Assessing Employers' Satisfaction with Marist education among Business Graduates of Notre Dame of Marbel University (NDMU), Philippines

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Abstract

Marist education is an educational approach that emphasizes the holistic development of students' academic competence, character, and cultural sensitivity. This study assessed the satisfaction of various organizations' and companies' employers towards the Business graduates of an institution offering Marist education, Notre Dame of Marbel University (NDMU), and identified competencies and skills that influence satisfaction. The study was participated by company owners, managers, and supervisors of private and government establishments in Region XII, Philippines. The data were analyzed and interpreted using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and stepwise multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that NDMU Business graduates possess a very high level of professional knowledge and a high level of professional skills. They also exhibit a very high level of non-professional competencies in terms of their values, interpersonal skills, and work attitude. Overall, employers are very highly satisfied with the work quality, quantity, efficiency, and organizational performance of the NDMU Business graduates. This implies that the University is able to produce graduates who are highly competent and meet the standard of the industry. Among the competencies identified, it became evident that knowledge, values, and work attitude can significantly influence employers' satisfaction with business graduates of NDMU. The findings of the study can help educational institutions tailor their programs to better meet the demands of the industry. Data-driven studies can provide quantifiable data needed for making decisions to ensure graduates are well-prepared, relevant, and competitive.

Keywords: NDMU Business graduates employers' satisfaction, Marist education, knowledge, values, work attitude

1. Introduction

One of the most important assets of an organization is its employees. In the study of Erickson, Williams, & Braget (2011)[1], employers expect incoming employees to have a more exceptional ability to apply their acquired knowledge to real-life job applications. However, according to the study of Balaceanu et al. (2013)[2], most employees lack the practical experience that should have been corrected by the educational system by exposing students to more hours of practical training or by participating in internship programs. Higher educational institutions (HEIs) are the major suppliers of inputs in the labor market. It has been a continuous challenge for HEIs to produce graduates who are "work-ready". However, graduates have advanced theoretical skills but are very weak in terms of practical skills (Hodges & Burchell, 2003)[3]. This

is also evident in the study of Stevens (2005)[4] wherein skills acquired by college graduates are not always adequate to perform the tasks required on the job.

Hodges & Burchell (2003)[3] found out that a performance gap in graduate competency levels based on what the employers expected and what they have experienced exists. The employers want "work-ready" graduates with prior work experience, and this is supported by the study of Chiru, Ciuchete, Lefter, & Paduretu (2012)[5]. They found out that there is a gap between the levels of university-acquired and job-required competencies. The study of LaPrince (2013)[6] found out that disparity exists between the skills of graduates and skills required by employers, and even graduates feel that the competencies they obtained from degree programs were not aligned with the employer requirements.

Philippines has 2, 409 HEIs operating as of January 15, 2024, according to the Commission on Higher Education; 97 are in SOCCSKSARGEN region (List of Higher Education Institutions, n.d.)[7]. For academic year 2022-2023, there were about 4,700,000 students enrolled in pre-baccalaureate up to doctoral programs with only 3% from SOCCSKSARGEN region (2023 Higher Education Facts and Figures, n.d.).

One of the premiere universities in SOCCSKSARGEN is Notre Dame of Marbel University (NDMU). This University is a sectarian institution run by Marist Brothers. The University has been providing quality education in the province of South Cotabato, in the Island of Mindanao for 77 years since it began its operation in 1946.

The University aims to provide quality Marist education to the archipelago by producing graduates who are with excellent character, competence, and respect cultural diversity. Currently, the University has six major academic sectors: Law School, Graduate School, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Education, College of Engineering, Architecture, and Computing, and College of Business Administration.

This study focused on the performance of graduates from the College of Business Administration. The College offers accountancy, business administration, and hospitality management courses. These courses are accredited by the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU). Improvement of curricula for business courses would require inputs from several stakeholders such as regulatory agencies, industry, and employers. Effectiveness of the curricula can be assessed based on the performance of graduates in their workplace. Hence, the study aimed to determine if a gap is present by measuring the employers' satisfaction towards the business graduates of Notre Dame of Marbel University. Ultimately, the study also determined the competencies and skills that influence employers' satisfaction. Results shall then be used in the curriculum development and improvement.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Competency-Based Education theory. The Competency-Based Education system emphasizes student-centered learning that stresses learning outcomes. The concept of competency is being practiced by vocational and technical education systems, and in higher education (Deaconu, Osoian, Zaharie, & Achim, 2014)[9].

European countries have implemented Competency-Based Education through the creation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The purpose of EQF is to make qualifications comprehensible across the entire EU area (Deaconu, Osoian, Zaharie, & Achim, 2014)[9]. The Philippines has its version of this framework called the Philippine Qualification Framework (PQF). PQF was institutionalized last October 1, 2012, through the Executive Order No. 83 Series of 2012, Institutionalization of the Philippine

Qualifications Framework. The PQF is a national policy that describes the levels of educational qualifications and the expected knowledge, skills, and competencies that each level needs to acquire. According to PQF, baccalaureate degree holders are classified as level 6; graduates at this level are expected to have broad and coherent knowledge and skills in their field of study for professional work and lifelong learning.

Competency has no exact definition. Gresalfi, Martin, Hand, & Gregno (2009)[10] understand this concept as a cluster of personal skills or abilities beyond the specific work-related environment. On the other hand, Mulder, Gulikers, Biemans, & Wesselink (2009)[11] see competence as a cluster of capabilities embedded around knowledge, skills, and attitudes imperiously required to accomplish tasks and solve problems and to be capable to practice a specific profession, within an organization, job, role or situation. Thus, competency is something that must be acquired to be able to perform a task or a job.

The labor market values employability skills among graduates seeking employment (Rubio-Andrés et al., 2023)12. Goleman (1996)[13] suggested that besides specialist knowledge, social skills, emotional skills, and teamwork abilities are also crucial in preparing an individual for a particular occupation. On the other hand, professional competencies refer to the capacity of selecting, combining, and using the knowledge, abilities, values effectively, and attitudes specific to a professional activity to be able to successfully solve issues related to the respective profession, efficiently and effectively. Transversal competencies include interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, media & information literacy, critical & innovative thinking, global citizenship, others (respect for religious values and appreciation of healthy lifestyle (Care & Luo, 2016)[14]

Employers consider interpersonal skills and communication skills as the most important skills and competencies that college graduates must possess according to Baird (2016)[15]. In addition to these skills, leadership skills are also more preferred by employers according to Briones et al., (2021)[16]. However, communication and interpersonal skills suffer the greatest disparity between required and actual performance worldwide (Jackson, 2009)[17]. Despite several studies supporting findings that there are more important or preferred skills, success of fresh graduates at work can be attributed to both hard and soft skills. These skills are seen by employers as equally important (Pang et al., 2019)[18].

Conceptual Framework

The current study determined which among the professional and non-professional competencies influence employers' satisfaction towards Marist education of business graduates. The conceptual framework shows the five variables tested as predictors of employers' satisfaction. The variables were based on the Competency-Based Theory, expected skills and competencies provided by CMO no. 7, series 2017, and the University's core values.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
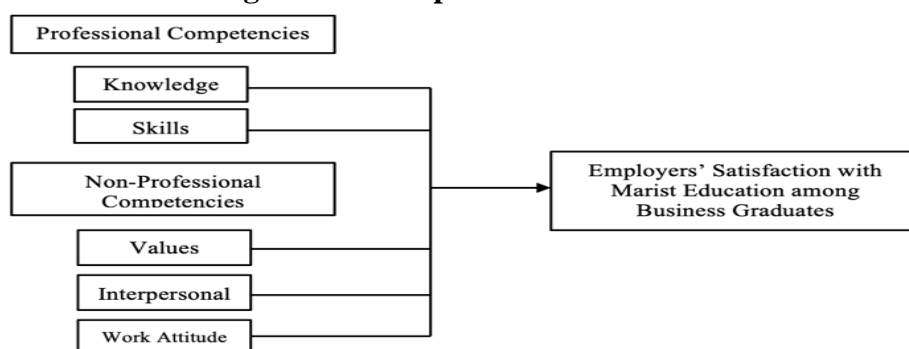
Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to assess the employers' satisfaction with Marist education among Business graduates of Notre Dame of Marbel University (NDMU). Ultimately, it identified the competencies and skills that influence employers' satisfaction.

Specifically, it sought to do the following:

1. Describe the profile of employers in terms of number of graduates being supervised, no. of years in operation, and type of organization.
2. Describe the level of professional competencies, specifically knowledge and skills of the graduates.
3. Describe the level of non-professional competencies of graduates in terms of values, interpersonal skills, and work attitude.
4. Describe the level of employers' satisfaction with Marist education among business graduates.
5. Determine which competencies predict employers' satisfaction

Hypothesis

H_o: Knowledge, skills, values, interpersonal skills, and work attitude do not predict employers' satisfaction with Marist education among Business graduates of Notre Dame of Marbel University (NDMU).

1. Methodology

The study used quantitative research design in determining the level of employers' satisfaction towards Notre Dame of Marbel University College of Business Administration graduates. The same design was utilized in identifying the competencies and skills that influence employers' satisfaction. The data for this study were collected using a survey questionnaire developed based on the CMO No. 17, Series of 2017 which enumerates the competencies that graduates of Business education should possess. The data were analyzed and presented using frequency counts, percentages, and mean. A sample size of 150 was computed using Cochran formula with 0.5 estimated proportion, +8 precision level and 95% confidence level. Snowball sampling technique was utilized. The researchers utilized both digitalized and printed survey questionnaire. The link was sent to the Messenger accounts of some employers. Printed survey questionnaires were distributed to some major establishments in the locale. The questionnaires were retrieved after 3 to 5 days. Despite such efforts, only 69 employers responded to the survey.

Table 1: Position of Employers

Period Graduated	Frequency	Percent
Supervisor	46	67
Manager	21	30
Company Owner	2	3
Total	69	100

The research instrument used was a self-made questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was developed based on the list of competencies that Business graduates should possess according to CHED Memorandum Order No. 17, Series of 2017. The questionnaire consists of the following variables: profile of employers, level of professional knowledge of graduates, level of professional skills of graduates, level of non-professional competence such as values, work attitudes, and interpersonal skills, level of

employers' satisfactions, competencies needed by employers, issues and concerns of employers towards graduates in terms of performance and quality of work, and recommendation of employers to improve the competencies of graduates. The questions/items included in the questionnaire are combinations of open-ended and closed ended questions. Closed-ended questions are either dichotomous or multiple choice. A four-point Likert scale was also used to gauge the level of professional and non-professional competencies of graduates and the level of employers' satisfaction.

Data on profile of employers were analyzed using frequency and percentage. Mean was used to analyze the level of professional and non-professional competencies of graduates and the level of employers' satisfaction. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine which skills and competencies can predict the level of employers' satisfaction..

2. Results and Discussion

Profile of Employers

Forty three percent, 43%, (30) of the employers had only one NDMU College of Business Administration graduate in their companies; 17% (12) of employers had 2 in their organization, and 40% (27) employers employed more than 2 Business graduates from the University. An average of 3 business graduates were hired by employers. In terms of the number of years in operation, 70% (48) have been in operation for already more than 15 years, followed by employers operating in less than 5 years at 12% (8), while only 8% (6) of the employers have been operating for more than 11 to 15 years. Results of the survey revealed that there are 58% (40) employers in private organizations who had NDMU Business graduate employees while 42% (29) of the employers worked in government agencies.

Level of Professional Competencies

The level of professional competencies was measured using knowledge and skills as indicators.

Based on the overall results of the survey of employers shown in Table 6, NDMU College of Business Administration graduates have a high level of professional knowledge (mean=3.55) in their respective work. Graduates have shown a high level of professional knowledge in understanding of the basic functions of management (mean=3.65). It is followed by a high-level knowledge in information and communication technology (mean=3.65) and professional knowledge in thorough understanding of the basic concepts of business (mean=3.62). The professional skills of NDMU College of Business Administration graduates is rated as a high level (mean=3.49) by their employers. Graduates can utilize information and communication technology applications and tools as in performing his/her tasks effectively with a high level of professional skills (mean=3.64). Employers rated on a high level of professional skills (mean 3.57) that graduates can perform assigned tasks aligned with the basic concepts of business (e.g. marketing, finance, human resource management, production and operations management, information technology, and strategic management). The overall professional competence of Marist business graduates as surveyed among employers is on a high level. Professional knowledge (mean=3.55) is the most regarded indicator of professional competence, while the professional skills is the lowest (mean=3.49) between the two indicators..

Level of Non-Professional Competencies

Non-professional competencies include values, work attitude, and interpersonal skills. The results of the survey revealed that Marist Business graduates have shown a high level of values (mean=3.74) in their workplace. Employers agreed that graduates demonstrate have a very high level of value (mean=3.83) in adhering to the policies, rules and regulations set by the companies. On the other hand, graduates are rated

with a high level of values in effectively managing conflicts in the workplace (mean=3.62). There is a high level of interpersonal skills (mean=3.66) among Marist business graduates. Graduates foster a sense of teamwork among co-employees, motivating them to collaborate and achieve shared goals on a high level (mean=3.74). They also exhibit high level of interpersonal skills by presenting themselves as approachable and willing to assist others whenever necessary (mean=3.70). The Marist Business graduates are rated by employers with a high level of work attitude (mean=3.60). Graduates exhibit enthusiasm and takes pride in carrying out tasks on a high level (mean=3.67). With a rating of high level of work attitude (mean=3.64), graduates are flexible to changes in assignments, projects, and schedules. This trait is closely followed by having a high level of work attitude (mean=62) by delivering quality performance in every assigned responsibility. The overall non-professional competence of Marist graduates is high (mean=3.67). In terms of values, graduates are rated in high level. Among the three indicators on non-professional competence, work attitude of graduates is rated as the lowest while still on a high level.

Employers' Satisfaction Towards NDMU Business Graduates

The overall satisfaction of employers towards NDMU Business graduates is rated a high level with a mean of 3.67. Among the indicators, organizational performance has the highest mean of 3.70. This means that employers are highly satisfied on the ability of the graduate as significant contributors in reaching the goals of the company where they work. Work quantity and work quality are also rated as very high level. On the other hand, work efficiency of the graduates got the lowest mean of 3.65 but still regarded by employers as with a high level of satisfaction towards NDMU Business graduates.

Competencies that Significantly Influence the Satisfaction of the Employers

Assumptions. Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) was used in determining which among the competencies significantly influence employers' satisfaction towards business graduates of Notre Dame of Marist education. MRA has four assumptions: sufficiency of observations, normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity tests. The result revealed that three out four assumptions were satisfied. Normality assumption was violated, however, with the innate robustness of regression analysis, any modest departures from normality assumption may be negligible (Berenson et al., 2012)[19].

Correlation. The interrelationship among variables - professional competencies measured by knowledge and skills, non-professional competencies measured by values, interpersonal skills and work attitude and satisfaction were measured through the Pearson R Correlation. According to Hair et al. (2014)[20,] the correlation coefficient describes the strength of the relationship of each variable. Variables such as knowledge (r= .778), skills (r=.706), values (r=.733), interpersonal skills (r=.615), and work attitude (r= .777) have strong positive linear relationship with employers' satisfaction.

Model Summary. The R-square measures what percent of the variance explained by the regression model. Model 3 shows a relatively high value of r-square of .725. This suggests that 72.5% of the variation in employers' satisfaction can be explained by knowledge, values, and work attitude of the Business graduates of Marist education.

ANOVA. The results of ANOVA shows a statistical significance with a p-value of less than 0.05. Therefore, the independent variables, knowledge, values, and work attitude taken together as a set statistically significantly influence the satisfaction of employers, $F = 57.133$, $p = 0.000$.

Regression Equations. The final regression model of employers' satisfaction to Business graduates of Marist education is presented below:

Employers' Satisfaction = .397 + .362(Knowledge) + .285 (Values) + .256 (Work Attitude) + error

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

The employers are highly satisfied with the performance of the NDMU Business graduates. The graduates possess high level of professional and non-professional competencies needed to be significant contributors in the workplace. Hence, the University is able to produce graduates who are highly competent and meet the standard of the industry. It can be further concluded that NDMU Business graduates truly embody Marist education by exhibiting high level of knowledge, work attitude, and values.

Recommendations

Notre Dame of Marbel University, as a Marist institution, is founded on its three core values: Competence, Character, and Culture in Harmony (CCC). The study's results revealed that the Institution successfully instills these three Cs in its graduates, as evidenced by the variables included in the regression analysis: knowledge, values, and work attitude. Although the findings support the Institution's existing strengths, the following recommendations were identified.

For the area of Curriculum and Instruction, to intensify students' exposure to various business trends, such as data analytics, business software, and artificial intelligence for them to be updated and at par with what the industry requires in terms of knowledge and skills.

For the area of Support Services, to create opportunities for students to develop their character and interpersonal skills. This can be achieved by engaging students in programs and activities where they interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, beliefs, cultures, and norms.

For the Marist Institution to regularly involve different stakeholders in planning and curriculum design processes to ensure that graduates remain competitive and relevant in the business landscape.

4. Acknowledgement

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