

Bachelor of Science in Office Administration: A Graduate Tracer Study (2018-2020)

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Abstract - *Recognizing the reality in today's academic world, the role of higher education institutions can not only be limited to imparting knowledge but also to contribute to maintaining a competitive economy and most important of all, securing the dream of graduates to get jobs and become socially recognized and successful in their respective field of endeavors. This research aimed to determine the employability of Bachelor of Science in Office Administration in Pangasinan State University-San Carlos City Campus from SY 2017 – 2018 to SY 2019 – 2020. A descriptive research design was utilized in the study. The data-gathering instrument used by the researchers is the Graduate Tracer Study developed by CHED. A total of sixty-five (65) randomly selected graduates participated in this study. Findings reveal that 93.85% of the graduates are already employed. In addition, the majority of the graduates are already working with a regular/permanent employment status. More than 70% of the graduates are presently employed in private companies. The respondents also stated that their present job is related to their program or course taken. The most prominent source for finding their first job was being a walk-in applicant. Moreover, more than 50% of the graduates were already employed within one to two months. Respondents also cited that communication skill is the most commonly useful ability in their job placement. 6.15% of unemployed graduates reported that family issues hinder them to look for jobs. To further enhance the employability of PSU graduates, a periodic review of the curriculum by academic leaders, alumni, and industry representatives to ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies needed by the industry.*

Keywords – *Office Administration, Tracer Study, Graduates, Profiles*

INTRODUCTION

In a world where knowledge is a critical element for nations to prosper and compete, the primary is placed on the quality and relevance of education and how it can ensure that graduates have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that industries need. The changing processes and diversified needs of clientele are challenging the ability of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to meet the demand for employable graduates. (De Guzman and De Castro, 2008)

Graduates are expected to develop personal skills, qualities, and experiences that will enable them to compete in the labor market (Morean & Mcquid, 2016). Employers are urging universities and colleges to exert more explicit efforts to develop graduates to become skilled and competitive.

Pangasinan State University is responding positively to the challenges in education in the new normal. This is manifested by the University's vision, mission, core values, and competencies. PSU will continually develop highly principled, morally upright, innovative, and globally competent individuals capable of meeting the needs of industry, public service, and civil society.

Graduate tracer studies constitute an important tool for educational planners as they can provide valuable information for evaluating the results of higher education and training institutions. This information may be used for minimizing any defects in a given educational program in terms of context, delivery, and relevance and for further development of the institutions in the context of quality assurance. Trace studies ensure curriculum relevance is maintained and increase the marketability of the graduates of the institution.

Scholars agree to obtain generic skill sets to obtain competitive advantage (Hager, Holland & Beckett, 2002).

Tracer study is an approach which widely being used in most organizations, especially in educational institutions to track and keep records of their students once they have graduated from the institution. Through tracer study, an institution is able to evaluate the quality of education given to their graduates by knowing the graduates' placements and positions in the society which later can be used as a benchmark in producing more qualified and competitive graduates. Hence, tracer surveys are studies that gather feedback from graduates of an educational institution to monitor their achievements and progress in their careers and give policy bodies vital information on key issues.

According to Boaduo (2009), tracer studies also enable the contextualization of graduates of a particular University through a system that is dynamic and reliable to determine their life path or movement. It enables also the evaluation of the results of the education and training provided by a particular institution and it will examine and evaluates the current and future career and employment opportunities prospects of graduates.

One of the factors in determining the effectiveness of an academic institution is the employability of its graduates. The quality of graduates is very essential to the function of quality instruction and facilities by an institution because it ensures that the graduates are fully equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to work in their respective field.

It is important to indicate that tracer study is a means of gathering important information about past graduates of higher institutions to be able to identify what they are doing with the training they obtained and what could be done to add to their expertise through these institutions to be able to reform their course programs to keep up with the needs of the rapidly changing technological and scientific age.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the employability status of Bachelor of Science

in Office Administration graduates in PSU-San Carlos Campus from SY 2017 – 2018 to SY 2019 – 2020, further it attempted to attain the following objectives:

1. What is the profile of the BSOA graduates from SY 2017 – 2018 to SY 2019 – 2020 in terms of the following:
 - a. Sex;
 - b. Civil Status;
 - c. Year Graduated?
2. What is the employment profile of the BSOA graduates in terms of the following aspects:
 - a. Present Employment Status;
 - b. Status of Appointment;
 - c. Type of organization;
 - d. Reasons for staying on the job;
 - e. Relatedness of job to the course/program taken;
 - f. Source on finding the first job;
 - g. Time of employment after graduation;
 - h. Initial gross earning?
3. What are the competencies learned in college that are useful in the current job of the graduates?
4. What are the reasons for non – employment of BSOA graduates?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive design that aimed to describe the employability status of BSOA graduates in the PSU-San Carlos Campus. This descriptive study involved BSOA graduates who completed their formal education at PSU-San Carlos Campus from SY 2017-2018 to SY 2019-2020. The contact details of the graduates were sought and obtained from multiple sources, including records from the registrar's office and social media channels.

Sample and Sampling Scheme

The cross-sectional survey research method was employed adapting the modified version of the CHED Graduate Tracer Survey Questionnaire prepared using Google Docs. Total enumeration was employed since there were only 161 graduates to be considered who were contacted via email addresses, Facebook, messenger, or Instagram and were sent the tracer survey questionnaire which they answered online. However, only 65 graduates were able to complete the survey. One of the major issues faced by the study is the availability of some graduates during the time of the survey. One of the primary reasons is that most graduates have either replaced their email addresses or changed their social media accounts.

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents

Program	Total Number of Graduates	Total Number of Respondents
BSOA	161	65

Data Collection Instrument and Data Gathering Procedure

An online survey was used to collect the data from the graduates. The survey was intended as a one-time cross-sectional tracer study done every three years covering the period of 2018 to 2020. The study employed the Graduate Tracer Survey Questionnaire developed by the Commission on Higher Education. The questionnaire was placed in Google Docs and respondents received a request by e-mail/messenger to complete it together with the link to it. The data collected contained factual information about the graduates as well as their perceptions and assessments. The data collection was made between mid of August 2021 and the end of February 2022.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages were utilized to achieve the objective of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To identify and understand the employment status of the BSOA graduates in PSU-San Carlos Campus from SY 2017 – 2018 to SY 2019 – 2020, relevant data were tabulated and subjected to appropriate statistical treatment. The profile of the BSOA graduates in terms of sex, civil status, and year graduated is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Profile of BSOA Graduates
n=65

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Female	51	78.46
	Male	14	21.54
Civil Status	Single	54	83.08
	Married	11	16.92
Year Graduated	2018	15	23.08
	2019	39	60
	2020	11	16.92

The profile of the respondents was looked upon in terms of sex, civil status, employment status, and year graduated. Table 1 shows that a greater proportion of the BSOA graduates from SY 2017-2018 to SY 2019-2020 are female covering more than seventy percent of the total respondent. In terms of civil status, 83.08 % of the BSOA graduates are still single during the time of the survey. The three-year period covering SY 2017-2018 to SY 2019-2020 reveals that the majority of the respondents graduated in the year 2019.

Table 3 presents the employment profile of the BSOA graduates in terms of present employment status, status of appointment, type of organization, reasons for staying on the job, relatedness of job to the course/program taken, source on finding the first job, time of employment after graduation, and initial gross earning. A graduate tracer study is a very powerful tool that can provide valuable information for evaluating the whereabouts and performance of graduates in the workplace.

As illustrated in Table 3, 93.85% (61 out of 65) of the respondents are already employed. The result also implies that only 6.15% of the BSOA graduates were not employed or decided not to find a job during the time of the survey. Moreover, this is manifested in the reasons for the non-employment of the graduates.

In terms of the status of appointment, 64.08% are already regular/permanent employees in their respective companies and 12.31% have contractual status. Only 1 out of 65 respondents have a temporary position. Meanwhile, 9.23% of the BSOA graduates are self-employed during the time of the survey.

With regards to the type of organization, 73.86% of the graduates are presently employed in private companies and 18.46% are in government agencies. Less than 7% are employed in other organizations.

As revealed on the reasons for staying on the job, the respondents states that their present

job is related to their program or course with 26.15% or 16 out of 65 respondents. Relatedness to a special skill was also reported with 24.64% and salaries and benefits with 23.08%.

As gleaned in the employment profile of the respondents in terms of relatedness of the job to the course/program taken, 48 out of 65 or (73.85%) respondents cited that their present job is related to their field of specialization.

The source on finding the first job as perceived by the graduates, almost half of the respondents answered as walk-in applicants 46.15%. 14 out of 65 of the graduates were recommended by someone and some of them were hired before graduation and right after their On-the-Job training.

More than 50% of the graduates were already employed within one to two months. Others are within three to four months with 13.85% and five to six months with 16.92%. Some of the respondents were hired a month before graduation because of their outstanding performance during their On-the-Job training.

As reflected on the initial gross earning of the respondents, 24 out of 65, or 36.92% earned ₱ 5,000 to less than ₱ 10,000, 22 out of 65, or 33.85% earned ₱ 10,000 to less than ₱ 15,000, respectively. Meanwhile, 3.08% earned ₱ 20,000 to less than ₱ 25,000 and 1.54% had an initial earning of ₱ 25,000 and above.

Table 3
Employment Profile of the BSOA Graduates
n=65

Employment Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Present Employment Status	Yes	61	93.85
	No	4	6.15
Status of Appointment	Regular/Permanent	41	64.08
	Contractual	8	12.31
	Casual	0	0
	Temporary	1	1.54
	Probationary	3	4.62
	Job Order	6	9.23
	Self-employed	6	9.23
	Government firm	12	18.46

Type of organization	Private firm	48	73.85
	Other	5	7.69
Reasons for staying on the job	Salaries & Benefits	15	23.08
	Career challenge	12	18.46
	Related to special skill	16	24.62
	Related to the course or program of study	17	26.15
	Proximity to residence	2	3.08
	Family influence	1	1.54
	Other reasons: Peer influence	1	1.54
	Contract	1	1.54
Relatedness of job to the course/program taken	Yes	48	73.85
	No	17	26.15
Source on finding the first job	Response to an advertisement	6	9.23
	As walk-in applicant	30	46.15
	Recommended by someone	14	21.54
	Information from friends	7	10.77
	Job Fair	5	7.69
	Other source/s:		
	I was hired right after my On-the-Job training.	3	4.62
Time of employment after graduation			
	1-2 months	34	52.31
	3-4 months	9	13.85
	5-6 months	11	16.92
	7-8 months	2	3.08
	9-10 months	2	3.08
	11 months – 1 year	4	6.15
	Others: two (2) weeks	1	1.54
A month before graduation	2	3.08	
Initial gross earning			
	Below ₱ 5,000	5	7.59
	₱ 5,000 to less than ₱ 10,000	24	36.92
	₱ 10,000 to less than ₱ 15,000	22	33.85
	₱ 15,000 to less than ₱ 20,000	7	10.77
	₱ 20,000 to less than ₱ 25,000	2	3.08
	₱ 25,000 and above	1	1.54
	No response	4	6.14

Table 4 summarizes the competencies learned in college that are useful in the present job of the BSOA graduates. As revealed in the table, BSOA graduates viewed communication skills to be the most relevant skill in their current job with 61.54%. This confirms the study of Clokie & Fourie (2016) that employers value communication competencies highly when recruiting new graduates and specific communication skills required in an industry reflect course content. Moreover, graduates also reported human relations skills with 44.64% as a relevant skill at their present work. Other competencies such as entrepreneurial skills, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking skills were also found to be useful in their employment. Other skills like computer/typing skills and organizational skills were also cited.

Table 4
Competencies Learned in College that are Useful in the Current Job as Perceived by the BSOA Graduates

Competencies	Frequency	Percentage
Communication skills	40	61.54
Human relation skills	29	44.62
Entrepreneurial skills	16	24.62
Problem-solving skills	22	33.85
Critical thinking skills	23	35.38
Other skills: Computer/typing skills/organizational skills	1	1.54

As gleaned in Table 5, respondents identified family concerns and decided not to find a job to be the major reason for non – employment. This reason is identified by 6.15% of unemployed graduates.

Table 5
Reasons for Non – employment of BSOA Graduates

Reason for Non-employment	Frequency	Percentage
Family concern and decided not to find a job	4	6.15

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results gathered from SY 2017-2018 to SY 2019-2020, greater proportion of the BSOA graduates are female covering more than seventy percent of the total respondent. In terms of civil status, 83.08 % of the BSOA graduates are still single during the time of the survey. The BSOA graduates had an employability rating of 93.85% (61 out of 65) of the respondents. The majority of the graduates are already working with a regular/permanent employment status. Furthermore, more than 70% of the graduates are presently employed in private companies and 18.46% are in government agencies. The respondents states that their present job is related to their program or course taken with 26.15% or 16 out of 65 respondents. In terms of relatedness of job to the course/program taken, 48 out of 65 or (73.85%) of respondents cited that their present job is related to the program/course taken. Almost half of the respondents answered as walk-in applicants with 46.15%. More than 50% of the graduates were already employed within one to two months. Some of the respondents were hired a month before graduation because of their commendable performance during their On-the-Job training. With regards to the initial gross earning of the respondents, 24 out of 65, or 36.92% earned ₱ 5,000 to less than ₱ 10,000. Moreover, 3.08% earned ₱ 20,000 to less than ₱ 25,000 and 1.54% had an initial earning of ₱ 25,000 and above. Competencies that are the most prominent curricular consideration according to the perception of BSOA graduates are communication skills, human relations skills, critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and entrepreneurial skills. Finally, graduates identified family issues to be the major reason for unemployment.

The study strongly recommends that to enhance the employability of the graduates, a

periodic review of the curriculum by academic leaders, alumni, and industry representatives to ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies needed by the industry.

Lastly, graduate tracer studies should be conducted regularly in a wider scope including other programs reflecting the employability of graduates and other factors to be included in the employment profile such as occupational classification, major line of business where graduates are presently employed, and place of work. An updated database must also be considered and another survey to be conducted including the feedback from employers.

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