

## **POLICY INTERVENTION FOR RETURNING STUDENTS: THE CASE OF CEBU TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY**

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### **Abstract**

Returning students are the heart of the institution (CTU). Therefore, the school must provide intervention strategies as an aid in the completion of the course. The study assessed the conditions of returning students (CTU) as a basis for the formulation of intervention policies. Specifically, it determined (1) the demographic profile of returning students in terms of individual background, academic and social system. (2) dropout rate ; (3) completion rate of the University; (4) dropout motives perceived by CTU Administrators in handling returnees; (5) lived experiences of school Administrator's Management of Returning Students. (6) Proposed Policy Interventions for Returning Students; (7) a conceptual schema for dropout students. The study utilized the descriptive evaluative type of research design where survey questionnaires are the primary data-gathering tools. There is evidence that the students in the CTU were dropping out of their course indicating a need to consider policy intervention.

**Key words:** Administrators' lived experiences, dropout motives, dropout rate, policy intervention, returning students

### **I. Introduction**

Students drop out of college for a wide range of reasons. Financial challenges, family responsibilities, work commitments, and academic difficulties can all figure into a decision to leave school. However, the good news is that a lot of those who previously dropped out of school eventually come back with more motivation than ever to succeed and finish their studies.

*"Education is one of the most powerful things in life. It allows us to find the meaning behind everything and helps improve lives in a massive way." - Norbert Jubail*

The situation of returning students proves the dictum stated by Norbert Jubail, an editor of 'Live Everyday', that education is seen as the only gateway in improving life situations.

Students face a lot of struggling factors when entering the classroom. The level of adjustment is very critical. According to John P. Bean in his book, *Nine Themes on Student College Retention*, which states that there are nine (9) themes that affect retention and these are the student's background, money, finance, grades, and academic performance, social factors, external environment, psychological and attitudinal factors, institutional fit and commitment, and intentions. These themes were based on his empirical studies sometime in 1978. While the

literature is dated, this still holds true as many other types of research on returning students' plight still refers to these nine (9) reasons why there is a high rate of drop-outs in schools.

Struggling in academic difficulties and social interaction share a greater impact on the completion of the course. This is due to the extent of appraisal of academic performance, it has been said that one person can be able to graduate the course even if the ability of social integration is lacking while it is also a fact that the success of the course is not possible if the grades are failed. The performance will be depending on the behavior, skills, and abilities of a certain person which must have to be practiced during admission of the program. According to (Pascarella et al. 1986), the stronger the individual's level of social and academic integration, the greater his or her subsequent commitment to the institution and to the goal of college graduation.

Not merely the issue of academic difficulties but rather economic challenges are additional reasons for quitting the course. Although it has been argued that poverty is not a barrier to achievement, many Filipino residents, particularly those who are indigenous, nevertheless fall into the low socioeconomic class category.. All of these factors for dropping causes were discussed by David McAughtrie (2016) of Unit International blog. He cited that Oakton Community College states that only 20–30 percent of the students who leave college do so because of academic difficulties. The other 70–80 percent leave due to cost, isolation, social difficulties, and unclear goals expectations.

Returning students are the students who reach the level of maturity during their live experienced encountered in outside real world. They are able to realize that education is important in their lives. Once they are equipped with cost, improvement of social relationships, confidence in communication, and setting the right goals that are expected, then they will return to school for admission. All of these is due to acquisition of lessons learned from experientialism and Socialism learning of theory developed by David Kolb (1984).

Truly, the design of the program must not limit only for planning, but it will be continued for implementation, evaluation, and monitoring. The expectation of the institution must be synchronized to the expected services from the students. It can be recognized through students feedback and to identify areas warranting further improvement attention. (Journal of Institutional Research, 14 (1), 9-23.).

In the case of Cebu Technological University, the system has no policy intervention for returning students. Eventually, the Dean's office, student's affairs have no concrete returning policies. These policies are generic and it is up to the school to localize it, in the case of CTU, these are scattered policies and these need to be collated and enhanced to better serve its returning students, henceforth guiding them towards the fulfillment of their degrees and eventually helping them achieve better lives.

The Cebu Technological University (CTU) is a big University scattered in nine (9) campuses in the island of Cebu. The population as of 2018 data is 35,574, hence, is big enough to consider it as the universe of the study. Cebu Technological University composes of one main campus located at Cebu City, eight satellite campuses in Argao, Moalboal, Barili, Daanbantayan, Danao, Moalboal, San Francisco, and Tuburan. CTU main offers a lot of programs compare to the other satellite campuses.

CTU main in Cebu City has offered 31 courses. Argao Campus has nine (9) courses, Moalboal has six (6) courses offered, Barili with four (4) courses that has been offered, Tuburan Campus provides twelve courses, Dan Bantayan Campus has six (6) courses, San Francisco Campus has offered seven (7) courses, Carmen Campus has six (6) courses, and Danao Campus has eight (8) courses offered.

These policies will definitely encompass to those who have not returned, and those who are returning, as well as those who are stayers of the institution. For those who have not return, these will give them a clearer view, and those who are returning and stayers will be guided because not all of those who returned actually succeeded or graduated in their course.

The policy is used for the baccalaureate programs since the bulk of leavers and returnees are in the undergraduate programs.

The consolidated population of the returnees among five (5) campuses for the last eight (8) years is about 1463 returning students. Out of 1463, there were 492 or 33.63% of them dropout from their course. It implies that there are indeed nevertheless been dropout issues among university students for the past eight (8) years.

The purpose of this study is to assess the conditions of Returning Students as basis in the formulation of policies and intervention mechanism. That is why Drop out rate of the University for the last eight years, completion rate of returning students for the last eight years, drop out motives perceived by the selected CTU administrators, lived experiences of the administrators in handling returning students, and etc. were gathered.

## **II. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **A. Research Design**

The study utilized the descriptive-evaluative research design since the result of the study appraises the proposed intervention policy for returning students and the conceptual schema for the returning students of CTU. The descriptive-evaluative design, according to Arifin (2010) and Ary (1990) as cited in Khamdani (2012), is a research design that investigates both the nature of what is existing and that provides information for a policymaker, for instance, to assess a particular implementation of a proposed program or a model.

The descriptive part of the study included the demographic profile of the respondents including their individual background, academic system, and social system. Moreover, the identification of the dropout rate and completion rate of the university was also illustrated in the study.. The narratives of administrators regarding the dropout motives, policy intervention and implementation, and existing strategic procedures of the university were also described through phenomenological techniques.

For the evaluative section of the study, the crafted policy proposal for the returning students and the conceptual schema for the dropout students were assessed to determine its possible impact on the concerned system of continuous institutional student dropouts and returnees.

## B. Sources of Data

In total, the Cebu Technological University (CTU) system has 19 campuses including the main campus, eight (8) satellite campuses, and 10 extension campuses which can be seen in Figure 4 below. The researcher considered the highest number of decreases in student population based on the enrolment data of the university from the school year 2017 to 2018 as the primary criteria to obtain the sample of the population. Figure 4 on the next page shows the difference in the CTU system's population from the first semester to the second semester.

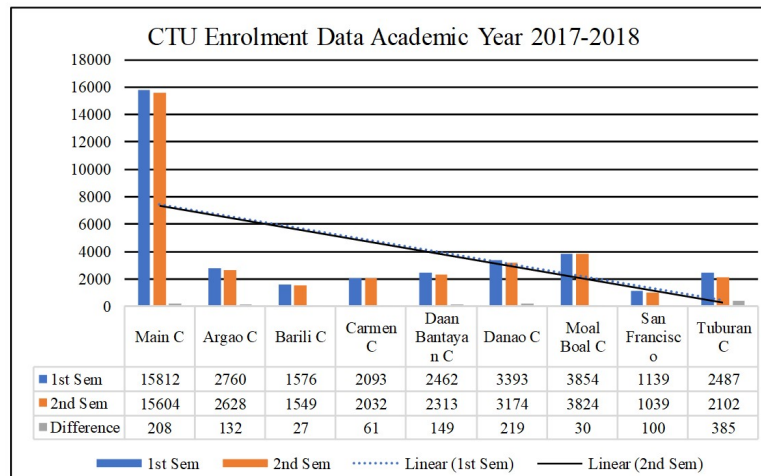


**Fig 4.** *Location Map of Cebu Technological University System*

Generally, the number of enrolments from the first semester of the said school year was recorded with 28, 929 officially enrolled students while the second semester logged 27, 693 admitted students. The difference of 599 population-decrease assumes dropouts among the students of CTU. It can be seen from Figure 5 that Tuburan Campus (385), Danao Campus (219),

Main Campus in Cebu City (208), Daan Bantayan Campus (149), and Argao Campus (132) obtained the top five position with the greatest number of population decline.

However, the difficult access of research data in Danao Campus and the other campuses of CTU due to the pandemic situation in Cebu persuaded the researcher to consider Moalboal Campus with 30 population decrease as the data source in identifying the dropout and completion rate of the university from the last eight (8) years.



**Fig 5.** *CTU Enrolment Data Academic Year 2017-2018*

Table 1 shows that 152 respondents were identified to participate in the study. However, only 102 students completely participated and answered the research instrument. Due to the restrictions of the pandemic including limited internet connection of some households and lack of mobile or desktop devices, 50 participants failed to return the responses, which was considered as the response bias.

On the other hand, there are 30 administrators in the identified CTU campuses. In selecting the key informants, the criteria are as follows: (1) must currently serving as an administrator of the university; and (2) must be an expert in the field of public administration and managing the students. After the implementation of the inclusion-exclusion criteria of selecting administrators, 12 were chosen and completely shared their lived experiences in supervising the returning students.

**Table 1.** *List of Respondents*

Campus	Returning Students	Administrators
Main Campus (Cebu City)	50	
Tuburan Campus	27	
Moalboal Campus	25	
Argao Campus	30	

Daan Bantayan Campus	20	
Total Respondents	152	30
Returned Responses	102	12
Response Bias	50	18

Moreover, archives from the registrar's office were retrieved to acquire the sample of the higher education institution's profile and program in terms of enrollment, graduation rate, and dropout rate. The number of courses of every curricular offering of the CTU system can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *List of Curricular Offerings of Cebu Technological University*

College	Curricular Offerings
Education	Bachelor of Elementary Education Bachelor of Secondary Education Bachelor of Technical Teacher Education
Engineering	Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering Bachelor of Science in Electronics Engineering Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering
Arts and Sciences	Bachelor of Science in Development Communication Bachelor of Science in Mathematics Bachelor of Science in Statistics
Technology	Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology Bachelor of Science in Graphics Design Bachelor of Science in Mechatronics Opportunity Livelihood Technology Entrepreneurial Classes
Management and Governance	Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management Bachelor of Science in Travel Management Bachelor of Science in Technology Management (Marketing) Bachelor of Arts in Local Governance Administration
Information Technology	Bachelor of Science in Information & Communication Technology
Agriculture	Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Technology
Medicine and Allied	Bachelor of Science in Nursing

**C. Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The three (3) guidance counselors from Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University's Mid La Union Campus's College of Management (COM), College of Engineering (COE), and College of Education validated the survey questionnaires. Then the questionnaires were administered to the respondents. However, the process of retrieval switched to an online platform through Google Forms because of the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic that restricted the movement not only of the researcher but also of the respondents.

On the other hand, to obtain the dropout and completion data of the study, the researcher asked permission from the University president through the university registrar to retrieve the profile of the returnees that was utilized to quantify the significant gap of enrollment, graduation, and success rates of the returning students in the completion of the program.

Moreover, a semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended questions was prepared to acquire the lived experiences of the 12 administrators regarding the academic concerns of dropout rates and the management of returning students. The questionnaire emphasized managerial and administrative functions to obtain the administrator's perceptions on dropout motives, best practices of academic interventions, existing intervention policies, policy enhancement procedures, and additional program implementation. Afterward, the questions were forwarded to emails of the 12 administrators. All received responses were properly organized and the codes and themes were created based on their respective responses.

**D. Analysis of Data**

Frequency count and percentage were utilized to determine the demographic profile of the returning students including their individual background (age, sex, number of siblings, and hobbies), academic system (academic program enrolled and terms completed prior to dropping), and social system (peer group interaction performance, extracurricular activities, barangay residence, and family income). Furthermore, secondary document analysis was conducted that determined the higher education institution's profile and program in terms of enrollment, graduation and dropout rate, and the number of courses in every curricular offering of the CTU system. Moreover, the same statistical tools were utilized to treat the dropout and completion rate data from the last eight (8) years.

On the other hand, the collected data from the semi-structured interview with the 12 administrations of the CTU system were analyzed based on the underlying concepts of the phenomenological research technique since the researcher aimed to obtain their lived experiences regarding the academic issues of dropouts and managing returning students. Braun, Clarke, and Terry (2014) elaborated the phenomenological technique is based on the concepts of

thematic analysis that involve multiple steps including the preparation of the data from coding to theme making to theme reporting.

All written responses from the Google Forms were retrieved and organized accordingly. Then, it was carefully analyzed by providing initial coding of all the responses using the in vivo code. The in vivo coding involves the encrypting process of exact relevant words and phrases based on the administrators' written answers. Then, a line-by-line coding procedure was conducted to ensure that the specific codes be formed. Subsequently, themes were formulated from the categorized codes. The researcher cautiously reviewed the themes that assure avoidance of code-theme overlap. Afterward, the researcher described the experiences of the administrators in terms of dropout causes and returning students' management.

Based on the responses of the Administrator, the researcher had come up with three themes. These were clustered and coded in accordance with the commonality of the responses of the 12 administrators on the reasons why students drop out of class.

The formulated themes from the responses of the administrators were the basis to craft the backbone of the intervention policy for the returning students. Hence, the conceptual scheme was created based on the intervention policy for the returning students.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Profile of the Respondents

##### Individual Background

Table 3 exhibits the profile of the respondents that addresses the first problem which aimed to describe the report of the returning students of Cebu Technological University (CTU) in terms of their individual background which comprises the following indicators: (1) age; (2) sex; (3) number of siblings; and (4) hobbies.

**Table 3.** *Respondents' Individual Background*

Indicators	f (N=102)	%
Age		
20 to 29 years old	92	90.20
30 to 39 years old	8	1.96
40 years old and above	2	7.84
Sex		



Male	47	46.08
Female	55	53.92
Number of Siblings		
One to three	46	45.10
Four to six	46	45.10
Seven to nine	10	9.80
Hobbies		
Music-minded	36	35.29
Basketball	19	18.63
Volleyball	17	16.67
Exercise	16	15.69
Running	7	6.86
Swimming	7	6.86
None of the above	0	0.00

*Age.* It can be gleaned from the table that respondents aged 20 to 29 years old has the highest frequency count of 92 or 90.20 percent. In contrast, respondents from the age range of 40 years old obtained the lowest frequency of two (2) or 1.96 percent of the whole sample size. This result is not surprising since the study's respondents emphasized returning students from the baccalaureate programs of the university in which most of the students are in their youth.

At this young age, they were immature in continuing to study which was caused by the transitional effect of adjustment from the K12 curriculum to college admission. When it comes to age, previous research shows that it may be an important factor from a developmental perspective. For example, students' previous experiences and achievements can influence the risk of future dropouts. In Markussen et al (2011) study on factors predicting early school leaving, non-completion, and completion in upper secondary education in Norway they identified earlier school performance as the far most predictive variable, i.e., that negative experiences in early school-age increase the risk of dropout in older age. In Bobby et al. (2016) study examining the effectiveness of dropout predictors across time, using two state-level high school graduation panels they found that age and poverty proved to be the most effective at discriminating between dropouts and graduates within each panel.

Some students resulted in dropout decisions during college because the courses they had taken up between K to 12 and college admission of being not congruent with each other. Some dropouts claimed that they did not have a good enough high school experience. In one instance, a student expressed that her school was a waste of time and that the students would not even do their homework or classwork and still get passing grades (Lagto, 2005).

*Sex.* Table 3 indicates that there are more female respondents than male respondents with a frequency difference of eight (8) or a 7.84 percent gap. It was worth noticing that most of the respondents are female dominant, which means that they are more responsive in answering survey questionnaires than the male category. The domination of female participants can be attributed to the curricular program offerings of the University in which most of the returning students are enrolled to.

*Number of Siblings.* Table 3 revealed that most of returning students with one to three siblings in a household equaled the percentage of returning students with four to six siblings with 45.10 percent in each of the indicators. It should be noted that the more members of the family the more financial requirements are needed. It was quite noticeable that having many siblings in the family belong to low-level economic status most especially that each member of the family must be sent to school for study. For instance, the necessities for education including school supplies, house rentals or transportation allowance, food allowance, projects, and other academic requirements are the determining factors to spend for every number of siblings in the family. Researchers including Bean (1980) claimed that background, money, and finance are most of the themes mentioned as struggling factors when the students enter the classroom.

*Hobbies.* In terms of the respondents' relaxation practices, it can be seen from the table that all of them enjoy a pastime after academic-related activities with 36 participants or 35.29 percent preferring activities that include music. In contrast, swimming and running are the least favored interests among the returning students that garnered an equal frequency count of seven (7) or 6.86 percent. It can be implied that most of the students prefer activities that can provide mental relaxation without the use of physical activities. Moreover, since it can be observed that the students do not have time to participate in extracurricular activities at the university, music has become their alternative platform for them to release the tension, pressure, and stress that they experience.

It shows that the more self-activities they are engaged in, the more they can divert their stresses from studying and other academic-related issues and concerns. According to the University of Montreal (2017), any number of very stressful "trigger" events that occur in their final few months in class pushes a teenager to suddenly drop out of school. Furthermore, it is now the features of the hobbies among returnees isolate stresses through listening to music, playing basketball, or conducting daily exercises. Some researchers acclaim that the experience of positive and negative emotions is directly related to levels of student engagement (Reschly et al., 2008).

## **Academic System**

*Academic Program.* Table 4 indicated that 62.75 percent of returning students were enrolled in the College of Technology (CoT) with a frequency count of 64 participants. On contrary, 8.82 percent or nine (9) of the respondents were enrolled in the College of Agriculture.

The findings are not surprising since the data from the registrar's office revealed that CoT is The huge number of enrollees from the college that also affects its dropout rate. This due to the programs offered are non-board courses.

**Table 4.** *Respondents' Academic System*

Indicators	f (N=102)	%
Enrolled Academic Program		
Technology	64	62.75
Education	18	17.65
Arts and Sciences	11	10.78
Agriculture	9	8.82
Terms completed prior to dropping		
First Year	59	57.84
Second Year	30	29.41
Third Year	13	12.75

It can be noted that CoT implements the “no grade requirement” with an exception to the “75 general average” rule. This practice was based on the assumption that it is not a board program.

*Terms Completed Prior to Dropping.* The table exhibited that most of the returning students stopped attending school after they completed their first year of college with a frequency count of 59 or 57.84 percent. Based on the evidence gathered, it was noticeable that most of the returnees were unable to decide whether they are going to pursue the course or not. Immaturity in accordance with their age can be a significant factor that affected their motivation to continue with their studies. Moreover, the economic and family background can strongly influence the respondents' determination to pursue their studies, and probably their choice of program offerings did not align with their respective tracks during their senior high school. In congruence with Steinberg and Almeida's (2008) statement, they claimed that the support for transition from high school to college was essential to improving the graduation rate of a particular educational institution. These transition programs include dual high school and college enrollment, internships as well as cooperative education programs. These programs help students acquire the skills needed to be successful in the workforce and college.

## Social System

*Peer Group Interaction Performance.* Table 5 shows the respondents' social system in terms of their peer-group interaction performance. It can be glossed from the table that most of the participants frequently ask questions or contribute to class discussions (55.88%) during their academic conversations and dialogues. However, it is surprising that three respondents do not engage in any peer-group collaboration. It can be noted that the students participate in academic endeavors including the conduct of dialogues with their instructors because they are asked to recite during class discussions and they are required to respond. However, some students are timid and do not engage in collaborative work. Possibly because there are students who do not participate in extracurricular activities of the institution because of external factors that hinder them from possible optimization of their social interaction abilities with their teachers and peers.

**Table 5.** *Respondents' Social System in terms of Peer Group Interaction Performance*

Indicators	f	%
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	57	55.88
Worked with other students on projects during classes	53	51.96
Worked with classmates outside class	56	54.90
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	16	15.69
Had serious conversations with students who are different	56	54.90
None of the above	3	2.94

It was discerned that most of the returnees were very willing to participate in teaching and learning activities like making projects, and helping classmates and other students inside the classroom.

The stronger the level of academic and social integration of the students the higher chances of getting grades. This has been supported by researchers including Jones, W. A. (2010) that claimed the stronger the individual's level of social and academic influence, the greater his subsequent commitment to the institution and the goal of college graduation.

According to the findings, a returning student who participates actively in class activities is more likely to get good grades, which boosts their drive to finish the course. Moreover, Astin (1977) found out that the three most important aspects of student involvement were academic involvement, involvement with staff, and involvement with student peer groups, which led to his conclusion. The student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years. Peer group interaction develops strong relationships and a feeling of belongingness. Peer groups that unite students and schools have the potential to decrease the dropout rate (Brewster & Fager, 2000).

*Extracurricular Activities.* Table 6 indicates returning students' social systems regarding their academic and non-academic interests. It can be deduced from the table that the majority of the respondents do not engage, (31.72%) themselves in various extracurricular activities of the university – scholastic or not. However, there are returning students that appreciate and get involved in various educational pursuits including music and sports and recreation both obtained 15.69 percent. It is also evident that few students participate in academic competitive teams (3.92%).

The respondents' reluctance to actively participate in various extracurricular activities of the institution, this is due to they were obliged to render services after class.

**Table 6.** *Respondents' Social System in terms of Extracurricular Activities*

Indicators	f	%
Student Organization	9	8.82
Academic Competitive Teams	4	3.92
Arts (Sewing, Machines, CAD)	15	14.71
Student's Government Involvement	5	4.90
Music	16	15.69
Sports and Recreation	16	15.69
Community Engagement	13	12.75
None of the above	32	31.72

Rickwood et al. (2016) reported that the main factor affecting the tertiary studies of Australian university students aged 17–25 years old was stress. Rumberger (2003), in addition, investigated a sample of 14,249 students to conclude whether certain extracurricular activities (athletics and fine arts) considerably reduced the likelihood of quitting school. He found that athletics, which usually consist of being on a team, were the only ones that had a significant role in the decision to quit school.

*Barangay Residence.* Table 7 shows the social system of the respondents in terms of their barangay residence. Most of the returning students who participated in the study require public transportation (88.24%) to reach their respective universities. Meanwhile, 11.26 percent of the respondents claimed that their campuses are near their households. The result is not surprising since commuting has been part of Filipinos' daily routine. However, it has to be considered that most of the respondents only reach the maximum monthly wage of Php5, 000.00. This means that most of the respondents belongs to low level of economic status. Datta et al. (2003) claimed that people who drop out of high school mostly earn wages below the poverty level, which means that the poverty rate for families headed by dropouts is more than twice that for families headed by high school graduates.

**Table 7.** *Respondents' Social System in terms of Barangay Residence*

Indicators	f (N=102)	%
Need to commute to school	90	88.24
Walking distance to school	12	11.26

The result suggested that with these economic requirements among returnees, the institution shall provide more allowances not just to the returnees but as much as possible to resident students in CTU.

*Monthly Family Income.* Table 8 exhibits the monthly income of the respondents. It can be deduced from the table that most of the respondents' household earns a maximum wage of Php4, 999.00 (45.10%). On the other hand, few returning student's families make a wage range of Php25, 000.00 to Php49, 999.00 a month with 2.94 percent of the sample size. It was found out that most of the returning students' monthly family income of the returnees had less than or equal to five thousand pesos only. The data revealed that every student needs additional financial requirements. Students in middle to upper-classes are less likely to drop out of school than those of a lower income class (Hale, 1998). Possibly, poverty among the students is a direct

impact of the poverty incidence in Central Visayas specifically. If these financial struggles will be resolved, their retention and completion of their course becomes most attainable.

**Table 8.** *Respondents' Social System in terms of Monthly Family Income*

Indicators	f (N=102)	%
Php 0 to Php4, 999	46	45.10
Php5, 000 to Php9, 999	42	41.18
Php10, 000 to Php24, 999	11	10.78
Php25, 000 to Php49, 999	3	2.94

This was supported by The Philippine Star (2017) wherein Quezon City Representative Alfred Vargas expressed concerns that the number of out-of-school-youths, both at primary and secondary levels, will steadily increase because of poverty.

### Dropout Rate of Cebu Technological University

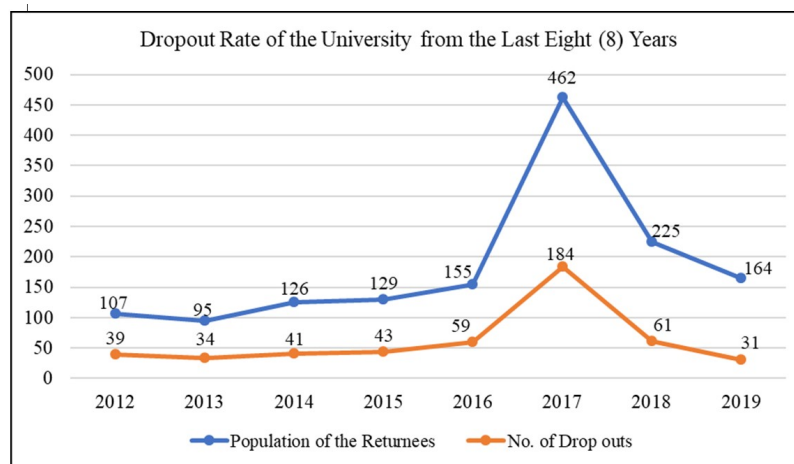
Table 9 provides the consolidated report of the returning students and dropout rates of the Cebu Technological University from 2012 to 2019. The individual description of the result was separately presented in a graphical form to easily comprehend the findings of the study in terms of the dropout rate and the completion rate of the university.

**Table 9.** *Consolidated Report of Returning and Dropout Students of CTU from 2012 to 2019*

Indicators	Academic Year								N	%
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Population of Returnees	107	95	126	129	155	462	225	164	1463	
Number of Drop-outs	39	34	41	43	59	184	61	31	492	
Rate of Drop-outs	36%	36%	33%	33%	38%	40%	27%	19%		33.63
Remaining Returnees	68	61	85	86	96	278	164	133	971	

Number of Returnees who Graduated	61	57	77	64	43	65	48	4	419	
No. of Completers for stayers	7	4	8	22	53	213	116	129	552	37.73
Completion rate of the Returnees	57%	60%	61%	50%	28%	14%	21%	2%		28.64

Table 9 illustrates the population rate of the university's returning students against its dropout rate from 2012 to 2019. It can be seen that the greatest number of returning students was recorded in the year 2017 (31.58%) that was followed by the year 2018 (15.38%), and the year 2019 (11.21%). On the other hand, the least number of returning students was documented in the years 2013 (6.49%), 2012 (7.31%), and 2014 (8.61%). Regarding the dropout rate, it can be determined that the years 2017 (37.40%), 2018 (12.40%), and 2016 (11.99%) garnered the highest dropout rate of the university based on the records from the last eight years. On the contrary, the years 2019 (6.30%), 2013 (6.91%), and 2012 (7.93%) obtained the least number of dropout rates. The results imply that it is almost likely there is a direct relationship between the number of returning students and the dropout rate of the university. It means that the higher the number of students who are coming back to the university, the higher the possibility of the dropout rate.



**Fig 6.** Dropout Rate of CTU from 2012 to 2019

The number of dropout students in the university can be attributed to various reasons including the socio economic status (SES) of a particular student, learning environment (instructors, facilities, peers, classmates, etc.), learning disability, family background, and other



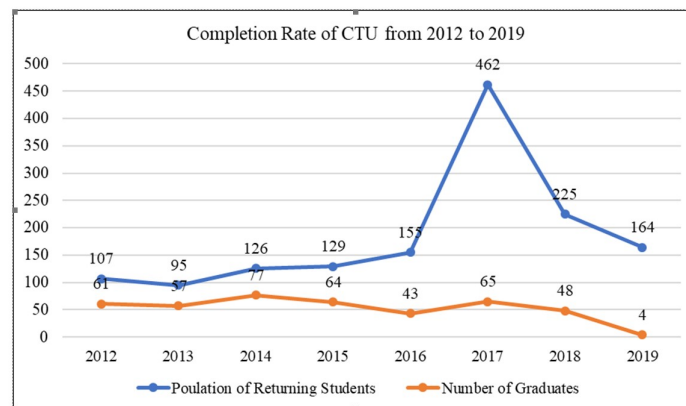
external factors. Moreover, internal factors including lack of motivation, lack of guidance, and academic commitment can also influence the dropping out motives of the students.

The study suggests that the intervention program dropout rate of the university is more challenging. Educational policymakers have supported the implementation of dropout prevention programs as early as eighth grade (Pollack, 2010).

### Completion Rate of Cebu Technological University

Figure 7 represents the population rate of the university's returning students against the number of students who graduated from their selected academic program. It can be observed that most numbers of returning students who completed their chosen academic program were recorded in the years 2014 (18.38%), 2017 (15.51%), and 2015 (15.27%) respectively. In comparison to the dropout rate, there is no visible trend that can be observed in terms of the completion rate of the university over the last eight years as the data are scattered.

It was found out in the study that the completion rate of the returning students is lesser than the dropout rate of the university. The completion rate is only 28.64 while the dropout rate result for the last eight years starting from 2012 to 2019 has 33.63 percent, this is probably because most of the returnees are still enrolling during this time and have not yet finished their course. The result suggested that preventive measures are needed to be imposed to increase the number of completers in the university.



**Fig 7.** *Completion Rate of CTU from 2012 to 2019*

Studies are in congruence with the suggestion including the completion rate as the product of individual commitment against cultural goals and socially approved. It implies that thoroughly and actively participating in cultural goals and social integration balanced with money and academic commitment matches among the group, the greater chances of completion of their course. According to (Sinclair et al., 1998), disengaged students often drop out academically and eventually separate from school leading to a higher number of dropouts. While programs that recognize the signs of disengagement and prioritize the importance of student engagement are needed to fully support students on graduation.

### **Dropout Motives Perceived by CTU Administrators**

Based on the written responses from the 12 selected administrators of CTU from the five (5) selected satellite campuses, the researcher formulated five (5) distinct and significant themes. This study emphasized the argument that all of these generated themes provide further understanding regarding the motivations and intentions of students regarding the dropout rate of the university that can also open for scholastic interventions and recommendations.

#### **Theme 1: Poverty still impedes academic success**

Economic and financial constraints greatly affected the students' motivation to pursue and complete their academic endeavors. The parallelism of this finding can also be observed from the conducted survey regarding the monthly income of the returning students' respective families wherein most of them earn less than or equal to Php5, 000.00. They fail to complete their chosen academic programs because they lack online resources including mobile technologies like smartphones and laptops or desktops as they do not have enough extra financial resources for the purchase and a prepaid subscription for data connection cannot be afforded. Moreover, the situation of the returning students got worsened because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

People who drop out of high school mostly earn wages below the poverty level, which means the poverty rate for families headed by dropouts is more than twice that for families headed by high school graduates (Herbert, 2005). The low family income of the returning students affects also transportation allowance because most of them are coming from proximity distance away from school, and need to commute to at least another town just to reach Cebu Technological University. Students from families that fall in the lower income distributions are five times more likely to drop out of school than those of higher-income families (Cantave & Harrison, 1999).

This study suggests that beside from the poverty line, people above the poverty line must also be considered. Several programs have been conducted to alleviate poverty among the deprived and underprivileged by initiating extension services or community-based extension activities. However, universities must also look into the role of the wealthy to lessen the poverty situation of their community. Dela Torre (2017) claimed that three frameworks can be implemented to fight the marginalization and economic situations of vulnerable communities. He emphasized that the third model or also known as the social-incubation model strengthens empathy and generates supportive links between the entrepreneur and the student, who share the same goal.

#### **Theme 2: Connection widens the gap**

The pandemic greatly affected the learning of students as it changed the modality of education. The shift to online learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic has demanded challenges among the students primarily in terms of Wi-Fi connection or data plan subscription. This has become one of the cited hindrances that not only students but also all stakeholders in the

education sector have seen which can hamper academic achievement among the students. The hybrid alternatives of meeting, the challenges of learning have “widened” the disparity in educational opportunities that fail to achieve optimum academic success among the returning students. According to the CTU administrators, since most of the returning students lack financial support, as reported in the first theme, they have difficulty participating in their various classes which results in losing interest in accomplishing their academic tasks which eventually leads to dropping.

Internet utilization is mostly used in synchronous classes, though it is also used for asynchronous in downloading modules and other learning materials. In the context of synchronous classes, Libasin et al. (2021) claimed that the OL-synch method produces higher academic achievements for kids. It is by Duncan’s (2012) findings which suggest that students would do better academically if they learn online using the asynchronous approach. However, the results of academic studies also counterfeit the advantages of synchronous classes. According to Joosten and Cusatis (2019) as cited in El Said (2021), students who require more assistance or are struggling academically expect greater communication and interactivity from their instructor.

### **Theme 3: Decision collapse interests**

Most of the CTU administrators also cited the returning students’ weak decision-making in terms of selecting their academic program. They believe that choosing the right and appropriate academic program for particular students’ knowledge and skills encourages a strong scholastic will to pursue their studies. Further, the country’s curriculum transition from K to 12 should have become an opportunity to align the students’ training so they are prepared for their entry into the university.

In addition, lack of interest tends to negatively influence their academic commitment and coping mechanism for various academic demands. First-year post-secondary students often struggle to adjust to their new environment. So much so, that Griffiths et al. (2005) termed this struggle a learning shock to liken it to the emotional jolt of adjusting to a new culture. Like newcomers confronting life in an unfamiliar country, first-year post-secondary students attempt to relate to a new academic culture; the transition seems to be a critical period of self-discovery and the success or failure of adjustment can determine how well students perform in the long-term (Hu & Wolniak, 2013).

### **Theme 4: Self versus environment**

The written responses among administrators have identified various reasons that affect students’ performance in their academic pursuits. This particular theme is a combination of familial and work conflicts that influence the academic endeavors of the students. Some of them answered that the students drop out because of the following reasons: (1) work-family conflict;

(2) work-study conflict; and (3) other personal problems. Therefore, it can be concluded that the outside factor of a particular student's environment can be one of the causes of this particular academic concern. It can be noted that some of the students do not live with their parents or guardians. Thus, the probability of distant familial support and guidance can be a factor in students' academic success.

### **Theme 5: Commitment amplifies extra responsibility**

Being a parent is an extra responsibility aside from attending classes at the university. Most likely, being a mother with children at a young age can also be an additional obligation and duty not only to the family but also to a child at birth. Early marriage and pregnancy are always associated with school dropout. Evidence proves that early marriage and pregnancy can be both the cause and consequence of dropping out of school.

Girls certainly leave or are taken out of school because they are pregnant or married, but girls who have already dropped out of school are more likely to marry and/or become pregnant early (Brown, 2012; UNESCO, 2017). It means that when women are pregnant, they are forced to drop out of school to focus on their marital situation. When the woman got pregnant, she has to prioritize the future of her baby inside the womb (Harding, 2003).

## **Lived Experiences of School Administrator's Management of Returning Students**

### **Theme 1: Strengthen institutional policy implementation**

Based on the responses provided by the administrators, most of them agreed that they implement various academic policies of the university to manage the returning students to minimize dropout rates. It can be noted that the conduct of general and departmental orientation must be integrated distribution of Student Manual even in a limited copies or in electronic file.

To lessen the incidents of dropouts, it is necessary to screen the applicants. The screening process of students does not discriminate against students rather it encourages them more to focus and accomplish their academic undertakings as research suggests that aptitude examinations including college admission tests are valid indicators of academic success.

It is important to augment these academic procedures and guidelines that will align with other policies that include admission, management of returning students, and minimization of dropout cases. This is in congruence with the results from Sam et al. (2013) that acknowledged the vital role of institutional policies in academic success. They argued that to integrate its educational system, institutional policies on academic and non-academic support services would enable universities to assist students' genuine requirements and so contribute to their academic

accomplishment and educational quality. Moreover, Beradda et al. (2022) noted that the primary solution to increase student retention is academic advising programs. Among other resolutions include (1) programs that provide pre-university information and advising on undergraduate majors; (2) programs that provide advising and support to students, especially training in learning strategies and psychological support, (3) guidelines for preventing student dropout; and (4) efforts specifically targeted students in online courses.

### **Theme 2: Establish multi-communication and network coordination**

Most of the administrators have acknowledged the role of communication and keeping in touch with the students. They have recognized that by keeping constant contact and interaction with students, it is easy to spot the existing problem that the dropout students are experiencing. Thus, preventing total dropout among the students. The COVID 19 pandemic made this communication process became more difficult since it was also stated that the students' unstable internet connectivity and financial constraints obstruct them to connect with their instructors. However, based on their responses, not only that the IT facilities are upgraded but also multi-communication should be the focus of the university.

Multi-communication, according to Valo (2019), is defined as a process of means interacting with several people separately but at the same time. Usually, multi communication refers to parallel conversations enabled by communication technologies. In the context of the study, it is important to privately discuss the problems of students not only with one person who is the administrator but also with the parents, students, subject teachers, advisers, and guidance counselors which will also build network coordination between the students and the people concerned.

### **Theme 3: Emphasize effective counseling**

When the administrators were asked about program that lessen dropouts, they have determined the significance and influence of the guidance office as an avenue that creates and implements development programs to help students, dropouts and or returning students, evolve holistically. Further, the administrators have also accredited the work of counseling as it encourages students to form associations and promotes equal opportunity practices, focuses attention on cultural or societal differences, and assists students with difficulties or concerns by conducting group or individual counseling sessions.

Guidance counseling is being emphasized from the administrator's perception as the help center for students, the university should assist the guidance office to cater to all its needs to support all its functions. In addition, training and upskilling should also be provided to designated staff of the office to ensure the facilitation of various cases that involve admission, implementation of education and counseling plans, reduction of dropout cases, increasing the

completion rate among the returning students amidst all external factors that affect them, and other duties and responsibilities are realized.

Khesht-Masjedi et al. (2019).

In addition, researchers also recommended that school psychologists are ideally positioned to lead initiatives to improve school connections since they are significant members of school communities with a sophisticated understanding of how to assist students' academic achievement and emotional well-being. Sulkowski et al. (2012).

### **Proposed Policy Intervention for Returning Students**

These intervention policies are intended only for returnees under Baccalaureate Degree at Cebu Technological University. The proposed intervention policy was based on the formulated themes by the researcher with their specific reasons for dropping as perceived by school administrators. The study revealed the following reasons for dropping out from classes are due to following issues: teenage marriage, conflict schedule of classes and job, economic and financial constraints, internet connectivity, unprepared for academic demands, picking up the wrong course, no academic commitment, family issues, and other personal problems.

The created prevention and intervention program for dropout students and returning students is illustrate.

#### **Dropout Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

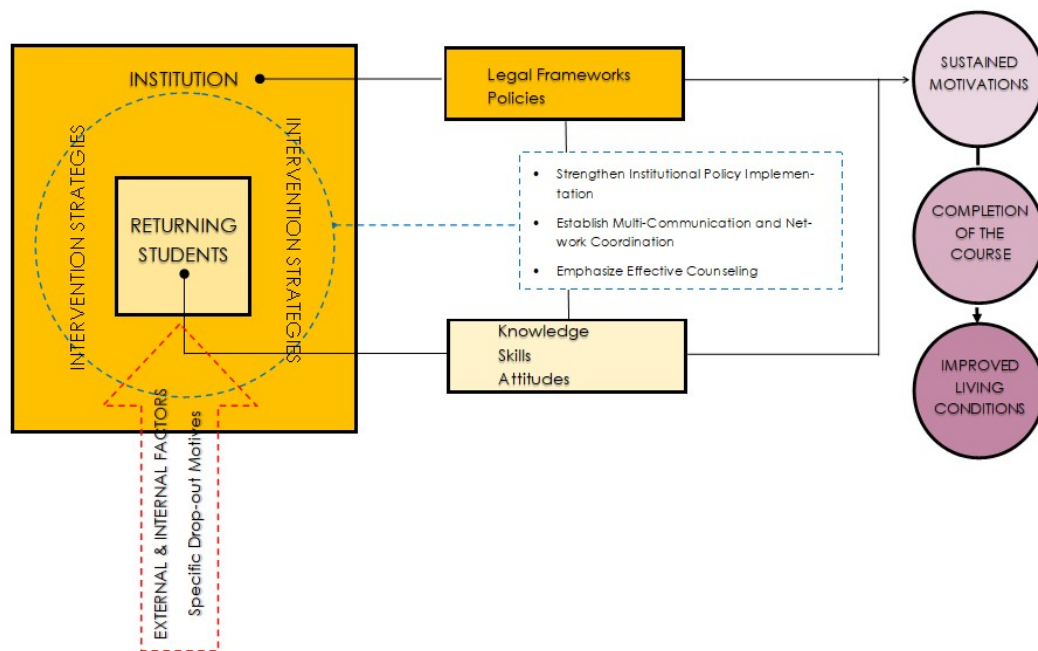
<b>DROP OUT MOTIVES AS (As theme)</b>	<b>Intervention Strategies (As Theme)</b>	<b>Specific Drop out Motives (Perceived by Administrators)</b>	<b>Specific Intervention Strategy</b>
POVERTY STILL IMPEDES ACADEMIC SUCCESS	Strengthen Institutional Policy Implementation	Transportation allowance	Provide minibuses that will cater to non-residence students or provide special houses like dormitories for returning students inside the university. Moreover, dormitory fees should be minimal that university students can afford.
		Low family Income	Conduct extension programs like skills training for the stakeholders outside the community, which can be the basis as a weapon to find job opportunities and improve the

			<p>income of the family.</p> <p>Conduct extension project income generated and recruit deserving poor family people to work on.</p>
CONNECTION WIDENS THE GAP	Establish Multi- Communication and Network Coordination	<p>Unavailability of Gadgets,</p> <p>Internet Connection Problem</p>	<p>Provide an Internet connectivity Kit,</p> <p>Create a communication strategy and build a network.</p> <p>Utilize both synchronous and asynchronous modes of teaching</p> <p>Provide more scholarships program</p>
DECISION COLLAPSE INTEREST	Emphasize Effective Counseling	Picking up the wrong course	<p>Introduce the overview of the course offered in the universities and what are possible job opportunities in the future.</p> <p>Conduct general orientation, course orientation, and classroom orientation.</p>
		No academic commitment	<p>Provide career guidance opportunity</p> <p>Create Student Development Program.</p> <p>Encourage the student to participate in extracurricular activities like sports.</p>
SELF VERSUS ENVIRONMENT		Conflict schedule of classes and job	Strengthen scholarship programs and establish more connections between private and public companies in such a way that there will be no more seeking jobs.

COMMITMENTS AMPLIFIES EXTRA RESPONSIBILITY		Teenage marriage and Early Pregnancy	Intensive counseling from a guidance counselor about the impact of teenage marriage by empowering the girls with information, skills, and support networks.
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### Conceptual Schema for Dropout Students

Based on the intervention policy, the researcher was able to derive a schema of the intervention policy that counteracts dropout motives. Thus, the conceptual schema is also illustrated below.



**Fig 8.** *Conceptual Schema for Dropout Students of CTU System*

The returning student/s is/are in the heart of the institution (CTU). Therefore it is imperative that the school should provide interventions strategies to sustain drives and motivations to continue schooling in such a way that it may lead to the completion of the course (output of the intervention activities or policies) from which the outcome will be improved living conditions of these graduated returning students.

With the provisions of legal frameworks about the policies, students will be knowledgeable and theirs skill will be motivated so that the sustainability of the motivation will last until completion of the program. These graduates becomes competent and improve their lives.



#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. The respondents have varied profiles and characteristics and determining their reasons for dropping from school also has varied values.
2. The profile of the returning students has a great significant relationship with the dropout rate of the university because it speaks economics, interest, and personal problem of the returnees.
3. Despite free educational tuition fees subsidized by the government among returning students, there are other casualties that need to put attention like financial crisis, personal problems, and interest because this will lead to demotivated in finishing their studies.
4. Most of the administrators have validated the Profile of the students as reasons to drop out.
5. The conceptual Schema that was drawn based on the data gathered by the students and administrators; the dropout rates of the university can be lessened if the dropout issues shall be enhanced.
6. Legal Frameworks for Policy intervention for returning students are really important to help less fortunate people to uplift socio economics and become better individual someday.

#### V. RECOMMENDATION

1. Orientation is intended only for Returnees/Drop-outs/Transferees.
2. Database for Returnees/Drop-outs and Graduation rates should be made.
3. Data Analysis and Interpretation of dropout rate should be conducted.
4. Providing intensive career guidance and job opportunities among returnees.
5. Scholarship opportunities for the returning students should be granted.
6. Proper screening of the returnees for non-board courses to align previous knowledge and skills to entry in the College.

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