

Consulting Opportunities and PhD Graduation in the UP School of Economics

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Consulting opportunities and the social science academia have a complex and tangled relationship. By raising monetary rewards to social science practice, consultancies probably enable many academics to remain with their universities (as opposed to seeking greener pastures outside academia) and, in addition, make the field more attractive to potential students. On the other hand, consultancies divert academics from what are traditionally believed their main tasks—teaching and pure research, possibly diminishing the quality and quantity of both. Moreover, consulting opportunities outside the universities possibly reroute students otherwise bound for academic careers.

The rerouting of talented students away from social science academia is a serious concern, especially where there is lack of a critical mass among practitioners. To sustain themselves, the social sciences need to produce their future teachers and independent researchers. The production of independent research cannot be neglected because it forms the bedrock on which the credibility of the field rests, and is itself necessary to make social science practitioners

credible consultants. The combination of a large mass of students attracted to a particular field and a lack of qualified teachers is a potential recipe for disaster, as it could lead to poor practitioners who could only devalue the standing and stature of the field.

The problem is particularly acute for a relatively poor country like the Philippines with a large population of tertiary students. Its relative poverty means that—except in a few universities—teaching jobs pay modestly. It also means that some of its more talented students who go to graduate schools abroad have less incentive to return. Meanwhile, the same poverty is cause for the presence in the country of many international aid agencies whose activities require the hiring of local manpower, typically graduates of the country's top universities, who are given above average compensation, potentially siphoning off the pool of future academics.

This paper looks at the production of PhDs in the University of the Philippines School of Economics (UPSE) vis-à-vis the widespread availability of consulting opportunities for its graduates, as an example of the tangled web of