Compliance on Library Standards in Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Province of Albay: An Assessment

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ABSTRACT

The compliance of library standards in accreditation is essential in ensuring quality education and institutional excellence. Accreditation serves as a mechanism for maintaining high academic standards, with libraries playing a crucial role in fostering learning, research, and knowledge dissemination. As accreditation requirements evolve, libraries must adapt to digital transformation, enhance resource accessibility, and improve user engagement. However, libraries worldwide face challenges in meeting these standards, particularly in IT infrastructure, collection management, and staffing. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mandates that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) establish libraries that adhere to specific standards to support academic programs. To achieve the research objectives, a multi-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative techniques was utilized. The respondents of the study included licensed librarians assigned to academic libraries and selected faculty members from HEIs in Albay. To enhance compliance, preparedness, and accreditation readiness of HEI libraries in Albay, a proposed Library Compliance Framework was developed. This framework follows the Plan, Do, Check, and Act (PDCA) cycle, serving as a structured guide for ensuring that library operations align with accreditation standards and institutional goals. Beneficiaries of this study include accreditation bodies, non-accredited institutions, HEI administrators, librarians, faculty, students, and policymakers, who can utilize its findings to improve library compliance and accreditation preparedness.

Keywords: Library standards, library compliance, accreditation, academic libraries, library assessment, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Albay.

INTRODUCTION

The compliance of library standards in accreditation plays a crucial role in ensuring quality education and institutional excellence. Across the globe, accreditation serves as a key mechanism for maintaining high academic standards, with libraries functioning as essential components in fostering learning, research, and knowledge dissemination. However, despite the universal recognition of their importance, many institutions aim to meet accreditation standards but struggle due to high operational costs and fluctuating exchange rates for imported materials (Nkiko, 2021).

Building upon these global challenges, many libraries in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) worldwide face substantial difficulties in sustaining compliance with accreditation requirements. Factors such as limited financial resources, staffing shortages, and technological constraints continue to pose significant hurdles (Hitt, 2024).

In the Philippine context, these challenges are further shaped by legal mandates. The compliance with the Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003 (RA No. 9246) and the Higher Education Act of 1994 (RA No. 7722) reinforces the role of libraries in upholding academic integrity and institutional accreditation. Moreover, CHED CMO No. 22, Series of 2021, sets comprehensive standards for HEI libraries, particularly in administration, human resources, collection management, and IT infrastructure. Yet, despite these frameworks, many institutions struggle to integrate modern library systems, such as digital repositories and online databases, which are essential for meeting evolving accreditation requirements.

Given these persistent challenges, there is a growing need for strategic planning, increased investment in library resources, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders to strengthen library compliance in the region. Ultimately, the findings of this study will provide valuable insights for policymakers, academic administrators, and librarians in formulating evidence-based policies and strategies. These efforts aim to enhance library compliance, preparedness, and readiness in accreditation in ensuring long-term sustainability and excellence in library accreditation compliance.

FRAMEWORK

The study explores a theoretical paradigm that incorporates Total Quality Management (TQM), Systems Theory, and Contingency Theory to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and ensuring compliance with library standards in the accreditation process of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Albay. Total Quality Management (TQM), developed by W. Edwards Deming (1986), emphasizes continuous improvement, stakeholder satisfaction, and systematic processes in achieving excellence. Under TQM, libraries are encouraged to adopt a customer-centric approach, where the needs of students, faculty, and the academic community are central to decision-making and service delivery. Systems Theory, proposed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), highlights the interconnectedness of various components within an organization. It suggests that a library should be viewed as part of a larger educational system. This perspective fosters an understanding of how the library interacts with other departments and contributes to institutional goals. According to Systems Theory, a library functions as an interconnected unit in which each element influences the others inefficiencies or strengths in one area (such as human or financial resources) ripple through the system and affect other areas like collection management or IT infrastructure. For instance, a well-supported human resources department can ensure adequate staffing and training, which, in turn, enhances service delivery and optimizes the use of IT infrastructure. Contingency Theory, developed by Fred Fiedler (1970), asserts that the effectiveness of organizational strategies, including those related to library compliance, depends on a variety of internal and external factors. This theory posits that there is no universal approach to meeting compliance standards set by accrediting bodies. Instead, libraries must consider their unique contexts such as institutional size, available resources, user demographics, and the specific requirements of their accrediting agencies. For example, a large university library with extensive funding and staffing may adopt a more formalized and structured approach to compliance, while a smaller community college library with limited resources may need to implement a more flexible strategy to achieve similar goals. By applying Contingency Theory, library administrators can identify the factors that influence their operations and tailor their strategies accordingly. This adaptability enables libraries to effectively align their services, collections, and administrative practices with evolving accreditation standards, thereby enhancing overall performance and user satisfaction. The researchers' integrated theory provides a structured yet adaptable framework for ensuring that academic libraries meet regulatory and accreditation requirements while maintaining service excellence. From TQM, it inherits a focus on continuous improvement and quality assurance; from Systems Theory, it recognizes the interdependent nature of library functions; and from Contingency Theory, it emphasizes that compliance strategies must be flexible and responsive to context-specific variables. This integration empowers libraries to develop comprehensive compliance strategies that align with institutional goals, accreditation standards, and the evolving needs of their users. The Library Compliance Framework serves as a guiding structure for library governance, ensuring that academic libraries operate efficiently, remain accredited, and continue to provide high-quality services.
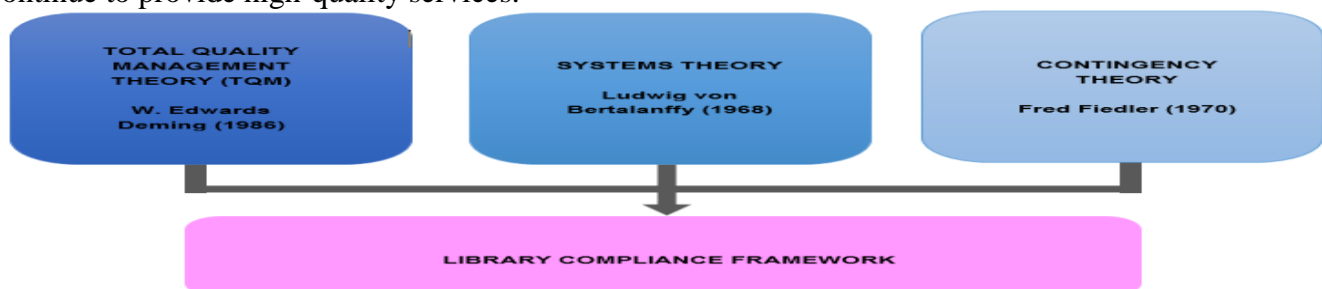
Researcher's Theory (Rapunzel M. Marigondon 2025)

Figure 1. Theoretical Paradigm

Objectives Of the Study

The aim of this study is to assess compliance of the Library Standards in accreditation among the Higher Education Institution (HEIs) in the Province of Albay. In the end, the expected Framework will be developed based on the result of the study. Specifically, the following objectives will be answered: (1) Determine the current status of HEI libraries in Albay along: (a)Type of Institution; and (b) Accrediting Body, (2) Identify the factors influencing compliance in areas of: (a) Administration, (b) Human Resources, (c) Collection Management, (d) Services and Utilization / IT Infrastructure, (e) Physical Facilities, (f) Financial Resources, and (g) Linkages and Networking; (3) Evaluate the level of compliance with these factors on accreditation of HEI Libraries, and (4) Propose a Framework to enhance the compliance, preparedness and readiness for accreditation of HEIs libraries in the province of Albay.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a multi method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques. Multi methods research is a research method that combines and integrates qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single research study. It involves collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data to understand a phenomenon better and answer the research questions (Dawadi, Shrestha, & Giri, 2021).

Research Site

The study was conducted in the province of Albay, located in the Bicol Region (Region V) of the Philippines. Albay is known for its vibrant educational landscape to the region. It is home to several Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that provide diverse academic programs, helping shape the province's intellectual and professional landscape. The research focused on the municipality of Daraga and Legazpi City, the capital of Albay. Legazpi City is the province's center of commerce, education, and government, hosting key institutions that drive regional development. Daraga, an adjacent first-class municipality, is also a significant educational hub, with institutions that cater to a wide range of academic disciplines. The study involved four HEIs operating within Daraga and Legazpi City, consisting of three private colleges and one public university. The respondents are librarians and selected faculty members of accredited HEIs in Albay.

Instrumentation

The researcher used a questionnaire which was adopted from the CHED Library Standards (CHED CMO No. 22, Series of 2021) that are common to all programs that were executed by the librarian respondents, however some of the indicators were constructed by the researcher and was validated by other librarian in different Institution. The developed questionnaire is composed of four (4) different parts. While the remaining parts of the questionnaire are focused on interview-type questions, which were answered by the selected faculty members to assess the level of compliance with the factors on accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in the province of Albay, the researcher used a themed format for the interview. This approach allowed for a structured yet flexible discussion, enabling the identification of key themes and sub themes related to accreditation compliance, challenges, and best practices. The respondents were academic librarians and selected faculty members of accredited HEIs in Albay.

Data Collection

The researcher requested a list of Accredited higher education institutions (HEIs) in the province of Albay in a formal letter to the Regional Director of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) via email. The researcher distributes a formal letter of asking permission sought for the School Administrators / Presidents and Librarians to conduct research to the identified HEIs in Albay for data gathering. The researcher distributes the communication letters and the survey instrument personally. The interview was conducted on a scheduled day on the availability of the librarians and faculty respondents. Pictures of the HEI libraries and the respondents was also captured during the interview and data gathering.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The current status of Higher Education Institution (HEI) libraries in the Province of Albay, underscoring their role in maintaining academic excellence through stringent quality standards. Each institution operates its own library, serving as a vital hub for education and research. Among these, three libraries are managed by private institutions, while only one is under a public institution, potentially reflecting disparities in resource availability and institutional support. These libraries undergo a rigorous accreditation process conducted by esteemed bodies such as the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA), the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP), and the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU). Accreditation not only ensures compliance with established benchmarks but also demands a strong administrative framework, effective governance, and continuous professional development of library personnel.

The factors influencing compliance in the accreditation of HEI libraries in Albay rated "Strongly Agree" in the areas of Administration, Human Resources, Collection Management, Financial Resources, and Linkages and Networking, indicating strong alignment with accreditation standards. In contrast, Services and Utilization/IT Infrastructure and Physical Facilities received the lowest, though still "Agree", ratings highlighting areas that require further improvement to strengthen overall compliance. Weng'ua, Rotich and Kogos (2019) whose study revealed that institutions struggle to provide efficient library information services with poor administration, financial resources, IT Infrastructure, and physical facilities. Chepkorir, Naibei and Cheruiyot (2019) emphasized on their study that having inadequate physical facilities with proper resources for a library guarantees poor library information service which leads to failure in compliance with accreditation requirements. This was also supported by Nyakweba, Muwangu, and Sendikadiwa (2020) whose study revealed that because of physical facilities and resources inadequacies on their library, it leads to poor service being provided to its user. Chaputula (2019) also indicated that IT Infrastructure is a necessity for a library to be compliant with accreditation standards as it offers user information on different platforms providing flexibility. The study also emphasized that if an institution's library aims to provide efficient library information services, an institution should invest in developing a good IT Infrastructure. In terms of Human Resources, Udo-Anyanwu (2021) emphasized on her study that libraries should always prioritize human resources when considering and planning the accreditation of their respective libraries as these individuals will be a huge factor in providing necessary help and action for a successful accreditation. These claims were also supported by Akanwa and Udo-Anyanwu (2021) whose study revealed that professional staff or human resources in a library have different ways on developing organization and preparedness for a library especially when it comes to preparing for important transitioning such as accreditation process. Obiano (2021) also indicated that when it comes to accrediting libraries, collection management is one of the factors that are being observed and assessed by accrediting bodies. In such way, many institutions who plan to be accredited are ensuring that they are prepared and already developed proper collection management on their libraries. Similarly, Chukwudi et.al., (2020) also supported the implications of the study emphasizing that linkages & networks of a certain institution could be a crucial factor when it comes to accreditation of libraries.

For the level of compliance, the Administration aspect of accreditation was rated "Highly Complied", indicating strong adherence to standards, while the remaining six indicators Human Resources, Collection Management, Services & Utilization/IT Infrastructure, Physical Facilities, Financial Resources, and Linkages & Networking were categorized as "Complied", suggesting areas needing further improvement. Notably, Services & Utilization/IT Infrastructure was close to "Moderately Complied", highlighting the need for significant enhancements. Ayyanar et al. (2019) supported these findings, stating that accreditation compliance is observed across multiple factors. Listor (2024) emphasized that HEI administrators in the Bicol Region prioritize career advancement and provide strong support for library Human Resources through competitive compensation and work environments. However, Lasig et al. (2024) found that only 18.75% of libraries in the Philippines complied with CHED's Collection Management standards, indicating insufficient efforts in meeting requirements. Kwegyiriba et al. (2021) noted that IT infrastructure and physical facilities are key indicators of accreditation compliance, with libraries improving services post-accreditation. Alcober (2022) highlighted that accredited libraries provide better IT tools, internet access, and e-resources, leading to

increased user engagement. Lastly, Lim Li Min & Casselden (2021) stressed the importance of Financial Resources, revealing that proper budgeting

and management significantly enhance library compliance and efficiency. Focus group discussions on Higher Education Institution (HEI) libraries in Albay highlighted key challenges in infrastructure, resource utilization, and accreditation readiness. Many HEIs faced poor ventilation, limited collaborative spaces, inadequate storage, and insufficient IT facilities, impacting usability. Faculty reliance on personal and online materials underscored the need for better resource promotion and curriculum-aligned collections. Accreditation compliance varied, with some HEIs excelling in planning and facility investment, while others required stronger faculty-librarian collaboration and resource management. To enhance accreditation and academic support, HEIs must expand digital access, improve physical facilities, and foster faculty-librarian partnerships, ensuring libraries effectively serve students and educators. This align with existing research on library facilities and academic support. Parbe, Phuti, and Barfi (2021) emphasized the impact of ventilation, lighting, and accessibility on user experience, while Gupiyem et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of adequate learning and collaborative spaces for effective research. Similarly, Donovan (2020) stressed that environmental conditions influence user engagement and resource preservation. Libraries play a critical role in curriculum development and teaching (Jensen & Howard, 2020), making updated, curriculum-aligned collections essential (Gonzalez & Ramirez, 2021). However, accessibility issues, such as remote library locations and limited research database access, hinder effective resource utilization (Gonzalez & Ramirez, 2021). Expanding digital collections is necessary to support faculty and students in modern learning environments (Vannier & Li, 2023). Enhanced faculty engagement through workshops and consultations strengthens accreditation compliance (Smith & Wright, 2022). The reliance on personal and online resources underscores the need for better promotion of library services (Woods & Turner, 2021). Additionally, timely material acquisition and efficient procurement processes are vital for maintaining relevant collections, as emphasized by Hill & Sutherland (2022) and Brown & James (2024). Strengthening these areas can help HEIs improve library effectiveness, accreditation readiness, and academic support.

Ultimately, strengthening HEI libraries is not just a requirement for accreditation, it is a strategic imperative for academic excellence, institutional credibility, and the advancement of higher education in the region.

Translational Research

This study bridges theory and practice by translating research findings into actionable strategies that enhance library compliance, preparedness, and readiness for accreditation. By identifying gaps in accreditation compliance and proposing a structured Library Compliance Framework, this research provides practical solutions that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Albay can implement to improve their library operations. The findings can inform policymakers, academic administrators, and librarians in developing evidence-based policies, optimizing resource allocation, and adopting best practices to meet accreditation standards. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the role of digital transformation, IT infrastructure, and financial resource management in achieving accreditation compliance. Through this translational approach, the study not only contributes to academic literature but also serves as a practical guide for HEIs to enhance their library services. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of libraries as central pillars of institutional excellence and their direct impact on student learning experiences, ensuring that HEIs are well-equipped to meet the evolving challenges of the academic landscape.

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