

CURRICULUM RELEVANCE ON GRADUATE CAREER: A TRACER STUDY OF THE GRADUATES OF CAVITE STATE UNIVERSITY-TANZA CAMPUS

MELONA I. SAQUIN

Assistant Professor I
Cavite State University – Tanza Campus

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ABSTRACT

The study determined the relevance of the curriculum to the graduates' careers. It specifically aimed to: determine the socio-demographic profile of the participants in terms of age, sex, present job level, type of industry employed, employment status, tenure of service, monthly income, number of months/years it took them to land a job after graduation and higher studies they pursue after college; identify the difficulties encountered seeking for a job; identify the graduates' ratings to the following skills gained from their respective curriculum that has relevance to their present career; and identify the participants' perception in the skills that need enhancement in the curriculum.

The study used a descriptive research design to describe the above-mentioned socio-demographic profile of the participants, difficulties encountered seeking a job, skills gained by the graduates from their respective curriculum, and the perceived skills that need training and development. The data were gathered from 200 Cavite State University - Tanza Campus graduates from 2016 to 2020.

As a result, the participants belong to the age of 24-29 years old and are female. Currently in rank and file level in terms of the level of position in their present job in various industries regardless of the degree they have earned. Specifically, the business process outsourcing and manufacturing industries are seen to be the top choices of the participants for their employment. Furthermore, most of the participants are holding a regular/permanent position with 1-2 years of experience and has monthly income ranging from 20,001-30,001. In terms of the length of period, before they got a job, it took those 1-6 months before landing a job. There is also a significant number of graduates who opted not to pursue higher education. Most of the graduates encountered all difficulties in seeking a job. Specifically, the limited professional network gave the graduates difficulty the most in seeking for a job. In terms of the graduates' self-assessed ratings of skills gained from their respective curricula relevant to their careers, it was revealed that all the skills provided are moderately relevant to the graduates' careers. Nevertheless, information technology and research skills are the skills that have the most relevance to the present career of graduates. This result implies that most of the graduates recognized that the given skills in their respective curriculum provided them with the necessary knowledge and skills that could be beneficial in their present careers. Lastly, based on the assessment of the participants on the skills that need to be enhanced in the curriculum, problem-solving skill must be enhanced as it helps graduates to cope with the industry requirement easily if this skill is acquired before graduating.

Keywords: curriculum relevance, graduates' career, tracer study, graduates' skills

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Career choice is one of many vital decisions students will make in defining their future. This action will have long-term consequences for them. According to Cudis (2019), despite many job opportunities created by the growing economy, the labor and employer sectors agree that there are still far too many college graduates who are unemployed, underemployed, or working in jobs that do not make the best use of their skills. Nowadays, one of the most pressing issues is the mismatch between jobs and skills. However, the concept of skills mismatch is broad. It encompasses many types of mismatch, such as over-qualification or under-qualification, skill gaps, skill shortages, field of study mismatch, and skill obsolescence. These various forms have different causes and consequences, necessitating different policy approaches (International Labour Organization, 2019).

Most employment opportunities in the Philippines are low-paying and do not match the level of competencies that most Filipino graduates can offer. Therefore, many graduates prefer to work abroad, which matches the skills and field they finished in college and leads to losing a country to a specific field or industry.

According to the International Bureau of Education (2022), curriculum relevance is the appropriateness and suitability of a curriculum to the needs, interests, aspirations, and expectations of learners and society in general. The curriculum is increasingly seen as laying the groundwork for comprehensive educational reforms to achieve quality learning outcomes in many countries worldwide. Moreover, according to Jovovic, M., Duraskovic, J., and Radovic, M. (2017), the match of the curriculum offerings and educational qualifications of the graduates in the University meet the needs of the work environment. The learning competencies are a loss on investment when graduates cannot fit the degree, interests, and capabilities developed at a university to the demands of the labor market (Corominas, Saurina, & Villar, 2010). This education-job mismatch is an essential indicator of the performance of higher learning. To prepare graduates for the demands of industrial employers, an educational institution with a relevant curriculum integrates real-world practical work experience into the curriculum. Thus, this study attempted to determine the curriculum relevance on the present career of the graduates of Cavite State

University – Tanza Campus from batch 2016-2020.

In view of the preceding statements, this study was conducted to:

1. Determine the socio-demographic profile of the participants in terms of;
 - a. age;
 - b. sex;
 - c. present job level;
 - d. type of industry employed;
 - e. employment status;
 - f. tenure of service;
 - g. monthly income;

- h. number of months/years it took them to land a job after graduation; and
 - i. higher studies pursued after college;
2. Identify the difficulties encountered by the participants in seeking for a job;
3. Identify the graduates' ratings to the following skills gained from their respective curriculum that has relevance to their present career:
 - a. communication skills;
 - b. human relations skills;
 - c. critical thinking skills;
 - d. entrepreneurial skills;
 - e. decision making skills;
 - f. problem solving skills;
 - g. leadership skills;
 - h. information technology skills; and
 - i. research skills;
4. Identify the participants' perception in rating the following skills that need enhancement in the curriculum:
 - a. communication skills;
 - b. human relations skills;
 - c. critical thinking skills;
 - d. entrepreneurial skills;
 - e. decision making skills;
 - f. problem solving skills;
 - g. leadership skills;
 - h. information technology skills;
 - i. research skills; and

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive research design to describe the socio-demographic profile of the participants, the difficulties encountered seeking a job, skills gained by the graduates from their respective curriculum, and the perceived skills that need training and development. It was also used to describe the relationship between the curriculum relevance to the present career of Cavite State University - Tanza Campus graduates. The study utilized a purposive sampling technique by considering 200 graduates from 2016 to 2020 who earned their respective degree programs at Cavite State University - Tanza Campus broken down as follows: 50 participants from Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, 50 from Bachelor of Science in Business Management, 50 from Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English, and 50 from Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Mathematics. A self-administered survey questionnaire was developed for data gathering. It is a structured questionnaire comprising several statements determining the curriculum relevance to the graduate career.

Frequency counts, percentages, and means were used to analyze the gathered data. Frequency distribution and percentage were used to determine the participants' profiles. The following

descriptive interpretation tables using the Likert scale were used to identify the difficulties encountered by the graduates seeking a job, the perception of the curriculum relevance on the graduates' career, and the perception of the skills that need enhancement in the curriculum.

Table 1. Descriptive interpretation for difficulties encountered seeking a job

WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree
3.41-4.20	Agree
2.61-3.40	Slightly Agree
1.81-2.60	Disagree
1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree

Table 3. Descriptive interpretation for skills that need enhancement in the curriculum

WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree
3.41-4.20	Agree
2.61-3.40	Slightly Agree
1.81-2.60	Disagree
1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-demographic Profile

Table 4 shows that majority (88.5%) of the participants belong to the age of 24-29 years old and are female (64.50%). Most (57%) of the participants are in rank and file level in terms of the level of position their present job. With regards to their industry employment, the data shows that the participants are currently employed in various industries regardless of the degree they have earned. The business process outsourcing (15.5%) and manufacturing industries (15%) are seen to be the top choices of the participants for their employment. Furthermore, most (63.5%) of the participants are holding a regular/permanent positions with 1-2 years' experience (34.5%) and has monthly income ranging from 20,001-30,001 (38.5%).

In terms of the length of period before they got a job, most (84%) of them took 1-6 months before landing on a job. There is also a significant number of graduates (94%) who opted not to pursue higher education.

Table 4. Distribution of participants according to their socio-demographic profile

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age		
18-23	2	1
24-29	177	88.5
30-35	14	7
36 and above	7	3.5

Sex		
Female	129	64.5
Male	71	35.5
Present job level		
Rank and file	114	57
Supervisory	67	33.5
Managerial	19	9.5
Type of industry employed		
Banking	8	4
Business Process Outsourcing	31	15.5
Manufacturing	30	15
Education	27	13.5
Agriculture	6	3
IT Industry	24	12
Food Industry	12	6
Automotive Industry	7	3.5
Hospitality Industry	9	4.5
Retail Industry	8	4
Construction	9	4.5
Healthcare	12	6
Government	17	8.5
Employment status		
Regular/Permanent	127	63.5
Probationary	36	18
Contractual	21	10.5
Job Order	16	8
Tenure of service		
Less than 1 year	57	28.5
1-2 years	69	34.5
3-4 years	58	29
5-6 years	13	6.5
7-8 years	3	1.5
Monthly income (PhP)		
Below 10,000	9	4.5
10,001-20,000	68	34
20,001-30,000	77	38.5
30,001-40,000	34	17
40,001 and above	12	6

Number of months/years it took them to land a job after graduation		
1-6 months	168	84
7-12 months	15	7.5
More than a year but less than 2 years	8	4
More than 2 years but less than 3 years	7	3.5
3 years and above	2	1
Pursue Higher Education		
No	188	94
Masters Degree (on-going)	12	6
Masters Degree Graduate	0	0
Doctorate Degree (on-going)	0	0
Doctorate Degree Graduate	0	0

3.2 Difficulties Encountered Seeking a Job

Table 5 illustrates the difficulties encountered by graduates in seeking a job. Based on the overall results, most of the graduates agreed that they encountered difficulties in seeking a job with an overall weighted mean of 3.84. Specifically, the limited professional network gave the graduates difficulty the most in seeking for job with the highest weighted mean of 3.62.

The study by Hollings & Chester (2019), as the nature of work and career changes, building and maintaining relationships is critical for securing employment. Making social connections from the beginning of tertiary education is crucial to developing and maintaining social capital. Graduate employability is becoming an increasingly important outcome for universities, and universities play an essential role in educating students about professional networking. Therefore, a limited professional network significantly impacts graduates when finding or seeking a job.

Table 5. Difficulties encountered by graduates in seeking a job

DIFFICULTIES	WEIGHTED MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
1. Limited positions available	3.39	1.006	Slightly Agree
2. Lack of job experience	3.58	1.127	Agree
3. Below minimum wage	3.49	1.215	Agree
4. Mismatch of educational qualifications	3.35	1.206	Slightly Agree
5. High educational qualifications	3.52	1.169	Agree
6. Positions are highly competitive	3.51	1.042	Agree

7. Lack of skills/competencies	3.20	1.098	Slightly Agree
8. Shortage of specialty jobs related	3.31	1.043	Slightly Agree
9. Insufficient skills experience	3.27	1.155	Slightly Agree
10. Limited professional network	3.62	1.045	Agree
OVERALL	3.84	0.837	AGREE

3.3 Curriculum Relevance to the Present Career

Table 6 shows the graduates' self-assessed ratings of skills gained from their respective curriculum relevant to their careers. From the overall result, the data revealed that all the skills provided are moderately relevant to the graduates' career with a weighted mean of 4.06. The highest weighted mean of 3.82, which was interpreted as moderately relevant, concluded that information technology and research skills are the skills that have the most relevance to the present career of the graduates. This result implies that most of the graduates recognized that the given skills in their respective curriculum provided them with the necessary knowledge and skills that could be helpful and useful in their present careers.

A tracer study conducted by Bueno, D. (2017) found that communication, human relations, entrepreneurship, information technology, problem-solving, critical thinking, and research skills are relevant skills learned. The graduate curriculum are responding to the needs of various industries. Administration, governance, curriculum, professional and cognate courses, and teaching-learning environment are some of the school-related factors relevant to the current employment of graduates.

Table 6. Graduates' self-assessed ratings of their skills gained from their respective curriculum that is relevant to their career

SKILLS	WEIGHT ED MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
1. Communication skills	3.69	1.294	Moderately Relevant
2. Human relations skills	3.81	1.159	Moderately Relevant
3. Critical thinking skills	3.68	1.291	Moderately Relevant
4. Entrepreneurial skills	3.70	1.085	Moderately Relevant
5. Decision making skills	3.68	1.283	Moderately Relevant
6. Problem solving skills	3.75	1.214	Moderately Relevant
7. Leadership skills	3.72	1.212	Moderately Relevant
8. Information technology skills	3.82	1.194	Moderately Relevant
9. Research skills	3.82	1.108	Moderately Relevant
OVERALL	4.06	1.045	MODERATELY RELEVANT

3.4 Perceived Skills that needs Enhancement of the Curriculum

Table 7 presents the perceived skills that, according to participants, need curriculum enhancement. Overall, according to the graduates' perception, they strongly agree that all the skills provided by their respective curriculum need enhancement, with a weighted mean of 4.55. The highest weighted mean of 4.37, interpreted as strongly agree, means the graduates strongly agreed that problem-solving skills must be enhanced as it helps graduates to cope with the industry requirement easily if this skill is acquired before graduating.

As indicated by Ramirez, T., Cruz, L. and Alcantara, N. (2014), review and upgrading of curriculum offers to ensure the availability of more skill/competency development programs, particularly for communication, critical thinking, information technology, human relations, and problem-solving skills. This will allow for the monitoring of how graduates are doing and teaching initiatives that will result in more successful and deserving graduates.

Table 7. Graduates' perception in the following skills that need enhancement in the respective curriculum

SKILLS	WEIGHT ED MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
1. Communication skills	4.36	0.801	Strongly Agree
2. Human relations skills	4.05	0.939	Agree
3. Critical thinking skills	4.27	0.767	Strongly Agree
4. Entrepreneurial skills	3.67	1.004	Agree
5. Decision making skills	4.32	0.754	Strongly Agree
6. Problem solving skills	4.37	0.745	Strongly Agree
7. Leadership skills	4.21	0.854	Strongly Agree
8. Information technology skills	4.15	0.859	Agree
9. Research skills	4.01	0.845	Agree
OVERALL	4.55	0.556	STRONGLY AGREE

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study determined the relevance of the curriculum to the graduates' careers. It specifically aimed to: determine the socio-demographic profile of the participants in terms of age, sex, present job level, type of industry employed, employment status, tenure of service, monthly income, number of months/years it took them to land a job after graduation and higher studies they pursue after college; identify the difficulties encountered seeking for a job; identify the graduates' ratings to the following skills gained from their respective curriculum that has relevance to their present career; and identify the participants' perception in the skills that need enhancement in the curriculum.

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The participants belong to the age of 24-29 years old and are female. Currently in rank and file level in terms of the level of position their present job in various industries regardless of the degree they have earned. Specifically, the business process outsourcing

and manufacturing industries are seen to be the top choices of the participants for their employment. Furthermore, most of the participants are holding a regular/permanent positions with 1-2 years' experience and has monthly income ranging from 20,001-30,001. In terms of the length of period before they got a job, it took them 1-6 months before landing on a job. There is also a significant number of graduates who opted not to pursue higher education.

2. Most of the graduates encountered all difficulties in seeking a job. Specifically, the limited professional network gave the graduates difficulty the most in seeking for job.
3. In terms of the graduates' self-assessed ratings of skills gained from their respective curriculum relevant to their careers, it revealed that all the skills provided are moderately relevant to the graduates' career. Nevertheless, the information technology and research skills are the skills that have the most relevance to the present career of the graduates. This result implies that most of the graduates recognized that the given skills in their respective curriculum provided them with the necessary knowledge and skills that could be and beneficial in their present careers.
4. Lastly, based on the assessment of the participants on the skills that need to be enhanced in the curriculum, problem solving skill must be enhanced as it helps graduates to cope with the industry requirement easily if this skill is acquired before graduating.

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. The University should conduct a periodic curriculum review for every degree program offered to evaluate its effectiveness and revise based on the industry skills requirements and to put more emphasis on the skill/competency development.
2. An effective graduate employability monitoring system must be in place to properly trace the employment of the graduates.
3. A tracer study must be conducted every 2 years and results must be considered in enhancing the curriculum.

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