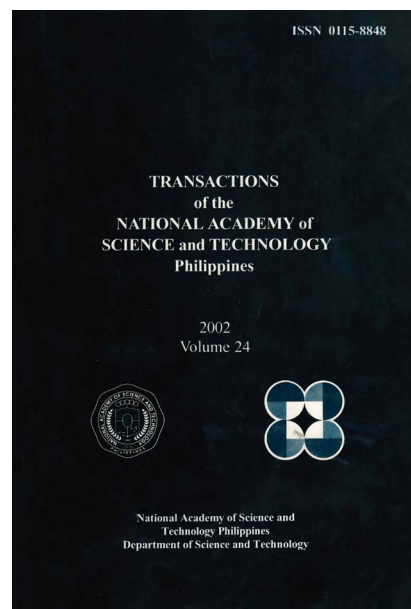


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Bringing Quality Education Right at the Doorsteps of the Filipino Learner: The UP Open University Experience

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BRINGING QUALITY EDUCATION RIGHT AT THE DOORSTEPS OF THE FILIPINO LEARNER: THE UP OPEN UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Statistical data on the Philippine education system show that only 15.62% of students who enter school graduate from college. While this is still one of the highest rates of graduation in higher education in the world, the data indicate that higher education in the country is not really accessible to all Filipinos. This paper traces the beginnings of distance education in the Philippines. At the University of the Philippines, the first degree program in the distance mode was at UP Los Baños in 1984. In 1995, the UP Open University was approved by the UP Board of Regents. The paper discusses the history, organization and management, and its procedures in the development and delivery of courses and academic degree programs. It also lists the various degree and nonformal courses offered. The UPOU experience in the last seven years is discussed and a summary of lessons learned from the experience is presented.

Keywords: distance education, open university, education pyramid,

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Education Pyramid and Access to Higher Education

The Philippine education pyramid is a tool that will show us not only the efficiency of the Philippine education system but also the size of potential student client group for distance education. I shall present to you this pyramid, based on the 1997 data of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Our figures here are not the latest, but they show clearly what is happening in the education system.

The 1997 student population of the Philippine education system was 19,504,227, broken down as follows: elementary (11,957,474), secondary (4,905,070), technical-vocational education (565,037), and higher education (2,066,646). These figures, by themselves, actually do not give us a clear picture of what is happening in the system. A clearer picture may be shown by constructing an "education pyramid." A tentative education pyramid is constructed using 1982-83 enrolment data as base figure (Table 1) to demonstrate what the Philippine education pyramid looks like (Figure 1).

As indicated in Table 1, of the 1,835,966 students enrolled in Grade I in 1982-83, 1,206,831 (63.73%) graduated and of these 1,172,647 (63.87%) enrolled in first year high school. Those who graduated from high school were 876,415 (47.74%). Of these, 622,979 (33.93%) enrolled in college, but only 283,545 (15.62%) finally graduated from college. This means that only about 16% graduate from higher education (Figure 1). This, however, is still one of the highest rates of graduation in higher education in the world.

Assuming that the 876,415 students who enrolled in fourth year high school all graduated, and 622,979 enrolled in college the following school year, we have 253,436 who "dropped out" after graduating from high school. Add to this the 336,534 who did not finish college, we have a total of 589,970 individuals who ought to be in college. This number is 32 percent of the original enrolment in Grade I, a potential client group for distance education in the Philippines (Librero, 1997).

These figures indicate to us that, in fact, higher education in the Philippines is not really accessible to all Filipinos. Even with relatively low tuition fees provided

Table 1. Attrition rate from elementary school to college.

Year	Grade I	Elem. Graduate	1st Year Hi School	Hi School Graduate	1st Year College	College Graduate
1982-1983	1,835,966 (100.00%)					
1987-1988		1,206,831 (65.73%)				
1988-1989			1,172,647 (63.87%)			
1991-1992				876,415 (47.74%)		
1992-1993					622,979 (33.93%)	
1995-1996						286,545

Sources: Bureau of Secondary Education, DECS, 11991
CHED Statistics Bulletin, 1995
Higher Education Data, Ched, n.c.

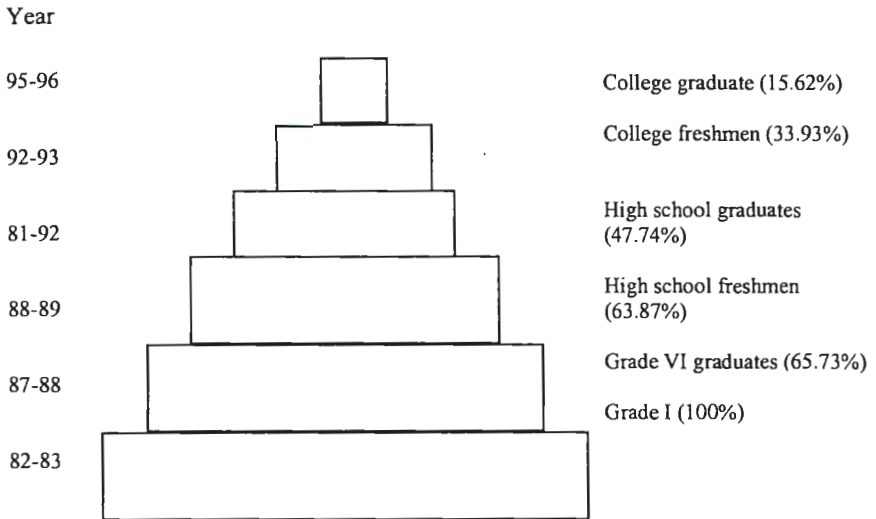


Figure 1. The Philippine educational pyramid.

by state colleges and universities, we still have a large population of the youth who are not in college due largely to financial difficulties, and perhaps lack of academic preparation given substandard instruction both at the elementary and secondary levels.

Factors Affecting Higher Education

In a paper presented during the First National Conference on Open and Distance Learning held in the Philippines in 1998, Professor Fred Lockwood of the U.K. Open University highlighted four influential factors affecting higher education world-wide (Lockwood, 1998). I feel that these same factors also apply squarely on Philippine higher education. These factors are:

1. *Significant increases in student population without corresponding increases in funding.* Consequently, there is an increasing number of youth who cannot be accommodated in conventional schools due to lack of teachers, facilities and other resources. To practically all higher education institutions in the Philippines, this is stark reality. But even those more endowed institutions are not completely satisfied with the amount of their resources. With less funding, most institutions have limited intake capacity.
2. *Increased concern for alternative, cost-effective methods of course production and teaching.* This requires innovative approaches to the

design, production and delivery of educational materials. It is important that we develop effective instructional materials at the least cost possible, and to maintain cost efficiency at all times.

3. *Potential and availability of "old" and "new" technologies.* Where old technologies still work, they ought to be used. Simply because a technology is old does not necessarily mean it should be changed. Still, new technologies ought to be used if they are available and affordable because frequently new technologies come with more efficient ways of doing things.
4. *Local, national and international competition in teaching and training.* More and more educational institutions are expanding their reach beyond geographical boundaries through distance education. Necessarily, the competition for more students among educational institutions is increasing, not only within but outside national boundaries as well.

Professor Lockwood predicted that future developments in learning and teaching are going to be greatly influenced by concepts associated with student learning, our understanding of the learning context, the systematic approach to course design, and our model of the teaching-learning system. He also emphasized that "developments in information technology suggest that several innovations may be used to deliver instruction" (Lockwood, 1998). For example, it is now possible to interconnect students through the Internet, given rapid developments in the information and communication technology sector.

Higher education is also influenced by the manner in which knowledge and information grow in this era of knowledge and information explosion. A typical example that I can cite at the moment is the case of the growth of information in the field of agricultural communications about 17 years ago in 1984. James Evans (1984), a colleague in the field of agricultural communications, had this to say:

I had recently estimated that if I were interested in reading one month's entries in only one of the international agricultural data bases, AGRICOLA (Agricultural On Line Access System of the U.S. National Agricultural Library), I would need to set aside about 200 years, reading 365 days a year. If I set my sights on reading all the materials currently in the AGRICOLA system, I would face about 24 centuries of reading. The AGRICOLA collection now contains about two million documents. Yet it is only one of many collections, each of which is growing. For instance, a recent analysis of literature in my own academic field, agricultural communications, revealed an annual growth rate of 14%.

The amount of knowledge to be learned is staggering, of course. To learn this much new knowledge, mere face-to-face classroom discussions no longer suffice. Students need to seek information and learn new knowledge on their own, independently of the face-to-face classes that they may have to attend.

The primary concern of face-to-face classroom instruction in today's world is perhaps better focused on learning how to learn. This should include, among other things, developing the ability to seek, process, and use information to solve present and future problems.

DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Beginnings of Distance Education in the Philippines

Distance education in the Philippines has its roots in correspondence education, which began when the United States-based International Correspondence School (ICS) started operations in the country in 1940. Until a few years back, ICS did not have a franchise to operate in the Philippines, hence its students were considered students of ICS in the United States (Librero, 1997).

In 1952, a freelance broadcaster named Pacifico Sudario produced an educational radio program for farmers of Iloilo. It was first broadcast over Radio Station DYRI (Tan, 1971). In 1963, the National Cottage Industries Development Authority (NACIDA) adopted Sudario's "school" format in a program on swine raising broadcast from Manila (Flor, 1995).

Perhaps the most extensive "school on-the-air" broadcasts were those that originated from the University of the Philippines (U.P.) College of Agriculture's Radio Station DZLB in Los Baños beginning in 1967 (Librero, 1985, 1990). The school on the air format, having been refined by Radio DZLB, was adopted on a national scale by the Department of Agriculture from 1973 to the present. Broadcasters of the Department of Agriculture run their independent schools on the air at the regional and provincial levels. Each of these schools on the air has, on the average, 1,500 farmer-students.

Beginnings of Formal Degree Programs in the Distance Education Mode

The first effort at offering a degree program in the distance mode in the country was at the U.P. Los Baños in 1984. At that time, then U.P. Los Baños Chancellor Emil Q. Javier initiated a project titled "Science Teaching Using Distance Instruction" (STUDI) (Librero, 1995). That project was headed by Dr. Ma. Cristina D. Padolina, who later became the first Chancellor of the U.P. Open University. This pilot project was so successful that STUDI was refined and proposed as a regular post-baccalaureate degree program called Diploma in Science Teaching (DST), which was approved for formal institution by the Board of Regents of the University of the Philippines in 1988.

UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES OPEN UNIVERSITY

Background

The resolution of the Board of Regents of the University of the Philippines establishing the U.P. Open University on 23 February 1995, states:

Faced with the perennial challenge of providing quality higher education to a growing population distributed in over 7,000 islands, the U.P., through the UPOU's open and distance learning, will allow wider access to quality education. As an institution with the largest full-time faculty, with the highest number of advanced degrees and the widest fields of study among institutions of higher education in the country, U.P. is in the best position to offer quality distance education programs.

The UPOU was designed to provide the mechanism for a wider access to U.P. education for more Filipinos, without watering down the quality of education that it delivers. It was felt that U.P. was in the best position to offer instruction through distance education in the country given its top caliber human resources, expertise, and experience.

The UPOU is a full-fledged university, one of the six autonomous universities of the University of the Philippines System. Its foundation and development were influenced by a series of events starting with the first school on the air broadcast originating from U.P. Los Baños in 1967. This was followed by the implementation of STUDI in 1984, with support from then Science Minister Emil Javier who was concurrently Chancellor of U.P. Los Baños. As a result of a successful STUDI, a formal degree program was formulated and instituted by U.P. Los Baños upon approval by the U.P. Board of Regents in 1988. Then in 1991, U.P. President Jose Abueva organized at the system level the U.P. Distance Education Program, with Dr. Francisco Nemenzo as Executive Director.

When Javier became the 17th President of the University of the Philippines in 1993, he immediately institutionalized the U.P. Distance Education Program and appointed Dr. Ma. Cristina D. Padolina as Executive Director. Thereafter, in each autonomous campus of the U.P. System, an Office of Distance Education, headed by a Director, was created.

Then, on 23 February 1995, the U.P. Board of Regents approved the establishment of the U.P. Open University as the 5th autonomous campus of the U.P. System, and with the U.P. Distance Education Program as its nucleus. The Office of Distance Education in each of the autonomous campuses of U.P. (Diliman, Quezon City; Los Baños, Laguna; Manila; Iloilo City) were transformed into the Schools for Distance Education (SDE), each one headed by a Dean. When the UPOU was reorganized in 1999, these geographically-based SDEs were transformed into the current discipline-based Faculties, namely: Faculty of Education, Faculty

of Health Sciences, Faculty of Management Science, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, and Faculty of Science and Technology .

Factors that Influenced the Establishment of UPOU

Why did the U.P. go into distance education to the extent of establishing the UPOU? The establishment of UPOU, from a broader context, is well explained by the fact that the Board of Regents recognized the “perennial challenge of providing quality higher education to a growing population” in the country. However, because of limited resources, the conventional colleges could not accept all students who apply for admission and qualify. Through distance education, the UPOU could allow the U.P. System to “respond to growing demands for quality graduate and undergraduate education” even in areas that are traditionally underserved by the tertiary education sector.

Viewed from more specific concerns, the establishment of UPOU was influenced by the following specific issues:

1. *Availability of human resources and expertise.* The University of the Philippines has the largest concentration of highly trained academics in the various disciplines who have extensive experience in teaching. To a degree, this expertise has not really been fully harnessed by the university in its conventional instruction programs. It was the feeling at the time when distance education at U.P. was conceptualized that it was absolutely necessary to harness said expertise in providing alternative ways of delivering education to Filipinos. In other words, offering degree programs in the distance education mode was seen as an alternative means of providing quality higher education to Filipinos who are unable to have access to conventional instruction in U.P. campuses.
2. *Access to quality higher education.* For a long time now, quite a large proportion of the Filipino studentry end up being out of school probably because they do not have the financial capacity to pursue higher education. Quality education in the Philippine is expensive. Even at the University of the Philippines, one has to pay at least P250 per unit. Translated into semestral cost, this totals about P4,500 tuition fee (assuming a standard load per semester of 18 units), and perhaps about P2,500 more for additional charges. On top of this, consider the cost of food and lodging in the city. Then, of course, you have the regular maintenance cost. For the entire semester, you are talking of a minimum of P25,000. This alone makes U.P. education rather inaccessible. In other schools in Metro Manila, one would need at least three or four times as much. Gut feel makes me estimate that approximately 70% of the total cost of one’s education is comprised of cost items that are indirectly related to schooling, such as board and lodging, transportation, laundry, and the

like. In other words, about P17,000 of the P25,000 would constitute one's savings if he/she did not attend conventional instruction in a U.P. campus. This is the amount that is saved by the learner if she/he were to pursue her/his higher education through distance mode. Consequently, quality education is more accessible to more learners through distance education.

3. *Democratization of admissions at U.P.* Democratization does not mean mere lowering of tuition fees. Many feel that the U.P. College Admission Test (UPCAT), for example, is a form of screening, which simply means that admission to the university is really not democratized. It has been pointed out that those who pass the UPCAT are those coming from more endowed high schools, which are essentially high schools where only those with financial capability can afford to attend. In other words, those who can afford have better chances of having access to U.P. education because they are more academically prepared given their access to better educational opportunities due to their economic status.

Still, it should be pointed out that even if all deserving students pass the UPCAT, not all UPCAT passers are accommodated primarily because of lack of facilities on campus. There are not enough teachers, not enough classrooms, not enough student housing facilities. This is the second tier in the flaw in democratizing admissions to U.P.

4. *Trends in the delivery of educational content.* In the last 10 years there has been a worldwide exodus toward distance education among higher education institutions largely because of the trends in higher education as enunciated by Lockwood (1998), as well as due to the rapid developments in the ICT sector. For tertiary institutions in the Philippines, there is a limit to the capacity of these institutions to expand physically and be physically present in all parts of the country. Funding, particularly government funding, is not so unlimited as to make continuous and unlimited physical expansion possible. Therefore, distance education, as an alternative delivery mode, is the direction to which universities worldwide are moving.

Vision, Mission, Goals, and Value of the UPOU

In its strategic plan (1999–2008) titled *Harnessing Technology to Improve Access to Quality Education*, the UPOU details its vision, mission, goals, and values it goes by.

Vision. *The U.P. Open University shall be at the forefront of the knowledge society as a leading institution of open learning and distance education.*

Mission. *Adhering to the philosophy of open learning and distance education, the U.P. Open University shall:*

1. *create dynamic, innovative, alternative learning environments, technologies, and opportunities that shall draw out the full potential of learners;*
2. *reach out to a wide spectrum of learners; and*
3. *contribute to the upgrading of the quality of education in the country.*

Goals. *The UPOU has five goals, as follows:*

1. *To offer degree and nondegree programs, through open and distance learning, that are responsive to the needs of the learners and the society of which they are a part;*
2. *To develop a system of continuing education to sustain professional growth and promote lifelong learning;*
3. *To develop and adapt delivery systems appropriate to the distance learner;*
4. *To provide leadership in the development of open learning and distance education expertise in the country and in the appropriate use of information and communication technologies for education; and*
5. *To make instructional packages accessible to various publics through collaborative arrangements, institutional agreements and other appropriate mechanisms.*

Values. *The UPOU upholds the following values of excellence, equity, efficiency, and humanism.*

Excellence. *UPOU shall promote academic excellence as it adheres to UP's standards. The value of excellence, likewise, shall permeate all aspects of UPOU's entire operations and shall be manifested in the performance of its staff.*

Equity. *UPOU affirms its open access policy in terms of student admissions, but shall maintain the rigors of learning in producing quality graduates. The value of equity shall likewise be observed in the fair practice of recognition and reward for performance.*

Efficiency. *UPOU is committed to the efficient delivery of its services to its various clientele. The value of internal efficiency shall be translated to optimum use of resources in the operations of the university.*

Humanism. *UPOU shall uphold the primacy of human concerns over the use of technology as a means of achieving its goals. The value of humanism shall also be expressed in terms of the university's concern for the well being of its personnel.*

Stakeholders of the UPOU

The stakeholders of the UPOU are the individuals and institutions who share the vision, mission and goals of the university. These are the students, the faculty, the employees, the policy makers, and its institutional partners.

The students, having invested their time, effort, discipline, resources, and commitment, shall in return expect to obtain a UP education through effective and efficient delivery systems.

The members of the faculty, having infused their expertise, dedication, and commitment to the UPOU, shall expect the leadership of the university to vigorously maintain the UP tradition of academic excellence, and to uphold the values of equity, excellence, efficiency and humanism.

The employees, having committed their skills, resourcefulness, and service, shall expect the university to provide a pleasant work environment conducive to high productivity, and to offer opportunities for growth and development of the individual.

Policy makers, in the UP system and the government, having supported and provided funds and the policy framework for the UPOU's operations, shall expect the UPOU to endeavor to implement to the fullest its institutional mandate and in doing so, to adhere to the rules of governance.

Institutional partners, having appropriated resources and entrusted their institutional reputation and prestige, shall expect the partnership to enhance mutual growth and development.

Structure and Management of the UPOU

The UPOU is the fifth autonomous campus of the U.P. System. Like the other campuses, it is headed by a Chancellor, who is assisted by Vice Chancellors and Deans.

Since its establishment in 1995, the UPOU has been reorganized once, in 1999. However, initially, UPOU had only one Vice Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The following year, 1996, the Vice Chancellor for Student Support Services and the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration were appointed (Padolina, 1999). Finally, in 1999 the Vice Chancellor for Research and Development was appointed.

The organizational structure of the UPOU is slightly different from those of the other constituent universities of the U.P. System because UPOU has some functions that are not actually present in the other campuses. The most important here is the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Support Services, which include all that have anything to do with student support services. In the conventional structure, student support services are included in the functions of the Office of Student Affairs. Student Support Services, however, includes other services that now belong to the Office of Student Affairs in the conventional structure. Student support services, therefore, is a major block of functions in the UPOU that requires the appointment of a separate vice chancellor.

Still, the present organizational structure needs refinements to improve its efficiency as an open university. One must realize that operating an open university within the framework and structures of a conventional university is not exactly the best environment for the UPOU. Further organizational refinements are needed.

The UPOU Academic Programs

There are a total of 21 academic degree programs offered by the UPOU at present, broken down as follows: one undergraduate program, ten post-baccalaureate Diploma programs, nine Master's programs, and one PhD program. Some of these are ladderized. The specific programs are as follows:

- Associate in Arts (AA)
- Diploma in Agriculture (DA)
- Diploma in Computer Science (DCS)
- Diploma in Environment & Natural Resources Mgt (DENRM)
- Diploma in Language Studies for Teachers (DLST)
- Diploma in Social Studies Education (DSSE)
- Diploma in Mathematics Teaching (DMT)
- Diploma in Research & Development Management (DR&DM)
- Diploma in Science Teaching (DST)
- Diploma in Social Work (DSW)
- Diploma in Women in Development (DWD)
- Master of Arts in Education (MAEd)
- Master of Arts in Nursing (MAN)
- Master of Environment & Natural Resources Mgt (MENRM)
- Master of Hospital Administration (MHA)
- Master in Information Systems (MIS)
- Master in Public Health (MPH)
- Master of Professional Studies in Development Communication (MPS-DC)
- Master of Public Management (MPM)
- Master of Social Work (MSW)
- PhD in Education (PhD)

Nonformal Courses

The UPOU also offers six nonformal courses, two of which are offered fully online. These are the following:

- Fundamentals of E-Commerce (online)
- Information Technology in Health Research (online)
- Caring for the Special Child
- Personal Entrepreneurship Development
- New Enterprise Planning
- Certificate in Barangay Administration.

The Certificate in Barangay Administration is not a degree program but actually a series of seven short-term courses. These courses are designed to provide knowledge and skills for barangay council members that will enable them to administer the affairs of the Barangay more efficiently. Each course lasts two months. Each time one completes a course, he/she is given a certificate of completion. When the enrollee completes all seven courses, he/she is certified by the UPOU as having completed the training program for barangay administration. These courses are:

- Barangay Administration and Governance
- Barangay Financial Administration
- Barangay Leadership
- Barangay Legislation
- Barangay Justice
- Barangay Planning and Development
- Community Mobilization

For the moment, UPOU also offers one stand alone course on Philippine culture. This course is an online course for three credits, titled Cultural Studies 250. It is offered fully online.

Graduate Education Enrichment Program

The Graduate Education Enrichment Program (GEEP) seeks to assist higher education institutions in the country in providing quality graduate and postgraduate programs in their respective localities by making available to their graduate students UPOU courses through a system of cross registration. Cross registrants under this program need not seek admission to the UPOU programs. All they need is permission from their respective universities to cross register at UPOU. The objectives of the GEEP are as follows:

1. To make existing courses of UPOU available to interested graduate students from other higher education institutions in the country;
2. To provide these special students the opportunity to take courses that may not be available in their respective HEIs; and
3. To offer these special students the opportunity to take specific courses that will strengthen their respective programs of study.

The GEEP was launched in 2002, hence there are no enrollment figures yet under this program. Various higher education institutions in the country have indicated interest in this program.

The UPOU Course Development Process

Course development is an important and tedious process requiring definite procedures and quality control measures. In conventional instruction, no one looks over the shoulders of the professor in the classroom. In fact, in the classroom the professor is the absolute authority over treatment and accuracy of content and method of instruction. In distance education, however, the final form of the instructional material is a product of the combined efforts of a number of individual experts.

At the UPOU, the development of course material is not the responsibility of only one individual but of a team of experts called the quality circle. This quality circle is composed of the lead writer (subject matter specialist), a reader (another subject matter specialist), an instructional designer, language editor, and media specialist (Figure 2). Whenever possible, the language editor, instructional designer, and media specialist may be one individual. Anyway, these individual experts work as a team throughout the development of the course

Generically, the basic functions of the members of the quality circle are as follows:

Writer:	Writes the modules.
Reader:	Reviews the accuracy and completeness of the content.
Instructional Designer:	Designs treatment and presentation of content to facilitate effective learning.
Language Editor:	Does both language and substantive editing to make sure that the modules are very easy to understand.
Media Specialist:	Determines what medium or a combination of media would be best to use to further facilitate understanding of content.

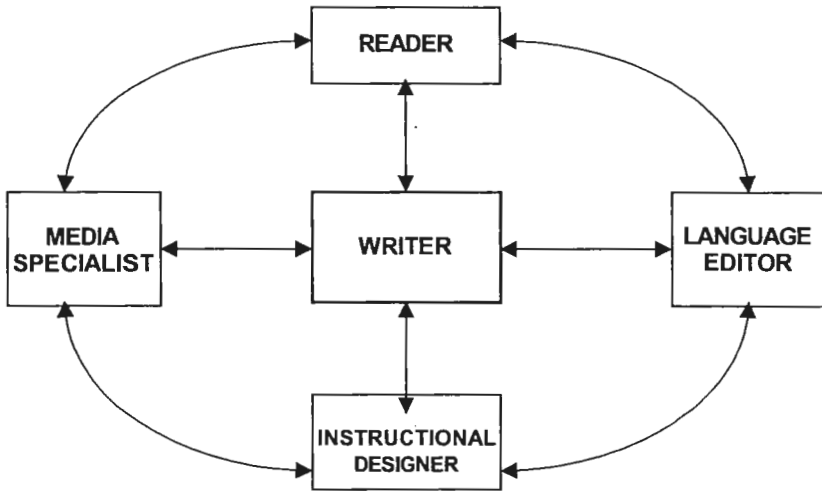


Figure 2. UPOU's course development quality circle.

The UPOU has also put in place a system of external review mechanism to make absolutely sure that the modules are indeed of high quality. We are starting with Filipino expert reviewers who are not members of the UPOU faculty. The services of foreign expert reviewers may be sought later on.

The UPOU Learning Centers

The Learning Centers are the hub of student activities. It is in these Centers where students go to enroll, get their modules and other instructional materials, attend tutorials, submit their course requirements, meet other students, access the Internet, take proctored examinations, and perform other activities related to their courses or their being students of the UPOU.

The basic criteria for setting up a Learning Center include the following:

1. availability of a host institution
2. availability of qualified Tutors
3. availability of students in the geographical area
4. availability of communication facilities
5. accessibility to students

Today, UPOU maintains 25 Learning Centers throughout the country and one in Hongkong (Figure 3). The UPOU is in the process of reviewing the performance of its Learning Centers. There may be a need to put up Centers where they are not currently existing, and perhaps phase out certain Centers that are not performing well.

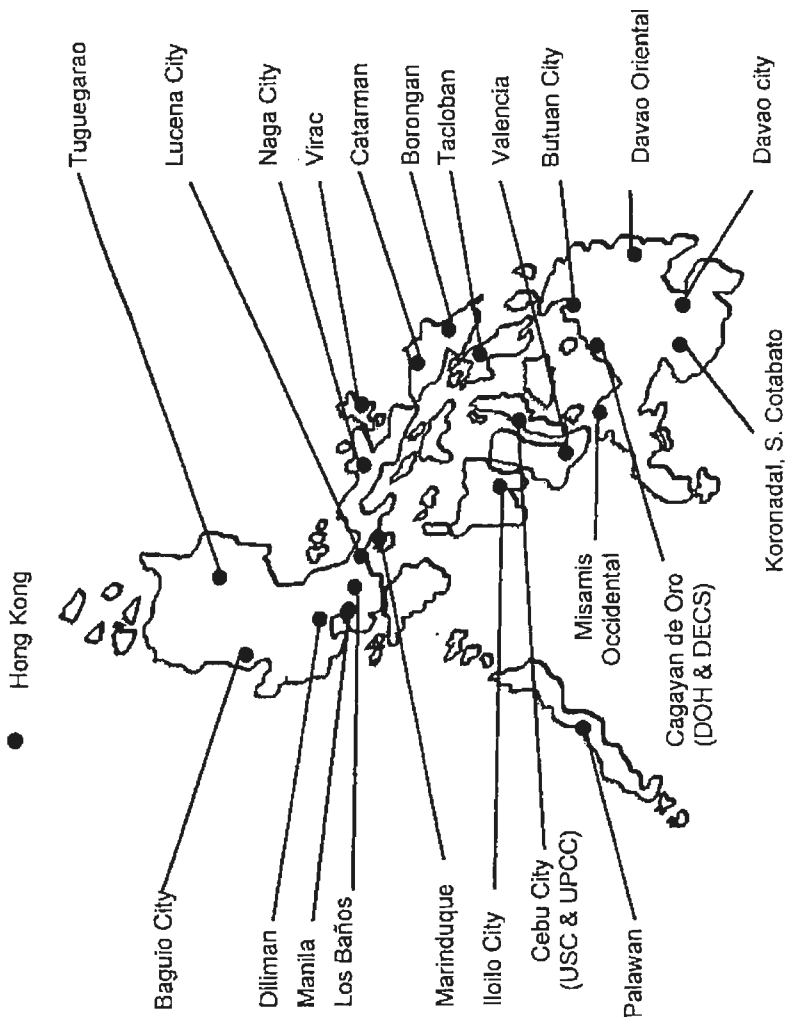


Figure 3. UPOU Learning Centers.

All the UPOU Learning Centers are connected to the Internet. In the process of installation is UPOU's WAN that shall make it easier for students to access through the Learning Centers courses delivered online. At some later date, it is hoped that live lectures and interactions among professors and students shall be undertaken through at least one-way video and two-way audio teleconferencing.

The UPOU Tutorial System

A significant component of UPOU's operations is its tutorial system. In distance education, the one that teaches is the institution through its instructional modules. But to make sure that the learners fully understand the modules, the UPOU employs the services of tutors. Tutors do not give lectures, they do not teach. They facilitate the discussions among learners to clarify issues and topics that they need to clarify for themselves. The tutors perform the very important function of facilitating the learning process.

The primary role of the UPOU tutor is to assist distance learners to be effective independent learners. They provide the additional motivation and guidance to help learners hone their study skills. They frequently provide counseling services as well. In short, the tutors are the conduits between the learners and the professor called the Faculty-in-Charge (FIC) of the course.

In Learning Centers that are based in U.P. campuses, the tutors come from the U.P. faculty in those campuses. In Learning Centers outside U.P. campuses, the tutors are recruited from the faculty of the host institution and other institutions in the area. There is a stringent set of criteria for tutors at UPOU.

A structured training and accreditation program for tutors has been put in place at UPOU. It consists of the following levels:

- Level I: Selection, training, and general accreditation
- Level II: Accreditation for tutoring at the UPOU
- Level III: Continuing education for accredited UPOU tutors

What this is saying is that those who qualify to do general tutoring, not necessarily with UPOU, are accredited by the UPOU accreditation program. If they want to become tutors of UPOU, they must first pass the standards specifically for UPOU before they can be accredited UPOU tutors. When they become tutors of UPOU, they are regularly provided support to undergo training to further upgrade their skills as well as to get exposure to developments in the field of distance education and tutoring techniques.

Part of the continuing evaluation and training of tutors is assistance in the following:

1. partial support for attendance in training programs and conferences in their areas of specialization and in distance education;
2. partial support for enrollment in continuing education courses offered by the UPOU or other U.P. units; and

3. partial support in the pursuit of advanced degrees at UPOU or other U.P. units.

A study tutor who performs well consistently would be considered mentor for new tutors in the same Learning Center. Such assignment provides additional compensation for the tutor. At the moment, UPOU tutors receive P400/hour compensation for their work.

Associated Issues

Admission policies. In general, admission to the diploma programs is simply possession of a bachelor's degree. Admission to the master's degree programs, however, depends on the admission requirements of each program but would generally require having a bachelor's degree in the appropriate field and having a weighted grade of 2.00 or better. There are programs at UPOU, such as the Master in Public Management, that require entrance examination. As a general rule, the master's degree programs of UPOU have the same admission requirements as those of the conventional campuses.

Fee structure. Fees are classified into tuition fee, registration fee, instructional materials fee, laboratory fee (only for courses with laboratory), and book supplement fee (for wrap around courses). The detailed fee structure for UPOU courses is shown in Table 2.

Recruitment of full-time faculty. The faculty of UPOU are expected to be experts in their respective disciplines, excellent communicators, and very good distance education teachers.

The goal of the UPOU is to have a core of full-time faculty to provide the leadership role in the conceptualization and development of courses rather than for UPOU to completely be dependent on affiliate faculty from the constituent universities of the U.P. System. Currently, UPOU has 15 full-time faculty: professor (1), associate professor (1), assistant professor (11), and instructor (2).

The UPOU will continue to recruit faculty members according to the needs of the various degree programs and other requirements of the faculties. There are two approaches in UPOU's faculty recruitment program: (1) recruit young faculty and provide them opportunities to pursue advanced degrees, and (2) recruit faculty with advanced degrees. The projection is that by year 2008, UPOU faculty (which should total about 30 by then) shall be comprised at least of 75% PhDs and 25% MS degree holders, which is the opposite of the faculty profile at the moment.

Financing and resource generation. The bulk of the budget of the UPOU, of course, comes from government appropriation. It is not a large budget by any stretch of the imagination, but enough for basic operations and some course development activities. Additional funding, particularly for additional course development and scholarship grants, is generated from other sources. For example, the Metrobank Foundation donated money for the development of selected courses in the Associate in Arts program. In the last few years, some 8 Congressmen, the

Table 2. Schedule of fees at UPOU (Philippine peso).

PROGRAM	TUITION (per unit)	REGISTRATION FEE	INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FEE
Associate in Arts	300	40	500/course
Diploma in Agriculture	250	40	200/unit
Diploma in Computer Science	250	40	600/course
Diploma in Language Studies for Teachers	250 225 (teacher)	40	500/course
Diploma in Social Studies Education	250 225 (teacher)	40	500/course
Diploma in Mathematics Teaching	250 225 (teacher)	40	300/course
Diploma in R&D Management	250	40	1,200/course
Diploma in Science Teaching	250 225 (teacher)	40	300/course
Diploma in Social Work	250	40	500/course
Dip. In Envi. & Nat. Res. Mgt.	250	40	500/course
Master of Arts in Education			
Master of Arts in Nursing	300	40	500/course
Master of Envi. & Nat. Res. Mgt.	300	40	500/course
Master of Hospital Administration	300	40	416/course
Master of Information Systems			
Master of Public Health	300	40	416/course
Master of Public Management	300	40	750/course
MPS Development Communication	300	40	750/course
Master of Social Work	300	40	500/course

OTHER FEES: For new students: Entrance Fee, P30; Deposit, P100; ID Fee, P130

Department of Science and Technology, and the Department of Education have donated scholarship grants, which has enabled UPOU to provide scholarship to three-fourths of its students. Short-term training for UPOU faculty and staff has been made possible through a joint development project between UPOU and Simon Fraser University of Canada from 1995 to 2001.

There is a very small amount of funds currently made available for research, but this shall be turned around over the next few years. The situation is that currently all of the research funds of UPOU comes from public funds. However, by

the year 2008, UPOU research money shall be comprised of 50% public funds and 50% private donations or grants.

The UPOU, aware of the fact that scholarship grant sources are drying up, is beginning to link up with industry for joint ventures. For example, the UPOU has signed Memoranda of Understanding with various media organizations in Manila to provide the mechanism through which these media organizations shall provide scholarship grants to their own personnel who shall enroll in any course of UPOU over the next five years.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the UPOU and Sun Microsystems Philippines, Inc. has also been signed. One project that the two organizations have agreed in principle to undertake is the establishment of the UPOU Online Course Development Laboratory, which shall undertake experiments in the design and development of highly interactive courses. It is expected that this MOU shall lead to more joint projects in course development, hardware and software testing, and technology development.

Enrollment. In the second semester, AY2001-2002, UPOU had an enrollment of 1,029, broken down as shown in Table 3.

The enrollment projection for UPOU by year 2008, the Centennial of the University of the Philippines, has been set tentatively at 15,000. With that kind of a target, there will be a need for an enrollment campaign throughout the country on a continuing basis between now and Year 2008.

It may be pointed out that this rather low enrollment projection is based on the fact that the bulk of the degree programs of UPOU are post-baccalaureate programs. However, enrollment is projected to increase rapidly when the UPOU starts offering undergraduate programs, beginning with the Bachelor of Arts in Multi Media Studies (BAMMS) which is expected to be offered beginning SY 2003-2004.

Location and facilities. The UPOU headquarters is located in Los Baños (65 kilometers south of Manila), in a 22-hectare compound assigned to it by the U.P. Board of Regents, along the national highway adjacent to the International Rice Research Institute. At the moment, the UPOU has only two buildings in its

Table 3. Enrollment by Faculty (2nd Sem, 2001-2002).

FACULTY	N	%
Faculty of Management Science	316	30.7
Faculty of Education	235	22.8
Faculty of Health Sciences	195	19.0
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities	191	18.6
Faculty of Science and Technology	92	8.9
Total	1,029	100.0

compound (administration building and the instructional materials development and production building).

Some Tentative Lessons

I would like to cite ten tentative lessons that we have learned from our limited experience at the UPOU. These are based only from my own point of view.

1. *The strength of the UPOU, which was one of the reasons why the UP went into distance education in the first place, is on its access to the expertise available at UP.* We have access to the best minds and teachers in the country. However, this is also one of UPOU's weaknesses. It has been heavily dependent on UP professors to develop its courses. What has happened is that many have prioritized their module writing assignment from UPOU over their normal work load in their respective units because the rate of payment provided by the UPOU is more competitive than the standard honoraria for excess work in the UP autonomous universities. This has caused some irritants between UPOU administration and other campus administrations.

The UPOU is now contemplating on employing expertise from outside of the University of the Philippines, including outside the country, especially when this expertise is not available at UP.

2. *As we have co-opted experts from other UP campuses to write our course modules, we have been heavily dependent on their ability to complete their writing assignments on time, according to contract.* Given their heavy work load in their respective units, they frequently are unable to meet critical deadlines. This has affected our schedules in offering courses. This is the reason why we have many courses on the run – that is, there are courses which are actually being written while they are offered at the same time.

To remedy this situation, the UPOU has employed the services of course managers who are tasked to coordinate with our module writers and other members of the quality circle to insure that the modules are completed and tested before the course is formally offered.

3. *We have not been able to establish that there is a significant direct relationship between ability to teach in a classroom and ability to write a learner-friendly instructional module.* Many very good classroom teachers have found it a bit difficult to write according to the guidelines we have developed for distance education materials. Often, their writing styles better suit the requirements of technical journals than independent, self-study students. There are also those who still insist that using simpler words in their discussion of basic concepts tends to

“water down” the quality of instruction and learning. Of course, the UPOU does not believe in this perception.

4. *There is a need for careful and creative use of technology in the design and delivery of course materials and instruction.* Filipino learners, by and large, remain print-oriented. However, they are positively affected by appropriate use of media that are available if these media make the materials to be learned more interesting and meaningful to them. Even then, the use of technology must be tempered with its availability and cost effectiveness in the design, production and delivery of instructional materials in the remote countryside.
5. *To facilitate effective and efficient reach of the countryside, there is a need to provide a telecommunications infrastructure in support of UPOU operations.* We are maintaining Learning Centers in places where sometimes there is limited access to telecommunication facilities. Yet, distance education cannot really be dissociated from the extensive use of telecommunications facilities in today’s world.

UPOU’s development strategy for its Learning Centers include upgrading these centers to become telecommunications-based learning centers. Even if they are now connected to the Internet, there is a plan to install a telecommunications infrastructure so that all our centers shall be connected and become part of the UPOU WAN. Ultimately, our students should be able to dial-up from our Learning Centers or from their homes and they shall have access to our digital library, for example.

We also look forward to the day when we shall deliver lectures through one-way video transmission for content delivery and two-way audio transmissions for interactions between professor and students and among students from different Learning Centers.

6. *An effective tutorial system is a necessary component of the UPOU.* The quality of instruction is greatly influenced by the quality of tutors and tutoring techniques and procedures. Some UPOU tutors have been found wanting in terms of their skills in tutoring in spite of their training. It is necessary, therefore, that UPOU continues with its regular evaluation and training of tutors. UPOU is finding it very helpful to maintain a pool of trained tutors.
7. *There is an increasing number of cases where both professors and students from the conventional campuses are using the course materials developed by UPOU.* It is said that the students find these modules much easier to understand. If anything, this could be considered a testament to the quality of instructional materials developed by the UPOU. In any case, one of the intentions of the UPOU is for its modules to be

used by students from conventional universities outside of the University of the Philippines System.

8. *It is correct to say that there is a large number of people interested to pursue their studies through distance education.* This is always reflected through attendance in seminars that the UPOU has regularly conducted in the last few years. However, the size of attendance in these seminars is extremely difficult to translate into enrollment figures. We have observed that basically there are two reasons why many either have decided to postpone enrollment or not apply for admission at all. First, they do not have the necessary financial support to pursue advanced studies. Second, a large number of potential students have expressed lack of confidence in their ability to cope with UP's standard of academic excellence that is being maintained by the UPOU.

Inssofar as the first point is concerned, the UPOU has continued to generate scholarship grants and provide scholarship support particularly for teachers who enroll in the teacher training programs. As far as the second point is concerned, the UPOU shall maintain its standards, but it shall introduce mechanisms to provide appropriate academic assistance to incoming students, such as offering bridge courses.

9. *There has always been a question of whether UPOU should offer programs simply because they are in demand, or offer very good programs in disciplines that ought to be offered even if the demand is not high.* It is not a question of one or the other. There would not be any use for a program of very high quality if it did not have students. In the same vein, just because a program is popular with everybody it ought to be offered even if its quality is highly questionable. There has got to be an appropriate balance between the two in order that UPOU would be able to offer a quality academic degree program, perhaps distinctly different from existing programs elsewhere, and availability of a reasonably large number of students willing to enroll using their own money. UPOU's target is to develop hybrid programs (applied rather than pure discipline programs). We expect that this is what shall happen with the BA in Multi Media Studies program, which is a combination of communication technology, applied computer science, and information science, that shall be offered next year.
10. *UPOU needs to have administrators who are full-time faculty of the UPOU.* Most of the current set of administrators are on assignment with the UPOU from other UP campuses. This situation has spawned some degree of disagreement between the UPOU and the constituent campuses. They look at this arrangement more as promoting UPOU at their expense.

The involvement of professors in various constituent university campuses as administrators of the UPOU should be viewed more positively in that the UPOU is still a part of the UP System. For example, academic administrators who are UPOU affiliate faculty from the constituent campuses also benefit from their exposure to alternative modes of educational delivery as experienced at UPOU. Furthermore, under this arrangement they are able to test their innovative ideas regarding teaching and learning. In any case, the UPOU should really look into getting its regular, full-time faculty to pursue advanced degrees and prepare them to take over the management of the UPOU. After all, it should be clear that the involvement of affiliate faculty in the management affairs of the UPOU should be on a limited scale over a specific period of time. The UPOU management should make sure that there would be a gradual shifting of administrative responsibilities to the full-time faculty of the UPOU. This should be achieved within the next five years at the latest.

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