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A Tracer Study of the Doctor of Education Graduates in a State University in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study examined the relevance and effectiveness of the Doctor of Education program of Laguna State Polytechnic University, Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines; demographic profiles of respondents such as age, gender, civil status, position, school type and details of promotion; achievement in current job, evaluation of achievement of program goals, and achievement of program outcomes. Based on the results, the program has successfully achieved its goal of developing a workforce of leaders capable of playing a key role at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This is reflected in the promotion of graduates to higher management positions such as superintendents, principals, and other supervisory positions in public school districts. Graduates feel that their degree has given them the confidence to establish themselves as educational leaders, work well with stakeholders, improve their communication and leadership skills, are satisfied and constantly strive to advance professionally and advance to the next rank. Successful practices in the areas of educational administration, school

administration and resource management, incentives and employer's feedback should be documented.

Keywords: graduates, principals, supervisory position, educational leaders

INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, graduate studies are effective in improving the skills of education professionals with the aim of contributing to the continuous improvement of classroom education and learning, the provision of student services, and the management of educational programs (CMO 53, series 2017).

Education is particularly helpful in bringing about behavioral changes, developing innate skills, and training individuals to lead successful lives (Qureshi, 2017). Education is available for them to learn and raise awareness of the entire knowledge that helps them progress and develop (Khan, 2017). It also provides students with the essential tools and training in order to prepare them to meet the demands of the workplace. As a result, educational institutions are innovating their curriculum and promoting activities that enhance the learning experience and positive classroom environment in schools to ensure successful graduates. Innovative programs are offered to assure that graduates have the inevitable attributes of the 21st-century workplace.

In the context of globalization and ASEAN integration, it is of paramount importance to improve the quality of education. If education is to respond to global and regional phenomena concerning individual success and social progress, it must have a strong stance for reform and change. It also must continue to strive for innovation, new dimensions, and new ways of thinking and actions.

A rational approach to addressing these challenges is for institutions to continuously track and evaluate programs aimed at making the curriculum appropriate and functional. Each school's program must be designed with specific goals in mind. Evaluation can be a very useful tool to determine if a program has achieved the stated objectives and has made changes or innovations to improve the program. The reputation of an educational institution relies on its excellent products, particularly its graduates. Ultimately, graduates are considered as an important factor in promoting, strengthening and expanding the reputation and progress of educational institutions (Faize, Ahmed and Jabeen, 2015).

Alumni are absolutely the best evidence of the effectiveness of the program in terms of employment and status. In addition, they are a good source of feedback on the relevance of the program in the current employment market. Graduate tracer research is a form of empirical research that can provide valuable information to assess the outcome of education and training at a particular university (Woya, 2019). This is a reliable tool to determine the quality and range of features of the services that the university provides to graduates.

Higher education stands out as one of the most important keys to overcoming change through instruction, research, and extension in the problems of 21st-century education. Accommodating the necessary reforms has become a significant problem for all Philippine

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Producing graduates who are completely prepared to use what they have learned in school and apply it to their individual work is one strategy to solve these challenges. Hence, the impression of HEIs in the Philippines is likely tangled to its reputation of generating graduates who would undoubtedly acquire good and stable jobs after graduation. Tracer studies are common research methods for educational institutions to check on the employability of their graduates (Cuadra, Aure & Gonzaga, 2019).

Laguna State Polytechnic University (LSPU) at Los Banos campus is offering graduate programs in education. The Master of Arts in Education (MAED) program with six majors was offered in 2004 because of the increased demands for the teachers with MAED degree in the Laguna province and other parts of the country. Eventually, the Doctor of Education (EdD) program was offered in 2012. The number of graduate students enrolled in the EdD program increased every year since then apparently due to the need for more competent teachers and school heads having advanced degrees and better skills in the field of educational management. The Graduate Studies and Applied Research (GSAR) of the College of Teacher Education, LSPU-Los Banos has already produced a total of 81 Doctor of Education graduates from 2016-2021 and distributed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Doctor of Education graduates from 2016-2021.

Academic Year Graduated	No. of Graduates
2015-2016	7
2016-2017	5
2017-2018	14
2018-2019	8
2019-2020	23
2020-2021	24
TOTAL	**81**

This study aimed to determine the relevance and effectiveness of the Doctor of Education major in Educational Management Program. Specifically, it determined (1) the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, length of service, type of school, and promotion details, (2) the reasons for pursuing the Doctor of Education program from the LSPU graduate program, (3) the performance level in their present job, (4) the assessment on the attainment of the program objectives, and (5) the attainment of the outcomes of the program.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey research and was conducted from April-July, 2022. Respondents included the graduates of the Doctor of Education from the academic years 2016-2021. To gather data on the graduates' sociodemographic profile, the reasons for pursuing EdD from LSPU, the assessment on the attainment of the program objectives, and the attainment of the outcomes of the program, the research group sent online questionnaires to the graduates thru their facebook (FB) and e-mail accounts. The respondents were assured that the data they provided were treated and kept with utmost confidentiality and used only for the purpose of

the study. The collected data through the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency counts, percentages, and means.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, length of service, present position, salary range, region where they are employed or teaching, types of school and education level where they are connected is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondents' profile.

Profile	Frequency	Percent
Age		
25-30	15	27.78
31-42	19	35.19
43-52	12	22.22
53 and above	8	14.81
Sex		
Male	16	29.63
Female	38	70.37
Civil Status		
Single	18	33.33
Married	24	44.44
Widower	6	11.11
Separated	6	11.11
Length of Service		
10-20	12	22.22
21-30	20	37.04
31 and above	22	40.74
Present Position		
Public School District Supervisor	5	9.26
Principal	10	18.52
School Head	12	22.22
Assistant Professor	13	24.07
Master Teacher	7	12.97
Teacher III	7	12.07
Salary range		
Php 20,000-29,999	6	11.11
30,000-40,999	8	14.81
41,000-50,999	22	40.74
51,000-60,999	9	16.67
61,000 and above	9	16.67
Education Level where respondents are employed	25	46.30
Basic	16	29.63
Secondary	13	24.07
Tertiary		
Types of School		

Public	51	94.44
Private	3	5.56

The respondents are mostly with Middle Ages (31-42 years old; 35.19%), followed by those with ages ranging from 25-30 years (27.78%), and the majority are females (70.37%). Meanwhile, 44.44% of respondents are married; 40.74% are in the service for 31 years or more; 24.07% are assistant professors and teaching at tertiary level; 22.22% are school heads; 40.74% with salary ranging from Php 41,000-50,999; and 46.30% are employed in the basic education schools. As to the types of schools, 94.44% of the respondents are in public schools, and 5.56% are in private schools.

School effectiveness is primarily related to the quality of education of the administrator. It is commonly known that all children must learn under the direction of an administrator. Whether in elementary or secondary school, the principal is the most important person for the success of the school (Yavuz, 2006). Awareness of what is expected of school leaders and how they carry out these responsibilities will facilitate school success.

Many of the school heads from the study are employed in the basic public elementary schools. Therefore, school leaders must continually grow in their profession by pursuing advanced educational degrees and training in order to keep up with school changes and demands. Furthermore, they would be able to fulfill their assigned duties and responsibilities as expected by teachers and non-teachers, stakeholders and students.

Table 3. Promotion status.

Period of promotion after graduation	**Frequency**	**Percent**
After 1 year	11	20.37
After 1 but less than 2 years	15	27.78
After 2 years	16	29.63
After 2 years but less than 3 years	6	11.11
After 3 years	6	11.11
Level of promotion		
Higher level rank (Administrative position)	27	50.00
Higher level teaching position	20	37.03
Not yet promoted	7	12.96

As shown in Table 3, the graduates of EdD program were promoted between one year to two years after and the majority occupied the higher-level rank as head teachers, school heads, principals and public school district supervisors. Likewise, 37% (n= 20) were promoted to the next higher level teaching position, while seven are still waiting for their promotion.

Table 4. Respondents' reasons for enrolling at LSPU-Los Banos campus.

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
For professional development	18	33.33
Availability of course offering in the institution	7	12.96
Affordable tuition fee	6	11.11
Status or prestige of the profession	11	20.37
Prospect for promotion	12	22.22

Table 4 shows the compelling reasons of the respondents for enrolling in the Doctor of Education program at LSPU-Los Banos campus, and they are as follows: professional development, 33.33%; prospect for promotion, 22.22%; status or prestige of the profession (20.37%), and availability of course offering in the institution (12.96%), and affordable tuition fee (11.11%). This implies that respondents achieved their desire for professional development since 29.62% (n=16) of them were promoted to the next higher-level rank (administrative positions such as Public School District Supervisor, Principal and School Head) after two years.

Table 5. Extent of attainment of the program objectives

EdD graduates are expected to:	Mean	Interpretation
1. Demonstrate competence and expert level of theoretical knowledge to undertake advanced independent research in educational management	4.72	Very high extent
2. Pursue academic excellence through a structured system of studies in philosophy, management, and research	4.71	Very high extent
3. Generate and sustain a high degree of professionalism and consistent diligence specifically in the art of transforming theory into practice and of converting knowledge into acceptable policy	4.80	Very high extent
4. Maintain the respect and trust of the community through manifestations of high morale and commitment to the profession	4.68	Very high extent
5. Manifest leadership, instructional and communication skills which are necessary in managing constituents of educational system	4.83	Very high extent
Overall	**4.73**	**Very high extent**

As shown in Table 5, the respondents feel that they received sufficient information about the teaching profession, professional development skills, deep professional understanding, and educational management. By completing their advanced studies, they became confident and effective leaders, improved their leadership and governance skills, enhanced their competitiveness, and learned how to effectively deal with stakeholders and how to understand the broader aspects of school operations.

Table 6. Respondents' performance level in their present position.

Indicative statements	Mean	Interpretation
1. Does the job with professionalism	4.83	Outstanding
2. Shows honesty and dedication to work at all times	4.81	Outstanding
3. Utilizes resources to its maximum level with initiative and resourcefulness	4.67	Outstanding
4. Works with harmonious and healthy human relations with peers, co-employees, and superiors	4.71	Outstanding
5. Maintains a healthy and upright leadership	4.84	Outstanding
6. Reports to work promptly and regularly	4.72	Outstanding
7. Submits requirements/forms on time	4.65	Outstanding
8. Joins all activities with enthusiasm	4.71	Outstanding
9. Shows commitment in doing the job	4.81	Outstanding
10. Does the job with passion	4.78	Outstanding
Overall	**4.75**	**Outstanding**

Table 6 shows that the graduates maintain a healthy and upright leadership (mean, 4.84) and perform their tasks very professionally and show commitment in doing job with both (mean, 4.81), and all are interpreted as outstanding. Respondents' timely submission (mean, 4.65), maybe due to the need to complete a lot of paperwork and reports. The overall performance of the respondents (mean, 4.75) is interpreted as outstanding.

The findings of the study affirmed with Cuadra, Aure and Gonzaga (2019) that the impression of HEIs in the Philippines is likely tangled to its reputation of generating graduates who would undoubtedly acquire good and stable jobs after graduation. Tracer studies, such as the one used by the researchers are common research methods for educational institutions to check on the employability of their graduates.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it is concluded that the Doctor of Education program of LSPU-Los Banos campus has successfully achieved its goal of developing a workforce of leaders that are capable of taking on essential roles in the primary, secondary and higher fields of education. This is reflected in the promotion of graduates to higher management positions such as supervisors, principals, school heads and other supervisory positions in the public-school districts. Graduates believed that completing their degrees gave them the confidence to establish themselves as educational leaders, worked well with stakeholders, and improved their communication and leadership skills. They professionally work and maintain their real leadership skills.

This survey found that graduates of the Doctor of Education program of the Graduate Studies and Applied Research of the College of Teacher Education, LSPU-Los Banos campus are satisfied and always aspire to achieve professional growth and expected promotion to the next rank. Successful practices in the areas of educational administration, school operations and resource management, performance awards, and employer feedback should be documented.

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