Public	33	16.3
Private	169	83.7
Horizontal Typology		
University	34	16.8
College	168	83.2

The graphical profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1 together with data concerning their geographic location, type of institution, and typology. According to the survey's findings, Region IV A - CALABARZON / MIMAROPA had the most respondents (127, or 62.9%), followed by Region I - Ilocos Region (14, or 6.9%), and NCR - National Capital Region (10, or 5.0%). Moreover, the least number of respondents came from BARMM – Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (1, .5%), CAR – Cordillera Administrative Region (1, .5%) and Region XIII – Caraga (1, .5%).

In terms of the status of the institution for accreditation, it was discovered that 177 respondents (87.6%) stated their institution is not, yet PACUCOA accredited, 20 respondents (9.9%) claimed to be level 1 candidates, and 5 respondents revealed their school is applying for PACUCOA accreditation.

In addition, 33 respondents (16.3%) came from public institutions, whereas 169 respondents (83.7%) came from private institutions.

Finally, according to horizontal typology, it was determined that 168 respondents (83.2%) were from colleges and 34 (16.8%) were from universities.

The firmographic profile's findings were verified by the Philippine Association of Schools of Medical Technology and Public Health, Inc. organization's list of PASMETH members and by a list of institutions with PACUCOA-certified programs. PACUCOA is a private accrediting organization that formally recognizes educational institutions by attesting that their academic programs uphold high standards in their educational operations. The Philippine Association of Schools of Medical Technology and Medical Laboratory Science (PASMETH) is the country's national organization for these schools. The majority of the members are from CALABARZON and NCR and are not yet accredited by PACUCOA or in candidate status, as evidenced by the 240 individual members as of 2021 from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Table 2. Challenges Towards Accreditation of BS Medical Laboratory Science schools in the Philippines in PACUCOA accreditation

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Philosophy and Objectives	3.65	Agree	1
2. Faculty	2.89	Moderately Agree	3
3. Instruction	2.83	Moderately Agree	5
4. Laboratory	2.59	Moderately Agree	7
5. Research	2.83	Moderately Agree	4
6. Library	2.62	Moderately Agree	6
7. Student Services	2.92	Moderately Agree	2
8. Social Orientation and Community Involvement	2.39	Disagree	10
9. Physical Plant and Facilities	2.46	Disagree	9
10. Organization and Administration	2.44	Disagree	8
Composite Mean	**2.76**	**Moderately Agree**	

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Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree; 3.50 – 4.49 = Agree 2.50 – 3.19 = Moderately Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 2 shows the challenges towards accreditation in terms of philosophy and objectives, faculty, instruction, laboratory, research, library, student services social orientation and community involvement, physical plant and facilities and organization and administration**.** The composite mean of 2.76 indicates that the respondents moderately agreed in general. Philosophy and objectives got the highest mean score of 3.65, followed by student services with the mean score of 2.92 and faculty with a mean score of 2.89.

The study revealed that the respondents are challenged in reviewing their mission, vision, goals and core values that express its philosophy of education which should pervade their operations. As well as in hiring qualified faculty members that should be highly qualified faculty members, in terms of academic qualifications and professional performance. Moreso, respondents are also challenged in instruction which should be manifested in the program of studies, instructional process, classroom management, academic performance of students and administrative measures for effective instruction same with laboratory, research, library, and student services.

All of these findings negate the PACUCOA (2012) requirements which should be at least present in an institution. It is essential, therefore, for a school to draw up for itself the mission, vision, goals, and core values that express its philosophy of education which should pervade its operations. Schools must also have a strong faculty which consists of highly qualified faculty members, in terms of academic qualifications and professional performance. The institution must also be concerned with the quality of instruction it provides to students. Laboratories must include not just the space, but also the supplies, equipment and features desired of good laboratories to help attain the objectives and outcomes of the Medical Technology program. Faculty members and students must be engaged and constantly seek to advance the frontiers of knowledge by experimentation, research, and publication. Moreso, the measure of excellence in the area of library is the extent to which its resources, services and facilities support the teaching, research and extension mission of the institution. Lastly, the school has the responsibility to collaborate with the family and other social institutions to develop the total personality of the student.

These findings are supported by the study of Barrett (2015) which the author emphasized that enhanced curriculum and instruction should be present in any educational process. The curriculum is considering a designed plan for learning requires a purposeful and proactive organization, sequencing, and management of the interactions between the teacher and the students. Moreover, the success of the curriculum and instruction is anchored to the institutional requirements such as the presence of qualified faculty members, laboratory, library, and research. Since the needs of the people is evolving, it is a challenge for institutions to update and improve the curriculum and instruction in timely manner.

Meanwhile, items such as social orientation and community involvement has a mean score of 2.39, followed by physical plant and facilities has a mean score of 2.46 and lastly organization and administration with a mean score of 2.44 which the respondents disagreed.

It only shows that the respondents are not challenged in social orientation and community involvement. It only shows that the respondents are committed to and are active participants in community activities, growth and development. The study also shows that the physical plant and facilities of the institution are adequate for the attainment of its objectives. It was also revealed that they have an administrative organization, which facilitates the attainment of their philosophy and objectives.

These findings were supported by PACUCOA survey (2012). It was mentioned that the school and its resources are committed to and are active participants in community activities, growth and development. As an instrument of social and cultural transmission and an agent of change, the school must develop in its students a social conscience, through awareness, concern and involvement in community development. Moreover, the physical plant and facilities of the institution should be adequate for the attainment of its objectives. Physical plant includes the site, campus, buildings, equipment, and services. And lastly, an educational institution should have an administrative organization, which facilitates the attainment of its philosophy and objectives.

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Table 3. Difference Responses Between the Challenges Towards Accreditation When Grouped According to Profile

Location	λ^2_c / U	p-value	Interpretation
Philosophy and Objectives	34.152	0.001	Highly Significant
Faculty	20.995	0.073	Not Significant
Instruction	17.913	0.161	Not Significant
Laboratory	56.693	0	Highly Significant
Research	13.938	0.378	Not Significant
Library	19.335	0.113	Not Significant
Student Services	12.513	0.486	Not Significant
Social Orientation and Community Involvement	53.21	0	Highly Significant
Physical Plant and Facilities	43.241	0	Highly Significant
Organization and Administration	54.342	0	Highly Significant
Status of the Institution for Accreditation			
Philosophy and Objectives	2.164	0.339	Not Significant
Faculty	4.067	0.131	Not Significant
Instruction	3.733	0.155	Not Significant
Laboratory	1.456	0.483	Not Significant
Research	3.698	0.157	Not Significant
Library	2.704	0.259	Not Significant
Student Services	8.117	0.017	Significant
Social Orientation and Community Involvement	0.599	0.741	Not Significant
Physical Plant and Facilities	0.531	0.767	Not Significant
Organization and Administration	2.126	0.345	Not Significant
Type of Institution			
Philosophy and Objectives	2624	0.579	Not Significant
Faculty	1642.5	0	Highly Significant
Instruction	1745	0	Highly Significant
Laboratory	1619.5	0	Highly Significant
Research	2617	0.57	Not Significant
Library	2516	0.355	Not Significant
Student Services	2662.5	0.672	Not Significant
Social Orientation and Community Involvement	1536	0	Highly Significant
Physical Plant and Facilities	1946	0.005	Significant
Organization and Administration	1943.5	0.005	Significant
Horizontal Typology			
Philosophy and Objectives	2745.5	0.713	Not Significant
Faculty	2363	0.104	Not Significant
Instruction	2276	0.054	Not Significant

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Laboratory	1971.5	0.003	Significant
Research	2585	0.375	Not Significant
Library	2694	0.587	Not Significant
Student Services	2711.5	0.631	Not Significant
Social Orientation and Community Involvement	1967	0.002	Significant
Physical Plant and Facilities	2021.5	0.006	Significant
Organization and Administration	1900	0.002	Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Table 2 illustrates the comparison of responses on the challenges towards accreditation when grouped according to profile. It was observed that there was significant difference on philosophy and objectives (p = 0.001), laboratory (p = 0.000), social orientation and community involvement (p = 0.000), physical plant and facilities (p = 0.000) and organization and administration (p = 000) when grouped according to location. In addition, it was observed that there was no significant difference on faculty (p = 0.073), instruction (p = 0.161), research (p = 0.378), library (p = 0.113), and student services (p = 0.486). Based on the post hoc test conducted, it was observed that those from Region II encountered more challenges towards accreditation.

As to the status of the institution for accreditation, responses vary on students' services since the obtained p-value was less than the alpha level (p = 0.017). These significant differences lie on those who are not yet accredited.

With regard to type of institution, there was also significant difference on faculty (p = 0.000), instruction (p = 0.000), laboratory (p = 0.000), social orientation and community involvement (p = 000), physical plant and facilities (p = 0.005) and organization and administration (0.005). From the test conducted, those who are in the public encountered greater challenges.

In addition, there was significant difference on laboratory (p = 0.003), social orientation and community involvement (p = 0.002), physical plant and facilities (p = 0.006) and organization and administration (p = 0.002) when grouped according to horizontal typology. This was observed on those who are from the university.

Furthermore, the study also revealed that there was a significant difference in some areas of PACUCOA in terms of challenges according to profile of respondents. It only shows that different organizations have different challenges in accreditation based on PACUCOA areas.

This is further supported by Pansiri & Sinkamba (2017) that in the realm of higher education, both private and public HEIs are presently in competition with one another. Due to the increased competition in the higher education sector, many private colleges and universities struggle with difficult issues and challenges that affect institutions' performance. Also, higher education is today the topic of more attention and concerns about its effectiveness due to increased public demands and the necessity to spend resources in accordance with preset standards for accreditation.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the study's findings, most respondents were from Region IV-A, which includes the Philippine provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Quezon, Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan. Most of the respondents are not yet accredited and came from private college institutions.

In terms of philosophy and objectives, faculty, instruction, laboratory, research, library, student services, social orientation and community involvement, physical plant and facilities, and organization and administration, respondents of the study are moderately challenged with a composite mean of 2.76. It only shows that some of the requirements exist but need to be updated based on PACUCOA requirements.

Furthermore, the study also revealed that there was a significant difference in some areas of PACUCOA in terms of challenges according to profile of respondents. It only shows that different organizations have different limitations in the compliance of the accreditation based on different areas of PACUCOA.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the researcher highly recommends the schools to establish a continuous improvement plan that will serve as a guide for PACUCOA Accreditation. Faculty members, students, staffs, industry representatives, and representatives of professional associations should be represented in the formulation, review and revision of the institutional vision, mission, goals, program educational objectives and should demonstrate commitment to implement them. A long-term faculty development program should be included to maintain or to hire highly qualified faculty members, in terms of academic qualifications and professional performance such provisions as scholarships, study leaves, and research grants. In addition, the curriculum should be enhanced and improved to help students achieve program outcomes and educational goals. It is also recommended to have sufficient teaching resources accessible to help students achieve their learning objectives. Complete, functioning, well-maintained, safe, conducive, and ready for hands-on exercises and experiments, laboratory facilities, equipment, and apparatuses should be complemented to the instruction. Furthermore, laboratory experiments should be supported by specialized tools and materials. Complete resources must be present, services and facilities that will support the teaching, research, and extension mission of the institution. Planning, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive community outreach and development programs in the partner communities should be documented. The school must have the capacity to provide facilities that are adequate to meet the demands of the academic community in terms of education, research, health, wellness, and social interactions.

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