Defining Quality Higher Education in an Emerging Economy: A Case of Cebu, Philippines

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Abstract For a robust economy, unemployment may be caused by job-mismatch, and job-mismatch is often associated with unemployable degree holders. A possible reason for this mismatch is the lack of a standard definition of what is quality higher education (HE) from the perspective of various stakeholders, namely, the educators, employers, and students. To get their definitions of quality HE, we interviewed 10 educators and eight employers from different industries using a non-probability sampling technique. For the sixty students, we used systematic sampling technique and purposive sampling. We collected and categorized their responses using an unstructured interview format and a thematic analysis approach, respectively. Our findings suggest that all three stakeholders based their perception of quality HE through the relevance of curriculum and quality of graduates. The quality of the educators, availability of resources, and societal impact also affect the perceived quality of the HEIs. Since the business environment is fast-changing, the HEIs need to invite the industry to participate in the student learning process, curriculum design, and in the process of upgrading their resources. Secondly, aside from the employability of the graduates, HEIs should also focus on the graduates' ability and willingness to learn new knowledge and skills on their own.

Keywords: employer satisfaction, employability, societal impact

Introduction

As countries move towards a more advanced economic stage, Higher Education (HE) becomes increasingly important. Gupta and Kaur (2014) noted that in keeping up with the rising trends of global standards, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) incorporate teaching, research, and extension to contribute to the economy, social progress, and political democracy. Tan and French-Arnold (2012) also posited that HEIs contribute in three areas. They contribute: 1) in the production and accumulation of human capital, 2) in the generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, and 3) in innovation and invention of new information and technology. Thus, for an emerging nation, such as the Philippines, the quality of HE system plays a critical role in producing a competent workforce.

Statistics from UNESCO ("Six ways to ensure," 2017) showed that from 2000-2014, there was an increase in the number of students in HEIs from 100 to 207 million. The substantial growth attests how the global demand for HE continues to rise. In Asia, the increase in school-age children, participation rate in basic education, and the progression rate in primary and secondary schools drove the enrollment growth in HE over the last 20 years (Chapman & Chien, 2014). However, the proliferation in the number of enrollment coupled with budget constraints has resulted to high student/teacher ratios, eroding conditions of faculty employment, weakening of professional development of faculty, outdated management systems, and deferred maintenance of facilities (Asian Development Bank, 2011). The low internal efficiency across many countries in Asia curbed universities from attaining the overall goals of HE, thus, affecting the quality in HE (ADB, 2011).

In the Philippines, data from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) (n.d.) showed an increasing trend of student enrollment in HEIs from 2011 to 2015. However, this trend started to decline by the start of 2016 to 2017 due to the promulgation of the K-12 program (Macha, Mackie, & Magaziner, 2018). The HEIs in the country included state and local universities and colleges, private universities and colleges, and other government schools. On the other hand, the Philippines bested eight of its neighbors within the ASEAN region as the

country ranked second in the number of tertiary enrollments, tertiary graduates, and higher education institutions (CHED, n.d.).

Despite the increasing number of tertiary graduates, the country continues to experience unfilled job vacancies, which may be caused by the talent shortage or the lack of qualified applicants to fill in the job vacancies (Abatayo, 2018). The president of the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines–Cebu Inc. posited that talent shortage is an indication that the industry is not getting the talents they need from the schools (Cordova, 2018). In fact, Tacadena (2016) reported that one of the possible reasons for the job–skill mismatch is the deteriorating quality of education in HEIs. The mismatch happens when the output of HEIs fails to meet the demand and required competencies of the industry, and thus, may cause unemployment problems in the country (Campos, 2016).

As per recommendation, universities and colleges must have industry partnerships to balance theory and practice in the curriculum (Bringula et al., 2016). CHED has taken the necessary initiatives to strengthen the linkages between the academe and the industry to address this gap. For instance, it brought together key players from the industry, civil society, and government to promote academic linkages through faculty immersions to further academic development and researches ("CHED strengthens academe-industry," 2017).

Despite the straightforward solutions, there have been few studies conducted in the Philippines to ascertain if program curricula address the needs of the industry. These efforts of the government to enhance the quality of HE in the country will be more effective by first understanding how the primary stakeholder groups perceive quality in HE. Thus, the main goal of this current research is to examine how the students, employers, and educators view quality HE.

This research aimed to highlight the similarities and differences in the perceptions of quality in HE of the three primary stakeholders, and discuss its implications, which may help in addressing the educational gap in the country. Additionally, the results of this work may assist the academe and the government in identifying, developing, and implementing the necessary refinements in their methods of providing quality HE.

Quality Defined

The concept of quality depends on the nature and usage of the products and the customers' needs. In the classic book of Suárez (1992), Deming defined quality as continuously meeting the needs and expectations of customers, while Juran's definition of quality is "fitness for use" at an economical cost. Nabaho, Aguti, and Oonyu (2017) also proposed quality to be as fitness for purpose, value for money, and transformative. Thus, the definition of quality is a function of the object and the customers. In education, it may be challenging to define quality since this is expressed from the point of view of the end-users (Elassy, 2015). For HE, its stakeholders include the academicians, employers, students, and communities (Nabaho et al., 2017; Welzant et al., 2015).

World's view of Quality in Higher Education

Quality in HE is a multi-dimensional concept due to the different needs and demands of the stakeholders (Johnson, 2016). Universities are ranked worldwide based on a combination of empirical data and opinions derived from surveys from stakeholder groups (Al- Juboon, Na & Ko, 2011). Thus, the public perceives the world university rankings as indicative of the quality of the HEIs.

Commonly known world university rankings are the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), the Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings (QS), and the Times Higher Education (THE). ARWUs put the most significant weight on research output and publications (40%) on its rankings (Pavel, 2015). QS primarily uses academic reputation (40%) to determine the performance of an institution (Dobrota et al., 2016). While THE gives equal weights on teaching and learning environment, research and reputation, and citations (World University Rankings, 2018). Aside from the standard publication output and citation impact, QS and THE consider the diversity and internationalization of an institution as criteria of quality HE. ARWU, on the other hand, gives importance to awards won by the alumni of the institution.

In the ASEAN, where the Philippines is a member nation, the ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) looks

beyond the quantitative data. AUN-QA examines the systems and processes set in place, ensuring the alignment of the needs of the stakeholders to the program structure and content, to the quality of the academic and administrative staff, and the graduates (output). In the Philippines, the quality of HEIs is measured through a voluntary accreditation system regulated by the CHED. This accreditation system in the country is similar to some countries in Asia, such as India, Japan, and South Korea. Conchada and Tiongco (2015) noted in their review of the Philippine accreditation system that the following are the indicators of quality HE: performance of graduates in licensure exams, research projects, linkages to other academic institutions and agencies, facilities, community extension programs, publications, and faculty development programs.

Stakeholder's Perspective of Quality in Higher Education

For the students, the teaching staff, curriculum, the learning environment, social support system, and availability of facilities define quality HE (Abidin, 2015; Lapina et al., 2016). The image of the institution and its culture/value may also influence the perceived quality (Shurair, 2017).

For educators, they view themselves as vital to the quality of HE since they directly affect the learning of the students (Cheng, 2011). Cheng even explained that educators are the ones who provide the students with updated materials, help them identify their learning needs, and motivate them to engage in the learning process. Additionally, Brown (2012) and Ingleby (2014) proposed that quality teaching practice gives students the skills to allow them to develop their creativity, inquiring minds, and cognitive ability.

Lastly, studies also measured the quality of HE by assessing the satisfaction levels of its stakeholders, including the employers (Abidin, 2015; Alani et al., 2015). Andrews and Higson (2014) concluded that graduate employability is associated with quality HE as it is considered as a linchpin between the HE and employers.

In sum, because of the different priorities, focus, and needs of the stakeholders, the definition of quality HE may vary from stakeholder to stakeholder. For instance, students are mainly concerned with the

learning environment, not only the learnings inside the classroom. At the same time, educators focused on the learning process and employers on the readiness of the students to join the workforce. Though the views of the stakeholders differ, their goal is the same – the employability of the graduates to fill in job vacancies in the industries.

Purpose of the Research

Our primary goal for this current study is to bridge the perceived job-mismatch by examining and comparing the perceptions of the three stakeholders of what quality HE is for them. In this way, the providers of HE may focus on these factors to minimize or even eliminate the perceived job-mismatch.

Thus, the research objectives are:

1. To identify the perceptions of the three stakeholders about quality HE.
2. To categorize the collected views of quality into themes.
3. To highlight the similarities and differences in the perceptions of the three stakeholders.

Methodology

We used a descriptive research design to understand the perceptions of the three stakeholders of what quality HE is for them. We chose the qualitative research approach because we are more interested in the depth of the interviews rather than the number of respondents (e.g., Nabaho, et al., 2017). Moreover, this approach is more appropriate when exploring relevant insights (Andrews & Higson, 2014).

We chose students from the business administration and management–related programs to be the participants for this current study. Macha and colleagues (2018) suggested that business administration and other business-related programs are the most popular program, which accounted for the highest number of enrolled students.

We used an unstructured interview format to gather the views of the respondents. To establish the validity of the interview questions, the

questionnaire was reviewed and modified by a faculty member from the Psychology Program who has sufficient knowledge with the various qualitative research processes. The initial question that we asked the respondents was, "how do you define quality in HE?" A standard follow-up question of "please explain further," and "is there anything else you want to share" were also asked. These questions would give the respondent the freehand to define quality in HE in whatever terms he/she sees fit. This method of inquiry allowed us to appreciate the beliefs and needs of the three stakeholders. Thus, the answers to these simple questions revealed the priorities of the stakeholders in defining quality in HE. On average, each interview lasted between 6 to 8 minutes.

For this current study, we chose respondents belonging to the three stakeholder groups: students, educators (teachers), and employers. We classified the students' group into two: students from the premier state university and students from private universities in Cebu. For the first classification, we used a systematic sampling technique in determining the respondents to give them equal chances of being chosen (Willis & Taylor, 1999). Due to time and budget constraints, we targeted a sample size (n) of 30 or 20% of the entire population (N) of 150 management students. We divided the size of the population by the sample size to get the sample interval. We randomly chose a number as the starting point, and the range was added to it to determine the first respondent. We repeated this process until we had the desired sample size. As for the second classification of students, we used a purposive sampling technique in obtaining 30 respondents. These students were currently enrolled in a business or management program in a private university in Cebu at the time of the research.

For the respondents who are educators and employers, we applied purposive sampling in identifying and selecting them based on some criteria (e.g., Tongco, 2007; Yeo & Li, 2014). For instance, in selecting the respondents for educators, he/she must be a fulltime teacher of a business or management course at a university located in Cebu. For the employers, the respondents must come from the top three significant industries in Cebu – banking, manufacturing, and knowledge processing outsource (KPO). Furthermore, the respondents must come from companies that employ graduates of any management course and must be one of the hiring decision-makers. Given the limited time and

resources, we were able to interview 10 educators from private and public universities and eight decision-makers.

To analyze the data, we used the thematic analysis technique. The data from each stakeholder group were coded and classified into thematic groups, which were then used for comparing and contrasting the three stakeholder groups' perceptions of quality in HE.

To fulfill the ethical requirements, we secured the consent of each respondent to participate in this study. For the employers and educators, the consent was coursed through a letter of invitation to participate. At the same time, for the students, we notified them personally or through social media. In cases that a potential respondent declined, we moved on to the next person on the list. Moreover, we ensured the participants that all information obtained would solely be used for this study and be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality.

Findings

This section aims to address the three specific objectives: categorize the perceptions of the three stakeholders, and compare and contrast their views.

Students

Table 1 summarizes the responses of the 60 students from six universities. Half of the respondents are from the state university, while the other half are from various private universities in Cebu.

Table 1.   Generated themes from the responses of the students, n=60

Generated Theme/ Description	Sub-categories	Frequency (Percentage)
Quality of Educators (evidence of expertise and ability to transfer knowledge)	Knowledgeable of the subject	12 (20%)
	Effective teaching methods	8 (13%)
	Learnings of students	8 (13%)
	Relationship with students	5 (8%)
	Total Frequency	33 (55%) 27 (45%)

	Total number of respondents*	
Relevance and Effectiveness of the Curriculum (applicability of the program curriculum to the real-world)	Real-World Application of Learning	12 (20%)
	Scope and relevance of the courses	8 (13%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	20 (33%)
Quality of Graduates (preparedness of the graduates for the real-world)	Developed skills and competencies	8 (13%)
	Holistic Development (spiritual, social)	3 (5%)
	Respectful Graduates	2 (3%)
	Employability	3 (5%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	15 (25%)
Reputation of the University (credibility of the HEI)	Accomplishment of vision/mission	1 (2%)
	Adherence to standards, accreditation	5 (8%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	6 (10%)
Availability and Quality of Facilities and Learning Materials (facilities and materials that augment student learning)	Available needed equipment and facilities	5 (8%)
	Instructional materials	1 (2%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	6 (10%)
Learning Environment (additional supports and services that HEI provides to students)	Opportunities for students	5 (8%)
	Learning atmosphere (caring teachers)	6 (10%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	11 (18%)
Student Performance (performance of students in the class)	Good Class performance	5 (8%)
	Student understands the lessons	5 (8%)

	Total frequency	10 (16%)
	Total number of respondents**	8 (13%)
Management of the University's Administration (availability and the conduct of non-academic support offices)	Support by the administration	3 (5%)
	Efficient staffers	2 (3%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	5 (8%)
Value for Money	Quality that is equal to what was paid	4 (7%)
Quality of Students (intake)	Students enrolling in the university	1 (2%)

* Total number of respondents may not equal to the total frequency since some respondents gave more than one description that was included under the general theme.

Considering the teachers have the most direct encounters with the students (e.g., teaching, consulting, advising) and the implementers of the curriculum (e.g., updating and executing), we anticipated that most, if not all, student-respondents would mention them. However, after analyzing the responses of the 60 students, their perception of quality HE can be categorized into several themes. Rated as top is the competence of the instructor to teach or labeled as *quality of educators* (45%). The knowledge of the teachers about the course topic and skills to explain it contributed most to the students' opinion of the caliber of their instructors. The second theme is the perceived responsiveness or the *relevance of the curriculum* to the demands of the real-world business setting (33%). The applicability of the learnings to the real-world defined the significance of the program. The third theme is the perceived preparedness of the graduates to join the workforce (25%) or *the quality of the graduates.* They believe the skills and competencies that they had gained in the university are likely to determine their preparedness. Thirteen percent of the respondents also believe that their performance in class may affect their confidence to join the workforce. Another theme is labeled as *quality of the facilities and resources* (17%), which includes all the physical features of the learning facilities and the perceived learning environment.

The responses of the students (Table 1) indicate that quality HE is the result of perceived input (i.e., teachers' expertise, up-to-date curricula, availability of facilities and materials, the reputation of the HEI, and learning environment), and expected output (i.e., the preparedness of the graduates, student performance, and value for money). The importance of these general themes is similar to all student-respondents. The only factor that was not mentioned by any student from the public university is the value for money. At least four students from private universities considered the cost of their education, while no one from the public-school thought about the cost of educating them for free.

Educators

Table 2 shows the response of educators. A total of 10 educators from the state and private universities in Cebu agreed to join the study.

Table 2.   Generated themes from the responses of the educators, n=10

Generated Theme	Sub-categories	Frequency (Percentage)
Quality of Graduates (performance of the graduates in the real world)	Skills and competence of the students	8 (80%)
	Principled students	2 (20%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	10 (10%)
Relevance of Curriculum (applicability of its curriculum to the industry and its community)	Relevance of what is being taught	8 (80%)
	Knowledge through practical learning	2 (20%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	10 (100%)
Quality of Educators (evidence of expertise and ability to transfer knowledge)	Academic credentials, expertise	7 (70%)
	Research	5 (50%)
	Innovative teaching methods	2 (20%)
	Total frequency Total number of respondents*	14 (140%) 10 (100%)
Available Resources (facilities and resources available to the instructors and students)	Facilities	2 (20%)
	Access to online resources	1 (10%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	3 (30%)

Admissions Process (the extent of difficulty to qualify in the HEI)	Rigorous admissions process	3 (30%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	3 (30%)
Societal Impact (service to the society)	Students engage in public service	1 (10%)
	Total frequency and # of respondents	1 (10%)

* Total number of respondents may not equal to the total frequency since some respondents gave more than one description that was included under the general theme.

For the teachers, the top three generated themes of quality HE include *relevant curriculum, the quality of graduates,* and the *quality of educators*. Every one of the educator-respondents agrees that the curriculum must be relevant and practical. Eighty percent of them define quality graduates in terms of the skills and competencies the students have acquired in the university. Also, the majority believes that the credentials and research of the teachers are evidence of their expertise.

Another theme is the *quality of the facilities and materials* (30%), which reflects the willingness and capability of the HEIs to spend money on academic-related resources. Thirty percent of the respondents also consider the complexity and rigorousness of *the admission process,* while only one educator (10%) mentioned *societal impact*, as determinants of quality in HEIs.

Like the student respondents, the responses of the educators indicate that quality HE is the result of perceived input (i.e., teachers' expertise, up-to-date curricula, availability of facilities and materials, admissions process), and expected output (i.e., quality of graduates, societal impact).

Employers

Table 3 displays the responses of the employers. We interviewed eight executives from the KPO, Manufacturing, and Banking Industries for this study.

Table 3. Generated themes from the responses of theemployers, n=8

Generated Theme	Sub-categories	Frequency* (Percentage)
Quality of Graduates (performance of the graduates in the real world)	Performance of the Graduate	8 (100%)
Relevance of Curriculum (applicability of its curriculum to the industry)	Timeliness of what is taught	4 (50%)
	Practical application	2 (25%)
Societal Impact (service to the society)	University's public service	2 (25%)
Relevance of the Program (there is a demand for the program)	Employment	1 (12%)

* total number is more than eight since respondents may give more than one definition of quality HE.

Four general themes were generated from the answers of the eight employers with the first theme as *the quality of the graduates*. All the respondents agree that the performance of the graduates in the organizations determines the quality of their education. The second theme is *the relevance of the curriculum* (75%) indicative of the timeliness and applicability of what is taught inside the classroom determine the effectiveness of the program. The last two themes are *societal impact* (25%) or the HEI's public service, and relevance *of the program* (12%) or the employability of graduates.

These responses also indicate that quality HE is the result of perceived input (i.e., relevant curriculum) and perceived output (i.e., quality of graduates, societal impact, and relevance of the program).

Similarities and Differences in the Definitions of HE among the stakeholders

Figure 1 shows the similarities and differences in the definitions of what quality HE is from the three stakeholders. All the three stakeholders identified the curriculum and the graduates as primary indicators of quality.
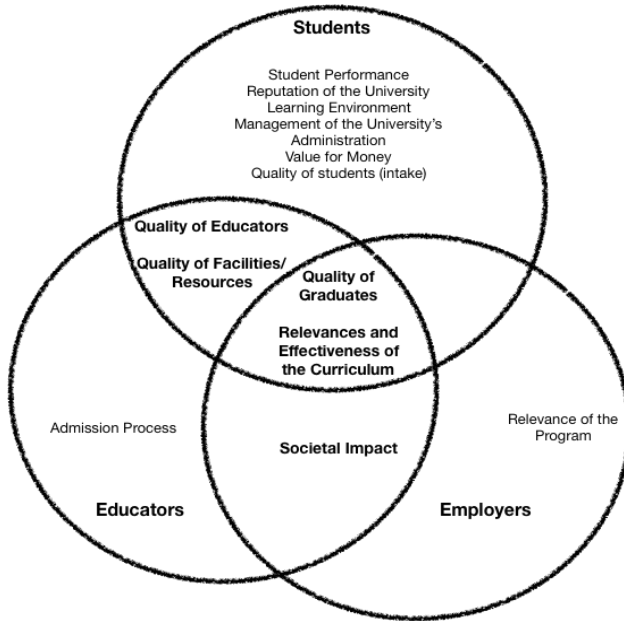
Figure 1. Similarities and Differences in the Definitions of Quality Higher Education among the three stakeholders

The three stakeholders regard the *curriculum* as an important input that significantly influences the process and outcome of HE. Students and educators have recognized the need for a relevant and effective curriculum through providing a wide scope of knowledge coupled with practical applications of learnings. Educators highlighted the need for constant reviewing and reforming of the curriculum to ensure that it is up-to-date and applicable in today's learning. The employers' perspective supports this opinion as they stressed the need for the curriculum to be anchored to what is happening in the industry (i.e., the applicability of the theoretical approach).Another primary indicator of quality drawn from this study is the *quality of graduates.* Students are the primary input that undergoes the process, which in turn will be produced as output. Similar to the students' sentiments, educators believe that excellent quality education must provide students with the right set of skills, competencies, and values. Consistently, employers think that graduates should be capable of translating the thinking process to action and being adaptive to the new systems.

Some themes emerged only among two stakeholders. These are also regarded as secondary indicators of quality. Interestingly, only the students and educators emphasized the importance of the transformation process, such as the *quality of the faculty* and the *facilities/resources available*. Employers are focused solely on the output rather than on the process of the outcome. This finding is crucial to the understanding of the employers that they are essential factors in the process of producing quality HE in Cebu. The active role of the employers in the educational process may bridge the knowledge-practical gap and the timeliness of the subjects that educators teach their students. The industry may also support the HEs by upgrading the facilities and resources that the HEIs need to have to produce the desired outcome.

Another secondary indicator from educators and employers is the *relevance of the HEIs to society* as an indicator of quality. It is interesting to note that even though community service is part of their university life, students see quality in terms of knowledge, and applicability of this knowledge to their future employability. Unlike them, the older stakeholders believe that quality HE is based on the contribution and impact of these HEIs in the society.

Some factors emerged only in one stakeholder group. Students, for instance, emphasize the importance of their class performance, reputation of the school, the learning environment, the management of the school's administration, value for money, and quality of intakes. Since they are the primary recipients of HE, they are more concerned with the processes inside their universities and the value that the HEI could give to them. Interestingly, students appear to put the entire burden of educating them on the HEIs without considering their role in learning. This finding is essential in improving the quality of HEIs because students need to understand that they have to take a proactive approach in their learning experience. If students do not put in the time and effort to learn, they will not perform well in the classroom and their career, no matter what the HEIs do for them.

Apparently, educators see the importance of the admission process because the quality of the students accepted in the university may likely affect the quality of the graduates. As the stakeholder group who is mainly responsible in the learning process, teachers want to

ensure that incoming students possess the minimum admission standards set by a university. An educational institution with a transparent selection process will obtain a pool of qualified students that would further the goal of providing quality education. Finally, being the recipient of the end product, employers stress the importance of the relevance of the program or the employability of the graduates in defining quality HE.

Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of this current study is to examine and compare the perceptions of the primary stakeholder groups (i.e., students, educators, and employers) of what is quality HE. This study aims to bridge the perceived job-mismatch; thus, fulfilling the expectations of the students and the industry that the HEIs are graduating employable degree holders. Through understanding the opinions of the stakeholders, this study may assist HEIs and government institutions in addressing the educational gap in the country.

The results show that the primary indicators of quality are the *relevance of the curriculum* and the *quality of HE graduates.* The secondary indicators are the *quality of educators*, *the quality of facilities,* and the *societal impact*.

Students, educators, and employers all share the same sentiments of having a curriculum relevant to the industry. For the students, it is about landing a job that would give them satisfaction. For the educators and employers, it is about accomplishing the very reason why HEIs exist – to develop the future workforce. HEIs need to create opportunities for employers to get involved in communicating to them the competencies that the graduates should have. Thus, for the program curriculum to be relevant, the HEIs need to work towards a continuous collaboration between them and the employers to know and meet the demands of the business sectors. For instance, Chamorro-Premuzic and Frankiewicz (2019) noted that the value of a college degree might increase if HEIs teach their students critical soft skills, such as problem-solving, collaboration, customer service, and communication. They further explained that employers and recruiters do not only look for competence but, most importantly, people skills. Without truly understanding the

needs of the employers, the perceived job-mismatch will continue to exist.

The results also suggest that the quality of graduates is reflective of the quality of education given by the HEIs. Because the business environment is commonly described as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous or VUCA (Kinsinger & Walch, 2012), the HEIs need to prepare their students for all kinds of challenges once they get out of the university. Thus, HEIs play a vital role in cultivating the graduates' willingness to learn new knowledge and skills by themselves. On this account, HEIs need to exert more effort to use innovative teaching methods that are student-centric and bring in the industry to assist them in the student learning process, not only in updating their programs and curricula. In their article, Smidt and Sursock (2011) emphasized the importance of engaging with employers and stakeholders to work on a strategic alliance for the mutual benefit of the students, HEIs, and society.

Our findings also suggest that the secondary indicators are a means of achieving the primary criteria of quality HEIs. First and foremost, HEIs need to value and invest in the educators' capabilities and the resources they require to perform their crucial role excellently. Schleicher (2018) supports this argument noting that "what teachers know and care about makes such a difference to student learning (p. 3). Furthermore, aside from having a faculty development plan to build the expertise of the educators, the HEIs must also develop a monitoring system to validate the effectiveness of the capacity building activities and resources. HEIs must ascertain whether the goals of these training and support are met and translated into actions. Together with updating the curriculum, HEIs must also invest in facilities that will enhance the total learning experience of the students, including their educators. This learning experience may include updated technology-based teaching and learning tools (Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015), common areas, auditoriums, libraries, among others (Hanssen and Solvoll, 2015).

Our results of the student interviews are consistent with the literature (e.g., Lapina et al., 2016; Shurair, 2017), except for value for money. The value for money appears to be unique to our current study. A possible explanation may be due to the economic status of the

respondents and the increasing cost of education in the country (Charland, 2018). From experience, we put our trust in the reputation of the HEI and the relevance of the program to land a job that pays well and, at the same time, gives us a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment. Thus, students put the burden of learning on the HEIs. For this reason, the HEIs should be mindful of the program offering, the caliber of the instructors, and the overall learning environment and experience that may affect the satisfaction levels of the students.

Similarly, most of our results from the interviews with the educators and employers are aligned with the literature (e.g., Andrews & Higson, 2014; Dicker et al., 2018). A unique factor that emerged in this study is the societal impact of the HEIs. The respondents emphasized the relevance of the universities in the community as an essential determinant of quality in HE. One of the educators coming from the state university explained that this factor is most likely because of the economic situation of the country. She further explained that since the Philippines is an emerging country, the public put their hopes in education to improve the country's economic situation by developing its people that directly impact productivity and nation-building. Especially now that public HE is free, the taxpayers, more than ever, expect to benefit from the output of the state universities. Furthermore, this result could be a by-product of the core value system of Filipinos, which is familism, or the concern over the well-being of their kin (Selmer & de Leon, 2001). Thus, it may help the reputation of the HEIs if they commit to community exposures and immersions of their educators and students by way of forming long term relationships with local communities, local and national government units, micro and small enterprises, and the like.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the interesting results, there are several limitations to this study. First, the respondents of the survey only involved selected students and educators belonging to the Business and Management-related courses from six universities (one premier state and five private HEIs), out of the many HEIs in Cebu. Employers respondents came from only three industries (manufacturing, KPO, and banking) present in Cebu. With this sample, results may vary across students and educators in different universities with different programs and employers from various

industries. Even with this limitation, the results of this study may be substantial to the HEIs in Cebu to assist in identifying, developing, and implementing the necessary improvements in their methods of providing quality HE. For future research, we recommend that more universities and degree programs be involved in exploring more definitions and dimensions of quality in HE. More employers and hiring decision-makers from several industries such as the hotel, food, telecommunications, and others should also be involved in the study for more extensive inputs.

Secondly, the use of purposive sampling does not provide a representative sample of the students, faculty, and employer stakeholders participating in the research. Thus, the results may have limited generalizability and should be tested in the future.

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