UB STUDENT PERCEPTION OF VARIOUS FACILITIES AND MAJORS AND THEIR JOB OBTAINMENT POST GRADUATION

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Abstract:

The government of Botswana is currently trying numerous approaches to diversify its economy particularly trying to grow the country's service industry. Evidence of the government's effort to expand its service industry is apparent on the University of Botswana (UB) campus. This study sought to explore the relationship between the current job market in Botswana and the allocation of degrees by UB through the surveying of current student. It was hypothesized that students gravitate towards the majors and facilities that offer the best chance of job obtainment upon graduation from UB and that students avoid majors and facilities that are perceived as having low levels of job obtainments after graduation. Additional, students were surveyed on how influential various factors were in their major decision. This student found that UB has generally helped to promote the diversification goals of the government of Botswana. The faculties of engineering & technology, health science, and business consistently had programs that were perceived as offering the highest salaries and best chance of job obtainment upon graduation from this institution. However, the results also indicated that while students do perceive these programs highly, this has not seemed to translate into students gravitating towards these majors. A significant portion of students do still major in areas that are perceived as having either the lowest salaries or the least chance of job obtainment chances upon graduation, such as the faculties of education and humanities. Additionally, this study found that UB students decide their major in many of the same ways as their American counterparts.

Introduction:

In the Western world, Botswana has become the poster child for economic success in Africa. Between 1965 and 1995, the country's GPA growth averaged 7.7%, making it the world's fastest growing economy during this period (Beaulier 2003, 231). Much of this economic growth can be attributed to the country's diamond deposits and its unique joint-partnership with De Beers in the mining of these minerals. The government smartly used the proceeds from this deal and invested heavily in infrastructure and welfare programs for its citizens including education. While the country has, however, wisely invested heavily in human capital, it has several problems that could jeopardize its development. Mainly, the country is still heavily reliant on its diamond wealth.

Consequently, the country's economy is closely tied to the global diamond market. An additional reason to diversify its economy is that diamond-mining production is expected to level off within the next two decades (CIA Factbook). Finally another reason that Botswana needs to diversify its economy is that the country now faces the dilemma of having an over-educated population for the current job market. This inefficient use of human capital creates numerous problems for the state. For all of these reasons economic diversification, especially industries that are labor intensive, is urgently needed in Botswana.

Growing the service industry, in particular, would alleviate many of the current labor problems in the country. Service industries generally are labor intensive and require high levels of education. Evidence of the government's effort to expand service industries is apparent on the University of Botswana campus. The faculties of business, engineering & technology, and health science have all either received or about to receive exquisite new buildings for the education of their students. All of these facilities are producing what are considered to be service industry graduates. Hence, this study seeks to explore the relationship between the current job market in Botswana and the allocation of degrees by the University of Botswana through the surveying of current students. It is hypothesized that students gravitate towards the majors and facilities that offer the best chance of job obtainment upon graduation from the University of Botswana and that students avoid majors and facilities that are perceived as having low levels of job obtainments after graduation.

Table 1: Student Major Perception

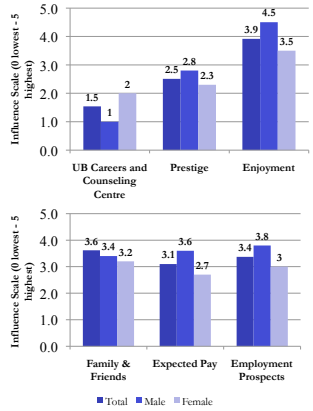
Best Job Obtainment
Bachelor of Engineering
Bachelor of Information Systems
Bachelor of Finance/Accountancy

Least Job Obtainment
Bachelor of Social Work
Bachelor of Arts (English)
Bachelor of Arts (French Language and Literature)

Highest Salary
Bachelor of Engineering
School of Medicine
Diploma in Law

Lowest Salary
Bachelor of Education
Bachelor of Arts (English)
Bachelor of Arts (African Language and Literature)

Figure 1: Influence of Factors on Major Decision



Literature Review:

There exists sizable literature on the choice of college major in the social sciences with emphases in primarily two areas. Foremost, there is the general body of knowledge identifying specific factors that influence undergraduate major choice. This body of literature includes awareness of the field, perceived earnings, job prospects, influence of family and friends, college experiences including internships and research, high school preparation, personal taste, college support services, and the desire to attend graduate school. A student's enjoyment of the major was continually found to be the most influential factor whereas career and counseling services provided by many higher education institutes was found to be the least influential. The other body of literature on college major choice has focused on the relationship between specific individual demographics and major choices. This body of literature includes race, socioeconomic status, and gender. However, all of these studies were conducted in the United States.

Methods:

The source of the participant population for this research was a scattering of current University of Botswana-Gaborone campus students. For the 2009/2010 academic year there were 14,767 enrolled students (the figure for the current academic year has yet to be released). Participants were recruited to do the survey by being approached by the survey giver (author of this report) in public areas and asked if they were willing to participant. The surveys were administered from March 28th to April 9th. Once the surveys were completed the responses were manually entered into an excel spreadsheet and then the surveys were then shredded and recycled.

Results:

One section of the survey asked participants to rank factors on how they influenced their major decision. The ranking scale was 0 to 5, with 0 being no influence and 5 being highly influential. The results from this survey on the influence of factors on major(s) decision at the University of Botswana are strikingly similar to American students. The results are listed in Graph 1. Students were also surveyed on their perception of the major that had the best and least chance of job obtainment upon graduation from the University of Botswana as well as which majors were perceived as having the highest and lowest salary upon graduation. Spaces were left blank in the survey for students to record their responses. Hence, a multitude of responses were given. Because of the various responses recorded by students the researcher had to then categorize the responses by faculty, and major if possible. For example, various participants wrote teaching, teacher, education, home economics, special education, etc in these spaces. All of these responses were then categorizes as a Bachelors of Education. The results from this question are listed in Table 1.

Conclusion:

Based on the results of this study, the University of Botswana has generally helped to promote the diversification goals of the government of Botswana. The faculties of engineering & technology, health science, and business consistently had programs that were perceived as offering the highest salaries and best chance of job obtainment upon graduation from this institution. However, the results also indicated that while students do perceive these programs highly, this has not seemed to translate into students gravitating towards these majors. A significant portion of students do still major in majors that are perceived as having either the lowest salaries or the least chance of job obtainment chances upon graduation such as the faculties of education and humanities. This study also found that students at the University of Botswana decided their majors in much of the same fashion as there American peers.

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