



## Do ELGAs (Expected Lasallian Graduate Attributes) Affect the Employers' Intent to Hire?: The Case of the DLSU-Manila College Graduates

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**Abstract:** This study analyzed the role of ELGAs (Expected Lasallian Graduate Attributes) in the hiring of DLSU graduates. ELGAs (Critical and Creative Thinker, Effective Communicator, Reflective Lifelong- Learner and Service- Driven Citizen) were the independent variables and intention to hire was the dependent variable. Using the theory of planned behavior, the normative and control beliefs were the mediator variables. The Employers' Belief was also added as a mediating variable. The results confirmed that Critical and Creative Thinker affected the intention to hire DLSU graduates. This was mediated by Normative Beliefs and Employers' Belief. The results also confirmed that Service Driven Citizen affected the intention to hire. The mediating variable was the Employers' Belief.

**Key Words:** Expected Lasallian Graduate Attributes; marketability of college graduates, employers' desired attributes

### INTRODUCTION

There is a need for universities to review whether their graduates have attributes that the employers' desire. Universities update themselves with the attributes that employers' desire in the form of appointments of advisers from the industry and talks by industry practitioners to students. These are all aimed in producing graduates who will be marketable to employers. In a very competitive labor market, will certain attributes such as ELGAs affect the employers' intention to hire?

### RESEARCH GAP/STUDY'S SIGNIFICANCE

There is no existing study if ELGAs can influence employers intent to hire college graduates. In a world where there is increased competition on marketing graduates in the labor market, this research can yield recommendations that will benefit higher education institutions in marketing their graduates to employers. This study is also significant to DLSU as it can evaluate if ELGAs can influence the employers' intent to hire college graduates.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to do the following:

1. What are the ELGAs that will affect the employers' intent to hire DLSU college graduates?
2. Will normative, control beliefs and employers' beliefs explain the relationship between ELGAs and the intention to hire DLSU graduates?



Respondents in this study were limited to Human Resource (HR) officers who hired DLSU-Manila graduates and/or accepted DLSU-Manila interns. These officers manned their company's booths at the Job Fair held in DLSU-Manila in 2017. There were also HR officers who were surveyed but were not involved in the Job Fair held in DLSU.

## Review of Related Literature

### 1. ELGAs as College Graduate Attributes

Marketers can view universities as firms, graduates as products and employers as buyers (Kerin, Theng, Hartley and Rudelius, 2013; Kotler, Armstrong and Opresnik, 2018). In this context, firms (universities) produce products (graduates) for buyers (employers). In the competitive labor market, these graduates should have desirable attributes that will distinguish them from other graduates so that they will have more chances of getting hired. Research on attributes that employers seek in college graduates show that there are theories taught in higher education that are too abstract and of little relevance to the employers' needs (Rosentreich, Priday and Bedgood, 2014). Rosentreich, Priday and Bedgood analyzed 729 job advertisements and summarized the attributes that employers desire from graduates (Table 1).

Table 1: Attributes Employers Desire from College Graduates

Attributes	Knowledge	Researchers
Analytical	Critical thinking	Rosenstreich, Daniela &Priday, G &Bedgood, Rowan. (2014); Melaia et al, 2008
Effective communicator	Communication skills	AACSB, 2013; Ellen & Pilling, 2002
Creative	Problem-solving	<i>Ellen &amp; Pilling, 2002; Melaia, Abratt&amp; Bick, 2008</i>
Detail-oriented	Attention to details	Schlee&Harich, 2010; Wellman, 2010
Ethical	Sustainability	Melaia, Abratt& Bick, 2008
Global	Multicultural perspectives	Ellen & Pilling, 2002; Schlee&Harich, 2010
Good with numbers	Forecasting, Budgeting	Ellen & Pilling, 2002
Planner	Project Management	Melaia, Abratt& Bick, 2008
Salesperson	Sales Knowledge	Ellen & Pilling, 2002,
IT proficient	IT knowledge	Ellen & Pilling, 2002

Table 1 shows that the attributes desired by employers correspond to ELGAs. An Effective Communicator is part of the ELGAs. A Creative and Critical Thinker (an ELGA) has analytical and creative skills, which are desired by employers as shown in Table 1. A Reflective Lifelong Learner and Service-Driven Citizen is ethical. Ethical is another attribute desired by employers (Table 1). An employability study conducted by DLSU's Office of Counselling and Career Services support the fact that employers looked for creativity and exceptional communication skills that Lasallian graduates exhibit (Retrieved June 20, 2017 from <https://thelasallian.com/2012/02/28/forming-ideal-lasallian-graduates/>). Creativity and exceptional communication skills are related to the following ELGAs: Creative and Critical Thinker and Effective Communicator.

Implemented in 2009, DLSU created the ELGAs primarily to promote Christian development (Retrieved June 20, 2017 from <https://thelasallian.com/2012/02/28/forming-ideal-lasallian-graduates/>). The ELGAs advocate teaching with a clear goal. It is based on a tool used for education planning which suggests that an academic



institution must first have a vision of the ideal graduate. This vision will be the basis for curriculum, course content, assessment and instruction.

ELGAs are used in the 6 colleges and the School of Economics at DLSU. According to Brother Jun Erguiza, the ELGA least exhibited by graduates would be Service-Driven Citizen (Retrieved June 30, 2017 from <https://thelasallian.com/2012/02/28/forming-ideal-lasallian-graduates/>). According to him, there is a need to turn graduates to service-driven citizens that will work for the betterment of society. In a study of the triple bottom line, it was observed that firms, which are managed by employers and would-be employers, are not responsible only for profits but are also contributing to society's betterment (Teehankee, 2014). According to Teehankee, employers who are looking for service-driven graduates are gaining legitimacy in many fronts. Thus, Service-Driven Citizen (an ELGA) is a desirable attribute.

Another study that legitimizes the ELGAs pertaining to Service-Driven graduates and Reflective Lifelong Learner observed that effective human resource management, particularly with greater emphasis on spiritual transformation and leadership by example, resulted in positive organizational performance (Edralin, 2014). This implies that responsible business does not aim to gain profits but reflects on a better understanding of the spiritual values, significance of life, Christian leadership skills and interpersonal skills to relate to others in peaceful and compassionate ways. This shift from profit as a sole gauge of business to social responsibility is not only seen in businesses but also among Filipino consumers who support social responsibility (Manalastas, 2014). Thus, employers, who want to promote their products to consumers, desire social responsibility attributes associated with Service-Driven Citizen and Reflective Lifelong Learner. These attributes should be coupled with Critical and Creative Thinker and Effective Communicator. The ELGAs make the curriculum relevant as business is now positioned as not only for profits but for social corporate responsibility, sustainability and betterment of society.

Do these attributes influence the employers' intent to hire? This study aims to test the effect of ELGAs on the employers' intent to hire graduates. Thus, ELGAs served as the study's independent variables (Morgan and Hague, 2013; Harrison, Cupman, Truman and Hague, 2016).

## 2. Beliefs and Intended Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) posits that beliefs are linked to behavior. Introduced in 1991, the TPB has become one of the most frequently cited models for predicting human behaviour. The core of TPB is to predict intentions through beliefs classified as behavioural, normative and control beliefs (Ajzen, 2011). Normative beliefs refer to the individual's belief that people who mattered to him would want him to engage in a certain behaviour while behavioral beliefs refer to beliefs about the likely consequences of a behaviour. On the other hand, control beliefs are beliefs that may facilitate or impede a behaviour.

A study by Cooke and French (2011) introduces a TPB-related issue in regards to the context of the situation of which the behavior pertains to. Variables deemed significant to the formation of beliefs are based on the context of a given setting. Certain behaviours, (in the case of the intent of hiring employees by HR officers) seek to serve an ultimate purpose. This situation calls for mediating variables which can explain the relationship between desired attributes and the employers' intent to hire. The mediating variables will be the normative beliefs and control beliefs. The survey included a question that directly asked employers if they will hire a DLSU graduate. This variable was included as the employers' belief. The dependent variable will be the employers' intention to hire.

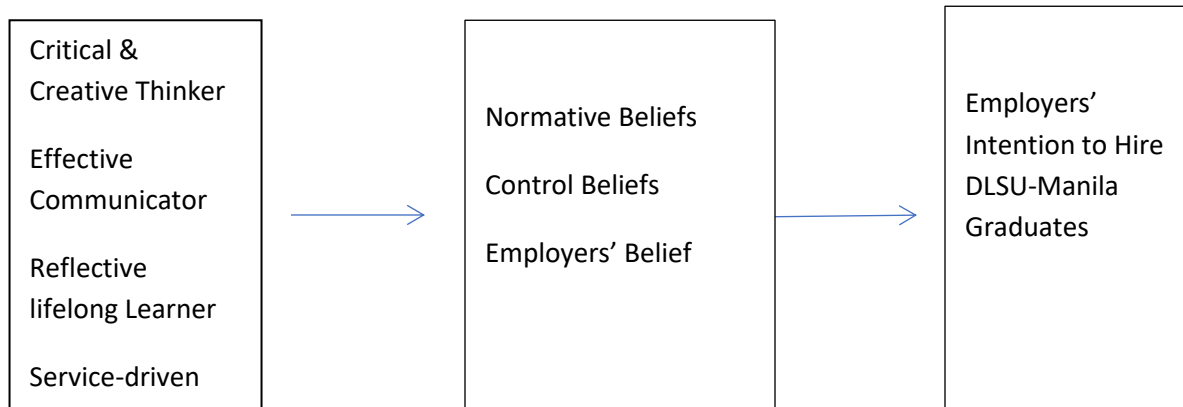


Figure 1. ELGAs and the Employers' Intent to Hire (Ajzen, 1991)

#### *Methodology*

The researchers used a survey questionnaire to gather data. It was submitted to the DLSU Research Ethics Office (REO) for approval. After it was approved by the REO, the researchers contacted HR Departments of selected companies. These companies were taken from a database of companies attending Job Fairs at DLSU-Manila. The researchers contacted the HR Officers if they hired DLSU college graduates and/or if they accepted DLSU interns. After this was checked, the researchers requested for appointments to conduct the surveys. Most of the HR Officers were surveyed when they went to DLSU Manila to interview applicants during the Job Fair held in DLSU in 2017. Other surveys were emailed by HR Officers because they were not part of the DLSU-Job Fair. The total usable surveys reached 163. The data was processed using a statistical software.

#### *Research Design*

This study aimed to find out if ELGAs can affect the employers' intention to hire. The mediating variables will be the normative, control and employers' beliefs.

#### *Instrument*

This used a self-administered survey questionnaire. It contained the following sections: 1. Consent form, 2. Respondents' basic socio-economic information and 3. Opinions about DLSU graduates.

#### *Pilot Test*

A pilot test was conducted to 5 companies taking DLSU interns. This checked the wording of the questionnaire and length of time needed to complete the survey. A pilot test was used to assess the clarity of items, as well as length, format, and instructions for the overall survey. Based on the results of the pilot test and comments from the participants, the questionnaire was revised.

#### *Sampling Design*

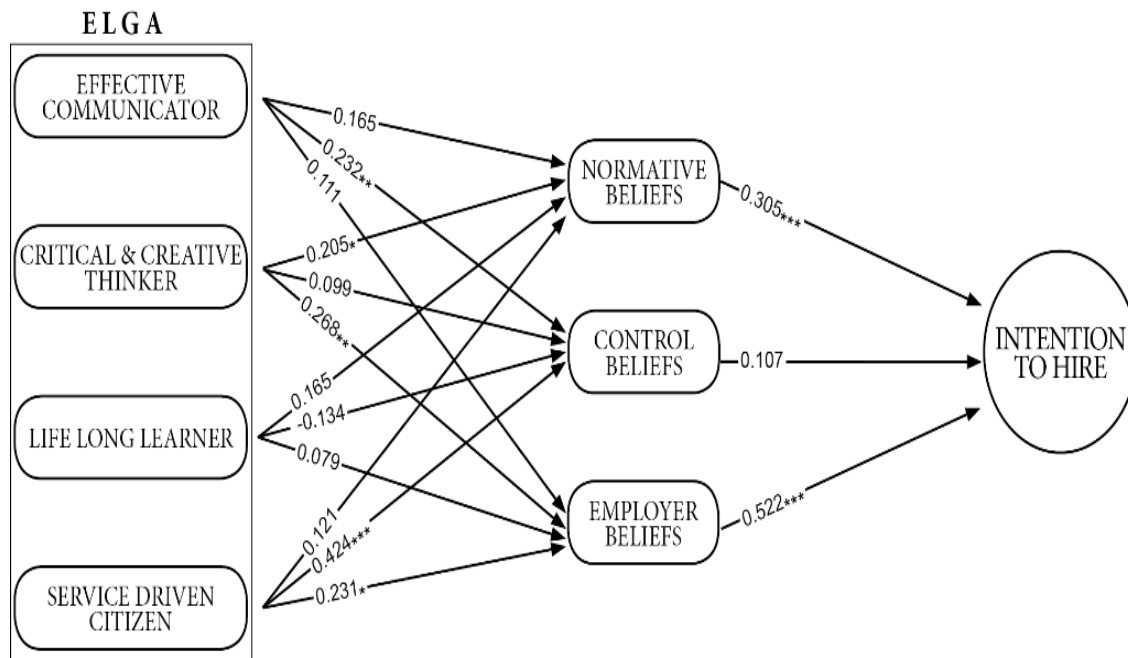
This study employed a non-probability technique that involved the conscious selection by the researcher of certain people to be included in a study. Only HR officers who hired DLSU-Manila graduates as interns and/or employees were surveyed.

*Data Processing and Analysis*

SMART-PLS software (Henseler, Hubona and Ray, 2016) was used to analyze the research data. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to examine the relationship between the variables. The specific type of SEM used was partial least squares (Hair, Joseph; Hult, G.Tomas; Ringle, Christian and Sarstedt, Marko,(2014).

**Results and Discussions**

Figure 2 presents the SEM graphical model that shows the following significant relationships:



*Figure 2. A Framework for ELGAs and Intention to Hire (Adapted from Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior, 2011)*

1. Critical and Creative Thinker showed a significant relationship with the intention to hire graduates. This was mediated by Normative Beliefs and Employers’ Beliefs. This implies that employers desire attributes associated with Critical and Creative Thinkers such as creative ideas, innovative methods and knowledge based on Christian principles. Normative beliefs, which referred to the individuals' beliefs about the extent to which other people who are important to them think they should or should not perform particular behaviours, mediated between Critical and Creative Thinker and Intention to Hire. .Since the Philippines is a country characterized by high power distance (Hofstede, 1991), human resource managers will normally recruit



applicants whom they think will pass the management's criteria. Further, since the Philippines is a collective society, HR officers intend to hire graduates who their peers and bosses would also want to hire.

Most respondents scored strongly agree to this statement that showed the normative belief: *The management would encourage me to hire DLSU graduates*. Evidences of normative beliefs are found in industry standards. Most companies conform to industry standards in evaluating their performance. College graduates who have referrals from persons known to HR officers will also have better chances of being hired.

Employers' beliefs mediated between Critical and Creative Thinker and Intention to Hire. This implies that if employers believe that the college graduate is innovative, creative and knowledgeable, there is a higher probability that the graduate will be hired. This strengthens the TPB theory as beliefs will lead to intentions.

2. The results also confirmed that Service-Driven Citizen had a significant relationship with intention to hire. This implies that employers desire graduates to incorporate Christian leadership skills in their work, perform according to the goals, responsible for their tasks, effective interpersonal skills and nourish their relationship with God. There were HR officers who stated that the Christian beliefs that characterized DLSU-Manila graduates influenced them to favor DLSU-Manila graduates over other applicants. These were the unique selling proposition that distinguished DLSU-Manila graduates over other applicants from public schools. The traits exemplified by service driven citizen also facilitates the productive behaviour of a prospective employee.

The mediating variable was the Employers' Belief. This implies that if employers believe that a graduate has Service-Driven citizen traits, there is a higher probability that the employer intends to hire this graduate.

Figure 2 and Table 2 also shows the following significant relationships:

1. Effective communicator had a significant relationship with control beliefs. This implies that the employers believe that the graduate's attributes of being able listen actively and articulate their ideas will mean that they are able to execute the tasks but it did not affect the employer's intention to hire.

2. Service-driven citizen had a significant relationship with control beliefs. This implies that the employers' belief that the graduate's attributes of corporate social responsibility will enable them to execute the assigned tasks but this belief did not affect the employers' intention to hire.

Table 2: SMART-PLS Results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values
Employers' Beliefs and Intention to Hire	0.522	0.528	0.079	6.599	0.000
Normative Beliefs and Intention to Hire	0.305	0.301	0.079	3.866	0.000
Service Driven Citizen and Control Beliefs	0.424	0.427	0.127	3.342	0.001
Critical and Creative Thinker and	0.268	0.253	0.110	2.432	0.015



Employers' Beliefs					
Effective Communicator and Control Beliefs	0.232	0.219	0.109	2.128	0.034

Reflective lifelong learner yielded a weak influence on the mediator and dependent variables. These attributes refer to the following:

1. They help contribute to a better understanding of a Catholic church.
2. They reflect on their values.
3. They reflect on the significance of God.

This implies that these attributes may not be sought immediately by employers in the workplace as Christian leadership skills and values are included in service-driven citizen.

## CONCLUSION

Employers desire attributes associated with Critical and Creative Thinkers. Creative ideas, innovative methods and knowledge based on Christian principles can influence the employers' intent to hire. This is explained further by the fact that HR officers will normally recruit applicants whom they think will pass their supervisors' criteria or referred by colleagues who matter to them. The beliefs of HR officers will also affect their intent to hire.

Aside from desiring Critical and Creative Thinkers, employers need graduates who incorporate Christian leadership skills in their work, performed according to the goals, responsible for their tasks, effective interpersonal skills and nourish their relationship with God (Service-Driven Citizens). Employers believe that these traits will lead not only to the firm's benefit but to societal good as well.

Reflective Lifelong Learner was the only ELGA that did not have significant relationships with mediating and dependent variables. This implies that this may not be an immediate attribute that is urgently needed.

Service-Driven Citizen and Effective Communicator had significant relationships with control beliefs. This shows that service driven and effective communicator traits will facilitate the performance of tasks but will not affect the intent to hire.

This study strengthens the Theory of Planned Behavior as beliefs can influence the intent to hire.

Future studies should focus on attributes that employers desire based on the industries that they represent.

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Presented at the 11th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 7 and 8, 2018



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