

A tracer study on the University of the Immaculate Conception graduates of bachelor of music

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Abstract

Aim: This research aimed to follow up with UIC Bachelor of Music graduates working in Davao City and the surrounding area between 1996 and 2016.

Methodology: A total of 31 recent college grads agreed to fill out the CHED-modified survey and contribute to the study, which used a descriptive research design and a purposive snowball sampling technique.

Findings: Despite the economic downturn, 51.8% of respondents were able to secure employment within six months of graduating; the vast majority of these individuals are in the teaching profession and are therefore employed in schools or studios. Almost half (42%) of current employees are consistent, with most having heard about their positions through personal recommendations. Respondents believe their education at UIC has helped them become more marketable to potential employers because of the curriculum they have taken away from their time there and the values they have internalized.

Implications/Novelty: The distribution industries in Davao City and beyond have not been studied before, and this study is the first to undertake an activity that can pinpoint the employment placement of music graduates and profile their employment/entrepreneurial endeavors.

Key Words: Education, Tracer Study, Music Education, Employability, Music Graduates, Davao City

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INTRODUCTION

Only one university in Mindanao, Philippines, the University of the Immaculate Conception in Davao City, offers a bachelor's degree in music (it was approved by the government to do so in 1953). For nearly a century, it has been used to develop human potential. The primary goal of the University of Illinois at Chicago Music Program is to provide the music industry with qualified graduates.

Many UIC alums play pivotal roles in many fields, especially in Davao City. As the first tracer study of its kind, this research will provide empirical evidence for UIC's claimed impact in the field of music. According to Zuckerman (2014), a music program graduate has access to more than seventy different job opportunities worldwide. Artists' repertoire representatives, accompanists, gig organizers, music teachers, artist managers, arrangers, arts administrators, and chamber musicians are examples of such jobs.

Since 1926, when UIC first offered a music course, the school's music education program has been turning out successful graduates. Back in the day, the music program at this university was more like a studio where students could take lessons in various instruments and voices. Students were evaluated at the end of the course through a recital and either granted permission to continue on to a bachelor's degree in music (4 years or more) or, if not, to an Associate degree in music (2 years). Since not everyone values a degree in music, the number of graduates has always been low. Graduates of the music program have made significant contributions to the music industries of Davao and other cities in Mindanao, the Philippines, and beyond, but this is not widely known.

There has yet to be a comprehensive study of what happens after music majors graduate in over 90 years. This research set out to profile UIC's music graduates' employment and entrepreneurial endeavors to paint a clear

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picture of how UIC's graduates are spread across businesses in and around Davao City. That's why this research has the potential to give us some insight into how well UIC's music programs are doing. There is also an urgent need to record the professional success of the university's music graduates because the program is part of a pilot group seeking accreditation from the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU) in this field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various authorities have high regard on the conduct of tracer studies. According to Mugabushaka (2002), tracer studies, which pertain to surveys of graduates of institutions of higher education, are considered important tools of institutional development, especially in an ever-changing world of work. He regarded this endeavor as a systematic feedback on the whereabouts of the graduates, their working conditions, and their retrospective evaluation of the programs.

Fisher and Chapman (1995) also expressed that tracer study is an ideal tool of providing demonstrable evidence of course outcomes as it permits institutions to map the pathways of their clients. Thus, findings of tracer studies enable educational providers to evaluate the effectiveness of their academic programs (Fisher and Chapman 1995; Kongmanus 2016).

There have been tracer studies that were conducted pertaining to the graduates of some academic programs in UIC. In a study conducted by Caminade, Flores, and Sagarino (2016) among the Bachelor of Science in Accountancy graduates, they found that 75% of the respondents are Certified Public Accountants of whom 79% was employed within a month after submitting their application. Majority are employed within their field of expertise. Further, they have identified the following competencies relevant to their job: skills on entrepreneurial, relational, communication, information technology, and problem-solving (Caminade et al. 2016; Owusu 2016; Wu 2017).

Acosta, Sagarino, and Amoguis (2013) also did a tracer study covering 101 business graduates of the university. Their findings revealed that 78% of the respondents have been employed within six months after graduation. The top four industries, where these graduates are employed, include Banking, Academe, Retail, and Government. Moreover, the skills the respondents find relevant to their first job are public speaking, computer literacy, communication skills, and customer relations. They attribute their employability to the UIC education to various aspects such as effective curriculum and training, prestige of the university, values, and discipline. Employers find the UIC business graduates to be competent, dependable, trustworthy, God-centered, dedicated, and sociable.

Various universities in the Philippines have also conducted tracer studies to evaluate the effectiveness of their curricula. Hazayme and Dela-Pena (2014) had concluded that La Salle University Engineering graduates within 2009-2013 are employable as they obtained their first job within six months after graduation. They see the need to improve the formation program to enhance further the values of their graduates (Hazayme and Dela-Pena 2014; Saadia 2015).

Orejana and Resurreccion (2010) found that 91% of their respondents composed of business graduates between 2002 and 2006 of their institution are employed with 20% having supervisory positions and 4% managerial positions. They have recommended exposures and actual applications of theories be enhanced. Also, Rocaberte (2010) had determined that 75% of his respondents covering graduates of University of Pangasinan (2001-2004) were employed with Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science graduates having more employment opportunities as compared to other courses like architecture, management accounting and physical therapy.

On the other hand, a significant number of Electronic Engineering Graduates of Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges of school years of 1999-2011 were found to be working abroad and only an insignificant number are employed in the province of Camarines Sur due to paucity of electronic industries and employment opportunities in the locality. Critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills were determined to be useful to their first job. In the area of Teacher Education in one university in Batangas, Aquino et al. (2015) concluded that majority has obtained Licensures for Teachers and are employed in public schools. Their respondents find teaching to be a rewarding and challenging profession. Moreover, Philippine Normal University graduates were highly satisfied with the institution's services and they have identified computer laboratories as the area that must be ominously

improved (Gines 2014).

In other countries, tracer studies were also conducted to elicit feedbacks on the effectiveness and relevance of their academic programs. In Malaysia, Latif and Bahroom (2010) carried out a three-year (2006-2008) survey among graduates of Open University Malaysia (OUM). Their findings revealed that OUM graduates are satisfied with the services provided by the institution and this satisfaction has increased over the three years. The study programs had highly influenced the holistic development of graduates particularly on maturity, reliance, and teamwork. Moreover, more than 75% of their respondents recognize the need for lifelong learning as manifested by their interest to participate in additional training after graduating.

In Mauricia, the Tertiary Education Commission (2008) found that 87.6% of the respondents were working and graduates of law, management, and engineering are more employable than other professions. Time to land a job had improved over time from a longer period to less than a year.

Statement of the Problem

The Philippines faces problems of high unemployment and underemployment rates. The unemployment rate in the Philippines as of 2012 was 7% and 21% of these college graduates (Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics 2012). Hence, this study aimed to track group of UIC Bachelor of Music graduates Batches 2004-2005 to 2014-2015 employed in the different industries in Davao City and outside the city.

Specifically, we elicited information to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the graduate-respondents in terms of:
 - a. Sex
 - b. Civil status
 - c. Age
 - d. Major subject or discipline
 - e. Year graduated
 - f. Music affiliation
2. What is the employment profile and features of the graduate-respondents in terms of:
 - a. Employment status
 - b. Employment position
 - c. Level of income
 - d. Means of obtaining the job
 - e. Period of seeking the first job after college
 - f. Skills found useful in the first job
3. In which industry are these graduates employed?
4. Did their training in UIC significantly influence their employability?
5. What are the characteristics of UIC Music Graduates which their employer value so much?

FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 shows the variables that interplay in this study. The independent variables include the demographic characteristics of the graduate respondents such as sex, civil status, age, discipline and year graduated. According to International Labor Organization (2009), these characteristics could impact decisions on employment. The educational qualification is conceived to be the primary factor in assessing applicant's suitability to a particular job.

On the other hand, the employment profile such as employment status, job position, and income level, means of job acquisition, job search time, industry they are employed with and the distinct characteristics are treated as dependent variables. These are conceived to be reliant on the demographic characteristics and qualification that an applicant/employee possesses. Also, the competence and distinct characteristics of UIC Music graduates are determinants of the attractiveness of graduates to employers.

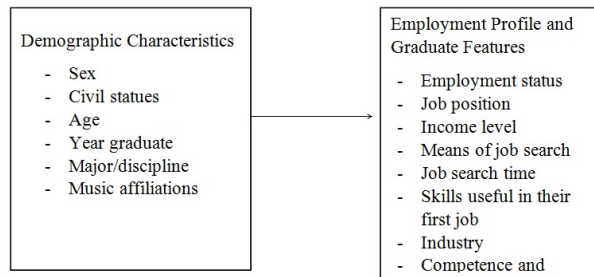


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

METHODOOLOGY

We used the descriptive research design in the conduct of this investigation. We will conduct a survey in tracing UIC Bachelor of Music batches of SY 2004-2005 to 2014-2015 from various industries in Davao City and outside the city. Consequently, respondents will be requested to answer an adapted (CHED tracer instrument) questionnaire pertaining to their demographic characteristics, employment profile, and the contribution of UIC as their college Alma mater to their present career.

We conducted the survey primarily in Davao City. The city serves as center of trade, commerce, and industry in Mindanao and the regional center for Davao Region. According to travelph.com, about 48% of the population of the city is of working age. Of this, a little over 88% are employed. Davaoeños are English-speaking and highly trainable. However, we did not limit the data gathering to Davao City since prospecting of respondents was done through referral (snowball), personal approach, e-mail, and Facebook messaging.

A soft copy of the questionnaire was sent electronically to those who were contacted through their e-mail or Facebook account. Attached to the questionnaire was an informed consent form containing the objectives of the survey, explanation of the rights of the respondents, and assurance of the confidentiality of their identity. For those who were personally convinced, they were provided with a hardcopy of the tool to fill up.

For data treatment, frequency counts to facilitate the computation of the percentages were done in order to present the demographic characteristics and employment profile of the graduate respondents. Moreover, the competency and distinct features of the graduates were presented and discussed separately.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of the Graduate Respondents

Majority of the graduate-respondents were male 51.6%, while the female comprises 48.4% (Figure 2). The composition of the respondents is favorable as both sexes are sufficiently represented considering that the distribution is almost equal.

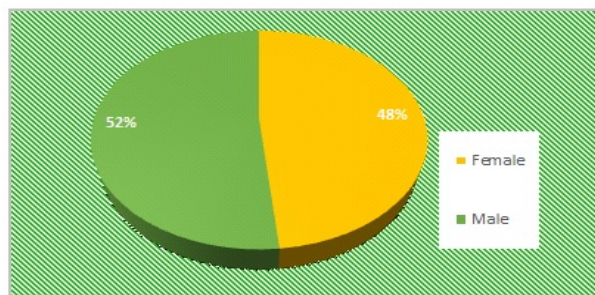


Figure 2. Profile as to sex

As shown in Table 1, the graduate-respondents are dominated by singles (83.9%) apparently because most of them (80.6%) are still young 20 to 30 years old. These data could be rationalized by a survey result which found that due to unstable global economy, many millennial want to secure their place in the world both financially and career-wise. Hence, many young professionals remain single (Power of Positivity).

Table 1: Respondents' profile as to civil status

Civil Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	26	83.9%
Married	4	12.9%
Widow/Widower	1	3.2%
Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	25	80.6%
31-40	5	16.1%
41-50	1	3.3%

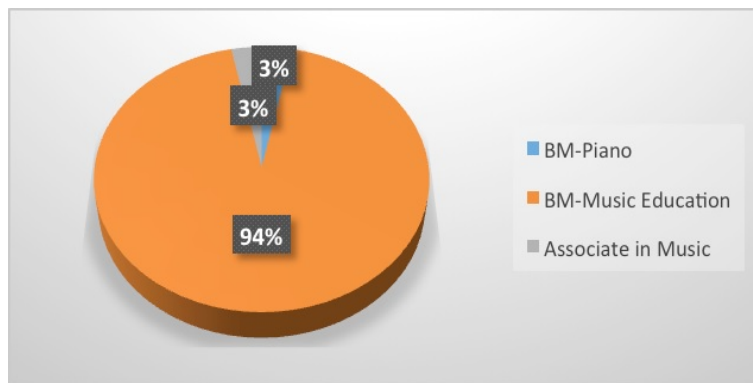


Figure 3. Discipline

As to the discipline that the graduate respondents have obtained 94% earned Bachelor of Music major in Music Education, three percent with the degree in Bachelor of Music major in Piano Performance, and the remaining three percent Associate of Music (Figure 3). This result implies that the graduates prefer a degree in Music major in Music Education because their chosen instruments or specialization fall under that course. Moreover, those who chose major in piano performance are fewer because of its degree of difficulty and higher level of standard.

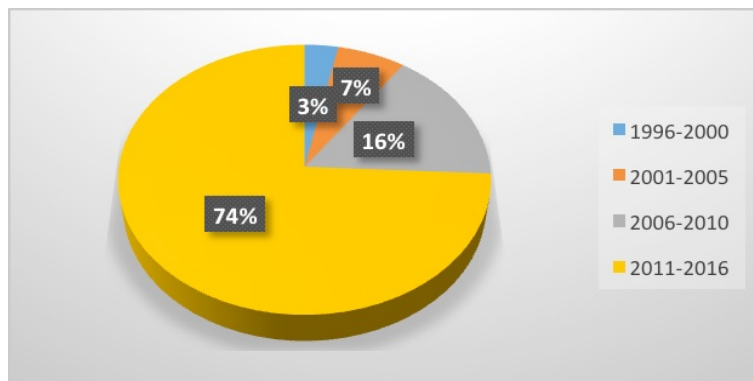


Figure 4. Year graduated

As reflected in Figure 4, 74% of the respondents completed their degree within the period of 2011 to 2016, 16% within the period of 2006 to 2010, 7% within 2001 to 2005, and 3% within the period of 1996 to 2000.

Apparently, based on the record of the Music program, the period of 2011 to 2016 has been the most fruitful period due to the modernization and development of the Music Program not only in terms of the curriculum but the environment as well. Further, it has been noted that the music student population continues to grow as well as the percentage of the students who successfully complete the course. This tremendous increase can be attributed to the continuous shaping of the curriculum that would fit the students' capabilities..

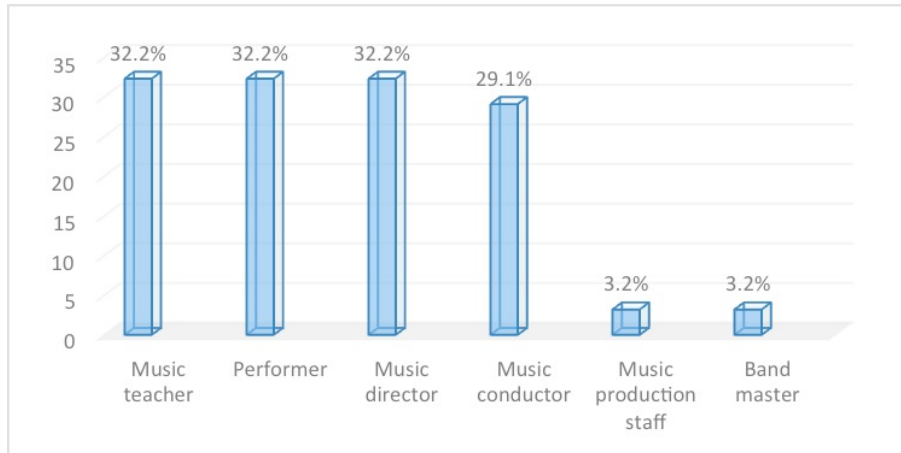


Figure 5. Music affiliation

One of the essences of this survey is to find out the music affiliations of the graduates. As shown in Figure 5; almost one third (32.3%) of the respondents are music teachers, and the same number is performers (32.2%) and music directors (32.2%) at the same time. Some (29.1%) claimed that they are music conductors while some are staffs of a music production (3.2%) and the rest are band masters (3.2%). This result is expected considering that majority of the respondents possess the degree in Music major in Music Education. Hence, most of the graduates end up being music teachers either in studios or public schools.

Employment Profile

As to the employment status of the respondents, it is noteworthy that almost half of them have already attained the regular status 42%, while 35% are contractual, 13% are in temporary job positions and 10% in casual position. Those who are employed in studios are categorized as temporary or contractual who are usually paid on hourly or per session basis.

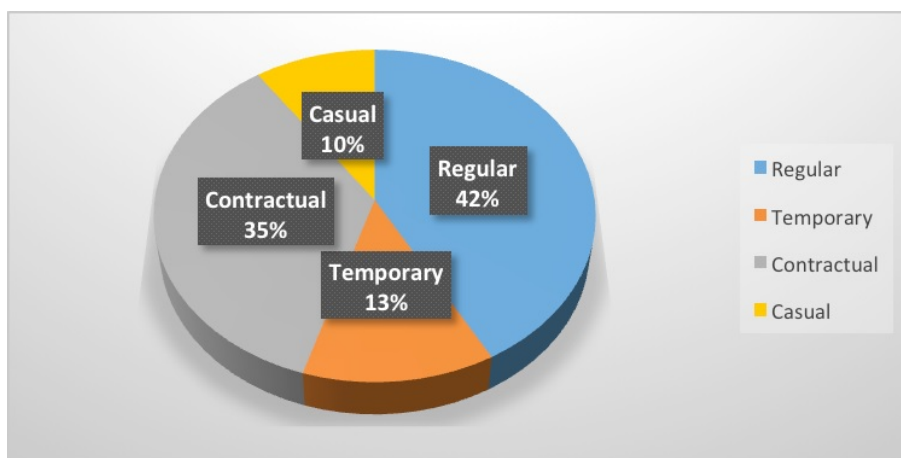


Figure 6. Employments status

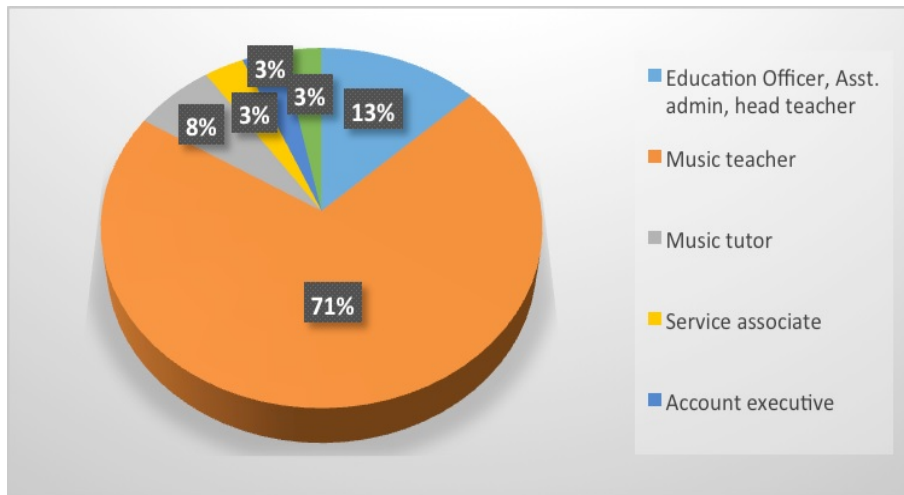


Figure 7. Employment position

The biggest bulk of the respondents 71% are music teachers (Figure 7) and this result is favorable as it is a manifestation that their current work is really aligned with their field of specialization which is music education. It is also noteworthy that some of them are already holding higher positions in their respective organizations such as assistant administrator, education officer and teachers-in-charge (13%). Only very few (6%) are engaged in a non-related taskservice associate (retail) and account executive in a bank. Although, this result is a manifestation that music graduates could also be employable in the other fields. This is being confirmed by the alumni survey results of the University of Nottingham that music graduates are employed across a varied range of fields (Slater 2013).

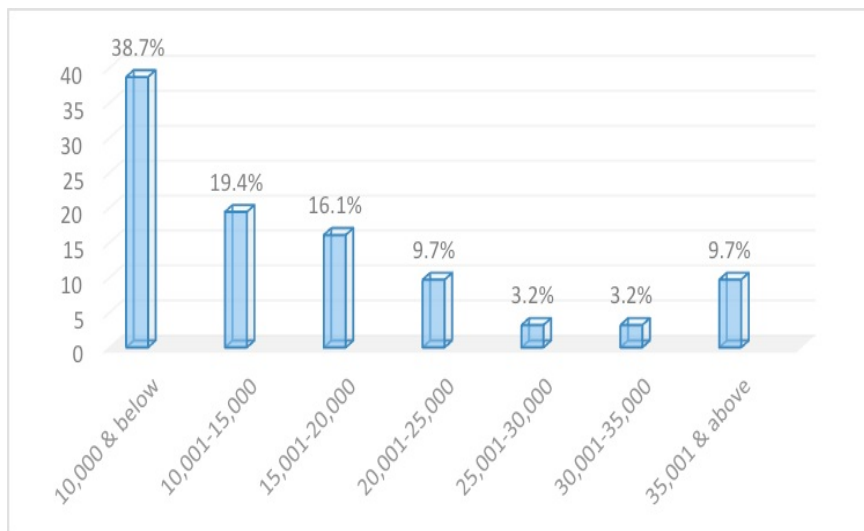


Figure 8. Monthly income

Pertaining to the income level of the respondents, data in Figure 8 show that more than one third are earning P10,000 and below while 25.8% are already earning a higher level–P20,000 and above. Those earning more than 20,000 a month are the ones who are employed with the Department of Education (DepEd). This finding implies that music-related professions, which are not aligned with teaching in the Philippines, could be one of the low-paying endeavors.

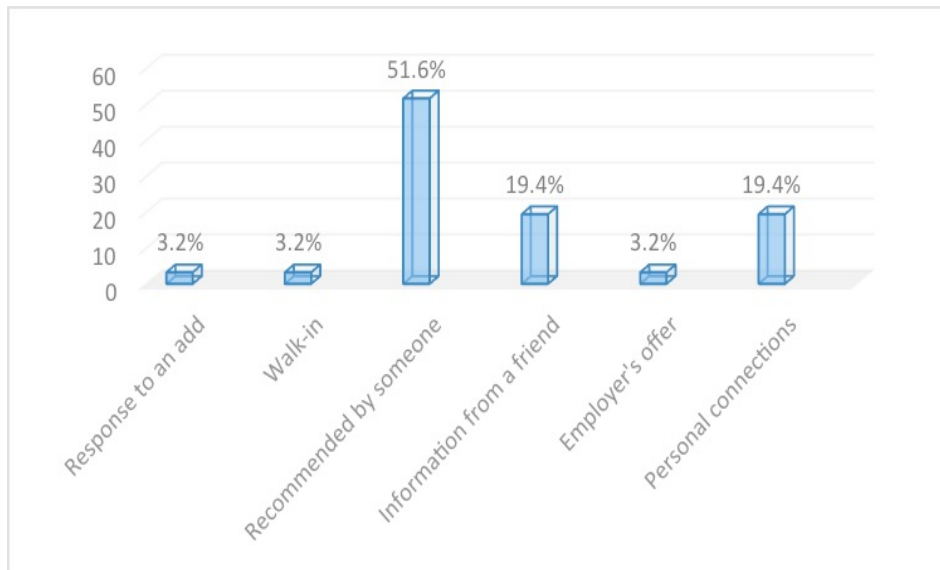


Figure 9. Means of obtaining the job

Data in Figure 9 show that connection is really a potential approach of finding a job since majority had indicated that they were recommended by someone 51.6%, and through personal connections 19.4%. This is a favorable result considering that obviously anybody could not just recommend someone for a job or task unless he/she knows the capabilities of that person. Hence, this result connotes that UIC music graduates possess qualities that are recommendable.

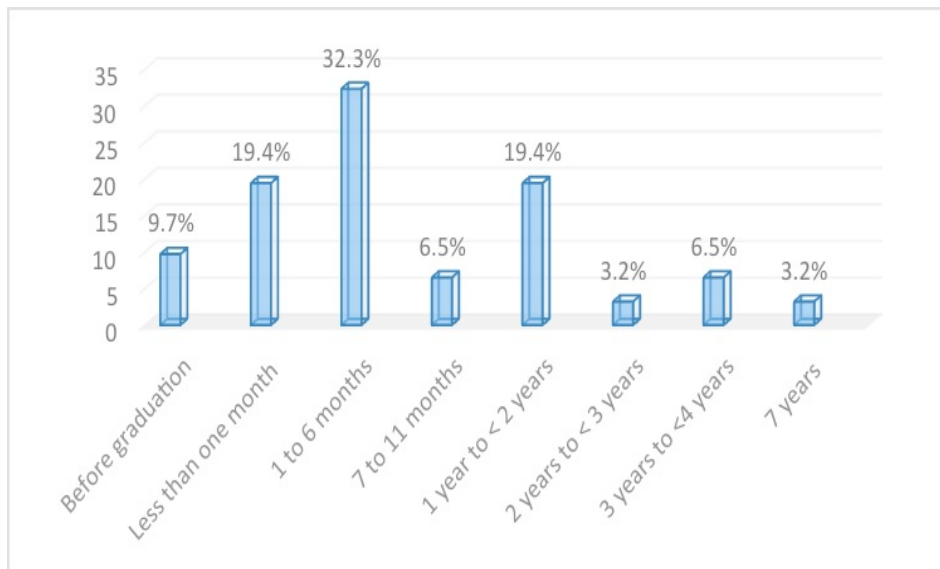


Figure 10. Period of seeking job

Data in Figure 10 further established the employability of the considering that 9.7% were already earning prior to graduation, 19.4% were hired in less than one month after graduation and 32.3% within one to six months. This high employability figure within a short period could be a manifestation that professionals in this field are really scarce within the region.

Table 2: Skills found useful in the first job

Skills	Rank
Ability to play music instrument	1
Instructional skills	2
Communication skills	3
Critical Thinking skills	4
Human Relations skills	5
Sight Reading	6
Arranging	7
Composing	8
Conducting	9
Entrepreneurial skills	10
Technical skills	11
Information Technology skills	12

The skills that the music graduates found useful in their first job are shown in Table 2. The ability to play music instrument is ranked number one followed by the instructional, communication, critical thinking, and relational skills. Apparently, this result is understandable considering that majority of the respondents are currently employed as music instructors. Hence, their skills of instrument playing coupled with the instructional, communication, critical thinking, and relational skills are basic requirements in teaching. Moreover, they also gave credit to other skills like sight reading, arranging, composing, and conducting as these serve as their edge over other teachers.

Industries they are Employed with

Data on the industries the respondents are employed with are shown in Table 3. The biggest chunk of the respondents are employed in the Academe (41.9%) and 38.7% are working in studios which offer short term courses on musical instruments. Few (12.9%) render music tutorials while amazingly 6.4% are employed in a non-related field such as the banking and the retail (motor) industry.

Most of the graduates who work in the academe have passed the Teachers Licensure Exams and have been given various opportunities. Those who have licenses have bigger chances of being employed in educational institutions. Those who end up working in music tutorials are the ones who prefer to teach music but in studios and exclusive set ups.

Table 3: Industry the respondents are employed with

Industry	Frequency	Percentage
Academe	13	41.9%
Music Studios	12	38.7%
Music Tutorials	4	12.9%
Banking industry	1	3.2%
Retail industry	1	3.2%

Influence of UIC on the Respondents' Employability

Generally, the respondents recognize the contribution of their UIC Education to their employability. They have articulated favorable impressions about UIC and these are summarized into two themes Effective Curriculum and Training, and Values and Discipline.

Effective curriculum and training

The respondents undeniably find the curriculum and training they earned from UIC to be relevant to their current job. It is understandable that the training they have had from UIC is applicable to their current job considering that 94% of the respondents are employed or engaged in music-related tasks. Three respondents have

emphasized the necessity of their skills to play musical instruments in fulfilling their tasks as a music teacher or as a performer.

Apparently, these skills even served as their edge over other applicants. These are the exact paragraphs shared by these respondents (Take note *R* means respondents).

My musical training definitely helped me because my job requires me to teach music theory as well as the application of those theories by playing musical instruments. And I was able to have knowledge in other instruments during college which is useful in our class where we play in a band/ensemble set up (*R 7*).

Yes, we have a very unique set of skills that an ordinary teacher does not have. This is our edge and our advantage over other teachers (*R 14*).

Yes, because of my skills in playing keyboard/piano and became the moderator of High School chorale. My skills are the reason why they hired me as music teacher in high school not only because of classical curriculum standard but also because of my ability to play indigenous instruments (*R 21*).

Yes, my training in UIC had a great impact in terms of my employability. It enhanced my critical thinking and cognitive skills in responding to different situations. I realized the importance of knowing the diversity of people that taught me to have enough patience. Having a good time management was also observed as I go through the training process with these skills I learned; it gave me a lot of confidence as an individual and edge in terms of employment (*R 24*).

Yes, the acquired teaching skills such as instrumental (piano) techniques, arranging, composing and interest many styles of music (*R 28*).

Moreover, the respondents have also confirmed the high demand for music teachers especially with the latest adoption of the Department of Education K to 12 curriculums. These job opportunities are not only true here in the Philippines but also in other countries like Thailand. Consequently, this favorable demand for music teachers is a manifestation that UIC is accomplishing its vision of being responsive to the signs of times particularly in producing graduates that could help build a transformed society particularly in the field of music.

Yes! What I have learned and experienced in the UIC as a student helps me in my employability because through these skills I have, I am now a teacher in the School Music Department. It is not difficult for me to find for a job especially here in overseas (Thailand) because music teachers are in demand (*R 8*).

Yes, fundamentals of music in which I've learned since have been useful in my workplace. Most are the basics, as long as you know or at least mastered the basics of music; you can survive in your place (*R 27*).

Values and discipline

The UIC's thrust of honing value-laden human resources has really paid off. This is one of the characters that UIC graduates could be proud of.

Yes not just because of the degree I got from the University but also the Christian way of living that the University taught me (*R 9*).

Yes, I have been dedicated as a performer and probably my discipline as a performer gained much attention to my employer (*R 11*).

Yes, the values I've acquired from UIC greatly influenced my ways of teaching (*R 12*).

Throughout the years as a college student, we are hard-pressed and well-loaded from projects, homework, music pieces, and other activities that made us learn how to handle stress and be accompanied by it. The accounts stated are present not only in our major subjects but also in our minor subjects and in these situations, we made a decision to face the primary role of the hardships in the university—make or break (*R 30*).

Characteristics of a UIC Graduate which Employers Value

Team Player, relational skills and adaptability to different situations

Some of the graduate respondents claimed that their character of being a team player is what their employers value most in them. Respondent 9 had indicated that he can collaborate well with colleagues and is to accept constructive criticisms as a way of learning. On the other hand, respondent 9 believes that he is capable of adjusting to different situations while respondent 30 has noted his good relationship with peers as the character that appeals to

his employer. This disclosure about the importance of relational skills is confirmed by Hogan, Premuzic, and Kaiser (2013) as they found that “the single-most important characteristic determining employability is interpersonal skill or social competence.”

Possession of attitude such as optimism, perseverance, hardworking and patience

Employers would most likely favor workers who have positive attitude towards life in general. The responses of some of the respondents (R3, R16, R18, and R28) have confirmed this reality that employers have high regard on their attitude of optimism, perseverance, and patience. Apparently, employers would really prefer workers with this kind of attitude because Greenberg and Arakawa (2006) had established that optimism is positively correlated with productivity.

God-fearing, faith in God and prayerful

Graduates of a Catholic university would often manifest the character of God-fearfulness, faith in God, and prayerfulness. Cognizant of being a graduate of a Catholic school, employers would expect that religiosity is evident in them. Three respondents have claimed the following in line with this distinct feature of a graduate of a sectarian school: “God-fearing because I work in a Christian-based company” (R 7), “my institution has molded me to become prayerful” (R 18) and “faith in God” (R 20). This finding is a fulfillment of the UIC’s thrust of producing graduates who are God-centered anchored on the college signpost Integrated, God-centered, Nationalistic, Innovative, Transformative, Excellence and Service-Oriented (IGNITES). According to Limjuco, Laya, Aleria, and Shalah (2017) “this signpost was created to counter against the prevailing issues of inconsistency between word and action, distrust in one’s capacities, toxic presence and mediocrity.” Moreover, respondent 12 had indicated IGNITES as the character his employer has commended with about him.

Unique and scarce musical skills

Based on the limited student population of the UIC music program, Music degree is not very popular among high school students and even among parents. Hence, there is scarcity of human resources that are qualified to teach music in schools. This is one of the reasons why music graduates are highly employable today, especially if they have already secured the licensure exam for teachers. This observation is confirmed by alumni surveys of the University of Nottingham which found that music graduates with unique skills and a broad range of jobs on offer have better prospects than people imagine. Music graduates are able to do a wide range of jobs in a variety of different industries (Slater 2013). According to respondent 14 “my skills are very important to my employer, we music educators are very scarce, we are even invited by other schools to play, teach, mentor, help and even want us to work with them.” Moreover, respondent 27 has also boasted about his musical talents, abilities to teach harmony, conduct a large group of singers, and arrange songs.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

It can be concluded that the graduates of the UIC Music program are employable since 51.8% of the respondents landed a job within six months after graduation. The opportunity that is available to the graduates is in the teaching field as manifested by the majority being teachers in the academe or music studios. Forty two percent are already regular and majority found their job through the recommendation of someone. Hence, character reference is still an important factor among employers in the Philippines when assessing a job applicant. The respondents find their UIC education influential to their employability particularly the curriculum and values they have imbibed from the institution. They have also identified the following characteristics valuable to their employers– the abilities to work with a team, the relational skills, adaptability to different situations, positive attitude and possession of unique and scarce musical skills.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Future research should employ a qualitative research design covering the employers in order to verify the claims of the respondents about the characteristics their employers’ value about them and to determine the strengths

and weaknesses of the graduates. Further, interviews and focused group discussions may be conducted among the selected UIC graduates to document the areas which they think need improvement in the music program based on their experience in the work field.

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