



“Education without limitation”

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RESEARCH CORNER:

Asian Institute for Distance Education (AIDE): Providing Higher Education Opportunities to OFWS

BY DR. RALPH A. SABIO

To holistically respond to one of the functions of higher education—which is research, we are featuring the research paper entitled: “AIDE: Providing Higher Education Opportunities to OFWs” which is written by Dr. R.A.Sabio, Chairperson of Business Management Department of St. Scholastica’s College Manila.

It must be recalled that last month, we featured this news in our January 2019 issue of the AIDE Info board where Dr. Sabio’s paper was presented and made part of the International Conference’s proceedings and publication. To be able to showcase the best practice of AIDE in helping the nation uplift the lives of the underserved, like the OFW, we are publishing the whole research paper in this issue.

Abstract:

According to the NEDA, (PDP 2017-2022, p.144) there are more than 10 million Filipinos who are based abroad. In 2015, newly-hired household service workers made up the largest proportion of deployed overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) at 37.8 percent, up from 28.2 percent in 2010. The OFWs are vulnerable to external shocks such as economic downturns in host countries, protectionist policies and political instabilities, besides exploitation. This study is an attempt to look into the OFW intake of one of the longest stand-alone distance education provider in the Philippines which is the Asian Institute for Distance Education (AIDE). Besides helping the Philippine economy grow, a look into the effort to professionalize and progress OFW’s educational attainment will be considered in this research such as efforts to take further college degrees while working overseas. The focus of this research is also to highlight the effort of AIDE to widen student access to higher education by helping OFWs obtain a college education through unconventional means or distance education.

Keywords: *Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW), Distance Education, Philippines, AIDE*

Paper Presented at the 6th Global Higher Education Forum (GHEF), Le Meridien Hotel, Putrajaya, Malaysia, October 8-10, 2018

Globalization has brought unprecedented change and impact in the way we do things every day. It has actually snowball migration, travelling and education over the years. Global labor mobility has drawn increasing attention in recent years. Interest has also been stimulated by the increasing diversity of people crossing national boundaries: immigrants, temporary workers, refugees, executives of multinational corporations (Calzado, 2007) and even students. All these movements of people have been influenced by push and pull factors such as inadequate income levels in the home country, better jobs available abroad, opening of borders, easier mobility due to better communications and transportation infrastructure, and the increasing need for services around the world (Calzado, 2007).

Two important things have become the subject of this paper, one is how education can be exercised in a borderless concept and second, how such modality can better respond to the needs of those who work beyond borders, specifically, how these workers are being assisted by the state or society in general, to develop their personal and professional well-being. This makes higher education more meaningful and responsive to the needs of the underserved and the needy. Thus, generally resulting to making education more accessible and flexible to the most deserving sector of society – the Overseas Filipino Worker or the OFW.

RESEARCH CORNER:

Asian Institute for Distance Education (AIDE): Providing Higher Education Opportunities to OFWS

By DR. RALPH A. SABIO

AIDE INC.

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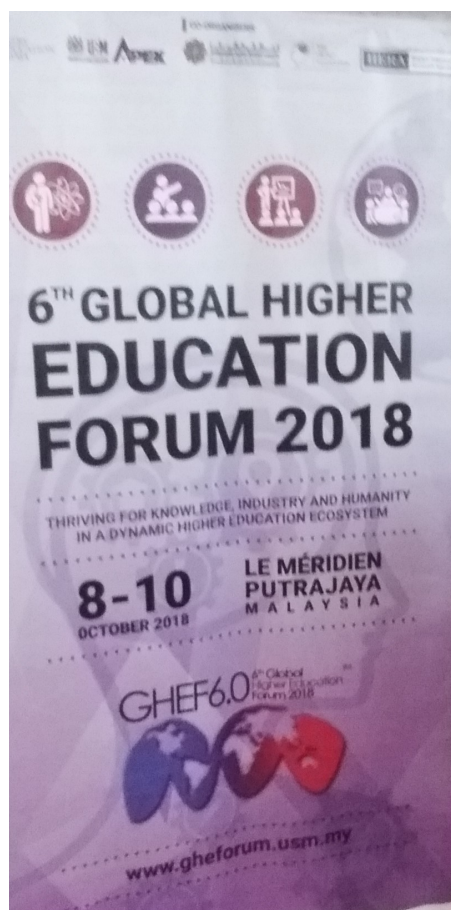
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Overseas Filipino workers or OFWs (which is the subjects of this research) are Filipinos who are employed in foreign countries. They travel abroad to seek better opportunities in order to provide for the needs of their families in the Philippines. They are also known as “Overseas Contract Workers” (OCWs), since they work abroad through a contract with their employers. The term OFWs was officially adopted under the President Fidel Ramos administration to give recognition to millions of Filipinos who sacrifice by working in other countries. The change, replacing ‘Contract’ with ‘Filipino’ – honors these Filipino workers by pledging the Philippine government’s commitment to their welfare wherever they may be, and removing the precondition of possession of contract in order for Philippine consulates to come to their aid, under the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (Republic Act 8042).

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Asian Institute For Distance Education: Providing Higher Education Opportunities to OFWs



Dr. Ralph A. Sabio

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There are two kinds of overseas Filipino workers, those who leave the country for temporary or contractual work and those who settle permanently in the country of destination. The term Overseas Filipino Workers refer to temporary migrant workers who are classified as either land-based or sea-based workers whereas permanent migrants are called emigrants. Although a large number of Filipinos abroad are permanent emigrants (most of them settling in the Americas), majority of them are OFWs or temporary workers (Cosalan, 2010).

According to the Philippines' National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), as enunciated in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP), (2017-2022, p.144) there are more than 10 million Filipinos who are based abroad. In 2015, newly-hired household service workers made up the largest proportion of deployed overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) at 37.8 percent, up from 28.2 percent in 2010. The OFWs are vulnerable to external shocks such as economic downturns in host countries, protectionist policies and political instabilities, besides exploitation. This study is an attempt to look into the OFW intake of one of the longest stand-alone distance education provider in the Philippines which is the Asian Institute for Distance Education (AIDE). Besides helping the Philippine economy grow, a look into the effort to professionalize and progress OFW's educational attainment were considered in this research such as efforts to take further college degrees while working overseas. The focus of this research is also to highlight the effort of AIDE to widen student access to higher education by helping OFWs obtain a college education through unconventional means or distance education.

Highlights of the AIDE History

The Asian Institute for Distance Education (AIDE) is one of only few distance education institution in the country that is not created from the regular traditional school which is the case of most open learning institutions in the Philippines. AIDE was formally recognized as an education institution on April 11, 1984. AIDE was initially conceived to be the Asian University of Independent Study (AUIS). Based on the study done, the project required legislation to grant a charter to what was to be known as the Asian University for Independent Study (AUIS). Parliamentary Bill No. 1033, which sought to establish the AUIS project, was introduced in the 1982 session of the Batasang Pambansa. Since the bill went no further than the first reading, the project was soon abandoned.

A year later, on June 1983, the project was reactivated when Filipinas Foundation, Inc. requested the Dean of Graduate Studies of the Far Eastern University, at that time, to react to the AUIS Feasibility Study and Parliamentary Bill No. 1033. It was consequently proposed that the bill be disregarded and that Filipinas Foundation should proceed to establish the school under the provisions of existing rules and regulations on accrediting institutions utilizing the non-formal delivery system. The decision to act on the proposal initiated preparations for the establishment and organization of the school. With its name slightly altered—from Asian University for Independent Study to Asian Institute for Distance Education—thus was AIDE born.

By August 21, 1983, the initial academic curricula and the administrative system of the school were mapped out. On April 11, 1984, AIDE was formally recognized as an educational institution when it was granted a permit to open and conduct a two-year course leading to the degree of Associate in Arts, and a four-year general course leading to the degree of Bachelor of Arts. A year later, on July 11, 1985, both courses were granted recognition by the Ministry of Education Culture and Sports (MECS). At its inception stage of operations, AIDE likewise offered the Professional/Skills Development Program and the Educational Placement Test Review Course.

On February 11, 1985, then Ministry of Education Culture and Sports (MECS), National Capital Region, granted AIDE the permit to offer the four-year course on Business Administration major in Management. The government program recognition (GPR) for this course was subsequently granted on January 6, 1986.

In 1986, AIDE initiated new and non-traditional programs with the offering of three Ports Education Programs, namely: the two-year courses leading to the titles Associate in Port Management and Associate in Port Equipment Operation, and the four-year course leading to the degree of Bachelor of Port Administration, while maintaining as its basic academic components the original liberal arts and commerce courses.

Today, AIDE continues to evolve and develop an even more academic, professional and technical courses which responds to the needs of a totally new and dynamic student population like those of the OFW.

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted to highlight the efforts of AIDE in making education more accessible and flexible to OFWs which is not usually done by any ordinary traditional school. It will describe the profile of the OFW students of AIDE. The aim is to disseminate AIDE's best practice so as to possibly replicate their objective of providing higher education for persons who are unable to avail themselves of the formal or conventional system due to time, space or financial constraints – thereby making education available to the underserved – the OFW.

An attempt to look into the OFW intake by one of the longest stand-alone distance education provider in the Philippines which is the AIDE may have policy implications to other higher education institutions (HEIs) which operates on a conventional delivery and non-traditional ones. It is essential to look into the effort to professionalize and progress OFW's educational attainment, or any underserved group for that matter, as such forms part of HEI's goal of nation-building. It is important to emphasize that human development is not confined to the young and non-working students. Education should be limitless, a life-long pursuit and is not constrained by age, status, situation, among others – such is the case of AIDE – which functions as a non-profit open school. Their goal which is worth stressing, is to provide a second chance, or perhaps the last chance, for those among us in every sector of our society, to acquire a college degree which has gone beyond their reach because of family responsibilities, illness, financial hardship, or space/time constraint.

Specifically, the paper will describe AIDE students' general profile in terms of gender, age group, age group by gender, number of working vs. non-working students, number of working students in the public and private sector. Further, this research will provide baseline information about the demographic variables of OFW students who enrolled in AIDE this year, particularly, percentage of OFW vis-à-vis AIDE total number of students, the gender, civil status, current courses enrolled in, age distribution, previous education level, current work, overseas/country of work. The researcher also looked into the other efforts of AIDE in propagating access to higher education, hence a look into the number of graduates of police officers from the Philippine National Police (PNP) was also considered in this research.

Any paper that deals with OFW is very important especially that there are only few researches that involve the survey of Filipino workers overseas, hence the conduct of this research.

Methodology

The study utilized simple quantitative descriptive research (case study) approach; this is to determine the baseline information of the OFW students of AIDE and describe their demographic profile. Secondary data were taken from the Registrar's Office of AIDE following the usual research protocol and ethics.

Findings and Discussion

1. AIDE Students' Gender, Age Group and Age Group by Gender, 1998-2003

Figure 1 shows the gender distribution of AIDE students who enrolled from 1998-2003. As reflected in the figure above, majority or 57 percent are male while 43 percent are female. This means that majority of the students AIDE are male dominated.

Meanwhile Figure 2 reflects the age group distribution of AIDE students. Twenty one percent belong to 25-30 years of age while another equal percentage of twenty one percent belongs to 31-35 years of age. It was followed by those who belong to 16-25 age group which accounts for seventeen percent while another fifteen percent belongs to 36-40 years of age. This means that the age group of AIDE students are between 16 to 40 years of age.

Finally, Figure 3 shows the gender of AIDE students by age group. As seen in Figure 2, 16-40 years of age generally describes the age group of AIDE students; and majority are male students.

Figure 1. AIDE Students' Gender, 1998-2003

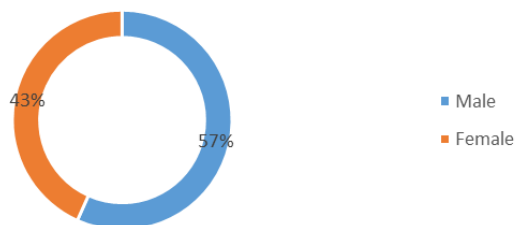


Figure 2. AIDE Students' Age Group, 1998-2003

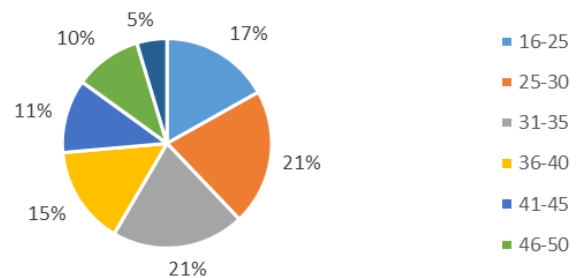
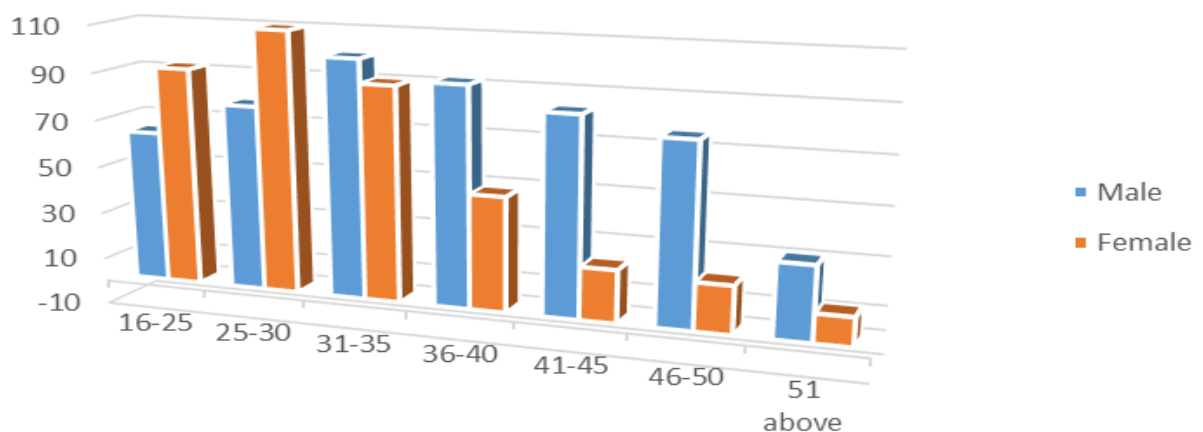


Figure 3. AIDE Students' Age Group by Gender, 1998-2003



2. AIDE Working and Non-Working Students, 1998-2003

Figure 4 and 5 shows the distribution of AIDE students who are working and non-working; for those who are working figure 5 shows where are they connected whether in the public or private sector. 76 percent of AIDE students, as seen in Figure 4, shows that majority are working while a handful of 24 percent are non-working students. Those who are working students are generally connected in the government sector; as seen in Figure 5, meanwhile, forty seven percent are from the private sector.

This result truly describes the type of students that distance education cater to, this generally are adult learners who were previously deprived of the opportunity to study. Truly, distance education can respond to the needs of students who are working, open learning system definitely gives them the opportunity to combine work with schooling. This platform undoubtedly gives second chances or perhaps the last chance for those among us in every sector of our society, to acquire a college degree which has gone beyond their reach because of family responsibilities, illness, financial hardship, or space/time constraint.

3. OFW Students of AIDE

As reflected in Figure, 5 percent of the students of AIDE are OFW. Meanwhile, majority or fifty seven percent are residing from the National Capital Region or the NCR while thirty eight percent are from the other regions within the Philippines. This reflects that the main source of student intake of AIDE is in greater Manila area. This result may have policy implication and may require strategic re-direction on the part of AIDE management to consider putting up satellite campuses or partner educational institutions outside Metro Manila so as to cover wider number of student's needing access to higher education through open learning system and distance education delivery.

4. Gender, Civil Status, Courses Enrolled In, and Age Group

Figure 7 shows the gender of the AIDE OFW Students, it appears from the figure that majority are female which accounts to 77 percent while only a handful of 23 percent are male. When the overall gender of AIDE OFW students are compared to the overall AIDE Student's gender, it appears that the findings are not the same because the overall AIDE student are generally male dominated.

Figure 8 depicts the civil status of AIDE OFW students. It shows in the figure that majority are single which totaled to 92 percent while only 8 percent are married. In the study of Galvez (2017) which evaluates how OFWs and their household allocate remittances in Cebu, Philippine through determining their socio-economic profile, among others, it revealed that OFWs considered in his paper were generally young which reflects the same result as this study. It also revealed in his paper that OFWs are married professionals which is not the case in this paper.

Figure 4. Working Vs. Non-working Students, 1998-2003

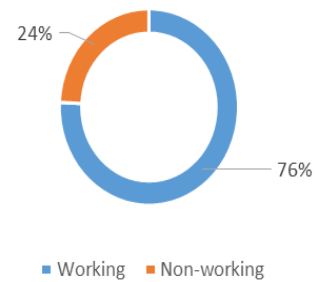


Figure 5. Working Students, 1998-2003

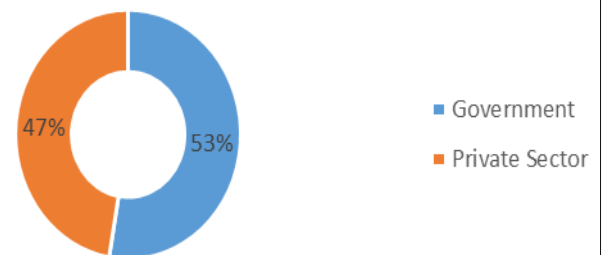


Figure 6. OFW Students vis-à-vis AIDE Total No. of Students, January - May 2018

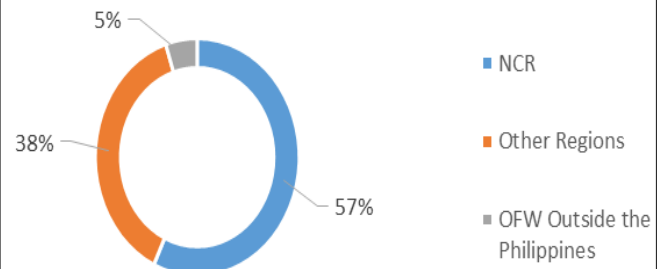


Figure 7. Gender of OFW Students

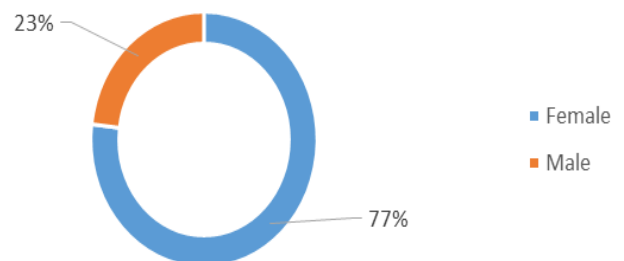


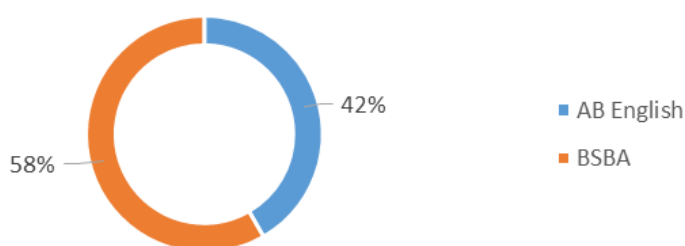
Figure 9. OFW's Courses Enrolled In

Figure 9 reflects the courses enrolled in by the AIDE OFW Students. Majority are taking BS in Business Administration course which is fifty eight percent while forty two percent are taking up AB English course. OFW BSBA students of AIDE may have contemplated of putting up their business and venture into entrepreneurial activity when they eventually retire. According to Arguelles (2016), entrepreneurship is a better remedy to household and societal economic needs because of its potential to create more jobs; hence, the multiplier effect on the economy. Creating an economic environment that promotes entrepreneurship, therefore, may not only allow OFWs to come home, but also be a means of achieving the long-term goal of inclusive growth for the Philippine economy.

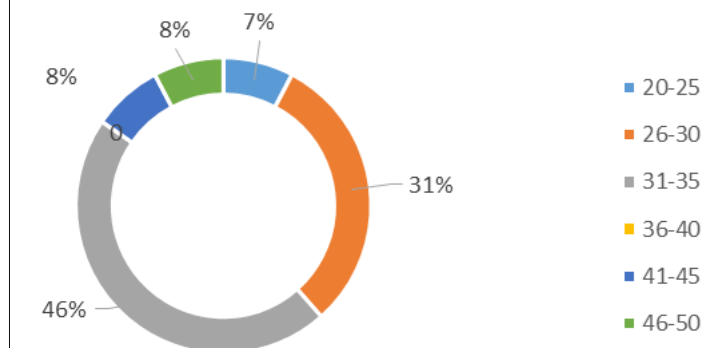
Figure 10. Age Group of OFW Students

Figure 10 shows the age group distribution of AIDE's OFW students. It could be gleaned from the figure that forty six percent of the students belong to 31-35 years of age; it was followed by those belonging to age 26-30 years of age which represents thirty one percent. When this result is compared to the overall age group of the total AIDE students, majority are those belonging to 25-30 and 31-35 years of age which accounts to twenty one percent. This means that the age group obtained for the OFW are the same as that of the AIDE total number of students.

5. Previous Education Level of AIDE's OFW Students, Current Work and Country of Work

Figure 11 shows that 77% of AIDE's OFW students were high school graduates, 15% were graduates of technical or vocational courses, and 8% were college/university level students. All of them were school leavers which may have been prompted of the need to work and help earn a living for their family. This reality only reflects that millions enroll in formal schools every year. Many millions more cannot. Hence, through the vision of the Asian Institute for Distance Education, Inc., which is a non-profit non-stock corporation, those who cannot go to the University, AIDE shall bring the university to them, thereby making education limitless and borderless. It actually spells no boundaries and sets no borders for OFW.

Figure 12 shows the current overseas work of AIDE's OFW students. From the figure, 33% of AIDE's OFW students are domestic helpers; 25% are employed in the service industry; 17% are office workers; another 17% are supervisors/managers; and 8% are factory workers. In the study of Cosalan (2010), on the study about OFW's general profile in South Korea, it revealed that most of the OFW who entered South Korea have jobs in the Philippines before migrating to Korea, this may not be true to AIDE's OFW students who has to coalesce working and studying if only to improve their current personal and professional state.

Figure 13 shows the country where AIDE's OFW students are working. 54% are working in Asia; 38% are in the Middle East; and 8% are in Latin America. If we compare the figure to the overall distribution of OFW, the figure reflects that indeed majority of OFW are working within Asian region as seen in Table 1 where 85 percent of OFW are working in Asia. Table 1 shows the distribution of the Overseas Filipino Workers by place of work and sex in 2017 as released by the Philippines Statistics Authority.

6. Other efforts by AIDE to propagate access to higher education

An interview with the Registrar's Office of AIDE revealed that apart from OFW, it was also able to graduate police officers from the Philippine National Police from 1989-2008; this is reflected in Figure 14.

Figure 12. Current Overseas Work

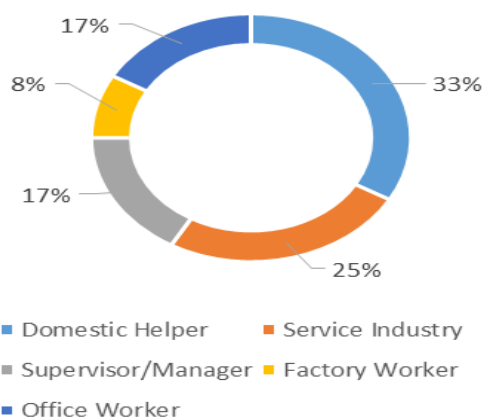


Figure 11. Previous Education Level

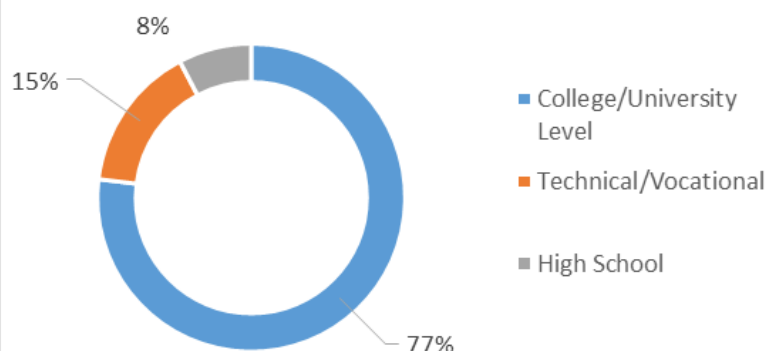
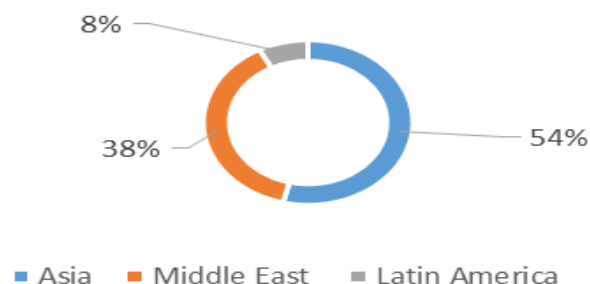


Figure 13. Country of Work



Conclusions and Recommendations:

Global mobility of people has undeniably portrayed mounting attention in the past years, due in part to the speedy growth of such migratory streams and its links and correlation to development initiatives. The Philippine economy is characterized by high migration rates. In 2015, the World Bank even reported that the Philippines received around 29.7 billion US dollars of remittances in 2015. Given the immense support, value and impact of OFWs' remittances to Philippine economy, it is therefore necessary for different sectors e.g. government and educational institutions to also consider valuing the welfare of this sector. Meanwhile in terms of higher education, there is a growing demand to expand and further democratize access to tertiary education through the advancement, promotion and application of open learning as a philosophy of access to educational services, and the use of distance education as an appropriate, efficient and effective system of delivering quality higher education in the country. This platform and recent development in education can better aid the need of uplifting the educational well-being of OFWs. Recognizing the need uplift the lives and welfare of the OFW, AIDE responded to making education flexible, accessible, limitless and borderless to these sector which is said to be somehow neglected. Therefore, given this best practice of AIDE in investing into the educational improvement of OFWs, this study recommends that proposed strategies for investments on education should be discussed and their household through various government institutions like Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) which is the main government organization tasked to ensure OFWs welfare. An example would be in a form of scholarship program which may be provided to OFWs, if not, other institutions may consider replicating the practice of AIDE of reaching and providing education opportunity to OFWs.

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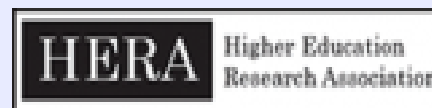


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