A Tracer Study of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology San Isidro Campus for the College of Management and Business Technology Graduates

Joannie A. Galano

Faculty members, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, College of Management and Business Technology, San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, Philippines

Abstract: *The effectiveness of programs being offered by different Universities and Institution can be measure by conducting tracer study. It provide feedback on program's relevance on the labor market. This study aimed to determine the employment status of graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration for 2014-2018 of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology-San Isidro Campus. A descriptive research method with the used of modified survey questionnaire as the primary means of collecting data. Results showed that 293 Entrepreneurship and 106 Marketing Management who responded to the study were employed in private company. Majority of them were employed, has rank and file status, regular status and recruited with six months after graduation. Majority of the respondents that school-acquired knowledge or competencies and skill which were highly developed in their formative years were highly relevant in their chosen occupation. As to recommended competency skills in their chosen occupation majority of them answered "communication skills". This study revealed that graduates of the Business administration program are marketable since they have the necessary skills and knowledge to be competitive to face the challenges of finding a job and becoming a part of the work force. To ensure that most of the graduates get employed, the researcher recommended that the university must take necessary intervention in acquiring materials and laboratory tools to enhance the student's learning and teaching experiences both programs. It is also suggested that the institution must intensify their linkages to support their job recruitment program for their graduate. It also suggest that periodic review of the curriculum to adopt the skills and knowledge of graduates to the skills required by the job market to be more employable. The university also consider requiring students to take up competency certification during their stay in the University to increase their competency skills which may lead to have better chance of getting hit=red not just locally but also globally.*

Keywords: Employability, Employment status, Higher Education Institution

1. Introduction

Higher Education Institution in the Philippines adapted the outcomes based education curriculum to ensure that the students' potentials will be developed in preparation to their future career and life. Higher Education Institution takes pride to have a curriculum that will develop students holistically. The formation of students is honed through academic excellence, personal development, and social responsibility. Every institution aims to develop competent business leaders who will soon be the catalysts of nation building, social dependability and economic development (Del Rosario, n. d.)

Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology San Isidro Campus is one of the Higher Education Institution (HEIs) which is responsible in providing curriculum that serves as the foundation of the graduates to develop their skills and knowledge in order to be prepared in the work environment. One of the program being offered by Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology-San Isidro Campus is Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) program majors in Marketing Management and Entrepreneurship under the College of Management and Business Technology. It is designated to produce graduates that possess a formulary of business operations and equip them with critical decision making skills for strategic and executive work necessary for competing in the ever changing world of business. The program empowers students with a basic and clear understanding of the function of every decision in a company, be it on marketing, finance, operations, human resources and office management. Trainings in this program emphasize leadership skills and thus, prepare them into managerial and supervisory position.

Through this study, the College of Management and Business Technology would like to substantiate the transfer of skills and knowledge to its graduate students. According to (Balinbing, 2014) as mention by (Lourdes et al., n. d.), tracer studies serve as basis for assessment and enhancement of existing educational programs offered by every academic institution. Higher Educational Institution (HEI) is challenge in balancing the development of higher education and professional relevance of academic teaching (Matejamelink and Samopavlin, 2009). Learning success' parameter is measured through the employability of graduates, type of employment and the length of landing on their first job (Word press, 2011).government agencies have been encouraging educational institutions and employers to work together to address employability issues (Lowden, Hall, Elliot and Lewin, 2011). It is considered as the pride and honour of every academic institution to produce globally competent employed graduates. In 2015, Tran suggested in his duty that changes in the society should be emphasized in the higher education system by its stakeholders.

According to (Aquino, et al., 2015), as cited by Posadas et al., graduate tracer studies can aptly provide essential

information useful in evaluating the results of the education and training of a specific institution of higher education as it collects information from the graduates in terms of their profile, education background, previous and current employment data, and the relevance of the curriculum to their job. These data may show the level of success of the institution's educational efforts pertaining to its graduates and the labor market. Any possible shortfalls in its program offerings in terms of administration, content, delivery and relevance can be determined and improved.

Moreover, (Hazaymeh and Dela Pena, 2011), as cited by Posadas et al. states that a tracer study enables the institution of higher education to get information on possible deficits in a given educational program which can serve as a basis for curricular improvement.

The College of Management and Business Technology at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology-San Isidro Campus (NEUST-SIC) is one with the goal of providing competitive training to business management students in order to give them the best chance to be employed. To monitor the performance of the college and the relevance of its curriculum, this graduate tracer study was conducted. .

2. Literature Survey

Employability is the ability of a graduate to get a satisfying job, stating that job acquisition should not be prioritized over preparedness for employment to avoid pseudo measure of individual employability. These are not set of skills but are range of experiences and attributed developed through higher level learning, thus employability is not a product but a process of learning. Today's challenging economic situation means that it is no longer sufficient for a new graduate to have knowledge of an academic subject; but it is necessary for a students to gain the skills which will enhance their prospects of employment (Ramirez, etal., 2014). Higher Education Institution as consider as the center of civilization must be responsive and involve in developing individuals through its programs offerings has obligation to keep track of their graduates and to determine accountability and whether or not their programs have impacted on their clienteles (Hazaymeh, etal., n. d.). One fundamental problem of education and training is that they must be geared to the current and future needs of societies undergoing social and economic change. Education and training must be planned in flexible dynamic process and not in static specifications. It should be always capable of changes. Specific consideration of the country have to be taken into account such that effective and efficient education and training even the resources are scarce.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) envisions to develop globally competent and empowered human resources, who are ready to the challenges and demands of the 21st century through the Higher Education Institution (HEIs), (Torres, etal., 2017). According to Mercado as mentioned by (Ramirez, etal., 2014), states that the Commission on Higher Education in the Philippines initiates to conduct Graduate Tracer Study among selected Higher Education Institution in order to gather data that would show

if HEI's offering courses or programs that produce graduates meet the needs of industry and society. HEI's should be able to align their efforts with the manpower needs of industry (CHED CMO#38, 2.2006, 11, s.1999).

According to (Schomburg, 2003) as mention by (Hazaymeh, et al., n. d.), a tracer study is a empirical study which provides valuable information for assessing the results of the education and training of specific program of an institution. Through a tracer study the Higher Institution can able to information that identify the gap between the program being offered and skills required by job market which will serve as basis for revision of the curriculum and improvements.

Conducting a research study on employability of graduates provides information on whereabouts of graduate which might broaden the perspectives among administrators, faculty and students. Relevant information such as income, economic sector, current job title, working time, duration of search for the first job, methods of job search, values develop and practice in work and skills acquire are essentially for an institution.

The acquisition of knowledge in the undergraduate specialization, skills and competencies will also promote productivity, efficiency and expertise in graduates' present job (Valdez, 2017).

On employment status, the provision of written agreement notwithstanding and regardless of the oral agreement of the parties, an employment shall be deemed to be regular where the employee has been engaged to perform activities which are usually necessary or desirable in the usual business or trade of the employee; except where the employment has been fixed for specific project or undertaking the completion or termination of which has been determined at the same time of engagement of employee or where the work or service to be performed is seasonal in nature and employment is for the duration of the season. A study by (Orejana, et al., 2010) showed that BSBA graduates indicate that 91% were employed, with 20% supervisory positions and 4% holding managerial positions. Content or topics covered by the programs is found to be the main strength in the aspect of curriculum as supported by 45% of the respondents while lack of applications and exposures came out to have more exposures and applications as expressed by 45% of the respondents.

On the number of employed and unemployed, (Diestro, 2013), most of the graduates are employed on the course they finished while who did not land job mentioned the following reason: busy as housewives and some pursue to higher studies (masteral and doctorate).

3. Problem Definition

This study aimed to trace the employment status of the College of Management and Business Technology graduates of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, San Isidro Campus between academic years 2014 to 2018. It sought to determine:

1) The profile of the graduates in terms of:

a) Year graduated; and,
b) Major/specialization; and,
c) Employment status.
2) The graduates' employment data.
   a) Employer sector;
   b) Job level position;
   c) Employment status;
   d) Number of years employed; and
   e) Monthly salary
3) How relevant are the school-acquired skills and competencies to the graduates' chosen occupation?
4) What skills and competencies do the graduates recommend to make the curricular offering more relevant to the current jobs?

4. Methodology/ Approach

The study used the descriptive research using the survey tool as the primary means of gathering. According (McCombes, 2019) descriptive research is an appropriate choice when the research aim is to identify characteristics, frequency, trends, and categories. To answer the aforementioned questions, the researchers devised a structures questionnaire based Commission on Higher Education (CHED) standardized form of tracing university graduates. The modified questionnaire was planned and created by researcher. Suggestions for modifications and improvements were done and it was set for a dry run and got tested by selected graduates.

The respondents of the study were four hundred fifty three (453), 206 Marketing Management and 247 Entrepreneurship graduates from 2014-2018. Personal distribution was done by students of College of Management and Business Technology. Other respondent were traced through email and facebook account. Lastly, the data collected, analyzed and interpreted using frequency and percentage distribution.

5. Results and Discussions

Table 1: Respondent's Profile

Course	Year Graduated	Total Graduates	Employed		Not Employed		Self-Employed		OFW		Cannot Be Traced	
BSBA Entre	2013-2014	71	55	77.00%	4	6.00%	1	1.41%	2	2.82%	9	12.68%
BSBA Entre	2014-2015	107	73	68.00%	5	5.00%	2	1.87%	4	3.74%	24	22.43%
BSBA Entre	2015-2016	40	30	75.00%	5	13.00%	1	2.50%	1	2.50%	4	10.00%
BSBA Mtkg	2015-2016	89	68	76.00%	4	4.00%	0	0.00%	1	1.12%	16	26.97%
BSBA Entre	2016-2017	175	91	52.00%	11	6.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	73	41.71%
BSBA Entre	2017-2018	100	40	40.00%	13	13.00%	0	0.00%	1	1.00%	46	46.00%
BSBA Mktg	2017-2018	115	38	33.00%	3	3.00%	0	0.00%	2	1.74%	72	62.61%
Total		697	395	56.67%	45	6.00%	4	0.57%	11	1.58%	244	35.00%

Table 1 showed the profile of the respondents. As gleaned on the table, 395 or 56.67% of the total respondents were employed locally; 45 or 6% were not employed, 4 or.57% were self employed, 11 or 1.58% were Oversea Filipino Workers or (OFW) 244 or 35% were traced. It can be seen from the table that graduates from 2013–2014 have the highest employability with 55 or 77% and year 2017-2018 has the lowest rate of 38 or 33%. For not employed both batch for BSBA Entre batch 2015-2016 and batch 2017-2018 has the highest number or unemployed which is 5 or 13% and 13 or 13% respectively. For self-employed, BSBA Entre of 2014-2015 got the highest number of 2 or 1.87% and 0 for BSBA Entre 2016-2018, 2017-2018 and BSBA Marketing Management 2015-2016 and 2017-2018. For OFW, BS Entre 2014-2015 got the highest number which was 4 or 3.74%, and BS Entre 2016-2017 got the lowest number which was 0.

As gleaned on the table, majority of the BSBA graduates were employable. It signifies that graduates possess the necessary skills and knowledge needed by job market which manifest that the programs offered by the College of Management and Business Technology are align with the policies, standard and guidelines. BSBA Entre graduates from 2013-2014 are expected to have higher percentage of employability since it is already on more than a year after their graduation.

"Not Employed" until this time because of their personal reasons like "taking care of their parents or children" and some admittedly "they just don't fine their luck to be employed". Graduates shows Filipino values of close family ties. Familism, a

cultural value that emphasizes warm, close, supportive family relationship and that family is prioritized overself (Campos, et al., 2014). Sacrificing for their love ones were become their choice in life because of the current situation they are facing.

"Self Employed" graduates comes from Major of Entrepreneurship which were involved on online selling, one involve in franchise, and venture in a restaurant business. It only shows that graduates has initiates to be their "own boss" and to put into practice what they have learned. In the study of (Noorkartina, et al., 2015) according to the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE), only 1.7 percent (as of 2013) of university graduates are self-employed. Having the courage of being an entrepreneur rather than to be employed is a good indication to support the government advocacy to increase the number SME's and lowered the unemployment rate.

The OFW were located in countries like Taiwan, Dubai, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Japan and South Korea. This show that graduates find their luck in other countries. The pressure of familial responsibility and peer pressure are among the biggest factors that drive Filipinos to work abroad. Seeing their friends get higher salaries and achieve a better life after only a few months abroad would entice several people to try their luck themselves. Transitional migatory labor remains a

primary method many Filipinos use in an effort to gain financial security of their families (Harper, 2012).

"Cannot be traced" are graduates which cannot be located on facebook or email and other social media account. Graduate destination surveys pose the difficulty of tracing graduates years later when their contact details may have changed (Toit, 2014). Graduates opted to use alias or not their real name on their social media account.

Table 2: Frequency of Respondents According to Employer' Sector

Sector	Frequency	Percentage
Government	34	8.52
Private	365	91.48
Total	399	100

Table 2 shows the frequency of respondents according to employer sector. It can be seen that majority of the respondents were employed in a private company which was composed of 365 or 91.48%. According to (Weedmark, 2018), most privately owned companies pay better than their publicly owned counterparts. One reason for this is that, with many exceptions, private companies aren't as well known, so they need to offer better incentives to attract the best employees. Private companies also tend to offer more incentive-based pay packages. Based on unstructured interview, most of the job opening was available in a private institution like banks industry, financing company, motor/car Trade Company etc. In addition, government workers in the Philippines are not automatically appointed to a permanent position. Some start as casual or contractual workers and either retain that status for a long time or eventually get appointed as regular employees. Others provide services to the government on a job order or consultancy basis and are thus not considered government employees (Zoleta, 2016).

Table 3: Frequency of Respondents According to Job Level Position

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Managerial	13	3.26
Supervisory	11	2.76
Rank and File	375	93.98
Total	399	100

Table 3 show the frequency of respondents according to job level position. Data indicated that majority of the respondents were employed as rank and file employees which was 375 or 93.98% and supervisory level got the lowest percentage which was 11 or 2.76%. Data implied that most of the respondents where on rank and file status since they considered young and still their experience and knowledge were not capable to do upper level position. (Vardi and Hammer, 2017) stated that, rates and directions of intraorganizational job mobility as well as perceptions of mobility requirements among rank and file employees were found to differ by technology. Career experiences were positively related to both interest in and effort expended at furthering the career. Based on unstructured interview the thirteen (13) got the managerial position because their experience and qualification meet the qualification standard of the company since they finished their on the job training

in the same comapnay. (McCamey, et al., 2018), key position is given or critical position in the company should be given to qualified or to whom who is ready to assume the position.

Table 4: Frequency of Respondents According to Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Regular/Permanent	304	76.19
Probationary	34	8.52
Contractual	54	13.53
Job Order	7	1.76
Total	399	100

Table 4 shows the frequency of respondents according to employment status. It can based on the results, majority of the respondents have regular/ permanent status which 304 or 76.19% and job order got the lowest percentage which was 7 or 1.76%. This indicates that graduates of Business Administration are competitive in finding the job. (Sisinacki, et al., 2017), employee performance evaluation should be developed for each organizational context or at least adjusted to specific needs of the organization to reflect company culture its vision and values, set of competencies and skills, business requirements and previous experience. Other graduates are expected to have already find secured job or have already security of tenure on their job. It can take college graduates an average of three to six months to land that first position after graduation, according to the University of Washington (Caldwell, et al., 2011). There are still some who are still in the job order position based on unstructured interview, the reason for being on casual status by this time because they are still waiting for a plantilla position in government service.

Table 5: Frequency of Respondents According Number of Years Employed

Years Employed	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a year	110	27.57
1 year	194	48.62
2 years	50	12.53
More than 2 years	45	11.28
Total	399	100

Table 5 shows the frequency of respondents according to number of years employed. It can be observed from the data majority of the respondents got employed in a year after graduation which was 194 0r 48.62%. Data implied that graduates are employable. (Rahmat, et al., 2012) stated that graduates needs to be competitive to ensure they can survive in the job market. To be competitive, well educated graduates need to equip themselves with various skills which attribute and determined their marketability. Based on the unstructured interview graduates who were employed more than two years were graduates who looked for another job after the termination of the contract on their first job. The reason for transfer is for promotion, job security and more benefits.

Table 6: Frequency of Respondents According Monthly Salary

Years Employed	Frequency	Percentage
Below P 5, 000	18	4.51
P 5, 000 to less than P10, 0000	94	23.56
P 10, 000 to less than P 15, 000	206	51.63
P15, 000 to less than P 20, 000	45	11.28
P20, 000 to less than P 25, 000	23	5.76
P25, 000 and above	13	3.26
Total	399	100

Table 6 show the distribution of monthly salary of the respondents. As seen on the table, the range of monthly earnings of those employed graduates ranged from P10, 000 to less than P 15, 000 with 206 or 51.63% respondents while followed by P5, 000 to less than P10, 000 with 94 or 23.56%, P 15, 000 to less than P 20, 000 with 45 or 11.28%, P20, 000 to less than P25, 000 got 23 or 5.76%, below P5, 000 with 18 or 4.51% and P25, 000 and above got the lowest salary range which is 13 or 3.26%. Earnings are waited by graduates as anybody else which make many of them look for the right job after graduation (Ramirez, 2014). In (Bullock, Stritch, and Rainey, 2015) research shows, in the private and public sectors, salaries play an important role in ensuring employees are motivated, thorough, loyal and sincere to their work. Therefore graduates consider salary in looking for a job because it is their main reason for looking for a job.

Table 7: Distribution of Employed Respondents on the Extent of Use and Relevancy of School-Acquired Knowledge or Competencies and Skill in their Chosen Occupation.

Extent of use and Relevancy of the Acquired Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
1. Very highly useful/ relevant	96	24.06
2. Highly useful/relevant	157	38.34
3. Moderately useful/relevant	125	31.33
4. Fairly useful/relevant	21	5.27
5. Poorly useful/relevant	0	0
Total	399	100

Table 7 show distribution of employed respondents on the extent of use and relevancy of school-acquired knowledge or competencies and skill in their chosen occupation. As gleaned on the table, "highly useful/relevant" got the highest frequency with 157 or 38.34%, followed by "moderately useful/relevant" with 125 or 31.33%, "Very highly useful/relevant" got frequency of 96 or 24.06% and lastly "poorly useful/relevant" got the lowest frequency which is zero. Graduates believes that school acquired knowledge and competencies are very essential as part of completing work task. This simply means that curriculum offered by the University is still congruent with the needs of the labor market. It can be concluded that graduates landed on the job which was related to their course.

Table 8: Distribution of Employed Respondents on the Extent of Development of School-Acquired Knowledge or Competencies and Skill in their Chosen Occupation

Extent of School-Acquired Knowledge or Competencies and Skill in their Chosen Occupation.	Frequency	Percentage
1. Very highly developed	78	19.55
2. Highly developed	185	46.37
3. Moderately developed	102	25.56
4. Fairly developed	34	8.52
5. Poorly developed	0	0
	399	100

Table 8 shows the distribution of employed respondents on the extent of development of school-acquired knowledge or competencies and skill in their chosen occupation. The data indicates that "Highly developed" got the highest frequency with 185 or 46.67%, followed by "Moderately developed" with 102 or 25.56%, "Very highly developed" with 78 or 19.55%, "fairly developed" with 34 or 8.52% and "Poorly developed" with zero response. The employed graduates found out that the competencies and skills they acquired while in college were highly developed, thus enabling them to perform well in their jobs. (Hanapi, et al., 2014) find out in their study that the majority of the respondents agreed that the graduates' attributes, lecturers' competency and the quality of education, which is referred to the curriculum of a study field, are among the factors that contribute to the unemployment. Therefore, it is reasonable for the parties who are involved in the construction and the enhancement of the curriculum of the related to the field of study to conduct an in-depth study.

Table 8: Distribution of Recommended Competencies and Skill in their Chosen Occupation.

Skills and competencies for Curricular Offerings	Frequency	Rank
1.communication skills	255	1
2. Human Relations skills	154	3
3. Entrepreneurial skills	45	6
4. Information technology	194	1
5. Problem solving skills	143	4
6. Critical thinking skills	98	5
7. Other skills	28	7

Table 8 shows the distribution of recommended competencies and skill in their chosen occupation. It can be seen that "communication skills" rank first with 255 respondents, followed by "information technology" with 195 respondents, "human relation skills" with 154 respondents, "problem solving skills " with 143 respondents, "critical thinking skills" with 98 respondents, "entrepreneurial skills" with 45 respondents and "other skills" ranked 7 with 28 respondents. This means that graduates acquires the competency skills that was developed in their formative years in college. Chous, shen, Hsiao and Chen an expert who developed ten competencies of business students which includes (1) entrepreneurial spirit, (2) marketing competence, (3) economic competence, (4) financial competence, (5) accounting competence, (6) management competence, (7) globalization competence, (8) law competence, (9) enterprise resources planning competence, (10) information technology competence (Riyanti, et al., 2014).

6. Conclusion

Based on the result of the analysis, the researcher concluded that graduates of both majors of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Entrepreneurship and Marketing Management are employable. Since majority of the graduates are employed mostly in a private sector, with regular/permanent status, on rank and file position with

salary range of P10, 000 less than 15, 000 and employed for more than one year in their current employer. It is also concluded that the employability skills acquired from the University was still match to the job requirements needed by employers. Majority of the respondents answered "highly useful/relevant" on the extent of usefulness and relevancy school-acquired knowledge or competencies and skill in their chosen occupation. Majority of the respondents answered "highly developed" on the extent of development of school-acquired knowledge or competencies and skill in their chosen occupation. Majority of the respondents answered "communication skills" as the recommended competency skills in their chosen occupation. This indicates that the graduates performed their jobs in conformity with the university's educational program objectives.

This study revealed that graduates of the Business administration program are marketable because they have the necessary skills and knowledge to be competitive to face the challenges of finding a job and becoming a part of the work force. To ensure that most of the graduates get employed, the researcher recommended that the university must take necessary intervention in acquiring materials and laboratory tools to enhance the student's learning and teaching experiences both programs. It is also suggested that the institution must intensify their linkages to support their job recruitment program for their graduate. It also suggest that periodic review of the curriculum to adopt the skills and knowledge of graduates to the skills required by the job market to be more employable. The university also consider requiring students to take up competency certification during their stay in the University to increase their competency skills which may lead to have better chance of getting hired not just locally but also globally.

7. Future Scope

This tracer study shall provide information concerning the employment status of the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Marketing and Entrepreneurship of the Campus for the last five years which may help both the University and the instructors identify areas for growth and development in the provision of relevant preparation and training business administration students. This study will further serve as baseline data for other researchers in conducting research regarding Business Administration programs.

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Author Profile

Joannie A. Galano, Ph. D. Associate Professor 1 is a faculty member and Area Chairperson of the College of Management and Business Technology-San Isidro Campus at Nueva Ecija Univesity of Science and Technology-San Isidro Campus. She earned her Master's in Business Administration degree at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology-Gen. Tinio Campus and her Doctor of Philosophy in Business Management at College of Immaculate Conception.