Skills and Career Interests of Grade VI Pupils

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Abstract-Unemployment or job-mismatch remains a concern for governments and service providers. This study was geared towards identifying the skills and career interests of Grade VI pupils. It employed a descriptive research design using research-made questionnaires. The participants were from the top seven feeder schools of Cor Jesu College, Digos City, Philippines. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentages. The skills they wanted to develop in high school are computer and IT related skills. The programs students preferred to pursue in college were Business Management, Engineering and Architecture and Computer Science. Licensure examination, facilities and accessibility are factors to influence them to choose a college while employability as a factor in choosing a program. Cor Jesu College, Ateneo de Davao University and University of Mindanao were the top three preferred tertiary institutions. The respondents saw themselves managing their own business or working in a company in the future. After college, they were almost equally divided whether to work abroad or remain in the country. It appeared that the young pupils had inclinations towards computer and allied technology skills which were consistent with their career preference. The result of the study will have a big implication for schools offering K to 12 and college programs.

Keywords: *Business and Management, Skills and Career, Descriptive Method, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

For the past decades, the Philippines remained the only country in Asia offering a 10-year Basic Education Curriculum (Gorospe, 2011). Thus, in order to be at par with world-class quality of education, the Philippines implemented the K to 12 Program. This new curriculum aims to reduce skills mismatch and

underemployment. One of the salient points of this program is the readiness of the graduates of basic education to work or indulge in business at the right legal age. However, the implementation of the K to 12 Program is not to be a walk in the park for all schools in the country as this would require major curricular revisions, additional manpower, and additional school facilities that would also mean a highly significant budget or investment. Universities would also have to develop strategies to address the absence of freshmen enrollees during the first two years of the K to 12 Program. Like all other countries in the world that adapt the K to 12 system of education, this program in the Philippines also aims to make high school graduates employable, rendering tertiary education unnecessary if the purpose is to immediately get a job (Tan, 2010).

This study focused on what the Grade VI students want in relation to their junior and senior high school and even college. The study was conducted before the Department of Education released the final K to 12 Curriculum. Hence, Cor Jesu College initiated this project to get data on what Grade VI students want. While there had been several studies about career choice (Papadimitriou, 2014; Aschbacher, Ing & Tsai, 2014; Ali & Menke 2014; Lichtenberger & George-Jackson; Powell & Luzzo,1998;), most of these are done among high school students. Little is known about what elementary students desire for themselves. What to offer in the Grades 11 and 12 are currently a subject for debates, discussions and consultations among school administrators and teachers in the Philippines. The Department of Education is offering different streams and tracks in the junior and senior high school. Schools have the liberty to choose which of these will be offered. The K to 12 Program is crucial for the employability of students after senior high school or after college. Hence, a careful and well-defined planning is necessary.

In relation to future careers, the government is at the forefront of making sure it maximizes its human resource to speed up development. The Philippine government believes that the K to 12 Curriculum is one concrete step towards this thrust (RA 10533). For the schools, a career program should be in place (Heepner, O'Brien, Hinkelman & Humphrey, 1994; Moon, Coleman, McCollum, Nelson & Jensen-Scott, 1993). One strategy utilized in career counseling fit for all levels, is the use of genograms. It is a technique in analyzing the career patterns of each child's family (Gibson, 2005). Using this tool will help formulate a goal of life-career development (Gibson, 2005). However, this program is not popular in the Philippines particularly in the elementary level. In this study, the respondents were asked through a survey on what skills they expect in the junior and senior high school and what course in college they aspire to take. The result of the study would not only be beneficial for the students and their parents but for the school in helping these students choose a career path.

According to structural theories on career development that began with Parsons in 1909, choice of vocation depended upon accurate knowledge of one's self, thorough knowledge of job specifications, and the ability to make a proper match between the two (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Rowan-Kenyon, et al. (2012) argued that childhood and adolescent experience have something to do with career choices. They also identified parental support, teacher support and mathematics engagement in the classroom as crucial precursors of career choice, especially careers related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, which have been declared national priorities in the United States. Among Asians, parental influence is a substantial factor in college and university choice. Asian parental influence plays a significant part on the children's education and their desire for them to pursue higher education for a secure and professional career in the near future (Kuick & Ng, 2010). As Asians, the same level of parental influence is also exerted by Filipino parents in their children's career directions, especially in college or university choice.

In the Philippines, Miranda (2005) described the social and personal process of career planning among the Filipino youth as rooted in from past and present experiences. For Filipino youth, one's career is defined in the different stages in life. Whatever circumstances he/she is facing, these will have an impact on his/her choices. For example, Miranda's description of career planning for Filipino youth is consistent with a study conducted by Cartoon Network's New Generations 2012 of which Filipino children expressed a desire for high-paying jobs (ABS-CBNews, 2012). This finding reveals how the Filipino youth is confronted with present realities where earning a higher pay is tantamount to survival.

Since there are very limited studies which focus on the students in the lower level, this study looked at the desires and interests of Grade VI pupils with the aim of preparing a K to 2 Curriculum. Determining the skills and career interests of potential high school students will set the directions in developing a needs-based curriculum for schools offering junior and senior high school. It is necessary for the school to be responsive and relevant to the needs of the students and society as a whole.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed quantitative research methods. The respondents were sixth graders from the top seven feeder schools of Cor Jesu College high school department. They came from three private and four public elementary schools within Digos City, Davao del Sur, Philippines. The choice of schools was purposive since the result of the study will be used to prepare a curriculum

for future students of the school. After obtaining the permission from school principals, school visits were then scheduled. An orientation was given to the respondents before they answered the questionnaire. A research-made questionnaire was used to gather the data. Frequency and percentages were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was believed that by the time the study was conducted, the respondents may already have had an initial inkling of what to develop while still in high school. Furthermore, they might already have a tentative plan of their career directions as this can be influenced by their parents or what they see and observe. At their stage also being Grade VI students, families, education, interests and simple understanding of society and its dynamism would have started to shape their visions of themselves in the future. This information will help in determining what they want to be after high school or college. In return, the school can respond to meet their goals.

As to the skills that they wanted to acquire after graduating in high school, Table 1 presents the respondents' preference.

Table 1. *Skills students want to posses after high school*

Skill	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Basic allied health skills	87	17.61%	2
Car repair, driving and car-maintenance skills	22	4.45%	8
Computer maintenance and repair skills	98	19.83%	1
Costumer services	50	10.12%	4
IT-related skills	80	16.19%	3
Electrical skills	45	9.11%	6
Housekeeping	15	3.04%	9
Plumbing-related skills	9	1.82%	10
Welding, carpentry and other construction-related skills	41	8.30%	7
Others	47	9.51%	5

The top three skills students wanted to possess after graduation in high school were Computer Maintenance and Repair Skills (19.83%), Basic Allied Health skills (17.61%), and IT-Related Skills (16.19%). Two of the top three desired skills were linked to computer technology. These may be influenced by

educational and societal demand to develop a comfortable level of computer competence (Shields & Behrman, 2000). The students also come from a generation where computers and internets are already a household necessity and where computer competence is highly regarded in schools. These kids may have often heard from their parents, teachers and other significant adult figures about local and global demands for computer-related skills.

Basic Allied Health Skills emerged as the second preferred skills students would like to learn in high school. Basic allied health skills include proper techniques in obtaining temperatures, weight, pulse rates, blood pressure and knowledge on basic life and care-giving support. This may also include proper collection techniques of specimens as sputum, urine, and stool. Students may want to be equipped with these skills in high school to prepare themselves for the health-related programs they wish to pursue in college. Pursuance of health-related programs ranked fourth among the programs students wanted to pursue in college.

Preferred Elective Subjects

Since the K to 12 Program integrates different skills and competencies of which students could choose what to master, the respondents were asked what additional or elective subjects they wanted to take in their senior high school.

Table 2. *Students preferred additional or elective subjects in senior high school*

Subject	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Basic accounting	108	22.0%	2
Basic computer science and programming	121	24.64%	1
Economics	42	8.55%	5
Finance	35	7.13%	6
Mechanical and electronics	55	11.20%	4
Robotics	29	5.91%	7
Writing and communications	78	15.89%	3
Others	23		8

Subjects in Basic Computer Science and Programming (24.64%) emerged as the top choice for elective subject. It validates the students' top preferred skill to develop in high school which is related to computer technology. Basic accounting was the second preferred elective subject and its preference may have been influenced by the desire to pursue business-related courses in college. It is also notable that more students wanted to allocate time to learn more on writing and communications in senior high school.

Preferred Post Graduation Activities

When asked what they will do after graduation, the top three activities they wanted to do were pursue college (47.06%), work (20.20%) and get vocational training (16.47%).

Table 3. *Students desired post high school graduation activity*

Option	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Be an apprentice	21	11.76%	**5**
Get vocational training	**84**	**16.47%**	**3**
Pursue college	**240**	**47.06%**	**1**
Take a vacation	60	4.12%	**4**
Work	**103**	**20.20%**	**2**
Others	2	0.39%	6

Going to college after graduation was a top priority of the students since the value of education and the opportunities a college diploma would bring are being repeatedly emphasized in schools and in the homes. Working was revealed as a second priority after graduation. Similar findings were found by Schexnayder, et al. (2009) who concluded that financial uncertainties and low family income are main factors for students in seeking a degree. Thus, children who are well aware of their family's economic status may consider working as another option instead of directly going to college. It may be the reason why getting a vocational training emerged as the third priority option after high school graduation.

Preferred Program to Pursue in College

The top three programs students preferred to pursue in college were Business Management, Engineering and Architecture and Computer Science. A degree in Business Management (19.34%) emerged as the most preferred program of the students.

Table 4. *Students preferred program to pursue in college*

Program	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Accountancy and Finance	62	11.99%	5
Agriculture and Natural Sciences	50	9.67%	6
Business Management	100	19.34%	1
Computer-related courses	79	15.28%	3
Education and Psychology	40	7.74%	7
Engineering and Architecture	94	18.18%	2
Nursing and health-related programs	70	13.54%	4
Others	22	4.25%	8

These three related courses are among the priority courses according to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) through CMO 01, series of 2014. For Business Management, students see a potential career with many companies in need of this course. On the other hand, this course could help them run their own business in the future. Also Kim and Gasman (2011) shared that a desire to run a business someday and projected earnings in the related career' tops the reasons why students pursue business-related degrees. With the development of the country with progress ushering construction and other infrastructure activities, the same concept of potentials and opportunities could be the reasons why Engineering and Architecture are preferred. Computer related courses ranked third in the preferred program to pursue in college. Students might have been informed or oriented that there is a good salary in this profession. It was affirmed by ZDNet Asia's Philippine IT Salary and Skills Report 2008 which revealed the significantly high salaries received by employees in the IT sector. On the other hand, students might really be drawn to learning more about computers (Calimag, 2008). This is substantiated in the study of Talisayon, Guzman and Balbin (2006) who discovered that more than 90% of their student respondents would like to learn how a computer works. They generalized that these students have a positive inclination in working in the field of Science and Technology.

Factors in choosing a College or University

Choice of college or university is as important as choice of college program. Reputation of a college/university in national/licensure examinations (23.18%) topped as the preferred criterion in considering a college or university. This was followed by Buildings and facilities (20.91%) and Accessibility (19. 91%).

Table 5. *Factors in choosing a school for college/tertiary education*

College/University Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Accessibility	84	19.91%	3
Buildings and facilities	92	20.91%	2
Teachers' qualifications	81	18.41%	4
Tuition and matriculation fees	70	15.91%	5
Yearly performance in licensure examinations	102	23.18%	1
Others	10	2.27%	6
Nursing and health-related programs	70	13.54%	4
Others	22	4.25%	8

In the study of Roushdy (2012), he mentioned the study of Hanson, Norman & Williams (1998) that identified national academic reputation as one of the factors affecting college or university choice of students. Also, Roushdy (2012) concluded that students are attracted to pleasant and comfortable school facilities and that the school's location is considered important by the students.

Preferred College or University

Cor Jesu College (24.35%) is the preferred college by the respondents. This was followed with a very slim margin by Ateneo de Davao University (23.91%). University of Mindanao (15.0%) ranked third followed by Other schools (10.87%), Holy Cross of Davao College (9.13%), Polytechnic College of Davao del Sur (7.17%), SPAMAST (5.87%) and USEP (3.70).

Table 6. *Students preferred school for college/tertiary education*

College/University	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Ateneo de Davao University	110	23.91%	2
Cor Jesu College	112	24.35%	1
Holy Cross of Davao College	42	9.13%	5
Polytechnic College of Davao del Sur	33	7.17%	6
SPAMAST	27	5.87%	7
University of Mindanao	69	15.0%	3
USEP	17	3.70%	8
Others	47	10.87%	4

From their desired college or university, the respondents were asked to identify the factors that they use in choosing their college program or course. These factors are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. *Students identified factors in choosing a college program/course*

Program/Course Criterion	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Course/program which addresses academic potential	93	21.09%	2
Course/program cost or expenses	43	9.75%	5
Employability after graduation	124	28.11%	1
Number of English subjects needed by the course/program	88	19.95%	3
Number of Math subjects needed by the course/program	56	12.70%	4
Roster of faculty in the program	25	5.67%	6
Others	12	2.72%	7

When it comes to choosing what to pursue in college or university, the data revealed that the choices were primarily affected by Employability after graduation (28.11%). The students preferred to pursue a degree that will ensure a career after graduating in college. Number of English subjects required by the program (19.95%) ranked as the third common factor. The emergence of this factor in the top three may suggest the growing understanding of students on the importance of English to be globally competitive (Wong, 2014, Choo, 2014; Nunan, 2003).

Students' Vision of their Careers

Career choice decision is highly influenced by financial compensation, job stability, job security and opportunities for advancement. Thus, when students envisioned themselves few years after college graduation, they saw themselves in high paying careers such as Managing a business (24.74%), Working in industries (16.64%) and Working in a health institution (16.49%). The results show a sense of maturity among the respondents who are also focused on the future.

Table 8. *Student's vision of their careers 10 to 15 years from present*

Type of Career	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
An educator	30	6.34%	6.5
Managing own business	117	24.74%	1
Working in a financial institution	30	6.34%	6.5
Working in an industrial/architectural/ engineering company	78	16.49%	2
Working for an office of a government agency	59	12.47%	5
Working in a health institution	74	16.64%	3
Working in an office of a private institution/agency	67	14.16%	4
Working as a sales person	10	2.11%	8
Others	8	1.70%	9

Students were also asked on where they preferred to establish their careers after graduation.

Table 9. *Students preferred location of work after college/university graduation*

Location	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Anywhere in the country	94	36.01%	1
Outside the country	92	35.25%	2
Undecided	75	28.74%	3

It is surprising that while there are still undecided (28.74%), the survey revealed that staying in the country (36.01%) and working abroad (35.25) almost got the same responses. Those who wanted to work outside the country is slightly behind by less than 1% from those who wanted to work anywhere in the country. The respondents may have had their own glimpse and understanding of the Philippine economy and it is good to know that in their young minds a good number of majority still preferred to pursue a career in the country. However, a good number too wanted to pursue a career overseas. The family experience and other society factors may have influenced the desire to work abroad.

CONCLUSION

The survey conducted to the potential high school clients of the college revealed that skills interests are leaning towards computer and its allied technology. Acquiring basic health skills was also a priority. Young as they are, the respondents have acknowledged the necessity of basic computer knowledge which is vital to becoming successful in college and in their future jobs.

In terms of career inclinations, the results validated their skills interests. Computer related careers remained as the top choice while engineering and architecture came in second. This is considered good news for the Philippines since Computer related course is one of the priority courses of the Commission on Higher Education from 2014 to 2018 (CMO 01, s. 2014). The respondents were also very practical in choosing a degree since they considered employability as the biggest factor. That is why schools work profusely in making sure their program offerings facilitate employment for the students once they graduate (Eden, 2014; Jackson, 2014; Greenbank, 2014).

It also showed in the result that the students preferred to study in a particular college within the city but the next in rank are schools located outside the province. When it comes to choosing where to work after college/ university, it was evident that going abroad remains enticing for these students even at their age. This choice affirms on their willingness to choose a degree with a good number of English subjects. It can be attributed to economic advantage (Hayes, 2014). Though still years away from finishing a degree, they already have the desire of finding a greener pasture in the foreign land. This is expected as the total number of Filipinos working abroad is increasing year after year (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013).

The implication of this study is for schools offering K to 12 Program to integrate the skills identified in this study. Based on the result, Cor Jesu College could choose a particular strand to offer in Grades 11 and 12. On the other hand, career interests as revealed in this study would be a good feedback for schools offering college degrees. However, one of the limitations of this study is the absence of the final K to 12 Curriculum from the Department of Education which would have been used to assess and compare with the result of the study. Nevertheless, the findings are very useful for schools like Cor Jesu College in crafting its K to 12 Curriculum and projecting what programs to offer in college. Since the respondents are still Grade VI students, a follow-up study in relation to career interests should be conducted once they are already in the senior high school.

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