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Research Article

Portrait of Outstanding Alumnae: Basis for Career Guidance Program

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to describe how the graduates from a state university and college in Region III, Philippines excel in their chosen careers. The findings of the study can be a source of model or inspiration to the students as well basis for career guidance program which can be used to further equipped students in their field of work. Specifically, it sought to find the contributory factors to be outstanding in chosen field; what are challenges and success that the alumnae experienced as students and employees; and how do the alumnae engage with the community. The study used descriptive phenomenology. In choosing the participants, purposive sampling was utilized. From the set criteria in choosing the participants, 11 were identified. The study used open-ended questionnaire. It was found out that to be outstanding, trainings, learnings, and values are necessary; however challenges will be there like of low self-esteem, poverty, losing a loved one, expectations and self-doubt. But the fruits of it is sweeter, such as winning, passing and top notching licensure examinations, receiving awards/recognitions, being promoted, and owning a business. But being outstanding must be shared by doing volunteer works to the community, helping the poor, and inspiring others. Based on the findings of the study, inclusion of being employable and being serviceable in the career guidance program is suggested. Further, invitations of successful alumnae will be a great motivation to the students. And further conduct of the study may be done to have a comprehensive description of an outstanding graduate of a different or wide locale.

Keywords: *alumnae, education, employability, higher education, outstanding*

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Background

To achieve excellence and quality are the common aims of any educational institution. As Lombardi emphasized that in excellence there is quality. The best testimony how a school delivers quality services is through its graduates. The quality of instruction as well as the responsiveness of the curriculum is being lived based on how the graduates of a particular institution performs in their own career and work place. Its graduates are the best advertisements that an institution have. Further, they are the living proofs of the achievement of the vision and mission of the educative institutions.

The word "outstanding" is often associated with excellence. According to The American Heritage Dictionary, excellence is a status of supremacy. Further, the word "excel" is defined as to do better leading to best practices or status.

Moreover, outstanding and excellence is connected to success. Based on Harbour's "Rising Above the Crowd", success means being the best. Meaning, excellence is being at best. Success implicits being better than what a person performs before. Thus, excellence is being better tomorrow than yesterday. Success is exceeding the achievement of other people. That, excellence means matching one's practice to their potentials.

The success of the graduates is also the success of its alma matter. Institutions aim that their graduates will land a job, be competitive, possess qualities above the rest, and be of person living the values its alma matter have imparted. However, not all graduates are the same. Not all graduates will land a job after graduation. It cannot also be generalized that after graduation, they will all be knowledgeable and skillful in performing their work. Such truth has to be accepted, due to factors concerning being a student and development as a person.

Based on Alston's (2018) article, a successful student should exemplifies intellectual curiosity, is self driven, has good time management, capable of embracing chancing, being creative and unique, is open minded, analytical, has good communicative skills, can work under pressure, and is emphatic.

In the study of Hattie (2003), students' achievement can be influenced by internal and

external factors. Students have 50% influence on their outputs and success. Home and school orientation have 5-10% influential factor on students' achievements. The home effects are association on expectations sets as well as encouragement and motivation. Schools have impact to one's development such as finances, the school size, the class size, the buildings are important as they must be there in some form for a school to exist, but that is about it. Peer effects have 5-10% of the effect. The people they deal with has minimal effect to the graduates. Teachers have 30% contributions to students' achievement. It is what teachers know, do, and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation.

The NEA Education Policy and Practice Department (2008) stated that external factors concerning parents and community involvement may be considered in the students' success. As stated by Meador (2017), becoming outstanding does not happen overnight. It takes continuous pruning and upgrade to be at one's best. The school and its people are there to be of help. At the end of the day, it is still about that person be prepared to take in that knowledge, make connections, and be able to apply it to real life situations. Further, everyone can improve and become better if they desire to do so.

Lierse (2016) conducted a study among outstanding university lecturers in an Australian university in 2014. The study identified five (5) dominant lecturer characteristics. These were: expertise, holistic approach to learning, engaging the student, open door policy and ambitious altruists. To be outstanding involves challenges, issues, and problems that have to be addressed.

In the study of Araujo, Cruz, and Almeida (2016), six (6) outstanding scientists aged 33-42 were interviewed. The study found out three (3) main dimensions: personality traits and characteristics, psychological skills and processes, and task-specific strategies. Further, it was highlighted the importance of emotional factors and motivational processes to achieve and sustain scientific excellence. Flexible coping, emotion regulation, and goal setting were emphasized and described as particularly important in dealing with rejections, setbacks,

and team management issues. Persistence and adaptive perfectionism were key individual characteristics which helped participants in nurturing and sustaining motivation. Being outstanding involves the holistic aspect of a person. It does not only focus on the credentials on a person but also of other aspects that constitute them in being the person.

Tamkin, Pearson, Hirsh, & Constable (2010) conducted a study on the traits of outstanding leaders. The study resulted that outstanding leaders speak about the role of vision as being emotionally align people to the organization and to face them towards where the organization is heading whereas good leaders are more likely to see vision as aligning people through a cascade of objectives. Outstanding leaders seek to place control and power within the team whereas good leaders tend to see themselves as ultimately responsible. Further, outstanding leaders see mistakes as an inevitable part of performance and seek to maximize the learning from them for individuals and to retain engagement and confidence whereas good leaders see mistakes as something that can be learnt from and avoided in the future. These imply that being outstanding is not being perfect. Outstanding leaders have do not only intelligent but emphatic and humble.

This study aims to describe how the graduates from a state university and college in Region III, Philippines excel in their chosen careers. The findings of the study can be a source of model or inspiration to the students as well basis for career guidance program which can be used to further equipped students in the field of work.

Objectives

This study aims to describe the characteristics of outstanding alumnae in the field of education, engineering, business, management, and technology.

Specifically, it intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the contributory factors to be outstanding in chosen field?
2. What are challenges and success that the alumnae experienced as:
 - a. students and
 - b. employees?

3. How do the alumnae engage with the community?

Methods

The study used descriptive phenomenology. Descriptive phenomenology as a research method is widely used in the social sciences, one in which it aims to explore and describe the lived experience (Welch and Barr, 2017). The study focused on the lived experiences of the participants in their work and their private life.

In choosing the participants, purposive sampling was utilized. Creswell and Clark (2007) wrote that in purposeful sampling, the researcher intentionally selects participants who have experience with the central phenomenon or the key concept being studied. Such type of sampling is used to attain the objective of the research.

The criteria in choosing the participants are: a. graduate of high school to college on the research locale from 2002 to 2017; b. Received very satisfactory rating in their performance evaluation; and c. Holds key position/designation in their organization.

The study used open-ended questionnaire. According to Farrell (2016), an open-ended questionnaire is a set of questions wherein the participants are free to express their answers in any manner. It gives freedom to the participants in giving their insights about the questions. The research instrument was validated by three seasoned educators. Each question was evaluated according to its: (1) attainment of the objectives; and (2) appropriateness of language structure used. The recommendations of the validators was incorporated into the final form of the instrument.

Results and Discussion

1. Contributory factors to be outstanding in chosen field

Being outstanding do not happened overnight. There are external and internal factors that contribute to it. More so, it requires discipline to take such remarkable description. According to Yovah and Harpaz (2021), being outstanding can lead to product and service innovation.

Based on the gathered data, the following themes emerged:

a. Trainings and Learnings

For a graduate to be adaptive with the work place, he or she must be geared with trainings and learning that could be utilized. These trainings and learning are product of one’s education. According to Abun et al (2021), the education is a process of the capacitating the intellectual aspect of a person by various simulations and reading. It also aims to help student to be prepared in their life and be equipped with necessary and even complex knowledge and skills. Also, it creates opportunities for independency and respect towards self and others. The use of the learned trainings and learnings are manifestations the viability of the program’s curriculum as well as the effectiveness of the teaching in facilitating learning (Orbeta et al, 2018)

“The acquired knowledge from studying allowed to prepare ourselves and be globally competitive in our chosen careers. Our alma matter had exposed us to various training and employment simulations that gave us overview of the real workplace.”- A1;A2;A3; A4; A5, A7

“ Our teachers have imparted learning and allowed us to master skills that are not only beneficial to land a job but to be a better person.”- A8; A9, A11, A12

b. Imbued Values

Knowledge is not the sole key of success. The values of a person has a great impact towards work and of the organization (Arieli & Rocass, 2018). Abun et al (2021) emphasized the spiritual and moral values of students give them a weapon to adapt to any organization culture. Realizing to that, the holistic development of a person is vital as he or she faced the world of work. Values are intrinsic that are manifested with one’s interpersonal ability as well as decision making.

“Values are important to survive in this world specifically: persistence and resilient. Having a positive look in life will allow you

to see light in the dark, beauty in challenging times, and opportunities in struggles.” -A1; A3

“Knowledge can be learned through books but not values. A person must not only educated but must also develop good values to help in reaching their life goals. Further, application of this values will be a test to be a good person.” - A4; A7

2. Experienced Challenges and Success

The development of person is a product of the negative and positive things that happen. Everyone do experience challenges but not all became successful. People may have enrolled in prestigious university but performs only in very satisfactory aspect. Based on Possinger and Powers (2016) outstanding graduates are aware of their struggles and because of that they value more what they have and the opportunities to further improve.

2.1 Challenges

Challenges are inevitable. But dealing and surpassing them draw success.

From the results, two themes emerged:

2.1.1 As Students

a. Low self-esteem

Being timid and passive are signs of the low self- esteem. These may be a result of various aspects like home orientation or bad experiences. This condition can lead to anxiety, depression, educational stress, and even suicidal tendency. It was found out that those who have high low self-esteem often remediation classes (Nguyen et al, 2018). Lack of self-confidence may lead to students on being less participative. In other situations, they become “laughing stock” of their classmates. With such, it may lead to demotivation and low academic performance.

“I am shy and lack of confidence.”- A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A8, A9, A11, A12

“I prefer to be alone and quiet because I am afraid to commit mistakes”- A6, A7,

b. Poverty

Poverty is one of the reasons why a person unable to do his educational requirements perfectly. Oxford (2000) defined poverty as a state of poor wherein there in insufficiencies, scarcity, and unavailable means for the needed resources. Andrews et al. (2003) finds that poverty is as one of the significant determinant on the academic performance of the students. In the study of Breger (2014), it was found out that poverty has a significant negative impact on students' achievement.

"Being a beggar in the streets to support my education." – A6, A8, A9
"Having to work every weekends and after class to have money for my studies."- A1, A2, A3, A4,A7, A10

2.1.2 As Employees

From the results, two themes emerged:

a. Employability

After graduation, the alumnae faced another challenge-landing a job and proving themselves towards works. With the credential work of job hunting and in search for suited human capital of the applicant to do the work, looking for job became a competition. Rowe and Zegwaard (2017) defined employability as a determined skills and attributed that are considered incorporated by the industry and must possess by graduates to secure an employment. Considerations on the expectations of the graduates as well of the employers must take into account. Failure to consider both expectaions may lead to both parties unsatisfied (Breger, 2014).

"After graduation, people/relatives expected to easily land a job and have a high pay." A6;A8
"It is believed by the employer that that you can do the job with almost perfect performance."- A1;A3;A5;A7

"People perceived that passing the board examination, you get easily employed on promoted easily."- A10;A11

b. Self-doubt

The graduates must posses with them the expected skills to perform satisfactory in the industry. However, honing one's competence is not only based on what was learned in the school but on how to master one's skills in the work field. In the study of Braslow et al (2012), it was found out that self- doubt is associated to one's competence. Further, it can be associated to self concepts. Self doubt can be a result of selfworth judgments as it concerns individual differences.

"After graduation, self-doubt is presence whether I am ready for the real battle of work." - A11; A12
"Doubting whether you had performed well"- A1; A3; A4; A8;A9
"When there are complaints and you tend to question your skills."- A2; A5;A6

2.2. Success

Success is associated to achieving one's dream. Further, it suggests developmental and positivity.

2.2.1 As Students

Based on the gathered data, one theme emerged:

a. Recognition

Recognition serves a positive reinforcement to everyone. Having an award or passing in outstanding remarks give an acknowledgement to all the hard works. Awards are also considered symbol of status. Awards are given to recognize or honor someone. It both a motivating factor to the receiver of the recognition as well those who are aspiring for it (Frey and Necker-mann, 2009).

*“Winning interschool competitions”- A1; A3
 “Passing the licensure examinations”- A1;
 A2;A6;A7;A10;A11
 “Being part of the Top 10 passers in the licen-
 sure examinations.”-A11*

2.2.2. As Employees

From the gathered data, three themes were formed:

a. Recipient of Awards

Being an awardee in the workplace apprehends that the employee is doing the right thing and has great contributions to the organization. In the study of Frey and Necker-mann (2009), awards play a motivating role to anyone because it caters the human desire to be affirmed by others. This was supported by Hamlin (2019) that highlighted the rewarding employees in an organization is importance for it boosts employee’s morale of working harder and being more productive.

*“Recipient of outstanding em-
 ployer of the month/year.”-
 A1;A2;A3;A4;A5;A6;A7;A8;A9;A
 10;A11*

b. Promotion in Work

Promotion is often associated to excellence, trust, and commitment towards work. Razak et al (2018) explained that promotions is important area not only on choosing the right perso po the job but also a life for leaders to plan a policy on how to motivate their subordinates to develop further. In the study of Saharuddin and Sulaiman (2016), the indicators concerning promotion and compensation have significant and positive impact on job satisfaction, morale, and work productivity.

*“Being promoted as process en-
 gineer, supervisor, coordinator,
 manager.”- A1; A2; A3; A4; A6;
 A8; A9*

c. Owning a Business

Be able to be an owner or head of a business is a success. In study of Pauceanu

et al (2018), it was found out that graduates who owned their business possess entre-preneurial confidence, entrepreneurial orientation, had a school support for entrepre-neurship, and cultural support for entrepre-neurship. Owning a business require both financial and skills components to en-sure the success of it.

“Owning my small business.”-A10; A11

3. Community Engagement

Giving service the community creates good world to all. Based on O’Connor et al (2011), the context of community engagement allows gradu-ates and even students to become “co-genera-tor” and not such “consumer” or “product” of the community. Graduates emerge from higher learning with particular attributes that part of their self-identity are more than equipped with skills but also in service of the community. Such community experience may also provide an ex-posure which gives them the opportunity to serve other and improve themselves. Further, Kellogg Commission (1999) emphasized that people must even more sympathetically and productively involved in helping and building better communities.

From the results, three themes emerged:

a. Volunteer works in various community programs

The most common student engagement with communities is volunteering. As mentioned by HEFCE (2007), students do volunteer works as a form of help to the community. Further, through this, the graduates were being exposed to the reality beyond their work. Volunteer works help to a built a more cohesive society.

*“Sharing my skills, expertise,
 and ideas to some volunteered
 works to the community and to
 the church.”- A2; A5*

b. Giving donations to the underprivi- ledged

Experiencing struggles in life opens door to help. According to Watson (2003), outreach is an activity that gives practical help to those in

need. A formed of dole-out may be a temporary solution but remain to be a solution. Graduates found themselves of returning the favor by doing gift giving to various shelthers and people in need. Some even support students who are financially challegend in their school.

"Helping those students who are experiencing financial constraints in their studies."- A1, A6,A7, A9, A11.

c. Be an inspiration

Being a source of inspiration invites positivity and hope. The stories of the participants lead to a motivating factor that no struggle is hard to a person with big aspiration and

will to thrive and create a breakthrough. The word inspiration was literally defined as "putting life into something that had been lifeless" (LRN, 2010). But moving the people within the organization have greater effects than rewarding them for doing a good job. Rewards are good but their effect to someone is temporal. But if someone is inspired to be part of the organization as well to perform, it is intrinsic and meaningful.

"Accepting invitation as resource speakers to impart my stories in life, education, and career."- A2, A3, A4, A8; A10

Emerging Framework

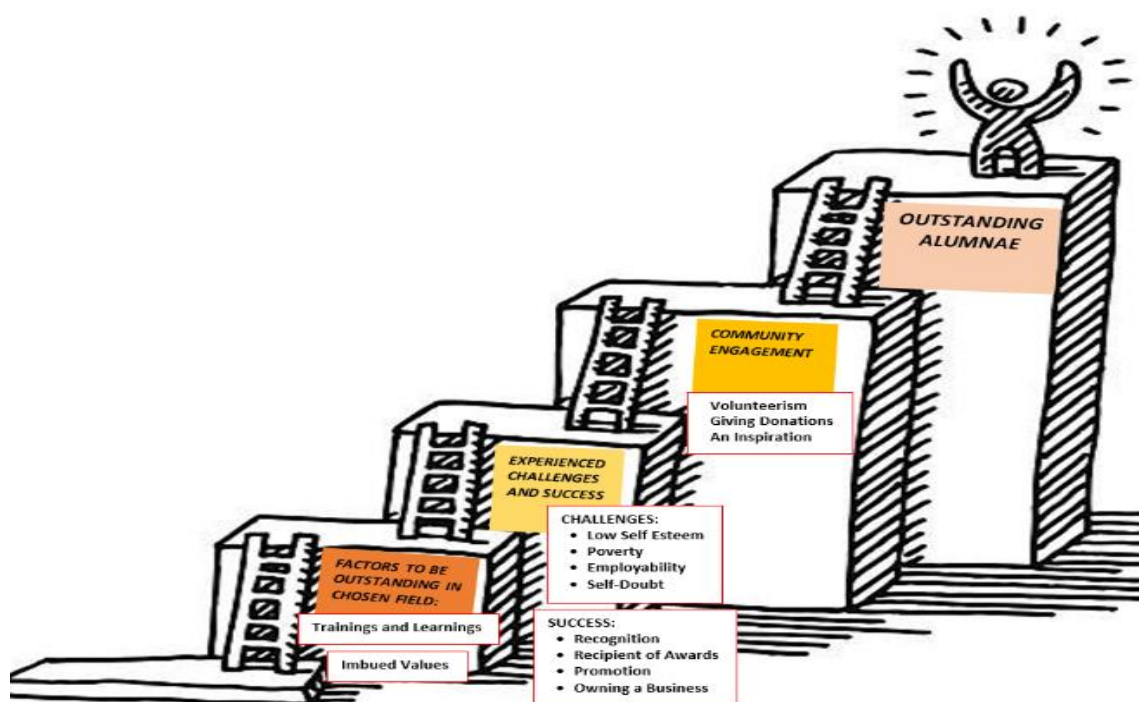


Figure 1: Gamboa, Gamboa, Mercado, Nicdao, & Puebla’s Framework for an Outstanding Alumnae

To graduate a course endures pains and struggles. No diploma is served in a silver platter. Being excellent does not mean being perfect but to have a brave heart and a firm determination to step and surpass ever steps on the ladder towards the achievement of one’s dreams.

After graduating, life is not a purely a bed of roses. Struggles and challenges are present and inevitable. But the learning, trainings, and values a person imbued through his or her education and experiences are his or her primary weapons to continue to thrive and strive. And reaping the fruits of those hardships open a

door to help and be an inspiration for those who are starting to their ladder of success.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To be outstanding, trainings, learnings, and values are necessary; however challenges will be there like of low self-esteem, poverty, losing a loved one, expectations and self-doubt. But the fruits of it is sweeter, as lead to winning, passing and top notching licensure examinations, receiving awards/recognitions, being promoted, and owning a business. But being outstanding must be shared by doing volunteer works to the community, helping the poor, and inspiring others.

Based on the findings of the study, inclusion of being employable and being serviceable in the career guidance program. Further, it invitations of successful alumnae will be a great motivation to soon to be graduates. And further conduct of the study may be done to have a comprehensive description of an outstanding graduate of a different or wide locale.

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