

Employability and Productivity of Alumni of a Private Higher Education Institution's Graduate School

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Abstract—Graduate education is part of the most effective means of developing capacities related to doing research that will improve educational theory and practice in the many different aspects of the educational process. Thus, this study traces the employability and productivity of a Private Higher Education Institution's (PHEI's) Graduate School graduates from 2010–2015 regarding employment status, position in the present job, and gross monthly income in the present job. The school-related factors relevant to graduate's employability and the competencies/ skills/ and values learned in the graduate school are important factors considered to further improve the curricular offerings. The descriptive-survey is used. Majority of the Ed. D., MA, MBA and MPM graduates are employed in a regular or permanent status. Thus, the Graduate School is continuously nurturing and embracing the quality of education as revealed by the graduates. They are occupying supervisory and managerial job level positions. Education graduates are school supervisors and head teachers, while the MBA and MPM graduates are supervisors and executives. The graduate programs are responding to the needs of various industries. Ed.D. graduates are highly satisfied with basic salary; the MA and MBA graduates were receiving at least Php30,000; and at least Php25,000 a month for the MPM graduates. Administration and governance, curriculum and instruction, research, professional and cognate courses, student services, library, internet laboratory, interdisciplinary learning, and teaching/ learning environment are the school-related factors relevant to their current employment. Communication, human relations, entrepreneurial, information technology, problem-solving, critical thinking, and research skills are considered relevant skills learned at the graduate school. Love of God, honesty, punctuality, obedience to superior, perseverance, creativity, professional integrity, unity, fairness, love for other, nationalism and eco-friendly are the values evidently manifested in their workplaces as part of the hidden curriculum of the institution.

Keywords - Graduate education, employability, productivity descriptive-survey design, tracer study, PHEI's, Philippines

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of education in the countries of the Third World has in some respects set up in many problems as it has solved. At the higher levels of schooling, we often find a considerable discrepancy between the output of graduates in different specializations and the absorptive capacity of the labor market leading, in turn, to unemployment and under-employment of certain types of graduates.

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One of the key issues in a tracer study is tantamount to learn about the relative impact of graduate programs on acquired competencies and professional success. Since then, indicators of graduates' transition and early career success have been attracting ever more attention on the policy agenda, accompanied by international surveys [1]. By conducting a survey on the cohort of graduates from a specific institution, profession, discipline, level of education, their employment characteristics, competencies and skills development, and have a comparative analysis, the information gained from these can be used by the graduate's alma mater and other education stakeholders for curriculum development and other emerging reforms.

The purpose of this paper is to measure the potential role of the graduate education and the fact of having worked during studies on the employability benchmark [2].

Knowing how important for graduates to possess the required skills for the industry, therefore, a study to measure the employability of the graduates necessitates empirical evidence based on the skills possessed by graduates during their studies. These skills are assessed based on their basic knowledge, soft, and entrepreneurial skill. Usually, the methodology utilized is questionnaire uploaded online or distributed manually. Such study is important to identify if the level of skills possessed by graduates during their studies are appropriate in helping them to perform in a job market [3], and the data on can be obtained from the students five months after they finished their studies using questionnaires, descriptive and inference statistical analyses to establish the relationships between employability and graduates' perception of their own skills [4].

In the contexts of Australia, Pakistan, Singapore, and Malaysia, employers, universities and professional bodies need to develop professionals who possess: practical skills as key players to engage with the institution's goals, understand the dynamics of the workplace, with informed knowledge responsive to the organization's requirements acquired from his broad range of experiences and ready to face the challenges of increasing competition, reactive to socio-economic, cultural, technical and environmental challenges with flexibly and intelligently across various contexts [5]; and employment skills and knowledge to help them obtain jobs in the private and public sectors to reduce unemployment among the university graduates [6]. Thus, these workforce's skills, knowledge and professional characteristics, Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin (2011), ascertained that these perceptions on skills vary by employment sector and size, higher education Institutions (HEIs) strategies, formal or informal methods, and desirable skills [7].

Moreover, in an era of globalization and competitiveness, employability was associated with satisfaction and loyalty towards HEIs. Results showed the gap analysis regarding the

employer's perception of graduates' employability skills performance as being lower than the importance assigned to those skills. A wide gap was found in communication skills, especially the skill of the English language usage. This means that improvement efforts and corrective actions must be taken to improve employers' overall satisfaction [8].

However, little research has been done about the graduates in Chinese universities making employability a key issue on job hunting. Universities are experiencing a decline in their graduate employment since the past decade. With this, Su, Zhang, and Nisar (2015) evaluated and analyzed the graduates' employability in China, adopting a multiple approach to establish the skills that will eventually enhance students' employability [9]; and de Guzman and de Castro (2008) saw it on the epistemological dimension of the qualities and competencies acquired by the graduates and how these skills are used and deployed in several other contexts [10]. Additionally, a confirmatory factor analysis substantiates that knowledge, skills, thinking skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, and management skills provided by educational institutions are demanded by employers [11].

Adding to the lists of soft skills, providing sessions to students could be an initial step for them to think about future employment requirements. This was reiterated by the UK Research Councils' Training requirements by providing an excellent framework that layout the expectations for students' research skills in their pursuit of an academic career [12]. Information technology and communication skills, and values such as love of God, supportiveness, courage, tolerance and perseverance were identified to be very much useful to the present work of the graduates [13]. Hard and soft skills were seen as employable factors particularly in the technical field like engineering. However, hard skills were considered less prominent compared to soft skills and personal attributes. Nilsson (2010) indicated that the educational program should be more on generalist competence and soft employability skills, including interpersonal skills, rather than on the substantive content of the program of study [14]. This further indicated that graduates have educational expectations different from the current university pedagogies'; and critical thinking skills across various curricula should be part of the integrative model at all educational levels [15]. Moreover, in Malaysia, graduate employability skills were analyzed based on qualification, academic score, experience and specific soft skills, and rate of employability was far above the ground on soft skills requested by employers, such as communication/interpersonal skills, foreign language proficiency, ICT/technical skills, high spirit of teamwork and specific personal attributes [16].

In contrast, the employment of highly educated Dutch doctoral graduates in the Netherlands, academic, non-academic, and demographic variables, such as research publications, age, gender and number of children in the family, were highly correlated with contract type than factors such as supervision and labor market preparation [17].

Thus, employability studies are typically viewed to have practical implications for HEIs and curriculum re-engineering related to the enhancement of graduates. The findings of the present study have implications towards regular review and

revision of the curricula in a way that would enable graduates to meet the expectations of changing information job market.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study traces the employability and productivity of PHEI's Graduate School graduates from 2010 – 2015 to ascertain the relevance of its curricular offerings. Specifically, it seeks to analyze the productivity of the graduates regarding employment status, position in the present job, and gross monthly income in the present job; school-related factors relevant to employability; competencies/ skills/ and values learned and useful in the current job; and the suggestions to further improve the curricula.

III. METHODOLOGY

The researcher utilized the descriptive-survey design of research. The actual number of graduates was traced and identified through the help of the College's Admissions and Registration Office. There were fifty (52) Ed.D., sixty-six (66) MAED, twenty-four (24) MALT, thirty (30) MASE, six (6) MARE, sixty-one (61) MBA, and twenty-one (21) MPM graduates from 2010 – 2015. From this actual number of graduates, the researcher was able to trace all the graduates. The instrument used throughout this study was the modified GTS survey-questionnaire provided by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The researcher personally asked about assistance of the staff from Admissions and Registration Office for the actual listing of the desired participants. With the help of friends, currently enrolled students, and e-mail communication, the researcher was able to distribute and retrieve the desired number of participants in the study with a retrieval rate of 100% of the total number of graduates. The data gathered were treated and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Ed. D., MA, MBA and MPM graduates are employed on a regular or permanent status, locally, and internationally. This implies that the school is continuously nurturing and embracing the quality of education as revealed by the employability rate of graduates. Employment status in the current labor market ascertained the specific areas of skill, credential of higher education, awareness of interdisciplinarity and the role of HEIs in supporting graduates' careers through continuous strategic development, and bridging higher level of education with the labor market [18].

The job levels/ occupations of graduates reveal that 53.85% of the Ed. D. graduates are occupying a key position in the educational institution as the supervisor or head teacher, 42.31% are school principals, and 3.85% are Master Teachers. Out of the 126 MAED graduates, 65.87% are classroom or Master Teachers, 28.57% are head teachers/ supervisors; and 5.56% are principals. Moreover, out of the 61 MBA graduates, 11.47% are college professors, 67.21% are occupying a clerical position; 13.11% are supervisors in numerous companies; and 8.19% are managers in different business organizations. Lastly, there are 28.57% MPM

graduates who landed as college professors, 52.83% are enjoying a clerical position, and 19.05% are supervisors in various LGU/ NGO. The results imply that the CC-GS programs are responding to the needs of diverse industries. The findings affirmed Ramirez, Cruz, and Alcantara (2014); and Ramli, Nawawi, and Chun (2010) findings when the graduates claimed that their knowledge, academic-acquired skills and competencies contributed greatly in their job performance. The use of Chi-square goodness of fit proved that there is a significant relationship between the graduates' fields of specialization and their occupations after graduation [19] and [20]. Likewise, academic-acquired skills and competencies of the graduates are relevant to their chosen occupations. The results further proved that school produces marketable and appropriately trained graduates with the majority landing in course-related jobs within a short period after graduation. The study also indicated that the graduates possess the skills and competencies necessary to succeed in this competitive world; and when employers perceived the needed enhancement programs to focus on the development and enhancement of critical thinking ability, generating hypotheses and linking ideas, applying theory into practice, sharp analytical skills, prioritizing problems, keeping up-to-date on latest information regarding the professionalism, giving clear explanation about problems and treatments and recognizing the effects of decisions to be made.

Ed.D. graduates are enjoying a salary of more than 45,000.00 a month. Moreover, there are 16.67% MA graduates who are receiving a monthly salary of P25,000.00 to less than 30,000.00, 50.00% with P30,000.00 to less than 35,000.00 monthly salary, 22.22 % with P35,000.00 to less than 40,000.00, 3.97% with P40,000.00 to less than 45,000.00, while 1.59 % is very happy with more than P45,000.00 a month. Out of the sixty-one (61) MBA graduates, 9.84% are receiving a monthly salary of P20,000.00 to less than 25,000.00, 62.29% with P30,000.00 to less than 35,000.00, 11.47 % with P35,000.00 to less than 40,000.00, while 6.55% are receiving a monthly salary of more than 45,000.00. Lastly, 33.33% of the MPM graduates are enjoying a basic salary of P15,000.00 to less than 20,000.00, 52.38% with P20,000.00 to less than 25,000.00, 9.52% with P30,000.00 to less than 35,000.00, and 4.76% with P35,000.00 to less than 40,000.00. The findings imply that the graduates are happy with their monthly income.

The school-related factors relevant to graduates' employment statuses are collectively grouped to administration and governance, curriculum and instruction, research subjects, professional and cognate courses, student services, library, internet laboratory, inter-disciplinary learning, and teaching/ learning environment are the related factors which contributed a lot to their current employment status. The results reveal that the presence of these relevant factors really hones their knowledge, skills and values which are considered by them as a very important instrument for land in various prestigious jobs. Thus, the school is continuously finding countless ways to improve the management of the graduate school. Efforts of the entire administration are very noticeable towards the attainment of quality graduate studies. A study conducted by Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council on

graduate employability skills, emphasized that the higher education sector is characterized by diversity; course and student profile are different and universities aim to develop students with distinct characteristics or attributes. Universities have taken different approaches to the manner in which they develop graduate employability skills. Thus, universities work to develop employability skills in their students by providing academic staff with relevant support and resources, integrating these skills into the curriculum and course design, providing students with work placements and exposure to professional settings and providing advice and guidance through career services. Universities offer students opportunities for improving themselves through participation in clubs and societies and university life. Students need to take responsibility for reviewing or assessing their own employability skills, addressing gaps and then pursuing appropriate ways to report. The quality of education depends largely on the qualifications and competencies of the faculty. In view of this, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) requires that teachers at higher education level must have at least master's degree in the fields in which they teach. Hence, there is a need to encourage and provide assistance to HEIs to enable them to meet this requirement. The faculty of the school maintains expertise to accomplish the mission and to ensure that the school has clearly defined processes to evaluate individual faculty member's contribution to the school's mission. The school administration plays a very important role in student development. While research has not determined a direct relationship between administration and student achievement, administration does strongly influence school environmental conditions affecting such growth. School administrators should facilitate environments allowing classroom teachers such opportunities. Such processes would use intrinsic motivators, prompt self-reflection and development to prompt a cooperative and trusting relationship. Unless the administration provides a school setting that supports teacher morale, only the most mentally disciplined teacher will differentiate between the administrative burdens and learner needs. The present study considers effectiveness of faculty as coping measures for dealing with such circumstances. Findings would provide professors stronger abilities to focus on student developmental needs. Research into effective methods, for developing administrator prioritization and personal skills would also support environments promoting student development.

The graduates are consistent in saying they learned various competencies and skills while studying. Competencies, skills and values learned by the graduates such as communication skills, human relations skills, entrepreneurial skills, information technology skills, problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, and research skills are of interest to their jobs. MA graduates reveal that courses offered are parallel with the practical application of the work which makes the curriculum responsive to their needs. This is a manifestation that the atmosphere in the graduate school in an output and competency-based instruction has been cascaded to the students' level. Graduates also claimed that though they found research very interesting subject, it needs time, devotion and skills to understand it seriously. Human relations skills gained

by the graduates are deeply rooted from the caring and individualized attention given to the students during their stay in the institution. This kind of relationship is resounding behavior worthy to be emulated and most of the graduates admit that they are very convenient as they effectively and efficiently perform their task. Communication skills, critical thinking skills, information technology skills human relations skills and problem solving skills are also applicable skills according to them. Graduates found these skills applicable due to the up-to-date level of job performance in the market. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines has spearheaded the conduct of GTS among selected HEIs. With regard to adequacy of training on human relation skills, it likewise resulted to a high degree of satisfaction which is interpreted as "strongly agree". Hence, PHEIs has provided the graduates with "very adequate" skills on human relations. The adequacy of training on problem-solving skills, the ability to evaluate action for making future decision earned a descriptive rating of "strongly agree". These abilities, together with the critical thinking skills, earned an overall descriptive rating of "strongly agree". Therefore, the graduates involved in this study are sufficiently provided and trained in solving problems and critical thinking. As to the adequacy of training on research skills, the ability to use technology to acquire needed information gained a descriptive rating of "strongly agree. This is brought by the fact that the use of technology in all aspects is very popular in the Philippines. Nonetheless, all research abilities yielded a descriptive rating of "strongly agree". Hence, the data confirmed that the PHEIs were able to develop the research skills of its graduates. The findings of the present study support the claim of Sitepu and Kehm (2011) when mapping the graduates' competencies, knowledge, personal attributes such as creativity, problem solving ability, learning ability, working under pressure, time management, fitness to work, working independently, analytical ability, ability to take responsibility, initiative, loyalty and integrity, ability to present ideas/product/report, planning coordinating and execution, ability to document ideas and information, ability to write reports, memos, documents, and continuous learning ability; and people skills manifested in working with other people/ team working, negotiation, tolerance, adaptability, assertiveness, persistence, appreciating different points of views, understanding of the system values in the society, leadership, and communication skills are very useful in workplaces [21].

Moreover, graduates reveal the values learned in school. They strongly agree that Love of God, honesty, punctuality, obedience to superior, perseverance, creativity, professional integrity, unity, fairness, love for other, nationalism and eco-friendly are evidently manifested in their workplaces as part of the hidden curriculum of the institution. Although, a considerable amount of literature addresses employability skills and values, much of the information is theoretical in nature and offers policy recommendations and prescriptive advice. Further, a research study has primarily examined the experiences of a particular HEI where remedial actions were taken to impart employability skills [22].

The findings of the study also reveal that the graduates are very satisfied with their current employment situation and that

College may sustain its best to improve on the knowledge, values, and skills they are developing among students for better alignment between college education and the world of works. The findings of this study are essential for curriculum development, higher education policy development, and higher education quality assurance. For improvement in learning condition, the results implied that a PHEI needs to think about strategies that are helpful in developing programs that could improve the alignment between higher education and the labor market. One program could be a strong curriculum program for internship and practicum that could provide graduates with advanced and more relevant skills for their chosen careers. Undoubtedly, the consequences are powerful documented factors to determine the graduates' level of satisfaction of the school services, academic environment and physical plant and facilities. Thus, the existing program of studies are still effective, adequate and relevant in taking action to the modern and complex changes brought about by emerging developments such as the international standards in academic programs, the ASEAN integration, the Qualifications Frameworks in the 21st Century, among others, and HEIs should stand out as one of the major players to cope with these reforms [23]. Also, professors are imparting the required performance standards and competencies as emphasized in the Human Capital Theory, popularized by Schultz to ensure a high employability skills possessed of Business Education graduates. The researchers encouraged the teachers to become more active in imparting the identified skills [24].

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The graduates are hired on a regular or permanent status. The Graduate School is constantly nurturing and embracing the quality of education. They occupy supervisory and managerial job level positions. Education graduates are school supervisors and head teachers, while the business and public administration graduates are supervisors and executives. The graduate programs are responding to the needs of diverse industries. The graduates are highly satisfied with their present wage. The administration and governance, curriculum and instruction, research, professional and cognate courses, student, laboratory, library services, inter-disciplinary learning, and teaching/ learning environment are the school-related factors relevant to their current job. Moreover, communication, human relations, entrepreneurial, information technology, problem solving, critical thinking, and research skills are considered applicable skills learned. Love of God, honesty, punctuality, obedience to superior, perseverance, creativity, professional integrity, unity, fairness, love for other, nationalism and eco-friendly is the values evidently manifested in their workplaces as the hidden curriculum of the institution. The findings further reveal that graduates are very satisfied with their current employment and that the PHEI should continue to improve the knowledge, values, and skills they are developing among students for better alignment between college education and the world of works. The findings are significant for curriculum development, higher education policy development, and higher education quality assurance. Enhancing graduate employability skills are

considered as an important task within the academic community.

Lastly, PHEIs should continue to work together with industry professionals to equip future graduates with the appropriate skills needed for success in the workplace. Unlike the results from previous studies in other countries that found that there was large unemployment among graduates, this study finds that all participants in this study are employed. The finding of the study also revealed that graduates are happy with their current employment situation and that colleges should sustain the skills they are developing in students for better alignment between graduate education and the world of works. The findings of this study are significant for curriculum development, higher education policy development, and higher education quality assurance. For improvement in learning condition, the study recommends that graduate schools in the Philippines are required to begin to think about strategies that are useful for developing programs that could improve the alignment between higher education and the labor market. One such program could be a curriculum revisit vis-a-vis relevant skills for their chosen fields.

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