



Employability of the University of Baguio Graduate School Alumni: A tracer study

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Abstract

This study is one of the responses to the need to have evidence of claims on quality education, even in the graduate school programs of the University of Baguio, to regulatory and accreditation bodies' requirements. This study determined the employment profile of the masters and doctorate graduates of the University of Baguio in the following academic programs: Master in Business Administration, Master in Public Administration, Master of Arts in English, Master of Science in Criminology, Master of Arts in Education major in Educational Management, Master in Dental Education, Master of Arts in College Teaching, Doctor of Philosophy major in Development Education and Doctor of Philosophy in Criminal Justice with Specialization in Criminology specifically for the years 2013 to 2018. It used the descriptive survey research method. There was a total of 43 graduates of the various graduate school programs who participated. It came out that the University of Baguio Graduate School programs alumni are considered employable. The University of Baguio also provided opportunities for the graduate programs alumni to acquire credentials for work promotion and other jobs requiring their specialization. Moreover, the alumni encountered various



personal and professional challenges after finishing their GS program. Lastly, the University of Baguio Graduate School students recommended varied ways of improving their respective academic programs.

Keywords: : Employability, Graduate School, Alumni, Benefits, Challenges

Introduction

Employability refers not just to the undergraduates finishing a course and then finding a job but also to those who have completed their masters or doctorate. The studies on graduate employability can help improve the quality of higher education to prepare and ready the students for work and the workplace and respond to the ever-increasing pressure from governments and employer groups (Bui, 2019; Clarke, 2018). The studies could help the universities check their approaches to brokering and maintaining partnerships and develop a holistic engagement framework for stakeholders (Ferns, 2019). This means that employability studies are needed to be done even for the graduate school by the higher education institutions (HEIS) to evaluate if they are achieving their vision, mission, and objectives for their graduates. It is not just the compliance to crucial result areas sought by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and accrediting bodies where the higher institution is a member like the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA).

In Australia and the United Kingdom (UK), universities have considered graduate employability as a key driver. They have included a range of generic skill-based learning outcomes embedded into degree programs, internships, work placements, and international study in their programs. These outcomes increase graduate employability and improve graduate employment



outcomes (Clarke, 2018). The concept of graduate employability can be explored and explained by varied factors studied in different countries like Uganda, China, and Australia. These factors include human, social, and psychological capital, career identity, individual attributes, individual behaviors, perceived employability, and labor market factors (Clarke, 2018; Ngoma & Ntale, 2016; Chen, 2017; Ferns, 2019).

Ragonese and Altham (2019) emphasized that the United Kingdom's (UK) higher education institutions have already recognized the changing landscape in education. The graduate's employability goes beyond the university experience mainly because of the renewed attention to students' outcomes and lifelong graduate potential. On the other hand, Zaber, Karoly, and Whipkey (2019) did research on the employment system in the United States of America (USA) and found out that the approach of those in the education sector in preparing the workforce still operates in the 20th-century model despite technological changes, globalization, and critical demographic changes. Another research done in the USA by Dhindsa (2019) stated that universities should consider the well-being of students to more effectively prepare them for the changing employment landscape with confidence and clarity. Moreover, when Stackpole (2019) did a qualitative study that examined the learning, development, and growth of college graduates of for-profit universities in the USA, the researcher found out that several of the respondents had meaningful development and growth during their academic careers. One of the many contributory factors for this growth is a presentation at an international research conference for doctoral degrees (Davis et al., 2019).

Rimmer, Everson, and Crampton (2019) defined in their study on supporting students to become global graduates; that the global graduate has been experienced globalization through award-winning placements unit and cross-cultural team challenges led by global organizations. Another research is done in the UK by Au (2019) on the role of master level studies in the career mobility of young graduate workers in Hong Kong: upgrade their knowledge, skills, and academic or professional credentials.



With the continuous development in higher education and the swiftly changing labor market, being gainfully employed or being promoted is becoming an ever more significant consideration in most students' lives – whether undergraduate or those pursuing graduate education. One observable factor that significantly influences such employability or such promotion has a master's or doctorate.

In the Philippines, an example is the minimum requirement of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for teachers at the tertiary level where they should have finished a relevant master's degree. This requirement may be the case because the researchers believe that when individuals get their master's or doctorate degrees, they have undergone a course of study demonstrating a higher-order overview of a specific field of study/area of professional practice. They are also perceived to possess an advanced specialized body of knowledge of theoretical and applied topics, high-order analytical skills, critical evaluation or professional application, and the capacity to solve complex problems and think independently and rigorously.

A study on the employment status of graduate school alumni in a Philippine HEI by Macalalad, Buenviaje, Regalario, and Laguador (2016) found out that their respondents were 100% employed. Another Philippine HEI tracer study by Encio, Refozar, and Laguador (2018) also found out that 100% of their MBA alumni have jobs. A tracer study on the GS alumni of Visayas State University by Cagasan, Dargantes, Florentino, and Lasquites (2017) discovered that 78% of their graduate school alumni work within academic institutions/state universities and colleges either as teachers, researchers, extension workers, or administrative workforce. Another HEI tracer study by Bueno (2017) found out that their graduate programs answer different industries' requirements. Also, Quitevis, Lopez, Binay-an, and Sanidad (2019), in a Tracer Study of Graduate School in a higher educational institution in Region 1, discovered that the respondents' first reason for pursuing their master's degree is for professional advancement in their field.

For the University of Baguio (UB), competence is one of its core values that



declares that UB is committed to nurturing excellent professionals. Also, part of UB's mission is to have competent professionals in the global community. One of UB's objectives, which is to produce a graduate who demonstrates a higher standard of learning and manifests the mastery of relevant skills, tells the reader that the university wants its graduates employed in various industries after they graduate from their degree. For those already employed, to get promoted in their current employment. This objective does not just refer to the undergraduates but also the graduate school's alumni.

This paper had its theoretical basis on Becker and Rosen's human capital theory as cited by Xu and Fletcher (2017). This theory states that if human capital increases with additional education, an individual's market value should increase in proportion to the amount of education he receives, often captured by the total number of credits accumulated, such as professional awards and promotions. A study conducted in the Philippines by Gonzales (2019) found out that having GS degrees increases the individual's professional value and can obtain additional remuneration. These results from the adequacy of skills the alumni gained in knowledge and technical, research, leadership, and; communication.

As to the nature of employment, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation Institute for Statistics (UNESCO / UIS), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Statistical Office of the European Union (EUROSTAT) in 2002, educational personnel is used to classify school personnel for all levels of education with four functional categories (OECD, 2002). First is the instructional personnel, including classroom teachers, academic staff, teacher aides, and teaching or research assistants. Pedagogical support, academic support, health, and social support fall under the second category: professional support for students. The third is the management or quality control or administration, including school-level management, higher-level management, school-level administrative personnel, and higher-level administrative personnel. Fourth is the maintenance and operations personnel.



There are also personal and professional benefits that graduates get after finishing their degree, classified as knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The benefits derived by the GS alumni are additional knowledge, skills, and attitude.

Knowledge. As defined by OECD (2020), knowledge has four types: disciplinary, interdisciplinary, epistemic, and procedural. Theoretical concepts and ideas are in addition to practical understanding based on performing specific tasks. Disciplinary knowledge is subject-specific concepts and detailed content. Interdisciplinary knowledge includes relating the concepts and content of one discipline or subject to other disciplines or subjects' concepts and content. Epistemic knowledge refers to the understanding of how expert practitioners of disciplines work and think. Procedural knowledge answers the how and the series of steps or actions taken to accomplish a goal.

Skills. OECD (2020) has also defined skills as the ability and capacity of an individual to carry out processes and to be able to use one's knowledge in a responsible way to achieve a goal. These are cognitive and meta-cognitive, social and emotional, and practical and physical. Cognitive and metacognitive skills include critical thinking, creative thinking, learning-to-learn, and self-regulation, enabling the use of and recognizing one's knowledge of the language, numbers, reasoning, and acquired knowledge. Social and emotional skills include empathy, self-efficacy, responsibility, and collaboration that enable oneself to develop oneself, cultivate relationships at home, school, work, and in the community, and exercise civic responsibilities. Practical and physical skills include the use of new information and communication technology devices.

Attitudes. Attitudes (OECD, 2020) are values and beliefs that influence behavior and how one wishes to define and lead a meaningful life and meet one's goals. Furthermore, Haste (cited from OECD 2020) mentioned that these reflect a disposition to react to something positively or negatively, and attitudes can vary according to specific contexts and situations.



It is the goal of this study to determine the employment profile of the masters and doctorate graduates of UB in the following programs: Master in Business Administration (MBA), Master in Public Administration (MPA), Master of Arts in English (MAEng), Master of Science in Criminology (MSCrim), Master of Arts in Education major in Educational Management (MAED), Master in Dental Education (MDE), Master of Arts in College Teaching (MACT), Doctor of Philosophy major in Development Education (PhD-DevEd) and Doctor of Philosophy in Criminal Justice with Specialization in Criminology (PhDCrim) specifically for the years 2013 to 2018.

This study's findings provide the administrators and supervisors with insights into the personal and professional experiences and challenges met by these graduate school (GS) alumni. Concerned human resource managers in companies where the GS alumni belong to may also use the findings to plan for programs designed to motivate employees to further their education. Graduate students and UB employees may further find the results of this study useful to them either in their future thesis, dissertation, or research writing; and be motivated by the graduates' success stories, which this study may also capture. There is no tracer study yet on the graduate programs of UB for the past five years.

This research's objective is to determine the employment profile of the UB masters and doctorate graduates. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following:

1. What is the employment profile of the UB GS graduates for school years 2013 to 2018?
2. What are the personal and professional benefits gained by the UB GS graduates?
3. What are the identified personal and professional challenges encountered by UB GS graduates?
4. What are the feedbacks from the UB GS graduates for further improvement of their various programs?



Methodology

The study used a descriptive research survey to look into the experience and suggestions for improvement by the UB GS alumni. The respondents were 43 UB graduates of the following graduate school programs: MBA, MPA, (MAEng), MSCrim, MAED, MDE, MACT, PhD-DevEd, and PhDCrim programs; specifically for the years 2013 to 2018. Despite all efforts to float the questionnaires through the graduate school office, visits to the respective offices of some, and getting in touch through social media, only 19.28% responded. The data were taken from the various UB graduation souvenir programs, which the researchers kept in their capacity as school secretaries.

The researchers used an open-ended, researcher-made questionnaire to gather the needed information. It was constructed in line with the study's specific problems and patterned after Schomburg's guidelines (2016). It consisted of two parts. The first part elicited data about the personal profile, i.e., the position of the respondents. The second part sought the GS graduates' answers to the personal and professional benefits gained and the challenges they encountered in the workplace. The second part also contained a portion intended to draw out different suggestions on how UB will be more responsive to the graduates/would-be graduates' needs. Before the administration of the questionnaire, the tool had undergone validation by an expert.

The researchers gave the questionnaires to all the respondents through all possible means like electronic mail, actual company visits, and social media. The graduates' information was obtained from the UB Office of the Graduate School, from the alumni association, from employers of the graduates if known, by asking graduates for addresses of friends who graduated with them, and by utilizing social media. The researchers first acquired the student addresses and contact information, then gathered data for eight months. There was a letter asking them to help their alma mater find out about their employability. To ensure a high response rate, the researchers followed up the graduates who were contacted but did not respond.



The researchers did the sorting of the profile responses and then obtained frequency counts to describe the results. They also thematized the open-ended questions on benefits according to knowledge, skills, and attitudes by OECD (2020); the challenges were whether personal or professional as per subsections of benefits in the questionnaire; while, the recommendations were based on the sub-categories of the open-ended questions, namely curriculum, faculty and employees, facilities and other enrichments.

The researchers included in the questionnaire a letter an assurance that they will not be identified and that their identity will not be divulged in the study. A letter indicating that all data gathered and the results were only for the study was attached. The names and other confidential details about the participants, such as name and age, were not asked to ensure confidentiality. After all the data were gathered, and the research is completed, the researchers shredded all the notes and questionnaires. The results of the data gathered were summarized as a general concept of the participants rather than as an individual perception.

The researchers will furnish, upon request, the written findings in general form to the informants at the end of the study, either through electronic means or through hard copies. The study will be disseminated through the following: having the research presented in a proper forum through lecture or poster presentation; and publication in the UB Research Journal. The researchers made sure that they religiously followed the data-gathering procedure detailed in the previous pages. The researchers further respected the privacy of the respondents by not asking questions that are too personal. The researchers ensured objectivity and non-discriminatory procedure when they selected the participants. The researchers ensured that the participants would not suffer long-term physical, emotional, and psychological harm when they participate. The researchers had done this by being true to the items found in the questionnaire. The participants did not spend or use their resources for this research.



Results and Discussion

Based on the UB Graduate School (GS) alumni's employment profile for school years 2013 to 2018, 100% of the respondents are employed. Most of the GS alumni respondents are employed in an educational setting. Less than twenty-five percent are employed in non-educational. These percentages show that the GS alumni of UB have jobs after graduation. This is confirmed by a study on graduate school alumni's employment status in their institution by Macalalad, Buenviaje, Regalario, and Laguador (2016), where the respondents were all employed. Encio, Refozar, and Laguador (2018) also found out that 100% of their MBA alumni respondents have jobs.

Most of the alumni for MS CRIM are employed under non-educational work. On the other hand, all the alumni who responded for MDE, MAED, MAEng, MACT, Ph.D. DEV ED, and Ph.D. CRIM are employed in the educational fields. The majority of the alumni for MBA and half for MPA are employed in the educational fields. This means that majority of the UB GS alumni respondents prefer to work in educational institutions.

Based on the data, of those in the educational setting, almost half are employed as instructional personnel who serve as instructors in universities and classroom teachers in high schools. A small percentage of the alumni are professional personnel who serve as student managers or clinic personnel. Almost one-third of these GS graduates work as management or quality control or administrative personnel who serve as registrars, clerks, secretaries, and heads of offices. This data shows that aside from being employed, the UB GS alumni are employed in various fields of their choice. This finding agrees with the Tracer Study on the GS alumni of the Visayas State University by Cagasan, Dargantes, Florentino, and Lasquites (2017), where 78% of their alumni work in academic institutions/state universities and colleges either as faculty members, researchers, extension workers or administrative staff.

The other UB GS alumni are employed in non-educational institutions like



police headquarters, pharmaceutical businesses, and government offices. An implication is that these alumni are already working when they enrolled or were currently studying in the UB GS.

The overall result of the UB GS alumni being 100% employed and in various companies aligns with Bueno's (2017) research, which found out that the graduate programs respond to various industries' needs.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of awards earned during employment of the UB GS alumni.

Table 1.

Awards During Employment of GS Alumni

Program	Awards during employment
MBA	Brand Excellence Award, Professional Medical Representative of the Year, Service Award, Perfect Team Attendance Award
MS CRIM	None yet
PHD CRIM	Best Research Paper –Social and Education Categories, Most Outstanding Criminologist
MDE	Outstanding Silver Jubilarean Award, Service Award, Leadership Excellence
MAED	None yet
MA English	None yet
MPA	Service Award
PHD DEV ED	International Research Conference Outstanding Award, First Place-Best Research (International), PERAA Outstanding Academic Head-Top 1
MACT	Top Performing Award - Non teaching Category

Thirteen (13) out of the 43 respondents of the six out of the nine GS programs reported received awards during their stay in their respective companies. This is evidence of the realization of the vision on academic excellence and the Core Value of Competence of UB.



This result further strengthens the human capital theory by Becker and Rosen as cited by Xu and Fletcher (2017), which was the basis of this paper. It was stated that if human capital increases with additional education, an individual's market value should increase in proportion to the amount of education he receives, often captured by the total number of credits accumulated, such as professional awards and promotions. Moreover, the GS alumni's awards support the study conducted in the Philippines by Gonzales (2019). The study established that having graduated and post-graduate degrees increases the individual's professional value traced from the adequacy of skills the alumni gained in knowledge and research, leadership, and communication. Moreover, this finding support what Ragonese and Altham (2019) found out in their research in the UK higher education sector that their higher education institutions have already recognized the changing setting in education. They stated that the graduate's employability goes further than the university experience because of the renewed consideration of students' outcomes and lifelong former student potential, including reaping awards in the workplace. Furthermore, having work-related awards confirm the study of Au (2019), which established the role of master level education in the career mobility of the young graduate labor force in Hong Kong that by having a master's degree, the alumni upgrade their professional credentials.

Personal and Professional Benefits Gained by the UB GS Alumni

Based on the UB GS alumni's answers on the benefits they have derived after graduating from their chosen graduate school degree, the required responses for personal and professional benefits were thematized.

Personal Benefits

The following were the themes of the personal benefits based on OECD (2020): knowledge, skills, and attitudes. UB GS alumni enumerated



benefits that are personal to them. One of the benefits is the knowledge in their chosen area that they gained. Related to this is the interdisciplinary knowledge they picked up. The second is the skills they acquired and/or the improvement or development of their existing skills. Lastly, their disposition in life has changed.

Knowledge. It is apparent in their responses that one of the benefits is the knowledge that they have gained. Based on their responses, the GS alumni have not only learned new ideas in their chosen field, but they have mastered the knowledge that they have acquired. This knowledge can be categorized as disciplinary, which is specific to the field that the respondents have taken. Some respondents mentioned that they have greatly augmented their knowledge on the different types of businesses and their natures and managing businesses. Sample statements from the respondents are quoted: “Personally, studying MBA enables me to systematically master the knowledge of business management, such as marketing management, financial management, human resource management.” Another wrote, “It also enhanced my knowledge about different types of businesses as well as of the nature I am encountering and will be encountering in the future.”

These responses are confirmed by Quitevis, Lopez, Binay-an, and Sanidad (2019) in a Tracer Study of Graduate School in a higher educational institution in Region 1 where the respondents’ top reason is for pursuing their Master’s Degree is for professional development in their discipline.

Some of the respondents have also gained interdisciplinary knowledge. In a statement given by a respondent, enrolling in the program has also helped him significantly develop his English proficiency. He claimed that he learned about the concepts related to his field of specialization; he also has developed his knowledge of English concepts. In his words, “In addition, my English has improved greatly during the study of MBA.”

Another one claims that it has given him confidence, “I have gained



higher confidence in teaching the field I have taken, per se.” One MPA graduate said, “I gained a wider understanding of the intricacies of public administration.” Another one stated that he gained additional knowledge.

These statements are in consonance with what Au (2019) researched on the role of master level studies in the career mobility of young graduate workers in Hong Kong, where it was found out that through master’s studies, the goal of the students is to upgrade their knowledge as well as skills.

It is also notable what one of the respondents mentioned about his degree program: “It also helped me to create ideas and strategies about building up my business.” This shows that the content knowledge has led to epistemic knowledge that may be specific to the classroom topics and how he is to apply it. The knowledge of business-led the respondent to work purposively towards his building up of his own business.

Skills. In the same study, most of the respondents claim that the skills they acquired were “Very Much Useful” to their present jobs. This contradicts what Zaber, Karoly, and Whipkey (2019) did as research on the employment structure in the USA, where they found out that the method of those in the education segment in preparing the labor force still operates on the 20th-century model regardless of technological modifications, globalization, and dynamic demographic variations.

Based on the alumni’s responses, one of the personal benefits that they have gained from their GS degree is the improvement or development of skills. Most of the skills they have developed can be described as social or emotional. Their pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors has caused them to develop themselves and nourish their relationships at home, school, and work. They have mentioned the development of their confidence and sense of accomplishment that, despite the busy schedule, they were able to finish their degree. Several respondents also claimed that their values



were also strengthened, like perseverance, responsibility, commitment, and a better vision and perspective in life. The following were obtained from their responses: “Sense of accomplishment that despite the hectic schedule, with perseverance, I was able to finish grad school; People in the profession look up to you/respect and recognition is accorded to you; My perspective in life was enhanced and realized that lifelong learning is really important/ personal growth...; Strengthened values; Increased responsibility and commitment.”

The respondents also wrote that their negotiation skills like communication with their colleagues, supervisor, and employees improved. They have gained the respect of their coworkers as well. They have developed friendships with their classmates inside and outside the UB GS, increasing their networks. They have also given inspiration to their parents and family, who are proud of them as they finished their degree, and their relatives to be determined to accomplish their dreams and achieve more. This is evident in the statement: “It’s what I really wanted to. To have a high degree. To make my family proud of me, and to inspire other people specially my relatives to be determined as well to achieve more than I have been through.”

Aside from emotional and social skills, the respondents also wrote benefits, which can be categorized as critical thinking skills. Maturity on how to see things were even enumerated as a benefit. The respondents have written the reinforcement of their research skills, critical thinking, decision-making, and analytical skills leading them to develop a sense of practicality like: “Empowered critical thinking and decision making... I am confident enough to keep up with research... Enhanced communication and analytical skills”

Attitudes. The disposition of the GS alumni has also changed as they have finished their degrees. As quoted from one of the respondents in the previous paragraphs, he realized that lifelong learning is essential and that



he had a positive change in his learning perspective. Other respondents also expressed a more positive outlook regarding their potential to be promoted at work and be looked up to by their coworkers. They have said that they have gained the potential for earning higher and more opportunities to be absorbed in other industries. The following are examples of their statements: “Additional knowledge and experience; Boost self confidence; Networking (personal, social, professional); Enhanced communication and analytical skills; plus factor during promotion; self esteem.” Another graduate listed, “Because more open to other industries. Maturity in the way we see things. Empowered critical thinking and decision making”

Professional Benefits

Professionals are those who derive their income from their specific knowledge or experience – as opposed to a worker, hobbyist, or amateur without formal education (Australian Council of Professions, 2020). Therefore, the professional benefits are those gained in terms of income as the profession is practiced. Based on the responses given, professional benefits are a combination of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that led to promotion, change in employment status, and expert services opportunities.

Some of the GS alumni identify being qualified for higher or senior positions and being eligible for promotions as a benefit from finishing the GS degree. Based on their responses, this could be because of the capability and competence to manage subordinates and having the ability to assist in the office operations, including conducting research and the improvement of the work performed. Obtaining the degree is somewhat preparation for greater professional responsibilities like expanding the market and helping other departments. As a result, the GS Alumni have gained more respect from superiors and colleagues and recognition from their institutions. This has significantly contributed to the accreditation of their workplace and the salary increase. Here are some of their answers: “Professionals Capability in terms of managing subordinates and helpful assistance to office operations



and to department head; a good phase of preparation to greater professional responsibilities; willingness and openness for further studies... It has been my advantage in staying in xxx University for years, even if I had to undergo numerous screening or interviews for re-employment.”

After finishing a GS degree, the promotion of the UB GS alumni is confirmed in the Tracer Study by Cagasan, Dargantes, Florentino, and Lasquites (2017), where 64% got promoted after earning their graduate degrees. Another corroboration for this is a research by Macalalad, Buenviaje, Regalario, and Laguador (2016) where they claimed that finishing the MBA program gave the alumni better opportunity to get new jobs, to be in a regular or permanent position, and be considered for job promotion; the respondents looked at themselves in five years time still in their company handling more responsibilities and moving up in their positions in the company. Also, Encio, Refozar, and Laguador (2018) affirm that finishing a Master’s degree leads to having new jobs, becoming regular or permanent, and be considered for higher positions in the company. The finding is also corroborated by what Dhindsa (2019) said: universities must ponder students’ well-being to further effectively prepare them for the changing employment setting with sureness and clarity.

Better work opportunity is also one of the identified gains in finishing the GS degree. Due to increased exposure to various global, social, and business issues, the respondents have gained perspective on building their own business. According to some respondents, the strategies taught in their program have helped them perform administration and human management duties in their business. Different perspectives from classmates who are professionals in other industries were learned to see varied roles. Some were qualified for career advancement, and opportunities in other institutions like obtaining the degree have opened opportunities for them in the university and acquired a part-time job in other agencies because of their credentials. Their employers have also considered the GS alumni for other recommendations because of the competitive advantage gained. The



UB GS degree has also qualified the alumni to be speakers for seminars and symposia and be collaborators for research. Here are some of what the respondents have written: “Teach w/ the graduate school; opportunities/ gets invited to talk to seminars - symposia; Increased salary; collaborate with research.”

The MPA graduate claims, “MPA became an additional leverage in my pursuit of a managerial position in the government.” The other MPA graduate said that finishing his MPA program increased his competency level and qualifications in securing a position in their company.

The responses substantiate what Quitevis, Lopez, Binay-an, and Sanidad (2019) found out in their graduate school alumni’s tracer study in Region 1 where some of these alumni have experienced being promoted after finishing their Master’s Degree. These benefits obtained by the alumni have indeed agreed with the human capital theory by Becker and Rosen, as cited by Xu and Fletcher (2017). The alumni’s personal improvements in their knowledge, skills, and attitudes significantly impact their performance and qualifications to higher positions, as Xu and Fletcher (2017) have posited. The increase in human capital increases with additional education, and the individual’s market value increases in proportion to the amount of education he receives. The credentials the alumni have earned, and recognition from their institutions capture these. Furthermore, the study of Gonzales (2019) has stated that having graduated post-graduate degrees increases the individual’s professional value, and he/she can obtain additional remuneration.

The personal and professional benefits written by the UB GS alumni show that the quality of GS education in UB prepares and readies the students for work and the workplace as a response to the ever-increasing pressure from governments and employer groups, as stated by Bui (2019) and Clarke (2018). It also shows that the role of master-level studies, as mentioned by Au (2019), is satisfied, which is to upgrade their knowledge



and skills and upgrade their academic or professional credentials. Also, the findings are confirmed by Cagasan, Dargantes, Florentino, and Lasquites (2017) in their Tracer Study of their GS Alumni that a great majority of the respondents (92%) considered the graduate degrees they earned as highly relevant to their current jobs. Moreover, Segismundo and Zacarias (2016) further confirmed the findings of this research when they gleaned that majority of their GS alumni claim that the latter's present employment is related to their graduate degree. Moreover, Segismundo and Zacarias (2016) confirm this study's results because their respondents claimed that their programs of study have very positively contributed to the graduates' personal and professional growth, particularly on people skills and personality development. The findings are also corroborated by Javier and Menez (2016) in their research on the MPA program of their university, where their GS alumni claimed their curriculum as excellently conforming to the private and public demands employment market. Furthermore, the findings agree with what Stackpole (2019) studied, which examined the learning, development, and growth graduates of universities in the USA and established that a number of the respondents had meaningful progress and growth during their academic careers.

Personal and Professional Challenges Encountered by the UB GS Alumni

The challenges the masters and doctorate UB GS alumni encountered in the workplace, both personally and professionally, are presented in this section.

Personal Challenges. After obtaining the degree, the respondents think that they need to be more responsible and trustworthy in the workplace and live up to the superiors and colleagues' expectations. The master's degree alumni even feel pressured to pursue a doctorate. Also, they experience the expectation to apply whatever they have learned from the program for the workplace and be one step ahead of the subordinates. Some have been undecided about their career paths, like enrolling in a new course, applying



for a job, or starting a business. These are all the personal thoughts of the alumni as given in their statements: “After graduating, I was actually undecided, I have been asking myself ‘what am I gonna do next? Am I going to continue my law school? Or am I going to build my own business? Or am going to apply for a job, and forever be an employee?’” “Expectations of the other people; application of the learnings and skills acquired from MBA.” “After earning the MBA degree, my superiors expect a lot from me. I need to be more responsible and trustworthy”. This was seconded by a MPA graduate: “People expect that you know everything since you were able to finish your masteral.”

Professional Challenges. The respondents have also been challenged with higher expectations from their superiors, like pursuing a doctorate and performing better in the workplace. They were given more workloads and greater responsibilities to produce quality output and share the knowledge gained from graduate school and mentor colleagues. Some have found themselves a threat to their superiors who do not have a master’s or doctorate degree. However, for some alumni, the degree was not relevant to the new work assignment, and no promotion was given to them. Immediate promotion is not guaranteed by their earning of degree due to external factors like insufficient government funds. Some alumni have had difficulty applying for the desired job position because they have a degree but had no working experience. Some of their statements are: “the finished course was not relevant to the new work assignment given. No promotion took place... Since I am a masters degree holder now, I tend to feel pressured on doing my job since I am expected to do better now or to be one step ahead.” Another wrote, “Job mismatch since I don’t have an extensive work experience, but already a graduate of Masters. Entry level positions did not hire me because of my educational background, while companies that require a higher position opted not to hire me because I lack job experience”

Researchers Buenviaje, Encio, Refozar, Anuran, Camello, and Laguador



(2016) agree to the presence of challenges. They posited that in the professional life of graduates, leadership and management skills are needed by graduates in order to address the needs of the industries; and, that companies commonly require employees who have abilities related to quantitative, analytical and strategic thinking to do greater responsibilities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings and results presented in the previous sections, the following are concluded from the study:

1. The UB GS alumni are considered employable.
2. The graduate programs of UB provide opportunities for the alumni to acquire credentials for work promotion and other jobs requiring their specialization.
3. The alumni encounter various personal and professional challenges after finishing their GS program.
4. The UB GS alumni recommended varied ways of making better their respective graduate programs.

Recommendations for the Programs by the UB GS Alumni

The recommendations given by the UB GS alumni were categorized in terms of curriculum, faculty and employees, facilities, and some enrichment.

Curriculum. Most of the respondents find the curriculum not lacking and is well-designed as they have responded “none” to the question of how the curriculum can be improved. However, some respondents wrote some recommendations. First, one said that the GS programs could be better if there is an immersion or exposure of the students. Second, some respondents suggested that the GS programs be open only to those who have work-related experience and not open to fresh graduates. These were some statements given: “To bring back the mandatory work-experience



of incoming enrollees (no fresh graduates allowed unless with work experience).”

The third is the implementation of Distance Learning. Since most of the students are working, they have suggested that the graduate programs may also implement Distance Learning. Online classes and more modular classes may be organized to help the students from farther places to enrol still and not have to travel. This is one of the suggestions given to prevent students from being delayed in taking up subjects due to concerns about schedules: “Some of the students need to travel from their location to Baguio just to attend their classes which only limits them to Friday and Saturday classes, some subjects arent enrolled thus delays the students ability to graduate earlier or on time. So why not implement Distance Learning of Online classes.”

The fourth point for improving the program in terms of content could be to focus on practical, updated, significant, or useful topics and subjects that concern the present generation or era. A respondent said: “More on practical’s/updated/significant or useful subjects/topics especially of the concerns of today’s generation or era.” The fifth point is adding foreign language subject to the MA English curriculum. The respondent stated, “If possible, add Foreign Language in the subjects...so to cope with the advancement of other schools in the related programs. Some schools with AB have already offered Foreign Languages even in undergrad.”

Sixth is internship/immersion. A respondent said, “Government Internship Program – During my time there was no internship in government agencies. I recommend that an internship program should be included in the curriculum so that students will have a better knowledge of the actual set up of the government and have a better grasp of the actual scope of government work / function.”

Faculty and Employees. Most of the respondents find the faculty highly qualified, knowledgeable, and competent. They are also described as



accommodating and providing quality customer service. Two points for improvement were given. The first is for some faculty qualifications. Technical subjects must be taught by professors with the same line of expertise as law subjects by lawyers. Second, professors must be adept at technology. That is, professors should also try to use technology to teach the subjects they are handling. These were some statements given by the respondents: “Technical subjects may be taught by technical instructions/ professors with the same line of expertise. (e.g. law subjects by lawyers).” Another noted, “Professors should try to use technology for their subjects.”

For the research advisers, some alumni mentioned the availability of them when needed. Communication through online modes or face-to-face modes should be included in the schedule. It was also suggested by an MPA graduate, “Additional Faculty who have relevant experiences in the government or in the field of PUBLIC administration.”

Facilities. Most respondents did not give any recommendations for the improvement of facilities. Some mentioned that the facilities for them are well-equipped. Few recommendations were given. Some respondents mentioned having separate classrooms for undergraduate students. The classrooms that the undergraduate students use are dirty and are used by graduate school students in the afternoon. Furthermore, the senior high students are usually dismissed in the afternoon and are noisy when the graduate program classes start. A respondent said: “The senior high students are noisy during the afternoon. The classrooms are dirty as well when its time for the graduate school students to use it.”

For the library resources, some of the alumni mentioned the need to update references in the library. The school may also consider equipping classrooms with internet connectivity. The alumni stated: “Classrooms with internet connectivity... More updated references in the library”

Other enrichments. Diverse additional recommendations were given by



the respondents like tracking the program's alumni; continuous refinement of the policies/programs of instructions; strategies and practice concerning the mission and vision; the changing of time/schedule; and having an acquaintance party for the students.

To increase the number of enrollees, the respondents suggested opening courses recognized in some specializations and ASEAN like masters and doctorate for dental public health and encouraging more faculty from other dental colleges to enrol. Offering scholarships to the students, especially to the non-uniformed personnel of the government, was also suggested. Being open to blended learning forms can further be a means to attract enrollees since they do not have to be in the school personally. Here are their suggestions: "Offering more scholarship for alumni and non-uniformed personnel of the government."

Another wrote, "Since the thrust is alignment, a program on Master in dental public health and Doctor of Philosophy in dental public health or other specializations recognized in the field of dentistry and ASEAN should be opened/offered."

For the MPA program, "Include more activities or projects that will gauge the students' knowledge about public administration (example: let students be involved in government programs / attend seminars / organize seminars / let them observe actual government work through internship programs)."



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