

Graduates' Experiences in the Professional Graduate Teacher Education Programs of Bicol University, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the experiences in the graduate program that contribute to the graduates' competency development; assess the degree of effectiveness, adequacy and relevance as a curricular program and recommend measures to enhance the curricular programs and its implementation. The study utilized descriptive research through conduct of survey questionnaire. The respondents are composed of 50 randomly selected graduates from 2010-2015 in the degree programs under Management and Professional Teacher Education Department of Bicol University College of Education. Results revealed that research, lecture and discussion, write ups, writing activity, recitation, community survey, community service, educational tours, essay writing, ICT utilization, preparation of charts and models, instructional materials development, debate, organizational exhibits, excursions, storytelling, internship, drama, sports, musical and arts activities are the noted experiences of the graduates that contributed to the graduates' competency development. The curricular implementation is very effective, very relevant and very adequate in the masters and doctorate programs. Further, to enhance the curricular programs and its implementation the graduates recommended the following measures: strengthen linkage of academe to industry, strengthen experiential learning programs for the graduate school, develop innovative curricular programs for research based and course work graduate studies to catch up with globalization, enhance research programs of the university, develop student and faculty exchange programs for graduate studies, enhance accessibility of students to internet connections, enhance leadership programs of the university.

Keywords: graduates' experiences, graduate teacher education, graduate curricular implementation, graduate curricular programs

INTRODUCTION

Graduate education system is critical to serve in-depth understanding of the field they are dealing into. This provides students with advanced learning in a specialized field or sub discipline. Many students pursue graduate studies for the love of learning and discovery. Graduate students and their work are an important part of an ongoing research process that helps us to better comprehend the human and natural world in which we exist. This provides the human community with ways of understanding natural, cultural, imaginative, social and technological phenomena and investigating problems through the pursuit of knowledge. Graduate students are thus engaged not only in a social process that provides society with new ways of looking at the world's complexity, problems and beauty, but in a personal quest for bettering their lives or expanding their learning and insight.

Knowing the veracity in today's academic world, the role of higher education institutions can not only be limited to impart knowledge, but also to contribute to maintain a competitive economy and most important of all, to secure the dream of graduates to get jobs and become socially recognized and successful in their respective field of endeavors. On the other hand, one of the major factors for underemployment and the difficulty in finding jobs is the inability of graduates to meet the necessary skills and competencies required by the industry.

The preliminary results of the Annual Labor and Employment Estimates for 2018 based on the average of the four (4) LFS rounds (January, April, July and October) reported an annual labor force participation rate of 60.9 percent out of 71.3 million population 15 years old and over. This is equivalent to about 43.5 million economically active population comprising of either employed or unemployed persons. The annual employment rate in 2018 was estimated at 94.7 percent; annual unemployment rate was 5.3 percent; and annual underemployment rate was 16.4 percent. In 2017 final result, the annual labor force participation rate was 61.2 percent, the annual employment rate was 94.3 percent, annual unemployment rate was 5.7 percent and annual underemployment rate was 16.1 percent.

Presented with these data, Commission on Higher Education is closely working with the industries to address especially the job mismatch among graduates. They were involved in crafting the curricula and standards and other pertinent activities. In a bid to address this growing job mismatch in the country, CHED, in collaboration with the universities all over the Philippines mandated to conduct Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) to determine the employability of graduates based on their respective disciplines. Through the study, CHED hopes to assess the issues concerning employability and the relevance of higher education programs vis-a-vis expectations of the employers. It will use the results of the study to monitor the quality of programs offered in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); provide incentives to institutions; prioritize or de-prioritize courses; determine the basis for allocating scholarships; and investigate whether 21st century skills are properly and adequately taught to college students. It is in this context that this study was done in order to find out whether there are also mismatch, underemployment and promotion issues among graduates in masters and doctoral programs of Bicol University College of Education Management and Professional Teacher Education Department. This will also give results if the graduate programs are still relevant.

Commission on Higher Education on its CHED CMO No. 53, S. 2007 claims that graduate education is the apex of the educational system. In the field of education, graduate studies is one of the most effective means of improving the capacities of education professionals who aim to contribute to the continued improvement of the teaching and learning in the classrooms, delivery of student services, and management of educational programs. Graduate education is also one 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.

One of the measures of performance of the State Universities and Colleges is the employability of its graduates as per DBM-CHED Joint Circular No. 1 series of 2016. This is measured by identifying the percentage of graduates employed within two years after graduation. Employment includes all types such as regular, contractual, underemployment, and self-employment.

The degree program focused of this study is the degree programs decentralized at BUCE under its Graduate Program. It is expected therefore, to support the primary mandate of SUCs that is, to produce the required human resource for regional and national development, Hence, this study is necessary for the university to follow up its graduates and to determine whether their preparations match with the needs of the employment market.

The study assessed the implementation of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Management, PhD in Educational Foundations and Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management Programs, specifically this aims to sought answer to the following:

1. Determine experiences in the graduate program that contribute to the graduates' competency development;
2. Assess the degree of effectiveness, adequacy and relevance of the Doctor of Education PhD in Educational Foundations and Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management as a curricular program;
3. Recommend measures to enhance the curricular programs and its implementation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized descriptive research through conduct of survey questionnaire. The respondents are composed of 50 randomly selected graduates from 2010-2015 in the degree programs under Management and Professional Teacher Education Department of Bicol University College of Education. A survey of the graduates was conducted to provide an assessment of the performance of the graduates. It revealed the graduates' responses on the graduates in terms of experiences in the graduate program that contribute to the graduate's competency development; the degree of effectiveness, adequacy and relevance of the curricular program; and recommend policies to enhance the curricular programs and its implementation

The research focused on the whole service area of the University which is the Bicol Region, the country and the rest of the world, considering that BU graduates are just everywhere. Some of the respondents that will be selected for the focus group discussion which shall be used may be based in areas outside the region. Required data will be gathered through the conduct of surveys, unstructured interview schedule, focus group discussion, consultation, and use of secondary data and literature review. The instrument developed by CHED in gathering data for a tracer study will be used as guide in developing the instrument for this study, considering the objectives herein stated.

The study used representative samples of graduates in the different programs per school year over the past five (5) years from SY 2010-2011 to SY 2014-2015. The survey instruments were mailed to one primary respondent plus one alternative respondent. This will be done to make sure the desired sample of respondents will be obtained considering the low retrieval rate for mailed questionnaire. Fifty (50) respondents were given time to answer the questionnaire. If the primary respondent failed to return the questionnaire on time, any one of the alternative respondents who returned the questionnaire on time was included in the sample. If all the two respondents failed to answer on time, a researcher was sent to the respondents to ensure completion of the questionnaire. This likewise employed other alternative modes of data collection which will make use of the following approaches to maximize information and data gathering: 1) use of email and use of the tracer questionnaire on an electronic mode; 2) use of social networking, such as the Facebook, twitter and other social media; and 3) use of mobile phones. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency counts and mean.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data on the Assessment of the Implementation of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Management, PhD in Educational Foundations and Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management Programs. Statistical data are presented in tabular form to support the textual discussion of the findings. In addition, the presentation is divided into three parts in accordance with the objectives of the study. The first part deals with the discussion of the experiences in the graduate programs that contribute to the graduates' competency development. The second part embarks with the discussion on extent of effectiveness, relevance and adequacy of the curricular program in terms of competency implementation as self-reported by the respondents. The third part deals with the discussion of the measures that the respondents may recommend to enhance the curricular programs and its implementation.

Experiences in the Graduate Program that Contribute to the Graduates' Competency Development

Learning experiences are the events, happenings and learnings of the students that made them remember because they made them feel good, satisfied, engaged, inspired, and acquired learning. The graduates were asked to significantly point out the experiences in the graduate programs that contribute in their competency development. Table 1 shows the salient experiences derived from the graduates during the conduct of the study.

Table 1. Experiences in the Graduate Programs

Experiences	Frequency	Percentage
Research	44	88%
Lecture and Discussion	39	78%
Write Ups	31	62%
Writing Activity	31	62%
Recitation	25	50%
Community Survey	23	46%
Community Service	22	44%
Educational Tours	21	42%
Essay Writing	20	40%
ICT Utilization	20	40%
Preparation of Charts and Models	15	30%
Instructional Material Development	15	30%
Debate	14	28%
Organization Exhibits	12	24%
Excursions	11	22%
Story Telling	6	12%
Internship	6	12%
Drama	3	6%
Sports	1	2%
Musical Activities	1	2%
Art	1	2%

Assessment of the Degree of Effectiveness, Adequacy and Relevance of the Doctor of Education PhD in Educational Foundations and Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management as a Curricular Program

This section discusses the results of the assessment of the degree of effectiveness, adequacy and relevance in terms of competency implementation of the Doctor of Education PhD in Educational Foundations and Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management as a Curricular Program. Table 3 shows the overall results of 4.33 indicating that the curricular implementation is very effective, 4.24 very relevant and 4.20 very adequate as a curricular program. Further, Table 4 also shows an overall result of 4.28 described as very effective, 4.25 described as very relevant, and 4.17 described as very adequate in terms of its implementation as a curricular program.

Table 2. Assessment of the Degree of Effectiveness, Adequacy and Relevance of the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management as a Curricular Program.

Competencies (Masters)	Effectiveness		Relevance		Adequacy	
	W.M	Description	W.M	Description	W.M	Description
1. Understand, develop, and sustain arguments about, and critically evaluate the current problems, principles, and concepts of the field of study; most of which should be at the forefront of developments in the discipline.	4.40	Very Effective	4.37	Very Relevant	4.32	Very Adequate

2. Apply the current knowledge in original ways to specific problems or contexts by undertaking research, a complex project, or some other form of advanced scholarship.	4.30	Very Effective	4.26	Very Relevant	4.21	Very Adequate
3. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the methods of inquiry in their own research or advanced scholarship, and how these methods are used to create and interpret knowledge in the field	4.40	Very Effective	4.26	Very Relevant	4.21	Very Adequate
4. Critically evaluate current research, advanced scholarship, and methodologies in the field.	4.05	Very Effective	4.05	Very Relevant	3.95	Very Adequate
5. Creatively and systematically deal with complex issues within a field, make judgements or decisions in the absence of complete data, and clearly communicate one's justification for such actions to specialist and non-specialist audiences	4.20	Very Effective	4.21	Very Relevant	4.21	Very Adequate
6. Demonstrate initiative, self-direction and originality in dealing with problems in the field (develop innovative teacher approaches and particularly in the planning and execution of tasks in the field	4.40	Very Effective	4.26	Very Relevant	4.26	Very Adequate
7. Continue to advance their knowledge and skills in the field using the established sources of advanced information in the field	4.40	Very Effective	4.21	Very Relevant	4.21	Very Adequate
8. Undertake more advanced and specialized training for developing existing skills, acquiring higher level and more specialized competencies in the formal higher education context.	4.45	Very Effective	4.26	Very Relevant	4.26	Very Adequate
Over all	4.33	Very Effective	4.24	Very Relevant	4.20	Very Adequate

Effectiveness, relevance and adequacy of the program implementation is more than a factor which is contributory to the success of the programs. With high quality implementation and giving students experiences which successfully paved the way to achieve desired learning outcomes aligned with the stipulated learning competencies for graduate education and having positive results to the graduates.

All of these contribute in the enhancement of professionalism, skills and abilities of teachers. Teacher participation in continuing professional development trainings and other practices enhance professionalism, improves knowledge of the subject matter and of pedagogical skills. These greatly affect the learner achievement as well.

Table 3. Assessment of the Degree of Effectiveness, Adequacy and Relevance of the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Management and Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Foundations as a Curricular Program.

Competency Indicator (Doctorate)	Effectiveness		Relevance		Adequacy	
	W.M	Description	W.M	Description	W.M	Description
1. Understand, develop and sustain arguments about, and critically evaluate the established theories, principles and concepts at the forefront of specialized field of study	4.33	Very Effective	4.28	Very Relevant	4.24	Very Adequate

2. Extend the forefront knowledge by conducting original research or other forms of advanced scholarship of a level of quality that meets the standards of peer review and merit publication	4.19	Very Effective	4.22	Very Relevant	4.15	Very Adequate
3. Interpret and critically assess new contributions to knowledge by other individuals, and communicate such interpretations and assessment to both specialist and non-specialist audiences	4.23	Very Effective	4.18	Very Relevant	4.11	Very Adequate
4. Conceptualize, design and implement research projects for the generation of new knowledge and/or new educational programs and systems, and adjust the project design in consideration of external exigencies	4.25	Very Effective	4.26	Very Relevant	4.18	Very Adequate
5. Make very informed judgements on complex issues in their field of specialization and its application, even in the absence of complete data, in ways that are informed by the ethical and social dimensions of the field, and be able to communicate their ideas to both specialist and non-specialist audiences	4.42	Very Effective	4.31	Very Relevant	4.18	Very Adequate
Over all	4.28	Very Effective	4.25	Very Relevant	4.17	Very Adequate

Examining these competency indicators shows that teachers in Master’s and Doctoral programs must possess a number of competencies. Graduate education is viewed as an effective means to improve educational theory and practice to keep pace with the demand of global competitiveness; hence teachers must have the dedication, diligence, knowledge and heart to develop these competencies.

Recommended Measures to Enhance the Curricular Programs and its Implementation

The top, highly recommendation of the graduates regarding with the Curricular Programs Enhancement and Implementation is to strengthen the linkage of academe to industry. Demands from global trends has set expectations and challenge to the different institutions on how to keep themselves abreast with the curricular program trends. CHED ex-Chairperson Patricia Licuanan stated that the higher education institutions in the country will be brought to streamline through the establishment of academe-industry partnerships. At this time, 80 leaders coming from different sectors gathered in the 2019 Higher Education Summit, and the active participation of nontraditional players in education, i.e., the business community, and flexibility in curriculum and program development are the consensus they are championing. Following this, sensitivity to the pulse of industry and finding more opportunities to collaborate and form partnerships is being encouraged to attain sustainability.

Table 4. Recommended Measures to Enhance the Curricular Programs

Recommendations	Frequency	Rank
Strengthen linkage of academe to industry	36	1
Strengthen experiential learning programs for the graduate school	33	2
Develop innovative curricular programs for research based and course work graduate studies to catch up with globalization	32	3
Enhance research programs of the university	30	4
Develop student and faculty exchange programs for graduate studies	29	5
Enhance accessibility of students to internet connections	24	6
Enhance leadership programs of the university	23	7

Parenthetically, acquiring stable academe-industry linkages will provide a room for more potential experiential learning programs in the graduate school. The Philippine Business for Education chair Ramon del Rosario also pointed during the conference that the country's job mismatch problem lies in the unsustainable workforce development models. Thus, it is of paramount importance to enhance industry-relevant knowledge and skills in the learning programs to prepare students in immersing them to the labor market. Meanwhile, findings from the study of Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill, (2007) suggests that service learning brings positive influence on teacher candidates' willingness to teach in diverse school settings, and that they even began to question societal inequities that they encountered. Taking this into account, it is a manifestation how experiential learning programs help students in setting ground to their prospect profession, especially to the teacher education.

Education has been provided wider confines of opportunities and has been brought by globalization into a higher standard over the course of time. 21st Century made it easier for information to be shared and accessed by consumers through the advancements of technology. In this regard, digital strategies to enhance curriculum design and pedagogy has been deeply embedded in the nature of education. Wade et al. pointed that potential creation of a paradigm shift of learning from teacher-centered to student-centered learning is feasible through integration of educational technology into the curriculum. Moreover, it is underpinned within the principles of constructivism enabling more student-driven learning. Accordingly, innovation in curricular programs for research-based and course work graduate studies is up for appeal to meet the pressure of the global standards.

Further, enhancement of research programs of the university is also recommended by the graduate students. Conducting research and studies has become a vital part of the academe – sometimes highlighted by institutions which will regard their distinguish competency and strength. “Knowledge generated by research is the basis of sustainable development, which requires that knowledge be placed at the service of development, be converted into applications, and be shared to ensure widespread benefits,” says Mary-Louise Kearney, Director of the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge. Having that stated, it only shows that tertiary education is an investment with research being submitted not for mere compliance but for the professional development, especially of teachers, and absolutely for generating ideas, projects or programs necessary for the further progress of the institution where they belong to.

Another recommendation on the list is to develop student and faculty exchange programs for graduate studies. The opportunity to expose student and faculty to another institution, and get themselves indulged to a new environment's governing policy and repertoire of teaching strategies is essential for professional development and accomplishment of research being conducted. “Internationalization” of higher education develops an open perspective, establishes open channel communication, facilitates understanding, and encourages people to broaden their experience and their knowledge (Bloom, 2004). Moreover, linkage establishment with other institutions can open more doors for research collaborations and project partnerships. Breaking borders and introducing different cultures will positively make the students and faculty competitive in the global setting and foster good quality of education.

Now, as higher education institutions slowly adhere to the integration of ICT in the curriculum, students are calling for a convenient access to internet connections. Contemporary educational settings sometimes require access to online information in the students' academic performance, and the presence of internet is in dire need. The qualities of a student's research and learning are largely dependent on the quality, quantity and current internet resources referred to (Ilo and Ifijeh, 2010; Mbofong, 2003). However, there are evidences to show that limited proportion of population of students has no access to internet at home, thus, the enhancement of accessibility to the internet inside the university would be of significant help to improve their academic performance and competency. Aldu (2006) claims that the internet is beneficial in several ways in the academic settings in terms of providing access to global sources of information.

Finally, one from among the four pillars of Bicol University is leadership. Students think that to be able to sense its realization, a need for enhancement in leadership programs is imperative. Student leaders are vital

component or student organizations, to facilitate and represent the whole student body. Leadership skills, honed as early as now that they are still students, would help them stand out in their respective fields when they finally left the university. Leadership programs often follow the philosophy of Maxwell (2005) which is that leadership can be learned through motivation and training, and only a few leadership skills are innate.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study led to the following conclusions:

1. Research, lecture and discussion, write ups, writing activity, recitation, community survey, community service, educational tours, essay writing, ICT utilization, preparation of charts and models, instructional materials development, debate, organizational exhibits, excursions, storytelling, internship, drama, sports, musical, and arts activities are the noted experiences of the graduates that contributed in their competency development.
2. The curricular implementation is very effective, very relevant and very adequate in the masters and doctorate programs.
3. Strengthen linkage of academe to industry, Strengthen experiential learning programs for the graduate school, Develop innovative curricular programs for research based and course work graduate studies to catch up with globalization, Enhance research programs of the university, Develop student and faculty exchange programs for graduate studies, Enhance accessibility of students to internet connections, Enhance leadership programs of the university were measures recommended by The graduates to enhance the curricular programs and its implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and conclusions of the study led to the following recommendations:

1. Conduct detailed interview of the respondents to substantiate the results in experiences and measures in enhancing the curricular programs
2. Further validate the instruments
3. Conduct similar study in other programs of Bicol University

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