



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR
INTEGRATIVE AND
DEVELOPMENT
STUDIES

Higher Education in EDCOM 2: **Going Global?**

WEBINAR PROCEEDINGS

NOVEMBER 8, 2021 via Zoom





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Table of Contents

Introduction	01
Programme	03
Opening Remarks	05
Dr. Ma. Cynthia Rose B. Bautista	
Keynote Remarks	07
Hon. Sherwin Gatchalian	
Panel Presentations	10
Dr. Alyssa M. Peleo-Alampay	10
Dr. Ester Albano-Garcia	14
Dr. Tirso Ronquillo	18
Atty. Joseph Noel Estrada	21
Roundtable Discussion/Open Forum	24

Introduction

The University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) held a roundtable discussion on reconvening the Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM) to make Philippine higher education globally competitive.

The virtual roundtable discussed the implications of reconvening the EDCOM given the current milieu of Philippine Higher Education. Specifically, the round table discussion sought to answer the following questions:

- 1.) How has the EDCOM impacted Philippine higher education in the last 30 years?
- 2.) What specific issues in Philippine higher education must the EDCOM 2 address?
- 3.) How must we consider internationalization and globalization as regards to the future of Philippine higher education?
- 4.) How can the proposed EDCOM 2 strengthen the public-private complementarity in higher ed?
- 5.) What are your policy recommendations for EDCOM 2 to improve the state of higher education in the Philippines?

Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture, delivered the Keynote Remarks. In the panel were Dr. Alyssa M. Peleo-Alampay, UP Assistant Vice-President for Academic Affairs (Quality Assurance), Dr. Ester Albano-Garcia, President of the University of the East (UE), Dr. Tirso Ronquillo, President of the Batangas State University (BSU) and President of the Philippine Association of State Universities and

Colleges (PASUC), and Atty. Joseph Noel Estrada, Managing Director of the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations of the Philippines (COCOPEA). Dr. Cynthia Rose Bautista, UP System Vice-President for Academic Affairs, gave the Welcome Remarks. UP CIDS Higher Education Research and Policy Reform Program (HERPRP) Fellow Mr. Karol Mark Yee and HERPRP Consultant Dr. Allen Espinosa of the Philippine Normal University (PNU) served as moderator and master of ceremonies, respectively.

The webinar was spearheaded by the UP CIDS (HERPRP) and the Office of Senator Gatchalian.

In-text citations were added to this publication as necessary.

Program

9:45–10:00 **Registration**

10:00–10:10 **Welcoming Remarks**

Dr. Ma. Cynthia Rose B. Bautista

Vice-President for Academic Affairs, University of the Philippines System

10:10–10:20 **Keynote Remarks**

Hon. Sherwin Gatchalian

Chairperson, Committee on Basic Education, Arts, and Culture, Senate of the Philippines

10:20–10:50 **Panel Presentation**

Dr. Alyssa M. Peleo-Alampay

Assistant Vice-President for Academic Affairs (Quality Assurance), University of the Philippines System

Dr. Ester Albano-Garcia

President, University of the East

Dr. Tirso Ronquillo

*University President, Batangas State University
President, Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC)*

Atty. Joseph Noel Estrada

Managing Director, Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations of the Philippines (COCOPEA)

10:50–11:50 **Roundtable Discussion/Open Forum**

Moderator:

Mr. Karol Mark Yee

*Fellow, Higher Education Research and Policy Reform
Program (HERPRP)*

Emcee:

Dr. Allen Espinosa

Research Consultant, HERPRP

Opening Remarks

Dr. Ma. Cynthia Rose B. Bautista

*Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of the Philippines System*

Dr. Ma. Cynthia Rose B. Bautista acknowledged the distinguished guests and speakers and welcomed the participants of the roundtable discussion in Higher Education in the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2).

EDCOM 2, as Dr. Bautista introduced, aims to build on the EDCOM of 30 years ago and to lodge Philippine higher education within the 21st-century landscape of higher education that is global; flexible; a blending of face-to-face, virtual and experiential learning; linked to industry and other stakeholders; and leverages the agency of students or learners among many other features of the next normal. Dr. Bautista expressed favor for having this roundtable discussion held at the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), whose faculty championed its Education Research Program (ERP). This program has contributed significantly to the law and the governance of basic education and to the policy and implementation of school-based management and reforms in the Department of Education (DepEd); has won two UNESCO international awards in succession; and has mobilized the expertise of UP's top-level economists, mathematicians, and educators in the 1990s to refine the socialized tuition policy that the first EDCOM advocated. The same faculty of the program constituted the core of the first EDCOM secretariat. The first EDCOM, which focalized education to enable technical, vocational, and higher education to grow, was a source of many reforms that included the use of the first language, the

inclusion of academic and secondary subjects at the secondary level, the development of graduate education, among others. Although different from its mission, the first EDCOM successfully advocated the typology of higher education institutions in a country that thrusts higher education institutions on the path to becoming universities. In 2011, the task force on typology-based and outcomes-based quality assurance in higher education studied EDCOM reforms and focused on its advocacy for a typology of higher education institutions, whereby professional institutions or community colleges may be excellent even if they are not universities. Dr. Bautista was also pleased that the issues the second EDCOM will have to tackle would be part of the roundtable discussion.

Dr. Bautista shared that the Oxford University Press will publish in early 2022 a book on higher education in Asia. She and two of her colleagues from the Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS) coauthored the chapter on the Philippines. They (1) focused on nuanced persistent issues by citing contradictions that surfaced among the positive features of Philippine education; (2) tackled inequitable access to higher education, the uneven quality of higher education institutions and the qualifications their graduates possess, underdeveloped research and innovation ecosystem, and national imperatives and realities vis-a-vis the changing global norms and metrics, including internationalization; and (3) traced the historical provenance and role of private education in our overview and pay much attention to the current crisis of private education in the country, arguing for the need to enhance and better articulate the terms of public-private complementarity. The latter is an issue that Dr. Bautista said would be covered in the roundtable discussion.

Dr. Bautista thanked the organizers and resource persons and hoped that the roundtable discussion has a stimulating and productive exchange.

Keynote Remarks

Hon. Sherwin Gatchalian

*Chairperson, Committee on Basic Education, Arts, and Culture
Senate of the Philippines*

Senator Sherwin Gatchalian commenced by thanking the organizers and panelists of the roundtable discussion.

Senator Gatchalian shared that his keynote speech covers questions that are crucial guideposts for EDCOM 2 in terms of how it can help usher Philippine higher education towards global competitiveness, to which he would provide succinct yet comprehensive responses.

First question: How has EDCOM 1 impacted Philippine higher education in the last 30 years? The senator stated that two of the most significant products of EDCOM 1 in terms of realized policy outposts are the creation of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Teacher Education Council (TEC). Since the creation of CHED, the supervision and regulation of the country's higher education system have been under one agency, separate from the administration, supervision, and regulation of basic education and technical and vocational education and training. Moreover, the creation of the TEC through Republic Act No. 7784 is also an offshoot of EDCOM 1. At present, the Senate Committee on Basic Education is proceeding with the bicameral deliberations of its proposal to amend the TEC Law. The objective of this amendment is to ensure the coherence and continuum between preservice and in-service teacher education, which in turn should improve the quality of teachers and school leaders

and eventually the quality of basic education in the country. Thus, the impact of EDCOM 1 on higher education is most felt in terms of the institutional arrangement that presently governs higher education. However, the institutional arrangement and governance structure are macro-level reforms, which may not necessarily lead to the ultimate desired outcomes of higher education—that is, high-quality graduates.

Second question: What specific issues in the Philippine higher education must EDCOM 2 address? Senator Gatchalian responded that the key concern for higher education that EDCOM 2 must address remains to be the improvement of the quality of education, which should be reflected in the quality of graduates. The senator noted: “Given the fact that labor markets are becoming increasingly global, and workers are able to move from one place to another, quality does not simply equate to meeting locally set standards anymore. Quality now equates to being globally competitive” (Ismael 2021). The senator emphasized that “EDCOM 2 must address this important question: How do we ensure that higher education graduates are globally competitive?” (Senate of the Philippines 2021). Quality of graduates is an issue that the Senate Committee included in the text of the substitute bill of EDCOM 2, which is the digital transformation of the entire Philippine education system.

Third question: How must we consider internationalization and globalization as regards the future of Philippine higher education? Does EDCOM 2 relate to the Philippine Qualification Framework (PQF) and the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)? The senator reiterated here that a quality graduate does not merely meet locally set minimum standards but must also aim for internationally recognized standards. He pointed out that “for Filipino graduates to be globally competitive, the Philippines’ qualification standards must conform to internationally recognized qualification standards” (Nazario 2021). He pointed out that the PQF is precisely designed to be aligned with the AQRF. With this, graduates can be “equipped with competencies and skills that would make them globally competitive” (Nazario 2021). In the draft EDCOM p. 2, specifically section 3 paragraph 5, EDCOM 2 is tasked to ensure compliance with the AQRF and the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher

Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), among others.

Fourth question: How can we propose EDCOM 2 to strengthen the public-private complementarity in higher education? Senator Gatchalian answered that EDCOM 2, through the creation of a framework, is meant to assess and analyze the performance of the entire education sector, from basic education to higher education, while taking into consideration the role of the private sector in this endeavor. Through such analysis, it will be able to suggest potential reforms that will help enhance the level of public-private complementarity not only in higher education but also in basic education.

Fifth and final question: What are the policy recommendations for EDCOM 2 to improve the state of higher education in the Philippines? The senator laid out the goals of EDCOM 2: to critically study Philippine education and the state of Philippine education after rigorous analysis, to develop policy recommendations, and to improve the state of education in the Philippines. From this, the recommendations include what EDCOM 2 should focus on and the creation of a framework to undertake an analysis of the education sector. The former is important, that when identified correctly may lead to EDCOM's eventual transformative value to Philippine higher education. Senator Gatchalian cited that in a Committee on Basic Education's public hearing and the Technical Working Group's sessions on EDCOM 2, it was repeatedly emphasized that the focus of the Commission's efforts should be on improving the quality of education which in turn should be reflected in the quality of graduates.

Senator Gatchalian concluded by reiterating the questions and thanking everyone in attendance.

Panel Presentations

Dr. Alyssa M. Peleo-Alampay

*Assistant Vice-President for Academic Affairs (Quality Assurance)
University of the Philippines System*

Dr. Alyssa M. Peleo-Alampay commenced by greeting the panelists, organizers, and everyone in attendance.

Dr. Peleo-Alampay expressed where her insights are based—her experiences in working with ASEAN networks in relation to quality assurance (QA) and in higher education networks, including some European countries, and her perspective as someone teaching from a state higher-education institution (HEI). She emphasized that there is a big change from EDCOM 1 to EDCOM 2 or the context that we are in. Students now are “digital natives.” These students were born with gadgets although they are not necessarily digitally literate. Nonetheless, they are very comfortable with the medium. This has been observed pre-pandemic which brought up the need to change the medium and thus the challenges of rolling out blended learning, especially in state universities like UP.

In the higher education landscape, things have also changed quite drastically. QA has become a big deal recognition and transfer of credit have also been part of the equation. Student-centered learning, learning outcomes, or outcomes-based education has been the cry of many HEIs, and to some extent, even UP is also struggling with it. Students have to be looked at as co-creators of knowledge and at the same time, teachers have to be able to recognize this and to be able to adapt to this in the classroom.

During the pandemic, UP was forced to shift to a hundred-percent remote or online learning. For remote learning, flash drives and course packs were sent to students, which is something to be considered when moving towards the next normal. Access issues were rampant in terms of connectivity and gadgets both for the teachers and the students. UP had to scramble to provide online teaching and learning resources, which was not a unique experience for the university as it happened all over the world. Even in first-world countries, teachers and students had to be trained in a new medium and a new atmosphere of learning. UP also had to enhance digital infrastructures and face health and wellness issues. All these things, Dr. Peleo-Alampay emphasized, will be faced even to an increased extent as blended learning is here to stay.

Whether everybody goes blended learning, also known as hybrid or HyFlex, students must be taught to be independent learners, and this mode is quite a challenge as this has not been done. Other skills have to be honed with the independent students such as language reading and listening comprehension, numeracy skills, and digital skills. They also have to be able to discern fake news to be good citizens, and search for and use credible data. They must also become ethical users of the medium, deal with data privacy, but more importantly, learn to be resilient and keep motivated with this kind of mode of learning. For the faculty, there has to be retooling and upskilling. Digital learning resources and tools must be updated. Other concerns to be looked at include learning internet connectivity and gadgets that are placed within the study environment of the student, the family, and the household; attendant issues with regard to basic necessities, internet speed and coverage in the country; and electricity.

Everything boils down to learning outcomes. It must be clear what we want students to learn. This is something that needs to be learned and be deeply ingrained in all teachers, even in students and all stakeholders. Feedback is also important, but this is something not done regularly. There is a failure to use feedback to make curricula relevant and students employable.

In terms of internationalization, student mobility in UP is very good with support from the government. However, this is not true in most state universities and colleges (SUCs). Funding is the key. Academic credit transfer is also underdeveloped and thus must be acceptable and practiced. Many countries and many other universities in the Philippines credit units that students took from abroad. In Europe, issues in security university databases and making secure credentials in order for digital credit transfer to happen are addressed.

Transnational education in the Philippines remains a one-way street. For this to be a two-way street, government support is needed and SUCs need to teach one another. The key here is the recognition of our degree programs and the reputability of HEIs. Faculty mobility needs funding and university partnerships have to go beyond the signatures of the memorandum of agreement (MOA). In terms of degree recognition, K to 12 education is solving a problem. Students who went abroad for master's and PhD degrees had a hard time because they lack two years of early education prior to K-12. Quality Assurance (QA) is also important here as more and more foreign universities ask for evidence of quality-assured degree programs before they accept Filipino students.

In terms of rankings, the international outlook or the number of faculty and students from foreign universities is a big part of the equation. In terms of attracting international faculty, usually, the ones who have Filipino descent or are used to be full Filipino citizens are the ones that are easy to attract because they want to give back and have family connections in the Philippines. For UP, what is hindering the university in hiring them is the dual citizenship law. In this case, government intervention might be needed.

In terms of industry, government, and academe partnerships, there has to be a creation of deeper productive partnerships that go beyond MOA and memorandum of understanding (MOU) signing. Multiply best practices that have been observed and open opportunities for online partnerships. As an example, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) developed the Science for Change Program, a cradle program that aims to create synergistic academe-industry relationships to

invigorate Philippine research and development (R&D) and many other projects. There is also a need to take advantage of opportunities and economic zones. Initiatives, such as from NEDA, Regional Development Council in Region 4A, which has a special committee for it building on EDCOM 1991, and other universities tying up with economic zones, have to be multiplied. Engaging the chambers of commerce for a more productive engagement is necessary. It may help universities identify employer needs globally as inputs to curriculum and opening opportunities for employment. The government may help strengthen this type of relationship and making it happen for more concrete solutions. Increasing faculty in HEIs and sending them locally or abroad for their PhDs are also important.

Faculty members with PhDs are usually the ones that take care of research in colleges or units to increase publications and creative works. They also allow the continuity of the disciplines by mentoring the next generations. Increased university recognition is also possible when you have more faculty with PhDs.

Other important things to look at are the prioritization of disciplines based on the national and regional needs, training and upskilling of faculty in terms of the different modes of learning and delivery, tapping into micro-credentials and crediting them towards the accomplishments of our faculty members when it comes to promotion, for example, and personal development. These micro-credentials can also be tapped for students to fill in the gaps of knowledge and expertise that we cannot readily offer in our academic units. Educational design experts for curriculum development are also needed for curriculum restructuring and redesigning.

Finally, Dr. Peleo-Alampay iterated what Senator Gatchalian mentioned about the PQF which needs to be put to life, ensure the next steps, strengthen mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning, and enable all of these pathways for everybody. The core of all these is clearly defined learning outcomes that must be applied.

Dr. Ester Albano-Garcia*President**University of the East*

Dr. Ester Albano-Garcia commenced by greeting the panelists and organizers of the roundtable discussion. She began the lecture by saying that she will answer the questions raised by the organizers one by one.

The first question that Dr. Albano-Garcia addressed was: how can we build on the EDCOM 30 years ago to make Philippine higher education globally competitive? She began by saying that EDCOM 1 did not particularly articulate making Philippine higher education globally competitive as a goal, but it identified major all-encompassing reforms. From general recommendations, EDCOM has a particular objective for the higher education sector, which is strengthening pre-service teacher education. Dr. Albano-Garcia was pleased to know that EDCOM has now been supporting education in both public and private sectors together. Emphasizing on the word “together,” she shared that the private sector faces problems similar problems. Her recommendations for higher education include (1) “making it possible for private industry workers, teachers, parents, and local governments to plan, deliver, and finance education and training, and greater access of poor children to all levels of education” (Congressional Commission on Education 1991, xiii); (2) promoting a “more cost-effective public college and university education with curricular programs that are relevant to the communities they serve” (Bautista, Bernardo, and Ocampo 2010); (3) improving on higher education employment by reducing job mismatches; (4) implementing selective admissions policy, complemented with scholarship only for poor, deserving students; (5) providing “incentives to students to pursue scientific, engineering and technical careers” (Congressional Commission on Education 1991, 33); (6) improving the quality of teachers through “high salaries and a career path and through policies and programs to strengthen their academic qualifications” (26); (7) “encouraging and strengthening voluntary accreditation” (34); (8) establishing and supporting national and regional centers of excellence (COEs) and centers of development (CODs) for both nonprofit and profit schools,

but which is no longer the case; (9) strengthening and improvement of graduate education research; and (10) establishing CHED's Higher Education Development Fund (HEDF) that used to fund excellent HEIs, both public and private, but is no longer the happening because the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and Commission on Audit (COA) prevented CHED from doing it.

Furthermore, Dr. Albano-Garcia shared previous reforms such as the Philippine Education Sector Study (PESS), Philippine Agenda for Education Reform, and Philippine Main Education Highway: Towards a Knowledge-based Economy. With all the studies she was involved in, she shared that she thought of choosing those that are doable: (1) the establishment of the National Coordinating Council for Education, which never materialized; (2) "rationalization within a moratorium period of the creation and conversion of SUCs" (Miralao 2004) which happened under President Joseph Estrada and involved reorienting the premises of financing public higher education; (3) "the establishment of a one-year pre-baccalaureate system" (Miralao 2004), which was eventually covered by K-12 instead and thus, reiterating Assistant Vice President Peleo-Alampay, allowing graduates to get graduate studies and be employed abroad; (4) faculty development in the tertiary level that is being implemented at present; (5) "the establishment of the national evaluation and testing system" which was not done (Bautista, Bernardo, Ocampo 2010); and (6) the establishment of a common standard of accreditation, which happened through a federation of accrediting agencies.

The Presidential Task Force for Education (PTFE) also included recommendations for the knowledge-based economy: (1) the Philippine Main Education Highway: Towards a Knowledge-based Economy; (2) strategies and initiatives towards developing this economy for people who are globally competitive in the next few decades, and (3) an effective innovation system and higher education system capable of producing world-class graduates and significant research and development (R&D) outputs.

The next question addressed was: were we successful? Dr. Albano-Garcia said that there were some gains. One was an improvement in

valid faculty qualifications. Another is the accreditation of COEs and CODs that were funded without constraints. However, she remarked that it may have been a mistake to not put constraints on funding as some presidents were galivanting in Europe in the middle of benchmarking programs. A proposal to have the funding programmatic was made, but still, the funding for private education was stopped. Another success was the improvement in the Professional Regulation Commission's (PRC) performance in at least nine disciplines. There was also a significant increase in budget for higher education, but there were many gaps and shortfalls with public-private complementation which was also mentioned by Senator Gatchalian. Graduate education research remains to be a very big problem up to now. Citing the paper that Dr. Albano-Garcia did many years ago, she mentioned that some areas still face issues such as persistent mismatch between in-demand programs and national development programs, and job skills mismatch. Although initially opposed by the CHED chair then due to a lack of memorandum and policies, standards, and guidelines (PSGs), two programs on digital entertainment and multimedia computing for the creative industries were developed by an autonomous university that Dr. Albano-Garcia leads.

Dr. Albano-Garcia also shared some issues such as increased regulation of private HEIs and unequal government support between public and private HEIs; low-quality graduate education programs; inadequate facilities for online learning; lack of competent faculty partly due to the increasing number of schools and lack of research funds; and issues on quality given that schools hardly work with industries to improve their curriculum.

Dr. Albano-Garcia concluded with the following recommendations: study labor demand; review and amend policies that inhibit public-private complementation and provide more public funds and distribute these more equitably; improve governance of HEIs, whether public or private, by leveling the playing field in terms of regulation and quality assurance requirements; formulate a new strategic plan for higher education towards transforming and rebuilding institutions fit for future learning, redesigning curricula to factor in the need to develop skills and competitiveness for jobs in markets of

tomorrow, artificial intelligence, robotics; push for the upscaling of the country's information infrastructure although based on talks with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), there is no hope for this at present; consider policies that would facilitate internationalization, cross border education and research arrangements; reiterate and push forward the implementation of the PTFE recommendations for improving the country's global competitiveness; revive and institutionalize the National Coordinating Council for Education (NCCE) proposed by the Presidential Commission on Education Reform (PCER) to harmonize and coordinate the policies and initiatives of the three agencies.

Dr. Tirso Ronquillo

*University President, Batangas State University
President, Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges
(PASUC)*

Dr. Tirso Ronquillo commenced by greeting the panelists, organizers, and participants of the roundtable discussion. He proceeded with the issues in Philippine higher education in relation to the globalization that EDCOM 2 must address.

“Based on the World Competitiveness Index Ranking 2021 of Switzerland-based Institute for Management Development (IMD), the Philippines ranked 57 out of 64 countries based on prosperity and competitiveness” (AEC Strategy Center 2021). In the Asia-Pacific, the Philippines “placed 13 out of 14 economies covered by the report” (AEC Strategy Center 2021). Dr. Ronquillo emphasized that “the Philippines slipped seven notches in the Global Competitiveness Ranking, [and that is] the sharpest drop in [the] Asia-Pacific and its poorest performance over the last five years” (AEC Strategy Center 2021), comparing the Philippines’ ranking in 2017 and 2021, from 41st to 52nd. This data means that the labor force’s long-term growth unemployment rate, researchers in R&D per capita, and youth unemployment contributed to the 15 biggest declines in the overall performance of the Philippine economy according to World Competitiveness Index Ranking 2021. One of the noted challenges in the Philippines in 2021, as per the report, is building “resilient social infrastructure, especially in health and education” (AEC Strategy Center 2021). There is a critical need to address such multiple declines in our economic performance to improve the overall competitiveness. Furthermore, only four Philippine universities made it to the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings released on June 9, 2021. Although few Philippine universities raised rankings on their academic programs, the Philippines is still lagging behind its Asian counterparts.

Dr. Ronquillo posed questions for reflection: What does it mean for Philippine higher education? What roles should higher education play in improving the Philippines’ global competitiveness? How will it guide EDCOM in providing policy directions in higher education?

He responded to these questions, saying that in the Philippines, the higher education sector is relatively large and growing at a fast pace. It consists of 2,396 HEIs, both public and private, and serves around 3.5 million students during the academic year 2019–20. Through the years, amid challenging or changing policy directions in higher education, it is confronted by a range of issues and challenges that include the following, among others. The first issue is access. Who gains access to and progress through higher education, carrying the absorptive capacities of SUC? The second issue is affordability. Quality is equated with cost, likewise, saying that quality is expensive. Quality should also be observed in (1) people, citing the ongoing deliberations of senate bill on the quality of teachers and administrators; (2) programs, being comprehensive and internationally benchmarked; (3) the curriculum, which should go beyond the minimum requirement; and (4) facilities to enable more activities in HEIs. The third issue is equity. This means greater public–private complementarity, which is ensured in the EDCOM 2, and increased competitiveness of graduates and readiness for the world of work and 21st-century skills. The latter entails the need to review the skills that students are being trained with. Equity also means funding and financing, citing Republic Act No 1091. However, the budget allotted for higher education is relatively low compared with other countries.

In conclusion, Dr. Ronquillo shared his recommendations for EDCOM 2 in improving the state of higher education in the Philippines through policy, people, program, and provision of enabling environment. In terms of policy, it is good that EDCOM 2 gears towards shaping up an enabling, developmental, and adaptive policy. A policy on going global must be formulated. Incentives and funding must also be made accessible. In terms of programs, a comprehensive program on globalization is necessary but a diagnosis of the status of globalization of HEIs must be done first. From this, evidence-based programs can be crafted. In terms of people, mobility should be both outbound and inbound. To guarantee globalization and internationalization, people must be sent abroad for their master's and PhDs, or even short courses. According to some global rankings of universities in the world, there is a need to attract foreign faculty. Policies must allow for attracting foreign instructors and researchers. This also necessitates short-term, medium-term, and long-term training of people in higher and basic education. A flourishing

discussion must also happen between foreign and local faculty, together with co-authorship and joint undertaking on the R&D and innovation activities. In terms of providing an enabling environment, the same facilities should be provided for faculty who are trained with advanced facilities abroad so they can share what they learned. These 4Ps, when in place or guaranteed, may lead EDCOM 2 to going global.

Atty. Joseph Noel Estrada

Managing Director, Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations of the Philippines (COCOPEA)

Atty. Joseph Noel Estrada commenced by greeting his fellow panelists, the organizers, and everyone in attendance.

Atty. Estrada began recalling the first EDCOM report from 30 years ago, which prompted landmark legislations such as the creation of agencies such as CHED, PRC, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and TEC, among others. He also expressed delight in being a student, like Senator Gatchalian and Mr. Karol Mark Yee, during the times these reforms under EDCOM 1 were initiated. Having EDCOM 2 in the hands of the government, citing Senator Gatchalian, Mr. Yee, and Atty. Estrada himself who were products of those reforms, EDCOM must have come to a full circle.

At present, the focus is on EDCOM 2 and the pandemic. Like in many countries all over the world, the Philippine education sector is among those that have suffered severe and extensive damage to the economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. To be able to really understand and appreciate the current state of Philippine education, especially higher education, Atty. Estrada emphasized the importance of looking back, even 30 years from now, which includes the pre-pandemic contexts. Pre-pandemic education has already been buried in serious concerns, leading us to the current learning crisis. He cited the Philippines' low ranking in the recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM). He also mentioned that it is not always a downward trajectory for Philippine education as there are also indications of progress in terms of the reduction of out-of-school youth or children in basic education and the increase in enrollment in higher education programs. This is partly due to the 2017 universal access to quality tertiary education or the Republic Act No 10931 providing free higher education in SUCs and the establishment of the tertiary education subsidy for the students in private HEIs.

While access to education is still a problem, the Philippines has improved in this area, leading to increased attention to improving the quality of education, including the quality of teachers and the outcome of our learners and graduates, in order to be at par with ASEAN neighbors. The role of the private education sector in improving the overall quality of education, the learner outcomes and literacy, and returns for our graduates is indispensable as private education tends to be cost-effective and agile in adapting to changes. However, diminished participation of the private education sector is observed due to robust funding in public schools and SUCs which, in turn, has contributed to the low efficiency of the education system as a whole and the current learning crisis. As noted by Pangalangan (2021), these “challenges in education have been exacerbated by the pandemic. As more private schools close, many students and teachers migrate to the public school system, and many students fail to continue with their education because of [the] economic difficulties.”

Atty. Estrada shared some important data that has consequences on the country’s human capital. From this, he encouraged a review of the education system through the EDCOM 2 and support for the urgent passage of the law sponsored by Senator Gatchalian.

Two issues need focus at this point: the quality of the education system and the impact of the health crisis on education. What can be done is to look at the reforms in EDCOM 1 and increase the support to parents and students through tuition subsidies in private schools in basic education. The latter may prompt the decongesting of classrooms in public schools.

External assessment is one of the best features of EDCOM 2 where a review from an agency that is outside of our ecosystem is possible. Complementarity should be strengthened and academic freedom in higher education should be operationalized or reinforced. Fiscal and financial support should be provided to small and medium, private higher education institutions without passing the buck to the students.

Atty. Estrada concluded by thanking everyone and expressing support for the passing of EDCOM 2.

Roundtable Discussion/Open Forum

Mr. Karol Mark Yee, the moderator of the webinar, facilitated the roundtable discussion/open forum. Below were the questions raised and the responses from the panelists.

1.) Is global competitiveness for all? And what does it look like if we use learner outcomes or outcome indicators? What does it look like if it were for all?

Senator Gatchalian shared that EDCOM 2 wants to talk about quality and competitiveness, but it does not talk about structures. From all that the stakeholders wanted to cover, the technical working group (TWG) narrowed down the focus. EDCOM 2 was a product of the results of the PISA, TIMMS, and CPLM. The low ranking of the Philippines in international assessments that affected our national pride prompted the development of EDCOM 2. Probing into trifocalization will not finish anything. Trifocalization needs to work, but the focus now is on competitiveness. Employment mobility is no longer physical, but this can be done through the internet. Filipino graduates should be trained for this.

Dr. Peleo-Alampay said that global competitiveness may not be for all given about 2,000 or so HEIs and some “low hanging fruits” based on the EDCOM 1 report. While looking at the contexts of each HEI, what can be done is to showcase candidates that can perform in the global competitiveness arena. Learning outcomes are the key to understanding what is expected of the education system. They must be mapped from the university down to the assessments, and be

consistent and accountable for them. Employability is also the key. A university that does not compete in the global arena should still have relevant degree programs and curricula as evidenced by quality and employable graduates.

Dr. Albano-Garcia expressed that in terms of the fact that things should be done better, global competitiveness is for all. At the high school level, students should do better in mathematics, language, and reading. At the college level, global competitiveness is for employment. She recalled that such was the basis of K–12. The idea was that Filipino workers should not be questioned about their number of years of education and receive a smaller amount of money when they do all the technical work. Careful selection of COEs and CODs in every region should also be observed. This cannot be done to all 2,000 HEIs due to issues with funds.

Dr. Ronquillo responded that global competitiveness should be for all. The competitiveness of a nation is measured by the competitiveness of its people. Selecting only a few capable ones will be detrimental to the country's position in global competitiveness. The "low-hanging fruits" should be provided with a different level of support. This should be covered by a policy. Singapore, for one, has ensured global competitiveness in all aspects. A systems approach or systems thinking must operate to avoid band-aid solutions. The status of HEIs must be reviewed, and then the amount of support needed for national competitiveness and later for global competitiveness must be discussed.

Atty. Estrada said that global competitiveness is not for all. It is a privilege. It needs to be shown to the world that the country deserves their attention which begins by having the confidence of putting Filipino learners and graduates with their counterparts all over the world. This is possible only when national targets in terms of quality standards and quality assurance are met. Global competitiveness is seen in mobility. The Philippines should be both a destination for students who would like to study or work in the country and a source of quality graduates. This is possible by removing the administrative barriers that restrict the mobility

of other countries going into the Philippines. Adding to the restrictions brought by the pandemic, many foreign students were stranded in their respective countries waiting to return to the Philippines. Otherwise, they will lose their scholarships. Another concern is the suspension of the study or internship of Filipino students abroad who may also lose their sponsorship. In particular, the United States is waiting for a more decisive government decision so that these students can go back.

2.) What challenges are we really looking at in terms of the global competitiveness of our graduates when they are very much in demand? What is our strategy for resolving the jobs problem? This is because the local jobs problem seems to be a binding constraint of higher education, training, and development in terms of human capital. But in terms of jobs, how does it later connect to good jobs?

Dr. Albano-Garcia shared that the students the government trained in teacher education institutions (TEIs) before were the set of Filipino teachers who sued the Brooklyn, New York government and some who run the ministries of fisheries and work in ASEAN. These trained graduates were all over the world. The problem in the Philippines is really providing good-paying jobs. This is getting into education, but this is something that can be easily handled when given the chance.

Senator Gatchalian agreed with Dr. Albano-Garcia on the evenness of quality and the jobs available for graduates. He also agreed with Mr. Yee that in other countries, there is a demand for Filipino graduates in the medical profession. He then cited agriculture as a point in case of failing to deliver quality. Farmers in Ilocos Norte have been reported to be affected by the Rice Tariffication Law, which is meant to make them competitive. There is unevenness in terms of quality as shown in the failure to compete with Vietnam or Thailand despite having a number of SUCs offering some kind of agriculture courses, the availability of a rice competitive enhancement fund, and the Philippines being an agricultural country. In this case, Senator Gatchalian agreed with Dr. Peleo-Alampay's presentation on a cohesive fusion of the industry and the academe. Another example of this is the IT industry.

3.) Why are we not as competitive in agriculture while other countries have really improved or modernized their way of producing higher yields, making their crops more resilient, all of these advances in technology and agriculture, thereby resulting in increased productivity? Why are we not at that same pace with our SUCs despite having all of the agricultural experts and agricultural programs in almost 112 SUCs?

Dr. Ronquillo reiterated the irony of the Philippines being an agricultural country yet producing more expensive yields compared with those that are imported. He argued that the curriculum on agriculture should be reviewed as there seems to be a mismatch with the actual context of farming in the Philippines, which is replete with issues such as insufficient produce and importation.

Dr. Albano-Garcia recalled that the three heroes of agriculture in Thailand with their statues built in Chulalongkorn University were graduates of the University of the Philippines in Los Baños. She shared Emil Javier's words that the government never listens to the policy recommendations of agriculture experts. She also recalled an encounter with an agriculture professor in an SUC in Samar. The professor lamented the ways the farmers till lands, that is through "*apak-apak*" and "*araro*," which are dated during Egyptian times. The professor also said that they provide farmers seminars on new ways of farming, but they still resort to the old ways. Dr. Albano-Garcia concluded that agriculture schools are not the problem but something else.

Dr. Ronquillo joined again in the discussion by citing mechanization for hundreds of hectares of land. Farmers in New Zealand enter into a consortium for mechanization. This is not possible for Filipino farmers who own small hectares of land. They need to be part of a cooperative to rent more farmlands but may still not be enough to return the investment from mechanization. This may be one reason why Filipino farmers still practice "*apak-apak*." He ended by urging stakeholders to look at the bigger picture and at what happens on the ground.

4.) In terms of the EDCOM 2 process, how do you envision problems with the agriculture, being offered in the SUCs, being tackled by

the EDCOM? How do we then study these constraints and figure out how then that translates to relevant policies that are required for legislation, for CHED to get into, and for other departments to get into?

Senator Gatchalian reiterated EDCOM 2's focus on quality and competitiveness. Micro approaches will not be done, that is per course, per SUC, or per curriculum approach. Instead, drivers that make schools competitive will have to be studied. Policy recommendations are macro but will have an effect on the micro-level. EDCOM 2 is given two years to do its work and its budget was increased from 10 million to 20 million annually to get the necessary manpower to conduct studies immediately. EDCOM 2 also assigns PIDS as its research arm to cutoff time for hiring people and jumpstart the research.

5.) Given that we are focusing on macro-level policies, how then will the legislation or legislative initiatives from EDCOM 2 be different from the usual laws to be passed on within the Senate Committee, within approved appropriations put into specific budgets, within CHED's drive to pursue several reforms, or from CHED-initiated reforms that could be done by a CMO? Why the need for EDCOM 2 to tackle these macro reforms? Is it not yet being done? Is there a constraint from the agency side or Congress to then pursue that using the usual routes? Why the need for EDCOM for macro policies?

Senator Gatchalian commended the question and shared that he thought of all these realizing the need to look at the problems from a macro point of view, not piecemeal, and provide system-wide solutions. He cited as an example the reforms in basic education. Basic education graduates also affect the higher education input, thus the need to look at it as a system. In terms of taking things to Congress, he shared that sometimes the upper and lower houses have differing views. They either meet eye-to-eye in several measures or have the measures jumbled at the end. He suggested that a bi-chamber approach be applied so the solutions will also be bi-chamber.

Atty. Estrada mentioned that EDCOM 2 wants to focus on competitiveness primarily to address job mismatch. The PQF Law is in place, but operationalizing it is a challenge. Aside from graduates' training in the standards, curricular programs must be reviewed, and aggressive involvement of the industry must take place. The challenge really is on implementation. He also cited the structure of EQFI where only one member is from the industry and the chair is from DepEd. Whether such is correct or not, EDCOM will look into it.

Dr. Ronquillo introduced that job mismatch has long been a discussion since he was young. He argued that the gap or mismatch should remain. Where there is a gap, there is innovation. He exemplified that in some countries, the university is more advanced than the industry while in others, it is the opposite. What students should be taught is independent and lifelong learning so they can adapt.

6.) What happened to the reforms implemented post-EDCOM 1? Why did they not prosper? And how could EDCOM 2 not fall into the same trap or challenge in the future post the study, post the legislation?

Dr. Albano-Garcia responded with a focus on the three agencies [DepEd, CHED, and TESDA] not talking regularly. She shared that she never saw TESDA (through Fr. Edicio dela Torre) in meetings on K-12. There was a chance that the heads of the three agencies met abroad and were able to talk about something. She shared that she told someone that the three should convene in regular meetings which rarely happened and thus resulted in issues in teacher education training.

Mr. Yee reinforced the question with a focus on graduate school: Why haven't we solved that problem by carrying out a selective admissions policy, reducing mismatch all of these were recommendations of EDCOM 1, why have we not succeeded significantly?

Dr. Albano-Garcia said that the recommendations from the studies on the graduate school programs were never implemented. One reason may be due to the nursing fiasco. She also hinted at university presidents

not looking at CHED reports on their programs. CHED could not reform each school, so it may be up to the university. In terms of research, there were not enough funds then. Chairman Alcala used to chair the regional research council and make proposals, but funds are not enough. Dr. Albano-Garcia was pleased to share that DOST has the funds it needs for small and large research projects.

7.) Do we see EDCOM as a regular need for our education system? In thirty years from now, do we need another EDCOM? Or is there anything we could do to prevent that from recurring, for that need to keep arising?

Dr. Peleo-Alampay expressed that EDCOM has to be recurring. Trifocalization needs to be strengthened which can be done through regular meetings with a single objective, so they know what to do. PIDS may be able to help direct the council. The coordinating council is the key so that EDCOM may not be needed all the time or be reactionary to face bigger problems. But at this point, Dr. Peleo-Alampay emphasized, EDCOM 2 is very much needed.

Atty. Estrada mentioned that the constitution has the provision for how the legislature should work under normal conditions. But since these are extraordinary times, EDCOM 2 came into view. EDCOM 2 will benefit the policymakers by being able to determine priorities, move in one direction, look at the status quo, and promptly address these in the form of policymaking these education issues. Essentially, EDCOM 2 provides two benefits. One is getting an external researcher or assessment to look into the system and have the policymakers and implementers look at them. Another benefit is allowing the participation of stakeholders as a kind of consultation among parents, teachers, barangays, and regions. He hoped that in the next 30 years, the next batch of legislators can just oversee implementation with a recalibrated framework.

Dr. Ronquillo raised a question: why did EDCOM take 30 years? He surmised that something might have gone wrong. He proposed then that EDCOM 2 should clearly articulate that the coordinating council meet and discuss regularly and do regular reviews so that problems are addressed at the onset.

Dr. Albano-Garcia proposed that a national review be done every 10 years, overlapping the presidential term of six years, so that when a new president comes in there is already something to work on. She agreed with Dr. Ronquillo's thoughts on waiting this long because problems have already become bigger. Studies were made in every administration, but implementation was really the problem.

Senator Gatchalian responded that EDCOMs were products of some negative events. EDCOM was a response to deteriorating student quality, a low budget allocation, among others. At present, EDCOM is a reaction to international assessment outcomes. He agreed with Dr. Peleo-Alampay on conducting self-assessment regularly so that EDCOM is not needed to be created through legislation as legislation takes time. He shared that he proposed what he calls a National Education Council where the president is head so that education will be at the center of national development. This body can be a self-assessment mechanism every year or every so often to prevent scrambling for solutions to problems. He encouraged everyone to look into the viability of this proposal.

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