



## Current Challenges and Prospects facing Distance Education in the Philippines

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### ABSTRACT :

In today's globalization and rapid technological advancements, dramatic changes have been happening in higher education, e.g. the dearth of resources for classroom-based instruction, the development of the open and distance learning philosophy, the need to service the needs of adult learners and many other factors which are the reality in the Philippines today. As a consequence, higher education institutions have been increasingly flexible to adjust their delivery system in an effort to respond to these changes. Distance Education (DE) has emerged as a legitimate alternative learning system (ALS) to the more traditional educational system in a number of higher education institution (HEIs) in the Philippines.

Under the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIV mandates that quality education at every level should be made accessible to all Filipinos, including *self-learning*, *independent*, and out-of-school youth programs. Thus, the Open University systems and distance education ideology has proliferated in the Philippines over recent years especially in the last two (2) decades. This is considered as one of the most rapidly growing fields and means of education; such that it changes the approaches used; the delivery system; faculty requirements; and the need to respond to the rare breed of students which are being catered to by this type of educational arrangement. The objective of this paper is to assess how distance education/open learning evolved in the Philippines and see how it responds to making education accessible and flexible to many Filipinos. The laws/issuances given by the government will also be looked into to determine how the government supports this new educational philosophy. Further, this research will look into the characteristics of learners studying in some distance education institutions. Generally, this paper will look into current trends, challenges and prospects in DE in the Philippines.

**Key words:** *distance education, open learning, adult learners, adult education, higher education institutions*

### A. BASIC FACTS ABOUT PHILIPPINE EDUCATION

Education in the Philippines is free and compulsory for children ages 6 through 12. Filipino and English are the primary languages of instruction. The literacy rate is 98.7 percent of the adult population,

with little variation between males and females. During the Spanish colonial era, only the elite population had access to education. After the United States gained control of the Philippines in 1898, a strong emphasis was placed on public education. The idea that free and compulsory education would democratize society took

hold in the Philippines. English replaced Spanish as the language of instruction and as the national medium of communication. Since independence in 1946, the Philippine government has opened schools in even the remotest areas. Literacy rates in some languages have slowly improved. However, significant differences in quality of education continue to exist between rural and urban areas. Virtually all children aged 6 to 12 are enrolled in school and attendance is compulsory. Enrollment for ages 13 through 16 is 78 percent. At the university level, enrollment stands at 28 percent of the relevant age group. (Microsoft Encarta, 2003).

In 2010, CHED reported that there were 1,573 private institutions and 607 state-run colleges and universities, a total of 2,180. The Public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) include: 110 State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) main campuses, 388 satellite campuses, 93 Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), 10 Other Government Schools (OGS), 1 CHED Supervised Institution (CSI) (CHED-ARMM) and 5 special HEIs. HEIs in the Philippines are classified according to (1) Private HEIs, which are established under the Corporation

Code and are governed by special laws and general provisions of such Code; (2) SUCs which are chartered public higher education institutions established by law, administered and financially subsidized by the government; (3) LUCs which are those established by the local government through resolutions or ordinances. LUCs are financially supported by the local government concerned; (4) CSI is non-chartered public post-secondary education institution established by law, administered, supervised and financially supported by government; and (5) OGS ) which are public secondary and post-secondary education institutions, usually technical-vocational education institutions that offer higher education programs (CHED, 2011).

In School Year 2008-2009, more than 2.6 million students were enrolled in various higher education institutions (as reflected in Table 1 below). . Like other Asian countries, the Philippines has relied on private institutions to increase higher education opportunities and, at the turn of the century, had a higher proportion of its students in private higher education than any other country.

**Table 1. Enrolment in Tertiary Level of Education, by Sex: Academic Years 2004-2009**

Year		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
TESDA	Male	673,353	694,745	856,965	805,567	893,091
	Female	1,010,029	1,042,120	1,315,449	1,208,353	1,091,555
	Total Enrolees	1,683,382	1,736,865	2,142,414	2,013,920	1,982,435
	Graduates	1,154,333	1,340,620	1,702,307	1,812,528	1,903,793
Academic Year		2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
CHED	Male	1,100,199	1,130,360	1,194,701	1,211,108	1,199,247
	Female	1,302,116	1,352,914	1,409,748	1,443,186	1,426,138
	Total Enrolees	2,402,315	2,483,274	2,604,449	2,654,294	2,625,385
	Graduates	409,628	421,444	444,427	444,815	469,654

Sources: TESDA, CHED

*Taken from the Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016*

Private institutions are funded from capital investments, contributions, tuition fees and other school charges, grants, loans, subsidies, and other income sources in accordance with government legislation. While they are fairly autonomous, they have to apply for permission from the CHED to open new courses and for

authorization to graduate their students. Each higher education institution adopts a certain admission policy beyond the general requirement that all candidates have to be graduates of secondary education. Some institutions require passing an entrance exam and a medical examination; others adopt open admission, but selective retention.

Though the Philippine Constitution has mandated that the government allocate the highest proportion of its budget to education, the Philippines still has one of the lowest budget allocations to education among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Despite the nominal increase in the education budget over recent years, state spending on education has actually declined when compared to the Gross Domestic Product, representing just a third of the United Nation's recommended national investment on education (Quismundo, 2012). According to Education Secretary State spending in 1997 hit a high of 3.2 percent of the country's GDP, higher than the current level of 2.1 percent. In 1998, the national education budget was 2.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In terms of the higher education budget, as a result of a Congressional initiative in 1997, its share increased sharply from 2.4 percent in 1987 to 15 percent in 1997. However, following the Asian economic crisis, its budget (DepED and SUCs) decreased from P17,166 (\$1,415) million in 1998 to P16,759 (\$1,382) million in 2000.

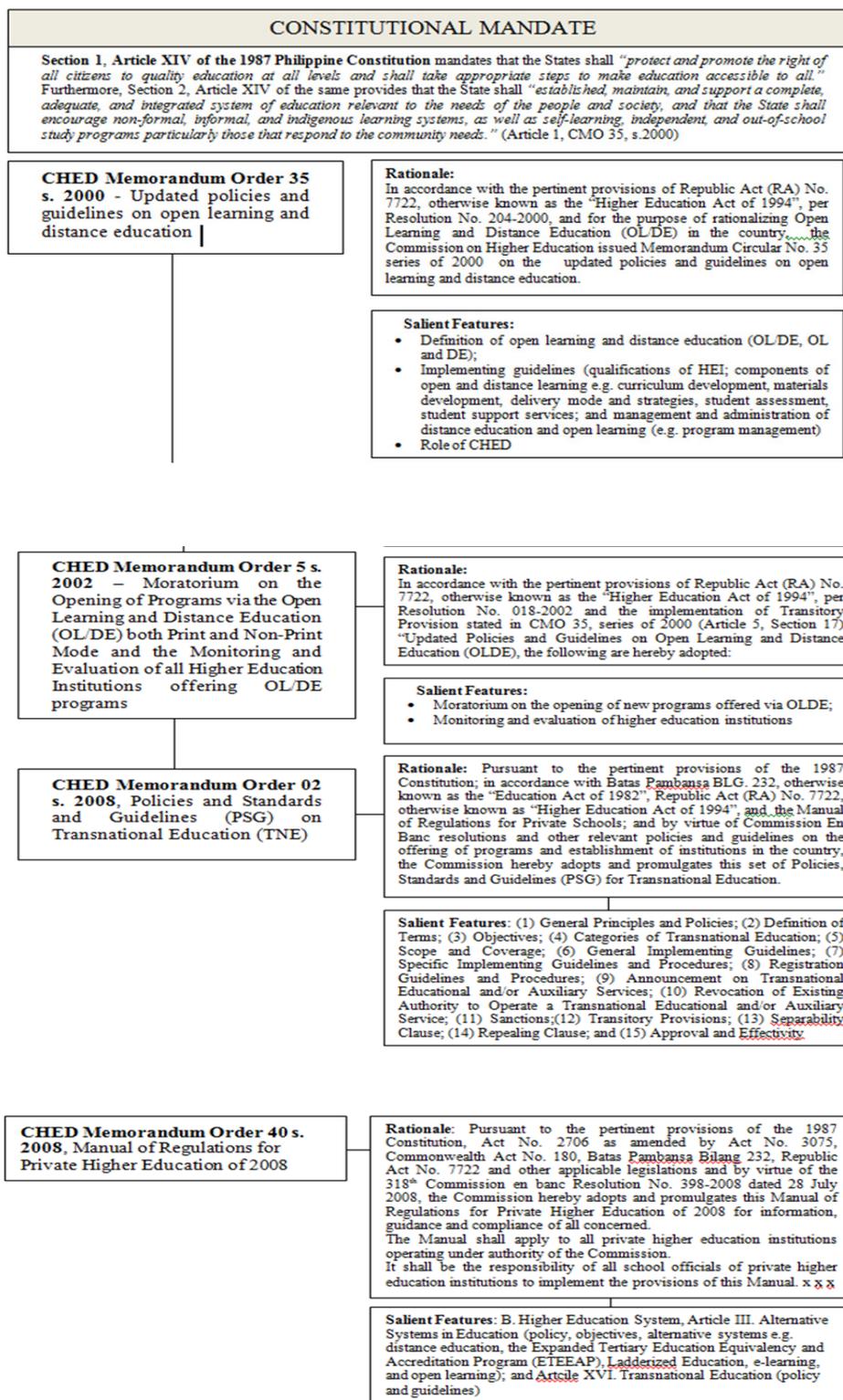
On the other hand, **Sabater (2012)**, in her write-up in Manila Bulletin states that education will get the biggest budget allocation in the 2013 proposed national budget at 14.6% of the total budget of P2.006 trillion or P293.7 billion. This is 23.4% more than its current budget for 2012. However, despite the increase in the education budget, the Philippine education spending still falls below UN standard. The current education budget is P238.8 billion, higher than last year's P207 billion but lower if taken as a ratio of GDP. Last year's budget was 2.3 percent of GDP, a benchmark used globally to gauge how much governments spend on education. The UN recommends that governments spend at least six percent of their GDP on education (Quismundo, 2012).

Despite budget limitations and some constraints, still most Filipinos regard education as a primary avenue for upward social and economic mobility. Middle-class parents make many sacrifices to provide secondary and higher education for their children. Hence, some traditional institutions or conventional universities and colleges are beginning to resort to provide a more accessible and flexible types of teaching-learning process, that is, through the use of unconventional means e.g. distance education and open learning.

## **B. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING IN THE PHILIPPINES AND ITS LEGAL BASES**

It was during the last two (2) decades that the concept of distance education, open learning, alternative learning systems (ALS) was officially introduced in higher education (and even in the basic education) in the Philippines. In fact, the first issuance from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) about it came out in the year 2000. However, as early as 1987, when the new constitution has to be put in place (as a consequence of people power revolution in 1986), the concept of non-formal education, self-learning, independent learning/study programs was already introduced to respond to the call to make education accessible to many Filipinos. The evolution of laws and issuances that relates to distance education, open learning and alternative learning system and recently the concept of transnational education in higher education; is best illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 1: Legal Bases of Open and Distance Learning in the Philippines



In Philippine basic education, the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2004-2010 (which provides the blueprint of every administration's future plans to implement a continuing integrated and coordinated programs and policies for national development) name among its goals, strategies and action plans; the installation of distance learning system in conflict-affected areas.

*“Distance learning is an alternative delivery mode (ADM) that reaches out to learners in underserved, high-risk and disadvantaged areas. Distance learning shall, thus, be adopted to provide children and youth in difficult circumstances, particularly those in conflict-affected areas, with education services to ensure that they continue schooling during and after the crisis situation.*

*To facilitate this, the following activities shall be carried out:*

- a. DepEd shall expand its existing Strong Republic Schools - Distance Learning Program, mediabased instruction and computer-assisted learning program;
- b. Alternative delivery modes of schooling like the In-School and Out-School Adults or ISOSA program, mobile teaching, multigrade teaching and distance teaching shall also be institutionalized. *The Project IMPACT (Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers) catering to areas with overcrowded classrooms and teacher shortage shall be expanded;*
- c. DepEd shall also institutionalize Special Education programs and establish functional networking with other distance learning providers;

x x x”

In terms of Higher Education, alternative learning system (ALS)/Delivery Modes for Higher Education was likewise named as among the goals and strategies and action plans which the government will pursue in the years 2004-2010, specifically, it states that:

*“Higher education programs via distance learning shall be developed and improved.*

*The coverage of the ETEEAP shall be broadened. Under the ETEEAP, people who have not finished college but have considerable experience and competencies acquired from informal and nonformal provision could earn a degree through accreditation of their prior learning.”*

### C. DEFINITION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION/OPENLEARNING/ TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION AND ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM (ALS) IN THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT

Several issuances from CHED have defined distance education, open learning, alternative learning system and transnational education over the last couple of years. Such definition is embodied in the CMO's specified above in the legal basis, to wit

- (1)**Open Learning and Distance Education (OL/DE)** are alternative systems of education. They emphasize the opening of opportunities by overcoming barriers that result from geographical isolation, personal or work commitments or conventional course structures which have often prevented people from realizing their educational goals (Section 6, CMO 35 s.2000)
- (2)**Open Learning (OL)** is a philosophy of learning that is learner-centered and flexible, enabling learners to learn at the time, place and pace which satisfies their circumstances and requirements. (Section 7, CMO 35 s.2000)
- (3)**Distance Education (DE)** is a mode of educational delivery whereby teacher and learner are separated in time and space and instruction is delivered through specially designed materials and methods and supported by organizational and administrative structures and arrangements (Section 8, CMO 35 s.2000; No. 11 Article II. Definition of Terms, CMO 2 s. 2008; Section 11 (1), Art. III. CMO 40 S.2008)

(4)**Distance Education** students refers to a student who is either onshore or offshore studying in the distance mode (No. 12 Article II. Definition of Terms, CMO 2 s. 2008)

(5)**Transnational education (TNE)** refers to all types of higher education study program, or sets of courses of study, or education services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from one where the awarding institution is based. Such program may belong to the education system of a State different from the States in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national education system (UNESCO 2001, as seen in No. 30. Article II. Definition of Terms, CMO 2 s. 2008 and No. 28, Section 5. Definition of Terms, CMO 40 s. 2008)

Further, under CMO 40 s. 2008, Section 76, Article XVI, transnational education was closely linked with the inevitable occurrence of globalization, changing foreign policies, and liberalization of trade in goods and services worldwide which according to said CMO, have created a climate for borderless teaching and learning as well as expanded the opportunities for transnational education. This phenomenon, together with rapid developments in information and communications technology, promotes access to foreign qualification, degrees, certificates and diplomas. It also encourages Philippine universities, colleges, and training institutions to offer credits and degrees in a borderless environment. The potential of transnational arrangements to provide education that meets human, social, economic and cultural needs can only be achieved by ensuring the provision of quality educational services.

Transnational education is a matter of critical public interest in terms of relevance of content to national needs and the need to safeguard the interests of legitimate education providers and the general public. Quality assurance, audit, accreditation and

similar activities protect the interests of various stakeholders in transnational education (Para. 2, Section 75, Article XVI, CMO 40 s. 2008).

(6)**Transnational education arrangement** refers to an educational, legal, financial or other arrangement agreed upon formally by partners in order to provide education services (No. 31 Article II. Definition of Terms, CMO 2 s. 2008)

**Alternative Systems in Education.** The Commission recognizes that education and acquisition of higher learning take place both within and beyond the confines of the classrooms. The Commission recognizes the need to formally acknowledge higher learning obtained from information and non-formal systems of education. The recognition shall be embodied in an instrument acceptable by the general public (Section 9, Art. III. CMO 40 s.2008).

1.To make quality higher education accessible to a greater number of qualified students who are otherwise isolated by geographical location, personal and work commitments, time constraints, and conventional course structures;

2.To establish a mechanism for assessment and accreditation of prior learning from non-formal and informal education and training, and from related work experiences of individuals toward the granting of equivalency certificates and awards in higher education; and

3.To establish guidelines for the award of higher education certificates and/or degrees to deserving individuals (Section 10, Art. III. CMO 40 s.2008).

These systems shall include but not limited to the following:

**Distance Education** – the same definition provided in No. 3 above.

- (1) **The Expanded Tertiary Equivalency and Accreditation Programs (ETEEAP)** – a comprehensive program of identifying, assessing and assigning equivalent college level learning for non-formal and informal training, and demonstrated/substantiated competencies, skills, attitudes and values acquired from related work experience towards the final granting of equivalent credits and/or awarding of appropriate academic degree by deputized higher education institutions. Competency enhancement programs are employed to ensure progression of the individual student in the Program.
- (2) **Ladderized Education** – refers to all education and training mechanisms that allow student’s and worker’s progression within and between Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Higher Education (HE).
- (3) **E-Learning** – the delivery of a learning, training or education program by electronic means. It involves the use of computer or electronic device.
- (4) **Open Learning** - the same definition provided in No. 2 above

The establishment and operation of the foregoing alternative systems shall be in accordance with the corresponding CHED policies, guidelines and procedures (Section 9-11, Article III, CMO 40 s. 2008).

#### **D. KNOWN DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

**UP Open University** – The **University of the Philippines Open University** (U.P.O.U.) is a [public distance learning institution](#) and [research university](#) headquartered at [Los Baños, Laguna](#).

Its mandate is to provide education opportunities to individuals aspiring for higher education and improved qualifications but were unable to take advantage of traditional modes of education because of personal and professional obligations (Wikipedia, 2012). Established in 1995 as the fifth constituent university of the UP system, UPOU had 2,500 students in 2008-2009. It has students in 44 countries, aside from the Philippines, majority of them overseas Filipinos. Between 2000 and 2006, UPOU graduated 2,419. The university has been recognized as the Center of Excellence in Open Learning and Distance Education by the Commission on Higher Education and designated as the National eLearning Competency Center by the Information Technology and eCommerce Council (Bolido, 2009).

Taken from its website, the UPOU’s vision is: “to be at the forefront of the knowledge society as a leading institutions of open learning and distance education (UPOU Vision). It’s mission is to provide wider access to quality higher education. It shall adhere to the highest standards of academic excellence, guarantee academic freedom, and encourage social responsibility and nationalistic commitment among its faculty, staff and students (UP OU Mission). Specifically, the UPOU has the following objectives:

- To provide opportunities for alternative access to quality higher education by offering baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate degree programs and non-formal courses by distance education.
- To develop a system of continuing education for sustaining professional growth and improving technical skills especially for those who cannot leave their jobs or homes for full-time studies; and

- To contribute towards upgrading the quality of residential instruction in the University and the educational system of the country, in general, by developing, testing and utilizing innovative instructional materials and technology, and sharing these with other colleges and universities through cooperative programs

(2) **PUP Open University** – “The Polytechnic University of the Philippines Open University (PUP OU) otherwise known as the "Pamantasang Bayan", which formally commenced in 1990, is a fresh and innovative system of delivering higher educational services in a manner that differs from the formal, highly structured, and classroom-oriented traditional approach.

The PUP OU is in consonance with the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Article IV mandates that quality education at all levels should be made accessible to all Filipinos and self-learning, independent, out-of-school study programs, non-formal, informal and indigenous learning systems, be developed particularly those which respond to community needs. The PUP OU caters primarily to the needs of the economically disadvantaged students, out-of-school youths, teachers, administrators, managers, professionals and ordinary employees who want to pursue degree or non-degree courses but are unable to do so due to accessibility, time, domestic and economic constraints. Ideally, under the Open University System, the students do not have to attend classes inside a classroom. They do not even have to enter the physical campus(es) of PUP. However, because of the discovered need of the PUP student to meet and encounter their classmates and subject specialists (instructors), they are required to attend contact sessions per subject. The PUP OU's thrust answers the call to higher education institutions to continue contributing to the efforts of the government of realizing its objectives of

poverty alleviation, global competitiveness and sustainable development, for the benefit of the present and future generations of Filipinos.

The PUP Open University was established in the 1970's. The initial offerings were non-degree (technical-vocational) courses. PUP first thought of the Open University concept when then PCC President Nemesio E. Prudente saw the need to provide access to educational opportunities to millions of Filipinos who wanted to study but were constrained by time, distance and other circumstances. He was assisted by then Assistant Vice President for Branches and Head of the OU and now Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Samuel M. Salvador together with Prof. Teofilo H. Montemayor. They worked relentlessly in establishing linkages with different organizations and laid down the foundations of the OU system in PUP. However, the initial implementation fizzled out when Martial Law was declared in 1972.

When Dr. Prudente was reinstated as PUP President in 1986, he again revived the concept of the Open University System. It was formally launched in March 1990. Dr. Prudente and Dr. Salvador believed in bringing education right at the doorsteps of the people. This concept was supported fully by Dr. Zenaida A. Olonan during her presidency. The appointment of Dr. Ofelia M. Carague as president of PUP in 1998 augured well for the PUP OU since she has been one of the prime movers of the OU in the University. In the presidency of Dr. Dante G. Guevarra, the PUP OU has grown leaps and bounds as it established the three schools that presently compose it. While broadcast-based distance learning systems in the Philippines were popular in the 1960's, it was PUP which first implemented the concept of the Open University, that is, a university within a university offering both degree and non-degree programs in the country duly certified by corresponding certificates or diplomas upon satisfactory compliance of course requirements.

From its website, PUP OU's vision is to be the premier Center of Excellence in the country for Distance Education. Its mission is to provide and promote quality education in all levels by making it accessible to all through self-learning, independent and out-of-school study programs, particularly those that respond to community needs and the challenges posed by an information and technological society and a global economy. Its objectives are as follows:

- Bring quality but affordable education to the greater number, improving their quality of life, especially that of the economically disadvantaged in complementation with the present traditional university curricular offerings;
- Offer a second chance which to others might be the only means of acquiring an education or expanding their knowledge;
- Advance and disseminate knowledge by a diversity of means, both formal and non-formal, with the aid of information and communication technology;
- Strengthen and make relevant the degree, certificate and diploma courses to the needs of employment necessary for the building of the economy and the development of the country;
- Promote the acquisition of knowledge in a rapidly developing and changing society and to continually offer opportunities for upgrading knowledge, training and skills in the context of innovations, research and discovery in all fields of human endeavor; and,
- Provide suitable undergraduate and post graduate courses of study to those already employed here and abroad but lack the necessary educational qualifications for advancement on account of age, poverty, distance to conventional educational centers, or time constraints.” (PUP, 2012)

(3) **Philippine Women's University (PWU)** - Then Philippine Women's University President, Dr. Jose Conrado Benitez, in his inaugural address on Feb. 19, 1993, formally announced the university's policy on distance education. He said that it is the classroom that will have to go to the students and not the students to the classrooms. It will enter the homes through distance education; it will take place in the offices and workplaces through various career development and continuing education programs; it will situate itself in our communities through accredited experiential learning activities designed for community immersion. In March 1994, the PWU EDTV or educational television program was launched. It was the first and only cable television channel exclusively dedicated for educational programming. On July 15, 1996, the PWU College of Distance Education was formally created. The PWU College of Distance Education says its learning centers are on its campus in Manila, and in participating schools in Makati, Las Piñas, Bataan, Bulacan, Imus in Cavite, Camarines Norte, Kalinga, Lipa in Batangas, Pampanga, Bacolod and Hong Kong (Quodala, 2007).

(4) **Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila (PLM)** – distance learning program in PLM is called the Off-Campus Program or the OCP. OCP is not new to the experience of PLM. It traces its roots back in 1995 when the College of Nursing conceptualized a new program to re-tool the country's midwifery program through the Bachelor of Community Health Services (BCHS). Graduates and board passers of the 2-year midwifery profession across the country found a way of spreading their golden hands -- from ensuring birthing life to babies -- to nursing health care among communities away from the modernity of urban medical health services. The success of the BCHS program ushered PLM to innovate other programs at the public governance sector. Realizing that a dedicated public service is the hallmark of a true republican society, PLM shaped its post-graduate program for

government management (Master of Government Management) to give emphasis to the value-delivery of public services among the citizenry. A public institution itself, PLM has carved a niche in bringing about a distinct program in its own sphere of core competency. One step led to another as more programs of equal significance to the society were added to the growing list of community-focused learning paradigms, i.e., bachelor in public administration, master in business administration-top executive program, master in community health services, doctor in public management, among others. To realize the objective of reaching a broader base, the colleges and graduate schools responsible for managing their respective programs *have tied up mainly with government agencies, and community and professional organizations*. Memoranda of agreement were forged to ensure quality control in delivering the educational objectives of the programs. Faculty members who are experts in their respective fields *are sent by PLM into these agencies and communities to re-tool public and community servants right at their doorsteps*. The policy research studies or dissertations of candidates for graduation are directed towards enhancing or uplifting the current state of affairs in their own communities by recommending stateful frameworks of significant contribution to the betterment of that community, through better health services or commendable public governance (PLM, 2012).

(5) **CAP College Foundation Inc.** – a recognized pioneer in educational innovations in the Philippines – was established in 1988 as a non-stock, non-sectarian educational foundation. Instituted under Philippine laws, CAP College engages in education, research and related activities utilizing non-traditional or non-formal as well as formal delivery of instruction and grants degrees for programs recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). CAP College is patterned after

the “open university” concept of education which is already well-established and widely accepted in Europe, North America and the United States, Australia, and Asia . With its non-traditional delivery of instruction, CAP College brings learning alternatives, new hope and opportunities to Filipinos here and abroad. In order to make its programs attuned to the times and with the needs of its students, CAP College continues to expand its network and to develop its linkages with other educational institutions and organizations. It has also developed linkages with government and non-government organizations here and abroad. International linkages include the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), where CAP College is an institutional member, and the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU). Locally, it is affiliated with the Open and Distance Learning Foundation (ODLF) and the Association of Foundations (AF).

In 2007, CAP College embarked on the digitalization of Distance Education. Through [www.capcow.com](http://www.capcow.com), CAP College harnessed the power of the Internet in serving its students worldwide through: on-line registration, downloading of instructional materials, on-line tutorials, individualized folders for students, and link to a career site via [www.JobsDB.com](http://www.JobsDB.com). Aside from the regular Digitalized Distance Education Program, CAP College Foundation, Inc. operates the School for the Deaf (SFD) – the first institution in the Philippines to offer collegiate courses for the Deaf.

Its vision is for the development of a culture of achievement among Filipinos as a primary ingredient in nation building through the pursuit of life-long learning and continued academic advancement. Its mission is to lead towards the democratization of higher education opportunities through Digitalized Distance Education.

Among its objectives as the following: (1) Provide opportunities for higher education to persons who cannot go to formal or conventional schools on account of time, distance, finances and other constraints; (2) Develop new non-traditional undergraduate and graduate programs to meet specific needs of government and industry; and (3) Contribute to the development of Distance Education in the Philippines (CAP, 2012)

**(6) Central Luzon State University -** The CLSU Open University was formally created on August 29, 1997 through CLSU Board of Regents Resolution No. 50-97. The mandate of the CLSU Open University is to provide education opportunities via degree and non-degree programs to disadvantaged individuals aspiring for higher education or for improved qualifications but who are unable to avail of the traditional modes of instruction. The CLSU Open University is open as to people, places, and methods. Its main aim is to provide access to higher education to more people, to bring education to them, wherever they live, which in turn requires it to apply/adopt different methods because it cannot achieve its aims through traditional classroom teaching. Its mission is to provide its students with opportunities to earn formal qualification as well as to develop in them the readiness for lifelong learning in today's knowledge society. Guided and propelled by the general objective of backstopping CLSU in undertaking efforts to make more meaningful contribution to the realization of the goals of national development through human resource development, the OU trains its efforts and resources towards the achievement of the following specific objectives, to wit: (1) Offer programs that are responsive to the needs of the learners and of their communities through distance education; (2) Institutionalize a system of continuing education to sustain professional growth

and promote lifelong learning; (3) Package instructional materials for various curricular programs and clientele groups; and (4) Establish a distance education network through collaborative arrangements, institutional linkages and other appropriate mechanisms to enhance the delivery of distance education programs and to generate awareness of and support to the CLSU distance learning program.

Distance education is a mode of education delivery whereby teacher and learner are separated in time and space, and instruction is delivered through specially designed materials and methods using appropriate technologies, and supported by organizational and administrative structures and arrangements.

The Open University students are provided with specially packaged printed instructional materials or self-learning modules which they study on their own most of the time. SLMs are prepared by a "quality circle" composed of a curriculum designer, who develops the subject based on the approved syllabus; subject matter specialist, who writes the module; a co A tutorial session is an important element of distance. It is conducted as part of the academic environment for optimal learning. The Open University conducts face-to-face tutorial sessions to enable students to interact with their tutors and peers. These sessions are held on campus and on-site at the designated Distance and Open Learning Centers (DOLCENs) and help students get acquainted with the University.

Tutorial sessions are held five times a semester/term at intervals of two weeks to one month. Each tutorial session lasts for three hours. On-line, via telephone tutorials and other forms of tutorials have been adopted for faster delivery of lessons and for enhanced access to Open University graduate degree programs. Content critic; a language editor; and a media specialist or graphics artist (CLSU-OU, 2012).

**(7) Open and Distance Learning Foundation of the Philippines (ODLF)**

– is the first organization founded in the late 90's to advance the cause and open and distance learning in the country. Its member institution consisted of known distance education providers today which includes: PUP Open University (PUPOU), CAP College Foundation Inc., Central Luzon State University Open University (CLSUOU), Southeast Asia Interdisciplinary Development Institute (SAIDI), Philippine Women's University (PWU).

**(8) Philippine eLearning Society (PeLS)**

– PeLS was founded on July 30, 2003 in Manila with the objective of promoting substantive content, appropriate pedagogy, and appropriate use of technology for eLearning, guided by ongoing research activities. Its mission is to lead the development of eLearning competencies through education and training and to promote collaboration among eLearning practitioners. Its vision is to be a recognized premiere organization that spearheads the advancement of eLearning in the Philippines (PeLS, 2012).

**(9) Philippine Society of Distance Learning (PSDL)**

- According to the Philippine Society for Distance Learning, Inc. (PSDL)'s website, it was formally organized on 25 September 2006 at the INNOTECH Center in Diliman, Quezon City by 15 academics who were all working at various aspects of distance education. A total of 31 individuals were originally invited to form an academic society for distance learning, but only 15 were able to attend the organizational meeting. The convenor of the organizational meeting was Dr. Felix Librero, then Chancellor of the U.P. Open University. The society was founded to pursue the spirit of community among distance educators at a higher level of academic discourse

(PSDL Mission, 2012). Further it aimed to realize the following specific objectives, to wit: (1) to promote the growth and development of distance learning through knowledge exchanges, policy formulation, and advocacy; (2) to promote professionalism in the practice of distance learning in the Philippines; (3) to stimulate collaboration among local and foreign professionals and practitioners of distance learning; (4) to sponsor scientific meetings and training programs in distance learning on its own or in collaboration with other institutions, including government (5) to sponsor scientific meetings and training programs in distance learning on its own or in collaboration with other institutions, including government; (6) to publish and disseminate research results, policy papers, and other scientific materials on distance learning in the Philippines.

The foregoing enumeration of DE providers in the country are just some of the few distance education institutions in the country. The ones listed above are what we call the established DE institutions so far, although there are a number of others which delivers higher education via distance or via the unconventional way. It can be observed from the above that most known distance education and open learning institutions in the country were rooted basically from the conventional schools or those that was originally founded on a face-to-face traditional teaching-learning delivery mode. Very few DE providers are what we call the stand-alone DE institutions or those that were actually built for distance education purposes solely.

**E. CURRENT TRENDS ON DE IN THE COUNTRY**

As discussed at the earlier part, the prominence of DE in the country is evident during the past two decades although there were efforts to provide education via distance as early as 1940's and 1950's through the provision of short courses on the radio and television. This is to make

education more accessible to many Filipinos especially those residing from remote areas. It was in the 90's when most DE practitioners began to write researches about open learning system, students under DE mode, and alternative learning system. It was also during the same period when DE institutions would send participants to Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) to benchmark on best practices on DE and Open Learning; to establish networks and collaborations and gain notable experiences from established DE institutions in Asia. Until these DE practitioners began to participate in other International Conferences in DE e.g. International Conference on Distance Education (ICDE). Some even established their own journal in distance education like that in the PUP Open University where it issued 4 Volumes of DE journal (ISSN 1655-6461), others joined as editors and writers of international DE journals e.g. Asian Journal of Distance Education (ISSN 1347-9008) while the rest submitted papers for publication at the International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning (IRRODL) and other known DE journals in the world. Other institutions have built their own ICT infrastructure to deliver courses via distance while the rest remained to be print-based modular approach. Truly, there were many efforts to develop DE in the country during the last few years, and in keeping with that development, the following latest activities transpired in the country:

**1. The Conduct of the First International Conference on Open and Distance e-Learning in 2012.** Recently in February 2012, the First International Conference on Open and Distance e-Learning (ICODEL) was held in Century Park Hotel in Manila wherein close to three hundred delegates from about 20 countries and over 100 institutions and organizations attended said event. ICODEL 2012 was jointly organized by the UP Open

University, UP Open University Foundation Inc., and the Philippines Society for Distance Learning. (Canas, 2012). The rationale for conducting such conference is as follows: *“In the 21st century, open learning, distance education, and e-learning are inextricably linked. The philosophy of open learning, with its emphasis on learner control over the time, place and pace of study, has animated distance education since its emergence as a mode of educational provision. Distance education in turn has contributed much to making educational systems more open and flexible, through its adoption of various education technologies. Online distance education in particular, has proven to be a transformative influence, as it demonstrates how the use of information and communication technologies can reshape the teaching and learning transaction. Open, distance and e-learning (ODeL) has revolutionized the way we perceive universities and the role of education in development. It has contributed to the making of a borderless world driven by innovation and knowledge creation for policy development, advocacy, and community transformation and action. This conference focused on the convergence of philosophies, pedagogies and technologies in ODeL, the opportunities opened up by this convergence in education and beyond, as well as issues and challenges arising from the practice of ODeL in various contexts”*(ICODEL, 2012).

**2. The formation of the Philippines Society for Distance Learning, Inc. in 2006** – the PSDL is the 3<sup>rd</sup> association of DE providers in the country that was recently organized. The first two are ODLF and PeLS. *see details in D.9. about the PSDL.*

**3. The initiative given by UNESCO Asia Pacific Open and Distance Learning Knowledge Base to some DE providers in the country** – The PUP

Open University was recently associated with UNESCO Asia Pacific Open and Distance Learning Knowledge Base. The knowledge base for policy makers in education is an initiative of the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education. Through this knowledge base, regional and cross-sector development of open and distance learning by sharing resources, knowledge and technologies of learning is encouraged. This knowledge base also hopes to enhance the thrust for educational accessibility and intellectual freedom through efficient organisation and management of educational endeavour in every country in the region. The Asia Pacific Open and Distance Learning Knowledge Base is committed to the provision of free and fair access to information on open and distance education and to enhance educational training and development through the use of learning technologies. In the face of current trends, global changes and new pathways in education, this knowledge base aims to provide policy makers with a comprehensive knowledge base on the various aspects of open and distance learning (ODL). UNESCO Asia Pacific Open and Distance Learning Knowledge Base perceives that open learning and distance education can provide for the training and development needs of every citizen of the world. In terms of the need for openness and flexibility, we consider this approach to be significant in achieving the Millennium Development Goals forwarded by the United Nations in the year 2001. In order to transform the condition of human life in the 21st century, the Asia Pacific Open and Distance Learning Knowledge Base aims to achieve the following goals: (1) To provide information that will help policy makers and decision makers formulate policies, develop strategies, programmes and plans to efficiently manage ODL programmes; (2) To offer current and state-of-the-art information on implementing ODL with reference to teaching-learning methodology, modes of delivery, media, learning technologies

and trends in research; (3) To serve as a network for international collaboration by providing a platform for the exchange of information, ideas, experiences, lessons learned, and best practices; (4) To provide a gateway for free and fair access to ODL databases and knowledge resources on ODL for the purpose of enhancing educational training and development. This knowledge base is managed, maintained and hosted by the **Open University Malaysia** (OUM) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (UNESCO Asia Pacific, 2012).

4. On the higher education level, the Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016 states that “enrolment in middle-level human resource development via technical and vocational education and training (TVET) increased by 27.38 percent, from 1.68 million in 2004 to 2.14 million in 2007. However, it declined to 2 million in 2008 and 1.98 million in 2009, as a result of efforts to improve quality assurance. On the other hand, enrolment in higher education rose moderately from 2.40 million in 2004 to 2.62 million in 2009. The number of graduates across all disciplines likewise increased from 409,628 to around 469,654 in the same period, or by 14.65 percent” (Chapter 8, Philippine Dev’t Plan, 2011-2016). This enrolment trend is something that DE provider may possibly explore and take advantage of. The number of enrollees which cannot be served by the traditional school can possibly be an opportunity for DE institutions. For instance in the Education Targets set by the government for 2011-2016; private or public DE providers may think of incorporating as part of their strategic plan, measures on how to help the government respond to the provision of higher education to be able to meet the targets specified, which is disclosed in the following table:

Table 2. Education Targets 2011-2016

Indicators	Baseline	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Literacy</b>							
Simple Literacy Rate (10 yrs. old and above)a/	95.6 (2008)			98.1			
Functional Literacy Rate (10-64 yrs. old)a/	86.4 (2008)			90.1			
<b>Early Childhood Education</b>							
Gross Enrolment Rate of 3-4 years old children in Day Care Service	19.45	20.00	30.00	40.00	50.00	60.00	70.00
Gross Enrolment Rate - Kindergarten/ b/ c/	68.41	74.73	81.05	87.36	93.68	100.00	100.00
Net Enrolment Rate - Kindergarten (5 yrs. old) b/ c/	48.23	58.58	68.94	79.29	89.65	100.00	100.00
Percentage of Grade 1 entrants with ECE experience	67.40	73.92	80.44	86.96	93.48	100.00	100.00
<b>Elementary</b>							
Net Intake Rate in Grade 1 <sup>b/</sup>	58.61	65.89	73.17	80.44	87.72	95.00	100.00
Gross Enrolment Rate <sup>b/</sup>	105.37	108.30	111.22	114.15	117.07	120.00	122.93
Net Enrolment Rate <sup>b/</sup>	88.09	90.09	92.09	94.10	96.10	98.10	100.00
Cohort Survival Rate	74.38	76.45	78.51	80.57	82.64	84.67	86.76
Completion Rate <sup>d/</sup>	72.18	75.13	76.61	78.09	79.56	81.04	82.52
Achievement Rate (Grade 6 NAT MPS)	68.0	70.9	71.7	72.5	73.3	74.2	75.0
<b>Secondary</b>							
Gross Enrolment Rate <sup>b/</sup>	81.03	86.83	92.62	98.41	104.21	110.00	115.79
Net Enrolment Rate <sup>b/</sup>	59.52	65.16	70.79	76.43	82.06	87.70	93.34
Cohort Survival Rate	78.44	79.35	80.27	81.18	82.09	83.00	83.91
Completion Rate <sup>d/</sup>	73.74	74.25	74.51	74.76	75.02	75.27	75.53
Achievement Rate (Year II NAT MPS)	45.6	54.6	58.7	62.7	66.8	70.9	75.0
<b>TVET</b>							
Enrolment	1,568,617*	1,100,000	1,210,000	1,331,000	1,464,000	1,610,510	1,771,560
Male	893,091	531,300	586,850	649,528	720,288	805,255	885,780
Female	1,091,555	568,700	623,150	681,472	743,712	805,255	885,780
Graduates	1,344,371*	1,000,000	1,100,000	1,210,000	1,331,000	1,464,100	1,610,510
Male	856,708	494,000	545,600	602,580	664,169	732,050	805,255
Female	1,047,085	506,000	554,400	607,420	666,831	732,050	805,255
No. of Persons Assessed	772,670*	600,000	660,000	726,000	798,600	878,460	966,306
No. of Persons Certified	636,689* (2010)	510,000	564,300	624,360	690,789	764,260	845,518
Certification Rate (%)	82.40*	85.00	85.50	86.00	86.50	87.00	87.50
Private Education Students Financial Assistance (PESFA) – Number of TVET beneficiaries	13,406	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
<b>Higher Education</b>							
Enrolment	2,770,965	2,881,352	2,955,949	3,021,059	3,080,827	3,155,616	3,220,987
Male	1,255,839	1,305,170	1,335,880	1,361,395	1,388,337	1,418,052	1,445,247
Female	1,515,126	1,576,182	1,620,069	1,659,664	1,692,490	1,737,554	1,775,740
Graduates	481,026	509,707	524,054	538,397	552,735	567,083	581,425
Male	206,015	219,503	226,249	232,994	239,737	246,482	253,228
Female	275,011	290,204	297,805	305,403	312,998	320,601	328,197
<b>Faculty Qualification</b>							
% Master's Degree	35.04	40	45	50	55	60	65
% Doctorate Degree	9.69	10	13	16	20	25	30
<b>Accreditation</b>							
Percent of higher education institutions with accredited programs	20	20	23	26	29	32	35
Expanded Tertiary Accreditation and Equivalency Program (ETEEAP) Graduates	200	800	800	800	800	800	800
Student Financial Assistance Programs (STUFAPs)– Number of HE beneficiaries	42,000	44,000	44,000	44,000	44,000	44,000	44,000
Percent of higher education institutions with Ladderized Education Program (LEP)	34 (2008)	30	32	34	36	38	40
National Passing Percentage in Licensure Exams	36.26	45.84	47.04	48.39	49.72	50.94	52.53

*\*2010 data*

*Sources: DepEd, TESDA, CHED, NSO and the ECCD Council*

*a/ data from the FLEMMS conducted by the NSO every five years*

*b/ Based on the 2000 Census of Population using the growth rate of the 2007 Census which is 2.04%*

*c/ Excludes preschool enrolment in summer classes*

*d/ The definition and formula for completion rate is currently being reviewed*

Source: Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016 (pp.256-257)

As Visser (2004) puts it, distance education has contributed to human development in ways not met through conventional approaches in such areas as, adult basic education, educating the unreached, out-of-school secondary education, and tertiary education. Reaching the unreached, providing learning opportunities at the basic level to adults in areas relevant to their ability to make the most out of their situation and to contribute to the development of their society, opening alternative routes to learning for out-of-school youths, particularly at the secondary level, expanding higher education at a cost far below what would be required for conventional approaches, these are some of the areas in which distance education has contributed in unprecedented ways to human development through education.

## F. CHALLENGES

The Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016 provides that: “[t]he challenge for the tertiary education is not just broadening but rationalizing the access of the economically and socially-disadvantaged and potentially-restive population. Particularly, the efficacy, usefulness and viability of student loan programs have not improved remarkably through the years. Significantly, **the need to produce enough competent and skilled workforce that will match domestic needs has become much more compelling.** Faced with the challenge of **competitiveness and the diversifying industry needs,** the government continuously instituted programs and provided the critical resources for skills upgrading and intensification in both high- and middle-level professions. Post-basic education funding has pointed to the need for students to be channeled to fields that

have clear local demand, such as emerging and critical S&T fields. The education and training sector remains confronted with the following issues and challenges: (a) limited participation of the industry sector in developing competency standards and curricula; (b) societal bias against TVET and insufficient social marketing, particularly among basic education students and their parents; (c) the need to upgrade the quality of higher education programs, including S&T courses, and make them internationally comparable; and (d) continuing job-skills mismatches, owing to low quality and relevance of education and training programs, alongside lower absorptive capacity of the economy.” (Chapter 8, Philippine Dev’t Plan, 2011-2016).

Given this situation, what then is the role that DE institutions should play to take part in these challenges as stated by the government? It must be pointed out that a key requirement for successful distance education is that there should be planning.

## G. PROSPECTS

Among the many prospects that the government will take (as enunciated in the Policies and Strategies in Education, Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016) which generally relates to distance education, open learning, alternative learning system and transnational education are as follows:

1. Make education and training truly inclusive and expand opportunities for lifelong learning through: (a) better and broader provision of basic educational inputs, especially in traditionally lagging areas by using Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) for out-of-school youths and adults;

for sustainability, taking into account the whole picture of educational concerns (Visser, 1994). As the concern of government is the concern of all higher education institutions (be it traditional or unconventional DE mode). Success of distance education solutions is contingent upon their being an integrated part of educational policies (Visser, 1994).

The biggest challenge is also for DE institution to help the government (especially in the next four years, 2013 - 2016) attain the enrollment rates it sets for technical and vocational education, and higher education institutions; the attainment also of the targets on the number of graduates both from TVET and HEIs is another challenge and finally the challenge on quality assurance and accreditation. Is there greater number of DE institutions that submits themselves for quality audits and accreditation? Does the figure set by the government includes non-traditional higher education institutions? What part of the pie will DE institutions take to meet the target set by the government? Or are they, in the first place, included in those institutions expected to help government meet the targets (of course with the exception of those DE providers with the traditional higher education provision as they are naturally expected especially the SUCs). Is DE seen to be an instrument to make education more accessible and flexible to many? These and many more questions will remain to be unanswered unless the full potential of distance education is fully exhausted in the country as in the case of Indira Gandhi National Open University in India – which tries to reach in the greater populace of the country and among other successful distance education in other parts of the world.

2. Support and institutionalize cultural and values-oriented projects on TV, radio, print and Internet through partnership with media and other private-sector and civil society entities; produce TV documentaries and infomercials, to highlight positive Filipino values and

promote sustainable development, peace and human security, good governance, disaster-risk reduction and climate-change preparedness. The development communication policy framework of the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) shall be adopted, with the convergence of traditional and multimedia platforms, as well as online and social media, in engaging wider clientele and audiences at all levels;

3. Devise a transnational education (TNE) strategy in programs and services for both inbound and outbound students and workers, including mutual recognition/ accreditation of skills and professional development of Filipino workers vis-a-vis neighboring countries. Reasonable and mutually beneficial supervision and regulation of TNE should lead to quality assurance and management of foreign providers, as well as the integrity and competitiveness of Filipino providers;

4. Balance the demands of globalization through a locally-adapted/ indigenized curricula that promote and preserve indigenous knowledge by: (a) expanding and upgrading the capacity to teach foreign languages in response to the requirements of internationally-shared human resources and emerging needs in the ASEAN region; (b) integrating balanced messages of migration and development in the Philippine education, both in the formal and alternative learning system; (c) making the education system responsive to the needs of the global community, while minimizing brain drain, encouraging brain gain and protecting the Filipino family from the social costs of migration; and (d) encouraging Filipinos overseas to remain rooted in their culture through an appreciation of Filipino languages, culture and heritage.

5. By 2016, the country shall achieve a universal and at least a 93 percent participation or net enrolment rate in the elementary and secondary levels, respectively. A gender parity index (GPI) of 1 shall be targeted in basic education

indicators. Likewise, TVET and higher education subsector shall also increase enrolment and graduation rate by 2016 (Education Targets, Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016).

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