WHO SHOULD ACCOMPLISH WHAT TASKS TO ENHANCE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT RATE

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Abstract: The university graduate employment rate has continuously declined since 2000 in Taiwan, while business managers have complained that they cannot find enough qualified employees. This research is thus aimed to determine what tasks should be carrying out by universities to solve the mismatch between knowledge learned by university graduates and the requests of the job market. AHP was adopted as the major calculation methods, and a self-developed questionnaire was administered to university faculty and administrative staff. Finally, practical recommendations were provided for universities to revamp their student career services.

Keywords: Employability, Higher Education, Job Market, AHP

INTRODUCTION

Although a university degree has long been perceived as a reliable warranty for a good job, the university graduate employment rate has been continuously decliningsince 2000 in Taiwan. Many university graduates cannot find a job right after graduation, and still many end-up get jobs that are various from their expertise and interests. On the other hand, business managers have complained that they cannot find enough qualified employees to fill their job vacancies because large numbers of university leavers are lacking basic competences required by the job market.This mismatch between competences inquired by the market and knowledge possessed by university graduates has evoked enormous concerns among government officials, educators and the general publics. Accordingly, the Taiwan government mandated that all universities should strengthen their graduate employment services, as well as to make their curriculum more responsive to market demands. However, since universities in Taiwan have ignoring the job market requests for decades, the results of their recent employability revamping efforts were proving ineffectual.This research is thus aimed to identify the major tasks a university should accomplish to better prepare students for their career prospects, and to determine which university office should be responsible for what tasks. The research questions as follows:

1 What is the relative importance of graduate employment dimensions?

2. What is the relative importance of graduate employment tasks?

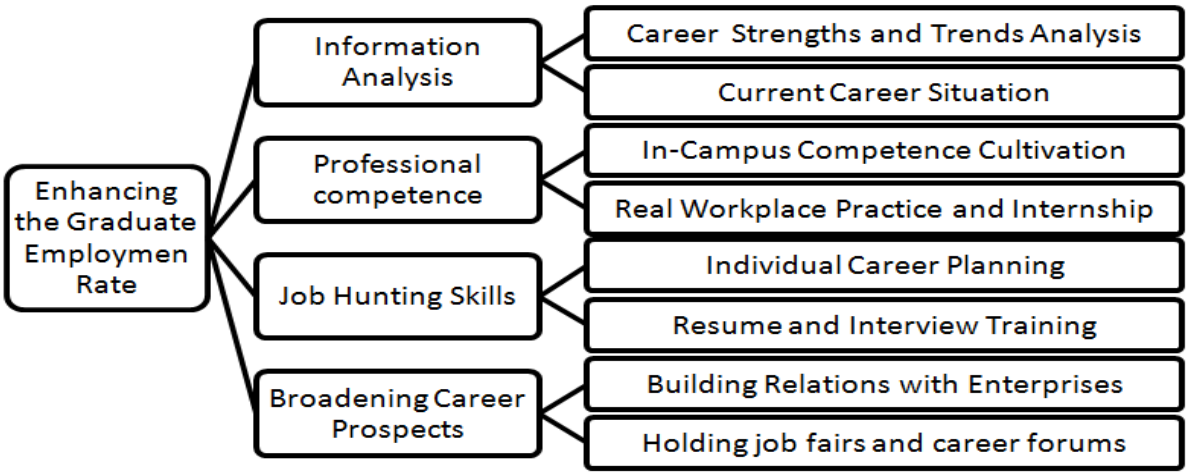
3. Which administrative office should be responsible for what operational tasks?

METHODOLOGY

Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was adopted for carrying out theanalyses. AHP is a structured technique to evaluate the relative importance or strengths of determinants. By breaking down a big problem into smaller questions, it allows researchers

to thoroughly consider all the determinants. Pair-wise comparisons were conducted by experts, and Lambda max is employed to examine the consistency of the data set. Finally, positive reciprocal matrix is used to evaluate relative value of each determinant. Since AHP is very powerful in determining the relative importance, which coincides with our research objectives, and therefore, AHP was adopted as the major instrument for this research. The AHP structure for this research is as follows:

Figure 1: AHP structure



A self-developed questionnaire was employed as the major instrument for this research, which was composed of three parts: part one contains 4 questions to collect participants' demographic information; part two contains 10 AHP pair-wise questions; and part three is a contingency table with the eight graduate employment tasks in the column and seven responsible university sections in the row, and participants were asked to rate the strength of relations between each task and each section. The questionnaire was then reviewed by three experts in educational administration, and the questionnaire was then administered to university faculty and administrative staff.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Dimension	Weight	Tasks	Weight to Dimens	Weight to Main Gaol
Information Analysis	.149	Career Strengths and Trends Analysis	.466	.069
		Current Career Situation	.534	.079
Professional Competence	.520	In-Campus Competence Cultivation	.396	.206
		Real Workplace Practice and Internship	.604	.314
Job Hunting Skills	.170	Individual Career Planning	.754	.128
		Resume and Interview Training	.246	.042
Career Opportunity	.161	Building Relations with Enterprises	.839	.135
		Holding Job Fairs or Career Forums	.161	.026

Table 1 Relative Importance of Graduate Employability Dimensions and Tasks

The AHP results showed that "Professional Competence" was the most important dimension concerning university graduate employability, which shared more than half of the total importance of enhancing students' employment rate. As for the tasks, "Real Workplace Practice and Internship" was perceived by university faculty and administrative staff as the most important task for improving students career prospects, followed by "In-campus Competence Cultivation", "Building Relations with Enterprises", and "Individual Career Planning". On the contrary, "Holding Job Fairs or Career Forums"were less stressed by the research participants.

	President Office	**Career Center**	**R & D Office**	**Student Affairs Office**	**Instruct. Office**	**College Office**	**Depart. Office**
Career Trends & Strengths Analysis	1.05	**4.95**	2.95	2.20	1.85	2.40	2.80
Current Career Situation	1.10	**4.95**	2.65	2.15	1.80	2.45	**3.05**
Competence Cultivation	1.00	2.50	1.80	1.90	**3.20**	**3.65**	**4.35**
Real Workplace Practices and intern	1.25	**3.50**	**3.25**	2.10	2.35	**3.25**	**3.80**
Individual Career Planning	1.05	**4.80**	1.80	2.20	2.00	2.55	2.85
Resume Interview Training	1.00	**4.65**	1.70	2.05	2.50	2.20	2.90
Building Relations with Enterprises	2.20	**3.85**	**4.05**	1.80	1.55	2.40	**3.00**
Holding Job Fairs or Career Forums	1.50	**4.75**	**3.25**	2.70	1.55	2.60	2.60

Table 2 Effective Degree of Administrative Offices by Employment Tasks

As showed in Table 2,the career center in the universities was the most important institute in carrying out almost all graduate employment tasks. The academic department office is also important because it also gained very high scores in five out of the eight tasks. On the contrary, president office and student affairs office were not appraised by the research participants in terms of enhancing graduate career prospects.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

University graduates in Taiwan are facing more difficulties in finding a job right after their graduation,

while business managers lamented that they cannot find enough qualified employees. This research is thus trying to figure out how universities might cultivate their students with competences more coincide with the requests of the job market. The research results showed that “Real Workplace Practices and Internship”and “In-Campus Competence Cultivation”are the most important tasks that should be carrying out by the university to enhance the graduate employment rate. Moreover, although almost all universities in Taiwan often hold job fairs or career forums, the effectiveness was not appraised by the research participants.

It is also important to realize that career center is very important in carrying out all the operational tasks to enhance graduate employment rate, and the student affairs office is not suitable for dealing with any of the tasks. However, in Taiwan, most universities put the career center as a secondary section under the direction of student affairs office, which is not adequate if the aim is to effectively enhance the employment rate.

Considering the importance of the career center, we would highly recommend that the universities should put more importance on the function of career center, and raise the position of the career center in the organizational structure.

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