

Career Needs of College Students in a State University: Inputs for a Career Development Program

Arnold P. Rapsing¹, Ronato S. Ballado^{2*}, Hillary D. Francisco³

¹ University Registrar, University of Eastern Philippines, Philippines

² Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Eastern Philippines, Philippines

³ Faculty Member, College of Arts and Communication, University of Eastern Philippines, Philippines

* Corresponding Author: balladoronato@gmail.com

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Abstract: *The study determined the immediate needs of the college students in being successful in their chosen careers which led to designing a career development program for the University. The study which employed a qualitative survey design, was conducted in the University of Eastern Philippines Main Campus among 682 college students proportionally sampled through Slovin's formula from students in all year levels and colleges. The study utilized an open-ended questionnaire. In analyzing the responses to the open-ended questionnaire, similar ideas were grouped into categories, and further into themes. Statistical tools utilized in the study are frequency counts and ranking. The needs identified by students are organized and categorized into seven themes: need for facilities and learning materials, need for personal values, need for financial assistance, need for family and peer support, need for knowledge and skills enhancement, need for teachers and needs along the teaching-learning process. Though ranked differently among the year levels, the top three needs of the students are needs along personal values, facilities and learning materials, and financial assistance. The needs were used as inputs for a career development program.*

Keywords: career, career needs, college students, career development program

1. Introduction

Every year, higher education institutions admit thousands of students who are bound to prepare for their chosen careers in the future. These learning institutions provide the academic and non-academic services to equip the admitted students with competencies for their careers.

A career defines how one sees oneself in the context of one's social environment, in terms of one's future plans, one's past accomplishments or failures and one's present competences and attributes (Raynor & Entin, 1982). UNESCO (2002) defined a career as the interaction of work roles and other life roles over a person's lifespan including both paid and unpaid work. Career is also seen as the progress and actions taken by a person throughout a lifetime, especially related to that person's occupations (Oloasebikan & Olusakin, 2014). Moreover, Kleine, et al. (2021) conceptualizes a career as a process of actions undertaken by an employee to ensure professional progress and advances during the working life.

However, it has been noted that some students do not stay long in courses they have chosen. It is observed that every semester, students hop from one college to another shifting to another

course. Lapan, Tucker, Kim and Fosciulek (2003) stated that the transition from high school to university has been understood as one of the most difficult developmental challenges confronting adolescents. Worse are situations when after finishing a course, graduates do not land into jobs related to the careers they were prepared for.

To prepare students for a smooth transition from high school to university in preparation for a lifetime career, institutions through their Guidance Units are mandated to offer career guidance services. Republic Act 10931, also known as the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, provides among others, Free Higher Education to all students of state universities and colleges (SUCs) and some local universities and colleges (LUCs). It mandates, among others, that a career development program be institutionalized. The career development program is envisioned to conduct activities that will ensure that students will finish the course they have chosen in the least possible time, thereby, ensuring that funds of the government will not be wasted.

2. Objectives

- 1) find out the topmost needs of college students
- 2) craft a career development program to address career needs of college students

3. Review of Literature

Career guidance is defined as a set of multiple processes, techniques or services designed to assist an individual to understand and to act on self-knowledge and knowledge of opportunities in work, education and leisure and to develop the decision making skills by which to create and manage his or her own career development (Herr, Cramer & Niles, 1996). Career guidance in schools have an important role in advocating for broad based career plans that focus on the student's interests and abilities and that will increase future career options (Mghweno et al., 2014). Kimiti and Mwova (2012) reported that when students are not guided in their choice of careers, they do not know what is good for them or even what they want. Hence, a lack of career guidance may cause students to make wrong choices and enroll for studies they know little or nothing about (Kimiti & Mwova, 2012). In order for young people to be genuinely "ready" for both college and career they need to have attended to their academic achievement, their aspirations and plans for the future, their ability to make transitions and their ability to direct their own careers (Sampson, Hooley, & Marriot, 2011).

The study of Keshf and Khanum (2021) identified needs of Pakistani undergraduate students along graduates needed self-awareness, direction, decision-making skills, information and guidance, emotional management, job search skills, and practical exposure. Arguelles & Bay (2014) and Ilagan & Pesigan (2021) reported that majority of college first year students need career guidance and identified specific needs were on career planning, college adjustment, developing good study habits and attitudes, interpersonal skills and relationships, and self-awareness. In the study of Balci (2018), majority of the students need to learn the relation of their interest and aptitudes to their vocation in the future, to learn how their education can help them in the future, to learn about necessary education for several vocations, and to learn activities which will make them happy.

A career development program is imperative for schools in order to prepare students for a successful career. Career development activity in schools can help young people to experience academic achievement, successfully transition to the labor market and live happier and more

productive lives (Sampson, Hooley, & Marriot, 2011). Super (1990) outlined the developmental career stages as growth, exploration, establishment and maintenance, and decline; but also noted that the tasks for each stage are recycled throughout the life span as the individual makes critical decisions that reflect career maturity. These career stages could be part of a comprehensive career development program for higher education institutions.

4. Methodology

The study was conducted in the University of Eastern Philippines Main Campus. It involved 682 students proportionally sampled through Slovin's formula from the students in all year levels and colleges. Employing the qualitative survey design, the study utilized an open-ended questionnaire asking the respondents on the three topmost needs for them to be successful in their present year level. In analyzing the responses in the questionnaire, similar ideas were grouped into categories, and further into themes. Statistical tools utilized in the study are frequency counts and ranking.

5. Results and Discussion

The needs identified by students are organized and categorized into seven themes: need for facilities and learning materials, need for personal values, need for financial assistance, need for family and peer support, need for knowledge and skills enhancement, need for teachers and needs along the teaching-learning process. There is a variety of needs as expressed by students, hence, the seven categorization of the needs. The identified needs are ranked differently among the students by year levels. However, the first three ranks in every year level were focused on the same category of needs, i.e. needs for personal values, needs for facilities and learning materials, and needs for financial assistance. This indicates that the needs of the students are basically similar. For the students, these are the needs that should be addressed for them to be successful in the present year level that they are enrolled in. The ranking of the needs per year level is shown on Table 1.

Need for personal values. The need for personal values ranked one among the first and third year students, while ranked two among the sophomores and ranked three among seniors. The need for personal values included the students need to be 'responsible', 'competitive', 'confident', 'cooperative', 'dedicated', 'determined', 'eager to learn', 'enthusiastic', 'ethical', 'attentive', 'good examples', 'serious', 'optimistic', 'thrifty' and 'productive'. The respondents also recognize values of 'sincerity', 'willingness', 'endurance', 'regular attendance to class', 'fighting spirit', 'focus on goal', 'hard work', 'physical health', 'interpersonal skills, 'love for chosen career', 'passion', 'patience', 'perseverance', 'physical outlook', 'proper mindset', 'discipline', 'studying hard', 'time management', 'trust in self', 'faith in God', 'humility', 'enjoyment' and 'knowing priorities.' Abessolo, et al. (2010) posits that in today's dynamic and uncertain career context, values play an important role for career choice and lifelong career self-management.

Need for facilities and learning materials. The need for facilities and learning materials ranked one among the needs for sophomore students while for freshmen and third year students, it was only second among the rank. The need for facilities and learning materials include the need for facilities, such as classrooms which are 'well-furnished', 'fully-equipped', 'conducive, friendly, clean, and safe learning environment', 'laboratory equipment/apparatus, 'clean toilet'; learning materials and resources, such as books which are 'affordable'; technology tools such as 'laptops', 'computers', and other 'digital equipment' and 'gadgets'

and ‘free internet connection’; and improving the ‘library complete with books and references’. Student achievement is largely influenced by the instructional materials and school support facilities rather than the qualifications and experience of teachers (Bandaio, 2023). When students achieve in their studies, their career development is supported.

Need for financial assistance. The need for financial assistance ranked three in all the year levels except the senior students where it ranked two. The need for financial assistance includes financial support, money, allowance, and scholarships. Yang (2011) avers that students who received financial aid were significantly more likely to take more courses, spend more hours studying outside class, have a higher class ranking, and be less likely to fail a course.

Need for family and peer support. The need for family and peer support include the ‘inspiration’, ‘moral support’, ‘motivation’, ‘spiritual guidance’, and ‘encouragement’ of the family and ‘emotional support’ of friends. The results of the study of Ginevra, et al. (2015) that parents’ perceptions of support predicted adolescents’ career choice through the mediating effect of the youths’ perceptions of parental support and career self-efficacy have important implications for practice and underscore that parents need to be involved very early on in their children’s vocational development.

Need for knowledge and skills enhancement. In terms of the need for knowledge and skills enhancement, the respondents indicated the need for enhancing ‘communication skills’, especially in ‘English’, ‘computer literacy’, ‘knowledge and mastery of subject matter’, ‘practical skills’, ‘critical thinking’, and ‘organizational skills’. The respondents also recognized their need to be provided ‘enough knowledge and skills’, ‘hands-on activities’, ‘seminars and trainings’, ‘tutorials’. Competency and skills development is an increasingly important component to be sustainable in all areas, including sustainable employability, which can be ensured through graduates’ employability (Chowdhury & Mohammad, 2016). Skill development plays a vital part in an individual’s employability and career development, which may contribute to the nation’s overall development as the country will possess more skilled human resources (Knight & Yorke, 2003; Nafukho, et al., 2004).

Need for teachers. The respondents expressed their need for teachers or professors who are ‘approachable’, ‘amicable’, ‘awesome’, ‘good’, ‘fair’, ‘filling up learning needs’, ‘inspiring’, ‘not terror’, ‘patient’, ‘of quality’, ‘considerate’, ‘competent’, ‘effective’, ‘open- minded’, ‘active’, ‘dedicated’, and ‘professional’. Some expressed the need for ‘additional teachers’ and for teachers who provide ‘guidance’ and ‘encouragement’. Khan, Murtaza, and Shifa (2011) claimed that teachers play a significant role in secondary school students’ career choices as their influence is visible in school subject selection and career details.

Needs along the teaching-learning process. In terms of the teaching-learning process, the respondents stated that they need ‘quality instruction’, ‘proper teaching’, ‘active interaction between teacher and students’, ‘comprehensive methodology’, ‘effective strategies’, and ‘proper scheduling of classes’. They also indicated provision of off-campus activities like ‘company visits’, ‘educational tours’, and ‘job fair’. Mahfud, et al. (2019) expressed the necessity to consider collaborative mechanisms in installing the confidence of students’ career choices through learning and teaching processes that pay attention to the needs and interests of each student in the form of their goal orientation.

Table 1: Ranking of Needs of College Students per Year Level

| Themes of Needs | First Year | Second Year | Third Year | Fourth – Sixth Year |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|---------------------|
| Personal Values | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Facilities and Learning Materials | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Financial Assistance | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Family and Peer Support | 4 | 4 | 6 | 5.5 |
| Teachers | 7 | 6.5 | 5 | 5.5 |
| Knowledge and Skills Enhancement | 6 | 6.5 | 4 | 4 |
| Teaching-Learning Process | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 |

Inputs for career development

The findings of the study led to the crafting of a career guidance program which can be adopted by the University of Eastern Philippine Guidance Unit. The program is composed of a rationale, objectives, and the planned activities to address the various needs identified by the respondents.

Career Development Program

Rationale

Planning a career does not start when a student graduates from a tertiary education institution. It is a long-term process that starts as early as secondary education and is even strengthened during college education. Hence, the school is a very essential component in the career development of a learner. The various co-curricular and extra-curricular activities of the school offered to the students complement the academic preparation of the learners, so that success in the chosen career will be attained.

Objectives

The career development program generally aims to provide smooth transition to how learners will apply their knowledge and skills learned in college to the preparation for their future work. Specifically, the program aims to:

- 1) provide activities that will supplement the academic preparation of students; and
- 2) explore the relevance of the activities to career planning.

Table 2: Activities for the Career Development Program

| Need addressed | Activity | Objective | Duration | | | | Responsibility | Success Indicator |
|----------------------------------|---|--|----------|-----|-----|---------|---|--|
| | | | Y 1 | Y 2 | Y 3 | Y 4 - 6 | | |
| Need for personal values | Assistance desk volunteering | To develop the spirit of volunteerism | | | | | Students | Students are confident to assist fellow students |
| | Seminars on personal/social development | To nurture/widen the personal/social aspects of students | | | | | Guidance counselors/advocates, Students | Students explore their own personal/social development |
| Need for facilities and learning | Career focused center/section | To explore understanding careers through | | | | | Librarians, Students | Students are updated of the issues |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| materials | in the University Library | reading materials, audio-video materials, etc. | | | | | regarding their careers |
| | Career tour | To explore the nature of careers/ jobs | | | | Agencies, Guidance Counselors, Students | Students understand the nature of the careers/ jobs they chose |
| | Kiosk for job vacancies | To search for job/career opportunities through coordination with DOLE | | | | DOLE/ NSPESO, Guidance counselors/ advocates, Students | Students find information on job opportunities |
| Need for financial assistance | School-based enterprises | To establish cooperatives run by students within the campus | | | | Student organization members and advisers | Students augment their allowances through the cooperatives |
| | School linkage to financial assistance grantors | To tap potential financial assistance providers | | | | Guidance counselors, Scholarship coordinator | Students are given additional opportunities to avail of financial assistance |
| Need for family and peer support | Holding a college-based Family Day | To give opportunities for family bonding | | | | Advisers, Family members | Students establish bonding with the family |
| | Career-focused Parent-Student conference | To provide mutual understanding between students and parents on the career choice | | | | Guidance counselors, Parents, Students | Students are given opportunities to confer with parents regarding their choice of career |
| Need for knowledge and skills enhancement | Basic college orientation | To be aware of the policies of the university | | | | Guidance counselors/ advocates, Students, Selected speakers | Students are oriented of the policies of the university |
| | Career interest/ aptitude assessment | To assess the career interest/ aptitude and skills of students | | | | Guidance counselors/ advocates, Psychometricians, Students | Students become aware of their interests/ aptitude |
| | Career | To explore | | | | Guidance | Students find |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| | counseling | career potentials through counseling | | | | counselors/ advocates, Students | enlightenment on their career choices |
| | On-the-Job Training/ Practicum | To develop skills through opportunities for on-the- job training | | | | Companies, OJT Students, OJT Coordinators | Students apply knowledge and skills in a simulated environment |
| | Career placement orientation | To acquire basic skills for job preparation | | | | Guidance counselors/ advocates, Selected speakers, Graduating students | Students determine tips and techniques on how to look for jobs |
| Need for teachers | Training for teachers along academic advising | To update teachers on trends of support services to students | | | | Faculty members, Guidance counselors/ advocates | Teachers are trained on how to facilitate academic support to students |
| Needs along the teaching-learning process | Work-based learning projects | To familiarize the projected career through the course requirements | | | | Faculty members, Students | Students submit course requirements which reflect career preparation |
| | Inviting resource persons from the community to talk about jobs | To acquire information from resource persons on the career chosen by students | | | | Selected resource persons, Students, Faculty members | Students acquire information about careers from professional |

5. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The needs identified by students are organized and categorized into seven themes: need for facilities and learning materials, need for personal values, need for financial assistance, need for family and peer support, need for knowledge and skills enhancement, need for teachers and needs along the teaching-learning process. Though ranked differently among the year levels, the top three needs of the students are needs along personal values, facilities and learning materials, and financial assistance. The needs were used as inputs for a career development program.

As a whole, the various needs of students could be addressed by a multi-faceted career guidance program. The activities experienced by a student, both curricular and non-curricular are essential inputs into how the career of a student is built. The experiences will give the students lessons, not only those that are useful in their future jobs, but also in how they will deal with life as future professionals. With the support of the University administration, there is a need for the University Guidance Unit, through the assistance of the College Guidance Units, to consider implementing the suggested Career Development Program to provide assistance to

students in the transition of acquiring knowledge and skills to applying these skills for their future careers. The College Guidance Units should elicit maximum collaboration from other units in the University which are part of the implementation of the activities in the program.

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