



Revisiting the Employability and Productivity of Nursing Graduates of La Consolacion University Philippines

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Abstract-The major purpose of the study is to assess the employability and productivity of nursing graduates of La Consolacion University Philippines. The study employed descriptive survey where the graduates of the nursing program from school year 2003 – 2004 to SY 2005 – 2006 served as the respondents of the study. The findings of the study suggest that the nursing graduates of the university are highly employable as shown by the 71.76 % employment record and had a sharp decline in employment in 2007 that is from 80.95 % to 54.34 %. The educational programs being offered by the university are relevant to the needs of industries and service units as shown by the finding that majority of the nursing graduates have jobs in line with their pre-service preparations. The nursing graduates of the university are highly employable as indicated by the finding that they find employment in one to six months after graduation. Finally, the productivity of nursing graduates in terms of their performance in licensure examinations needs extensive upgrading.

Index Terms – Employability, Productivity, Nursing Graduates

I. INTRODUCTION

Employability and productivity of graduates are central to the strategic direction of higher education institutions. This interest is associated with human capital theories of innovation and economic performance. Growth in the stock of human capital is essential for economic growth, and hence, the government's agenda is driven by the desire to stem the productivity shortfall. Higher education institutions therefore are being steered to place greater emphasis on the employability and productivity of graduates (Jackson, 1999).

Morley (2001) suggests that higher education institutions both mediate and manage government policy, and that the boundaries between academic institutions, government and businesses have loosened and been reformed. This raises the question of what the real purpose of higher education institution is, whether it is to provide to the workforce of the future, or it is to give educational stimulus, or both. And what

important role does the government have to play to enhance the employability of graduates.

The notion of employability of graduates challenges traditional concepts of higher education and raises the question of what the point of higher education is; subject knowledge and understanding, or learning how to learn. Some academicians feel that this agenda is driven by government policy and employers, rather than the educational institutions. But one thing is clear, there is a concern locally and worldwide that existing undergraduate programs are not producing graduates with the kind of life long learning skills and professional skills which they need in order to be successful in their careers (Harvey, 2001).

In the Philippines, no less than the Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas lamented the mismatch between the graduates being produced by the country's universities and colleges and the jobs available. She sees it as one of the factors behind the country's increasing unemployment rate. She stated that job-skill mismatch is a very serious matter that must be addressed and given sufficient priority if the government is to effectively deal with employment and underemployment problems (Remollino, 2006).

The ranks of unemployed person have exhibited an increasing trend since 1998. Except for a minor decline in 1999, the number of unemployed has increased gradually from 3.043 million in 1998 to 3.874 million in 2002. As a ratio to labor force, the rate of unemployment declined slightly from 10.3 percent in 1998 to 9.8 percent in 1999. It rose to 11.2 percent in 2000, and has remained at almost the same rate in 2001 and 2002. (Cruz, 2003)

The 2005 study, "The Employers' Role in Employment Generation" showed that there were 7.48 million new labor force entrants against the 5.9 million new jobs created from 1996 to 2004, resulting in an additional 1.5 million unemployed. Unemployment rates during the eight-year period were in double-digit territory, peaking at 11.4 percent in 2002 and 2003, National Statistical Coordination Board data show (Calderon, 2008).

From the data bank of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), 447,847 students are graduating in 2008. A look at how they are distributed across the disciplines would show how many – or how few – of them would be getting opportunities for

employment relevant to what they studied for. Out of this number, 126,631 or 28 percent would be earning degrees in business administration and related courses like accountancy and secretarial courses. These programs yielded the most graduates in the last two years.

Next to business administration, the courses that produced the most number of graduates are as follows: education and teacher-training courses (90,259), engineering and technology programs, including marine engineering (54,897), information technology (41,403), and medical and allied courses like nursing, radiological technology, and medicine (30,919).

On the other hand, the Philippine Labor Force Survey of January 2006 showed that in 2005, the country's largest employer was the services sector. Almost all areas of employment in the services sector, except health and social work, registered increases resulting in an overall growth of 371,000 from 15.3 million in January, 2005 to 15.7 million in January, 2006.

Only a few graduates of education and teacher-training courses can expect to be hired in teaching positions. While the public school system is consistently short on teachers, budget constraints limit the number of teaching positions being offered. The last time a substantial number of teaching positions was opened was in 2004. A total of 10,000 teaching positions were made available for entry-level teachers, and only 11 percent of the 90,259 graduates were hired. The others tried their luck with the contractual teaching positions offered by cities and municipalities. The rest may have to wait for vacancies opened up by retiring teachers or those going abroad.

Most graduates of medical and allied courses aim to work abroad. They usually stay for a few years just enough to gain experience and boost their chances of overseas employment. Thus, even if there are more graduates than new jobs available, the country experiences an extreme shortage of health professionals, especially in the provinces.

Prospects for graduates of engineering and information technology courses, if they plan to work locally, are not too good. Employment in the industry sector registered a negative growth of 95,000 from 4.977 million in January 2005 to 4.882 million in 2006. CHED data from 1990 to 2003 shows a consistent growth in the number of business administration graduates yearly – from 73,021 in 1990 to 110,870 in 2003. This field has consistently been the topnotcher in terms of the number of graduates by discipline group – consistently producing more than 20 percent of all graduates by course annually.

The country's growing number of graduates forces them to crowd each other out in the few

available jobs for those without work experience. The relatively few graduates of private schools with good English proficiency whether graduates of business administration or engineering, end up as call center agents. But generally, graduates end up searching for employment in an economy that has little space for the likes of them. (Remollino, 2006)

Indeed, the job mismatch problem has contributed to massive underemployment in the country. In the words of Calderon (2008), mismatch keeps jobless rate up, and the mismatch has led to an exodus of highly-skilled Filipino labor to countries where opportunities abound and wages are more rewarding. As the ratio of new hires to college graduates worsened, overseas deployment improved. NSDB data showed that 7.56% of graduates in 2004 landed jobs abroad. This went down to 5.89% in 2005, but rose to 7.48 % in 2006.

The People Management Association of the Philippines President, Mr. Enrique V. Abadesco Jr. pointed out that the country has yet to come up with a national strategy coherent enough to boost human capital, because the source of the country's competitive advantage rests on it. (Calderon, 2008)

The foregoing discussions explain the reason why higher education institutions are mandated to look into their internal efficiency and external productivity. For the University of Regina Carmeli, this is expressed in terms of two concepts, the employability and productivity of the graduates. Bringing to fore the employability and productivity phenomenon of the graduates would not only mean identification of program strengths and weaknesses. The university would have empirically based data that could be used in improving the market relevance of its higher education programs, and in addressing the education and skills mismatch in the labor market.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concepts on Graduates Employability

Harvey (2003) notes that employability is not just about getting a job. It is more than about developing attributes, techniques, or experience just to enable a student to get a job, or to progress within a current career. It is about learning and the emphasis is less on "employ" and more on "ability". In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner.

Employability is the acquisition of attributes (knowledge, skills, and abilities) that make graduates more likely to be successful in their chosen occupations. It usually refers to the employment of graduates but this includes self-employment. A broader definition includes any lifestyle choice, or

refers to employability as the development of abilities to ensure graduates are critical life-long learners.

The definition adopted by the UK's Enhancing Student Employability Team (ESECT, 2005) and widely adopted in the UK is "a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefit themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy.

Hillage and Pollard (1998) had defined employability as the ability to gain and retain fulfilling work. Brown and colleagues (2002) objected to Hillage and Pollard definition and ordered a different definition of employability, which is the relative chances of finding and maintaining different kinds of employment.

Knight and Yorke (2001) presented two main concepts of employability. These are the educational conception relating to the ability of graduates to tackle graduate jobs. This is related to the notion of capability whose development was sponsored by the RSA in the late 1980s – Higher Education Capability. This means that employability of graduates relates to their being equipped for a job and capable of being employed, rather than job acquisition. The second is the ability of the graduate to get a job – any job. The second concept is used by the government in the construction of the Employability Performance Indicators (EPIS), but it is the first concept that most practitioners in higher education are primarily concerned with. Good student learning and the curriculum, teaching and assessment that go with it. This implies that curricula designed to enhance students' employability are also desirable on purely educational grounds. It is possible to see both the traditional academic education and key skills as being subsets of employability. It is difficult to maintain that academic progress is not enhanced by high standard of literacy, by a range of communication skills and the ability to work in groups or teams and by learning how to learn effectively (Atkins, 1999).

Many of the variants on defining employability are about the propensity of graduates to secure a job and progress in their career. The University of Newcastle (Allison et al., 2002) defines employability as the capacity to move self-sufficiently into and within the labour market, to fulfill potential through sustainable employment.

Employability Skills

Coopers and Lybrand (1998) define employability skills in terms of four key areas: (1) traditional intellectual skills – e.g. critical evaluation, logical argument; (2) key skills – communication, information technology, etc.; (3) personal attributes – motivation, self-reliance; and (4) knowledge of

organization and they work. There are several synonyms – core, key, generic, personal transferable skills, work and related skills. This is the reason why it is difficult to conceptualize what is meant by employability skills. Added to that, skills are often referred to as capabilities, competencies or attributes, learning outcomes, thus compounding the sense of confusion.

Dearing (1997) explicitly refrained from producing a list of skills, because of the nature of individual programmes of study and their learning objectives. It is probably useful for students to see the sort of skills that the programme is aiming to develop so that they are more aware of their own personal development. It is also useful for students to see the type of skills which employers are typically seeking from graduates. This means that students can be aware of any gaps in their own personal development well in advance of getting to the stage of applying for jobs.

It is possible that employers' criticisms of the shortcomings of graduate recruits are not so much the result of failure in the higher education curriculum, rather of failure in the transfer process. Atkins (1999) questions how transferable key skills are into employment contexts. Eraut (1994) sees transfer as a learning process in its own right, although this may be easier for skills in relation to objects such as using particular computer packages, rather than the "softer" skills of interacting with and managing people effectively. Brown (1999) believes that learning, and the transfer of that learning, is most likely to be effective if the learning situation closely resembles the work place.

Knight and Yorke (2000) believe that if there is any hope of transferring the learning from one context to another, the learner needs to use that learning in a variety of different situations. From these comments, it would seem that practice in a number of contexts is fundamental for the development of employability skills and attributes.

Brennan et al. (1996) in a survey of graduates across Europe and the United Kingdom found that UK graduates rated teamwork, working under pressure, oral communication skills and problem solving in the top ten skills competencies they viewed important. In contrast, none of these appeared in the list of competencies rated highly by European graduates, instead they highlighted learning abilities, working independently and written communication skills.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) regarded key skills to consist of six components: (1) communication, (2) numeracy, (3) information technology, (4) learning how to learn, (5) problem solving, and (6) teamwork. These are considered to be generic skills as they represent skills that can be used to support study in any discipline.

The interest in graduates' employability and productivity is associated with the human capital theories of innovation and performance. The theory espouses that innovation in education is complex and therefore requires persistent planning, implementation, and innovation (Knight, 2001). Planning involves a conscious effort of looking into the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The noted strengths would provide information on what to sustain or further improve. The weaknesses on the other hand, could serve as agenda for innovation driven by the desire to address whatever productivity shortfall there is (Jackson, 1999). Higher education system therefore is being challenged to place greater emphasis on the employability and productivity of graduates.

Morley (2001) even suggested that higher education institutions mediate with government policies, and that the boundaries between institutions, government, and businesses be loosened and reformed. Seemingly, what is being suggested is more functional collaboration and complementation among stakeholders. This raises the question according to Morley, of what the purpose of higher education is, whether it is to provide to the workforce of the future, or to provide education stimulus, or both.

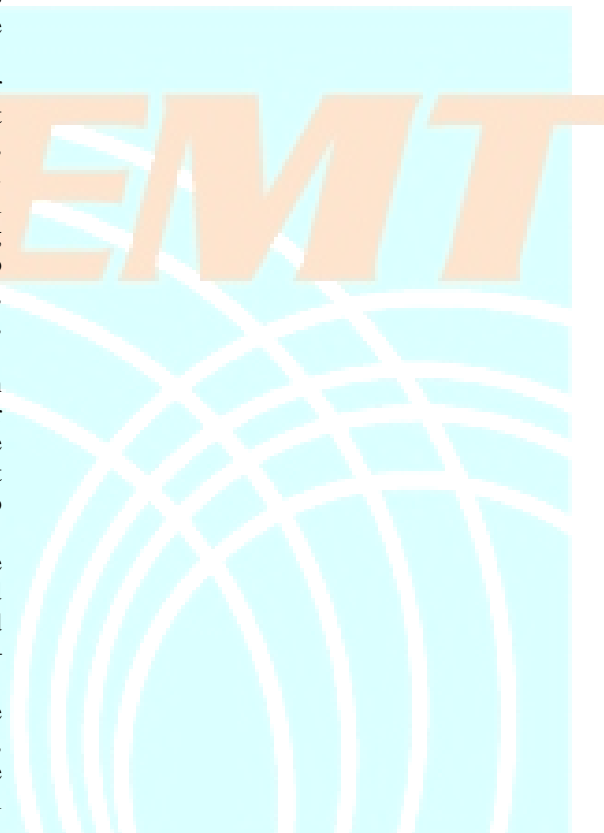
Knight (2001) opined that innovation in education is complex although government and other agencies persist in treating it as something simple to be planned, delivered, and evaluated. He contends that change is slow as the culture of an institution has to change and adapt.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model of the study. The tracer study assesses the employability and productivity of the graduates in the college of allied medical sciences from SY 2001 – 2002 to SY 2005 – 2006

Employability as a dependent variable of the study was described using employment data, employment status, nature of employment, major line of business, waiting time for employment, job level position, and monthly income. The graduates' productivity was assessed in terms of their performances in licensure examinations, their readiness on the requirements of their job, and their job performance. Another feature of the study was the attempt to compare the employability and productivity of the graduates across programs.

Another focus of the study was determining the graduates' perceptions on the extent to which the following school factors influence their productivity: program of studies, the teaching competence of the faculty, and the adequacy of classroom, library, and laboratory facilities. The assessments were conducted with the end in view of identifying policy and program

interventions necessary to further improve the employability and productivity of the graduates.



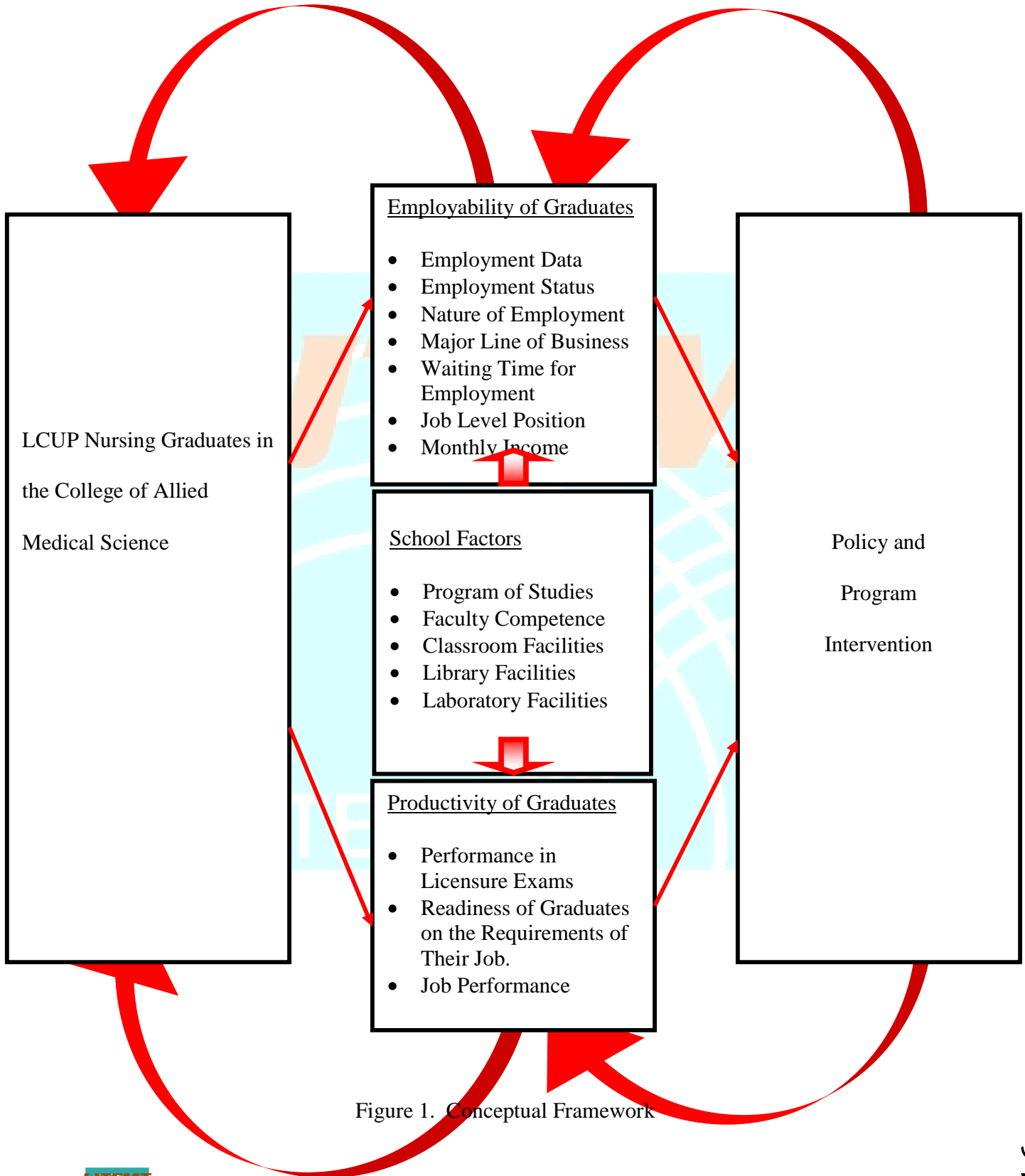


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The major concern of the study was to assess the employability and productivity of the LCUP nursing graduates in aid of policy formulation and program development.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following specific questions:

1. What is the phenomenon of employment of the LCUP nursing graduates from SY 2003 – 2004 to SY 2005 – 2006?
2. How may the productivity of the graduates be described in terms of:
 - readiness of the graduates on the requirements of their jobs; and
 - performance in licensure examinations;
3. How do the graduates perceive the extent to which the following factors influence their productivity?
 - program of studies
 - teaching competence of the faculty
 - adequacy of classroom facilities
 - adequacy of library facilities
 - adequacy of laboratory facilities

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study employed the descriptive survey method of research. The method sought to describe and analyze the phenomena of employability and productivity of the graduates from school year 2003 - 2004 to school year 2005 - 2006.

The graduates of the nursing degree programs from school year 2003 – 2004 to school year 2005 – 2006 were the respondents of the study.

One hundred percent of the graduates were targeted for the study. However, only a total 143 out of 162 respondents or about 88.27 percent retrieval rate was obtained. Table 1 presents the distribution of the respondents by program.

Population and Sample of the Study

Program	School Year			Population	Sample	Percentage
	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006			
BSN	28	32	102	162	143	88.27

The primary data gathering instrument used in the study was essentially a locally developed and validated instrument designed for tracer studies by the Commission on Higher Education. The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part covers the phenomenon of employment of the graduates in terms of degree finished/specialization, employment data, employment status, nature of employment, major line of business, waiting time for employment, job level position, and gross monthly income. Part two deals with the productivity of the graduates described in terms of: performance in licensure examinations, readiness of the graduates on the requirements of their jobs, and their job performance. Part three highlights the perceptions of the graduates on the extent to which school factors, namely: course contents, teaching competence of the faculty, adequacy of classroom facilities, adequacy of library facilities, and adequacy of laboratory facilities, influence their productivity.

Essentially the items in the questionnaire were drawn from the CHED Tracer Study Instrument except for the items on the influence of factors on the graduates' productivity. The items dealing with graduates' productivity specifically performance in licensure examinations were obtained through documentary analysis.

Table 1

The data gathered were processed by computer system using the program Statistical Packages for Social Sciences or SPSS.

The data gathered were presented using appropriate tables and graphs, and were analyzed using the following statistical procedures:

1. Frequency counts and percentage procedure were used in describing the phenomenon of employment of the graduates and their performance in licensure examination.
2. Mean and standard deviation were utilized in reporting the productivity level and job performance.
3. A five-point Likert Scale interpreted as follows was used in reporting the extent to which the independent variables influence the graduates' productivity:

Scale Equivalent	Range	Descriptive
5	4.50 – 5.00	Very Great Extent
4	3.50 – 4.49	Great Extent
3	2.50 – 2.49	Moderate Extent
2	1.50 – 2.49	Small Extent
1	1.00 – 1.49	Not At All

4. The comparison of the graduates' employability and productivity was analyzed using the F – Ratio or the Analysis of Variance Test (ANOVA).

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data gathered were presented, analyzed, and interpreted in line with the following headings: phenomenon of employment of the LCUP Nursing graduates; productivity of the graduates; the influence of institutional factors on the productivity of the graduates; and policy/program interventions.

A. Phenomenon of Employment of the LCUP Nursing Graduates

The phenomenon of employment was described in terms of employment statistics, employment status, nature of occupation, major line of business, waiting time for employment, job level position, and gross monthly income.

Employment data. A closer look on the employment statistics of Table 2, one could glean that the nursing graduates had a sharp decline in employment in 2007 that is from 80 % to 54.34 %. The highest employability rate of 80.95 % of the nursing graduates was recorded in school year 2004 – 2005, the

lowest rate of 54.34% in school year was recorded in SY 2006 – 2007. The graduates posted an average employment rate of 71.76 % with a standard deviation value of 15.09.

Table 2.
Employment Data of LCUP Graduates (SY 2004-2005 to SY 2006-2007)

School Year	Nursing
2006 - 2007	54.34 %
2005 - 2006	80.00 %
2004 - 2005	80.95 %
Mean	71.76 %
Std. Deviation	15.09 %

The slump may be attributed to the policy issued by CGFNS in 2006 limiting the issuance of visas to Filipino 2006 nursing board passers who took and passed a retake of the nursing licensure tests particularly Tests 3 and 5. To address the problem on the employability of the affected Filipino nurses particularly in the United States, the Department of Labor and Employment took the initiative to offer the voluntary retake of the June 2006 Nursing Exam in coordination with the Board of Nursing (Brion, 2009).

Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) releases nursing board passers biannually. Data would show that there is an increasing supply of nurses, hence the demands is progressively going down and competition is getting stiffer.

Employment status of the graduates. Employment status was described as regular or permanent, temporary, casual, contractual, or self-employed.

The employment data in Table 3 shows that 54 or 37.76 % of the nursing graduates assume regular or permanent position. Almost one fifth or 20.98 % have contractual status of employment. A total of 24 graduates or 16.78 % were on casual status. The rest have temporary status (14.69 %) of employment, or self-employed (9.79 %).

Nature of occupation. The nature of employment was described using twelve categories of occupation utilized by the CHED Tracer Study Questionnaire, namely: (Category 1) officials of government and special interest organizations,

corporate executives, managers, managing proprietors, and supervisors; (Category 2) professionals; (Category 3) technicians and associate professionals; (Category 4) clerks; (Category 5) service workers/hotel/shop and market sales workers; (Category 6) farmers, forestry workers, and fishermen; (Category 7) traders and related workers; (Category 8) plant and machine operators and assemblers; (Category 9) laborers and unskilled workers; (Category 10) special occupation; (Category 11) clinical instructors; and (12) behavioral therapists.

Table 3.
Employment Status

Employment Status	Nursing	
	F	%
Regular or Permanent	54	37.76%
Temporary	21	14.69%
Casual	24	16.78%
Contractual	30	20.98%
Self-Employed	14	9.79%
Total	143	100%

The great majority of the nursing graduates or 76.92 % are working as nurse professionals or clinical instructors. Nine or 9.89 % are engaged in special occupations like behavioral therapists and caregivers. Only 10.93 % are doing clerical and trade related activities.

It could be gleaned in Figure 2 that the nature of occupation of the graduates was essentially professional practice (42.68 %), clerical work (16.17 %), and service/shop or market sales workers (12.21 %). These three occupational categories take 71.06 percent of the graduates. The remaining 28.94 percent are divided in eight other occupational categories, namely: special occupation (9.9 %); officials of government, managers, and supervisors (5.61 %); traders and related workers (3.63 %); technicians and associate professionals (1.65 %); behavioral therapist (.006 %);

laborers and unskilled workers (.006 %); and farmers, forestry workers, and fishermen (.003 %).

Table 4
Nature of Occupation

Occupation	Nursing	
	F	%
Officials of Government and Special-Interest Organizations, Corporate Executives, Manager, Managing Proprietors and Supervisors	0	0%
Professionals	51	56.04%
Technicians and Associate Professionals	0	0%
Clerks	5	5.49%
Service Workers/Hotel/Shop and Market Sales Workers	2	2.20%
Farmers, Forestry Workers and Fisherman	0	0%
Traders and Related Workers	5	5.44%
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	0	0%
Laborers and Unskilled Workers	0	0%
Special Occupation	7	7.69%
Clinical Instructor	19	20.88%
Behavioral Therapist	2	2.20%
Total	91	100%

Major line of business. In terms of major line of business, the biggest group of nursing graduates was employed as health and social workers. This group accounts to 57.34 % of the 143 graduates. There were 37 or 25.87 % graduates working as clinical instructors. The other 13.73 % of the graduates were

distributed in seven other lines of business as shown in Figure 3.

One interesting finding of the study was that generally there is a good match between the pre-service trainings of the graduates and the nature of their jobs.

In the same vein, the nursing graduates were either nurse professionals (56.04%) or clinical instructors and caregivers (28.57%). The findings indicate that LCUP has been steadfast to its mission of offering educational programs and services that are relevant and responsive to needs of the clients.

Table 5
Major Line of Business of the Company

Line of Business	Nursing	
	F	%
Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry	0	0%
Fishing	0	0%
Mining and Quarrying	0	0%
Manufacturing	5	0.35%
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	0	0%
Construction	0	0%
Wholesale and Retail Trade, repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and households goods	8	5.59%
Hotels and Restaurants	3	2.1%
Transport Storage and Communication	2	1.4%
Financial Intermediation	1	0.7%
Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities	1	0.7%
Public Administration and Defense, Compulsory Social Security	0	0%
Education	37	25.87%
Health and Social Work	82	57.34%
Other Community, Social and Personal Service Activities/Special Occupation	0	0%
Private Households with Employed Persons	4	2.8%
Extra-territorial Organizations and Bodies	0	0%

Total 143 100%

Waiting time for employment. The waiting time for employment of the graduates is shown in Table 5. Analysis of the data reveals that the great majority of nurses or 43.96 % have waited less than to be employed. Thirty one or 34.07 % of the nursing graduates have 1-6 months waiting time. About ¼ or 21.97 % of the nursing graduates have seven to less than two years waiting time. As a whole, the average waiting time of employment among LCUP nursing graduates is 1-6 months. This may be attributed by the time needed by the nursing graduates in preparation for the Licensure exam

Table 6
Waiting Time of Employment

Waiting Time	Nursing		
	Factor	F	%
2 years to less than 3 years	5	0	0%
1 year to less than 2 years	4	12	13.18%
7 – 11 months	3	8	8.79%
1 – 6 months	2	31	34.07%
Less than a month	1	40	43.96%
Total		91	100%
Mean			1.91 (1–6 months)

Job level position. Four categories were used to describe the job level position of the graduates: rank and file/ clerical; professional/technical/supervisory; managerial/executive; and self-employed/special occupation.

Perusal of the data in Table 6, one could glean that a total of 55.25% of the nursing graduates are employed either as professional nurse or nurse supervisors. The other 39.86 % are doing clerical jobs. Those performing special occupation like caregivers/therapist account to 4.89%.

Monthly Income of the Graduates. A mean monthly income of 2.28 was registered by the nurse graduates, which indicates that their average monthly income is between P 10,000.00 to P 15,000.00. A total of 63 nursing graduates or 44.06 % of 143 registered a monthly income ranging from P5,000.00-P10,000.00. There were two groups of 32 graduates or 22.38 % who receive a monthly income ranging from P10,000.00-P15,000.00 and below P5,000.00 respectively. Only 5 graduates or 3.49 % have monthly income of P25,000.00 and above.

Table 7
Job Level Position

Job Level	First Job		Present Job	
	F	%	F	%
Rank and File/ Clerical	49	54.44	30	33.33
Professional/ Technical/ Supervisory	25	27.78	42	46.67
Managerial/ Executive	7	7.78	9	10.00
Self-Employed	9	10.00	9	10.00
Total	90	100.00	90	100.00

Table 8
Gross Monthly Income in your First Job

Gross Monthly	Frequency	%
P25,000 and above	3	2.10
P20,000.00 to less than P25,000.00	2	1.39
P15,000.00 to less than P20,000.00	11	7.69
P10,000.00 to less than P15,000.00	32	22.38
P5,000.00 to less than P10,000.00	95	66.43
Total	143	100.00
Mean	1.5	(10K to 15K)

As a whole, the mean monthly income was 1.46, and this means the average monthly income of the graduates is close to P 10,000.00. Appreciating the income data of the graduates in the light of the Annual Per Capita Poverty Threshold (NSCB Poverty Statistics, 2007) of P 17,298.00, the income data of the graduates are way above the poverty threshold in Bulacan. In the same vein, the average monthly income of the graduates is also higher than the poverty threshold in Metro Manila.

Competencies Found Useful by Graduates

Enhancing graduate employability is a priority thrust of the University. In line with this, management has responded to the challenge by taking a holistic approach in enhancing the employability of students, reflecting research on the competencies found useful by graduates in the performance of their jobs, and on the graduates attributes sought by employers. Management believes that the way to have impact on students' employability is to empower them through knowledge and attribute acquisition, to consider the efficacy beliefs of students specifically what they feel might be able to make a difference in the workplace, and embedding the value-added concepts in the curriculum.

*Table 9
Competencies Found Useful in First Job*

Competencies	Frequencies	Percent
Communication Skills	87	27.10
Human Relations Skills	66	20.56
Entrepreneurial Skills	11	3.43
Information Technology Skills	28	8.72
Problem Solving Skills	58	18.07
Critical Thinking Skills	67	20.87
Other Skills	0	1.25
Total	314	100

The graduates of the nursing program were asked what competencies they acquired from LCUP and found useful in their organizations, and the data collected were summarized in Table 8. The nursing

graduates considered communication skills both oral and written, as very useful competencies in any organization. This was revealed by 27.10% obtaining a rank 1. This was closely followed critical thinking skills (rank 2) disclosed by 20.87 % of the graduates. The ability to sort mass of patient information upon assessment to be able to diagnose health problems, plan and set goals based on identified problems, implement plan of action, and evaluate whether set objectives are met are important component of nursing process that requires critical thinking. The third most important is human relations skills, which refers to the ability to relate well with patients, colleagues, and top management is essential in building trust and rapport. The other competencies found useful were problem solving skills (rank 4); information technology skills (rank 5) and entrepreneurial skills (rank 6)

The integrated embedding of these skills into the curriculum is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. Bennet et al (2000) pointed out the need to tie up core skills (specific discipline skills) with generic skills (transferable support skills) for greater productivity. Linked with this is their model of course provision, in which generic skills, interlock with disciplinary content.

Productivity of the Graduates

The productivity of the graduates was described in this study in terms of their perceived readiness on the requirements of their jobs and their performance in licensure examinations.

Perceived readiness of the graduates on the requirements of their job. The nursing graduates were asked to describe their readiness on the requirements of their job in terms of knowledge learned. Attitudes and work habits, and values formation. The data gathered are summarized in Table 9.

*Table 10
Readiness on Job Requirements*

Readiness on Job Requirements	WM	Descriptive Equivalent
Knowledge learned	2.30	Satisfactory
Attitudes and work habits	2.42	Satisfactory
	2.41	

Skills		Satisfactory	<i>Performance of nursing graduates in licensure examinations.</i>
Values formation	2.47	Satisfactory	The data in Table 10 reveal the performance of the LCUP nursing graduates from December 2005 to June, 2008. It may be gleaned from the data that the best performance of the nursing graduates in the licensure examination was recorded in December of 2006. The graduates obtained an institutional passing record of 71.43%. This performance was way above the national record of 49.10 %. The college of nursing likewise registered two other board performances higher than the national records. These were in December, 2007, (47.73% as against 43.45 %); and in June 2005, (50.00% as against 49.41 %). However, the nursing graduates recorded poor performances in June and November of 2008, (25.67 % and 22.3 %); June of 2007 (35.17 %); June of 2006, (26.47 %); and December 2005 (47.06 %). All these performances were below the national passing percentages.

The data revealed that the nursing graduates perceived that their readiness on the requirements of their jobs was satisfactory in terms of knowledge, attitude and work habits, skills, and values formation. This means that they feel certain in dealing with the challenges of their work, and that they can work fruitfully with others on a regular task. In terms of knowledge, the mean value obtained was 2.30. This is a healthy sign that their pre-service trainings have given them the much needed knowledge to be successful in their careers. The highest assessment was on values formation as indicated by the computed mean of 2.47. Considering that LCUP is a Catholic university, the finding that the values formation was rated highest is an indication that its formation program is producing impact to its clients. Skills and attitude and work habits were closely rated by nursing graduates indicated by mean values of 2.41 and 2.42 respectively.

A closer look at the data in table 8, one could glean that of the four readiness indicators, the one that recorded a lower mean was knowledge requirement. Nursing management may recognize the need to further upgrade its program. Another lesson may be drawn from the study conducted by Yorke and Knight (2000), emphasizing metacognition in teaching. Metacognition is seen as subsuming elements of “learning how to learn, of reflection in, and a capacity for self-regulation.”

The grand mean performance of 40.74 indicates that as a whole the performances of 40.74 % indicates that as a whole the performance of the nursing graduates in the licensure examinations for nurses was below the mean national percentage of 47.63 % for the last five years indicative of unsatisfactory performance.

From the findings of the study obtained, a number of motivating insight may be drawn. First, an enhancement of pre-service instructional program may be done, and this is a big challenge for the administrators and faculty members of the College of Allied Medical Sciences. PACUCOA recommendation on the improvement of teachers’ instruction is another suggestion to consider. Therefore, this may be complemented by strengthening the area of instruction of the CAMS. In this light the following may be thoughts to ponder: (1) enhancement of teachers’ teaching strategy by shifting from “teacher-centered” to “student-centered” approach in teaching; (2) utilization of board type questions and reliable test items thru test item analysis of every nursing subjects; (3) reassessment of the curriculum in the light of the competency requirements of PRC; (4) niching among faculty members handling professional and major subjects. For example, loading of nursing subjects to more competent and more experienced faculty members who can actually prepare the students in the board examination; (5) updating faculty members on current trends and development in nursing thru sending them in seminars and training; (6) 100 % exposure of students to special area may be considered; (7) utilization of English as a medium of instruction in teaching nursing subjects.

Second, it seems significant that some operational strategies and control mechanisms be put in place. The following may be considered: (1) Instituting

*Table 11
Performance of LCUP Graduates in Licensure Examinations*

School Year	Institutional Passing Percentage	National Passing Percentage
June, 2008	25.67 %	43.00 %
November, 2008	22.36 %	45.00 %
June, 2007	35.17 %	48.18 %
December, 2007	47.73 %	43.45 %
June, 2006	26.47 %	42.97 %
December, 2006	71.43 %	49.10 %
June, 2005	50.00 %	49.41 %
December, 2005	47.06 %	55.34 %
Mean	40.74 %	47.63 %

a highly selective admission procedure for incoming freshmen. It was found out from the study conducted by Al Hamoui (2009) that High School Grade Point Average and IQ test have positive correlation with academic performances in general and professional subjects. Hence, selection criteria may be developed in accepting freshmen applicants. (2) Administering diagnostic and achievement tests for every professional nursing subject to carefully monitor how well the learning competencies have been mastered by the students. If the result necessitates, remediation activities may be conducted as a reactive response to noted insufficiencies. (3) Preboard examinations results, as a measure of overall achievement, may be a gauge to diagnose whether graduating nursing students will be allowed to take the licensure examination. When necessary enhancement programs may be given to students particularly in areas where standards are not met. This practice would offer the students a good exposure in preparing for board examinations.

Factors Influencing the Productivity of Graduates

An important element of the holistic approach implemented by management in enhancing the graduates' productivity is the consideration of the efficacy beliefs of students regarding the extent of contributions of the different program dimensions: specifically the contents of the courses offered by the University the competence of faculty the adequacy of library and laboratory facilities. Table 11 presents the perceptions of the graduates.

In terms of course content the nursing graduates perceived a moderate extent of contribution of the course contents of their program to their productivity in the workplace. Five indicators were used and in descending mean values the first was the curriculum provides depth and breadth in the course content (1.91); the program is responsive to local and international standards of quality and excellence (1.90); the program promotes the development of critical thinking among studies (1.86); the program of studies is consistent with the general goals of the curriculum (1.82); and that the course generates knowledge in broad range of disciplines relevant and responsive to contemporary issues and problems (1.81). The program mean of 1.86 indicates the moderate extent of satisfaction of the nursing graduates on the contents of their course

Nearly the same trend of perceptions may be deduced from the graduates' assessments of the teaching competence of the faculty of the department. The graduates perceived a moderate extent of contribution in the five indicators of the teaching competence of the faculty of the department in terms of teaching strategies (1.98). mastery of subject matter (1.92) manifesting substantive knowledge and

experience on their discipline (1.88), in terms of flexibility and critical thinking skills (1.85) and in maintaining harmonious relationship with students (1.73). The obtained mean was 2.33 and this reflects a moderate extent of contribution on their productivity.

In the area of library facilities, the nursing graduates expressed moderate extent of contribution of the library facilities on their productivity using five indicators namely: presence of a strong reference book collection for literature research (1.97); presence of professional librarians that assist faculty and students (1.93); adequacy of the collection of books periodicals etc. (1.92); conduciveness of the library atmosphere to study and research (1.69); and the adequacy of lighting and ventilation (1.57). The program mean of 1.82 reflects that the graduates perceived that the library facilities contributed to a moderate extent to their productivity.

Table 12
Extent of Contribution of the College Training on Graduates Productivity

Dimensions	WM	Descriptive Equivalent
Course Content	1.86	Moderate Extent
The program of studies is consistent with the general goals of the institution	1.82	Moderate Extent
The curriculum provides depth and breadth in the course content	1.91	Moderate Extent
The program is responsive to local and international standards of quality excellence	1.90	Moderate Extent
The program promotes the development of critical thinking among studies	1.86	Moderate Extent
The course generates knowledge in broad range of disciplines relevant and responsive to contemporary issues and problems	1.81	Moderate Extent
Teaching Competence of Faculty	1.88	Moderate Extent
The faculty demonstrates mastery of subject matter	1.92	Moderate Extent
The faculty manifests substantive knowledge and experience on their field	1.88	Moderate Extent
They make use of innovative/creative teaching strategies	1.98	Moderate Extent
They are flexible and possess excellent critical thinking skills	1.85	Moderate Extent
They maintain harmonious relationship with students	1.73	Moderate Extent
Adequacy of Library Facilities	1.82	Moderate Extent
The library has adequate collection of books, periodicals, and other library materials to support the demands of instruction and research	1.92	Moderate Extent

There is a strong reference book collection for literature search, background readings and information sources	1.97	Moderate Extent
There are professional librarians that assist faculty and students for their research needs	1.93	Moderate Extent
The library atmosphere is conducive to readings and study	1.69	Moderate Extent
The library is well-lighted and properly ventilated	1.57	Moderate Extent
Adequacy of Laboratory Facilities	2.01	Moderate Extent
Laboratory facilities are adequate to support instructional and research requirements	2.06	Moderate Extent
The laboratory facilities are equipped with the necessary equipment	2.10	Moderate Extent
The lab facilities are well-lighted and properly ventilated	1.87	Moderate Extent
The lab facilities are conducive to study and research	2.01	Moderate Extent

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The nursing graduates of the university are highly employable as shown by the 71.76 % employment record and had a sharp decline in employment in 2007 that is from 80.95 % to 54.34 %.
2. The educational programs being offered by the university are relevant to the needs of industries and service units as shown by the finding that majority of the nursing graduates have jobs in line with their pre-service preparations.
3. The nursing graduates of the university are highly employable as indicated by the finding that they find employment in one to six months after graduation.
4. The productivity of nursing graduates in terms of their performance in licensure examinations needs extensive upgrading.
5. Curriculum enhancement and physical infrastructure build-up are in order considering that the graduates' perceptions of their readiness on the job requirements in terms of knowledge learned, attitudes and work habits, skills, and value formation was simply satisfactory, the perceived extent of contribution of the program on their productivity was described as "to a moderate extent."

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are hereby submitted:

1. Enhancement of teachers' teaching strategy by shifting from "teacher-centered" to "student-centered" approach in teaching;
2. Utilization of board type questions and reliable test items thru test item analysis of every nursing subject;
3. Reassessment of the curriculum in the light of the competency requirements of PRC. This may also include benchmarking with other institutions locally and abroad in terms of the competency requirements of programs.
4. Niching among faculty members handling professional and major subjects. For example, loading of nursing subjects to more competent and more experienced faculty members who can actually prepare the students in the board examination;
5. Updating faculty members on current trends and development in nursing thru sending them in seminars and training;
6. 100 % exposure of students to special area may be considered;
7. Utilization of English as a medium of instruction in teaching nursing subjects;
8. Instituting a highly selective admission procedure for incoming freshmen
9. Building a separate laboratory facilities for general education

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