

Viewing the Master of Education Management Student's Abilities, Motivation and Opportunities towards Change through an Appreciative Inquiry Lens

Rosalie A. Corpus, Carmencita L. Castolo*, Elizabeth Fernando

Polytechnic University of the Philippines

*Email: racorpus@pup.edu.ph, clcastolo@pup.edu.ph

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Abstract

Graduate students from the Open University System Master in Education Management (OUS MEM) program of a State University were asked if their professional practice and attitude to their work, school heads, colleagues and students have changed as a result of enrolment in the program. As faculty members of the OUS MEM, the researchers are always on the lookout for organizational change and used the Appreciative Inquiry approach which focused on strengths rather than weaknesses, to evaluate students' answers as stakeholders' inputs. With a descriptive flexible research design, responses received were coded into the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Framework, a performance tool in management contextualized into academe. Results showed that Teachers' knowledge and skills were seen as Ability enablers with teacher professionalism and relationships with students, colleagues and school heads as the perceived bases, actual change and results of the change. Seen as Motivation enablers were how they now practice education management, their collective professional identity, individual beliefs, personal affinities, goals and emotions. Opportunity enablers were seen as national education laws, social influences, personal circumstances, context and resources that opened doors to promotion and additional income. Parallels were seen between the individual Teacher and the OUS MEM, using AMO and the four phases of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in the narratives. Such as a) Discovering OUS MEM program's attributes that can enhance teachers' Ability; b) allowing them to Dream of a better future; c) OUS MEM Designing better Opportunities for Teachers' personal enhancement and better d) Destiny and future. Results were presented to OUS MEM officials for possible reforms and continuous improvement of the MEM program. It is recommended that the study be replicated for further development of other OUS graduate programs.

Keywords: Abilities-Motivation-Opportunities Framework; Appreciative Inquiry Approach; Narrative Paradigm; Descriptive Flexible Research Design; Open University System Master in Education Management

Introduction

To acquire quality higher education degrees your goal could be through traditional colleges or universities. However, if personal qualifications, resources or credentials are lacking, you may consider an open university, which are institutions offering flexible opportunities to develop abilities and proceed with a higher level of education (Pop, 2020), usually online or through distance learning. The first university launched to provide education open to all was the Open University in Milton Keynes, England, UK in 1969. Since then, countries followed realizing that all people should have the chance to improve their education.

Article IV of the Constitution of the Philippines mandates that quality education at all levels should be made accessible to all Filipinos, and that independent and informal learning systems be developed for lifelong learning responsive to sustainable community needs (Official Gazette, 1987). In 1990, the Open University System Master in Education Management (OUS MEM) of the largest State University in the Philippines in terms of student population, started. Its objectives and attributes provide graduate students composed of teachers and school administrators with an affordable and portable education that promotes general efficiency and self-reliance aimed to bring about better quality of life for all Filipinos.

The Polytechnic University of the Philippines OUS provides a flexible teaching and learning program through blended e-learning platforms. Termed “Pamantasang Bayan” which translates to “the university for the masses”, its undergraduate and graduate students may come from professional and ordinary employees, who desire to continue their degree or non-degree courses but may be disadvantaged by time, access and economic constraints (www.pup.edu.ph.gov). Teachers and school administrators are the biggest audience of the University’s MEM program which they can accomplish within five to six semesters, depending on their progress.

As with any organization, the State University’s OUS is in a continuous innovation mindset, continually seeking feedback from its main stakeholders, its graduate students, as a source of idea generation and implementation (Anderson, 2004). With many higher education institutions having started their own open universities, the State University is seeing a very real need to make OUS more competitive; and the researchers, being active OUS faculty and staff, are always on the lookout for innovations as a primary source of competitive advantage. The chances of an organization to survive, to be successful and effective in even more challenging environments are becoming more dependent on innovation (Post, 2012). The researchers agree that in an educational institution such innovations can stem from the personal and professional changes that graduate students report they experience in their residency in the MEM program. As Kozlowski and Bell (2003) said about management of organizations, “teams do not behave, individuals do; but they do so in ways that create team level phenomena.” Contextualizing this statement to OUS MEM, the personal and professional changes the individual graduate student experienced, when collectively seen with other graduate students’ individual cognitions, attitudes and behaviors, can also influence the performance and outcomes of teams and organizations. This, as per Kozlowski and Klein (2000) is known as the “bottom-up effect of innovation.”

The OUS MEM program is headed by designees from the College of Education and its course specialists are all licensed professors mostly on a part time basis, coming from other academic institutions and higher education agencies; its administrative staff are regular employees of the State University. Teaching within it is on a per invitation basis, with course specialists expected to be tech-savvy since there are, at most, only six face to face meetings in a semester with the other 12 held online making use of its learning management system, the eMabini portal. Instructional delivery may be through printed or e-modules or synchronous and asynchronous lessons, where the course specialists discuss topics with their, at most, 25 graduate students per class. As mentioned by Muhi (2018), “the OUS is an alternative system of education which offers not only flexible and accessible but also quality education, sustainability, and opportunity to anyone who wishes to better themselves and their lives.” Though first in the land, many other universities followed suit such as the open university of the national university in 1995, a private university in 1997, and others private and state-run (Fortun, 2018).

In July 25, 2016, Republic Act No. 10931 or the “Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act” was signed into law (Lawphil Project, 2016). With free tuition and other school fees for

tertiary education in state and local universities and colleges, many privately run higher education institutions (HEIs) may have felt threatened by falling enrolment rates. As reported by some OUS MEM students, many private HEIs resorted to actually going directly to public basic education schools to offer their masters courses wherein the instructors would go to the school rather than teacher-students going to them. Since the researchers noticed less enrolment in its “pamantasang-bayan” found in nine learning centers all over Luzon and Visayas: in Bansud, Lopez, Manila, Maragondon, Quezon City, Sablayan, Taguig, Sto. Tomas, Batangas, and Unisan, we felt incumbent to look at what value added component of the OUS MEM through its graduate students can we utilize to present to the officials of the State University as stakeholder inputs in its ongoing plans for competitive advantage for the organizational development of the OUS MEM. To this end, this research of exploring the “bottom-up effects of innovation” brought about by enrolment to the OUS MEM experienced by its graduate students was conceptualized to mitigate some of the effects of falling enrolment rates.

As an organization of human systems, OUS MEM assumes positive features that something is always working well. However, no organization is without its issues. In December 2019, the researchers gathered from 122 graduating students their narratives of the changes (if any) in their personal and professional lives because of their enrolment in the OUS MEM program. Their responses were coded into the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Framework, and Appreciative Inquiry was used as a research and change methodology to rank and quantify the changes OUS MEM has developed in their lives. AI has proven to be highly effective for capturing the positive features of an organization or social system and energizing its membership to strive for higher levels of performance (Acosta & Douthwaite, 2005). The researchers are hopeful that the study results will then produce OUS MEM strengths towards innovating and instituting better programs or simply continuing doing what it has been doing well so far.

Theoretical Framework

The Narrative Paradigm

Using the Narrative Paradigm, this study utilized the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Framework in coding the responses of the graduate students, and the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) research methodology to cluster the coded answers to the research question “How did your professional practice and attitude towards your work, school administrators, colleagues and students changed as a result of your enrolment in the OUS MEM program?”

The Narrative Paradigm created by Walter Fisher in 1978 states that humans are essentially story tellers and likes stories being told to them. It refers to a theory of symbolic actions – words and/or deeds – that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them, applied to real world situations. He argues that “the Narrative Paradigm’s basic premise is that everything we do is and can be laid out as a story. Humans cannot, in fact, do anything without it attaining some kind of narrative structure.” As such the main points involved in the Narrative Paradigm are: a) Humans are essentially storytellers; b) Decisions that humans make are based on “perceived good reasons” rather than on proof; c) What we do and how we think is swayed by history, biography, culture, and character; and d) Our rationality is determined by our sense of narrative probability (the coherency of the narrative) and narrative fidelity (whether the story rings true with what we already know to be true); and e) We are continually choosing the stories that we keep company with, and these stories are constantly changing. Therefore, narratives are a selective reality. Fisher is of the belief that narrative coherency and narrative fidelity are what make one story better than another. People choose what they want to believe, which is influenced by external factors. Whatever media presents can reinforce pre-existing notions but people will have their own select viewpoints and will

choose what parts of the story to believe (because it “rings true” with what is already known: this is narrative fidelity) and what parts are ignored. Further, using the Narrative Paradigm is also highly descriptive. It brings people together. Communicating in the narrative enables sharing of understandings of how the world works and allows identification with one another, particular if of similar beliefs. In this way, the Narrative Paradigm demonstrates that human attitudes can be directed by narratives and can move people to empathy. Fisher recognizes that to some degree there is a desire for drama. Combined with how adept people are to pass judgment when identifying with a story, the Narrative Paradigm is an incredibly effective form of communicative technique and a persuasive tool in that it helps to create meaning and connect with others in consideration of moral constructs. For the purposes of this study, the Narrative Paradigm was used in initially clustering the responses of MEM students into the AMO Framework in complementation with the Appreciative Inquiry methodology.

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Framework

The AMO Framework was initially proposed by Bailey (1993), and later improved upon by Appelbaum (2000), suggested that ensuring the employee's discretionary effort needed three components: employees had to have the necessary skills, they needed appropriate motivation and employers had to offer them the opportunity to participate (Appelbaum et al., 2000). AMO is a high-level framework that reflects the likely reality that human behavior is influenced by a variety of factors. “A” stands for Ability or the Information, skills, or capability necessary to perform the behavior; “M” is for Motivation which is the drive to act or perform the behavior, and “O” means Opportunity or the contextual or situational constraints or enablers that affect performance of the behavior (Michie et al., 2011). As Michie (2011) stated, “it has been suggested that most of the time motivation influences behavior, and that ability and opportunity influence motivation.”

In the context of teachers in the Philippines and the locality of this research study, the AMO Framework is explained. Teachers desiring to advance in their careers are advised by the Department of Education (DepEd) in its Guidelines for Teacher Promotion (2019), to take advanced degrees such as Master in Education Management. A teacher must have the “Ability” to undertake the rigors of advanced studies to upgrade their skills and knowledge (mental and physical acuity, financial expense, time constraints, library and internet access); with “Motivation” consisting of the rewards and recognition provided by the DepEd and the Commission on Higher Education (in terms of incentives, scholarships and sabbaticals); which the OUS MEM addresses with its components as the “Opportunities” it provides (online and blended modes of delivery, self-phased independent learning, very competitive tuition fees, professional course specialists and library facilities), that are available to aid them in their future aspirations.

Using the AMO framework in this paper in presenting the research question to the MEM graduate students, coding of responses gave rise to specific enablers and barriers existing for each of these components. Enablers and/or barriers for each were: a) for Ability -- Knowledge and Skills; b) for Motivation -- Professional Identity, Individual Beliefs, Personal Affinities, Goals and Emotions; and for c) Opportunity -- Social Influences, Personal Circumstances, and Context and Resources (Garcia and Tomas, 2016). As the Life Cycle Institute (2019) says “change is learning, learning is change. Those who learn and adapt faster have a competitive advantage.

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Framework

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as defined by its proponents Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) is about “the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. It involves ‘discovering’ what gives ‘life’ to the organization when it was most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms.” Further,

Preskill and Catsambas (2006), stated that “AI is a group process that inquires into, identifies and further develops the best of ‘what is’ in organizations in order to create a better future. It is a means for addressing issues, challenges, changes and concerns of an organization in ways that build on the successful, effective and energizing experiences of its members.”

As mentioned, this study looked at the clustered and coded “stories” or narratives of the 122 graduate students of the OUS MEM to the main research question: “Did your professional practice and attitude towards your work, school administrators, colleagues and students change as a result of your enrolment in the MEM program?” As Preskill and Catsambas (2006) mentioned, AI is a belief that the questions we ask are critical to the world we create. Therefore the reason for clustering the 122 narratives received into the AMO Framework and examined through an AI lens as inputs and feedback towards the Master in Educational Management’s continuing program development and enhancement.

Methodology

This study makes use of the Descriptive Flexible Research Design. This is a Descriptive Study in the sense that it aims to describe the status of a phenomenon but does not require a hypothesis to be tested. As noted by Saeed(2019) the hypothesis may be developed, should needed, after the data is collected and interpreted. This is also Flexible in research design since academic freedom is noted in the collection of data which may or may not be measured quantitatively. As noted a theoretical framework may not even be available before the actual research begins and may arise out of the cohesion of variables during the data interpretation stage to arrive at study findings, conclusions and recommendations.

In December 2019, 122 graduating students of the Master in Education Management program of the Open University System of the largest State University in terms of population appeared in its Main Campus in Sta. Mesa, Manila, for further instructions relative to their upcoming graduation. The researchers took advantage of this opportunity and provided each student a piece of paper where they were requested to write their answers to these questions as printed:

Main Research Problem: Do you perceive your professional practice and attitude towards your work as a teacher, school administrators, colleagues and students changed as a result of your enrolment in the Master in Education Management program of the Open University System?

Sub-Problems:

1. What are your perceived bases or reasons for the change;
2. What is your perceived actual change; and
3. What are your perceived results of the change?

As they left the venue and retrieved their certificates of appearance, they were also requested to hand in their filled out forms which guaranteed 100 percent retrieval of the research instrument. Upon retrieval the forms were counted, numbered in sequence 1 to 122 in total, and their answers to the main research question and sub-questions noted.

1. Initial Coding

The handwritten responses or narratives were typed into four main clusters: Their answers to the main research question, and to the three sub-problems.

Responses received for the main research question were 122 or 100 percent “Yes”. This portion was then crossed out to prevent duplication of recording. Breakdown of the responses herewith may be seen in Table 1.

2. Second Coding

Responses or narratives for the three sub-problems were noted in the same manner; responses encoded into three (3) tables in a MS Word file. Each table corresponded to a sub-problem. Each statement in each table were then coded and counted based on the definition of:

a) for Ability -- Teacher professionalism and professional relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, parents and other stakeholders, reflection on personal practice as a teacher, as well as knowledge and skills.

b) for Motivation–Practice of Educational Management, Students, Professional Identity, Individual Beliefs, Personal Affinities, Goals and Emotions.

c) Opportunity –What opened doors to other opportunities, the laws and department of education memoranda, the components or attributes of the OUS MEM program, basis for promotion as well as social influences, personal circumstances, and context and resources.

After each statement in each table were compared to the key words mentioned below, the instance of how many times each key word appeared was noted in each table. Recoding of responses for this second coding may be seen in Table 2.

Subsequent coding in answer to the sub-problems were done and may be seen in Tables 3 and 4. A summary Table 5 showed the parallels between the responses clustered in the AMO Framework with the four (4) phases of Appreciative Inquiry: Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny.

Table 1. Likert Scale

Frequency	Percent
4.51 - 5.00	Extremely Satisfied
3.51 - 4.50	Very Satisfied
2.51 - 3.50	Moderately Satisfied
2.51 - 3.50	Slightly Satisfied
1.00 - 1.50	Not at all Satisfied

Results and Discussion

Narratives in answer to the main research question and the three sub-questions are shown and discussed in the following tables in the following pages.

Change in Professional Practice and Attitude as a Result of Enrolment in the Open University Master in Education Management Program

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Relationship covered by the “YES” Response

Response	Relationship	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	Administrator	8	7
	Colleagues	23	19
	Students	32	26
	My work	59	48
Total		122	100%

Based on responses received, 122 respondents, equivalent to 100 per cent answered “YES” their professional practice and attitude toward their work as teachers, school administrators, colleagues, and students have changed. Table 2 further breaks down the “YES” response into: 59 or 48 per cent of the respondents saying change happened in how they see their work as teachers after engagement in the program; 32 respondents or 26 per cent said changes were toward interaction with students. With colleagues, 23 or 19 per cent felt changes in their interaction, as well as 8 or 7 per cent of the respondents seeing such change in their dealings with their school administrators.

Table 3. Respondents’ Perceived Bases for the Change Grouped into AMO Enablers

AMO Enablers		
Ability	Motivation	Opportunities
Teacher professionalism and professional relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, parents and other stakeholders	Practice of Education Management	Opened doors to other opportunities
		Laws and Department of Education Memoranda
Reflection on personal practice as a teacher.	Students	Components of the OUS MEM Program
		Basis for Promotion

Table 3 above shows that based on responses received for the first sub-problem, the category “Teacher professionalism and professional relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, parents and other stakeholders” is also the first enabler focused on the respondents’ Ability as a Professional Licensed Teacher, followed by “Reflections on personal practice as a teacher.”

For Motivation enablers, the “Practice of Education Management” and “Students” were seen. This set of enablers shows how the respondents perceived the practice of Education Management to be a worthwhile investment of their time, resources and effort, being the logical extension of their undergraduate work. A minimum of at least a master’s degree is necessary to gain employment as an administrator in the public school system (Study.com, 2020) to which most of the graduate students belong and aspire to. “Students” are also a huge motivator; as Connery (2012) said “for what is a teacher if without students?”

The Opportunity enablers which are, in order, “Opened doors to other opportunities,” “Laws and Department of Education Memoranda,” the “OUS MEM program itself” and “Basis for promotion.” Teachers looking to increase their salaries may benefit from a Masterdegree (Teach.com 2019). The MEM program they are enrolled in will open doors of opportunities for advancement and other awards and recognition; these opportunities were noted in local legislation such as “Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994” and DepEd 2019 Guidelines for Master Teacher Promotion (Llego, 2019) stated that 18-24 masteral units in education units are desirable for promotion. Engagement in the MEM program itself is already an opportunity for teachers since not all feel they have the ability and motivation to enter into such a program in this State University. Likewise, teachers are consciously reaching towards a promotion in rank and its corresponding financial rewards. As noted in the Commission of Higher Education Memo No. 40, s. 2008, and No. 46, s. 2012, “a master’s degree in the specialization and the appropriate license are requisites for teaching

in higher education institutions, and for the institutions themselves to maintain their status as universities.”

Respondents’ Perceived Actual Change as a Result of Enrolment in OUS MEM

Majority of the informants, equal to 49 per cent, noted “Personal Professionalism and Growth” as the most obvious actual change they experienced as a result of enrolment in the OUS MEM Program. Followed by “Changes in Characteristics as a Teacher, their “Relationship with Peers and Colleagues, and their “Perception of Students, and “Applying the Knowledge learned in OUS MEM in Teaching and Learning Strategies for Students.” These four attributes are all classed as among the Teacher’s Abilities that they felt has undergone actual changes as a result of the enrolment in the OUS MEM.

“Attitude toward and relationship with School Administrator and duties assigned,” and “Role as Future Administrator”, are seen as Motivation enablers.

Seen as Opportunity enablers are the presence of “Local Laws, Department of Education and Commission of Higher Education Memos,” “Relationship with Internal and External Stakeholders” and “Relationship with OUS MEM Faculty and Staff.”

Table 4. Respondents’ Perceived Actual Change Grouped into AMO Enablers

AMO Enablers		
Ability	Motivation	Opportunities
Personal Professionalism and Growth	Attitude toward and Relationship with School Administrators and Duties Assigned	Local Laws, Department of Education, Commission of Higher Memos
Changes in Characteristics as a Teacher		
Relationship with Peers and Colleagues	Role as Effective Future Administrator	Relationship with Internal and External Stakeholders
Perception of Students, Applying Knowledge learned in OUS MEM in Teaching and Learning Strategies for Students		Relationship with OUS MEM Faculty and Staff

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) implemented in August 2017 through DepEd Memo No. 42 s, 2017, states that it shall be used as a basis for all learning and development programs for teachers. Its Module 12 requires Teachers’ being able to communicate promptly and clearly the learner’s needs, progress and achievement to key stakeholders including parents and guardians. Likewise, in the enabler “Relationship with OUS MEM Faculty and Staff” the students provide feedback on how the course specialists, faculty and staff of OUS MEM have provided them with the impetus to see the opportunities available for them within the Program. Feedback such as these is important for the continuous improvement of the PUP OUS MEM Program.

*Respondents' Perceived Results of the Change***Table 5. Respondents' Perceived Actual Change Grouped into AMO Enablers**

AMO Enablers		
Ability	Motivation	Opportunities
Changes in how I see and accomplish my Work Personal Changes	Changes in how I interact with Students Changes in how I interact with Colleagues Changes in how I interact with Administrators	Promotion Relationship with Internal and External Stakeholders

Most 35 or 48 per cent of the respondents noted “Changes in how I see and accomplish my Work” as the most important result of the changes experienced from enrolment in the OUS MEM program. This is the utmost enabler for Ability, followed by “Personal Changes” as seen by 27 respondents equivalent to 37 per cent. Followed by “Changes in how I interact with Students equal to 20 respondents or 27 per cent, Colleagues at 13 respondents of 18 percent and 10 respondents or 14 per cent for Administrators” respectively. These were seen as Motivation enablers. Opportunities seen as results of the changes experienced are “Promotion” as per two respondents equal to 3 per cent, and “Relationship with Internal and External Stakeholders” with 1 respondent or 1 per cent.

A study by Kocabas (2009) found that teachers are mostly motivated by: a sense of safety in the school; sense of self-fulfillment in their learners' achievements; the continuing attraction of the teaching profession; levels of self-reliance, effectiveness, efficiency and empowerment; their perception of their status in society; positive relationships among colleagues; self-perception of their competencies; levels of self-respect; appreciation in their achievements and values, and effective administration and management of their school and places of work. Peters and Waterman, as cited in Kocabas (2009) said that the main factor in motivating people is to give the individual a sense of success. “An individual's motivation level,” said Findikci (2006), “is dependent on the material and social benefits he or she gains from the school they work in and the institution they study in.” This is most prevalent in the Motivation enablers seen; the students, colleagues and administrators in the work places of the teachers. Promotion and relationships with internal and external stakeholders are Opportunity enablers since these components can contribute to the development of the teacher in the community.

As seen in Summary Table 6, the use of the Appreciative Inquiry Approach solicited a positive frame of mind in how the respondents answered the sub-problems of the study. Likewise, parallels can be seen between the Teachers and the OUS MEM program's attributes using AMO and the four phases of the four phases of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in the narratives. Such as a) Discovering OUS MEM program's attributes that can enhance teachers' Ability; b) allowing them to Dream of a better future; c) OUS MEM Designing better Opportunities for Teachers' personal enhancement; and a better d) Destiny and future.

Table 6. Summary Table of Respondents' AMO Enablers as seen through An Appreciative Inquiry Lens

Appreciative Inquiry Phases	Discovering	Dream	Designing	Destiny
	OUS MEM attributes that can enhance a Teacher's Ability	Teachers see in OUS MEM attributes that can allow them to have a better future	Teachers see in OUS MEM attributes' better Opportunities for their personal enhancement	Teachers see in OUS MEM attributes a better Destiny and future
AMO Enablers	Ability Enablers = Knowledge and Skills	Motivation Enablers = Professional Identity, Individual Beliefs, Personal Affinities, Goals, and Emotions	Opportunity Enablers = Social Influences, Personal Circumstances, and Context and Resources	
Perceived Bases for the Change Table 3	-Teacher professionalism and professional relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, parents and other stakeholders -Reflections on personal practice as a teacher	-Practice of Education Management -Students	-Opened doors to other opportunities -Local laws, DepEd and CHED memos -PUP OUS MEM Program -Basis for promotion	
Perceived Actual Change Table 4	-Personal Professionalism and Growth -Changes in Characteristics as a Teacher -Relationship with Peers and Colleagues -Perception of students, applying knowledge learned in PUP OUS MEM in teaching and learning strategies for students	-Attitude toward, and relationship with, school administrator and duties assigned -Role as effective future administrator	-Local laws, DepEd and CHED memos -Relationship with internal and external stakeholders -Relationship with PUP OUS Faculty and Staff	
Perceived Results of the Change Table 5	-Changes in how I see and accomplish my work -Personal changes	Changes in how I interact with: -Students -Colleagues -Administrator	-Promotion -Relationship with internal and external stakeholders.	

Findings show that the OUS MEM program contributed to Teachers' personal Abilities, knowledge and skills; imbued and provided them with the necessary professional identity that they

believe having a master's degree in Education Management can bring them. Such identity will provide the self-confidence and boost in self-esteem they need to as Motivation to be empowered teachers, compelling them to gain their goals as future administrators. Likewise, the material and social benefits derived from the Opportunities from OUS MEM and provided by the empowering scenario of local laws and DepEd and CHED memos, coupled with the admittedly scarce financial resources but deep and abiding spirit of industry and flexibility that teachers have will strengthen their interaction with the stakeholders who are their partners in the development of the community

Conclusion

In conclusion, 100 per cent of the graduate students said that their professional practice and attitude towards their work, school administrators, colleagues and students, have overwhelmingly positive changes as a result of their enrolment in the OUS MEM program. This conclusion may be of significance to the following stakeholders, and study recommendations are addressed to them.

For academic heads of graduate programs, transforming your traditional delivery to blended learning programs may be a good bet. Be aware of the curricular offerings of the different programs you may have, sharing of resources such as faculty in a multi-disciplinary manner could reduce operations costs.

For administrators of open universities, it is recommended that your learning management system must be very powerful and fast to accommodate the needs of your graduate students. Library and laboratory materials should be electronic and accessible at all times. Note that a purely online open university program may seem threatening to public school teachers especially those who are more mature since there is still that felt need to be in physical touch with a teacher. Most of the teachers in the Philippines are in public schools and you must consider the need of this particular niche to be competitive. Likewise it is said that technology will never replace the teacher, but a technology-savvy teacher will replace the more traditional one.

For teachers who are wanting to upgrade their knowledge and their professional and personal capabilities, enrolling in the OUS MEM program is recommended because you will be with your peers and colleagues from mostly public schools, and probably your course specialists will empathize with your plight since she/he is most probably an output of a public school too. The researchers are quite proud of the fact that we are graduates of the OUS MEM program. A blended learning platform can be more student-friendly so that you can interact with your professor when advised to do so. The required upgrading brought by enrolment in advanced degrees can be quite daunting which is why the open university with its flexible attributes is fast becoming a more popular choice.

As an instrument for continuing program and organizational development, it is recommended that the study be replicated for the other programs under the State University's Open University System, so that feedback and inputs from our most important stakeholders – the graduate students – will be heard and acted upon.

As a final note, the outputs of this study underscores the fact that, just as the basic and tertiary education envision a graduate who can be gainfully employed with all the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes inherent in a productive member of society, a graduate program must also look to providing its graduates with the highest educational standards and attributes since its graduates will, in turn, mold the future leaders of the land. Relevancy, usability, flexibility and reliability should be the hallmark of graduate education much like the parallelism seen in the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Framework and the Appreciative Inquiry Approach to continuous program development and enhancement.

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