

Employability of Business and Computer Management Graduates of one Higher Education Institution in the Philippines

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Maribeth G. Buenviaje, Galicano V. del Mundo, Ferdinand Añonuevo and Meinrado Martinez

College of Business Administration, Lyceum of the Philippines University, Batangas City, Philippines

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Abstract - *The study aimed to determine the graduate's employability of the Bachelor of Science in Business and Computer Management from 2005-2010. It identified the employers' perspective of how LPU- graduates in the respective jobs assigned to them. Descriptive method was utilized in the study. The employability of Bachelor of Science in Business and Computer Management (BSBCM) revealed that 90.32 percent of the graduates are locally employed in their field of specialization, having regular employment status in the manufacturing firms holding clerical positions but pursuing Master's degree hoping to be promoted after years of relevant experience. As employer's feedback, it was noted that the BSBCM graduates have high performance in human skills as evidenced by their high interpersonal relationship with their superiors and officemates. Communication skill, information technology skill, human relation and critical thinking skills are found very useful in their job placement while entrepreneurship skill obtained the least response. As to work values, love for God and honesty and love for truth were relevant among graduates. All professional subjects are considered by the BSBCM graduates to be relevant which include Programming Fundamentals, Data Base Management and HTML Presentation skills. The curriculum of the General education subjects posted importance on Languages. School related factors to job placement in terms of faculty and instruction is the mastery of teacher's subject matter and their quality of instruction.*

Keywords: *Business and Computer Management, employability, communication skill*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines' unemployment rate is the second-highest among the Association Nation (ASEAN) member countries, with Indonesia registering the highest at 8.4 percent [1]. This is indeed high especially if compared to the end-of-year unemployment rates in Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia at 1.4 percent, 2.6 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively.

In the perspective of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), employability has a variety of meanings. It describes the employment rate of graduates to the characteristics of the graduate [2]. For some, employability can be associated with how quickly a graduate finds employment. As a result, the waiting period for seeking employment dominates the indicator of whether or not an institution is able to produce qualified graduates for the job market [3]. However, given the broad understanding of employability, it is important to recognize that the quality of a university graduate is not just a reflection

of the quality of the curriculum and its supporting academic environment; for there could be other factors contributory to employability and unemployment.

Business graduates had been oversupplied in the Philippines as demonstrated by the 22 percent who had business degrees in 2004, many of whom ended up being unemployed [4]. The results of the survey done by UNESCO [5] reported that communication skills were not rated highly by both the graduates and employers alike. On the other hand, mechanisms for matching labour demand and supply – such as providing accessibility to public services and job-matching technologies (e.g., job fairs, career or job placement services), and implementing measures to ease the school-work transition like linkages between academe and industry/employers [6], [7], [8] are perceived to be more beneficial.

According to a 2004 study by the Institut Penyelidikan Pendidikan Tinggi Negara (IPPTN) [9], slow economic growth and the changing employment

structure have had a significant negative impact on graduate unemployment in Malaysia. Another study undertaken by the IPPTN in 2002 and 2003 concluded that while there were some gaps in the curriculum in terms of equipping students with the necessary skills for employment, more needs to be done with respect to graduates' career planning and their overall psychological make-up.

Reflecting the priority given to develop a knowledge-based economy, tertiary education enrolment had increased fivefold from 28.6 million in 1970 to 152.2 million in 2007. Unfortunately, employment rates had not kept pace with this trend. The global unemployment rate increased from 5.6 percent in 2007 to 6.2 percent in 2010. This has created a highly competitive environment for young people aged 15-24 years, as can be seen from high youth unemployment rates: 11.8 percent in 2007, 12.8 percent in 2009, 12.6 percent in 2010 and 12.7 percent in 2011 [10]. Such statistics are worrisome because the youth represent the productive labour force of the countries. If not gainfully engaged for extended periods of time, many governments will have to deal with a host of issues and challenges facing a lost generation.

As a researcher, employability performance indicator cannot be concluded simply from the employment rates of HEI graduates; while some definitions of employability signifies that it is closely linked to the rapport between higher education and employment [2]. This relationship poses critical questions about the purpose and structure of the higher education system. Employability is not about only training or providing additional skills to gain employment; it should also be about how the higher education system through its many institutions develops critical, reflective and empowered learners who will be highly sought after and valued by employers. The employers' perspective of the kind of graduates they will hire is important to help HEIs decide the direction of their educational goals. It is in this context that the researcher was prompted to undertake this study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study determined the Graduate's Employability of the Bachelor of Science in Business and Computer Management from 2005 to 2010. More specifically, it described employment status and employer's feedback regarding the LPU graduates as

their present employees. It also determined how the school-related and work-related factors contributed to the graduate's employability and assessed the extent by which work values and skills provided by LPU contributed to the employability of business management graduates.

METHODS

Research Design

The researchers used descriptive method in gathering the data of graduate's employability. The questionnaire of this research was taken from LPU Research and Statistics Center whereby items were based on CHED mandates of tracing university graduates.

Participants

The respondent of the study is the total population of 90 BSBCM graduates

Table 1. Distribution by Year Level

Year of Graduation	No. of Graduates	No. of Respondents	(%)
AY 2005 – 2006	21	15	24.19
AY 2006 – 2007	16	11	17.74
AY 2007 – 2008	16	11	17.74
AY 2008 – 2009	15	10	16.13
AY 2009 – 2010	22	15	24.19
Total	90	62	

Instrument and Procedure

Names, addresses and contact numbers of the graduates from 2006 to 2010 were obtained from the Registrar's Office; wherein the questionnaires were distributed online thru networking sites.

Data Analysis

The data were classified, tabulated, and coded for analysis. The following statistical tools were employed using the following: Frequency, Percentage, Rank and Weighted Mean. A scale of 1 to 4 was used with 1 as the lowest and 4 as the highest. The responses were equivalent weights and corresponding verbal description as follows: 3.50-4.00: Very Relevant (VR); 2.50-3.49: Relevant (R); 1.50-2.49: Fairly Relevant (FR); 1.00- 1.49: Not Relevant (NR). To interpret the result of Work Related Values, the given scale was given: 4.50 – 5.00 = Very Much (VM); 3.50 – 4.49 = Much (M); 2.50 – 3.49 = Little (L); 1.50 – 2.49 = Very Little (VL); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not at all (NA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. Distribution of the Graduates Profile (N = 62)

Profile Variables	f	%
Sex		
Male	25	40.32
Female	37	59.68
Location of Residence		
City	48	77.42
Municipality	14	22.58
Advanced Studies		
Master in Business Administration	10	16.13
Reasons to Pursue Advanced Study		
For promotion	10	100.00
For professional development	10	100.00

Table 2 shows the percentage distribution of the respondents' profile. It was found out that majority of the graduates are female which obtained a frequency of 37 or 59.68 percent while male got 40.32 percent. The gender profile means that business course can be both for men or women. Most of the graduates were living in the city since it obtained the highest frequency of 48 out of 62 respondents.

Out of 62 graduates only 16.13 or 10 of them decided to pursue Masters in Business Administration for they believed they can be promoted or it is for their professional growth. According to some graduates, there are a lot of provisions from their company that only those who finished Master's degree will be promoted to higher positions and will be given priority for trainings and other related- professional exposures. Others are not yet decided to pursue graduate studies due to financial reasons.

Table 3 presents the employment data of graduates. According to the data gathered, majority of the business graduates were employed since it obtained the highest frequency of 56 or 90.32 percent. Most of the employed graduates are regular in their status with 78.57 percent and gainfully employed meaning they are working in the field of their specialization.

At present, after five years, the graduates of Business management from 2006-2010 are locally employed (85.71%) in clerical positions (48.21 %) and Technicians and associate professionals (33.93%) while their major line of business is in the manufacturing industry (33.93%).

Table 3. Graduates Employment Data

Presently Employed or Not	f	%
Yes	56	90.32
No	6	9.68
Reasons why not employed		
Family concern and decided not to find a job	1	16.67
Health-related reason(s)	2	33.33
Lack of work experience	3	50.00
Status		
Regular or Permanent	44	78.57
Temporary	7	12.50
Self-employed	5	8.93
Nature of Employment		
Gainfully employed (regular or full time; job held is related to field of specialization)	49	87.50
Self-employed (working for oneself maybe from one's own profession or business; not working for another firm and drawing a salary)	7	12.50
Present Occupation		
Officials of Government and Special-Interest Organizations, Corporate Executives, Managers, Managing Proprietors and Supervisors	10	17.86
Technicians and Associate Professionals	19	33.93
Clerks	27	48.21
Major Line of Business		
Manufacturing	19	33.93
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	5	8.93
Construction	1	1.79
Wholesale and Retail Trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods	9	16.07
Hotels and Restaurant	3	5.36
Transport, Storage and Communication	1	1.79
Financial Intermediation	6	10.71
Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities	7	12.50
Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Security	3	5.36
Health and Social Work	2	3.57
Place of Work		
Local	48	85.71
Abroad	8	14.29

This result may be associated with CHED data that since all corporations whether in the service or industry sectors involve business administration with prospects for job openings for graduates of business administration and related courses are better. It is not therefore surprising to note from 1990 to 2003, the data by CHED showing a consistent growth in the

number of business administration graduates yearly – from 73,021 in 1990 to 110,870 in 2003 wherein this field has consistently been the topnotcher in terms of the number of graduates by discipline group were and consistently producing more than 20 percent of all graduates by program annually.

While there are graduates who were unemployed with 9.68 percent; reasons can be attributed to unemployment which revealed lack of work experience (rank first), health related reasons (2nd) and least in rank is family concern. As business graduates, it is not surprising to note that there are students who established their own business for competitions in finding employment is very high due to graduates mismatch and competitive business graduates.

Table 4. Profile of Graduate’s Employability after Graduation

First job After College	f	%
Yes	10	17.86
No	46	82.14
Reasons for Staying on the Job		
Salaries and benefits	10	100.00
Career challenge	9	90.00
Related to special skills	5	50.00
Related to course of study	9	90.00
Proximity to residence	1	10.00
Peer influence	2	20.00
First Job is Related to the Course in College		
Yes	8	80.00
No	2	20.00
Reasons for Accepting the Job		
Salaries and benefits	8	80.00
Proximity to residence	2	20.00
Reasons for Staying on the Job		
Salaries and benefits	10	100.00
Career challenge	9	90.00
Related to special skills	5	50.00
Related to course of study	9	90.00
Proximity to residence	1	10.00
Peer influence	2	20.00
Reasons for Changing Job		
Salaries and benefits	40	86.96
Career challenge	31	67.39
Related to special skills	10	21.74
Proximity to residence	2	4.35
Length of Stay in the First Job		
1 to 6 months	38	82.61
7 to 11 months	5	10.87
1 year to less than 2 years	3	6.52

Table 4 (cont). Profile of Graduate’s Employability after Graduation

Job Search	F	%
Response to an advertisement	1	10.00
As walk-in applicant	1	10.00
Recommendation by someone	1	10.00
Arranged by school’s job placement officer	2	20.00
Family business	1	10.00
Job Fair or Public Employment Service Office (PESO)	4	40.00
Length of Time		
1 to 6 months	50	89.29
7 to 11 months	6	10.71
Initial Monthly Earning		
P5,000.00 to less than P10,000.00	8	80.00
P10,000.00 to less than P15,000.00	2	20.00

Table 4 shows the profile of graduates employability after graduation in terms of first job after college, reasons for staying on their first job, their job related course, length of time in finding employment, reasons for accepting and changing jobs and initial monthly earning.

From the table, graduates were able to find job 6 months after graduation with 80 percent due to job fair or public employment office (PESO). Their present position as clerk is not their first job, although most of their first job is related to their program of study. According to the graduates, they accepted the job offer due to salaries and benefits and claimed they will further stay and change their present position both for the same reason. Even with the very minimum salary, BSBCM graduates are positive that promotion is ahead of them considering the potentials, human skills and technical know-how present among them.

As claimed by Syafiq and Fikawati [3] employability can be associated with how quickly a graduate finds employment, the waiting period for seeking employment dominates the indicator of whether or not an institution is able to produce qualified graduates for the job market. However, given the broad understanding of employability, it is important to recognize that the quality of a university graduate is not just a reflection of the quality of the curriculum and its supporting academic environment; for there could be other factors contributory to employability and unemployment which may also be the positive attitude [11], [12], [13] of graduates who are determined to find one.

Table 5. Feedback of the Industry on the Performance of Graduates

	f	%
1. Expressing one's self in oral communication clearly.	48	85.71
2. Ability to speak with sense and substance.	54	96.43
3. Can prepare office memoranda	51	91.07
4. Considerate of the feelings of the rank and file.	56	100.00
5. Never entertain gossips or indulge in intrigues	56	100.00
6. Attends to clients with dispatch	52	92.86
7. Possesses quality for public relations work.	54	96.43
8. Can relate to supervisors and managers	55	98.21
9. Can get along well with officemates and superiors.	56	100.00
10. Can relate well to office clerks, janitors and messengers	56	100.00
11. Show respect to visitors and clients	56	100.00
12. Show willingness to work with other office personnel	54	96.43
13. Can work well with officemates	52	92.86

**Multiple Responses*

Table 5 presents the feedback of the industry on the performance of business graduates in their company. As cited by management expert Katz, managerial skills for business leaders to be successful consist of conceptual, technical and human skills. This might also be true to the employees as they will future or soon managers of their organization. The result of this feedback revealed that graduates who are mostly employed in manufacturing firms possessed human skills as evidenced by their 100 percent rating on can get along with superiors and officemates, can relate well office clerks, janitors and messengers, considerate with others feelings and show respect to visitors and clients. Such human skills or interpersonal skills are vital to a healthy working environment and relationship. It is always true that it is the person's attitude which will bring him to altitude.

Least in the employer's rating is the ability to expressing one's self in oral communication clearly and graduates can prepare office memoranda. Such skills may be improved and acquired through day to day exposures, seminars and trainings. Such result is an avenue for the continuous improvement of the university in as far as employers' feedback is concerned.

Table 6. Skills or Competencies Found Very Useful in Employment

Skills	f	%
Communication skills	10	100.00
Human relations skills	9	90.00
Entrepreneur skills	2	20.00
Information technology skills	10	100.00
Problem-solving skills	8	80.00
Critical thinking skills	9	90.00

**Multiple Responses*

Table 6 shows the skills or competencies found very useful in the first job of the BSBCM graduates. The responses showed that communication skills and information technology skills ranked number 1 and followed by human relation and critical thinking skills. Entrepreneurship skills go the lowest responses with 20 percent which signifies that the graduates were not yet given tasks to apply their entrepreneurial competency [14].

In finding employment, skills needed are intellectual skills, communication skills and interpersonal skills which contributed much to graduates future employment [15]. While the skills for human resources management and communication skills are important, it is equally important that graduates develop human skills necessary to establish good interpersonal relationships which is very vital to create a more satisfying work environment.

Table 7. Work Related Values Found Relevant in Employment

Work-Related Values	WM	VI	Rank
1. Love for God	5.00	VM	2
2. Honesty and love for truth	5.00	VM	2
3. Punctuality	4.96	VM	4
4. Obedience to superior	4.86	VM	12
5. Perseverance and hard work	5.00	VM	2
6. Creativity and innovativeness	4.82	VM	15
7. Courage	4.68	VM	16
8. Professional Integrity	4.89	VM	7
9. Love for co-workers and others	4.89	VM	7
10. Unity	4.91	VM	5
11. Fairness and Justice	4.84	VM	14
12. Leadership	4.88	VM	9.5
13. Tolerance	4.89	VM	7
14. Efficiency	4.86	VM	12
15. Supportiveness	4.86	VM	12
17. Nationalism	4.88	VM	9.5
Composite Mean	4.89	VM	

Table 7 shows the work related values very much considered in finding employment. It was posted that love of God, honesty and love for truth and perseverance and hard work got the highest weighted mean of 5.00, while creativity and innovativeness and courage got the lowest mean score of 4.82 and 4.68.

It has to be noted that employee's values in life affects his values in work. Values are the principles or beliefs that are important to people, and they affect all aspects of life – including work. Knowing which work values are most important will help make decisions about what jobs or career paths might suit best. Work values including engagement [16], [17], [18], satisfaction [19], [20] and organizational commitment serve as significant factors to consider in maintaining positive behavior.

Aligning an employee's values specifically love of God, truth coupled with graduate's perseverance and hard work will surely foster loyalty and a bond between employer and employee. Leadership as one of the aspects of management is a significant component of handling higher responsibilities in the organization [21] where graduates needed to possess once they finished college.

Table 8 shows school related factors to job placement in terms of Curriculum and Instruction as to General Education subjects (GE), professional subjects (major subjects of Business administration) and faculty and instruction.

Curriculum plays an important part in the delivery of instruction that guides the students in the completion of its enrolled degree program in college.

From the results, very relevant is Languages (4.00), followed by Mathematics (3.65) and Natural Sciences (2.18) found to be slightly relevant. The professional subjects posted relevant to employability are courses related to computer as Programming Fundamentals 1(3.98), HTML and Presentation Skills and Database Management (3.97). The graduates perceived that the mastery of teachers in the respective subject matter and the quality of instruction are factors relevant to their employment. The capability of the teachers to share their knowledge and expertise to the students can be consider a good factor of quality instruction.

The role of mathematics skills in the performance of job assignment is significant to manage data and information of the organization in providing sound decision making based on relevant facts and details [22].

Table 8. Relevance of School Related Factors to Job Placement in terms of Curriculum and Instruction

General Education Subjects	WM	VI	Rank
1. Mathematics	3.65	VR	2
2. Languages	4.00	VR	1
3. Natural Sciences	2.18	SR	3
Composite Mean	3.27	R	
Professional Subjects			
1. HTML and Presentation Skills	3.97	R	2.5
2. Database Management	3.97	R	2.5
3. Programming Fundamentals 1	3.98	R	1
4. Computer Accounting 1	3.52	R	9
5. System Analysis and Design	3.94	R	5
6. Management Information System	3.52	R	9
7. Fundamentals of Multi Media Systems	3.65	R	6.5
8. Operating System with Trouble Shooting	3.95	R	4
9. Project Management	3.52	R	9
10. Computer Seminar (New Trends in IT) with Environmental Issue	3.65	R	6.5
Composite Mean	3.76	R	
Faculty and Instruction			
1. Conducts himself in a dignified and professional manner.	3.97	R	3
2. Has good communication skills	3.95	R	4
3. Teacher has mastery of the subject matter	4.00	R	1.5
4. Makes use of various teaching aids	3.94	R	5.5
5. Relates subjects to other fields and other life situation	3.94	R	5.5
6. Conducts accurate and objective evaluation of student performance	3.92	R	7
7. Quality of instruction is relevant to the course	4.00	R	1.5
Composite Mean	3.96	R	

It is very interesting to note that computer related skills and communication skills in English are very necessary to become employable business course graduates. This may only be realized when teacher is presenting his expertise in the field of his

specialization. The instruction on the other hand is attributed to the present Outcomes Based Education (OBE) Curriculum which is aligned to all the curriculum of the Business programs offered by LPU. OBE as a system which is composed of various processes ensures the significant outcomes on knowledge, values and skills of the students after graduation [23] - [26].

Researcher's observation as the university dean posted on how curriculum matches graduate's employability. In order to minimize mismatch, there is a need to reform in whatever areas which is a university call. Noted that graduate unemployment in the Philippines has largely been attributed to a structural or skills mismatch where [27] one area of this mismatch lies in the inadequacy of the general skills and knowledge among new entrants to the labour force. These new graduates are perceived to have lacking the requisite level and quality of communication, technical and job-specific skills needed in the workplace. Thus, there are thousands of customer service and business jobs in the booming call centre and BPO industries being filled by graduates who have been trained to be nurses and teachers instead of business graduates.

School related factors to job placement

The laboratory and College Dean's Office Services are relevant to the job placement of the graduates with a weighted mean of 4.00. This was followed by library and registrar's office services with a weighted mean of 3.94.

The school related factors in terms of community extension, Linkages and Research were rated relevant school related factors to the job placement with a composite mean of 3.88 while linkages with other institutions and OJT ranks first with a weighted mean of 3.95. Internship provides hands-on experience to the students on how they will apply the acquired knowledge on theories, concepts and principles into practice [28], [29], [30]. Community extension activities helped the institution to shape the character and values of the students towards volunteerism and strengthening the value of social responsibility [31], [32].

This is very much associated with the results of the very relevant subject among graduates of business. While they are certain on the importance of Computer related subjects, it is also equally important to have simulation and computer and laboratory to enhance

their skills. In this modern technological advancement, a skill in the application of computer skills is also one of the demands of the employers in hiring graduates. School facilities serve as significant support to the development of technical skills of the students [33], [34].

While the students realize the value of the organization vis -a-vis employability, it is also expected that university set up meaningful activities vital to their significant and worth keeping stay in the university. Such maybe spearheaded by the colleges' organizations and the community extension of the university.

Based from the findings of the study conducted by CHED, graduate tracer studies should be established, with such studies being regularly conducted by all HEIs and collated for sharing. Further, more programs involving apprenticeship, entrepreneurship training, internships and on-the-job training should be institutionalized in academic programs, particularly for poor and marginalized young people. These programs should help to ease the transition from school to workplace. Further that higher learning institutions need to nurture the development and integration of generic skills, such as communication and other soft skills, into subjects, courses and programs to make graduates more employable.

In as far as linkages is concerned, it was disclosed to the researcher as the Dean of business administration, that business graduates revealed how linkages with other company and exposure during field trips and benchmarking practices have been very contributory through sharing resources in order to improve existing university practices. By mandates of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) create office like Industry Academe Linkages. Such office helps facilitate development of symbolic relationship between academic institutions and partners from different industrial sectors. At present, Lyceum of the Philippines University has its own Internship Office (INTO) which takes charge of all the University linkages (local and international students exposures).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Most of the BSBCM graduates are locally employed in their field of specialization with 90.32 percent employment rating. Business graduates have regular status in the manufacturing firms holding clerical positions, but pursuing Master's degree

hoping to be promoted after years of relevant experience. BSBCM graduates have high human skills as evidenced by their high interpersonal relationship with their superiors and officemates based on the employers' feedback. The skills or competencies found very useful in finding employment of the BSBCM graduates are communication skills, information technology skill, human relation and critical thinking skills. Entrepreneurship skills obtained lowest mean. Love for God and honesty and love for truth were considered relevant work values to the job placement of the graduates. As to school related factors, the curriculum of the General education posted importance on Languages while most professional subjects are considered by the BSBCM graduates to be relevant, specifically, Programming Fundamentals, Data Base Management and HTML Presentation skills. The mastery of teacher's subject matter and quality of instruction revealed to be important school related factors to the job placement in terms of faculty and instruction. Laboratories and the college Dean's Office Services were noted to be very relevant student services to job placement. The school officers and heads include within their spheres of responsibility, provided all the vital activities of the institutions and colleges to make their students stay meaningful.

It is recommended that the college dean may continuously benchmark with other business schools for curriculum enhancement. Linkages may also be explored on international exposure for Business graduates. The dean of CEAS may enhance students' communication skills competency through strengthening the teaching strategy aside from sustaining speech laboratory and the like. The University's recognized organizations on business may spearhead computer related seminars in order to update information technology skills of graduating students. Likewise, work values may also be part of series of seminars for graduating business students. Continuously do the Bazar festival of the CBA department to inculcate the importance of entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Study on entrepreneurial education may also be explored for Business graduates. Work engagement and job satisfaction of the graduates may also be considered for future investigation.

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