Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes Needed by Companies in Metro Manila

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ABSTRACT— *The study focused on studying the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed by Metro Manila employers. It surveyed 100 companies coming from various industries. It used descriptive research design. The results showed that while intellectual competence and research skills are essential in an academic pursuit, there are many skills that graduates can sharpen during to make them more employable. Graduates need to be aware that employers will evaluate candidates on the basis of how their diverse skill set can enhance their workplace, and how their personality will complement their new community. It is also important for Universities and colleges to prepare their students to possess the right attitude, image and appearance, skills and capacities and not only focus on their intellectual capacities and knowledge. It means that there should be a balance between theories, applications and teaching the right behavior and attitude towards work, other people and life as a whole.*

Keywords— skills,knowledge,attitudes

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1. INTRODUCTION

Unemployment in the Philippines had been a perennial problem and it greatly affects the over-all economy of the country. The National Statistics Office reported that Philippine employment dipped to 37.82 million in April 2013 from the 37.84 million in April 2012. The unemployment rate rose to 7.5% from the 6.9% data according to the latest Labor Force Survey (2013). Majority of the unemployed were high school graduates (31.7 percent), college graduates (21.3 percent) and college undergraduates (14.6 percent),About half (48.2 percent) of the unemployed were aged 15-24 years old, 27.5 percent of which are male while 20.7 percent are female.Based from the data coming from National Statistics Office, Universities and colleges in the Philippines had an approximate 10,000 graduates without the assurance that they will find an appropriate job for what they have finished in the tertiary level. Though many of the graduates cannot find jobs or remain unemployed, the data also revealed that are many vacancies needed by the employers, however, applicants lack the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes they need to fill up the vacancies.

One of the leading causes of unemployment in the country is occupational immobility where graduates' skills and attitudes do not match what is currently needed by the industry. It is observed that many students lack the necessary skills and attitudes of an employable individual even after they graduate. Universities and colleges therefore have the responsibility to see to it that they prepare the students to these necessary skills and attitudes in order for their graduates to be employable. Underemployment is also prevalent in the country where almost 9 million of the employed are underemployed (NSO,2014). Underemployment occurs when a person has a job however, the degree that he finished cannot be applied to his current job. An example will be when a Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduate works as a call center agent. Unemployment and underemployment are manifestations that graduate's skills, attitudes and image do not match the needs of the labor market.

The main objective of this paper was to determine the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed by Metro Manila employers in order to guide the students what to enroll and the University administrators what courses to offer and skills, knowledge and attitudes to hone and emphasize in their curriculum to make their graduates employable and can readily find jobs when they graduate from their university or college.

Statement of the Problem

Generally this research study will determine the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes needed by employers in Metro Manila. Specifically the research questions are:
1. What courses do employers in Metro Manila need in the next 5 years?

2. What are the attributes and capacities employers are seeking at the point of entry to employment?
3. What are the aspects of appearance and image that are necessary to employers in Metro Manila?
4. What are the necessary skills needed by employers in Metro Manila?
5. What are the necessary attitudes needed by employers in Metro Manila?

Significance of the Study

This paper is significant to the business owners and employers since the results of this study will be helpful in determining the kind of employees they need in their organizations. On the other hand, employees, students and graduates will also benefit from the results of this study since they will know what are the prevalent skills, knowledge and attitudes that most of the companies in Metro Manila look for. And lastly, the results of this study will also be beneficial to the academe especially the professors who would construct the curriculum of their students since they will have an idea what are the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes that the industry look in their applicants.
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2. RELATED THEORIES

Different Causes of Unemployment
1. Frictional Unemployment:
This is unemployment caused by the time people take to move between jobs, e.g. graduates or people changing jobs. There will always be some frictional unemployment in an economy because information isn't perfect and it takes time to find work.
2. Structural Unemployment
This occurs due to a mismatch of skills in the labor market it can be caused by:
- **Occupational immobility.** This refers to the difficulties in learning new skills applicable to a new industry, and technological change, e.g. an unemployed farmer may struggle to find work in high tech industries.
- **Geographical immobility.** This refers to the difficulty in moving regions to get a job, e.g. there may be jobs in London, but it could be difficult to find suitable accommodation or schooling for their children.
- **Technological change**. If there is the development of labor saving technology in some industries, then there will be a fall in demand for labor. (See: technological unemployment)
- Structural change in the economy. The decline of the coal mines due to a lack of competitiveness meant that many coal miners were unemployed, however they found it difficult to get jobs in new industries such as computers.
3. Frictional
Frictional unemployment, also called *search unemployment*, occurs when workers lose their current job and are in the process of finding another one. There may be little that can be done to reduce this type of unemployment, other than provide better information to reduce the search time. This suggests that *full employment* is impossible at any one time because some workers will always be in the process of changing jobs.
4. Voluntary
Voluntary unemployment is defined as a situation when workers choose not to work at the current equilibrium wage rate. For one reason or another, workers may elect not to participate in the labor market. There are several reasons for the existence of voluntary unemployment including excessively generous welfare benefits and high rates of income tax. Voluntary unemployment is likely to occur when the equilibrium wage rate is below the wage necessary to encourage individuals to supply their labor.
The *natural* rate of unemployment
This is a term associated with new Classical and monetarist economists. It is defined as the rate of unemployment that still exists when the labour market it in equilibrium, and includes seasonal, frictional and voluntary unemployment. The US economist Milton Friedman first used the concept to help explain the connection between unemployment and inflation. Friedman argued that if unemployment fell below the *natural rate* there would be an increase in the rate of inflation.
Graduate employability: concepts, interpretations and issues: The concept of employability
The term employability has gained prominence of late because of the changing world of work. Employability is used interchangeably with other terms such as core skills, key skills, and common skills. To Saterfield and McLarty (1995), employability skills are the skills required to acquire and retain a job, including job-specific skills, academic skills and a range of attitudes and habits. Communication, problem solving and management skills are also important. According to Hillage and Pollard (1999, p.83), employability is "(a) the ability to gain initial employment, (b) the ability to maintain employment and make 'transitions' between jobs and roles within the same organization to meet new job requirements, and (c) the ability to obtain new employment if required, to be independent in the labour market by being willing and able to manage employment transitions between and within organizations." It follows that the concept of

employability refers to the competencies a graduate must have in order to find a job. When viewed in the context of the workplace and employment market, the term employability refers to several situations, as follows:

- The situation in which an individual would be employed because his or her competencies match the demands of a particular workplace and the expectations of potential employers.

- The readiness of an individual to be employed. Thus, an employable graduate is an individual who has completed studies, is currently available for work, has job-related competencies and makes arrangements to start a job (Godfrey, 1986).

- The effort that leads to enabling a student to acquire knowledge, personal and professional skills, and the attitudes that will support his or her future development and employment (Brown, 2006).

- The attributes of a graduate, as a result of education he or she has acquired. With certain competencies, a graduate has higher likelihood to be employed if he or she applies for a job or can create a job.

From the perspective of employers, the level of "quality" of a graduate refers to their adequacy in terms of the following attributes: self-confidence and soft-skills, especially competence in communicating in the English language, focus and commitment. Surprisingly, employers have not raised other issues which are equally important in terms of employment levels, such as sluggish economic growth.

Harvey and Knight (1996) and Harvey and Green (1993) have argued that the "quality" of graduates can be broken down into five related dimensions: quality as exceptional (e.g., high standards), quality as consistency (e.g., zero defects), quality as fitness for purpose (fitting required specifications), quality as value for money (as efficiency and effectiveness), and quality as transformative (an ongoing process that includes empowerment to take action and enhancement of customer satisfaction).

To employers, "good quality" graduates would almost certainly include those who can be integrated into modern profit-oriented organizations and can quickly contribute effectively to these organizations (Harvey and Mason, 1996). Such graduates would exhibit exceptional fitness of purpose and value for money, making them highly demanded by profit-oriented organizations (Morshidi et al., 2009). Employers want to employ graduates for the knowledge and ideas they bring to an organization, their willingness to learn and speed of learning, their flexibility, adaptability and ability to deal with change, their logical, analytical, and problem-solving skills and the impact they have on innovations (Harvey and Mason, 1996).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Gathering Instrument

In this study, questionnaire was the main instrument used. The researcher prepared the questionnaire composing of two main parts. The first part gave the demographic profile of the respondent employers in terms of both their personal and organizational profile. The second part will determine the necessary skills, image and attitudes that employers are looking in the graduates of the different universities and colleges.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of the employers that are located in Metro Manila. The researcher surveyed one hundred respondent-employers and was based from a quota sampling method employed by the researcher.

The employer-respondents have the following personal demographic profile:

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Below 27 years Old	23	23%
27-37 years old	32	32%
38-48 years old	35	35%
49-59 years old	4	4%
60 and above	6	6%
Gender		
Male	58	55%
Female	42	42%
Civil Status		
Single	43	43%
Married	45	45%
Widow/er	12	12%
Educational Attainment		
Elementary	1	1%

High School	5	5%
College Graduate	76	76%
Masters Graduate	14	14%
Doctorate Graduate	4	4%

On the other hand, the organizational profile of the businesses are as follows:

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
Years of Existence		
Below 5 years	2	2%
5-10 years	14	14%
11-15 years	35	35%
16-20 years	40	40%
21-25 years	6	6%
Above 25 years	3	3%
Business Form		
Sole Proprietorship	21	21%
Partnership	12	12%
Corporation	67	67%
Number of Workers		
1-10	3	3%
11-20	5	5%
21-30	3	3%
31-40	14	14%
41-50	22	22%
More than 50 employees	53	53%
Industry		
Education	2	2%
BPO	22	22%
Agriculture	3	3%
Manufacturing	34	34%
Other Service Sector	22	22%
Health Services	8	8%
Trucking Services	9	9%
Type of Business		
Micro-business	17	17%
Small Business	35	25%
Medium Business	33	33%
Large Business	15	15%

Statistical Treatment

For the needed attributes, capacities, appearance, image, skills and attitudes they were measured using the following likert scale:

4 – Critical
3 – Important
2 – Somewhat Important
1 – Unimportant

The responses of the respondent employers were analyzed using the following range:

4.00 - 3.25   Highly Important (HI)
3.24 - 2.50   Moderately Important (MI)
2.49 – 1.75   Slightly Important (SI)
1.74 – 1.00   Unimportant(U)

4. PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Problem 1. What courses do employers in Metro Manila need in the next 5 years?

Table 1. Courses Needed by Employers

Courses	Frequency	Percentage
Business Courses	100	100%
Engineering Courses	55	55%
Teaching Courses	12	12%
Social Sciences	27	27%
Natural Sciences	25	25%
Maritime Courses	1	1%
Criminology	3	3%
Cyber services	67	67%
IT	45	45%

*multiple response

The table reveals that all (100 respondents) employers need business courses such as accountancy, business administration, hotel and restaurant management and tourism management. On the other hand, 67 respondents or 67% need cyber services courses such as animation art, visual artist designing, flash animation, and web designing. The third most needed course was engineering courses with 55 respondent-employers choosing the course. It courses and Social sciences have 45 (45%) and 27 (27%) responses respectively.

It can be deduced that the three most needed courses in Metro Manila are Business management courses, cyber services courses, and engineering courses.

Based on a study conducted by Projectfit by the Department of Labor and Employment last 2009, the government agency found that medical courses, culinary and hotel restaurant management, banking and finance courses, engineering courses and cyber services as in demand courses until 2020. This is in conjunction with the results of this study since the top three courses also came up with the results of the DOLE study. Business management courses came up to be the most needed course since these courses are needed by any industry. These courses are called the "backoffice" courses that is why the courses under the business management became the most needed course by Metro Manila employers. Employers interviewed by the researcher revealed that they also prefer employees with a master degree in business administration.

Problem 2. What are the attributes and capacities employers are seeking at the point of entry to employment?

Attributes/Capacities	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Educational Qualifications	3.09	MI
Previous Job Experience	2.55	MI
Right Personality	4.00	HI
Right Appearance	2.73	MI
School Graduated	2.09	SI
Total	**2.90**	**MI**

Legend: 4.00 - 3.25   Highly Important (HI)
3.24 - 2.50   Moderately Important (MI)
2.49 – 1.75   Slightly Important (SI)
1.74 – 1.00   Unimportant (U)

The table indicates that in terms of attributes and capacities, the over-all weighted mean is 2.90 with a verbal interpretation of "moderately important". This means that employers perceived that several attributes or capacities of their employers are not that important in retaining their employees. Looking closely at the table, employers perceived that **right personality** got a weighted mean of $\bar{x}$ =4.00 with a verbal interpretation of "highly important". It can be deduced that having a right personality is an important attribute that employers in Metro Manila is looking for their employees and applicants. Having the right personality that fits the job is an important consideration for employers, and so applicants and employees must know their personalities so that they can assess if the jobs they are aspiring for are really suited or not in their respective personalities. The table also reveals that the educational attainment also matters with Metro Manila employers as it got a mean rating of $\bar{x}$ =3.09 with a verbal interpretation of "moderately important". It means that majority of the Metro Manila employers perceived that having the right course for the job is an important aspect of an applicant or employee. However, it can be seen in the table that school where applicants graduated is not an important consideration of Metro Manila employers as manifested by a weighted mean of $\bar{x}$ =2.09 with a verbal interpretation of "slightly important". Gone when the days that major consideration of the employers are graduates of the top tier universities and schools. The researcher also asked a question if school were the applicants graduated matter and almost all of the employers said that it is not in their priority list as long as the applicant has the basic general knowledge

and that they have the dedication and right behavior. If their employees, they claim, graduated in top tier universities, it will just be an added bonus on their part.

Lastly, the results also revealed that right appearance also matters for Metro Manila employers as manifested by a weighted mean of $\bar{X}$ =2.73 with a verbal interpretation of "Moderately important". When the researcher clarified the meaning of right appearance to some of the respondent-employers, the former found out that employers look for employees who can represent their companies with dignity by dressing up in a dignified and corporate looking way. Right appearance, they claim, does not mean having good looks but appearing to be dignified and knows how to power dress appropriate to their company and to the position of the employee.

Problem 3. What are the aspects of appearance and image that are necessary to employers in Metro Manila?

Aspect	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Age	2.36	SI
Weight	1.91	SI
Height	1.64	U
Dress Sense	2.45	SI
Voice/Accent	2.36	SI
Physical Looks	1.91	SI
Total	**2.11**	**SI**

Legend: 4.00 - 3.25 Highly Important (HI)
3.24 - 2.50 Moderately Important (MI)
2.49 – 1.75 Slightly Important (SI)
1.74 – 1.00 Unimportant (U)

The table shows the importance of appearance and image to the employers of Metro Manila.

As revealed in the table, the overall importance of appearance and image to the employers in Metro Manila is "slightly important" as evidenced by a mean rating of 2.11. This implies that appearance and image of the applicants and employees are not that significant to the employers in Metro Manila. This is attributed to the fact that the jobs and tasks related to the respondent-employers do not require the employees and applicants to be with model-like appearance. However, when the researcher clarified the matter, the employers said that they require their employees and applicants to know how to dress up properly and be presentable to their customers and clients.

Looking closely at the table, dress sense got the highest mean rating equivalent to 2.45 with a descriptive rating of "slightly important". This is in accordance with the interview conducted by the researcher to the employers, where it was found out that employers sometimes see how their employees and applicants look. However, on a research conducted by Professor Comila Denning (2013), it supported the notion that being physically attractive is an advantage when applying for a job. There is little support for the "beauty is beastly" effect. The "what is beautiful is good" bias seems fairly universal and has been found in a variety of different cultures. Since it is not fair to base hiring decisions on non-job-related factors like attractiveness, training hiring managers to avoid this bias is one way to reduce such inequity. This is not what the researcher found out in the case of Metro Manila employers, where physical looks and image is only slightly important to them.

Problem 4. What are the necessary skills needed by employers in Metro Manila?

Aspect	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Interpersonal Skills	3.82	HI
Communication Skills	3.73	HI
Critical Thinking Skills	3.73	HI
Personal Development Skills	3.91	HI
Presentation Skills	3.18	MI
Leadership Skills	3.00	MI
Numeracy Skills	2.91	MI
IT skills	3.27	HI
Total	**3.44**	**HI**

Legend: 4.00 - 3.25 Highly Important (HI)
3.24 - 2.50 Moderately Important (MI)
2.49 – 1.75 Slightly Important (SI)
1.74 – 1.00 Unimportant (U)

The table shows the level of importance as to skills needed by Metro Manila employers.

Gleaned from the data presented, the overall importance of skills to the Metro Manila employers is "highly important" as evidenced by the mean rating equivalent to 3.44. This means that the Metro Manila employers, perceived the different skills as important in selecting and retaining their employers. Looking closely at the table, the skill that got

the highest mean rating is personal development skills, or having the right attitude at work. This implies that Metro Manila employers perceive that having the right attitude at work is the most important skill that their employees must possess. Employers would, aside from having the necessary knowledge, select and retain their employees based on their behavior and right attitude. Also, one of the highest mean ratings was interpersonal skills or their skill to interact with other people such as customers and co-workers. This means that having a good interpersonal skills or the ability to interact with other people is also perceived to be important skill by the Metro Manila employers. Employers perceive that having the ability to interact effectively with other people would make their employees more effective and productive.

One study conducted by Renee Polziehn (2011), revealed the same results were the top nine skills needed by employers of United Kingdom are:

1. Communication and interpersonal skills
2. Critical and creative thinking
3. Personal effectiveness
4. Integrity and Ethical Conduct
5. Teaching Competence
6. Societal and Civic Responsibilities
7. Leadership
8. Research management
9. Knowledge mobilization and knowledge translation

The results of this study shows that aside from knowledge and intelligence of the employees and applicants, employers expect them to have good interpersonal skills and personal attractiveness. This is in conjunction with the results of this study.

Another study conducted by Lowden et. al (2011) revealed that employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competences from their degrees but require graduates also to demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and managerial abilities.The scoping interviews with employer and HEI organizations found that there are characteristics, skills and knowledge and intellectual capability elements that are required for specific roles. In addition, combinations of transferable skills were also deemed particularly relevant. These were:

- Team working
- Problem solving
- Self-management
- Knowledge of the business
- Literacy and numeracy relevant to the post
- ICT knowledge
- Good interpersonal and communication skills
- Ability to use own initiative but also to follow instructions
- Leadership skills

The results of the two studies are in conformance with the results of this research study. This means majority of employers require graduates not only possessing intellectual capacities but more importantly interpersonal skills and personal development skills.

Problem 5. What are the necessary attitudes needed by employers in Metro Manila?

Aspect	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Strong Work Ethics	3.82	HI
Dependability and responsibility	4.00	HI
Possessing a positive attitude	4.00	HI
Adaptability	3.73	HI
Honesty and Integrity	3.91	HI
Self-motivated	3.82	HI
Strong Self Confidence	3.45	HI
Professionalism	3.82	HI
Loyalty	3.82	HI
Total	**3.82**	**HI**

4.00 - 3.25	Highly Important (HI)
3.24 - 2.50	Moderately Important (MI)
2.49 – 1.75	Slightly Important (SI)
1.74 – 1.00	Unimportant (U)

The table shows the overall importance of attitudes as perceived by Metro Manila employers.

As gleaned from the table, the overall importance of attitudes as perceived by employers is "highly important" as evidenced by a mean rating of 3.82. It means that employers think that employees should possess the right attitude

towards their work. It is an important aspect of retaining and selecting employees. Looking closer at the table, it can be deduced that dependability and responsibility and possessing positive attitude are the highest aspects of attitude, both with a mean rating of 4.00 and a verbal interpretation of "highly important". Employers look for employees who are dependable and are responsible in finishing whatever the desired tasks assigned to them and that they also look for employees with positive outlook in life. The researcher clarified the matter to some employers through an interview and it was revealed that employers know how stressful the work environment of their companies and it would just add up if ever employees possess negative outlook in life. Moreover, employers also claim that they would have the tendency to promote employees whom they can see a dependable and responsible. People want to be around those who make them feel better about themselves. Employees with positive attitudes tend to be more productive employees because they always see the accompanying opportunity with every challenge. Research shows that only eight percent of the things we worry about are worth being concerned about. People with positive work attitudes know this, therefore they do not waste time worrying, and they expend their energies on more positive activities.

5. CONCLUSION

Recognize that while intellectual competence and research skills are essential in an academic pursuit, there are many skills that graduates can sharpen during to make them more employable. Graduates need to be aware that employers will evaluate candidates on the basis of how their diverse skill set can enhance their workplace, and how their personality will complement their new community. It is also important for Universities and colleges to prepare their students to possess the right attitude, image and appearance, skills and capacities and not only focus on their intellectual capacities and knowledge. It means that there should be a balance between theories, applications and teaching the right behavior and attitude towards work, other people and life as a whole.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For lecturers and professors to be more abreast of the new updates of the courses they are teaching through immersing themselves in the industry. This will make the professors and lecturers updated of the current trends of the industry and that they will also know what knowledge, skills and attitudes do the employers look for their companies.
2. Universities should change the way courses are taught to build employability skills into the curriculum, including providing work- based experience.
3. Universities should always trace their graduates in terms of their employability by conducting regularly a tracer study.
4. Employers and partners form the industry must be invited when there are curriculum reviews because their inputs are necessary in developing the curriculum. Mason et al (2006) researched the impact of different kinds of HE employability skills initiatives in 34 departments in eight different universities on graduates' labour market performance. They found placements and employer involvement in course design and delivery to be the most effective. With this, it is therefore recommended that representatives from the industry and employers should be part of the curriculum review and development of universities.
5. Universities should also conduct pre-employment seminars such as interviews, curriculum crafting and power dressing. Employers stressed that efforts put into creating a good first impression, CV preparation and self-presentation at interviews were also very important, but many graduates appeared to lack the skill and motivation to impress at this initial stage. For example, a common criticism was that graduates often do not take the time and care to craft CVs geared to a particular employer and some employers highlighted that candidates often had limited motivation to apply themselves to their interview and do background research on the employer; as a result, they had unrealistic expectations.

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