Journey to Quality and Academic Excellence: The Organizational Life History of Adventist University of the Philippines

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Abstract

The study narrates the journey of Adventist University of the Philippines (AUP) to academic excellence. The humble beginnings and the past experiences of the institution paved the way to strive to academic excellence. The Excellence Model based on accreditation standards was used to achieve the vision-mission and goals of the University. The data of this paper were based on the documents taken from the university. The university has a unique organizational structure governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees and managed by its president and three Vice Presidents, that is, Academics, Finance and Operations, and Student Services. The strategic planning process of the university is well planned utilizing both “top down” and “bottom up” approaches where all sectors have the chance to participate in the process. The university president heads the strategic planning process, passing it on to the vice presidents, college deans, academic directors, and department heads. The strategic planning process and activities were presented to the faculty and staff. The University has assessment system that monitors the performance of the faculty and staff of the university. The Human Resource Department regularly conducts seminars and trainings for faculty and staff development based on the training needs survey. The combined workforce of the faculty and staff of the university resulted to numerous achievements. AUP’s performance is evident by the various awards and recognitions as well as accreditation levels given by several agencies. The continuous quest for academic excellence has been empowered by past and present performance of the University.
I. INTRODUCTION

Striving for academic excellence and high quality education is the main thrust of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The quest for quality in education is a never-ending journey. It has been on the agenda of HEI’s for many years. Achieving this is not easy. Support from the administrators, faculty, and staff is needed for this quality and academic excellence journey.

The fundamentals of quality in higher education is quality assurance which refers to the planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product or service will satisfy given the requirements for quality (Borahan & Ziarati as cited in Arjomandi, Kestell, & Grimshaw, 2009).

Every higher education institution formulates its philosophy, vision, and mission so that it can cover the major activities of the university. Every quality measure starts with the formulated mission statement, vision, goals, and objectives. The mission statement encompasses the inputs, process, and outputs (Arjomandi, Kestell, & Grimshaw, 2009). The core activities of HEIs are: curriculum and instruction, research, community extension, and social involvement.

According to Brusoni et al. (2014), “there is a need to analyze the excellence through different stakeholders, including students and families, society and employers. The term has been widely used in accreditation schemes in management filed for higher education, to define the level of quality of service provided by the institutions. In this context, it is possible to define standards for performance which permit the recognition of excellence” (p. 9).

The measure of quality was based on accreditation standards and criteria set by accrediting agencies and by Malcolm Bridge performance excellence. These models help the universities/organizations assess their improvement efforts, diagnose their overall performance management system, and identify their strengths and opportunities for improvement. The criteria set also help the organization by improving performance practices, capabilities, and results; facilitating communication and sharing of information on best practices among organizations of all types; serving as a tool for understanding and managing performance and for guiding planning and opportunities for learning (Yabut, 2014).

Assessment of excellence in teaching and instruction has been a long-standing issue for higher education institution. The university has no existing study that documents how the Adventist University of the Philippines became a university and has maintained the autonomous status. Thus, this study was conceptualized. Aside from the aforementioned, this study is expected to generate useful information to be shared to other colleges and universities of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) institutions. The cases and challenges identified will serve as examples in their pursuit of quality and academic excellence.

Information gained from this study can be used in devising academic programs, activities, and policies for improvement.

II. METHODS

This qualitative study used narrative approach. As it presents AUP’s organization-
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History

Adventist University of the Philippines traces its roots and humble beginnings from missionary-oriented people who had a strong desire to develop young people for usefulness in life, but more specifically, to prepare efficient workers in the different branches of Christian service and ultimately for citizenship in the coming kingdom of God.

The coming of Elder L.V. Finster in 1908 as a pioneering missionary led to the conversion of young Filipinos to Adventism: Bibiano Panis, Emilio Manalaysay, and Leon Roda who were also trained on methods of sharing the gospel. They impressed Elder A.G. Daniels, President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, of the need to build a school for them.

Location. Before its present location in Silang campus, AUP was first located in Pasay City. Then later it moved to Baesa, Caloocan City.

Pasay campus. The matter regarding building a school was presented to the General Conference Committee and in due time a small amount was raised and used to purchase a five-acre lot (worth $6,500 equivalent to Php13,000 then) at the corner of Donada and San Juan Streets in Pasay City, now the location of the North Philippine Union Conference of SDA. The rest of the money was used to purchase lumber for the construction of the school’s first building. The school was opened in Pasay on June 12, 1917 to 36 students, 12 of whom were girls. Part of the curriculum was the work program to help students earn money while they study. The first faculty of the academy was Professor I. A. Steiniel, the principal and business manager and Professor O. F. Sevrens, as preceptor. Both had come to the Philippines
with their families as missionaries. Brother Marciano A. Roxas was the first Filipino teacher employed by the Academy. In 1925, it was voted at the Spring Council of the Far Eastern Division that the academy be authorized to carry 14 grades, adding one grade each year towards 1927 and that the name be changed to Philippine Junior College. Elder W. B. Amundsen was elected principal in 1927 until the year 1931.

**Baesa campus.** At the end of 1927, 26 hectares of land was purchased in Baesa, Caloocan, then part of the Rizal province for Php65,951.95, to accommodate the increasing number of enrollment. Prof. L. M. Stump, president of the college in 1931, directed the construction of the buildings. The school finally moved to Baesa campus in 1932. It was also in 1932 that the Far Eastern Division permitted the elevation of the junior college to a senior college naming it Philippine Union College (PUC). The successful years of PUC could be traced back to the missionary efforts of the administrators, teachers, students, and church members who worked hard without monetary rewards. The visionaries of the Baesa era composed and adopted the school song “Shine on Forever” in 1934.

**Silang campus.** The ever multiplying number of PUC enrollment has inspired the administration to purchase yet a bigger property of 165 hectares of land located in Puting Kahoy, Silang, Cavite in 1972. The same missionary spirit inspired the pioneers in the past had stimulated the administrators, faculty and students to work hard, sacrifice time, energy and effort. The pioneers left behind the conveniences of life in the city just to move to the new PUC ‘mountain’ location. The year 1979 saw the first batch of freshmen and sophomore students in this new campus and, in 1981, with the movement of the juniors and seniors from Baesa, the campus transfer was completed.

**Change of institution’s name.** Growing is a package of joy, crises and pain, which PUC experienced in all phases of its community existence. Through all these, PUC has kept on “shining.” On August 1, 1996, in accordance with Republic Act (RA) No. 7722 and by the virtue of the Resolution No. 132-96, Series of 1996, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) granted PUC the long-awaited university status entailing the change of the school’s name from Philippine Union College to Adventist University of the Philippines (AUP).

On July 8, 2009, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) approved the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws of the new AUP, and was thus granted a Certificate of Incorporation under Company Registration No. CN200909866 for another term of 50 years.

**Organizational Structure**

AUP is a faith-based institution owned and operated by the Seventh Day Adventist Church. The university is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees and managed by its President and three Vice Presidents: Academics, Finance and Operations, and Student Services.

**Strategic Plan**

The strategic planning process of the university is well planned utilizing both “top down” and “bottom up” approaches where all
Faculty and staff. AUP has committed faculty and staff who support the academic programs and activities of the university. Table 1 shows the total number of faculty and staff from 2008-2014 which include the denominational workers, insti-

The University identified six strategic goals to achieve the vision and mission: transforming spirituality, excellence in teaching and learning, committed Christian service and ministry initiatives, excellent organizational stewardship, qualified and committed personnel, and effective institutional relations initiatives. Among these, two directions are of highest priority namely, 1) to enhance excellence in teaching and learning through the integration of faith and learning, and produce graduates with the passion for service in the practice of their professions, and 2) to renew the university’s identity as a residential university, provide effective structure and adequate resources to produce graduates who are faithful to the Adventist values and lifestyle (AUP Strategic Plan 2012-17).

The University president heads the strategic planning process, passing it on to the vice presidents, college deans, academic directors, and department heads. The strategic planning process and activities are presented to the faculty and staff.

To ensure that the mission, vision, and goals are being implemented in the university, assessment surveys are conducted to the Board of Trustees, alumni, and students. Further, the University has assessment system that monitors the performance of its faculty and staff. The Human Resource Department (HR) regularly conducts competency assessment to monitor the performance of the faculty and staff. Seminars and trainings for faculty and staff development have been developed based on the training needs survey.

Faculty and Staff Qualification and Achievement

Faculty and staff. AUP has committed faculty and staff who support the academic programs and activities of the university. Table 1 shows the total number of faculty and staff from 2008-2014 which include the denominational workers, insti-
tutioinal workers, probationary, and full-time contractual. Part time faculty and staff were not included in this study.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HR Office of AUP

Faculty Qualifications and Achievements. CHED requires that all faculty teaching in the college level must be MA/MS degree holders. Thus, the VP- Academics encourages all faculty to upgrade or finish their master's and doctoral degrees. Through the faculty development fund, SSD, CHED, DOST and some private funding, AUP faculty have finished their MA/MS and Ph.D programs.

The data in 2014 revealed that AUP has 42 faculty with doctorate degrees, 128 with master's degree, and 72 with bachelor's degrees.

Academic Support Services

The academic administration directly works hand in hand with the University Research Center; Community Extension Services; Records and Admission, Information, Communication and Technology and the University Library departments.

The Academic Programs

Adventist University of the Philippines (AUP), offers programs from pre-school to graduate school. There are 37 higher education programs, of which, 25 are baccalaureate; 6 masters; and 6 doctoral programs (EdD, PhD and MD). Table 3 shows the nine colleges and the programs offered operating under vertical articulation:

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College of Arts and Humanities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in Psychology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Faculty Research

Adventist University of the Philippines envisions to be a leading institutions in Asia not only in academics but also in research. The University Research Center continues to develop faculty and staff to do research with the full support from the administration. Research capability of faculty through seminar/workshop, research collaboration has been strengthened to encourage more participation. Incentive schemes have been reviewed to motivate the undergraduate and gradu-
AUP is also a community of foreign students. The majority of the foreign students are from Indonesia, Korea, Africa, and the United States.

Table 5 shows the average number of foreign students from 2009 to 2014. For the last 5 years, there were more than 700 international students enrolled at AUP, who came from more than 43 countries.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collegiate year</th>
<th>Elem</th>
<th>HS</th>
<th>UG</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>2,774</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>4,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>2,842</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>4,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>3,082</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>4,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>3,247</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>4,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>3,420</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>4,760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: AUP, AUPA, AUPE Records and Admission

AUP is also a community of foreign students. The majority of the foreign students are from Indonesia, Korea, Africa, and the United States.

Table 5 shows the average number of foreign students from 2009 to 2014. For the last 5 years, there were more than 700 international students enrolled at AUP, who came from more than 43 countries.
Student Performance

The exemplary performance of AUP students in various areas such as arts, allied health, science, music, and business brought a name of the University to the general public.

AUP graduates continuously top the board examinations in programs such as Medical Laboratory Science, Nursing, Dentistry, Agriculture, Accountancy and other academic competitive tests. These achievements helped pave the way for the university to acquire Deregulated Status on October 22, 2001 and University status on October 27, 2003. AUP was awarded an Autonomous Status for the meritorious achievements of students, faculty and the University in general.

Organizational Performance

AUP is committed to provide quality Bible-based education nurturing students for ACE - Academic excellence, Christ-like character, and Exemplary service.

The meritorious achievement of the AUP in instruction, research, and community extensions, and for maintaining a tradition of integrity, excellence, and high quality performance in educational service resulted to the university’s high performance. On March 7, 2009, the Commission on Higher Education again awarded AUP renewal of its Autonomous status from March 2009 to March 2014.

It is evident that AUP has policies and continues to formulate policies to improve its processes. The commitment to excellence is clearly defined in the strategic plans for each college. The strategic plans of the university particularly the academic departments have become the partners to the accrediting agencies in pursuing quality and academic excellence.

AUP in its quest to maintain its university and autonomous status is subjected to accreditation and certification. The institution is accredited by the Federation of Accrediting Association of the Philippines (FAAP) through the Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities-Accrediting Agency, Inc. (ACSCU-AAI), and the Philippine As
association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA). It is also recognized and accredited by the International Board of Education and the Adventist Accrediting Association (IBE-AAA), with headquarters at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.

Part of the long range plan of AUP was to be ISO certified. On November 26, 2014, the academic and support services of AUP was ISO 9001:2008 certified by Societe Generale De Surveillance (SGS).

The Theology program is accredited by the Association of Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA) in 2003 was revisited in 2007 and on June 29 to July 1, 2014.

Twenty-one of its degree programs are accredited by the Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities-Accrediting Agency, Incorporated (ACSCU-AAI). Seven degree programs are accredited by the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities.

Nine programs are enjoying the highest level, i.e., Level 4; elementary school is Level 3, high school is Level 2. Five programs are in Level 1. Five programs are on candidacy status. Three have already undergone consultancy visit under PACUCOA, and another four are scheduled for preliminary visit by ACSCU-AAI. The level of accreditation of the theology program accredited by ATESEA is not indicated. Table 4 shows the list of programs and their accreditation status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. BS Accountancy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(English, History, Psychology)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. BS Business Administration</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. BS Nursing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. B Elementary Education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. B Secondary Education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Biology, Chemistry, Math,)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. MBA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. MAEd</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Elementary School</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. High School</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Pre-school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. BS Nutrition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. MSN</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. EdD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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16. PhD 1
17. Master of Arts in Psychology Candidate
18. BTh Accredited
19. Medical lab Science Candidate
20. Dentistry Candidate
21. Master in Public Health Candidate
22. Doctor in Public Health Candidate
23. BS Accounting Technology Preliminary
24. BS Development Communication Preliminary
25. BS Psychology Preliminary
26. PhD in Psychology Preliminary
27. BS Office Administration Consultancy
28. AB Religion Consultancy
29. BLIS Consultancy

Source: Certificates from Accrediting Agencies

Aside from the program accreditation, FAAP awarded AUP a very prestigious award, the Institutional Accreditation from April 2010 to December 2015. With such award, AUP is one among the 10 of the 2,323 HEIs in the country granted with Institutional Accreditation.

The International Board of Education-Adventist Accrediting Association (IBE-AAA) also granted a five-year institutional accreditation for Tertiary, High School and Elementary School.

IX. DISCUSSION

AUP, in its desire to achieve quality education and academic excellence, strives hard in order to achieve this. The journey to quality and academic excellence has been at the heart of the past and current leaders of AUP. Strategic management is widely used that paved the way to this vision. The quality and performance of the university have been evaluated by the national and international accrediting agencies and many other agencies including the Commission on Higher Education in order to achieve quality performance. The results of these various evaluations and other university documents were the basis of this study.

X. CONCLUSION

The journey to quality and academic excellence entails processes for supporting the mission, vision, and goals of the university. The support from the academic community was evident. The strategic planning process of the university is a significant tool that provides direction and guidance to the university for a period of time. The accreditation and re-accreditation processes and other evaluations for quality have helped the university achieved quality and academic excellence. The combined workforce of the administrators, faculty and staff of the university resulted to numerous achievements as manifested in the performance of the students, graduates, and faculty of AUP. AUP's performance is evident
by the various awards and recognitions as well as accreditation levels given by several agencies. Thus, the achievement of AUP is a product of hard work, persistence, and commitment of the previous and present management of the AUP.

References


