

Relevance of Business Graduate Program of Universities in Batangas Province: Basis for Development of Industry-Based MBA Curriculum

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Abstract – *This study primarily aimed to assess the relevance of business graduate program with reference to basic/foundation/core courses, major courses, electives, co-curricular activities, seminars and trainings attended, researches conducted and teaching strategies of Universities and Colleges in Batangas Province; it also compared the responses of the two groups of respondents; the graduate students and industry representatives; and develop an industry based MBA curriculum. This study utilized the descriptive-comparative methods. Results show that graduate students and industry representatives differ on their assessment on the relevance of business graduate program with reference to basic/foundation/core courses and electives, co-curricular activities, seminars and trainings attended and teaching strategies. An Industry-Based Curriculum for Master of Business Administration was developed to address the needs of the industries and the academe as well.*

Keywords: Graduate Education; Business Graduate Program; Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered an inseparable part in the whole process of a country's development. It is the way to national development and personal liberation. Without education, the poor and the deprived is bound by ignorance to a cycle of misery and poverty.

As the graduate education represents the apex of the entire educational system where most formal staff training and development activities take place, it has to pay attention to acquiring specialized skills needed to make education a way to national development. A graduate education that requires a great deal of work refers to programs that award a master's degree or a doctorate where the coursework is exclusively in the major area of study.

In today's job market many positions go unfilled due to a shortage of skilled candidates. Professionals with a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree continue to be in high demand, making it the degree professionals seek to advance their career goals. In fact, according to the 2012 Year-End Poll of Employers Summary Report published by Graduate

Management Admission Council (GMAC), 76% of employers expect to hire MBA graduates, and an MBA is typically the most sought after degree out of all graduate degrees [1].

The Master of Business Administration program in the Philippines has been generally successful as it has supplied the managerial force among many private organizations as well as public offices. Many of those who graduated from the country's best MBA schools are the leaders of the government and industry today, deciding how companies are run, shaping the destinies of industries and charting the course of the nation [2]

The Philippines is a choice for many students from all over the world seeking graduate education in business. The MBA in Philippines programs follow international standards for quality business education and faculty are highly qualified professionals who are considered experts in their field. MBA in Philippines

programs provide students with a rigorous curriculum that challenges them to become strategic thinkers through gaining a strong understanding of all aspects of business and theory [3].

Nonetheless, there is much opportunity for Master of Business Administration schools to seize. Both business and government still look up to these schools as the major supplier of trained managers. Globalization has posed the challenge that local businesses be managed efficiently so as to be able to compete internationally. Likewise, development planners count on these MBA schools to produce managers who are development oriented and ready to do their share in fast tracking the local economy.

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs are being met with escalating criticism from academics, students, and various organizational stakeholders. Central to these criticisms is the contention that the MBA is wholly out-of-touch with the “realworld” and is irrelevant to the needs of practicing managers [4]. Oneway to bolster professional managerial developmentisthrough the establishment of a common body of requisite knowledge, skills, or competencies. In thissense, the current results pertaining to the overallalignment of MBA curriculum with the required behavioralcompetencies of managerial work couldserve as a road-map for designing or redesigningcurricula that support the development of the most essential managerial capabilities [4].

The Business Graduate Programs in Batangas Province aims to provide graduate students with learning opportunities for business leadership toward excellence, and effectiveness in the pursuit of global competitiveness in the attainment of national and regional goals. Graduate students are expected to be competent leaders, managers and industry and academe practitioners emphasizing the alignment of the required MBA curricula and required managerial competencies of the industries.

MBA students from Batangas Province at present have different priorities and strong perspectives in their desire to succeed in their field. They realized that business environment is dynamic and constantly changing, so an MBA program must aim to meet the demands of an evolving market, aligned with emerging fields, innovative technologies and business trends. Thus they look into if their curriculum is relevant and tackles the world issues. The study of Pandya [5] identified that the components of

Academic stress and different stressors have impact on the students. This study further enlightened each component of academic stress such as curriculum and instruction, team work related issues, assessment, and placement and impact on performance and outcomes of Academic stress.

Graduate students are aware that pursuing an MBA requires a personal commitment and financial investment and in return they are expected to receive a quality education that offers an industry relevant curriculum. In line with the high expectations, the MBA students in Batangas province will be provided with a curriculum designed to equip the students with skills and will enable them to be qualified and competent in higher level management positions.

In the light of the challenging present scenarios, the researchers being faculty members of the College of Accountancy, Business, Economics and International Hospitality Management realized the need to analyze the relevance of Business Graduate programs in Batangas Province. Findings of this study will serve as basis in developing an Industry Based MBA Curriculum that will suit the needs of the academe and the industry as well.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to assess the relevance of Business Graduate Program in response to the needs of the industry. Specifically, it sought to determine how the respondents perceived the relevance of Business Graduate program to industry with reference to: Basic/Foundation Courses, Major Courses, Electives, Co-curricular Activities, Seminars and Training attended, Researches conducted and Teaching Strategies; determine how do the responses of the graduate students and industries compare; and based from the findings, develop an industry-based curriculum.

METHODS

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive comparative method. Descriptive as it tries to determine the relevance of the Graduate Business Program *with reference to* basic/foundation/core courses, major courses, electives, co-curricular activities, seminars and trainings attended, researches conducted and teaching strategies and comparative since it aims to determine the difference on the responses of the two groups of respondents.

Subjects of the Study

The study utilized the purposive sampling and the criteria used in the selection of the respondents were the MBA students who are enrolled in the major courses during the First Semester SY 2013-2014. There were 115 Master of Business Administration students from Batangas State University, Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas, Dela Salle Lipa, Golden Gate Colleges and University of Batangas and 20 industry representatives. The 20 industry representatives were the officers and employees of the companies/firms where the students are connected with.

Data Gathering Instrument

The study made use of researcher made questionnaire validated through interviews from MBA students followed by validation by a group of professors teaching in the Graduate Program. Final copy of the questionnaire was made after the internal and external validation. The questionnaire assessed the relevance of Business graduate program with reference to Basic/Foundation courses, major courses, electives, co-curricular activities, trainings/seminars attended, researches conducted and teaching strategies. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for all variables in the study revealed a reliability coefficient of 0.85 indicating high internal consistency. A Focus Group Discussion represented by industry representatives was also conducted to substantiate the results of the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers gathered relevant information about the Graduate Business Education Curriculum from the 5 Graduate Schools in Batangas Province and from these, the researchers were able to formulate the questionnaire which was the primary source of data.

The researchers personally administered the questionnaires to the MBA students of the five MBA schools after their respective classes and retrieved all on the same day. Also, the questionnaires for the 20 industry representatives were administered personally by the researchers inside their company premises.

A focus group discussion was also conducted. A focus group could be defined as a group of interacting individuals having some common interest or characteristics, brought together by a moderator, who

uses the group and its interaction as a way to gain information about a specific or focused issue.

A group of 10 members who are unfamiliar with each other are representatives of industries and the academe. These participants were selected based on the common industries or profession where the MBA students are working with.

Data Analysis

All the collected data were tallied so that the responses of the respondents in each item were analyzed. The gathered data were interpreted and analyzed through relative frequency, weighted mean, t-test. Weighted Mean was used to determine the relevance of Business Graduate Program with reference to basic/foundation/core courses, major courses, electives, co-curricular activities, seminars and trainings attended, researches conducted and teaching strategies as assessed by the students and industry representatives. T-test was used to determine the differences on the assessment of graduate students and industry representatives on the relevance of Business Graduate Program.

A Likert scale was used to evaluate the responses by giving a quantitative value on any kind of subjective or objective dimension, with level of agreement/disagreement being the dimension most commonly used. The given scale was used to interpret the result of the study: 3.5 – 4: Very Relevant; 2.5 -3.49: Relevant; 1.5 – 2.49: Least Relevant; and 1 – 1.49: Not Relevant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the summary assessment of Business Graduate Program. Students and industries' assessment of Business Graduate Program in terms of the Basic/Foundation/Core Courses were found to be both Very Relevant with composite means of 3.55 and 3.78. It shows that the business students Develop their analytical thinking capabilities necessary for business academic training. The MBA degree is more than just another credential. It is a high-level business education that provides professionals with the opportunity to learn organizational theory from a practical perspective and approach. The educational experience builds resilience, confidence and self-worth through the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Table 1. Summary Assessment of Business Graduate Program

	Student			Industry		
	CM	VI	Rank	CM	VI	Rank
Basic/Foundation/Core Courses	3.55	Very relevant	1	3.78	Very relevant	2.5
Major Courses	3.54	Very relevant	2.5	3.68	Very relevant	6
Elective Courses	3.50	Very relevant	4	3.75	Very relevant	5
Co-curricular Activities	3.43	relevant	7	3.82	Very relevant	1
Trainings and Seminars	3.49	relevant	5	3.78	Very relevant	2.5
Researches Conducted	3.46	relevant	6	3.63	Very relevant	7
Teaching Strategies	3.54	Very relevant	2.5	3.76	Very relevant	4

Note: CM: Composite Mean; VI: Verbal Interpretation

The major courses were assessed as Very Relevant by the graduate students and industries having composite means of 3.54 and 3.68 respectively. The graduate students' revealed that major courses provide would-be managers and mid-level managers with the strong foundation in concepts, principles and competencies in business administration that will support their development as effective managers. The industry assessment revealed that the Design for business practitioners wish to upgrade their managerial skills and to make them strategic thinkers to move them with passion for excellence in the field of business.

The Elective Courses of the graduate students were assessed by both respondents as Very Relevant as indicated by their composite means of 3.50 and 3.75. Graduate students' revealed that it focused on the deepening of knowledge, application and analysis of the role of business and providing reliable information for corporate decision making. The industries hold the opinion that Electives were designed to familiarize students with accepted management standards, procedures, and techniques employed by corporate business and functional level managers. This conforms with the study of Krishnamurthy [6] that the development of future corporate citizens can be achieved by a combination of traditional academic teachings, interface with industry and meaningful engagements with society.

The two groups of respondents differed in their assessment on the Relevance of Business Graduate Program in terms Co-Curricular Activities. The students' assessment in terms of Co-Curricular Activities was Relevant as indicated by the composite mean of 3.43 while the industries' assessment with a composite mean of 3.82 was Very Relevant. It is interesting to note that both group of respondents manifest that these co-curricular activities provide opportunities for character building and nurture life

skills and attributes such as leadership, teamwork and compassion and a practical hands-on approach to the students which provide similar experiences which they will face in the outside world.

Trainings and Seminars attended were found to be relevant by the graduate students as indicated by the composite mean of 3.49. These allow them to develop their abilities to improve their competence as professionals and provide supplemental knowledge and activities to help graduate students stay in tune with industry trends and provide educational opportunities beyond the traditional graduate school curriculum was Very Relevant. The industries' assessment differed as it was assessed as Very Relevant as indicated by the composite mean of 3.78. The industries believe that these trainings and seminars allow students to develop their abilities to improve their competence as professionals and students will explore how they will be more involved in decision-making and implementation processes within the field of business.

Graduate student's assessment in terms of Researches was found to be Relevant as indicated by the composite mean of 3.46. Their research expertise allows them to design and improve policy measures for managing and coping with business processes and change. The expertise of graduate students allow them to design and improve researches to contribute to academic progress by developing and disseminating business knowledge and information acquired through creative and pioneering research to help solve a specific business problem or make a decision. This affirms that Research performance was improved by the number of faculty, the proportion of full professors, the proportion of assistant professors, and editorships. MBA program performance was improved by the budget per faculty member, and the proportion of full professors [7]. The assessment of the industry differed as Researches was found to be

Very Relevant as indicated by the composite mean of 3.63. They affirm that researches are designed to integrate students into a strong research environment and connect them to real business environment and that it contributes to academic progress by developing and disseminating business knowledge and information acquired through creative and pioneering research.

In terms of Teaching Strategies, both graduate students and industries' assessment was found to be Very Relevant as indicated by the composite means of 3.54 and 3.76 respectively. The students revealed that teaching strategies that are used in the graduate education provided meaningful learning opportunities to understand the role of technology in instruction that affect the workplace.

Differences Between the Responses of Graduate Students and Industries

It can be noted that the computed p-values of basic/foundation/core courses, electives, co-curricular activities, seminars and trainings attended and teaching strategies were found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance. The result only indicated that the respondents differed on their assessment on the relevance of business graduate program with reference to basic/foundation/core courses, electives, co-curricular activities, seminars and trainings attended and teaching strategies. That is why the results reject the null hypothesis. This confirmed in the study of Kumar and Jain [8], where he found that there was a misalignment between required course curriculum and managerial competencies across the three groups of business schools.

This also conformed with the study of Nangoy [9] where he envisioned that the following changes will strongly affect the future Philippine business

environment, understanding other major foreign languages, foreign ownership in local business, automation and robotics; and biotechnology and genetic engineering. The academe and industry envisioned that the following competencies are required for the future Philippine MBA graduates: global business orientation, intercultural understanding, understanding local/ global political issues, proactive leadership, innovative and creative, integrative ability, technology literacy, flexible adaptive behavior, negotiation skills, English fluency, computer fluency, strategic policy deployment, and business functional understanding.

Furthermore, the assessment of industry representatives based on statistical results got higher mean than the graduate students' assessment. This only shows that industry representatives found the basic/foundation/core courses, electives, co-curricular activities, seminars and trainings attended and teaching strategies more relevant than the graduate students.

Based on the interview conducted from industry representatives, they emphasized that basic courses, electives, co-curricular activities, trainings and teaching strategies are very relevant for business graduate students as these will provide academic training for them to enhance their managerial skills when they go up the organizational ladder.

However, it can be seen that at the 0.05 level of significance, the computed p-values of major courses and researches conducted were found to be not significant. That is why the results failed to reject null hypothesis. The result only indicated that the responses of the graduate students and industries on the relevance of business graduate program with reference to major courses and researches conducted were almost the same.

Table 2. Differences between Responses of Graduate Students and Industries

	Mean		t-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
	Industries	Students				
Basic/Foundation/Core Courses	3.7800	3.5583	3.023	.004	Reject Ho	Significant
Major Courses	3.6800	3.5426	1.307	.194	Fail to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Electives	3.7500	3.5043	3.126	.003	Reject Ho	Significant
Co-curricular Activities	3.8200	3.4365	6.305	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Seminars and Trainings Attended	3.7800	3.4957	3.710	.001	Reject Ho	Significant
Researches Conducted	3.6300	3.4626	1.740	.091	Fail to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Teaching Strategies	3.7429	3.5058	2.695	.010	Reject Ho	Significant

Development of Graduate Business Curriculum

A Focus Group Discussion was utilized to substantiate the findings of the study. A curriculum mapping was done to determine the common Core/Basic/Foundation courses and Major courses in the five universities. Graduate Business Education as the apex of Business Education had to keep abreast with the fast changing pace of the industry. The present MBA Curriculum is designed to equip Graduate students with fundamental skills to make them strategic thinkers to become managers and leaders for others. The core courses of the MBA curriculum provide more advanced concepts and principles in the field of business and commerce. The major courses of MBA curriculum is designed to equip students with skills that will make them qualified and competent in higher level management priorities. This centers on the current management techniques and functional areas in the field of business and are relevant and useful in their work environment. The MBA program does not merely teach student about theories and application of business concepts, processes, tools and techniques but also teaches students about managerial tools and right decision making processes in business. The MBA program is taught through classroom-based instructions, seminars, workshops and organized talks. Students are engaged in focus group discussions simulations, business games, role playing, debates, field research activities, oral presentations, case studies, company presentations, business research papers and thesis. These teaching learning strategies are useful in upgrading their managerial skills for promotion to higher level management.

The Industry Based MBA Curriculum was developed from the perspectives of industry and academe representatives as shown in Table 3.

Nine (9) units are required by Commission on Higher Education (CHED) as MBA core courses. These are Research Methodology, Statistics with Computer Application and Corporate Social Responsibility with Good Governance. None among the universities offer Corporate Social Responsibility as an MBA core. Based from one of the members of Focus Group Discussion, CSR should be part of MBA core. She explained that CSR will help students to be more aware of the obligations of the company in its stakeholders especially the environment. It was then agreed by the other industry representatives to integrate such subject to the MBA Core Courses. Likewise, Statistics with Computer Application and Research Methodology must be retained because these

subjects are mandated by CHED. This was then favored by the industry representatives.

Table 3. Proposed Industry-Based Mba Curriculum

Core Courses (based on CHED Memo Series of 2008)	UNITS
Research Methodology	3 units
Statistics with Computer Application	3 units
Corporate Social Responsibility with Good Governance	3 units
	9 units
Major Courses	
*Entrepreneurial Management	3 units
*Managerial Economics	3 units
*International Business	3 units
Financial Management	3 units
Strategic Marketing Management	3 units
Human Resource Management	3 units
<i>(Note: *based on CHED Memo Series of 2008)</i>	18 units
Elective Courses	
Production and Operations Management	3 units
Management Information System	3 units
Strategic Management/Business Policy	3 units
Human Behavior in Organization	3 units
Logistics Management	3 units
Quality Management	3 units
Current Trends in IT	3 units
	6 units
Seminar in Thesis Writing	3 units
Thesis Writing	3 units
Total	39 units

There are 3 major courses which are mandated by CHED. These are Managerial Economics, Entrepreneurial Management and International Business. Financial Management, Marketing Management, Human Resource Management, and Production/Operations Management are common major courses among the five (5) universities. However, it was agreed that Production/Operations Management can be included in one of the Electives. The six (6) major courses to be included in the Master in Business Administration Curriculum are: Managerial Economics, Entrepreneurial Management, International Business, Financial Management, Strategic Marketing Management and Human Resource Management.

The most relevant courses to be included in the Electives according to industry partners are Production/Operations Management/Management Information System, Strategic Management/Business Policy, Human Behavior in Organization, Logistics Management, Quality Management and Current Trends in IT.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The study was conducted to assess the relevance of business graduate program with reference to basic/foundation/core courses, major courses, electives, co-curricular activities, seminars and trainings attended, researches conducted and teaching strategies, compared the responses of the two groups of respondents ; and develop an industry based MBA curriculum.

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn: Business Graduate Program with reference to basic/foundation/core courses, major courses, electives, co-curricular activities, seminars and trainings attended, researches conducted and teaching strategies were found to be Very Relevant to Industry Needs as assessed by both students and industries; Graduate students and industry representatives differ on their assessment on the relevance of business graduate program with reference to basic/foundation/core courses, electives, co-curricular activities, seminars and trainings attended and teaching strategies. On the other hand, their assessment on the relevance of business graduate program with reference to major courses and researches conducted were almost the same; and an industry based curriculum for Master in Business Administration was developed based from the needs of the industry, CHED mandates and the results of the Focus Group Discussion from industry representatives in Batangas Province.

The following recommendations were drawn from the conclusions of the study: The Graduate Business Curriculum need to be continuously revisited and reviewed to keep abreast with the needs of the industry; Revisions of the Graduate Business Curriculum need to be participated by stakeholders like alumni, graduate students, Graduate School faculty and industry experts; Basic course, Major courses and Electives in the Business Graduate Program may be reviewed as to their depth and relevance to the needs and expectations of the industry and finally, a similar or related study may be conducted to further validate the results of this study.

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