

**Program Resources, Overall Students' Educational Experience, and Retention:
An Assessment of La Consolacion University Philippines' Holding Power**

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Abstract - The study aimed to assess the impact of program resources, and college commencing and graduating students' overall educational experience on retention at the La Consolacion University Philippines and to determine whether these variables are predictors of retention. A descriptive correlational method of research was used to obtain a picture of the phenomenon under study. Regression analysis was utilized to determine the degree of influence which variables or categories singly or in combination predict student retention. Findings revealed that provision for program resources does not significantly influence student retention rates but faculty resources and student services, may be considered singly as significant determinants of student retention. Moreover, the quality of students' overall educational experience in terms of variables have significant combined effects on student retention. The best determinants of student retention are experiences on enrolment procedures and finance services.

Keywords: predictors, retention, faculty, student services, enrolment, finance

1. Introduction

The Philippines is a country composed of 92.34 million people (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015), with 3.56 million students enrolled in higher education programs in 1,699 (88%) public and 224 (12%) private higher education institutions (Commission on Higher Education, 2014). Albeit the roster of students attending universities continues to increase, improving graduation and completion rates remains a challenge to higher educational institutions. Any public or private higher education institution face the challenge of the growing number of its school leavers.

Concern over the lengthening of the period that students stay at school has, in fact, been a global concern; so much so that administrators and instructors alike are giving this serious thought and are closely monitoring their school's student retention rates (Thelin, 2003; Demetriou & Sciborski, 2011) - that is, the percentage of students who persist to graduation at the school where they first enlisted.

Based on the most recent CHED's (2015) *Higher Education Statistical Bulletin Academic Year 2014-2015* roughly 17.2 percent or only 648,752 of the total enrolment figure of 3,811,726 in AY 2011-2012 graduated in 2014-2015. Moreover, out of this graduates figure, 53.8 percent came from private institutions, La Consolacion University Philippines included.

The study was delimited to a population of 538 students representing freshmen and senior students from the six different colleges of La Consolacion University Philippines, Malolos City enrolled in 4-year degree courses. Freshmen student-respondents included those who have stayed at the University for at least twelve to sixteen weeks or four months during the First Semester of AY 2015-2016 while seniors or fourth year student-respondents were those who have been enrolled in LCUP since their first year in college. Respondents were those who carried not less than 15-unit subject load for the semester.

The study did not include new students or freshmen who were transferees from other colleges or universities, those enrolled at the LCUP Night College, cross-enrollees, those taking up units in Education, and those enrolled in extension schools such as ICICAT, Northville 9 and Masile.

The researcher deemed it necessary to conduct the present study because concern on whether retention is considered an institutional efficiency/effectiveness issue calls for an investigation within the organization. Whether enrolment is a management strategy or a financial issue, understanding the effect of commencing students' overall educational experience, available program resources, and retention and how effectively and efficiently such resources are utilized were considered in this study to determine how this may help in enhancing program sustainability and prolong students' stay as well.

The study was anchored on the major assumption that institutional characteristics would exert significant influence on the retention rates of educational institutions. Conceptually, the study had its theoretical underpinnings on Vincent Tinto's (1975; 1993; 2010; 2012) Student Integration and Institutional Departure models.

2. Related Literature

Private higher education institutions (HEIs) have the inimitable characteristic of being business entities and at the same time, institutions of higher learning. As business entities, enrollment is their lifeblood that provides funds to carry out all of its other functions.

The two-fold enrolment process is composed of the initial and continual enrolment phases. The former, being an initial decision phase, is essentially a distinct and discrete process – the student decides to pursue a degree, selects which schools to apply; if found qualified and accepted at

several schools, which to attend. This is followed by the continuing decision to persevere in college and to continue at a particular university/college.

Retention is one among the very few topics on higher education that has been so extensively researched (Berger & Lyon, 2005; Tinto, 2010/2012; Seidman, 2012). Common findings point to institutional factors – administrative, academic and services - and student characteristics, perceptions and profile (Braxton and Lee, 2009). Some results associate the utilization of program resources (McDonough & Fann, 2007; Haddow & Joseph, 2010) with retention during the early weeks of the first semester.

Students dropping out and leaving school has, by some means, become a matter of economic survival for both the school and its workforce. Valuable funds are lost (Belfield et al., 2014; Rath, et al. 2013) when students enrolled leave the school and do not persevere until graduation. Losing students, from an economic standpoint, is bad business. Every student leaver represents a financial loss for universities and colleges. These institutions forego tuition and fees from students, revenue from books and services, and other income generating streams.

The loss of students returning to campus usually results not only in greater financial loss and a lower graduation rate for the institution but, might also affect the way internal and external stakeholders, view the institution (Burgette & Magun-Jackson, 2008). According to Bean (1990, as cited in Stillman 2005), retaining or keeping a student is fundamental to the ability of an institution to carry out its mission. A high rate of attrition (the opposite of retention) is not only a monetary problem for schools, but a symbolic failure of an institution to achieve its purpose. The most important aspects that define a business' lucrativeness and profitability are its capability to entice customers and to retain them. In the case of HEIs, this means persuading prospective students to enroll and upon entering the institution, retain them until graduation. Because of decreasing funding, student retention became a matter of economic survival for some colleges and universities for that matter.

Thus, it becomes imperative to recognize and act on what research tells about student retention into the next year level and to graduation. Albeit ability, motivation, and preparation, are important factors in student retention, they cannot explain all the reasons that students stay or leave (Reason, 2009). Braxton (2009) indicated that the lack of student persistence may be labelled the departure puzzle. It is puzzling that almost one-half of students entering two-year colleges and more than one-fourth of students entering four-year collegiate institutions leave these institutions at the end of their first year (Spedding, 2009).

2.1 Provisions for program resources. While attrition impacted on the institution in terms of academic reputation, a program's ability to compete for future students, and resources spent for students, also influenced the student's personal and professional future. The problem of dwindling enrolment may likewise impact on the college or university in terms of the school's academic reputation, apportionment of funds spent for the students, and the program's ability to vie in the future for prospective enrollees (Samoff, 2001 and Gutlig, 2000:38 as cited in Imenda et al, 2004; Mok et al, 2009).

For the good of the student and the institution, colleges and universities were increasingly being held accountable for student retention. Policy makers made use of retention rate as one of several indicators of performance for higher education institutions, to make appropriate judgments about institutional effectiveness and performance.

2.2 Students' overall educational experience. Research indicated there are three key factors influencing students' decisions to become non-completers and leave school before graduation (Lamb et al., 2004; Smyth & Hattam, 2004; Teese & Polesel, 2003): (1) negative and unfulfilling experiences in college, (2) severe home and welfare issues, and (3) work/opportunities.

Due to the similarities in workplace turnover and student attrition, one theory, the psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1995 as cited in Teese and Polesel, 2003) made for an interesting analogy to explain student retention at a given institution. While employees and businesses both established an implicit set of expectations (e.g., a fair and respectful working environment), students and institutions may also establish a similar set of expectations (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994 as cited in Gray and Hackling, 2009). For example, the student may believe the institution was required to provide an open learning environment, while the institution may believe the student should be hard working and honest in their academic pursuits.

In the business arena, psychological contracts have shown positive impacts on the employee-employer relationship. The psychological contract can help create a fundamental trust between the employee and the employer, which further encouraged cooperation between the two parties (Malhotra & Murnighan, 2002). Promised benefits can also influence the employee-employer relationship through the standard of reciprocity. In particular, when employees foresee positive experiences, they may react by signaling to the organization their commitment through certain actions such as organizational citizenship behaviors in return for the promised benefit (Hui, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004).

Conversely, violations of the psychological contract have shown to result in some negative consequences. Although unmet expectations resulted in less satisfied workers, lower performance, and higher intentions to leave (Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992, in Hui et al., 2004), the breach of a psychological contract was likely to produce more intense responses. More specifically, research has demonstrated that violations of psychological contracts can lead to such negative effects as greater job turnover (Sturges, Conway, Guest, & Liefoghe, 2005), lower job performance (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002), and feelings of betrayal (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994 as cited in Hui et al., 2004). Because these attitudes and behaviors were often associated with feelings expressed by students who leave school, it was possible that these students were experiencing a similar response to their educational experience.

For this reason, it is important to know what drives student's decision to stay or leave the institution. By understanding the different factors affecting students' attrition and retention decision, the university will be able to effectively make strategic adjustments leading to high retention rate among its clientele: the students.

3. Method

The descriptive correlational method of research was used to obtain a picture of the phenomenon under study. It covered the commencing and graduating students' overall educational experience and their perception of the quality of program resources provided to them. To determine which of the program resources and student educational experience singly or in combination influence student retention at La Consolacion University Philippines, the data were subjected to correlation and regression analyses. It was hypothesized that program resources and educational experience would not significantly influence the retention rates across departments.

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Only freshmen and seniors were eligible so they were purposively chosen as participants in this study.

The study made use of a locally constructed survey questionnaire which was subjected to content validation by experts, reliability tests and test run.

For research purposes, a minimum reliability of .70 is required for instruments (Siegle, 2013). A reliability of .70 indicates 70% consistency in the scores that are produced by the instrument. Since the researcher's instrument made use of multiple categories, separate calculations for each category was made. The Excel Spreadsheet Reliability Calculator which was devised by Dr. Del Siegle

(2013), was utilized by the researcher, The said spreadsheet provided for the following calculations: Cronbach's alpha, Split-half correlation and Spearman-Brown formula.

The mean results of the data gathered for Program Resources and Overall Educational Experience were tabulated. For the retention data, the percentages of retention rates were extracted.

Regression analysis was utilized to determine the degree of influence which variables or categories singly or in combination predict student retention.

A 5-point Likert scale was applied in describing student's perception of the quality of program resources and their overall educational experience as follows:

- For program resources

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating/Verbal Interpretation
5	4.50 – 5.00	Very Impressive (VI) - The respondent strongly agrees that provisions were impressive and extensive
4	3.50 – 4.49	Impressive (I) - The respondent agrees that provisions were impressive and extensive
3	2.50 – 3.49	Neither Impressive nor Unimpressive (N) - The respondent neither agrees nor disagrees that provisions were impressive and extensive
2	1.50 – 2.49	Unimpressive (UI) - The respondent disagrees that provisions were impressive and extensive
1	1.00 – 1.49	Very Unimpressive (VUI) - The respondent strongly disagrees that provisions were

- For students' overall educational experience

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating/Verbal Interpretation
5	4.50 – 5.00	Excellent (E) - The respondent strongly agrees that he/she had the best student experience
4	3.50 – 4.49	Very Good (VG) - The respondent agrees that he/she had the best student experience
3	2.50 – 3.49	Good (G) - The respondent neither agrees nor disagrees that he/she had the best student experience
2	1.50 – 2.49	Fair (F) The respondent disagrees that he/she had the best student experience
1	1.00 – 1.49	Poor (P) - The respondent strongly disagrees that he/she had the best student experience

Data collected was run through the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

4. Results

Analysis of the data in Table 1 revealed that program resources namely: faculty, classroom resources, library and instructional media resources, laboratory facilities, student services, and budgetary allocations correlate with student retention in varying extents. This was shown by the obtained B coefficients which are non-zero.

Results of the analysis of variance test revealed an F ratio equal to 1.520, with an associated probability equal to .177, a value much higher than .05. The findings indicate that the null hypothesis which states that *the provision for program resources does not influence significantly student retention rates across departments* has to be sustained.

Moreover, faculty resources and student services, may be considered singly as significant determinants of student retention. It may likewise be gleaned with a closer look at the coefficients that two program resources recorded a B coefficient with associated probabilities less than the significance level set at .05.

These were faculty and student services with B coefficients of .040 and .049 respectively.

Table 1

Regression Analysis of Program Resources on Student Retention

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	T	P-value
	B	S.E	Beta		
(Constant)	0.166	0.074		2.239	0.028
Faculty	.041	.020	.146	2.060	.040
Classroom resources	.010	.024	.042	.434	.664
Library and instructional media resources	.018	.026	.084	.701	.484
Laboratory facilities	.010	.018	.046	.564	.573
Student services	.040	.024	.168	1.678	.094
School infrastructure	.032	.020	.143	1.564	.119
R-squared= .029					
F-value = 1.520					
p-value = .177					
alpha = 0.05					

This finding indicates that for every unit increase in the quality of faculty would result to a corresponding increase in student retention by as much 14.6 percent. In the same vein, for every unit increase in the quality of student services would result to a corresponding increase in student retention by as much as 16.8 percent. The other program resources likewise influence student retention but not to a significant extent.

The study of Berger (2001) lent support to the findings of the current investigation. He found out that institutional characteristics can have an effect on college student retention. His study held that institutional expenditures are behavioral characteristics of the institution; therefore, how an institution utilized and spent its resources can have an effect on college student retention (Gansemer-Topf, & Schuh, 2003; Gansemer-Topf, et al., 2004).

Umfress (2010) also found that expenditures with student services were a significant predictor of college student retention even when other important characteristics were controlled, while all other expenditures including that of research and instruction were not.

It could be likewise gleaned from the regression results presented in Table 2 that student educational experience in terms of: recruitment and admission processes, enrolment procedures, finance services, academic integration, social integration, academic advising, and institutional commitment correlate with student retention in varying extents which was exhibited by their nonzero B coefficients.

Results of the analysis of variance test revealed an F ratio equal to 3.989, with an associated probability equal to .000, a value much lower than .05. The findings indicate that the null hypothesis which states that *the quality of student educational experiences does not influence significantly student retention rates across departments* has to be rejected.

Furthermore, with a closer look at the coefficients it could be found that two variables namely: enrolment procedures and finance services recorded B coefficients of .045 and .045 respectively, with associated probabilities less than the significance level set at .05

The findings indicate that for every unit increase in the quality of student educational experience in enrollment procedures would result to a corresponding increase in student retention by as much as 27.1 percent.

In the same vein, for every unit increase in the quality of student experience in finance services would result to a corresponding increase in student retention by as much as 26.8 percent. The other variables likewise influence student retention but not to a significant extent.

Table 2

Regression Analysis of Students' Educational Experience on Student Retention

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	T	P-value
	B	S.E	Beta		
(Constant)	.213	.065	.144	3.287	.001
Recruitment and admission processes	.034	.021	.271	1.624	.105
Enrolment procedures	.045	.014	.268	3.276	.001
Finance services	.045	.011	.033	4.020	.000
Academic integration	.009	.023	.010	.399	.690
Social integration	.002	.020	.043	.113	.910
Academic advising	.009	.017	.102	.545	.586
Institutional commitment	.024	.020	.102	1.158	.248
R-squared = .084					
F-value = 3.989					
p-value - .000					
alpha - 0.05					

The quality of student educational experience in terms of variables have significant combined effects on student retention. The best determinants or predictors of student retention are enrollment procedures and finance services.

According to Tinto (1975; 1993; as cited in Pleitz, et al., 2015), students enter college with a set of expectations about what college will be like. These expectations are particularly important because they calibrate a student's initial levels of academic and social experience and commitment to the institution.

Tinto likewise stated that management can influence student retention by shaping the character of the entering class and indirectly influencing the freshmen's expectations of the setting into which they enter. These pre-entry expectations serve as the initial lens through which the students see, and in turn, judge the institution (Tinto, 2012).

The results of the study of Pleitz, et al. (2015) provided insights into how the discontinuity between expectations and experiences impacts the likelihood of student retention. Discrepancies within the institutional expectations domain also predicted student attrition, such that students with greater discrepancy between their expectations and experiences were more likely to leave (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005; Pleitz, 2015).

5. Discussion

The quality of commencing and graduating students' experience in terms of provisions for *Program Resources*, overall, was *Impressive* with a weighted mean result of 3.69. Considering individual variables, the quality of students' experience in terms of: Laboratory Facilities ($\bar{x}=3.49$) was *Neither Impressive nor Unimpressive* while the quality of students' experience on the rest of the variables was *Impressive* as follows: Classroom Resources ($\bar{x} = 3.84$), Faculty ($\bar{x}=3.78$), Budgetary Allocation ($\bar{x} = 3.76$), Student Services ($\bar{x} = 3.74$), Instructional Support resources ($\bar{x} = 3.54$), and Instructional Support Resources ($\bar{x} = 3.54$).

Across departments, only the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) students' quality of experience in terms of provisions for *Program Resources* was *Neither Impressive or Unimpressive* with a weighted mean of 3.24. Other departments' quality of student experience on program resources was *Impressive*: College of Allied Medical Sciences (CAMS) $\bar{x}=3.94$; College of Information Technology and Engineering (CITE) $\bar{x}=3.86$; College of Education (CoEd), $\bar{x}=3.80$; College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy (CBEA), $\bar{x}=3.71$; and College of International Hospitality Management (CITHM), $\bar{x}=3.65$.

Only one variable, *Finance Services and Processes*, which obtained the lowest computed weighted mean of 3.29, was interpreted as *Good*. Two other variables recorded lower weighted means: *Recruitment and Admission Processes* ($\bar{x}=3.61$), and *Enrollment Procedures* ($\bar{x}=3.65$). *Institutional Commitment* had the highest overall weighted mean of 3.83, interpreted as *Very Good*. The resulting overall weighted mean was followed by other higher rated individual variables accordingly: *Academic Integration* (3.80), *Social Integration* (3.68), and *Academic Advising* (3.67),

On the whole, the CLA obtained the least computed overall weighted mean of 3.35, which was interpreted as *Good*. On the other hand, the CITE obtained the highest quality of students' educational with a computed overall weighted mean of 3.93 and interpreted as *Very Good*. The rest of the colleges' quality of students' educational experience were rated *Very Good* as well: CoEd (3.79), CHMIT (3.64), and CAMS and CBEA whose student's overall educational experience both obtained weighted mean results of 3.59.

As of the first semester of AY 2015-2016, there was an overall increase in enrolment across departments in all levels of 13% or 134 total increase in head count based on figures of 2014-2015. There was an overall decrease of 43 or 4% decrease in the student roster from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014. Another decrease totaling 108 students or 9% decrease was evident from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015.

The overall rate of persistent students was recorded at 25.7%.

5.1 Program resources. In combination, variables under Program Resources cannot be considered as significant determinants of student retention as evidenced by the p-value of 0.177, $\alpha=0.05$. The null hypothesis (H_0), *The provision for program resources does not influence significantly retention rates across departments*, therefore, is accepted. Individually, five (5) out of the six (6) variables under Program Resources namely: Classroom Resources, Library and Instructional Media Resources, Laboratory Facilities, Student Services, and Budgetary Allocation do not have significantly statistical predictive capabilities on Retention as displayed by their obtained p-values of .664, .484, .573, .094, and .119, correspondingly. The only variable that revealed an individually statistically significant predictive capability on Retention was Faculty which showed a .040 p-value, at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Therefore, Program Resources, as a whole, has no statistically significant predictive capability on student retention, however, taken singly, Faculty Resource and Student Services have statistically significant predictive capabilities on retention; therefore, are determinants of student retention.

5.2 Student overall educational experience. Variables under Students' Overall Educational Experience, considered in combination with each other, have a statistically significant predictive capability on Retention, with obtained p-value of .000, at $\alpha = .05$. Enrollment Procedures and Finance Services variables were found to have statistically significant predictive capabilities on Retention as demonstrated by the p-values of .001 and .000, respectively, at $\alpha = 0.05$. The other variables, Social Integration, Academic Integration, Academic Advising, Institutional Commitment, and Recruitment and Admission processes, considered individually, have no statistically significant predictive capabilities on Retention as evidenced by their p-values at $\alpha = 0.05$, accordingly as follows: .910, .690, .586, .248, and .105.

Student Educational Experience variables when combined therefore, are significant determinants of student retention; taken individually, though, only Enrollment Procedures and Finance Services have statistically significant predictive capabilities on student retention; therefore, are determinants or predictors of the same.

5.3 Recommendations. It is recommended that additional investments be made in the promotion and marketing of the University's programs by hiring an expert marketing consultant who can offer the University the benefit of objective advice backed by experience of delivering successful results in a variety of market sectors. The consultant's advice can help LCUP improve performance through changes in marketing strategy, growth in revenue, increase in market share (enrollment), increase in retention rates, launching of new courses and entrance into new markets.

Likewise human resource management must be intensified to make the best possible use of skills and experiences of faculty members and other employees and motivate them to deliver their level best to ensure that the University's foremost clientele, the students, get their best educational experience for them to imbibe a sense of loyalty and commitment to persist in college until graduation in LCUP; that the right candidate be hired for the right job, trained from time to time, managed well and also retained in the organization.

The current research further suggests that one primary reason for student attrition is similar to a common explanation for workplace turnover; the psychological contract between a student and school is broken, and the expectations that one party brings into the relationship are violated. By better understanding the nature of these expectations, it is hoped that Management and advisors can move closer to solving this complex problem and increasing student retention. Importantly, LCUP

can proactively minimize the issue of attrition by paying attention to the areas of concerns that have been uncovered.

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