



KadaKareer Whitepaper

The Problem and Our Intervention

Background and Context

In 2013, the Philippine government passed the Enhanced Basic Education Act, effectively shifting the country from a 10-year education system to a 13-year one (1 year of Kindergarten, 6 years of Elementary and 6 years of Secondary). According to UNESCO, the Philippines has one of the highest primary education enrollment and completion rates (~96% and ~84% respectively). Unfortunately, these rates decline in secondary schools, then even further in tertiary schools.

Though only 36% of all college-aged Filipinos end up matriculating, the number of HEIs in the Philippines is ten times more than in its neighboring countries. As of 2019, the Commission on Higher Education in the Philippines (CHED) reported that of the 1,963 HEIs in the country, 242 are public while 1,721 are private. Collectively, these HEIs serve about 3.2 million students, of which only around 750k actually graduate. This abysmal graduation rate indicates that there is something amiss about the higher education system that does not lend to student success.

Evidently, there are severe gaps in tertiary education in the Philippines that have caused its perceived value to decline in the eyes of young Filipinos and their families. Specifically, there is a deep deficiency in how HEIs prepare students to enter the workforce, both in terms of career exploration and also skills development.

Problem and Significance

According to the International Labor Organization, the youth unemployment rate in the Philippines has hovered around 15-17% since 2005, with a young person four times more likely to be unemployed compared to a typical Filipino adult. This is slightly higher than the average for Southeast Asia, which sits at around 13%. Some of this can be attributed to a lack of relevant skills, as the number of Philippine firms with unfilled vacancies rose to 30% of all companies between 2009 and 2015, according to a World Bank report. In other circumstances, young Filipinos lack enough information on how to successfully search for and apply for jobs that match their needs.

On top of this, the recent COVID pandemic has caused general unemployment to spike, and a recent report published by House Representative Joey Salceda indicates that as many as 2.4



million skilled jobs may be unfilled after the pandemic if workers are not adequately trained in post-pandemic skills.

Based on Entangled Solutions' white paper, "Unlocking Career Potential", there are three pillars to building a career: occupational identity, social capital and skills. As such, this problem within the higher education landscape in the Philippines and its disconnect with the world of work can be broken down into three key gaps:

1. **Exposure Gap:** Students attend college out of necessity but are not given the tools to know what they enjoy or are good at, as the system does not provide adequate career guidance resources or allow for career exploration of any means.
2. **Network Gap:** Students are not being appropriately supported by experts or professionals who can help them in their career journeys, either because they do not have these types of people in their networks, these connections between academia and industry do not exist, or those who are assisting them within their universities do not have the adequate experience to do so effectively.
3. **Skill Gap:** The content and method of teaching at universities is either outdated, irrelevant or ineffective at imparting the skills that employers are looking for. In short, students end up graduating with a degree but without the actual skills to accompany it.

Exposure Gap

In the Philippines, students do not have the exposure, support and resources they need to discover what they're good at or to pursue careers that can lift them and their families out of poverty. Exploration is not encouraged in traditional Filipino schools, leaving students in majors and jobs that do not match their skillsets, meet their financial needs, or bring them fulfillment. The nature of the college application system does not lend to flexibility either, as most students have to select a major even before they begin university and it is both costly and arduous to switch later on. Furthermore, there are few opportunities for apprenticeships or internships which could provide students an inside look into different types of jobs to determine their suitability and interest.

According to the Youth Education Investment and Labor Market Outcomes Survey (YEILMOS) conducted by the Asian Development Bank and the Department of the Philippines in 2017, 86% of students reported that they received "some" information when choosing careers, while 14% indicated that they did not receive any at all. Overall, less than a third of students shared that they had access to information like labor market trends, types of occupations that fit their personal interests, or types of occupations that fit their skills. As a result, the same ADB survey reports that only 30% of workers indicate that they are in their desired career.

Network Gap

According to the same aforementioned survey conducted by the ADB, students cited immediate family and social circles as their main source of information when making career choices – parents (68.8%), peers (48.3%), and relatives (40.5%). This could prove problematic as students may not have access to individuals who are knowledgeable about the careers they aspire to, especially if they are from underprivileged or under-resourced backgrounds.

A deep body of research has historically shown that social and personal circumstances truly shape career thinking – in essence, who is around you forms your perceptions about what type of career you can and will pursue. An analysis of PISA data by the OECD, for example, shows that young people from families with higher socio-economic status are significantly more likely to want to work as professionals, whereas those from families with lower socioeconomic status wanted to hold roles more similar to technicians.

But this effect doesn't just stop at career aspirations. As is common knowledge, the quality of an individual's network also bleeds into their career success, with several studies demonstrating that anywhere from 50-70% of jobs are obtained through social contacts. Consequently, a true "network gap" exists for young Filipinos who may not have access to communities that can help affirm their career aspirations or support them in obtaining a desired job.

Skill Gap

Finally, and perhaps most prominently, systemic shortcomings in the Philippine higher education landscape have hindered students' performance in the workplace upon leaving school – the so-called "skill gap". In fact, while literacy and numeracy skills across young professionals may be strong, a study by the Philippine Talent Map Initiative indicated that Filipinos are severely lacking in soft skills such as creative problem solving, planning and organizing, and decision making.

In an APEC study on skills shortages and training needs of MNCs in the Philippines from 2001, it was reported that though MNCs expressed satisfaction with the level of literacy and numeracy skills of the Filipino workers, they similarly indicated that the following skills could be improved: management and supervision, interpersonal and communication skills, planning and problem-solving, use of technology, self-management, multi-skilling, and team-work. The Philippine Daily Inquirer called this phenomenon a "qualification inflation", where students possess degrees but do not necessarily have the skills to back them up. This is also particularly worrisome as 9 out of 10 of the most in-demand jobs in the Philippines at present require either interpersonal skills, IT skills, or both.

Inequities

On a macro-scale, all three of these gaps – the exposure gap, the network gap and the skill gap – have deep implications on socioeconomic equality and economic productivity. In 2017, the World Bank released a report indicating that two-thirds of Philippine employers could not fill vacancies because they claimed that applicants did not have the proper socioemotional skills (i.e. communication, interpersonal engagement). Furthermore, with a growing services sector that makes up more than half of the Philippines’ GDP, helping students find jobs that fit their motivations and abilities is crucial to helping them progress in their own careers and propel the country’s growth with greater productivity and innovation.

Unsurprisingly, of course, all of the gaps explained above can be witnessed much more starkly in public versus private schools and in rural regions versus urban regions. For instance, according to the ADB, across all of the career guidance services that schools can offer, as few as only 5-40% of public schools reported providing certain resources in contrast to private schools. For example, only 44.7% of public schools claimed to offer one-on-one career counselling sessions while 85.3% of private schools said they did. Similarly, when students across geographic areas were asked about the number of hours of personalized help they received, students from Manila reported an average of 7 hours, while students in the provincial region of Ilocos Sur reported an average of 2 hours. To truly address these gaps, there will need to be a nuanced approach towards and keen awareness of these kinds of internal inequities.

The Innovation

After understanding the nature of the problem in the Philippines, a successful innovation to tackle this problem in the Philippines would have the following key characteristics:

Philippine-specific factor	Characteristic of innovation
Inequities obvious and present between rural/urban regions, public/private schools, and higher-income/lower-income students according to report and survey by the ADB and DepEd	Must be targeted towards underserved lower-income students, especially those in rural public schools (similar to models like <i>Mentor Spaces</i> , <i>Posse Foundation</i> , <i>Year Up</i> , <i>MLT</i>)

<p>Clear dearth of information available for students across the board on how to approach their career decisions and journey, according to the ADB and DepEd</p>	<p>Must provide adequate information and resources for students to read through and learn from on their own time (similar to <i>Nepriis</i>)</p>
<p>Deep reliance on immediate family members and peers for career decisions, despite these individuals not knowing exactly how to approach specific careers</p>	<p>Must provide a personal relationship that can act as an <i>additional</i> voice on this matter, backed by professional experience and expertise (similar to <i>Mentor Collective, Mentor Spaces, Pathrise, Sharpest Minds</i>)</p>
<p>Significant lack of soft skills, as evidenced by companies unable to fill positions and studies done by PTMI and World Bank</p>	<p>Must include a concrete way to develop soft skills such as creative problem solving, planning and organizing, and decision making (similar to <i>MLT, Year Up</i>)</p>
<p>Digital opportunity is present to leverage rising mobile and internet penetration, especially to reach far-flung provinces, though data is still expensive</p>	<p>Can be available on a mobile device for ease of access, though still with a focus on low-bandwidth methods of engagement (similar to <i>Nepriis, Mentor Spaces</i>)</p>

Therefore, given the outlined characteristics above, the KadaKareer innovation was built to specifically address the career resource/support gap in the Philippines.

The Kada Model

KadaKareer aims to **support underserved youth in the Philippines** to launch and sustain careers that will fulfill them personally and professionally. “Kada” comes from the word “barkada”, which means a group of friends or a support group. Based on the insight that most successful models in the career development space today are human-centered, we want to be these students’ support groups throughout their career journey.

We support students by providing **resources, tools and coaching** that will help them throughout their early careers, and to specifically bridge the exposure, network and skill gaps that we have



witnessed across low-income students in rural Philippines.

In working with students, we meet them where they are at and provide a superior value proposition by providing support that is:

- Easily accessible from a mobile device and uses only low levels of bandwidth
- Customized for an individual student through human connection (through coaches and peer interaction)
- Flexible, but targeted and effective
- Customized to fit the Philippine context and the needs of Millennials / Gen Z

Our secret sauce will be our **incredible community and our low-bandwidth yet dynamic platform**. As such, we hope to build our organization on **two pioneering and flagship products**: First, an **“Inside Look” Career Database (“Career Explorer”)** with bite-sized videos and designed materials about different careers – this will resemble Nepris’ current video library, so it will be easily searchable and highly engaging (in other words, not simply static content). Second, we will create a **Career Coach Marketplace (“Coach Connector”)** featuring professionals and experts within specific industries, who will be paired with students for short or medium-term engagements to provide advice and support on all things related to the student’s career journey.

With these two products, we hope to create a synergistic model that simultaneously allows for both scale (the platform/database piece) and customization (the 1-on-1 coaching piece), while keeping the **Community** at the center of our core value proposition.

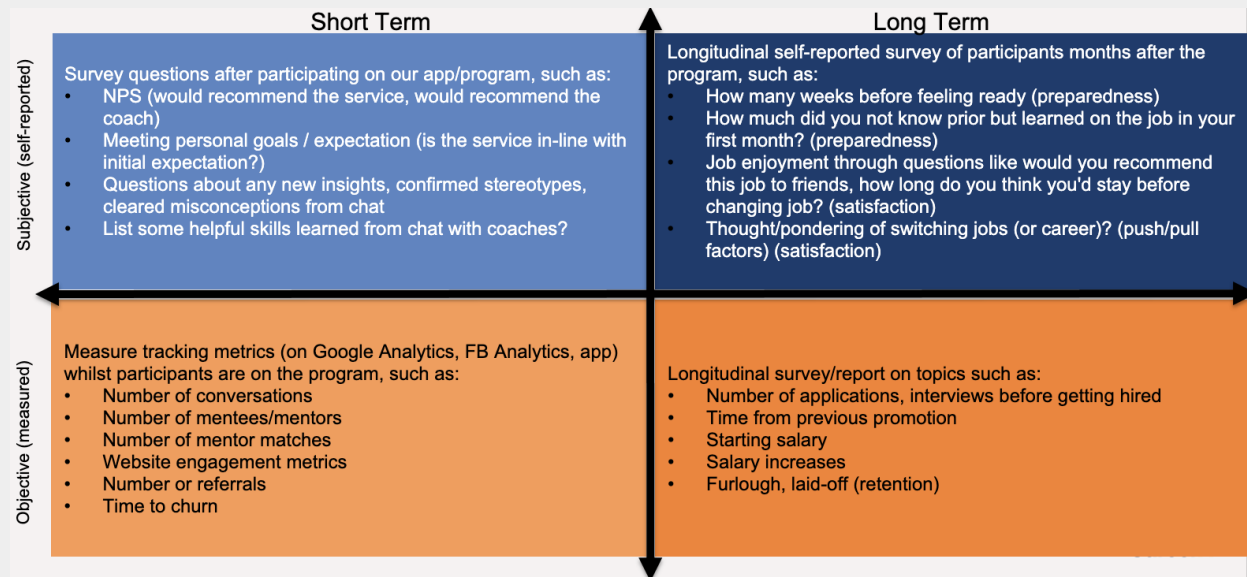
Our Intended Outputs

We intend to focus on increasing engagement with our products, to maximize the chances that students receive the support that they need. We therefore plan to track the following:

- Number of registered students and coaches
- Number of coaching requests made
- Number of coaching conversations held
- Number of repeat coaching conversations held
- Number of videos for different professions in database
- Number of videos watched in full
- Number of visitors to the database

Our Intended Outcomes

With high levels of student engagement, we hope to see concrete positive effects on several career-related outcomes, both in the short-term and long-term. These outcomes center around confidence, career satisfaction, job acquisition, time-to-hire, job preparedness, job retention, promotion rates, salary levels, etc. These are captured in the quadrant below.



For coaches, we similarly want to imagine positive effects in both the short-term and long-term. These outcomes, however, will be more focused on self-reported metrics around satisfaction and fulfillment, professional and personal development, and applicability of learned skills to the workplace.

Our Intended Impact

We hope to see our intended impact on both an individual level and a societal level. On the individual level, we hope that the underprivileged young professionals that use our products will be:

- Easier to find jobs that they are interested in
- Happier and more satisfied with their jobs
- Performing more effectively and productively in their roles
- Getting promoted at quicker rates
- Earning at higher levels
- More able to change their family's socioeconomic status



- More able to see purpose and value in their jobs
- More engaged members of their communities

On the societal level, we hope to see change that reflects:

- A paradigm shift in how and where companies hire
- A paradigm shift in how schools approach career exploration and development
- A narrowing job-skills mismatch
- A more productive workforce
- Equal opportunities for all kinds of students to apply for and acquire jobs
- Poverty alleviation and increased mobility

Resources

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