

Employability of University of Bohol, BS Psychology Graduates

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ABSTRACT

Employability of graduates is a major success indicator of curriculum effectiveness. The main purpose of the study is to evaluate the employability of BS Psychology graduates of the University of Bohol. This study utilized descriptive survey and correlation of the employability, competencies, and personality attributes of BS Psychology Graduates from School Year 2003 to 2011. Results of the study showed that graduates were very highly employable having been employed within a period of less than 3 months after graduation and currently on a full-time permanent status and a greater number has concentrated in the industrial/organizational field. The extent to which the university has equipped them with employability competencies was rated Above Average. Respondents highly perceived their personality attributes. There was a significant relationship between personality attributes and employability, and between employability competencies and personality attributes. Results of this study implied that graduates who are highly equipped with employability competencies develop high personality attributes resulting to high employability. The outcome of this study is one of the bases for the curricular improvement of the BS Psychology program of the University of Bohol.

KEYWORDS

Psychology, Employability, Employability Competencies, Personality Attributes, Correlation, Asia, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

According to the Philippine Graduate Tracer Study conducted by De la Salle University in 2012, unemployment continues to be one of the top concerns of the Philippine government. Compared to other Asian economies, the Philippines' unemployment rate continues to be among the highest in the region during the past five years registering at 7.2% in 2012. Employability is regarded as an aspect of quality of higher education, or more precisely, the benefit and usefulness of the study program for career and work tasks (Storen, 2010).

In response to employment concerns and usefulness of study program, the University of Bohol pioneered to offer in the province the degree Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Through the years, the course has gone through several curriculum revisions but the longest running curriculum which still applies up to the time of the conduct of this study is the 2002 curriculum. Having produced more than a hundred graduates through the years, the employability and competitiveness of its graduates became a major concern of the university. As Bandura (1995) stated, a major goal of formal education should be to equip students with the intellectual tools, efficacy beliefs, and intrinsic interests to educate themselves throughout their lifetime.

This paper attempted to evaluate the employability of BS Psychology graduates by looking into the length of time before they got employed after graduation, their current status of employment, and field of psychology where graduates worked. HEFCE (2001) mentioned that graduate's first employment statistics have for some time been used as a performance indicator in higher education while Knight & Yorke (2004) states that employability is concerned with the ability not only to secure a first job but also to remain employable throughout life.

The extent to which the university has equipped them with employability competencies and developed their personality attributes upon graduation was primarily examined. Relationship between employability competencies and employability, between personality attributes and employability, and between employability competencies and personality attributes were further tested. Such variables coincide with the proposition that employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful (Pool & Sewell, 2007). The outcome of this study is one of the bases for the curricular improvement of the BS Psychology program of the University of Bohol.

This research is anchored on the Career EDGE model, a practical model of graduate employability developed by Lorraine Dacre Pool and Peter Sewell in 2007. Specifically, they have identified five critical elements: Career Development Learning; Experience (Work & Life); Degree Subject Knowledge, Understanding & Skills; Generic Skills; and Emotional Intelligence. The design of the model illustrates that each component is absolutely essential and that the absence of any one element may considerably affect a graduate's employability. The mnemonic "CareerEDGE" stands for the five components on the lower tier of the model. This model suggests that students must be provided with opportunities to experience and develop in the five components and be given the chance to reflect and evaluate their experiences. By doing so, they will be able to develop higher levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem. These three personality attributes are the crucial links to employability.

The research conducted by UNESCO in Bangkok (2012) arrived at a general consensus that employability refers to a wide range of attributes and competencies that enable the job seekers to gain and maintain employment such as, but not limited to, the following: Communication skills; Logical, analytical and problem solving skills; Personality, confidence, and integrity; Flexibility and adaptability; Innovation and creativity, and Team spirit. Academic qualifications are essential, but the aptitudes and attitudes of job seekers are equally, if not more, important to employers. It is therefore crucial for graduates to cultivate qualities most sought after by their potential employers.

In the study of Felonia in 2010, it was concluded that there was relevance of the curricula to the employability of graduates of higher education institutions in Zamboanga City. Personal Attributes and "Type of Higher Education Institutions graduated from" influenced the employability of graduates of higher education institutions in Zamboanga City but Politics did not.

In the research findings of De Guzman and De Castro (2008), the impressive employability profile of comprehensive university graduates to middle level management positions is brought about not by the academic honors of the graduates but through capabilities such as knowledge, skills and attitudes used in work places.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the descriptive method utilizing a self-constructed questionnaire. Likert scales were used in measuring the respondent's perception. Respondents of this study were 38 graduates from SY 2003-2004 to SY 2010-2011.

This study was based at the University of Bohol, Tagbilaran City but the location of respondents was practically worldwide because the graduates were already scattered in the different places of the country as well as abroad. Questionnaires were distributed and were retrieved personally to those within Central Visayas and through emails and social networking sites for those in far places.

To test whether there was a significant relationship between employability competencies and employability, between employability competencies and personality attributes, and between personality attributes and employability, the Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient Correlation was utilized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Employability of Graduates
N=38

Item	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Very High Employability <i>(Employed right after graduation - less than 3 months after graduation)</i>	20	52.63	1
High Employability <i>(Employed within 3-6 months after Graduation)</i>	10	26.32	2
Moderate Employability <i>(Employed within 7-9 months after graduation)</i>	2	5.26	4
Low Employability <i>(Employed within 10-12 months after graduation)</i>	1	2.63	5
Very Low Employability <i>(Employed within 10-12 months after graduation)</i>	5	13.16	3
Total	38	100.00	

Majority of the BS Psychology graduates from University of Bohol were very highly employable as represented by 52.63% of the respondents. Next in rank was high employability (26.32%), followed by very low employability (13.16%), then, moderate employability, (5.26%) and low employability (2.63%).

Table 2. Current Employment Status
N=38

Item	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Part time status <i>(Employed, working 1-39 hours per week)</i>	1	2.63	5.5
Full-time status <i>(Employed, working 40 or more hours per week but on probationary status)</i>	9	23.68	2
Full-time status <i>(Employed, working 40 or more hours per week on a permanent status)</i>	20	52.63	1
Contractual /project based	5	13.16	3
Self-employed	2	5.26	4
Previously employed but currently unemployed	1	2.63	5.5
Total	38	100.00	

Majority of the respondents (52.63%) were employed on a full-time permanent status. Meanwhile, there were 9 respondents (23.68%) who also worked full-time but on a probationary status. Five respondents (13.16%) were on contractual/project based jobs, 2 (5.26%) were self-employed while 1 respondent (2.63%) worked part-time. One respondent (2.63%) was unemployed at the time of the survey but was previously employed.

With majority of the graduates having been employed on a full-time, permanent status, there was a strong indication that UB's BS Psychology graduates were highly employable. This proposition anchored on the statement of Knight & Yorke (2004) that employability is concerned with the ability not only to secure a first job but also to remain employable throughout life.

Table 3. Field of Psychology
(Multiple Response, N=44)

Item	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Clinical	0	0	7.5
Industrial/organizational	16	36.36	1
Guidance and counseling	4	9.09	5
Educational/school/teaching	8	18.18	2.5

Assessment/psychometrics/testing	4	9.09	5
Social	4	9.09	5
Developmental	0	0	7.5
Not applicable, nature of work not in line with Psychology	8	18.18	2.5
Total	44	100.00	

There were 16 (36.46%) respondents who landed a job in the industrial/organizational field. Other respondents were spread in the fields of Educational/School/Teaching (18.18%), Guidance and Counseling (9.09%), Assessment/Psychometrics/Testing (9.09%), and Social Psychology (9.09%). There were 8 respondents (18.18%) who expressed that the nature of their work was not related to any of the fields in Psychology. On the other hand, none of them worked in the Clinical and Developmental fields of specialization. On the totality, majority of the graduates landed on Psychology related jobs.

Table 4. Extent of Developing Employability Competencies
Among the Graduates
N=38

ITEMS	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Value	Interpretation
I. Degree subject knowledge, skills and understanding	3.68	Above Average	Competency is developed at a great extent
II. Generic Skills	3.67	Above Average	Competency is developed at a great extent
III. Career Development Learning	3.67	Above Average	Competency is developed at a great extent
IV. Emotional Intelligence/Strength	3.88	Above Average	Competency is developed at a great extent
V. Experience	3.65	Above Average	Competency is developed at a great extent
Composite Mean	3.70	Above Average	Competency is developed at a great extent

Respondents believed that their stay in UB equipped them with the employability competencies needed for the employment world as evidently shown in their rating of 3.70 (Above Average) in all 5 components of the CareerEDGE model. Rated highest was emotional intelligence/strength (3.88),

followed by the following: degree subject knowledge, skills and understanding (3.68), generic skills and career development learning both rated 3.67. Experience was rated the least weighted mean of 3.65.

This result gave an assurance that the University of Bohol, specifically the BS Psychology Program equipped its graduates with the competencies that made them highly employable. This coincides with Bandura's (1995) proposition that a major goal of formal education should be to equip students with the intellectual tools, efficacy beliefs, and intrinsic interests to educate themselves throughout their lifetime.

Table 5. Level of Personality Attributes Upon Graduation
N=38

ITEMS	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Value	Interpretation
I. Self-efficacy	2.84	Positive perception	High level of Personality Attributes
II. Self-esteem	3.05	Positive perception	High level of Personality Attributes
III. Self-confidence	3.03	Positive perception	High level of Personality Attributes
Composite Mean	2.97	Positive perception	High level of Personality Attributes

Respondent graduates had positive perception of their personality attributes upon graduation in the context of self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence as suggested by the composite mean of 2.97. The rating on self-esteem (3.03) ranked the highest followed by self-confidence (3.03), while self-efficacy (2.84) was rated the least.

When subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation to analyze the relationship between employability competencies and employability result was insignificant. Hence, there was no significant relationship between employability competencies and employability rate. Such finding indicated that equipping the graduates with employability competencies did not necessarily result to high employability. Therefore, being equipped with competencies alone is not enough. There is still a need to further evaluate and reflect on such competencies and translate those into powerful tools for developing high self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

This result affirms the findings of the research conducted by UNESCO in Bangkok (2012) which states that academic qualifications are essential, but the aptitudes and attitudes of job seekers are equally, if not more, important to employers. It is therefore crucial for graduates to cultivate qualities most sought after by their potential employers.

As to the extent upon which the graduates were equipped with employability competencies if it significantly affect their perceived level of personality attributes in the context of self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence, the ratings were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result showed that the employability competencies significantly affect personality attributes. It led to the conclusion that developing the graduate's employability competencies resulted to a high belief in themselves that they can perform the tasks expected of them in the work field.

This finding demonstrates the interplay of the Above Average rating on employability competencies and the positive perception on personality attributes among the graduates. This is a strong affirmation of the CareerEdge model which states that students must be provided with opportunities to experience and develop in the five components and be given the chance to reflect and evaluate their experiences. By doing so, they will be able to develop higher levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem (Pool and Sewell, 2007).

Developing a positive perception of one's personality attributes namely; self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence had a significant effect on employability. This was proven by the result when data were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

Such finding adheres to Pool and Sewell's (2007) proposition that says,

"It is important to have a belief in one's ability to succeed and be able to project this belief to the outside world, but by achieving a high level of self-esteem graduates will also be realistic about their achievements and be committed to lifelong learning".

The same is true with the research findings of De Guzman and De Castro (2008), that impressive employability profile of comprehensive university graduates to middle level management positions is brought about not by the academic honors of the graduates but through capabilities such as knowledge, skills and attitudes they had used in work places.

CONCLUSION

1. University of Bohol's BS Psychology program has produced very highly employable graduates. These graduates were able to land jobs in less than 3 months after graduation and were given full-time permanent status by their employers.
2. The generalist BS Psychology curricular program of the university allowed the graduates to spread across various fields of disciplines, thus, giving them more opportunities for employment. However, graduates were more inclined towards industrial/organizational field of Psychology.
3. UB's BS Psychology curriculum maintained a well-balanced program which afforded its graduates a great extent of experiences and opportunities needed to develop themselves the 5 key elements of the CareerEDGE model. Such key elements are referred to as employability competencies, namely: Career Development Learning; Experience (Work & Life); Degree Subject Knowledge, Understanding & Skills; Generic Skills; and Emotional Intelligence.
4. Equipping the graduates with employability competencies resulted to a high perception of their personality attributes in the context of self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence. Such personality attributes enabled the graduates to believe in their competencies and their capacity to succeed.
5. Being highly equipped with employability competencies did not necessarily result to high employability. However, if graduates were given the opportunity to evaluate and reflect on these competencies, high level of self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence were developed. These personality attributes were the crucial factors leading to high employability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the findings of this study revealed that competencies significantly affect the graduates' level of personality attributes, there is a strong need to provide opportunities for the maximum attainment of such competencies among the students. By doing so, graduates will leave the portals of UB with high regard of themselves, which in turn, will significantly relate to high employability.

After having proven the relevance of the CareerEDGE theory of employability to the findings of this study, it is, therefore, strongly recommended that the

above- mentioned competencies be given emphasis in the curriculum revision of the BS Psychology program.

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