A PROPOSED MODEL OF
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION - CALL CENTER INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP
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This is a model building research, aimed at the development of a model of higher education institution - call center industry partnership. Using Pandits’ grounded theory methodology, the model emerged from data gathered from six partnership cases. The sources of data were interviews of key people who are directly involved in the partnership, on-site observations, and official documents pertaining to the partnership. The resulting model explains the phenomenon of HEI-call center partnership in terms of conditions or factors that cause the formation of the partnership; strategies for initiating and perpetuating the partnership; contextual conditions within which the partnership is couch, and the consequences or outcomes of the partnership.

Since the emergence of the Philippine call center industry in 2000, the call center industry has been described as “a sunshine industry that represents a window of growth for the country” (Department of Labor and Employment, 2005, p. 1). The call center industry accounted for almost 80% of the $147 million invested in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) investments in 2004 in the country. The call center industry offers new employment opportunities to graduates who have faced high unemployment rates in excess of 16.6% (Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics, 2004). The Philippine call center industry has created new jobs for new graduates. Uligan (2006) reported that the customer contact sector accounted for 112,000 employees in 2005 and will grow by 60% to around 179,200 by 2006. Furthermore, the growth of employment in call centers will reach 506,500 in 2010.

However, the call center industry presently experiences the problem of few qualified job applicants. On the average, only 4% of applicants are hired by the call center industry (Hernandez, 2004). Therefore, there appears to be a dissonance between the call centers’ expectations of applicants and the preparedness of graduates from Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs). The acceptance rate of graduates who seek employment in the call centers needs to be increased to meet industry demands for new employees.

Although the local HEIs produce 400,000 fresh college graduates every year, about three quarters of these graduates have sub-standard English skills (Uligan, 2006). To address declining skills in English, the Philippine government has reinstated English as the medium of instruction at all levels in the Philippine educational system. Uligan (2006) sees that it will probably take another generation, before Filipinos once again become comfortable with the language. The immediate short term solution has been left to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and to the call center industry.

The word “partnership” has many meanings. It is often used to describe a “business entity” where partners share the profits or losses of the business undertaking. However, in the literature of partnership involving HEIs, a partnership is “more than a ‘business arrangement between two or more parties;’” it is a “relationship in which there is commitment to a common set of goals and overall objectives” (Mabizela, 2005, p. 27).

There are very few local studies (Keitel, 2005; Teodoro, 1990; Yñigo, 2002) on industry-school partnerships. Keitel (2005) conducted a case study on the existing
partnership between a call center, Qinteraction, and the University of Makati (UMAK). This partnership was initiated by Qinteraction as a step towards meeting their need for part-time staff. This move was welcomed by the UMAK because of its on-the-job training (OJT) program. Qinteraction’s contributions take the form of giving suggestions to improve UMAK’s curriculum, especially in English, providing a venue for students’ on-the-job training, and offering full-time employment to graduates. To date, this partnership still exists, and the partners are satisfied with their relationship (Keitel, 2005).

Teodoro’s study (1990), on the other hand, focused on partnerships between the software industry and schools to meet the demands of changing human resource requirements. Along this line, Teodoro recommended that schools should tap industry practitioners to teach and help in curriculum development activities, and undertake consultancy projects to provide opportunities to faculty for joint research and development projects. She likewise mentioned that through partnerships, the schools can access industry resources such as hardware and software. Industry benefits, at the other end could be new products and services, qualified graduates, and consultants from the academe. Teodoro recommended further research on academe-industry collaboration.

While Teodoro (1990) and Keitel (2005) dealt on industry and higher-education partnerships, Yñigo (2002) looked into partnerships between diverse manufacturing industries and vocational institutions. Covering six TESDA certified schools, she identified factors that facilitated school-industry partnerships. There were regular mutual visits by both parties, open communications, signing of MOA’s, immediate action on problems or issues, trust and confidence, a sense of fulfillment, and clear definitions of financial obligations. The vocational schools received help from the industry partner in the areas of curriculum planning, program monitoring and evaluation, policy formulation and implementation, and resource sharing. Benefits which continued to be enjoyed by the industry partner include a pool of prepared technical manpower. Yñigo (2002) additionally found out that schools’ selection of industry partners was based on the company’s facilities and products, manpower training needs, and reputation. Selection of schools by the industry partners, on the other hand, was based on the school’s reputation and the compatibility of the schools’ training programs with the industry’s objectives for the partnership.

**The Present Study**

This study was focused on under-researched areas in educational management: model building and academe-business partnership. As such, the study extended the existing literature on these areas.

From a practical perspective, the results of the study could guide call centers and HEIs that have existing linkages to further strengthen their relationship. The study could also guide efforts of HEIs and call centers that intend to form such partnerships. Lastly, this research might spawn interest in similar undertakings, involving the academe and other types of industry.

This study was guided by Pandit’s (1996) grounded theory methodology, which consists of five phases: research design, data collection, data ordering, data analysis and literature comparison.
Statement of the Problem

This study was aimed at the development of a model of partnership between the call center industry and HEIs. Specifically, it was designed to answer the following problems, based on the indicated steps of Pandit’s (1996) grounded theory building approach.

**Review of technical literature: Definition of a priori constructs**

1. Based on the experience of the respondents from the participant call centers and HEIs:
   1.1 What are the conditions or factors that caused the formation of their partnership?
   1.2 What criteria were used in the choice of the partner institutions?
   1.3 What strategies were employed to:
      1.3.1 start the partnership?
      1.3.2 sustain the partnership?
   1.4 What conditions, if any, have influenced the employment of those strategies?
   1.5 What have been the consequences or outcomes of the partnership?

**Data Analysis and Closure**

1. What model for call center-HEI partnership may be proposed, based on the findings of the study?

**Comparison with the Literature**

1. How may the emergent model be described with regard to:
   1.1 internal validity?
   1.2 external validity?

**METHOD**

**Research Method**

Strauss (1987) underscores the usefulness of the case study when used with grounded theory. Thus, the multi-site case study research strategy was adopted in this study. The case study is the preferred strategy when examining relevant contemporary, qualitative events that cannot be manipulated (Yin, 1994).

**Participants**

Selection of call center-HEI partnerships was based on theoretical sampling, that is, on the basis of which call center-HEI partnerships could provide the most information for model building.

The Executive Directors of two industry associations, namely; the Business Processing Association Philippines (BPA/P) and the Contact Center Association of the Philippines (CCAP) provided the researcher with background information regarding the history and growth of the Philippine call center industry and introduced him to the executives of call centers. The researcher contacted the executives during conferences, and through telephone calls and email, to determine if their call centers have partnerships with HEIs. Those with existing partnerships with HEIs provided the researcher with the names of key executives who have been involved in the partnership.

The first partnership case for the study was selected because the researcher was aware of this comparatively long-existing HEI-Call center partnership. His previous business relationship with the management team facilitated data collection. The subsequent cases were chosen for the purpose of verifying, extending, and refining the concepts, categories, and propositions that were developed from the first case. Six cases were included in this study.

Key executives from both the participant call centers and universities who have been directly involved in the partnerships were included in the study. From the participant call
centers, these were the chief executive officers (CEOs), human resource directors, and training directors (n=20). From the participant HEIs, the respondents consisted of the executive vice-presidents, the vice-presidents for academic affairs, the directors of career services, and the heads of English departments (n = 13). Third party representatives included the executive directors and project managers of industry associations, training organizations, and English language specialists (n=12). A total of 45 participants were covered in the study.

Procedure

Data collection

Development of rigorous data collection protocol. An interview guide, prepared by the researcher, directed the interviews. Sample interview questions were: “What factors or conditions led to the establishment of your partnership?” “What factors or strategies have sustained the partnership?” “What are the outcomes or consequences of the partnership?” Interview protocols and observation checklists were additionally prepared to guide data gathering. The interview protocol included the overall strategy for entering the field, the procedure for contacting executives, and specific information to be gathered from additional sources of data such as school brochures (e.g., enrollments, program offerings), email addresses and contact numbers of participants, and Memorandums of Agreement (e.g., duties and responsibilities of each party).

Entering the field. Schedules of meetings with participants were confirmed through emails, telephone calls, and hand-delivered letters of request.

Data collection took place from September 2005 to February 2007. Initial meetings were held at call center and HEI offices to meet the key executives and to obtain background information on the partnerships. A total of 45 individual and group interviews were personally conducted by the researcher among the participants. Each interview lasted at an average of 45 minutes. All of the interviews were taped, with the consent of the participants. The interviews were later transcribed to facilitate data analysis.

Aside from interviews, additional information was gathered from the partners’ websites, and MOAs.

Data collection and data analysis were conducted simultaneously. A data base was created for every case. The data base included transcripts of interviews, and documents shared by the call centers and universities, as well as the researcher’s field and observation notes.

Data Ordering

For each data base, events were arranged chronologically (i.e. possible sequential flow of events from the initial to the current phase of the partnership).

Data Analysis

The database for the first partnership (Case 1) was analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. During open coding, data were broken down into concepts, which were subsequently grouped under appropriate sub-categories and categories. For example, the following transcript of an interview yielded some concepts (italicized inside parentheses):

So our problem was how to handle those spikes where you have an extraordinary large volume of calls for a given hour, and then after that it docks down. And the solution was to hire part-timers, where they could go for two to three hours at any given time, and that given time is those spikes (felt need for
part-time staff during peak hours). So we talked to universities around the Makati area (initiating strategy) because that would be the best, safest bet (conditions for the choice of HEI partner) because it would be very close to our office (physical proximity) and we could call them easily anytime (ease in communication).

During axial coding, concepts were related to their respective categories and sub-categories. An example of a proposition that relates the concepts, sub-categories, and category in the preceding example is: The consequences of an HEI-call center partnership are mutual benefits for the members. Possible benefits to the HEI are industry-responsive curriculum, faculty training, and monetary incentives. On the other hand, possible benefits to the call center are a pool of qualified part-time and full-time personnel.

Lastly, through selective coding, the emergent discrete categories (shown in the following example in bold italics) were integrated in the form of theoretical statements or propositions. An example of a proposition so derived is, “There are causal conditions that impel the formation of HEI-call center partnership; the consequences of which are mutual benefits for both parties.”

After the coding process, the researcher constructed a schematic paradigm of a model of HEI-call center partnership derived from the first case. The relationships among the concepts, sub-categories, and categories presented in the paradigm were then expressed as propositions, which were written in a logical, sequential manner, from the inception to the outcomes of the partnership.

After the initial model relating to the first partnership case was developed, the next step was selecting additional cases. This was done for the purpose of extending and/or sharpening the initial framework by filling in categories that might need further refinement and/or development. The same coding processes were employed for each of the subsequent cases. The categories, sub-categories and concepts that emerged in each case were integrated with the previous cases. By the time the sixth case was added, the categories have been saturated, that is it yielded only one concept to one of the existing categories.

**Reaching Closure**

Addition of cases was stopped after Case 6, and the model was finalized, presented in the form of a paradigm with corresponding propositions.

**Comparing with the Literature**

The emergent model was compared with the existing literature to determine its validity. Propositions that found support in the literature were considered as having external validity; which means those have applications to other domains covered by previous researchers. On the other hand, propositions which were not affirmed by the extant literature were considered as contributions to the existing literature on call center – academe linkages.

**RESULTS**

For each of the six partnership cases, a brief background information concerning the call center and the HEI is presented, to show the contextual conditions within which the partnership was couched, (i.e., it may serve as an important context for understanding each case). Excerpts from interview transcriptions are quoted verbatim and are italicized.
CLOSURE

Saturation is achieved when all the data fit into the established categories and no new categories emerge from the data. In this study, causal conditions, contextual conditions, strategies, and consequences emerged as distinct categories that are all related to the core category, *HEI-call center partnership*. The core category is defined by Pandit as the phenomenon of interest.

After the emergent categories were integrated, a narrative was developed that explains the emergent categories in relation to their component concepts and sub-categories, and the circumstances under which they are connected. This narrative is the storyline of the model, a synthesis derived from the propositions that related the categories and concepts derived from the different cases. This narrative was based on the following propositions that were derived from the six partnership cases covered by the study. For each case, only those propositions that did not emerge from the previous cases were listed, to show how the model got enhanced or extended from additional findings gathered from each subsequent case.

**A MODEL OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION - CALL CENTER PARTNERSHIP**

An HEI-Call Center partnership may be defined as a formal, collaborative, mutually beneficial relationship characterized by resource sharing, trust, and respect; initiated and sustained to ensure a steady source of qualified industry-ready personnel and employment opportunities for students and graduates of the partner HEI.

Causal conditions, initiating and sustaining strategies, and consequences are the major categories that make up the HEI-Call Center Partnership Model. These major components of the proposed model and their relationships are illustrated in Figure 1.

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**HEI - CALL CENTER PARTNERSHIP**

- **Contextual Conditions**
  - Ownership of the partners
    - Independent of each other
    - Both owned by the same company
  - Absence/presence of third party involvement

- **Initiating Strategies**
  - Solely by the Call center
  - With third party assistance

- **Sustaining Strategies**
  - Solely by the Partners
  - Third party assistance

- **Consequences of HEI-Call Center**

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*Figure 1. A Model of HEI - Call Center Partnership*
In the model, the causal conditions are the events that triggered the development of the partnership. The contextual conditions refer to the conditions in which the partnership is couched. The initiating strategies refer to the actions deliberately aimed at starting the partnership, while the sustaining strategies refer to actions and responses that occur as the result of the partnership. Finally, the consequences are the outcomes of the strategies and the facilitating conditions.

**Causal Conditions**

There are causal conditions that prompt the formation of HEI-call center partnerships. These are primarily the felt needs experienced by both parties which they expect can be responded to by each partner. The most compelling need, on the part of the call center is a source of qualified manpower, owing to the increased demand for call center services. The desire to augment students’ financial resources, by granting them part-time jobs while completing their undergraduate degrees, is another motivator that propels a call center to initiate a partnership with an HEI. In addition, each partner views graduates’ difficulty in getting employed as a concern that can be addressed through the partnership.

Expected benefits motivate the formation of HEI-call center partnerships. The call center industry looks at higher education institutions (HEIs) as sources of qualified manpower for their business operations, given the necessary training and call center job exposure. On their end, HEIs look forward to having on-the-job training exposure for their students; getting assistance from the call center in developing a call-center responsive curriculum and in conducting a training program for their faculty who will implement the curriculum; and most important, an assurance of job opportunities for their graduates. Thus, HEIs may be expected to favorably respond to an invitation for partnership with call centers, because of expected benefits for the school, for the faculty, and most especially, for the students.

**Contextual Conditions**

Some conditions tend to influence strategies for initiating and sustaining the partnership, as well as the consequences or outcomes of the partnership. Two such conditions are: (1) ownership of the partner institutions and (2) presence or absence of third-party involvement or participation.

**Ownership.** The call center and the HEI may be independent entities; that is, with separate ownerships or, both may be owned by the same company or companies. In the case when the partners both belong to the same company/companies, the HEI-call center partnership is predetermined; the call center and the HEI consequently taking on the roles of partners. In contrast, when the call center and the HEI are independent entities, the call center takes the initiative of forming the partnership. Selection of the prospective partner HEI is based on predetermined criteria – the more common of which are physical proximity which facilitates communication, and assurance on the part of the call center of first priority in hiring the HEI’s graduates. Additional criteria may be considered by the call centers, such as large enrollment, inclusion of an English program in the curricular offerings, Internet connection, and willingness to update facilities to meet the call center’s specifications. For call centers that demand highly specialized skills on the part of their personnel, the technical expertise of the HEI and its faculty, and the presence of graduate programs aligned with the call centers’ personnel skill requirements are the more likely considerations in the choice of a partner HEI.
A second contextual condition that may influence the strategies and outcomes of an HEI-call center partnership is presence or absence of third party participation or involvement.

**Presence or absence of a third party involvement.** The formation and/or the continuity of a call center-HEI partnership may totally be dependent on the efforts of the partners or, with third party assistance/involvement. The third party may be a government official in the community where the HEI and the call center office are located or a representative from a government agency such as the Department of Trade and Industry. It may also be a foundation or a professional organization that provides free services to foster the formation and continuity of industry-academe linkages.

Strategies to initiate and sustain the partnership are employed, with the hope of realizing mutually beneficial consequences for both partners, including the students.

**Initiating Strategies**

Initiating strategies may be employed solely by the call center or with the help of a third party. This third party is likely to facilitate the initiation of the partnership by making the necessary introductions between the HEI and the call center. This assistance may even extend to granting of a first-move incentive to the first call center established in a particular locality. This means not supporting other call centers that may in the future wish to enter the market in the same locality. This incentive may come from the highest local official, in reciprocation for the call center’s assurance of job opportunities for the college graduates of the partner HEI.

**Sustaining Strategies**

Third party participation may extend beyond helping initiate the partnership. This happens when the third party is a foundation or a professional organization that has the mission and the expertise to provide free services to foster the formation and continuity of industry-academe partnerships. Third-party involvement may take the form of providing human resources training for both partners, and assistance in formalizing the partnership through the preparation and signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA). On the part of the HEI and the call center, strategies to sustain the relationship once formed, involve designation of persons-in-charge of partnership operations; regular meetings and communication; drafting and signing of an MOA, and observance by both parties of their respective responsibilities. The responsibilities of the call center include conducting a training program for the HEI faculty who handle special courses and degree programs aimed at developing the skills and competencies required of current and prospective call center personnel. These are courses on English language proficiency and on call center fundamentals; associate and baccalaureate degrees in systems communication technology, computer science, information technology, computer engineering, and electronics communications engineering; as well as master’s programs in engineering and computer science.

Because these training programs for the call center personnel require especial curricula that are tailor suited to the demands of the call center industry, the partner call centers can be expected to help their partner HEIs develop industry-responsive curriculums or in some cases, allow the use of their copyrighted curriculums, especially those intended to develop students’ oral communication proficiency in English. Sharing of material resources between the partners, and endowments from the call centers in the form of laboratories and
equipment, hardware, and software supportive of the training courses and programs likewise serve to sustain the relationship.

Flexibility in the students’ OJT schedule to avoid conflict with academic activities; refraining from hiring OJT students for full-time jobs; and observance of the policy of not pirating HEI faculty are other strategies employed by call centers to sustain the partnership. They also provide incentives to students and to faculty. Incentives for students may include scholarships or tuition fee reimbursements for call – center training programs/graduate studies; part-time jobs while on OJT, and priority for full-time jobs after graduation. Incentives for the faculty cover free training programs and honorarium for handling courses for the call center personnel.

The partnership is enhanced by top leadership commitment and mutual trust between the partners. Moreover, a partnership in which each partner adheres to respective roles and obligations and continues to observe governing policies may be expected to continue, even after the expiration of their MOA. However, although a partnership may thrive on the basis of trust and confidence, a memorandum of agreement, which specifies the goals of the partnership, and outlines the duties and responsibilities of the partners, helps formalize and sustain the linkage.

The signing of a contract between the call center and a student who completes a training course funded by the call center is another formality that may be adopted by the partners. The contract provides the assurance that when hired, the student will work with the partner call center for the period of time stipulated in the contract.

**Consequences**

The consequences of an HEI-call center partnership are mutual benefits for the members; the satisfaction of the needs of each partner that triggered the formation of the partnership.

For the call centers, the partnership addresses their need for qualified candidates for employment, and gives them the first priority in the recruitment of industry-ready graduates. This access to qualified manpower saves call centers time and financial resources which they would otherwise spend for training new, inadequately prepared employees. Their partner HEIs likewise provide them with call-center responsive graduate programs for the formal training of their highly-skilled personnel, such as electronics and communications engineers.

For the HEIs, it is highly likely that their expectations for entering into a partnership with a call center will be met. Benefits that they may derive from the partnership include: part-time employment for students and full-time employment for graduates who are products of the call center training programs; industry-trained faculty; industry–responsive curriculums, and updated training facilities and equipment. Additional benefits resulting from the partnership may include monetary incentives or cash donations for the HEIs for participation in the partnership; honoraria for the faculty who handle the call-center training programs and tuition fee subsidies for students.

**Comparison with the Literature**

Following the last phase of Pandit’s grounded theory approach which makes use of the case study strategy, the emergent model of HEI-call center model was compared with the extant literature bearing on the topic.

Many of the components of the model that emerged in the present study find support from the technical literature. Employment benefits for students and graduates, as one
consequence of HEI-call-center partnership finds support in an earlier case study by Keitel (2005). The study concluded that employment opportunities for graduates were the foremost benefit derived from the partnership.

Top leadership commitment as one of the facilitating conditions that tend to sustain HEI-call center partnerships likewise finds support in the finding of Yñigo (2002) that pointed to the requirement for top management to drive and to form the partnership. Teodoro’s study (1990), on the other hand, pointed out the need for academe-industry partnerships to meet the demands of changing human resources requirements. This was affirmed in the model proposed in the present study. The training of the faculty of the partner HEI, the OJT experience for the students, and the development and implementation of an industry-responsive curriculum with the help of the partner call center, and at times of a third party, are among the strategies aimed at sustaining HEI-call center partnerships. These strategies can be expected to meet the changing expectations and demands, particularly of the call center industry, concerning human resources.

Yñigo (2002) found out that mutual regular visits by both parties, open communications, signing of MOAs, trust and confidence, and clear definitions of financial obligations are actions that sustain a partnership. All those actions, with the exception of the last mentioned, are included in the sustaining strategies of the model proposed in the present study. Definitions of financial obligations did not emerge in the findings of the present study. The closest to it is the practice, by particular call centers, of shouldering the honorarium of faculty who handle the training programs for their personnel.

Yñigo’s study (2002) additionally showed that schools’ selection of industry partners was based on the company’s manpower training needs and reputation. This was not the case in the present study, because the call centers were the ones that chose the partner HEIs. Selection of schools by the industry partners in Yñigo’s study was based on the school’s reputation and the compatibility of the schools’ training programs with the industry’s objectives. This is similar to one of the cases covered in the present study where the HEI’s reputation for graduate programs in engineering and computer science was a basis for the selection of a partner HEI by the call center. In another case covered in the present study, the offering of an English course by the HEI influenced the call center’s choice of a partner HEI.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that a call center initiates the formation of a partnership with an HEI due to lack of qualified applicants, even for part-time jobs where the basic requirement is proficiency in the use of the English language. In a local survey of 171 senior business executives (BPA/P, 2006) 51% indicated that lack of qualified applicants with English proficiency had a negative effect on their organizations’ growth. These findings point to the need to strengthen curriculum and instruction in English. In addition, the action of one company (i.e., in Case 2) to establish its own college to meet its manpower needs due to inadequate preparation and subsequent unsatisfactory work performance of college graduates is an indication of a gap between the formal preparation of graduates of higher educational institutions and industry expectations.

HEIs have been criticized to be out of touch with the real world (PMAP Tripartite Summit on Higher Education, 2006). Through partnership with industry, which in the case of the present study is the call center industry, HEIs become more relevant to changing societal needs. Partnership with the call center industry links an HEI to the new call center...
employment phenomenon in the Philippines. As revealed in the present study, through the partnership, an HEI broadens employment and career opportunities for the graduates in this emerging industry while upgrading curriculum, improving the quality of English teaching, and applying advances in industry-based technologies in their laboratories. These benefits point to the advantage of linkages between HEIs and call centers which, at the time of the study, may be considered as merely in its infancy stage.

The expressed concern by the call industry concerning lack of qualified applicants to handle call center services has triggered some responses both from the private sector and from the government. On June 21, 2006, the General Manager of North Asia for TeleTech (2006) in a presentation to the Canadian Chamber of commerce cited two studies which provide a four- to five- year period to prepare for the pending scarcity of qualified graduates for call center employment. He outlined the McKinsey model that supported the availability of qualified candidates for 500,000 BPO jobs in the Philippines over the next 4 to 5 years. He further referenced the Wallace Business Forum project which supports the generation of enough workers to sustain an annual growth employment rate in call centers of 30%. The implication is that there is a bright prospect for call center-HEI partnerships to flourish, and there is a stronger impetus for these partnerships to develop and to produce qualified graduates for the industry.

An acknowledged limitation of the study is that the long-term effects of HEI-call center partnerships cannot be fully determined at the time of the study owing to the short time that call centers have existed in the Philippines. The call center industry started in the Philippines only in 2000, hence HEIs and call centers are still in the early stages of their partnership. The long-term outcomes or results of the academe–industry partnership are therefore only preliminary. It is therefore necessary to conduct future research into the effectiveness of HEI-Call Center Partnerships. Because of the recency of the signing of the MOAs, its implementation could not also be fully covered in the present study. Nevertheless, the study yielded significant findings that can guide other HEIs and call centers that may wish to form partnerships with each other.

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of the study, it may be concluded that the phenomenon of HEI-call center partnership can bring about needed improvements in higher education institutions to make them industry-responsive. Based on the job opportunities open to students and graduates of the partner HEIs, it may also be concluded that the phenomenon has the potential of addressing the national problem of high unemployment rate of HEI graduates in the Philippines (Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics, 2004).

Based on the findings gathered from the six partnership cases covered by the study, the following inferences may further be drawn: (1) that there are common causal conditions that trigger the formation of the partnerships; (2) that the partners, whether by themselves, or with the help of a third party, have the capability to establish and sustain the partnership; (3) that HEI-call center partnerships are beneficial to both parties, most especially to the students and graduates of the partner HEI, and (4) the facilitation of a third party can contribute to the strengthening and continuity of the partnership.

Finally, based on the results of comparison with the relevant literature, it may also be inferred that the model of HEI-call center partnership that emerged in the study has external validity.
Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are drawn:

1. The primary goal of HEIs is to prepare graduates for employment; and based on the findings of the study, there are a number of job and career opportunities in call centers that await these graduates. In this light, it is recommended that HEIs be more proactive in providing training programs that can prepare interested students for the demands of the call center industry. These educational institutions must consider this solution to unemployment, in their strategic plans.

2. The partnerships covered by the study were all initiated by the call centers. It would do well for HEIs to initiate the linkage, to enhance employment opportunities for their graduates. In particular, school leaders need to meet with the call center industry executives to gain a better understanding of the needs of the industry. This can serve as important inputs in making particular curricular offerings, industry responsive.

3. As shown in the study, an HEI has options. Depending on its institutional goals, renounces, and level of expertise, it may opt for students’ OJT in a call center; improved English curriculum and instruction; a certificate course on call center fundamentals as done by three of the HEIs covered in the study; an associate degree in systems communication and technology or, bachelors and graduate degrees in computer science and information technology, electronics and communications engineering, or computer science. These courses and programs may be developed with the assistance of a partner call center; thereby affirming the importance of academe-industry linkages.

4. The study likewise revealed the presence of non-profit foundations and organizations that provide completely free assistance for the development and continuity of HEI-call center partnerships. Partners should draw on third-party involvement to facilitate and sustain their partnerships.

5. Lastly, the present study offers a number of possibilities for future research. For instance, the occurrence of conditions or factors that may hinder the success of HEI-call centers as regards attainment of the objectives of the partnership is not remote. However, no such factors or pitfalls were identified in the six partnership cases covered by the study. Future investigations of HEI-call center partnerships may reveal such challenges, and offer solutions to overcome identified problems.

At this point in time, it is too early to evaluate the impact of call center-HEI partnerships on the national problem of unemployment of college graduates. Future research after such partnerships have hopefully flourished and involved more HEIs and call centers will address this research gap.

Evaluation of the HEI-call center partnerships covered in the study is also beyond its scope. Further research will be necessary to evaluate the effectiveness or success of the partnerships and to determine variables that can possibly explain variations in the effectiveness or success of those partnerships.

Finally, further research may be undertaken to validate and to extend the model proposed in the study. Such research studies may take into account the duration of the partnerships, with the view of determining the long-term effects of the partnerships on both parties; and in the locality that they both serve.
REFERENCES


Professional Summary

**Robert S Keitel**

With more than 20 years human resources consulting, teaching and educational linkage design experience in Asia, Dr Keitel has worked for the American Embassy Manila, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), A. T. Kearney, and Ernst and Young.

Beginning his international consulting career in New York City with Arthur Young (now Ernst and Young), Dr Keitel started the Human Resources practice in Hong Kong. He opened the Hong Kong Office and directed consulting projects throughout the Asia Pacific region.

Currently, he is the Regional Employment Advisor for the Global Employment Initiative- Strategic Networking Assistance Program (GEI-SNAP) based in the American Embassy in Manila.

Dr Keitel has taught Organizational Behavior in China. His research interest is focused on educational linkages to create high paid jobs in developing countries. He has recently presented his research at the 2007 International Conference on Research in Higher Education (ICRHEI) sponsored by the Philippine Commission on Higher Education.

Educationally, Dr Keitel obtained his PhD at De La Salle University Manila in Education specializing in leadership and management. He holds a MA from the University of Illinois’ Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations. His undergraduate degree was granted from the University of Colorado.