

The Employability Skills of BSBA-Marketing Management Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the significant difference between the BSBA- Marketing Management students' and companies' evaluation of employability skills. A structured questionnaire was distributed to (1) Fourth Year students enrolled at Tarlac State University in their On-the-Job-Training (OJT) subject and (2) OJT companies where the students have taken their OJT. This study utilized the 21st Century Skills as the benchmark of employability skills. The study found out that no gap exists between the evaluation of employability skills between students and companies. The three dimensions of employability skills scored the following significance .889 for learning innovation; .962 for information, media and technology skills; and, .397 for life and career. The study raises implications to the college and the department.

Keywords: employability skills, Marketing Management students, OJT companies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education sector is characterized by diversity where course and student profiles are different and their challenge is to develop students with distinct characteristics or attributes. Universities and colleges have been taking different approaches in which students' employability skills are developed. For example, they have been providing their students with competent academic staff with relevant support and resources, providing advice and guidance through career services, opportunities to participate in clubs/associations/organizations in their university life. In the case of business schools, there have been considerable attention to clarifying precisely which skills should be developed, and how, but far less on evaluating employability skill provision and its impact on graduate work-readiness (Jackson, Sibson and Riebe, 2013). The terms "employability" or "employability skills" refer to a set of generic softer skills and competencies. In particular, personal attributes that can be summed up as a positive attitude are critical to being employable. A positive attitude encapsulates characteristics such as a willingness to take part and openness to new activities and ideas. Equally, knowledge is a vital component of what makes you employable. In brief, employability is best understood as: a set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labor market

participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy (CBI, 2011).

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (www.21stcenturyskills.com) has developed a framework for 21st century learning, which describes the skills that students need to thrive in today's global economy, namely: learning and innovation skills; information, media and technology skills; and, life and career skills. P21, the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education. The organization brings together the business community, education leaders and policymakers to define a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure students' success as citizens and workers in the 21st century.

The benefits of evaluating employability skills apply to all stakeholders in undergraduate education. Educators can better gauge their contribution to graduate work- readiness and are alerted to areas of weakness requiring adjustments in their strategies, program content, learning activities and/or assessment. Graduates will be better equipped to explicitly promote their own capabilities in employability skills. Finally, the evaluation result will highlight those areas of which would benefit from industry assistance and intervention, such as embedding professional learning activities into curricula and assessment.

The Department of Marketing Management under the College of Business and Accountancy has increase in its population since it was first offered in 2007. With ASEAN Integration and other challenges, the department sought to check students' evaluation of their employability skills vis-à-vis companies'.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. How do Marketing Management students and companies describe employability skills along the areas of:
 - 1.1. Learning and Innovation Skills;
 - 1.2. Information, Media and Technology Skills;
 - 1.3. Life and Career Skills?
2. Is there a significant difference between Marketing Management students' and companies' evaluation of employability skills?
3. What are the implications of the study to CBA- Department of Marketing Management?

Hypothesis:

1. There is no significant difference between the students and companies evaluation of graduate employability skills.

3. RESEARCH METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study used the descriptive research design to explore the significant difference in Learning and Innovation Skills, Information, Media and Technology Skills and Life and Career Skills as per response of the students and companies. The questionnaire consisted of two parts to measure the studied variables: the first part asked

the profile of respondents (both the students and prospective companies), second part was about the 21st Century Skills as divided into three skills, namely: Learning and Innovation Skills, Information, Media and Technology Skills and the Life and Career Skills. No modification was made to the current questionnaire. The survey used a faceted approach to the measurement of Learning and Innovation Skills in terms of specific, identifiable characteristics. It measured three aspects of students' learning and innovative skills: creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, and communication and collaboration. Under the Information, Media and Technology Skills, it measured the students' information literacy, media literacy, ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) literacy. The Life and Career Skills was also measured in terms of flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility were the five skills needed in developing adequate life and career skills. A 5-point Likert scale format with choices per item was used, ranging from "poor" to "outstanding."

There were 136 students enrolled in their OJT/Practicum subject for 2nd Semester, AY 2015-2016. From among this number, 114 Fourth Year BSBA-Marketing Management Students and 104 prospective companies answered the same questionnaire to evaluate the Employability Skills of BSBA- Marketing Management OJTians. The retrieval rate of the questionnaires from students and companies were 83.8% and 76.5%, respectively.

From among the students, eighty-three (83) or 72.3% were female respondents, while the males were only thirty-one (31). They were designated under the Marketing department of the different companies, and other business functions including Finance, Accounting, and Production among others. On the contrary, prospective companies from which students took their OJT were mostly in the service industry, logistics, sales, and manufacturing, just to name a few. Ninety-two (92) or 88.46% of those OJT companies were private entities while only twelve (12) or 11.54% were public or government agencies.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Employability Skills

As seen in Table 1, "communication and collaboration" yielded the highest mean grade of 4.01 and 4.03 for students and companies respectively with the adjectival description of "very satisfactory." It means the Marketing Management Students evaluated themselves that they were effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills, they listen effectively to decipher meaning, use communication to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade, utilize multiple media and technologies and communicate effectively in diverse environments. They also have the characteristics of demonstrating the ability to work effectively, exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful to achieve a common goal and assume shared responsibility for collaborative work and value the contributions made by each member.

Table 1
Learning and Innovation Skills

<i>Variables</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Creativity and Innovation</i>	Students	3.96	VS
	Companies	3.92	VS
<i>Critical thinking & problem solving</i>	Students	3.86	VS
	Companies	3.85	VS
<i>Communication & Collaboration</i>	Students	4.01	VS
	Companies	4.03	VS
<i>Overall Rating</i>	Students	3.94	VS
	Companies	3.93	VS

On the contrary, “critical thinking and problem solving” scored 3.86 and 3.85 the lowest mean grades from students’ and companies’ evaluation, respectively, having also the same adjectival description of “very satisfactory”.

The overall mean score for learning and innovation skills variables is 3.94 for students while 3.93 for companies with “very satisfactory” adjectival description.

Table 2
Information, Media and Technology Skills

<i>Variables</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Information Literacy</i>	Students	3.92	VS
	Companies	3.90	VS
<i>Media Literacy</i>	Students	3.92	VS
	Companies	3.94	VS
<i>Overall Ratings</i>	Students	3.92	VS
	Companies	3.92	VS

In terms of the students’ information, media, and technology skills it garnered a high threshold overall mean score of 3.93. Marketing Management Students were able to access information effectively and efficiently and evaluate information, use information accurately and creatively, and manage the flow of information.

They were also capable of analyzing the media, understand and effectively utilize it, and apply technology effectively.

Table 3 shows the mean grades of the life and career skills of the marketing management students per each variable.

Table 3
Life and Career Skills

<i>Variables</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Flexibility & Adapt</i>	Students	3.96	VS
	Companies	3.93	VS
<i>Initiative & Self-Direction</i>	Students	3.95	VS
	Companies	3.97	VS
<i>Social & Cross Culture Skills</i>	Students	4.26	VS
	Companies	4.16	VS
<i>Productivity & Accountability</i>	Students	4.17	VS
	Companies	4.02	VS
<i>Leadership & Responsibility</i>	Students	4.05	VS
	Companies	3.98	VS
<i>Overall Rating</i>	Students	4.08	VS
	Companies	4.01	VS

As shown, all the variables (flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility) garnered very satisfactory scores from students, of 3.96, 3.95, 4.26, 4.17, and 4.06 accordingly. This means that the students' very satisfactory life and career skills to their work because they have the ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age, they have rigorously attentive in developing adequate life and career skills. Contrary wise, the response of companies were almost the same with those of the students, having mean scores of 3.93 (flexibility and adaptability), 3.97 (initiative and self-direction), 4.16 (social and cross-cultural skills), 4.02 (productivity and accountability), and, 3.98 (leadership and responsibility).

Table 4
Overall Employability Skills

		<i>Grand Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Overall Rating</i>	Students	3.98	VS
	Companies	3.95	VS

In terms of the overall employability skills as evaluated by students and companies, a close mean score was recorded. 3.98 and 3.95 were the grand mean of students and companies, accordingly and both were still under the "Very Satisfactory" bracket.

4.2. Test of Difference Results

Table 5
Overall Employability Skills Evaluation Difference between Students and Companies

The table reveals the test of difference results between the students' and companies' evaluation of employability skills.

<i>Skills</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>Learning and Innovation</i>	.139	216	.01048	.889	Not Significant
<i>Information, Media and Technology</i>	-.047	216	-.00375	.962	Not Significant
<i>Life and Career</i>	.850	216	.06480	.397	Not Significant

As a rule of thumb in statistics, .05 significance level or lower means that there is a statistically significant probability that the differences between the two variables exists and is not due to chance, and reject the null hypothesis.

The three dimensions of employability skills scored the following significance .889 for learning innovation; .962 for information, media and technology skills; and, .397 for life and career. Since these three skills' statistical significance were above .05, the null hypothesis stating that "there is no significant difference between the students and companies evaluation of graduate employability skills" is hereby, accepted.

4.3. Implications of the Results to CBA- Department of Marketing Management

The department is yet on its ninth year since its establishment and has yet produced six (6) batches of graduates, including batch 2016.

First, the result showing "no significant" difference between the evaluation of students' and companies' on employability skills sounds surprising. Being a young department in the college and having "Very Satisfactory" rating from both the students and companies validates that the department had been doing well in honing the employability skills of BSBA- Marketing Management students. This means that the faculty members (for major subject or minor) had been providing what is due to

students in terms of the 21st Century Skills is concerned. The curriculum is responsive to the changing times and the learning environment is conducive, that their skills have been fully developed.

However, there seems no room for the department's improvement along areas of curriculum, instruction, learning environment, or whatsoever, considering that companies evaluation of employability skills matched with students'. Thus, the next question could be "what's next" for the department after knowing that no gap was identified.

From the findings of this research, the following may be considered:

1. This study can be an offshoot of another research to validate the veracity of the current paper's findings. A tracer study may be conducted after 6 months to 1 year to check whether the students have been employed knowing that their skills matched with what employers/companies look for.
2. The present research may be replicated/duplicated in the years to come (using the same instrument/tool) to check whether the findings would still be the same. A trend analysis may support or debunk this research' findings. Moreover, the other departments in the college may want to explore the same. By doing so, the College of Business Administration can see and check the overall evaluation among its students across departments and sectors/industries.
3. Since almost all of the students have taken their OJT within Tarlac Province, and businesses have been saturated by graduates from the college, the evaluation might have been affected by "affinity." This could be explored or investigated in the next researches.

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