Career Choices of U.P. Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Program Graduates from 1975-2011

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Abstract

The fluctuating number of graduates, board examinees, and board passers in the field of Landscape Architecture (LA) coupled with an unchanging number of freshmen enrollees annually in the University of the Philippines College of Architecture (UPCA) for the same profession has brought many questions to the faculty members in the college. One hundred fifty one of 373 graduates were included in the study. The researcher used descriptive survey method employing a questionnaire as the main instrument. These questionnaires containing questions on career theory and development were sent via electronic mail to the respondents. Forty percent of the graduates responded and were included in the study. Using statistical correlation analysis of factors, data shows that personal goal (p-value=0.001) and current job salary (p-value=0.001) satisfaction significantly affected the decision to practice the profession.

Keywords: professional development, career theory, landscape architecture

I. Introduction

The Landscape Architecture (LA) program has been offered in the University of the Philippines College of Architecture (UPCA) since 1971. Since that time, a number of students had graduated and had been assumed to be practicing all over the country and abroad. Almost 40 years have passed and no recorded data had been made as to the state of the program and where all the graduates are. Although the College program has been revised three times based on consultation with the different stakeholders, the proponents surmised that it is time to make a thorough study focusing on the plight of the graduates.

A. The Problem

Did all the students who received the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (BLA) degree engage in the practice of Landscape Architecture? If not, what happened to the other graduates and what are the reasons behind their career choice?

B. Objectives

The objectives of this study are (1) to determine the population of landscape architecture students who opted to pursue the practice of the profession of Landscape Architecture after graduating from UPCA; and (2) to determine the factors that are significant to the decision of BLA graduates to practice or not to practice the profession.

C. Scope and Limitation of the Research

The proposed study shall only cover graduates of the BLA course from the University of the Philippines Diliman from 1975 when the first batch of students finished the course up to 1983 when the profession was first regulated by the Professional Regulations Commission, then to 2001when the governing law, R.A 9053, was promulgated and up to 2011. The study was only able to include those who responded in the survey.

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27

MUHON: A Journal of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and the Designed Environment
University of the Philippines College of Architecture   Issue No. 5

II. Review of Related Literature

A. Landscape Architecture in the Philippines

Landscape Architecture is a fairly new profession in the country. It was brought to the Philippines in 1962 by US-trained Filipino landscape architects namely Anselmo Alquinto, Salvador Bautista, Sergio Peñasales, Dolly Perez, Ildefonso P. Santos, Jr., and Jess Sison. Eventually, the need for a new batch of landscape architects came which is why Santos pioneered the establishment of a four-year undergraduate program under the College of Architecture in the University of the Philippines Diliman in 1971. The profession was eventually recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission in 1983, and in 2001, Republic Act 9053 (also known as the Philippine Landscape Architecture Act of 2000) was signed (History of Philippine Association of Landscape Architects, 2011). The demand for graduates is reinforced with the establishment of the program in University of San Carlos (USC) in Cebu in 2003 and the Bulacan State University (BulSU) in 2007.

B. Landscape Architecture Practitioners in the Philippines

After college, LA graduates are allowed to take the licensure examinations which take place every March of the year. They are not required to undergo apprenticeship program since on-the-job training is part of the requirement in the curriculum. Data from the Professional Regulation Commission shows that an average of 14-20 students take the board yearly with most of the examinees coming from UPCA. However, only an average of 67 percent of the examinees passed the examination annually. At present, there are 281 licensed landscape architects, of which an estimated 68 percent are practicing the profession. Around 24 percent are working in foreign countries (China, Singapore, Middle East, the United States and United Kingdom) while about 20 percent are connected to different local landscape architectural design firms. Some 24 percent went into individual practice while others are in the academe or into contracting, and the others joined the government service. Around 13 percent are connected with business processing offices, while only around five percent work with real estate developers. Twenty-six members or more than nine percent are inactive and the rest had already passed away (Galingan, 2011).

C. Psychological Studies Related to Professional Career

Several studies have been made on the general subject of career theory, practice, and development. Leung (ND), in his article on Five Career Theories discussed theory of Work Adjustment, self-concept theory of Career Development, Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, Social Cognitive Career theory and Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities in Work Environment which are the five major models for career developments in the United States. Psychologists and other professionals alike have taken great interest in the subject matter that numerous investigations have been made to refine its study. For this study, focus will be put into the different aspects of career choice and adjustment and its relation to the profession of landscape architecture in the Philippines and the graduates of UPCA from the same career.

1. Person and the Environment

One theory that discusses the relationship between an individual and his environment is Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (Swanson & Fouad, 2010) which states that "career choice is an expression of one's personality and therefore, members of an occupation have similar personalities and histories". According to Holland, each individual has a resemblance to the following six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. An individual can be a combination of several types with one of these dominant, and the other, secondary. At the same time, the environment where an individual works has the same six types as well. This is a result of the different persons that congregate with the same types of people that forms the type of the environment.

Another theory that is concerned with people-environment fit is Dawis' Theory of Work Adjustment. It is concerned with an individual who is not satisfied with his job and his corresponding response to it—whether to shift to a new career or to adjust to his current job. According to Dawis (Swanson & Fouad, 2010), there are two factors affecting the reaction of a person to dissatisfcation in his career: one is the individual's abilities that are needed in his job (job requirements) and the other is the needs of the people that are met by his job rewards (individual requirements).

This study will look into the environment of the professionals and its effects on the career choice and the adjustments of the practitioners—their decision to stay or to resign from their jobs when dissatisfied.

2. Self-Efficacy and Outcome Expectations

Lent, Brown, & Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was derived from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Swanson & Fouad, 2010). It discusses the importance of self-efficacy and outcome expectations in an individual's career choice.

The SCCT devised three models: interest, choice, and performance models. For this study, the focus is on the interest model. This model states that a person's input (gender, race, disability/health status, personality, and predispositions) and a background contextual affordances result to an individual's learning experiences. These learning experiences help one become more inclined to engage in activities that are of interest to him. This, in turn, affords one of his own self-efficacy beliefs (the confidence to perform tasks) and outcome expectations (the expectations one has of the results of his behavior); the

28

MUHON: A Journal of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and the Designed Environment
University of the Philippines College of Architecture

Issue No. 5

combination of both results to his interests, and then his goals, and eventually, his actions to attain the goals, and finally, his performance attainment.

The researchers used the theory to investigate if a person's self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations towards the profession of Landscape Architecture aided them to stay in the profession or to look into other career path.

III. Methodology

A. Participants

The participants of the survey were 373 graduates of the BLA program from the UPCA. A total of 151 graduates responded in the study. Considering that all of the 373 graduates were contacted by the researcher, only 151 (40 percent) sent their replies.

The main data collection method was through interviews. An open-ended questionnaire or a loosely followed question guide was adopted to give more flexibility to the respondents' range of answers, and to give the researchers the leeway to adjust especially if initial field reports reveal a better way of communicating questions, or better ways with which respondents choose to answer the interviewers.

B. Procedure

The researchers obtained a list of all the people who graduated from the UPCA with a degree in Landscape Architecture and arranged them from the first graduate to the latest. Each alumnus was assigned a control number and simple random sampling was employed to obtain a fair number of participants in the survey. With the use of this list, the researchers searched the website of Philippine Association of Landscape Architects (PALA) through its website (http://pala.org.ph) for the contact details of the members who are potential respondents. The social networking site Facebook (http://www.facebook.com) was also used to search for others.

C. Survey Sheet

The survey sheet is divided into six parts: Work Experience, Perception about One's Professional Competence, Personal Expectations, Personal Goals, and Professional Practice.

- Personal Background - This part of the questionnaire contains personal information about the respondents. Questions on where they heard of LA and whether they are licensed professionals or not are here as well. This part can aid in determining the personality of the respondent;

- Work Experience - This part is about the respondents' on-the-job training, their first job, and their present job. Divided into these three, the table compares the following aspects: the type of office (LA/architectural firm, contractor/supplier, land developer, or school/university), their satisfaction rating on their

place of employment (in terms of compensation, relationship with co-workers, physical atmosphere, relevance to interest, and the traveling distance from home), and their satisfaction rating on themselves as an employee. A question on why they resigned from their job is asked as well. This part of the survey will provide us information on whether there is a relationship between their decision to practice the profession and the people-environment fit from Dawis' Theory of Work Adjustment;

- Perception about One's Professional Competence - This helped the researchers know the respondents' self-efficacy beliefs from SCCT. The researchers listed down skills that are expected of LA graduates (which were derived from a pre-survey done to select LA graduates) and they will score each number according to how they assess themselves. The total will be their Self-Efficacy (SE) score.

- Personal Expectations - Listed down here are the things that the respondents expected they will get to do (these things were derived from a pre-survey done to LA graduates when they were tasked to enumerate things expected of LA graduates) with the knowledge and skills they acquired after graduation. The total number for this part showed their Outcome Expectations (OE) score which was formulated from the SCCT.

- Personal Goals - The respondents will check what they wanted to achieve from the list of goals connected to Landscape Architecture enumerated. This list is derived from a pre-survey done to select LA graduates on what goals they aspired for after graduation. The total will be the respondents' Personal Goals (PG) score.

Professional Practice - The last part has essay-type questions the respondents have to answer. The questions revolve around the following topic: their choice of employment at present, reasons why some colleagues are not practicing LA, and how the LA curriculum helped them on their present career choice. These are some questions that helped the researchers figure out what the alumni think of their careers years after they have finished their degree.

D. Process of Statistical Analysis

For categorical data, frequency and percentage were calculated and chi square test applied. For comparisons between the groups, nonparametric test, Mann–Whitney test, was used. Data are presented as mean ranks.

Correlations in values were assessed by calculating Spearman rho correlation coefficients. A 5 percent level of significance was used, thus a computed P-value < 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant. All calculations were performed using SPSS statistical package.

29

MUHON: A Journal of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and the Designed Environment
University of the Philippines College of Architecture   Issue No. 5

IV. Results

A. Personal Background (Demographic Profile)

Table 1. Demographic profile of Landscape Architecture graduate respondents included in the study.

Category	Variable	No.
Gender	Male	78
	Female	73
Age	≤ 20	0
	21-30	85
	31-40	41
	41-50	9
	51-60	10
	≥ 60	3
Civil status	Single	95
	Married	53
	Widowed	0
	Separated	1
Number of years of completion of LA course	< 4	9
	4	77
	5-6	48
	>6	15
How did you first hear of LA?	Family/friends	36
	Print ads	4
	Online	0
	UPCAT form	88
PRC Licensed practitioner	Yes	104
	No	45

B. Work Experience (Career)
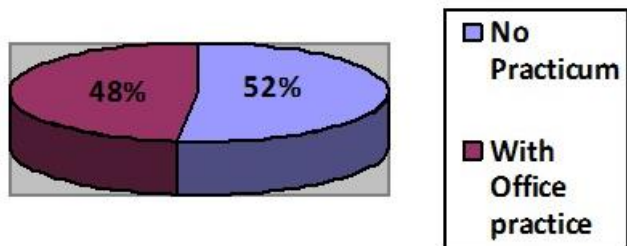
Figure 1. Pie chart showing the percentage of respondents who had their on-the-job training as a requirement in school.

Figure 1 shows a comparison of the number of students who had their on-the-job training before graduating and those who had not. In the past, on-the-job training was not a requirement but during the 2002 revision of the curriculum, students were required to take 200 hours of training before taking their thesis subject. Of the 151 respondents, 72 (58 percent) of them were required and 79 (59 percent) were not.

Table 2. The comparison on the first job's office base (in darker shade) of the respondents in comparison to their present job's office base (in lighter shade).
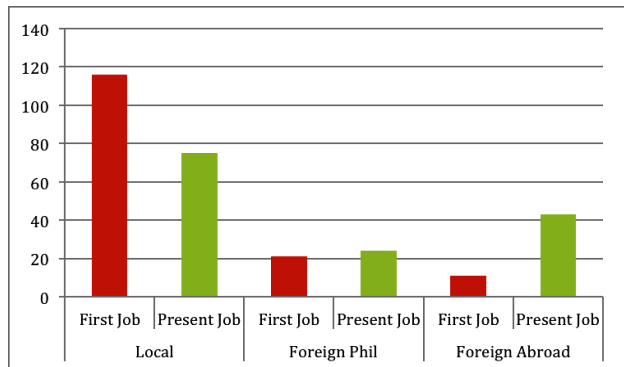

Table 2 shows the number of respondents who are practicing with the first job different from their current job. Local means they are working in the Philippines in a company owned by a Filipino, Foreign Phil suggests that they are working locally in a foreign owned firm while Foreign abroad shows that the respondents are working abroad in a foreign owned company.

Table 3. The comparison on the first job's type of office (in darker shade) of the respondents in comparison to their present job's type of office (in lighter shade).
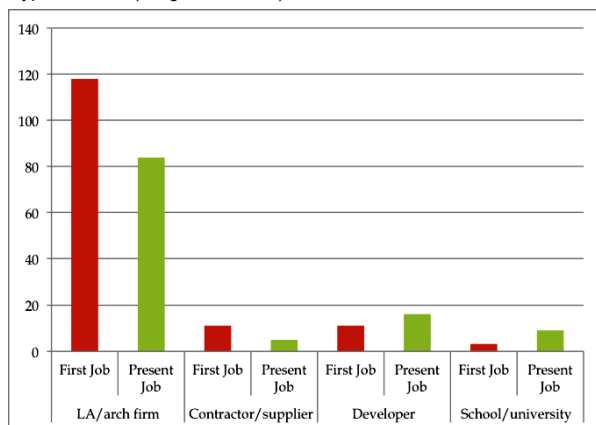
Table 4. Bar graph showing the comparison on the first job's salary range (in darker shade) of the respondents in comparison to their present job's salary range (in lighter shade).
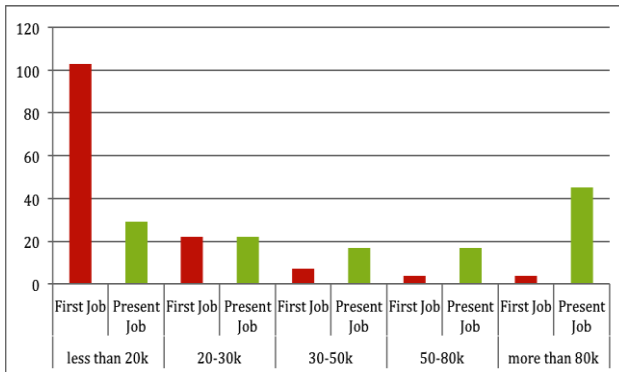
Table 5. Comparison between first and present job among different variables.

VARIABLE	JOB	n	MEAN RANK	P-value
compensation	first job	144	101.18	< 0.001
	present job	141	185.71	
Co worker	first job	145	134.54	0.045
	present job	141	152.71	
Physical atmosphere	first job	145	122.81	< 0.001
	present job	141	164.77	
Relevance to interest	first job	145	130.13	0.003
	present job	141	157.25	
Traveling distance	first job	144	126.22	< 0.001
	present job	140	159.25	

Data in table 5 shows the significant difference (p value < 0.05) of the first and present job in terms of compensation, coworker, physical atmosphere, and traveling distance.

C. Perception about One's Professional Competence (Self-Efficiency Score)

Table 6. Kendall's tau b and Spearman's rho table showing the correlation coefficient, p-value, and the coefficient of determination of the Self-Efficiency Scores.

Kendall's tau_b	
Correlation Coefficient	0.118
P- value	0.086
N	151
coefficient of determination	0.013924
Spearman's rho	
Correlation Coefficient	0.14
P- value	0.087
N	151
coefficient of determination	0.0196

Data shows in Table 6 that the Self-Efficiency scores were not significantly high for most of the respondents in terms of perception of one's professional competence.

D. Personal Expectations (Outcome Expectations Score)

Table 7. Kendall's tau b and Spearman's rho table showing the correlation coefficient, p-value, and the coefficient of determination of the Outcome Expectations Scores.

| Kendall's tau_b	
Correlation Coefficient	0.131
P- value	0.057
N	151
coefficient of determination	0.017161
Spearman's rho	
Correlation Coefficient	0.154
P- value	0.059
N	151
coefficient of determination	0.023716

Data shows in Table 7 that the Outcome scores of the respondents were not significantly high in terms of personal expectations.

E. Personal Goals (Personal Goals Score)

Table 8. Kendall's tau b and Spearman's rho table showing the correlation coefficient, p-value, and the coefficient of determination of the Personal Goal Scores.

Kendall's tau b	
Correlation Coefficient	0.244
P- value	0.001
N	151
coefficient of determination	0.060
Spearman's rho	
Correlation Coefficient	0.278
P- value	0.001
N	151
coefficient of determination	0.077284

Data shows significant scores of respondents in terms of attaining personal goals after graduation.
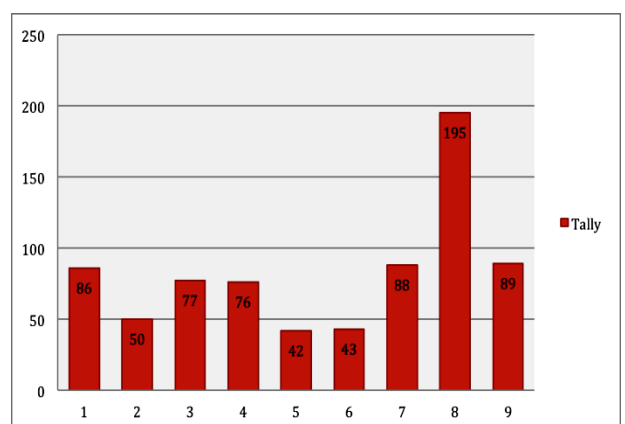
Figure 2. The number of respondents who answered affirmatively to each item in the Personal Goal part of the questionnaire.
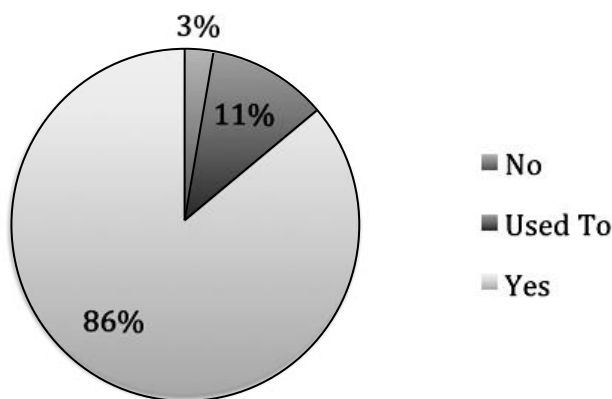
F. Professional Practice

Figure 3. The percentage of respondents who are practicing (Yes), used to practice (Used To), and not practicing (No) the profession.

V. Analysis of Results

The study shows an equal number of male and female graduating from the course of landscape architecture. Most of the respondents belong to the young, 21 to 40, age group and that most are single. This data may be due to the difficulties in acquiring responses from more senior practicing architects. Of the 138 graduates on the above 40 age bracket, only 22 sent back their replies.

Most (70 percent) of those practicing the profession were noted to be PRC licensed. This is due to the fact that licensure examination was required since 1985. The respondents are either fairly young and have not taken the board examination yet, working abroad or in a related work where license is not required. Majority of the respondents (56 percent) are aged below 30 years old.

Study shows that more than 52 percent of those practicing the profession are still working locally in architectural firms. Most practitioners were noted to transfer work because of significant difference of compensation, travel distance, and coworker and physical atmosphere. One or two graduates chose not to work to become fulltime housewives and not due to lack of work opportunities.

It is important to note that based on the efficiency scores, most of the respondents did not significantly assess themselves as professionals with skills to practice efficiently and most were not significantly noted to be doing what they are expected to do as a landscape architect.

It is however important that based on personal goal scores, most of the respondents feel that they are doing what they have wanted to do when they graduated from college.

VI. Conclusion

Currently practicing landscape architects feel that the most important factors in the practice of the profession include good compensation, good working atmosphere and travel distance. Results from this study show that most do not feel they have all the skills required to practice the field and that they are not doing what is expected from them. Given the background of where they are working (in outsourcing companies and contracting offices), it can be concluded that this is because they are assigned jobs which are only part of what a landscape architect does.

It can be summed up that majority of the graduates (86 percent) are still practicing the profession because it is their personal goal to be good landscape architects, they found good work, and are compensated enough. The result of the survey in Table 5 with regards to reasons for transferring to a new job proved the theory of self-efficacy and outcome expectations in an individual's career choice, in the same manner that working environment and co workers are great contributors in the satisfaction of a worker.

It can also be deduced that landscape architecture students face bright prospects since all the graduates are either fully employed or have their own respective offices or companies. Notable are the three respondents over the 60 age bracket who are still practicing in their own firm.

VII. Acknowledgments

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32

MUHON: A Journal of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and the Designed Environment
University of the Philippines College of Architecture   Issue No. 5