

PHILIPPINE NORMAL UNIVERSITY ALUMNI TRACER STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the extent of satisfaction and adequacy of the knowledge and skills that graduates have obtained from PNU in connection to their current employment. The data were gathered through a validated survey questionnaire and were interpreted using frequencies and percentages. The study made use of convenience sampling and the survey was administered both online and face to face. There were 1,826 PNU alumni from various programs, both graduate and undergraduate levels from 2010 to 2018 who served as respondents of this study. Findings revealed that competencies and skills learned by PNU alumni at the university, Human Relations Skills, Communication Skills, and Knowledge and Technical Skills have been considered as the most recognized and relevant of all the skills as viewed to a large extent. In terms of adequacy of the skills learned at PNU, the alumni respondents indicates that critical thinking skills, communication skills, human relations skills, and content knowledge are adequate at great extent. Still, it is highly recommended that improvement of research skills and ICT skills shall be given emphasis in the curricular enhancement.

Keywords: Tracer study, alumni employment, teacher education curriculum, alumni skills and competencies

INTRODUCTION

With the ongoing educational reforms being implemented by the national education agencies, it is imperative for higher academic institutions especially the teacher education institutions (TEIs) to adapt changes. As globalization and internationalization of educational practices intensifies, the TEIs should be able to strengthen and make their curricular offerings relevant and competitive. The PNU as the country's premier teacher training institution is expected to provide a

teacher education program which is at par with leading teacher training institutions in the world. PNU is continuously compiling various data related to service improvement of the university with the aid of a system-based approach to provide accessible services to its external and internal stakeholders. The PNU through its Alumni Relations and Services Office (ARSO) has embraced evidence-based approach and outputs as the basis for the development of its program related to alumni services. One important input in the development of comprehensive alumni



programs is the involvement of the alumni through their feedback. A tracer study is regularly conducted among graduates of a higher education institution after a few years of graduations. The questions asked in the survey are under the following themes: transition to work from school, work entrance, current occupation, connection to the education institution, and usefulness of the skills and competencies learned from schools (Schomburg, 2016). On the other hand, the study of Rocaberte (n.d.) aims to determine the graduate's employment rate, reasons for unemployment, most sought after academic programs, employable types of graduates, waiting time before employment, reasons for staying in the job, the competencies learned in college and the relevance of these competencies to their employment. The evaluation of the program is important for it studies how the academic program received by students (although not the lone factor) likely affects or influences the life of the said graduates after their stay in the school or university (Morell, 1989).

Tracer study is an evaluation tool intended to measure the effectiveness and quality of the programs being offered by an academic institution. The outcomes of the university programs may have some level of fluctuations due to volatility of the labor market. Thus, a tracer study is crucial to gather information over time about the fluctuation of the employability of graduates and what is being demanded by the labor market. In general, tracer study provides information to both educational policy makers as regards to what programs must be supported and what programs may be terminated (Accountability Initiative Private Limited, 2016).

Since the creation of the ARSO in 2013, it has provided the stakeholders (i.e., accreditors, NGO, etc.), and the PNU community needed data for appropriate feedback about the university programs and activities. In relation to this, the PNU alumni tracer study serves as great mechanisms to integrate the results of assessment or evaluative research for policy formulation. This action could determine if academic programs do provide the industry and academic institutions with the needed and relevant skills of education leader, expert practitioner, and research scholars. The data

under the tracer study is a valuable input in enhancing existing curricular programs as well as in developing and offering new academic programs relevant and responsive to the needs of the society. However, proper and sustainable documentation through proper collection and consolidation of data remains a challenge. Thus, improving and strengthening the existing online database is imperative. This tracer study is a vital input to the following: a) university administration for it will help strengthen the alumni office's programs in developing and implementing relevant programs for alumni. Likewise, the results can enrich various curricular programs; and b) faculty members may consider the profile on relevant skills, knowledge, competence, and values that are needed by schools and other industry partners to make PNU alumni or graduates employable and competitive in the world of work.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to achieve the following objectives: 1) to determine the relevance of PNU curriculum in terms of employability of PNU graduates; 2) to determine the extent to which the programs of PNU contributed to the development and achievement of PNU alumni; and 3) to identify how PNU alumni competencies have been adequate for their current employment.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the general approach of quantitative research. A survey questionnaire was developed, validated, and used as the data collection instrument. It made use of convenience sampling and the survey instrument was administered through online and face to face. The researchers ensured that the respondents have consent to participate in the study and their identity are treated with utmost confidentiality. The total number of respondents were 1,826 PNU alumni from various programs, both graduate and undergraduate levels from 2010 to 2018. It is important to note that the number of respondents under the level of satisfaction and adequacy of the skills and knowledge that PNU graduates varied. The instrument used in the study was modified and

adopted from the survey instrument used by Gines (2012). The final and revised survey questionnaire contained five (5) parts, namely: a) personal information; b) educational background; c) employment background; d) relevance of education to employment; and e) adequacy of training from PNU to employment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Competencies Learned Relevant to Employment

The succeeding discussion focuses on the alumni competencies learned from the PNU which they find relevant to their employment.

1.1. In terms of Knowledge and Technical Skills in Current Employment

It reveals that 63.81 percent of the 1,702 alumni across all units, apply their knowledge and technical skills in their current employment to a great extent while 32.73 percent use it to some extent. Graduate Teacher Education Faculty (GTEF) has the highest percentage (77.89%) and mean score (4.78) when it comes to the utilization of knowledge and technical skills. It seems that they benefit a lot from what they have learned in graduate studies programs. It is therefore significant to note that most of the employed PNU alumni were able to use their acquired knowledge and technical skills to a great extent. Next to GTEF, Faculty of Science, Technology, and Mathematics (FSTeM) (70.86%), FES graduates (65.74%), and Faculty of Arts and Languages (FAL) graduates (65.60%) also have a high percentage (to a great extent) of relevance to the knowledge and technical skills they have learned from PNU. Although it is notable that 25.76 percent of Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences (FBeSS) graduates have indicated that the knowledge and technical skills were relevant to their current employment to a great extent and 54.54 percent to some extent.

1.2. On Communication Skills in Current Employment

Communication skills are one of the skills that are mainly utilized regarding the skills used in current employment. About 73.87 percent confirmed that they apply it to a great extent while 25.19 percent apply it to some extent. The FAL has the highest percentage of 81.32 percent, second is GTEF which got 76.90 percent (233), and 3rd is Institute of Physical Education, Health, Recreation, Dance, and Sports (IPEHRDS) (73.53%) in the use of communication skills to a great extent. It appears that a great number of PNU alumni have maximized the practice of their communication skills. Indeed, the FAL and IPEHRDS alumni are quite confident and have the facility to express themselves and have a grasp of language in terms of communications skills. In GTEF, they are more exposed not just in classroom settings but also in administrative works given the fact that they have obtained their master's degree.

1.3. In terms of Human Relations Skills in Current Employment

Part of the training program of teacher education is the enhancement of human relation skills not just focusing on pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Good human relation skills are one of the aspects that teachers must possess because almost every day teachers are dealing with internal and external stakeholders especially with groups of people from local government units (LGUs), NGOs, etc. to seek assistance and guidance when it comes to the welfare of the students and school. In terms of how PNU alumni practice relevant human relation skills in their current employment, majority of the alumni or 71.32 percent have affirmed its application to a great extent and 26.62% confirmed to some extent with overall mean score of 4.67.

The GTEF has second to the highest affirmation 75.25 percent (to a great extent) while only 22.44 percent (to some extent) affirmation. Based on the percentages and mean scores it can be deduced that a great number of the alumni utilized their human relation skills in dealing with students, parents, and other stakeholders. FAL



(71.77%), FBeSS (71.65%), and FES (71.30%) garnered to a great extent in terms of human relations skills in current employment. They exemplify smooth interpersonal relationships that make them build sound and lasting relationships among their community.

1.4. In terms of Leadership Skills in Current Employment

The leadership skills of alumni in their respective institution where they are employed as teachers or administrators. It shows that 62.45 percent of the total population with a mean score of 4.57 affirmed that their acquired leadership skills in the university are useful in their current employment. Based on the table, IPEHRDS got the highest percentage of 70.59% in the practice of their leadership skills to a great extent while 27.94% to some extent and 1.47% limited with mean score of 4.69 showing that our IPEHRDS alumni in any field of endeavor display strong leadership skills in their current employment. GTEF got 65.68 percent in the practice of their leadership skills “to a great extent” while 32.67% “to some extent” and with a mean score of 4.64. The 3rd highest is Faculty of Education Sciences (FES) with 62.04 percent wherein FES alumni apply their leadership skills in their current employment “to a great extent” while 33 percent apply it “to some extent”.

Surprisingly, Institute of Knowledge Management (IKM) graduates have the lowest percentage in terms of relevance of leadership skills to their current employment. It only showed a 51.12 percent under to a great extent. This may be attributed to the fact that IKM graduates are more into the application of the technical skills and knowledge they have learned from PNU in the improvement of ICT related systems.

1.5. In terms of Research Skills in Current Employment

In terms of the research skills of PNU alumni in their current employment, the extent of the use of research skills it seems that the percentage is lower compared to the practice of leadership skills. Overall, the use of research skills “to a great

extent” was just 47.15 percent less than 50 percent while “to some extent” it was only 40.26 percent. However, GTEF got the highest percentage, 62.05% in “to a great extent” and 28.71 percent in “to some extent” with 4.50 mean score. It seems that GTEF alumni were able to practice their research skills and somehow met the standard of “quality graduate” set by the College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research (CGSTER). But still the result needs to be improved. The culture of research in graduate programs needs to be strengthened. The 2nd highest percentage is FSTeM (49.88%) and 3rd highest percentage is FES (42.59%) to a *great extent* in terms of research skills. However, there is a need to strengthen the culture of research both in graduate and undergraduate programs.

1.6. In terms of Problem-Solving Skills in Current Employment

The overall use of problem solving in current employment “to a great extent is 61.92 percent while 34.43 percent use it “to some extent” with an overall mean score of 4.56. Most of the units got more than 50% under “to a great extent” scale. GTEF got the highest percentage (69.64%) and mean score (4.65). This shows that GTEF alumni frequently use their problem-solving skills; maybe they belong to the frontline of the school events and activities since they already obtained their graduate degree (i.e., MA and PhD). Their current employer entrusted to them some of the decision-making. FSTeM (66.42%) and FES (63.43%) have 2nd and 3rd highest indicating that problem solving skills are relevant to a greater extent in their current employment.

1.7. In terms of Information Technology Skills in Current Employment

As to the practice of information technology skills, a little more than majority or 53.33 percent of the alumni claimed that they use their information technology skills in their respective workplace “to a great extent” while 37.44 percent confirmed the practice of their skills “to some extent” and with overall mean score of 4.44. IKM graduates showed the highest percentage of 58.54 percent



that their ICT skills are relevant to a great extent. This is followed by GTEF alumni with 53.47 percent under “to a great extent” and 37.29% “to some extent” scale. The other Faculties, namely: FSTeM (53.33%), FBeSS (53.33%), and FES (53.24%) are almost equally the same in saying that their ICT skills are relevant to a great extent. Also, the mean score is lower as compared to other skills mentioned from other Tables. The challenge is how the university, and their current employer could provide “pedagogical spaces” that could help the teachers/alumni to practice and utilize their IT skills in their respective workplace.

For FAL and IPEHRDS, they have a low percentage of relevance of ICT in the workplace (47.35% and 45.59% respectively). Maybe one of the limiting factors why the FAL and IPEHRDS alumni could not practice their skills in their current employment is because of the absence of or limited opportunity for the use of IT resource materials. It must be remembered that a significant number around 23.1% of the alumni work in the public schools known for limited or zero access to information technology facilities. Meanwhile, alumni who work in the private sector account for 51.77 percent, but it seems this huge number does not guarantee that these schools have information technology access that can be utilized by the FAL and IPEHRDS alumni. Another likely rationale for the slow percentage of the use of information technology skills in their current employment is the nature of FAL and IPEHRDS specialization courses which do not require intensive use of the alumni IT skills.

2. PNU Alumni Adequacy of Training from the University with Respect to Current Employment

The university must assure that the graduates leaving the university acquired necessary competencies and skills through training and it must be adequate before entering the world of work. The alumni must be aware of the extent they can perform well and the adequacy of the competencies they acquired from the university. Their self-awareness is one of the best gauges for them to perform better and for them to give what is expected from them. In this manner the alumni

could also help the university improve and enhance academic offerings.

2.1. In terms of Adequacy of Training in Terms of Communication Skills in Current Employment

The adequacy training of alumni in terms of communication skills. The overall percentage under “to a great extent” is 70.39 percent while “to some extent” is 28.49 percent. FAL, it seems that the acquired communication skill is adequate to a great extent given that it has 76.86 percent, followed by GTEF (76.39%), and the 3rd highest is IPEHRDS (75%). Although the mean scores are high and at the very acceptable level.

In the case of FBeSS, it seems that the acquired communication skills are adequate given that “to a great extent” garners 63.59% while the answer “to some extent” achieves 34.36 percent. The percentage of FBeSS alumni who believe that the communication skills they acquired are useful to “a great extent” may be high but it is not an impressive score yet. As teachers, having effective communication skills both in Filipino and English is mandatory, and the results of the study can be a basis to review how such skills are taught to PNU students.

2.2. Adequacy of Human Relations Skills in Current Employment

Human relations skills are essential skills that a teacher must learn, possess, and practice in their teaching career. This study category measures teachers’ general ability to handle, respond and collaborate with various education stakeholders. It shows that GTEF has 74.59 percent adequacy level under “to a great extent” the highest among the five faculties and two institutes, and 23.10 percent “to some extent. The level of maturity and experiences might be the possible factor why this component is high. Likewise, IPEHRDS (72.06%), FES (70.83%), and FBeSS (70.26%) have shown a high percentage that their human relations skills are adequate to a great extent in their current workplace. Overall, PNU alumni got 68.28 percent “to a great extent” and 29.55 percent “to some

extent". The human relations skills that they learned are still relevant to their workplace.

2.3. In terms of Adequacy of Leadership Skills in Current Employment

Most often people confine their idea of a teacher in a classroom setting: a teacher must be inside the classroom, help the student learn, and must literally teach. Very few acknowledge that a teacher has and must have leadership skills both inside and outside the classroom. The PNU trained its students not only to teach but also to lead. Table 10 reveals the adequacy of training in terms of leadership skills in current employment. Overall PNU alumni got 63.04 percent "to a great extent" and 33.31 percent "to some extent". IPEHRDS garnered 73.53% "to a great extent" and 25 percent "to some extent" with 4.72 mean score. FES placed second indicating that 68.52 percent of the alumni respondents have adequate leadership skills. The results are not bad considering that the respondents in the study are relatively Beginning Teachers who have just started their careers. In the case of GTEF, 67.99 percent "to a great extent" and 30.03 percent "to some extent" with 4.66 mean score. This data from GTEF seems to show that there is still more space for improvement because as a university and NCTE our alumni to great extent must take the lead when it comes to education leadership, most specially alumni of College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research (CGSTER). As the country's NCTE that trains students to become teacher leaders, our alumni to a certain extent are expected to take the lead in their respective school localities.

2.4 In terms of Adequacy of Problem-Solving Skills in Current Employment

Inside and outside the school, teachers must possess good problem-solving skills. Before they can properly teach problem solving skills, they must acquire adequate pedagogical problem-solving skills. The university is one of the responsible institutions to train teachers to acquire the necessary skills. The extent of adequacy of training in terms of problem-solving skills of PNU alumni in their current employment. A total of

62.86 percent fall under "to a great extent" and 34.14 percent "to some extent." GTEF alumni got 71.29 percent "to a great extent" and 25.41 percent "to some extent" with 4.67 mean score, again seasoned teachers got the highest rank among the five faculties and two institutes. Indicating 2nd highest under to a great extent is IPEHRDS (66.18%) and the 3rd is FSTeM (64.69%).

2.5. On Adequacy of Research Skills in Current Employment

Developing a research-oriented academic university or promoting a culture of research is a big challenge to any university. This practice or orientation cannot be developed overnight. Also, developing research skills among university students means more funding and strong political will from the administrators. The adequacy of training of the PNU alumni in terms of research skills in their current employment. Overall, PNU alumni got 52.97 percent "to a great extent" and 38.32 percent "to some extent" with a mean score of 4.42. While in the case of GTEF it seems that it is highly same with the previous skills, the problem-solving skills. GTEF has 69.97 percent "to a great extent" and 26.07% "to some extent" and with a mean score of 4.64. Next to FSTeM alumni (56.54%), it is the FBeSS alumni (49.74%) who think that the research skills they got are adequate to "a great extent" with 49.74 percent while 42.56 percent is "to some extent". Though the percentage is high, it is evident that it has a great room for improvement. The culture of research must develop further to increase the adequacy of research skills among students and once they leave the university, they acquired adequate research skills needed or relevant to their workplace.

2.6. Adequacy of Critical Thinking Skills in Current Employment

To develop good research skills, one must learn and acquire critical thinking skills. This is one of the essential skills in doing or conducting research. Critical thinking skills serve as a "passport" to develop among university students the culture of research. The adequacy of training of



PNU alumni in terms of critical thinking skills in their current employment. GTEF has 77.23 percent “to a great extent” and 22.44 percent “to some extent” with a mean score of 4.77. It is given and expected that GTEF alumni could get the high percentage and mean score since the alumni are seasoned educators/teachers. The FBeSS alumni has 73.85 percent “to a great extent” and 24.62 percent “to some extent” with a mean score of 4.72. The percentage of alumni who believe that they got adequate critical thinking skills from the PNU is the highest among all undergraduate faculties and institutes. This probably comes from the fact that the FBeSS alumni were exposed to learning situations where critical thinking skills are highly essential.

2.7. In terms of Adequacy of Information Technology Skills in Current Employment

In this era of digitization, every educational institution promotes 21st century learning, Education 4.0, Big Data, etc. Which are strongly connected to maximum utilization of information technology in the field of education. But how do we prepare our future teachers and teachers for these huge trends in information technology? Were they able to acquire adequate skills for these during their stay in the university? Are they confident enough to say that they are ready to apply and practice these skills? The adequacy of training of PNU alumni in terms of information technology skills in current employment. A total of 60.51 percent fall under “to a great extent” and 34.87 percent fall “to some extent”. Among alumni, IPEHRDS graduates (66.18%) believe that “to a great extent” they got adequate information technology skills necessary in their current employment while IKM 65.85 percent believe the same. The percentage who says “to a great extent” is not so high. Considering the importance of information technology skills not only for teaching, but it is also important that PNU students are given adequate knowledge in IT.

2.8. In terms of Adequacy of Content-based Knowledge in Current Employment

Mastery of the content is one of the basics of teaching. As future teachers or seasoned teachers, PNU alumni must understand that “we cannot give what we don’t have” this is one of the reasons why future teachers need to stay in the university for several years, to acquire knowledge and gain content mastery in the area that they are specializing in. The adequacy of training received by PNU alumni in terms of content based, 68.69 percent confirmed that they acquired content based “to a great extent” and 18.81 percent “to some extent” with mean score of 4.65. In the graduate studies program, it is expected to have high content-based adequacy since teachers or alumni took graduate courses to deepen their content knowledge. GTEF got 80.86 percent “to a great extent” and 18.81 percent “to some extent” with 4.81 mean scores. As expected, the percentage is significantly high since they are done taking graduate studies courses. Another high in saying that they got adequate content-based knowledge are IPEHRDS (73.53%) and FSTeM (70.12%). For IKM, its 60.98 percent who answered “to a great extent” is not that high yet considering that possession of content knowledge is highly critical to the teaching profession. This tracer study can be a good sign to revisit the content-based curricular offering of the unit.

CONCLUSIONS

From the competencies and skills learned by PNU alumni at the university Human Relations Skills, Communication Skills and Knowledge and Technical Skills are considered as the most recognized and relevant of all the skills they learned as viewed at large extent. The development of Human Relations Skills is naturally embedded in the learning situations experienced by the PNU alumni when they were still students, while the Human Relations Skills are basically the essence of the two curricula programs they studied under the unit, Social Sciences and Values Education. The third most recognized is the relevance of Content Knowledge acquired in the university at large extent. In terms of adequacy of the skills learned at PNU, the alumni indicates that Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills,



Human Relations Skills and Content Knowledge are very adequate at great extent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations of this study:

1. PNU can focus on the improvement of the current students' research and ICT skills which can be done with the help of the Educational Policy Development and Research Center and IKM and internally strategized enhancements. The same can be said of the IT skills of the students which speak of the present limitations the university has when it comes to IT infrastructures.
2. It is also recommended to identify some of the issues that strongly hinder the performance of PNU alumni with respect to their current employment. Another survey on employer feedback is one way to address this gap of data on the skills and performance of alumni.
3. In the case of the CGSTER, there is a need for regular graduate surveys to allow the monitoring of graduates over time, especially their gains after obtaining their master's or doctoral degrees. As of now, little can be offered for the promotion or increase in salary among CGSTER graduates and their long-term success in the bureaucracy or in the labor market. Thus, it is explicitly recommended that a longitudinal study be conducted to trace the graduates periodically over a longer period.
4. As manifested in the data, the survey instrument is quite long and there are entries which are not relevant to the alumni resulting in dropping out from the survey. The success of any tracer study is highly dependent on the availability of accurate data on graduates along with their contact details (National Commission for Further and Higher Education, 2016). There is a need to revise the current survey instrument to make it more user-friendly and avoid repetitive items.

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