

## **Do professional, semi professional, and non professional study program graduates have different levels of competencies?<sup>1</sup>**

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The paper discusses competencies of higher education graduates of one private higher education institution from 6 study programs which are grouped into three categories: professional study program graduates; semi professional study program graduates, and non-professional study program graduates. This study, taking place in 2008 employed a tracer study method to collect data from the graduates from 3 cohorts: 2001, 2003, and 2005, each period of which portrays their situation at the time of the survey: the early stage of searching for a job (2005), the period of settling for the job (2003) and the period of building career in the perspective jobs (2001).

The study involved 879 graduates and was aimed at measuring the gap between the competencies acquired during studies and those required at work, the 32 questions about competencies in the questionnaire were grouped into (1) Knowledge, (2) personal competence or "personal attributes" and (3) interpersonal competencies or "people skills". In general, the respondents stated that there was a gap between acquisition of competencies during study time and requirement competencies at work but they differ according to their fields of study.

Graduates of the professional study program have a lot of opportunities to utilize their knowledge and competencies in work places but in general, the gap between all knowledge acquired during studies and required at work was between 0.3 and 1.5. There was also a significant gap in semi professional study program graduates between 0.2 and 1.2; in the a non-professional study program, the gap was between 0.0 and 1.0. In general, the gap in knowledge was between 0.6 and 1.0, with professional study programs the highest (1.0), and non professional program the lowest (0.6).

The gap of personal attributes between "at graduation" and "required at work" was between 4.2 and 4.7 while the acquisition was between 3.0 and 3.7. In general, the competencies gap in professional study programs was between 0.6 and 1.7, in semi professional was between 0.5 and 1.1, and in non professional graduates was 0.4 and 1.1. In interpersonal competencies the gaps in professional study programs were between 0.2 and 1.2; in semi

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professional study program, the gap was between 0.2 and 0.9; and in the non-professional study program, the gap was between 0.2 and 0.7. In general concerning interpersonal competencies, non-professional graduates had the lowest gap (0.4), followed by semi-professional graduates (0.6), and finally professional graduates (0.7).

The results show that according to the graduates, regardless their study backgrounds, personal attributes and interpersonal competencies were rated more important than knowledge as far as employment is concerned.

Concerning competencies of the graduates of the three groups, the results showed that compared to semi-professional and non-professional graduates, professional graduates' competencies were found to be the lowest, in knowledge, personal and interpersonal competencies. The competency gap between acquisition and requirement among non-professional graduates was the smallest. The more professional a study program, the broader the gap between acquisition and requirement of competencies.

#### Curriculum of a study program

According to Ministerial decree No. 045/U/2002, curriculum of a study program should include competencies as follows:

- ✦ foundation of personalities;
- ✦ mastery of science and skills;
- ✦ ability to work;
- ✦ attitude and conduct at work according to the level of expertise based on the mastery of science and skills; and
- ✦ understanding of the norms in the community where he/she works."

These will cope core, supporting and others that relate to competencies

From the survey, the following was found that almost half of the graduates from the engineering study programs said that their fields of study did not matter very much to their work.

52.7% worked as regular (marketing, purchasing, administrative, etc) employees

74%: Sarjana degree was the most appropriate level for the jobs

80% English grads and 78% accounting grads believed that their level of education fits for the work

## Gap between acquired and required competencies

Gaps between acquired and required competencies in professional; semi professional; and non-professional study programs do exist, but only admitted by as many as 19% that diploma (non-degree) or lower degree graduates were the most fitting for their jobs.

The gaps measured are knowledge, personal and interpersonal gaps and the results are as follows:

1. Concerning knowledge, the gap of professional study program between 0.3 and 1.5.; semi professional between 0.2 and 1.2; and non-professional between 0.0 and 1.0. So in general, between 0.6 and 1.0. Professional study programs the highest (1.0), and non professional program the lowest (0.6).
2. In general the gap of personal attribute was between 4.2 and 4.7 at graduation and 3.0 and 3.7 "required at work": the gap between professional study programs was between 0.6 and 1.7, semi professional between 0.5 and 1.1, and non professional graduates was 0.4 and 1.1.
3. For interpersonal competencies, the gap of professional study programs was between 0.2 and 1.2; semi professional study program, between 0.2 and 0.9; non-professional study program between 0.2 and 0.7. In general the lowest gap (0.4) in non professional, semi professional graduates (0.6), and professional graduates (0.7).

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