A Tracer Study of Graduate Programs: Evidences of College of Education's Commitment in Transforming Lives

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Abstract

Higher education institutions are significantly contributing to the socio-economic development of the country by endowing individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and capability to become more productive and useful citizen of the country. This tracer study on PUP COED GS programs; Master in Education Management and Doctor in Education Management employed the use of exploratory mixed method of research using two phases in process; interview and observation to further improve the questionnaire which constitutes the 2nd phase by means of distributing the same via google form, Facebook accounts, emails and personal cellular number in order to achieve a response rate of 63% from MEM graduates and 45% from DEM graduates. Using the first phase method, the researchers were able to transcribe participant's responses that were coded. The themes were generally anchored from the research questions. Each of the four themes have sub-themes emerged based on the identified common codes and descriptions reflected during the interviews. While, personal and employment profile were able to capture from the questionnaire along with other sub-questions necessary to provide feedback on the improvement of the PUP COED graduate school programs understudied.

Keywords: Tracer Study, Graduate Programs, Education's commitment

Introduction

Higher education institutions are significantly contributing to the socio-economic development of the country by endowing individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and capability to become more productive and useful citizen of the country. While it is true that factors of technological advances and increased global competitiveness are indication of what the future is all about (Harrison, 2017), HEIs are expected to evolve as well to focus on innovative solutions in order to meet the demands of times.

As the world continuously experiencing change, the biggest challenge is highly dependent on generation of students living in a VUCA world which stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous. Furthermore, leaders, teachers or faculty members and students will need to work harder to ensure that the education and experiences provided; competencies acquired is what make up the future generations of workforce in our country. As a result, there are measures or new strategies that were discovered in response to the pandemic around the world to become adoptive of new innovations in the area of education and employment in order to keep students, teachers and workers safe while being productive at the same time. Bigger and much complicated responsibilities are identified in addressing pressing issues in the academic sector, much more on the higher education institutions who are considered to mould the future leaders that will lead the next generations of workforce.

Raising the bar of teacher education through updating one's knowledge has been spelled out in the Department of Education Order No, 66 series of 2007 otherwise known as the "Revised Guidelines on the Selection and Promotion of Other Teaching, Related Teaching and Non-Teaching positions", and DepEd Order #42 series of 2007 or the Revised Guidelines on the Selection and Promotion and Designation of School Heads; the Commission on Higher Education National Budget Circular 461 (NBC 461, 1998). The mode of promotion scheme employed is a mass promotion based on the guidelines by the NBC 461 jointly approved by the Philippine association of state colleges and universities (PASUC) approved by the commission on higher education (CHED) and was funds allocated by the department of budget and management (DBM), putting premiums on significant qualifications achieved in schools, colleges and universities and other required documents signalling potential fit between individuals' capabilities and job opportunities in the labor market (WEF, 2019).

The role of higher learning is truly reflected in a research article by Dondi, Klier, Panier and Schubert (2021). The researchers concluded in their survey that participants with a university degree that a higher average proficiency scores across 56 distinct elements of talent as identified among foundational or DELTA skills needed for the future of work along with 13 skills group namely; critical thinking, planning and ways of working, mobilizing systems, developing relationships, self-

awareness and self- management, entrepreneurship, goals achievement, digital fluency or citizenship, software use and development and understanding digital systems; divided in four categories of cognitive, interpersonal, self-leadership and digital, suggesting that those with higher levels of education are better prepared for changes in the workplace.

Meanwhile, Jones (2015) further described the role of learning outcomes in enhancing the quality of Higher Education, as external measure of quality, and as foundation for internationalizing the curriculum; and these signifies the important role of teachers in higher education. Dash (2015 p. 41) strongly argued that excellence should be the prime consideration in offering programs in HEIs with effective teaching workforce, research and technological innovation to ensure in achieving quality higher education. While, Suhardiyanto, Herlina and Hartulistiyono (2015, p 47) put premiums on quality teaching that is influenced by contextual shift within the higher education environment.

In the Philippines, the experience of COVID 19 pandemic becomes a machinery to accelerate this transformation in education system resulting to review the current educational practices in curriculum and instruction; competencies of teachers and educational leaders; institutional and policy reforms in education and Philippine Qualifications and learning outcomes. PQF was developed as a call for comparability of competencies at various educational levels within the ASEAN region (Ogena, 2015 p 77). This is partly supported in April 28, 2021 in an online forum facilitated by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce Incorporated' Education Task Force with their Philippine Education Development Model to identify the different issues concerning each of the educational practices which highly raise the need to reassess education system; harmonizing each of the elements of education from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Department of Education (DepEd), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to comprise what legacy to live for the next generation. Leading the way to Higher Education Transformation—Universities across the country which are operating in a rapidly changing global context.

More so, The Commission on Higher Education or CHED of the Philippines as the regulatory body of Education focusing on higher learning institutions, envisions of making the Philippine higher education system equitable and producing locally responsive, innovative, and globally competitive graduates and lifelong learners. This lead to mandating higher education institutions align its vision and mission that gradually translated among its graduates; graduates that thereby use as metrics of defining quality education as outcomes of the university. Believing in Latif and Bahroom (2010) findings focusing that the quality of a university can be determined by the evaluation made by its own graduates. Having gone through the system and graduated from it, they are in a very good position to appraise the quality of education which they have received in terms of preparing them to become more holistic individuals equipped with relevant lifelong learning skills.

Hence, at this point, a tracer study from the College of Education graduate programs particularly in the Doctor in Education Management and Master in Education Management was undertaken, to yield a number of data that would be relevant for the improvement of the curriculum; as well as seeking what the graduates had already accomplished by means of graduating from the program; what economic and professional value added had they enjoyed with by attaining a graduate degree program?; are their expectations in their employment been granted through promotion or achieving higher income or position? Likewise, it seeks to determine if they better off now than before. If the change is attributed in some part to their COED graduate program. Further, it asks about their personal evaluation whether the program they took is relevant and of quality. It sought facets of the program needs improvement and other recommendations to fine tune and make the program relevant and responsive to the change of times. The "who" and "what" are also important data needed in identification of these graduates as it connotes importance on why tracer study has to be undertaken given higher expectations leading the education system in the next generations. This study was used as an instrument in identifying challenges in the DEM and MEM students' success through the former learners' perception of experience in the institution. As a whole, the study captured the whole experience of graduate school study; seeking graduates' feedback in determining realistic improvement in the university. This is to ensure that quality learning outcomes had been in the core of these programs in the College of Education of Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

Methodology

This research study particularly employed the use of Exploratory Mixed Method Research Design using two phases of data collection. The first phase was of qualitative data collection and analysis through interviews and observation then followed by the collection of quantitative data (questionnaires) as the second phase, to test or generalize the initial qualitative results of qualitative research. Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017) defined mixed methods research as the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e. g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.

The researchers applied the multiple sources of evidence methodology to validate answers of the respondents from Master in Education Management and Doctor in Education Management to include interviews, observation and questionnaires among the procedures undertaken:

• Interviews and Observations – This is the first phase undertaken by the researchers. Considering the nature of work of the graduates from these programs understudied, the researchers scheduled observation and interviews in different days via zoom link starting May to September of 2021. As an exploratory mixed-method research design was used in this study, researchers explore and understand data based on the described experiences and impact of the graduate study program on their life. This research was guided by four research questions:

RQ1. What is the participant's reason for enrolment to graduate school?

RQ2: What challenges do the participants experienced in graduate school?

RQ3: How do the participants describe their experienced as a whole?

RQ4: How do participants describe the impact (contribution) of their graduation to their personal or professional life?

The participants are mostly consisting of graduates particularly hold a supervisory responsibility and or higher ranking officials in their respective institutions; from the Department of Education, from the University of the Philippines, Philippine Normal University, Limay Polytechnic College in Bataan and other International schools namely; Saigon International University in Vietnam, Rafols Institute in Mongolia, and in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

• Questionnaires: the second phase is with the use of a questionnaire which was developed through the incorporation of the themes as provided by the participants in the interview phase. The questionnaire consists of four parts (4); information pertaining to personal profile including that of their present and permanent address, sex, date of birth, civil status, mobile number used and email address to keep updated of their whereabouts. Secondly, is seeking graduates' employment information such as: name of their employer or company, type of organization and their employment, nature of work stations, employment status, place of work,

monthly income, if work related to the degree graduated from, how applicable the skills learned from the graduate program, and satisfaction derived from the program. Thirdly, is the use of checklist on the contribution of the program to graduates' personal and professional aspects; rating of the program. Fourth part, sought MEM and DEM impact through an open-ended questions to comprise the following: Personal reason/s on your enrolment for further study, challenging part of your graduate school experience, description of experience in COED Graduate School using the rating of 1 to 10; 1 as the lowest and 10 as the highest; please indicate your reason, suggestions to enhance the program in PUP-COEDGS, description of the impact/contribution of your graduation to Graduate Study program to their personal and professional welfare.

There were around 83 graduates of MEM with 62.5% response rate (30) and 46 (45.10%) from DEM with 102 total graduates from SY 2014-2015 to 2019-2020; They were all considered for this Tracer Study by means of distributing questionnaire via googleform; emails and even sent via the graduates' personal number and fb account that were requested from the College of Education Registrar's Office. Considering what Tracer Study can be provided; valuable information for evaluating the productivity of the higher education and training institutions (Tertiary Education Commission. (2009), follow up on their graduates; find out what they are doing in so far as the education and training they have received from their alma mater (Tumapon, The Manila Times, September 9, 2016), and determination of the quality of a university through evaluation made by its own graduates (Latifah and Bahroom, 2010) are the practical reasons for this study.

Results

Using thematic analysis proposed by Clarke and Braun (2013), transcriptions of participant's responses were coded. The themes were generally anchored from the research questions. Each of the four themes have sub-themes emerged based on the identified common codes and descriptions reflected during the interviews.

In order to fully address the four research questions, the illustration below displayed the analysis derived from the interviews conducted.

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
RQ1: **Reasons for Enrolment to Graduate School**	1.1 The Purposeful Pursuit for Personal Growth as Self Fulfillment	personal growth, personal development, self- fulfillment
	1.2 The Value of Professional Advancement as equated to Career Progression and Increased Remuneration	professional growth and development; career growth and development, work promotion, high salary,

		academic opportunities, advance learning
	1.3 Academic Standards and Educational Alignment	quality education offered, university good reputation, excellent teaching, educational alignment.
RQ2 **Challenges Experienced in the Graduate School**	2.1 Academic Struggles in Writing and Completing Theses and Dissertations	doing and finishing my dissertation, dissertation writing, preparing and completing thesis
	2.2 Course Expectations and Requirements	professors are experts in their subject area, making it hard for us to navigate requirements, stressful academic requirements, the high expectations of the course
	2.3 Work-Study Role Conflicts	Coping with tasks as a full-time employee at the same time submitting on time the required tasks working while studying (load of work), conflict with work
	2.4 Distance of Residence to the University	travel from my island province every weekend, long travel weekly; travel distance from home to school
RQ3 **Overall Experiences as Described by the Graduate Students**	3.1 Personal and Professional Support System	meet new friends, lot of connections both in public and private sectors, the support of my professors, supportive friends and classmates
	3.2 Meeting Personal and Professional Expectations	self-fulfillment, learned a lot from the professors and it met my expectations' faculty are high caliber in their respective fields, boost more my confidence in terms of doing my job
RQ4 **Impact of Graduate Study Program in their Life**	4.1 Career Boosting and Promotion Impact	promoted as Assistant Professor and Head of a department in my institution, promotion due to the educational qualification, promoted as School Principal III, promoted as OIC- Assistant Schools Division Superintendent of SDO Makati
	4.2 Impact on Professional Networks and Linkages	establish linkages, and relationships with researchers, academics and scholars from other educational institutions; panel reactor to some international research conferences,
	4.3	contributed a lot to me and to my job,

Impact on the Fulfillment of the Purpose Driven Personal and Professional Life	improved my confidence personally and professionally, contributed much to my personal and professional welfare, helped increase my value as an employee, self-fulfilling for the individual who deserve it,
4.4 From Theory to Work-based Praxis Impact	participate in managerial decisions in our school, practice what I have learned in my profession, with the management skills learned, I have easily adjusted as a young administrator.

Theme 1: Reasons for Enrolment to Graduate School

Sub-theme 1.1: The Purposeful Pursuit for Personal Growth as Self Fulfilment

This sub- theme reveal that participants purposefully pursued and strive for graduate studies for personal growth and enhancement reasons. Evidently, common keywords shared and expressed by the participants were: "personal growth, personal development, and self-fulfilment".

As implied by their narratives, the most significant manifestation of self- fulfilment was characterized by a certain level of personal growth. As mentioned in the study of Morodenko, 2011; Shadrikov, 2010; self-actualization contributes to the achievement of the person's inner world for autonomy. In the context of this study, proving that they could upscaled themselves to maximize their capabilities and competencies purposefully through pursuing for graduate studies as realization and fulfillment of their lives. More so, De Jager-van Straaten A, Jorgensen L, Hill C, Nel JA (2016), purposeful engagement in the pursuit of personal growth among students includes aspects of their academic achievement and life in general.

Sub-theme 1.2: The Value of Professional Advancement as equated to Career Progression and Increased Remuneration

This sub-theme emerged on the recurring narratives of the participants towards their professional development. Participants prevalently shared their views on "professional growth and development; career growth and development, work promotion, high salary, academic opportunities, and advance learning".

This implied the importance of professional advancement as determinants to the participants' work promotion and aim for higher salaries. Hence, professional advancement allows graduate students to competitively pursue for higher career position equated with increased remuneration. As a general perception among the

participants, enrolled in graduate studies allows them to accelerate themselves for better career however few of them mentioned on the importance of the said professional engagements to upscale their learning and competencies to prepare and themselves far advanced from their learners. This competitive edge of having advance degree allows them to experience higher sense of value based on acquired promotion and increased salaries.

Sub- theme 1.3: Academic Standards and Educational Alignment

This sub-theme focused on the perceived academic standards and graduate studies program offered of the university aligned to their field of specialization. Participants mentioned about "quality education offered in graduate school, university good reputation, excellent teaching, and educational alignment".

As implied by the narratives, participants are after of the university standards and alignment of their graduate programs to their specializations. In the study on Martin (2014), he revealed that strong university curriculum of the programs allows graduate to compete with international industries. This was supported by the Støren & Aamodt, (2010), when they mentioned about the impact of quality program to graduate education employability.

Theme 2: Challenges Experienced in the Graduate School

Sub-theme 2.1: Academic Struggles in Writing and Completing Theses and Dissertations

This sub-theme narrated by the participants focused on the perceived challenges as experienced by the them in writing and completing their theses and dissertations.

As mentioned by Shahsavar, Z& Kourepaz, S & Bulut, S. (2020) , the main problem was lack of sufficient time in critically synthesized related information as well as the negligence of some supervisors and professors to fulfil their obligations to provide the students with sufficient information about writing a literature review.

Furthermore, Puspita, C. (2019) study revealed that there three factors affecting students' difficulties in writing thesis, lack of confidence to decide on the topic; second, sociocultural factors in understanding about the university research culture; and the third factor is linguistic factors especially in paraphrasing sentences.

Sub-theme 2.2: Struggle in Meeting Course Expectations and Academic Requirements

As mentioned in the interviews, participants struggled on complying on the demands of the course requirements. Accordingly, they shared difficulties on the having professors with expertise in the said course, hereby making difficult for them to meet high expectations set hence, perceived it as stressful academic requirements.

They narrated the following: difficulty to prepare reports and take-home tasks, not very familiar with research works so it's really difficult., hard time in coping school-related activities (assignments and reports) hard time doing the research paper.

Sub-theme 2.3: Work-Study Role Conflicts

The third sub-theme identified was related to participants' conflicting work- study. Here, the participants acknowledged that both work and study have their own demands and need to be fulfilled. The following were narrated by the participants "coping with tasks as a full-time employee at the same time submitting on time the required tasks, working while studying, and role conflict."

Accordingly, fulfillment of this dual role demand brought tension which ultimately causes work-study conflict (Khan, S. A., 2016). More so, as cited in the studies of Baron & Corbin, (2012); Jackling & Natoli, (2011); Webber, Krylow, & Zhang, (2013), working while studying can lead to detrimental outcomes such as low academic engagement, performances and poor grades.

The above sub-theme concerning the academic struggles of the participants in writing and completing theses and dissertations was supported by the work-study roles of the graduate students.

Sub-theme 2.4: Distance of the Residence to the University

The fourth sub-themes narrated by the participants emphasized their difficulties based on the distance of their residence to the school. As inferred, participants came from far places. As mentioned by them "travel from my island province every weekend, long travel weekly, and travel distance from home to school".

Various literatures evidently showed the effects of distance of residence to school on students' performance (Easton & Ferrari, 2015; The New Times, 2016;). This was supported by Getachew, B. (2018), as they consider the negative influence school proximity to the academic performance of students. More so, as stated by Ebinum, Akamagune, & Ugbong, (2017), long distances travelled to school are among the major reasons of the encountered difficulties of the students especially in coping to perform well in school.

Theme 3: Overall Experiences as Described by the Graduate Students

Sub-theme 3.1: Personal and Professional Support System

This sub-theme focused on the prevalent responses of the participants on both personal and professional support system they had. Participants usually framed their narratives on "having a new set of friends, connections both in public and private sectors, the support of my professors, and having supportive friends and classmates".

This implied the importance of the support system in navigating the graduate study program. A recommended by Jairam, D. and. Kahl, D. H. (2012) in their study that rapport building with a doctoral adviser as well as maintaining professional connections is vital in navigating the doctoral program. Indeed, the extended support of classmates, friends, and even professors in graduate school allows them to pursue their studies despite challenges experienced.

Sub-theme 3.2: Meeting Personal and Professional Expectations

This sub-theme highlighted as a narrative in support of Theme 1: Reasons for Enrolment to Graduate School. Here, participants clearly recognize that their purposeful personal reasons to enroll in graduate study program and their aim for professional advancement as well as their expectations on the university academic standards were met. Among of the recurring statements were "self-fulfillment, boost more my confidence in terms of doing my job, learned a lot from the professors and it met my expectations and faculty are high caliber in their respective fields".

Accordingly, Money J., Nixon, S., Tracy, F. et. al. (2017) regarded that students were optimistic to describe their experiences in the

university when the levels of support were prevalent especially in the fulfillment of their expectations. Meanwhile, Byrne et al., (2012), stated that in situation that these expectations are not met by the students, failure, withdrawal, and disengagement thrive.

Theme 4: Impact of Graduate Study Program in their Life

Sub-theme 4.1.: Career Boosting and Promotion Impact

This subtheme highlighted the impact of their graduate study program to boost their educational qualifications for career promotion. Participants freely expressed the following statements "promoted as Assistant Professor and Head of a department in my institution, promotion due to the educational qualification, promoted as School Principal III and promoted as OIC- Assistant Schools Division Superintendent of SDO Makati".

These recurring responses from the participants implied career earning potentials. Accordingly, as stated by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic (2019), salaries depend on the individual experiences and area of expertise. Hence, this connotes that an advanced credentials boost the salary and career prospects in many professions.

Sub-theme 4.2.: Impact on Professional Networks and Linkages

The second sub-theme emerged based on the emphasis of their shared experiences towards "establish linkages, and relationships with researchers, academics and scholars from other educational institutions; and panel reactor to some international research conference."

This implied that professional networking prevails wherein they build meaningful professional connections with their fellow academicians and school leaders in other institutions. Established connections open more professional opportunities.

Sub-theme 4.3.: Impact on the Fulfilment of the Purpose Driven Personal and Professional Life

This third sub-theme narrated by the participants focused on the impact of their

graduate study on the fulfilment of their purposeful driven journey towards the realization of their personal and professional life. Among of their statements were "contributed a lot to me and to my job, improved my confidence personally and professionally, contributed much to my personal and professional welfare, helped increase my value as an employee, self-fulfilling for the individual who deserve it".

This implied that having a sense of purpose in one's life is equally important is having a sense of purpose in your role at work. As stated in the book of Warren, J. (2002), knowing one's purpose gives meaning to one's life. In this study, this evidently showed that the participants purposefully pursued to enrol in the graduate study program for the purpose of finding and fulfilling their significant impact in their field both personal and professional domains.

Sub-theme 4.4.: From Theory to Work-based Praxis Impact

The fourth sub-theme shared by the participants highlighted on the impact of graduate study program on the demonstration of their learnings in their work. Among of their shared responses were "participate in managerial decisions in our school, practice what I have learned in my profession, with the management skills learned, and have easily adjusted as a young administrator".

In the study conducted by Sudirman, A, & Gemilang, A. (2020), as mentioned, students generate learning opportunities to carry out engagement, collaboration, and responses to skills and knowledge. Furthermore, this learning opportunities were transferred into their work. Indeed, universities serve numerous important functions and among these were in research, education, and community engagement (Mahon, K. Hannu L. T. Heikkinen & Huttunen, R., 2019), hence, graduate students with advanced learning can meaningfully translate this to their field.

The second phase used the questionnaire to extract information relating to personal profile and that of the employment profile of MEM and DEM respondents. The results are presented in the matrices and briefly described by the researchers as follows:

Table 1. Personal Information of the MEM Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
23-32	13	43.33%
33-42	13	43.33%
43-52	3	10.00%
53-62	1	3.34%
Total	**30**	**100%**
Sex	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	15	50%
Female	15	50%

	30	100%
Marital Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Single	14	46.67%
Married	15	50.00%
Widowed	1	3.33%
	30	**100%**

MEM respondents' age are mostly ranging from 23 to 32 and 33 to 42 years old with 13 (43%) consecutively; with 25 as the youngest and 60 as the oldest declared age; comprised of both male and female (50%); where majority are married respondents (15 or 50%).

Table 2. Personal Information of the DEM Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
23-32	3	6.53%
33-42	14	30.43%
43-52	20	43.48%
53-62	8	17.39%
63 and above	1	2.17%
Total	**46**	**100%**
Sex	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	14	30.43%
Female	31	67.39%
Prefer not to say	1	2.18%
Total	**46**	**100%**
Marital Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Single	13	28.26%
Married	30	65.22%
Widowed	1	2.17%
Divorced	2	4.35%
Total	46	100%

While, with the DEM program, graduates' age is ranging from 43-52 years old (43%); 29 as the youngest age and 63 as the oldest age declared. Mostly comprised of female respondents (67%); and with married marital status (65%).

Table 3. Employment Profile of MEM Respondents

Employer	Frequency	Percentage
Higher Education Institutions	9	32.14%
Department of Education	15	53.57%
Private Institution of Learnings	1	3.57%
Others	3	10.72%
Total	**28**	**100%**
Work Station	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
School	27	93.10%
Office	2	6.90%
Total	**29**	**100%**
Assigned Level	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Tertiary	9	45.00%
Secondary	11	55.00%
Tech-Voc	0	0
Total	**20**	**100%**
Position Held	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Managerial/Supervisory	1	3.33%
Instruction	22	91.63%
Administrative	1	3.33%
Total	**24**	**100%**
Length of Service	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
30-25 years	2	6.67%
24-20 years	0	0
19-15 years	3	10.00%
14-10 years	8	26.67%

9 years and below	10	43.48%
Total	**23**	**100%**
Nature of Employment	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Permanent	28	93.34%
Temporary	1	3.33%
Contractual	1	3.33%
Total	**30**	**100%**
Monthly Salary	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
60,001 to 70,000	1	3.45%
50,001 to 60,000	3	10.35%
40,001 to 50,000	6	21%
30,001 to 40,000	3	10.35%
20,001 to 30,000	15	50.00%
Below 20,000	1	3.45%
Total	**29**	**100%**
Promotion attributed to Graduate School Program	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	23	88.46%
No	3	11.54%
Total	**26**	**100.00%**

As for the MEM respondents' employment profile, the data clearly depicted that majority of the respondents are with the Department of Education (15 or 54%); while 32% are with the Higher Education Institutions. Worked in a school set-up with 27 or 93%, particularly in Secondary or high school level (11 or 55%), mostly are teachers (22 or 93%), staying for around 9 years in the service, holding a permanent position (28 or 93%) and with a monthly salary scale of 20,001 to 30,000. And have been promoted 23 or 88% which is highly attributed from graduating to MEM program.

Table 4. Employment Profile of DEM Respondents

Employer	Frequency	Percentage
Higher Education Institutions	13	54.17%
Department of Education	7	29.17%
Private Institution of Learnings	2	8.33%
Others	2	8.33%
Total	**24**	**100%**
Work Station	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
School	23	95.83%
Office	1	4.17%
Total	**24**	**100%**
Assigned Level	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Tertiary	14	58.33%
Secondary	9	37.50%
Elementary	1	4.17%
Total	**24**	**100%**
Position Held	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Managerial/Supervisory	7	35.00%
Instruction	12	60.00%
Administrative	1	5.00%
Total	**20**	**100%**
Length of Service	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
30-25 years	3	14.29%
24-20 years	4	19.05%
19-15 years	6	28.57%
14-10 years	4	19.05%
9 years and below	4	19.05%
Total	**21**	**100%**
Nature of Employment	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Permanent	23	95.83%
Self-employed	1	4.17%
Total	**24**	**100%**
Monthly Salary	**Frequency**	**Percentage**

70,001 and above	8	32.00%
60,001 to 70,000	3	12.00%
50,001 to 60,000	4	16.00%
40,001 to 50,000	6	24.00%
30,001 to 40,000	2	8.00%
20,001 to 30,000	2	8.00%
Total	**25**	**100.00%**
Promoted	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	23	88.46%
No	3	12.00%
Total	26	16.00%
Promotion attributed to Graduate School Program	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	19	86.36%
No	3	13.64%
Total	**22**	**100.00%**

While, this table on DEM employment profile that mostly of the respondents are with the Higher Education Institutions 13 or 54%, work in school (23 or 96%) as faculty (12 or 60%), with 15 to 19 years in service, holds a permanent position and with a monthly salary of 70,000 and above (8 or 32%). With a number of respondents (19 or 86%) attributed their promotion from DEM program.

Table 5. Dichotomous Question

Question	f	%
Is your current job related to the degree earned from PUP-COEDGS?	49	64.47%
Were you working while pursuing your degree at PUP-COEDGS?	54	71.05%
Is your PUP-COEDGS degree providing you with necessary technical know-how for your job?	51	67.11%
Do you intend to stay in the same job/profession?	53	69.73%
Does your organization actively recruit graduates from PUP?	38	50%

Forty-nine or 64% of both MEM and DEM combined responses on to the relatedness of the current job to the degree earned from PUP COED GS. Fifty-four or 71% are working while pursuing their degree. Fifty-one or 67% agree that MEM/DEM program provided them with necessary technical know-how of their job. Fifty-three or 70% have the intent to stay in the same job or profession and only around 38 or (50%) actively recruits graduates from PUP.

Table 6. Usefulness of COED-GS Programs

Items	General Mean	Verbal Interpretation
How applicable are the knowledge and skills gained from PUP-COEDGS to your job?	**4.72**	**Very Useful**
How satisfied are you with your current job?	**4.76**	**Very Useful**

The applicability of the knowledge and skills gained from MEM and DEM programs are very useful (4.72) and satisfaction gained (4.76) in the respondents' current job.

Table 7 Contribution of PUPCOED-GS Programs to Personal and Professional Growth

PUP-COEDGS Programs personal and professional growth	*Mean*	*Verbal Interpretation*
Academic profession	3.72	Very highly
Research Capability	3.48	Highly
Learning Efficiency	3.64	Very Highly
Communication Skills	3.56	Very highly
People Skills	3.60	Very highly

Problem Solving Skills	3.64	Very highly
Information Technology Skills	3.12	Highly
Meeting Present and Future Professional Needs	3.52	Very highly
Exposure to Local Community within Field of Specialization	3.44	Highly
Exposure to International Community within Field of Specialization	3.28	Highly
Critical Thinking Skills	3.60	Very highly
Salary Improvement and Promotion	3.60	Very highly
Opportunities Abroad	3.12	Highly
Personality Development	3.60	Very highly

Focused on the impact of graduate study is well-implied in this table as the respondents provided a very highly rating on the contribution of either MEM or DEM program on their personal and professional growth particularly on their academic profession (3.72), though shown just a highly result on "information technology skills" and "opportunities abroad" with 3.12 weighted mean. This also strengthened above findings that there is a sense of fulfillment by being enrolled in GS program and that graduate students wished to stay in their respective institutions or have stayed for 15 to 19 years for DEM graduates and 9 years for MEM students.

Table 8 Rate/Evaluation of PUPCOED-GS Programs with the following indicators:

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Range of Courses offered	3.40	Highly
Relevance of the program to your profession	3.64	Very Highly
Extra-Curricular Activities	3.24	Highly
Premium Given to Research	3.40	Highly
Interdisciplinary learning	3.36	Highly
Teaching and learning Environment	3.48	Highly
Quality of Instruction	3.56	Very Highly
Teacher- Student Relationship	3.52	Very Highly
Library Resources	3.24	Highly
Laboratory Resources	3.08	Highly
Class Size	3.72	Very Highly
Infrastructure and facilities	3.20	Highly
Professor's pedagogical and content knowledge	3.64	Very Highly

Out of the 13 indicators being evaluated, graduates from MEM and DEM programs have put high premiums on "Class size" (3.72), "relevance of the program to the profession" (3.64), "Professor's pedagogical and content knowledge" (3.64), "quality instruction" (3.54), and "Teacher-Student ratio" (3.52). These are indicators pertaining to effective teaching for higher education; a germane quality of teaching in higher education is to create opportunities for students to stretch their cognitive capacity (Glasser, 2006 and Zeelen, 2012) as cited by Ng (2015).

Discussion

As the study aims to generate personal and professional information from graduate-respondents from MEM and DEM programs in the PUP COED Graduate School; analysis of these data were meaningfully sustained through the use of exploratory mixed method of research and thereby strengthen the results of the present study.

The results of this study can be well-described in themes generated in the first phase of the study. Theme 1 as reasons for enrolment to graduate school which was discussed in detailed on the sub-themes provided in the first phase as purposeful pursuit for personal growth as self-fulfilment, the value of professional advancement as equated to career progression and increased remuneration; academic standards and educational alignment. While, Theme 2 challenges experienced in the Graduate School such as: academic struggles in writing and completing theses or dissertations, struggle in meeting course expectations and academic requirements, work-study role conflicts, and distance of the residence to the University. Theme 3 as to their description of their overall experiences as Graduate students; putting premiums on personal and professional support system, and meeting personal and professional expectations. And the last theme described the impact of graduate study program in the lives of the graduates which accordingly are relative for career boosting and promotion impact, professional networks and linkages, fulfilment of the purpose driven personal and professional life, and from theory to work-based praxis impact.

MEM and DEM graduates are already matured to take the roles expected for a higher education program; the experiences and responsibilities go along their age whether they are male or female; married or still single status. Cognizant to the role expectation, their employment profile speaks on how impactful graduate education programs in boosting their teaching career plan, promotion, increased

remuneration, build professional network and linkages, fulfilment of their higher purpose whether they are working in higher education institutions or from the Department of Education; both are teachers who direly work for the achievement of these important indicators of enrolling in the graduate school program as the respondents highly attributed their promotion from MEM and DEM programs.

Results also shown that MEM and DEM graduates put high premiums on the quality experience in PUPCOEDGS particularly on the Class size set/teacher-student ratio, relevance of the program to the profession, the Professor's pedagogical and content knowledge which redound to what makes up of effective teaching and learning experience in enrolling in graduate school programs.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Enrolling in graduate school program may not be easy at all for higher expectations and higher responsibilities for both the provider of learning; higher education institutions and the receiver of the learning; the students who would become the ear, eyes and tongue of the institution when they leave the school and eventually achieving goals set in their lives by using the knowledge, skills learned from their respective programs through their well-meaning experiences from the administration, from the faculty members, from the support system which the HEIs provide. But, because of the incentives for both the improvement of personal and professional welfare of the students, the intention of enrolling and the demands to enroll in graduate programs become a necessity in education system.

This tracer study becomes a tool for further improving the programs in PUP COED Graduate School taking into account on quality of learning experience that can be provided through continuously inviting well-meaning faculty members who really have vast experience in handling higher learning experience in order to motivate the current enrolled students and increase the number of enrolees in the PUP COED GS.

Quality assurance is an important issue to focus in Higher Education. It is only, but an impetus, to evaluate its importance regardless of who will be the respondents. The idea set is to provide quality learning experiences which are highly regarded by the respondents. therefore, considering the relevance of the program to the present time is another study to work on in future researches to allow the identification of crucial aspects in the implementation of graduate programs of HEIs pertaining particularly on skills educational leaders should possess align to the present educational set-up and be ready and adaptive of the changes to happen in the Philippine educational landscape.

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