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Employability of BS Business and Computer Management Graduates from 2013 to 2015 in one Academic Institution in the Philippines

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Abstract - *This study aims to determine the employment status of BSBCM graduates from 2013 to 2015 which also identifies the degree of contribution of skills and work related values to the job placement of the 83 graduate-respondents. Descriptive type of research was utilized in the study utilizing the total population. Findings show that there is 87.95 percent of the BSBCM graduates are gainfully employed locally with regular or permanent status who landed a job within 1 to 6 months. Career challenge and relevance of course completed to job assignment are the reasons of the graduates for accepting and staying on the job. Communication and Human Relations skills are considered very useful in most BSBCM graduates in meeting the demands of their present job. The value of hard work contributed very much to the job placement of most BCM graduates followed by honesty and love for truth, perseverance, leadership, love for God and courage.*

Keywords: *business and computer management, human relation, graduates, employability*

INTRODUCTION

Every business organization requires people who can adapt to challenging environment of global competition with appropriate computer skills. Employees are the core ingredients of service products [1]. Filipinos are the most flexible workers where they can adapt to various cultures and business practices. Labor market is getting tighter due to large volume of graduates every year. Selection process of companies becomes stringent and thorough examination of applicants is being facilitated to ensure only qualified employees will be considered in the position [2], [3], [4].

Refozar and del Mundo [5] emphasized on their study that there seem to have a wide gap between number of graduates and absorption rates. And the usual cause, as claimed, is the apparent weak preparation of graduates with job requirements of the government and private organizations. Truth of matter is that jobs are available, but it seems that very few qualify for the available jobs. Competency deficiencies in graduates have also been referred to as "skills gaps", referring to the difference between the level of competence required for employment or alternatively the importance of competencies for employment and the level of competence of graduates [6].

Institutions of higher learning are responsible in meeting the demands of national and international standards and requirements for graduates [7] to be part of the competitive workforce to address the gap of the weaknesses in the students' preparation for work. Wilton [8] noted that two dominant rationales are offered by UK policymakers for the continued expansion of higher education: to service the high-skill labour requirements of a knowledge economy, and to increase educational and employment opportunities for under-represented groups.

Various curricular and extra-curricular activities are emphasized in the delivery of instruction as strong support to the implementation of outcomes-based education [9]-[15]. The development of knowledge, skills and values of students in business and computer management is aligned to the program educational objectives and student outcomes of the degree program.

Graduates are considered the ultimate products of higher education institutions who will serve as part of the larger community in national and international development [16]. Employability is typically viewed

relationally and contextually and is associated with the specific place in which one works. The responsibility for managing and developing one's employability lies with each individual [17]. Currently the six key generic skills in use are: communication, application of numbers, information technology, working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving [18]. Employability has become a global buzz-word: instructors in higher education are increasingly being called upon to produce highly employable students who will in turn contribute to the financial capital of the country's economy [19].

The rapid growth in undergraduate business education over the last three decades has coincided with the growing dominance of an economic ideology of higher education (HE); that its role is principally one of contributing to national competitiveness through the development of graduate employability [20]. Identifying some gaps on the work values of the graduates would also provide insights on how teachers could integrate in the lesson some of the attributes of being an asset in the organization through classroom activities and projects. Possessing highly qualified technical or professional skills would provide better opportunities to be employed in the local community and abroad [21]. Although knowledge and skills of the students would not be enough to see the entirety of their qualification in certain position to be filled but possessing the right attitude towards work is something that everyone should focus on together with enhancing their skills in communication [22]-[33].

Knowing the business world as socially dynamic environment is where everyone should focus on how to communicate well in various media and channels. With increasing demand for accounting professionals, audit firms are banking on universities to provide graduates equipped with technical know-how and critical English skills. This explains heightened employer concern over the business English skills of new hires, prompting questions on adequacy and relevance of English taught in universities [34]. Communication skills are a fundamental personal competency for a successful career in accounting. What is not so obvious is the specific written communication skill set employers look for and the extent those skills are computer mediated [35].

The evolution in the application of information technology in business is really moving fast and everyone is required to get ahead so that nobody will be left behind on how large firms play in the global market. This is where the importance of knowledge and skills in computer and business management comes in to get along with the trends of having competitive edge in managing enterprises. Graduate of business and computer management would also be able to manage various database systems as support to the development and innovation of the organization. They can be given positions in customer service, database management, marketing through social media using various communication tools and other related fields.

Laguador and Ramos' study [2] found out that employers have very high regards in the competence of the graduates in terms of the relevance of their knowledge and skills in research and work discipline, communication skills and computer skills. They strongly preferred employees, who are loyal and committed to their works and functions; responsible team members; with strong moral values and high sense of professionalism. A positive attitude is something that is most valued by supervisors and co-workers and that also makes the job more pleasant and fun to go to each day [36]. Schleicher et al. [37] noted that job attitudes and work values are antecedents to important individual and organizational outcomes, such as performance and retention of employees. Hirschi [38] found out that young adolescents who place greater importance on various work values in general and to intrinsic values in particular show more positive career development prior to a major career/educational transition point. Employers preferred graduates who are proactive, trainable, cooperative team players and who can carry all responsibilities with ease and result-oriented individuals with high regards toward the achievement of company's mission.

Based on the previous study conducted by Buenviaje et al. [26], the employability of BSBCM from 2006 to 2010 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.

This present study explores on the characteristics of BCM graduates from 2013 to 2015 in terms of describing their employment status and how other school related factors like skills acquired from attending formal schooling in the university as well as work-related values contributed to their job placement. Determining the employment status of the

BSBCM graduates of LPU-Batangas after one or two years would provide substantial data for the institution as confirmation to the realization of meeting its target percentage of employed graduates. Findings will also serve as basis for the improvement of student development program.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the employability of Business and Computer Management graduates for three school years from 2012-2013, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. It specifically aims to determine the present employment, employment status, nature of employment, skills learned in college and work – related values of the respondents; and to propose an action plan to improve the student development program of the College of Business Administration.

METHOD
Research Design

This employability study used the descriptive research design wherein according to Shuttleworth [39], it is a scientific method which involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way.

Participants

Total population of 83 BS Business and Computer Management graduates from three academic years 2012-2013 (45 graduates), 2013-2014 (19 graduates) and 2014-2015 (19 graduates), Graduates of 2016 were excluded in the study since there are only few months after their graduation and it would not provide precise data of employment.

Instrument

Survey questionnaire is the main instrument used in this study. The instrument will be crafted from the prescribed instrument for tracer study of the University wherein some variables were omitted just for the purpose of determining some basic data and information from the graduates which include: the present employment, employment status, nature of employment, competencies learned in college and work – related values of the respondents.

Procedure

The respondents were informed on the purpose of the study and were invited to participate in the survey with the assurance that the data will be provided in the survey will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will solely be used for the purpose of this research. The researchers administered the questionnaires through online survey. The study achieved 100 percent retrieval rating.

Data Analysis

The following statistical tools are employed in interpreting the data obtained from the survey: Percentage and Rank was used to analyze the profile of the respondents with respect to the selected variables. Weighted Meanwas used to determine the degree of perception of the graduate respondents in the school factors related to their job placement.

The respondents were given four options to identify the factors that contributed to the placement of the graduates in their present employment and to determine the skills developed by Lyceum of the Philippines University and work related values of the respondents. To arrive at a verbal description of each item, the arbitrary numerical guide was followed:Very Much (VM): 3.5 – 4.00: Much (M): 2.5 – 3.49: Little (L); 1.5 – 2.49: Very Little (VL): 1.0 – 1.49.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents frequency distribution of the BSBCM Graduates in terms of present employment data. There are 73 or 87.95 percent of the BSBCM graduates are presently employed during the data gathering while 10 or 12.05 percent are unemployed. Graduates of batch 2013 has 40 out of 45 or 88.89 percent are presently employed while 17 out of 19 or 89.47 are employed in Batch 2014 and 16 out of 19 or 84.21 percent are employed in Batch 2015.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of the BSBCM Graduates In Terms of Present Employment Data

Present Employment	2013		2014		2015		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Presently Employed	40	88.89	17	89.47	16	84.21	73	87.95
Unemployed	5	11.11	2	10.53	3	15.79	10	12.05

Table 2. Distribution of BSBCM Graduates In Terms of Present Employment Status and Nature of Employment

Status	2013	2014	2015	Total	%
Regular/Permanent	29	11	13	53	72.60
Contractual	3	3	1	7	9.59
Casual	5	1	2	8	10.96
Temporary	3	2	-	5	6.85
Nature of Employment					
Gainfully employed	35	14	12	61	83.56
Self-employed	3	-	1	4	5.48
Underemployed	2	3	3	8	10.96

Majority of the BSBCM graduates or 53 or 72.60 percent are already enjoying regular or permanent status while 8 of them or 10.96 percent have casual job status, 7 or 9.59 percent of them are contractual and the least group of 5 or 6.85 percent are having temporary jobs at present. Sixty-one (61) or 83.56 percent of the BCM graduates are gainfully employed while 8 of them or 10.96 percent are underemployed and 4 or 5.48 percent are self-employed.

They considered themselves as gainfully employed because their salaries are good enough to sustain a living with single status. It is the nature of most Filipinos before getting married is to save enough money for the wedding and buy car or house and lot. The findings of the study of Heaton, McCracken and Harrison [40] indicated that SMEs might struggle to meet graduate expectations on pay, but they appeared to provide effective mentoring and succession planning.

Table 3 shows the reasons for staying and accepting the job and period spent to find the present job. Out of 73BCM graduates, 69 of them or 94.52 percent stayed on the job due to career challenge followed by related to course or program of study (65 or 89.04%), salaries and benefits (63 or 86.30%) and related to special skill (52 or 71.23%). However, proximity to residence (13 or 17.81%), family influence (11 or 15.07%) and peer-influence (5 or 6.85%) are considered the least reasons of the BCM graduates for staying in the job.

Graduates accept jobs mostly because the job is related to their course completed (65 or 89.04%) and due to salaries and benefits (47 or 64.38%) as well as career challenge (38 or 52.05%). However, the least reason considered is the proximity to residence (16 or 21.92%). Analysis of the results from the study conducted by Kimani [41] indicated an average rating of the various aspects of study provisions and conditions. Most of the graduates (72%) considered the job held to be appropriate to the level of education attained.

Table 3. Reasons for staying and accepting the job and Period Spent to Find the present Job

Reasons for staying on the job	F	%	Rank
Salaries and benefits	63	86.30	3
Career challenge	69	94.52	1
Related to special skill	52	71.23	4
Related to course or program of study	65	89.04	2
Proximity to residence	13	17.81	5
Peer influence	5	6.85	7
Family influence	11	15.07	6
Period Spent to Find the First Job			
Less than a month	16	21.92	2
1 to 6 months	52	71.23	1
7 to 11 months	8	10.96	3
1 year to less than 2 years	2	2.74	5
2 years to less than 3 years	5	6.85	4
Reasons for accepting the job			
Salaries & benefits	47	64.38	2
Career challenge	38	52.05	3
Related to course completed	65	89.04	1
Proximity to residence	16	21.92	4

Graduates aim to find work because they want to have a decent life and acquire their basic needs from their salaries and benefits. Most employees within one to five years after graduation gradually change their attitude on how they perceive work as a source of living. Because of certain level of maturity based on experience, they see work as a source of happiness and fulfilment not as a material symbol but something developmental where they to nourish and grow.

They start to see work as a challenge that keeps them on discovering more information and skills on their assignments. They begin to realize where they are good at and continue to make remarkable outputs and achievement of the vision and mission of the institution.

There are 52 or 71.23 percent of the graduates obtained their jobs within 1 to 6 months while 16 or 21.92 percent in less than a month and 8 of them or 10.96 percent within 7 to 11 months.

Graduates would be able to land jobs in a short period of time within 6 months to one year in average. It gives them ample time to seek for better

opportunities and weigh the consequences of working near their residence or try their lack in Manila. This is the period when they have options what company or position to apply but mostly hiring period depends on the urgency and need of fill the vacant position.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of BSBCM Graduates In Terms of Skills Learned in College They Find Very Useful in Their Present Job

Competencies Learned in College	Total	%	Rank
Communication skills	68	93.15	1
Human Relations skills	57	78.08	2
Entrepreneurial skills	24	32.88	6
Information Technology skills	48	65.75	3
Problem-solving skills	42	57.53	4
Critical Thinking skills	38	52.05	5

*Multiple Responses

Table 4 presents the frequency distribution of BSBCM Graduates in terms of skills learned in college they find useful in their present job. Graduates considered communication skill (93.15%) as the number 1 they find very useful in their job placement followed by human skills (78.08%), information technology (65.75%) and problem solving skill (57.53%). However, Entrepreneurial skill is considered the least skill they find useful in their job placement. Findings of the study of Kavanagh and Drennan [42] indicate that students are becoming aware of employers' expectations in terms of communication, analytical, professional and teamwork skills. Although employers are still expecting a good understanding of basic accounting skills and strong analytical skills, they are also requiring 'business awareness' and knowledge in terms of the 'real world'.

BCM graduates have similar skills from IT graduates with some common skills in computer applications with difference lies on their capability to apply IT skills in the business setting and operations not only confined on the technical aspect of basic computer programming and system development. They see things on business perspective and customer requirements as basic information in developing and executing plans and projects, managing customer information as part of the customer relationship management are good job assignments for BCM graduates. Bratucu and Boscor [43] noted that the most important skills determined by the changes of the labor content are: working with the computer and information technologies and communication.

Downey et al. [52] added that Information technology (IT) and information system (IS) professionals constitute one of the greatest cadres of knowledge workers in modern organizations today along with the business professionals.

Communication skill is every job's requirement to sustain the business operations of every organization. Oral communication is one of the most useful skills of graduates during job interviews using English as a medium of communication to convey answers and express ideas on how knowledgeable and suitable the applicants for the position. Communication is not all about the language but it is also about the attitude on the way graduates deliver the message in the most appropriate manner that demonstrate humility and sincerity. Results of the study of Jones [35] indicate that basic writing mechanics are the skills in highest demand, followed by effective documentation. Except for email proficiency, employers do not consider computer-mediated communication competencies as important as traditional business communication skills.

Critical and analytical skills of BCM graduates can be utilized in analyzing and archiving the customer information as basis for decision making of the employer and as substantial input for strategic and operational plan. They can assist the organization in establishing database as repository of data and information essential for day-to-day business operation. They can also conduct scientific researches out of the gathered information to be presented to the management in consideration for better options or alternatives. Fahim and Komijani [44] emphasized that critical thinking is not only vital for students to perform well in school, but also needed in future workplaces, social and interpersonal contexts where appropriate decisions are to be made carefully and independently on a daily basis. Employers stated on the study of Hagan [45] that what they looked for most graduates was academic achievement, which they used as an indicator of other things such as motivation, problem solving ability, and learning capacity.

However, entrepreneurial skill is considered the least considering they are business administration graduates. Graduates may not see the extent of the significance of the entrepreneurial skill during their job interviews because they find it as not highly applicable for entry level employees [46].

Table 5 presents the work – related values contributed in meeting the demands of the present employment of the respondents.

Table 5. Work – Related Values Contributed in Meeting the Demands of the Present Employment of the Respondents

Work-Related Values	Total	VI	Rank
Love for God	3.54	VM	5.5
Honesty and love for truth	3.78	VM	2
Punctuality	3.47	M	8
Obedience to superior	3.42	M	9
Hard work	3.94	VM	1
Creativity and innovativeness	3.48	M	7
Courage	3.54	VM	5.5
Professional Integrity	3.37	M	10
Love for co-workers and others	3.35	M	11
Unity	3.19	M	12
Fairness and Justice	2.95	M	13
Leadership	3.57	VM	4
Tolerance	2.48	L	16
Efficiency	2.80	M	14
Supportiveness	2.75	M	15
Perseverance	3.69	VM	3
Nationalism	2.37	L	17
Composite Mean	**3.28**	**M**	

The value of hard work (3.94) contributed very much to the job placement of most BCM graduates followed by honesty and love for truth (3.78), perseverance (3.69), leadership (3.57), love for God (3.54) and courage (3.54). Likewise, creativity and innovativeness (3.48), Punctuality (3.47), and obedience to superior (3.42) and professional integrity (3.37) contributed much to the job placement of the graduates. However, tolerance (2.48) and nationalism (2.37) are considered with little contribution to their job placement. Employers value employees who understand and possess a willingness to work hard [47].

In general, the computed composite mean score of 3.28 implies that the work related values contributed much to the job placement of the BSBCM graduates. Frieze's et al. [48] study found out that certain work values were related to higher salary levels and to the number of hours worked.

One of the distinct characteristics of Filipinos is being hard working. Graduates are every willing as part of their goals after college to provide their families some sort of comfort and things that they never had during the period when most of the salaries of their parents are being spent in tuition fees and other school requirements. Graduates need to show their parents their full support to the needs of families as a sign of gratitude. Those are some of the personal reasons behind the hard work and perseverance of the graduates to find for a good job. The love of God is always been part of Filipino culture that strengthens their faith and hope to see bright future after trials and difficulties they encountered during college.

Table 6. Proposed Action Plan

Key Result Area	Strategies	Responsible
Graduates' Employability	• Strengthen the company or industry linkages of the university through establishing more functional MOAs and MOUs where BCM students could work as interns and be able to provide relevant research output for utilization of the partner-industry. • Communicate with the employed alumni in various industries especially those assigned in the Human Resource Department to provide the University with the list of their job openings.	Alumni Office, Dean and Department Chair, INTO, LAIA
Skills Development	• Ensure that there are assessments of student outcomes of BSBCM to address the identified gaps based on the results of the assessment • Provide the students with opportunity to take certification as Microsoft Specialist to enhance the job qualifications of BSBCM graduates and encourage them to pursue Master's Degree as part of their lifelong learning activity.	Dean, Department Chair, Faculty Members
Work Related Values	• Integrate the work related values in the syllabi of BCM which highlights the value of perseverance, Love for God, team work and hard work • Supplement the classroom instruction with support from the co-curricular activities through plant visits/tours in local or foreign multinational companies identifying cultural diversity and core values most evident and being practiced in the organization • Relate all applications of lessons to actual work environment and how values should manifest in performing certain duties and responsibilities following ethical standards.	Faculty Members, Dean and Department Chair

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

There are 87.95 percent of the BSBCM graduates are gainfully employed locally with regular or permanent status. Majority of them landed a job within 1 to 6 months. Career challenge and relevance of course completed to job assignment are the reasons of the graduates for accepting and staying on the job. Communication and Human Relations skills are considered very useful in most BSBCM graduates in meeting the demands of their present job. The value of hard work contributed very much to the job placement of most BCM graduates followed by honesty and love for truth, perseverance, leadership, love for God and courage. The action plan to strengthen the graduates' employability, skills development and work – related values is proposed. This study is limited to the BSBCM graduates from 2013 to 2015 wherein the results might not be true to the graduates of other degree programs therefore, it cannot be generalized.

It is recommended that the College of Business Administration may provide curricular activities with direct objectives of developing the employability skills of the students through conducting seminars and intensifying the pre-employment activities and job fair to give more job opportunities to the graduating students. The teaching performance may also be investigated as a factor in addressing the gap between the acquired knowledge and skills of the students towards the attainment of the industry needs [49], [50].

Thesis of the BCM students may focus on the concerns of business companies to offer solutions to the actual problems of the management and its people which will also serve as marketing campaign for the employers to recognize the capability of BCM students that would be beneficial for their operations. Findings of the study of Mason et al. (2009) suggest that structured work experience has clear positive effects on the ability of graduates, firstly, to find employment within six months of graduation and, secondly, to secure employment in graduate-level jobs. The latter job quality measure is also positively and significantly associated with employer involvement in degree course design and delivery. The present research is limited only to the BSBCM graduates of one university with specific period from 2013 to 2015 where findings might only be true to the specific population under which cannot be generalized. Results can be utilized for specific purpose in program accreditation [53] and input to the institutional development specifically for the College of Business Administration. A follow-up research may explore on the level of productivity of the BSBCM graduates to determine how they grow personally and professional on their chosen career. The student development program for the College of Business Administration focusing on the needs of BSBCM students may be implemented and evaluated for its effectiveness.

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