



Employment Skills: Implications for Instructional Enhancement and Student Development

Leonila R. Sito

College of Teacher Education
Benguet State University

ABSTRACT

The 21st century puts premium on employable skills - a combination of the technical or hard skills and the interpersonal or soft skills. This descriptive normative study aimed to ascertain how graduating college students of Benguet State University perceived their preparedness for employment. Data were subjected to Factor Analysis, Analysis of Variance t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test. The respondents reported that they were capable enough in the identified employment skills. Female respondents are significantly more capable of teamwork, responsibility, writing, communication, problem-solving and self-management than their male counterparts. Respondents in the non-technical programs were significantly more capable along competencies in IT, communication, visualization, teamwork, reading and math than those from technical programs. Self-reported capacity for employment did not differ whether the respondents were officers or members of recognized student organizations. Positive and highly significant relationships were found among the contributory factors such as self-system, instructors' guided activities and developmental activities, with employment skills. The results have implications for improving instruction and enhancing student development programs.

Keywords: *soft skills, hard skills, type of program, status in organizations, contributory factors*

INTRODUCTION

A productive youth sector contributes significantly to the development of the nation. There is, however, the pressing problem on employment opportunities for young adults worldwide. At the end of each school year, college graduates, their parents and university personnel have that sense of accomplishment and joy, but these feelings go hand in hand with some apprehensions on whether or not they would land a job.

The Economist (2013) echoed the official findings gathered by the International Labor Organization (ILO) where seventy five million of 15- to 24-year-olds worldwide are unemployed. This puts the global youth unemployment rate at 12.6 percent. The finding pointed to an increase

of 3.5 million between 2007 and 2013. The same source mentioned the report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) where twenty-six million young people in the rich world, most of whom are highly educated, are "NEETS" (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Moreover, on the average, more than a third are on temporary contracts and many of the "employed" young only have informal and intermittent jobs which make it hard to gain work skills.

The CBC News (May 8, 2013) commented that the economic downhill that started in 2008 considered the youth a generation at risk. This condition has been attributed to the persistent incidence of unemployment, a proliferation of temporary jobs and the growing discouragement among the youth in advanced economies. Even

in developing countries, there is the prevalence of poor quality and subsistence level jobs.

In the 2011 Job Street's Career Congress, The Philippines' Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Secretary Baldoz pointed that the issue of talent mismatch remained to be the main agenda of policy makers. She recommended that measures to meet the expanding labor supply with 21st century skills include curriculum upgrading, training and up-skilling, teacher education, career guidance and counseling, industry-academe linkage and collaboration, and labor market signaling. She added that curriculum be upgraded to focus on the mastery of core subjects like math, science and civics as well as creative problem solving or innovation skills, communication skills and self-directed work ethics.

Despite the high educational qualifications of college graduates, there is the recognition that employers consider college graduates to be lacking in some skills that will enable them to stay long in the job. These are the lifelong skills- a combination of the hard/technical skills and the soft skills. With the ASEAN Integration, fresh graduates in the ASEAN have to be well-equipped in order to benefit from the mobility of workforce within the region. It means that they have to meet the standards set along human capacity and professionalization. This therefore implies that graduates should not only possess the hard skills but the soft skills as well.

Sutton (2002), Glenn (2003), Perreault (2004), Wilhelm (2004), and Mitchell (2011) emphasized that the twenty-first century workplace is seeking resourceful individuals who possess professional skills for entry-level jobs. During these highly competitive times, employers emphasize on employment competencies which accordingly do not match the qualifications that job seekers bring along. In 2000, the 175 members of the ILO adopted a definition of employability skills as the skills, knowledge and competencies that enhance a worker's ability to secure and retain a job, progress at work and cope with change. Individuals are most employable when they have broad-base education and training, basic

and transferable high-level skills including teamwork, problem-solving, information and communications technology (ICT), and communication and language skills (ILO HRD Recommendation 195, 2004).

Employment competencies are a combination of the hard and soft skills. Hard or technical skills are the minimum skills necessary to do a job. Most people with the same level of education and experience should have roughly the same level of hard skills that have been largely acquired through formal instruction. Hard skills are the first screen used to weed out applicants who are obviously not qualified for a job (Morrison, 2013). Beyond this, in the competitive selection process, most employers use soft skills to differentiate one candidate from another. Lorenz (2009) refers to "soft skills" as a cluster of personal qualities, habits, attitudes and social graces that makes someone a good employee and comfortable to work with. Soft skills are often intangible and, therefore, are not formally taught. They tend to be more of a function of personal qualities such as motivation, sociability and work ethic. Some soft skills include leadership, creativity, ambition, accountability, ability to teach, interpersonal abilities, and reliability. Beard *et al.* (2008) stressed that while examinations strongly evaluate technical skills, additional means of addressing and measuring requisite soft skills need to be in place. They suggested the need for a learning model to incorporate these skills into curricula and for universities to integrate the assessment of soft skills.

Hansen and Hansen (2012) posted the top skills and personal values that employers seek from would-be employees. These skills are similar to what experts in the field (Phani, 2007; Jain, 2009; Sabo, 2012) assert as essential in getting and surviving a job. Work skills in the 21st century include skills in communication, analysis, computer/technical literacy, flexibility, interpersonal relations, leadership, multicultural sensitivity, planning and organizing, problem-solving, and teamwork. Also, said experts named personal values that employers seek in employees. These are honesty, adaptability, work-ethic, dependability, loyalty, positive attitude,

professionalism, self-confidence, self-motivation and willingness to learn.

After graduation, college students search for jobs and oftentimes, they remain jobless for several months or years, or are under-employed. It is along this reality and challenges which befall the youth and specifically the graduating students of the Benguet State University that this study has been considered. The information gathered from the study hopes to serve as a feedback to the University and to the Colleges as to the sufficiency and quality of training they provide to their students. The study also gives a glimpse of graduating students' readiness for the ASEAN Integration. Moreover, the Office of Student Services can enhance some measures and trainings to enrich the competencies of the students. The families of the graduates, the society and the nation can all gain from a competent workforce.

Objectives of the Study

This study gathered from the self-report of the graduating students of 2012-13, whether they possessed certain skills essential for employment. Specifically, it determined the employment skills that students have developed; compared the perception of the respondents about their employment skills when grouped according to sex, type of program, and status in recognized student organization/s; identified the factors that contributed to the development of the employment skills; and determined the relationship between the perceived level of employment skills and the factors that have contributed to the development of the same.

METHODOLOGY

From the 1,134 graduating students of undergraduate programs of Benguet State University for school year 2012-13, almost sixty-four percent (n=725) participated in the survey. After discarding spoiled questionnaires, it was decided that data from thirty-nine percent of the graduating students per program who completed the survey form be considered in the analysis.

Thirty percent of the respondents were male, and 70%, female. Respondents from the technical courses (Agriculture, Agri-Business, Agricultural Engineering, Forestry, Development Communication, Applied Statistics, Environmental Science, Information Technology, and Veterinary Medicine) comprised 29% of the population of the study and the non-technical courses (Elementary and Secondary Education programs, Library Science, Nursing, Home Economics) made up 71%. As to the status of the respondents, there were 41% who were officers in student organizations while 59% were members.

Based on literature search, a questionnaire was constructed. Items relating to the employment and lifelong skills were crafted from the literature of Hansen and Hansen (2012) and Lorenz (2009) while the contributory factors were based on Jones' (2013) job skills for the 21st century. It was during the conduct of the BSU Labor Education for Graduating Students when the data were gathered. Factor analysis determined the clusters of the employment skills and the factors that developed these skills. Mean scores were computed and ranked. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test were employed to test the statistical hypotheses while Tukey post hoc test was used to identify areas of significant variability. Use of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test determined the relationship between the perceived employment skills and the factors that influenced the development of the skills. Data were interpreted at the 0.05 level of confidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceived Employment Skills

Using factor analysis, ten clusters of employment skills were identified that comprised both the hard and soft skills. The hard skills included communication, problem-solving, math, reading, writing, and IT competencies while teamwork, self-management, responsibility, and visualization were categorized under soft skills. Results showed that there were certain overlaps among these hard and soft skills like communication and problem solving.

In general, results showed that the respondents are ready for the world of work (Table 1). The F-test showed that there were highly significant differences in the perceptions and the Tukey post hoc test indicated the comparative differences. Specifically, results showed that respondents were most capable in terms of teamwork. They claimed that they were capable of working well with those who come from varied ethnic, social, gender, and educational backgrounds and tolerate and respect differences thus they are able to understand how beliefs and backgrounds affect how a person behaves.

Table 1. Employment skills among graduating students of Benguet State University, 2012-2013

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS	MEAN & POST HOC TEST
Teamwork	3.4309 a
Responsibility	3.3644 b
IT/Computer literacy	3.2914 c
Reading	3.2289 d
Self-management	3.2149 d
Communication	3.1492 e
Problem-solving	3.1478 e
Writing	3.1180 e
Visualization	3.0463 f
Math	2.9406 g
<i>Overall mean = 3.19 = Capable enough</i>	
<i>F = 55.446**** prob. = 0.0000</i>	
Legend: 1.00- 1.50 slightly capable	Mean scores with the
1.51 - 2.50 moderately capable	same letter do not
2.52- 3.50 capable enough	differ significantly
3.51- 4.00 very capable	

Filipinos have good interpersonal skills, and being a team player in a diverse group would enable a smooth adjustment into the world of work. Teamwork is embodied in the Filipino values like *pakikisama*, *pagkamatulungin*, and *pakikiisa* among others. The respondents have developed these social skills that are imperative in a service-oriented world of work. As society gets to be more seamless regarding its mix, the ability for teamwork is a premium. In any organization, being a team player is an indispensable trait. Almost all hiring organizations agree that teamwork propels the organization to higher levels. Information from the US Department of Labor (2009) showed that

employers look for workers who contribute their ideas, and want people who can work with others to create and develop projects and plans. Being a team player involves working cooperatively, contributing ideas, suggestions, and effort, communicating, having a sense of responsibility, and a healthy respect for different opinions and customs, and the ability to participate in group decision-making.

The second most perceived capability was sense of responsibility. The students claimed that they could be relied on in their given tasks and can make wise choices in situations. They asserted that they can responsibly challenge existing procedures, policies and authorities in a professional manner.

The capacity to assess and use technology, particularly application of software in doing tasks was identified as the third work skill. This showed that the respondents can navigate the internet and use state-of-the-art technologies to source out reliable and relevant information. They can present and communicate their ideas and information through computers and similar technologies. Familiarity with present-day equipment and gadgets is indispensable in these technology-driven times. Pavlina (2010) asserts that IT competence empowers one as it makes work efficient and gives one the sense of confidence in the job. It optimizes working ability and enables one to complete more tasks.

The fourth cluster was composed of two perceived employment capabilities: reading and self-management. Reading is an indicator of information management/information-generation skill. It enables one to locate information from appropriate sources, to understand graphs and models, and to do tasks as guided by manuals. Reading in this sense means functional literacy and the ability to understand, hence, making use of the information available to be utilized in the job. Such is what “learning to know”- a pillar of education (UNESCO, n.d), means. Reading without understanding is tantamount to illiteracy.

On the other hand, self-management relates to one’s perceived abilities to organize and employ

certain methods and strategies as one directs his/her own activities (Self-management, UK, 2015). The respondents asserted that they were capable of planning, organizing and using their resources to attain the goals they have set. They could objectively assess their knowledge and skills in given tasks, set appropriate aims, and monitor themselves as they progress. This finding implied that they have developed a sense of self-discipline and independence that can intrinsically motivate themselves to accomplish their tasks and meet goals. This self-management skill is related to what Bandura (1994) calls self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations.” It means a person’s capability of controlling things that could lead to his/her success.

The fifth cluster comprised three sets of perceived employable skills: communication, problem-solving and writing skills. On communication skills, the respondents pointed out that they were capable of choosing appropriate words and language that would suit the receiver of their message and do this with fitting gestures, tone and volume of voice. They can organize their ideas, ask questions for clarification as well as respond correctly to others while being mindful of the other’s body language. With today’s fast-paced interaction, accuracy is paramount when communicating, hence, knowing the appropriate words to express one’s self coupled with the corresponding gestures avoids the cost of misunderstanding and misinformation.

Relative to problem-solving skills, respondents stated that they can set their targets and goals. They are capable of identifying several solutions and generating alternatives to reach their goals, see how a solution works and make revisions should things not go well, and can make decisions. These capabilities are related to their sense of responsibility. This result shows who is able to carry on a task with minimal supervision and can solve problems on their own.

The third set of perceived skills in this fifth cluster pertains to the respondents’ writing skills.

The graduates asserted that they can organize, check, edit, and revise reports and documents if needed. They can record information completely and accurately. This capability stems from the years of making essays, writing reports and making researches and thesis in their undergraduate courses. Although their mentors complain often about their poor writing skills, overall, the respondents felt they are can perform this skill.

The sixth cluster relates to visualization. Visualization is similar to the ability to imagine and think of logical consequences. The respondents believed that they have the capacity to imagine how a system works by looking at a schematic diagram, perceive figures and information in a blueprint, draw or sketch correctly. Findings imply that the students have developed critical thinking skills- skills that are imperative to the job.

The last cluster is concerned with mathematical skills. The respondents stated that they can use numbers to solve practical problems. They can use tables, graphs, diagrams, and charts to manage information. Moreover, they can make reasonable estimates of mathematical results without the use of a calculator. Besides functional literacy, the four pillars of education’s *learning to know* involves numerical literacy. It means that one knows how and why a mathematical result is such based on its operation and not on how well it is committed to memory.

In conclusion, the graduating students perceived that they were provided with sufficient training in both the hard and soft skills and are thus ready for the world of work.

Comparison of Employment Skills Along Selected Variables

Employment Skills According to Sex

Among the ten domains of skills, significant differences were observed along teamwork, communication, problem-solving, self-management, responsibility and writing. In all these domains, the females perceived themselves

Table 2. Employment skills according to sex

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS	SEX		t-value	prob.
	Male	Female		
Teamwork	3.099	3.449	20.564****	0.0000
Communication	3.081	3.156	12.579****	0.0000
Problem-solving	3.069	3.187	5.009*	0.0260
Self-management	2.939	3.245	6.270**	0.0130
Responsibility	3.08	3.406	18.999****	0.0000
Math	3.060	2.939	1.601ns	0.2070
IT/Computer literacy	3.266	3.251	2.348ns	0.1260
Visualization	2.932	2.973	0.176ns	0.8970
Reading	3.135	3.205	1.3520ns	0.2460
Writing	3.052	3.200	15.383****	0.0000
<i>F</i> = 5.655		<i>prob.</i> = 0.0000		

to be significantly capable compared to their male counterparts (Table 2). These imply that the female group has developed better capacity of said soft skills thus they may have an easier time adjusting to the world of work.

In terms of the perception of the female respondents on teamwork, they said that they can collaborate in small groups while the males are competitive in their interactions. Females do better in interpersonal relations, communication and teamwork.

Similarly, with regard to problem-solving and writing, data showed that the females are significantly better. These skills require focus and concentration. The Perelman School of Medicine (2013) reports that females outperform males in terms of attention span. When doing these activities, the females were found to stay focused for a considerable amount of time to arrive at the answer or to finish a report or write-up. Moreover, females focus more on the process whereas males give more emphasis on the product (Bradley, n.d.). Thus in this study, the females asserted that they are indeed more capable of sustaining attention. The t-test also indicated a significant variability in the capability of the male and female respondents along self-management. Psychologically, one may not be conscious that one's self is constantly developing and becoming. In the process of

evolving the self, one has to direct and manage oneself to become what and who one wants to be. This finding is what the pillar of education on *learning to be* means. It has been observed in this study that the female respondents were more capable or more conscious of how they are developing themselves, thus, are more competent in self-management.

With the aid of modern-day technology, neurologists and psychologists point to many differences in brain structures and functions of boys and girls even at a very early age (Gilligan, 1982, Tannen, 1990, Jantz, 2014). These differences are enhanced as one grows through trainings and socialization. For instance, females have more advantage in terms of speaking, reading and writing because of wiring in the left hemisphere of their brains. Their right hemisphere allows them more empathy and better understanding of and reflecting on their feelings. On the other hand, the left hemisphere in boys functions to recall facts and rules and to categorize. Their right hemisphere functions for visual-spatial and visual-motor skills which may enable them to excel in topics like geography, science, and math (Perelman School of Medicine, 2013). As Tannen (1990) concluded, men see themselves as engaged in a hierarchical social order in which they are either "one up or one down" in relation to others. Hence, their communication styles and reactions to others' communications often

stress the need to “preserve independence and avoid failure.” Women, on the other hand, tend to see the world as a “network of connections” so that their communications and interpretations of others’ communication seek to “preserve intimacy and avoid isolation.” Relatively, Gilligan (1982) cites researches by some psychologists and experts that have found marked differences in the basic operational thinking modes between sex groups. Accordingly, as boys grow, they become “increasingly fascinated with the legal elaboration of rules and the development of fair procedures for adjudicating conflicts,” as they play. Girls, on the other hand, “have a more ‘pragmatic’ attitude toward rules.” Girls are “more willing to make exceptions and are easily reconciled to innovations.” Boys’ play is observed as more competitive, while girls’ play “is more cooperative.”

The finding in this study that the female respondents were perceived to have better capacity in writing is corroborated by Koch *et al.* (2008). They concluded that boys face a multitude of problems when it comes to literacy, pointing that these difficulties could stem from gender identity, social and cultural issues, religion, technology, school cultures, teaching styles, curriculum, and the shortcomings in the pre-service and in-service training of those in the education profession. The findings imply that the differences in learning and thinking styles of the male and female learners are manifested

even up to the tertiary level. Given this, there is a need for college mentors to be aware of the differences in the cognitive processing and learning styles of the grouping according to sex so that they can adopt the appropriate methods and strategies to enhance and maximize the learning of both groups. These thinking processes and skills may have impact on their overall abilities including employment skills. With the above findings, the null hypothesis is partially affirmed.

Employment Skills According to Type of Program

Those enrolled in non-technical programs perceived themselves to be more significantly capable in six of the ten skills at hand than those in the technical programs. These are along IT literacy, communication, visualization, teamwork, reading and mathematical skills (Table 3). The gender of the respondents and the type of pedagogy they have experienced may explain the findings.

The significant differences in the employment skills could be attributed to the differences in teaching methods, styles and guidance given to the respondents. There is common knowledge among educators that teaching methods and strategies do impact learning. It should be noted that instructors in the technical and non-technical courses have different professional trainings and experiences regarding teaching tasks. Moreover,

Table 3. Employment skills according to type of program

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS	TYPE OF PROGRAM			
	Technical	Non-technical	t- value	prob.
Teamwork	3.148	3.393	6.992**	0.0090
Communication	2.068	3.170	9.690**	0.0020
Problem-solving	3.161	3.081	0.770ns	0.3810
Self-management	2.999	3.176	2.495ns	0.1150
Responsibility	3.167	3.310	3.157ns	0.0760
Math	2.961	3.052	5.233*	0.0230
IT/Computer literacy	3.115	3.423	30.859****	0.0000
Visualization	2.868	3.046	7.835**	0.0050
Reading	3.141	3.199	6.567***	0.0110
Writing	3.042	3.211	3.024ns	0.0830
<i>F</i> = 4.2920****		<i>prob.</i> = 0.0000		

teachers teach the way they have been trained. This finding is related to the position of Weimer (2008) that when teachers impart knowledge, they link this with the ability to inspire and motivate students. These teachers have with them a set of instructional methods, strategies and approaches, and the ability to assess student learning outcomes. It is assumed that the respondents in the non-technical programs had learning experiences that enabled them to develop an overall sense of confidence so that they reported higher level of perceptions of their employment skills. With these findings, the null hypothesis is partially affirmed.

Employment Skills According to Status in Organizations

The status of students was classified either as officer or active member in at least two of the various organizations accredited by the university. The activities in these organizations complement the academic development of the students. The table shows that apparently, officers in organizations have higher levels of perception about their capabilities than the non-officers or members along all the employability skills. The differences, however, were not significant as indicated by the t-test. It denoted that regardless of their status in student organizations, they believed that they are capable enough with employment skills. This implies that the experiences they have gained from their

extra and co-curricular activities do not spell a significant impact on their employment skills. With the findings, the null hypothesis is affirmed.

Contributory Factors in the Development of Employment Skills

Besides knowing the graduates’ perceived employable skills, the study likewise aimed at identifying the factors to which the respondents attributed the development of their skills. From the utilization of Factor Analysis, three clusters were identified as the contributory factors in the development of employment skills: self-system, instructor-guided and development activities.

The respondents stated that their employable skills were primarily attributed to their self-system. Bandura (1994) explains that a person’s attitudes, abilities, and cognitive skills comprise what is known as the self-system. This system plays a major role on how an individual perceives situations and how he/she behaves in response to different conditions. It encompasses various personal psychological attributes that guide one’s behavior.

The respondents reported that the development of their employment skills have been attributed to their personal qualities such as the ability to set goals, monitor their thoughts and actions, question what they are thinking and doing to check if their outputs meet standards, and

Table 4. Employment skills according to status in organization

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS	STATUS		t- value	prob.
	Officer	Member		
Teamwork	3.432	3.007	3.297ns	0.0700
Communication	3.152	3.061	0.338ns	0.5610
Problem-solving	3.199	3.011	0.115ns	0.7340
Self-management	3.264	2.808	2.997ns	0.0840
Responsibility	3.393	2.995	1.618ns	0.2040
Math	3.050	2.934	0.065ns	0.7990
IT/Computer literacy	3.302	3.230	0.520ns	0.4710
Visualization	3.007	2.868	0.142ns	0.7070
Reading	3.231	3.073	0.389ns	0.5330
Writing	3.170	3.047	0.084ns	0.7730
<i>F= 1.227ns</i>		<i>prob.= 0.271</i>		

strive to reach goals. They mentioned that they have learned to work well under pressure, are enthusiastic, optimistic and energetic, can assert themselves and enhance their self-esteem. It is implied that the respondents have developed the ability to assert and value themselves and their ideas and are self-disciplined. This is shown by their time management, by keeping their words, and in knowing how to gain respect by doing well in their tasks. This finding also affirmed that the respondents have built a healthy self-concept and attained a level of maturity as a result of college education. It is surmised that since a high percentage of the students in government institutions come from the lower socio-economic group of society, they have developed a strong sense of responsibility that will propel them to a better status in life. It should also be noted that the trainings they acquired from their mentors and from the administration of Benguet State University had been instrumental in harnessing these qualities. Being able to sustain these positive qualities to gain excellence in any endeavor would be of great advantage in the workforce.

The second cluster refers to the instructor-guided activities. The respondents acknowledged that their mentors were instrumental in enhancing and polishing their abilities. The tasks given by instructors for individual or group work like group activities and research work made them more confident. Class work likewise required them to discuss and evaluate their answers and taught them to learn from their mistakes. The repertoire of knowledge provided and the caring attitude of instructors contributed to the learning process and enhancement of their employment

Table 5. Contributory factors to the development of employment skills

CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS	MEAN & POST HOC TEST
Self-system	3.5100 a
Instructor-guided activities	3.4365 b
Developmental activities	3.3291 c
<i>F= 37.527 prob.= 0.000</i>	

Legend: 1.00 - 1.50 minimal influence
 1.51 - 2.50 moderate influence
 2.52 - 3.50 substantial influence
 3.51 - 4.00 immense influence

competencies. The finding is supported by Zernike (2010) as he pointed that teachers do not just impart education; they affect the emotional, intellectual, and social development of each student. He reiterated the reality that teachers can be “virtually limitless in their capacity to touch lives”. Relative to this, Polick, Cullen and Buskist (2010) cited McKeachie (2006) who affirmed that teachers are committed to helping each of the learners become better life-long learners – thus making a difference by facilitating a significant personal transformation in the lives of their students. These were realized when teachers showed students how much they cared about them. As a consequence, this caring attitude can fuel development, instill personal confidence, and inspire students’ learning in and out of the classroom.

The third cluster of contributory factors are identified as developmental activities. These refer to the activities that complement the formal classroom learning. The respondents recalled that they engaged themselves in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in athletics/sports, religious and civic activities.

Several units of the university provided the opportunities for development. The Office of Student Services in coordination with the colleges encourages students to participate in curricular organizations aligned with their fields of specialization and to join in extra-curricular activities. It is in these groups where they are able to hone their abilities in teamwork, leadership, and problem solving. They are likewise able to develop self-confidence, ethics and know how to accept and respect diversity. The Institute of Human Kinetics (IHK) not only keeps students to be physically fit but likewise support in enhancing their interpersonal skills. Through sports activities, one develops sportsmanship, self-discipline and self-management, fortitude, perseverance and time management among other traits. The different activities of the National Student Training Program (NSTP) were likewise very significant in enhancing teamwork, sense of responsibility, service, volunteerism and other civic values among the respondents. Students’ involvement in the activities of these

units complemented their academic training and honed their interpersonal and intrapersonal development.

Relationship of contributory factors and employment skills

A correlation was carried out to determine if the contributory factors were associated with employment skills. Findings confirmed that there were minimal to moderate relationships between the two sets of variables and all were highly significant. These findings conveyed that the more the respondents believed the contributory factors that were employed, the more capable these made them along the various employable skills. The findings implied that the positive development of personal qualities and character formation were facilitated by teachers, university staff and others. Ultimately, these resulted to the development of wholesome qualities not only for employment but with one’s life as a whole.

With the ASEAN Integration, the current state of globalization and the onset of knowledge-based society, citizens face greater challenges. The “value of learning” must therefore be enhanced. A person’s motive for learning is primarily to develop his employment skills, to exercise civic engagement, or may be of purely personal nature. Possessing lifelong skills can thus enable individuals to maintain and enhance their

personal situations, their societal participation, and their employability. The impact of lifelong learning skills cannot be undermined. It is for this reason that lifelong learning skills have been integrated into all the systems of governments and social institutions of the European Union. It recognizes that learning is an essential tool for acquiring education and thus for shaping one’s individual opportunities, both in life and at work. It is worthwhile to note that the Federal Government of Germany adopted the tenets of lifelong learning in 2008 in its entire socio-political system believing that such learning is one of the greatest factors to propel it to success (Helsinki, 2011). This government realized that lifelong learning is decisive for the prospects of the individual, the success of industry and the future of society thus making it one of the priority tasks of its education policy. It has the strong conviction that lifelong learning is committed to the goal of increasingly making use of its most important institution-education, to promote economic dynamism and personal career opportunities. It is hoped that mentors in all levels can inculcate the principles of lifelong learning as they teach.

Given the above findings and discussions, the significance of education cannot be underscored in the various domains of a learner’s life. As pointed by Sharma (Posted by Jain, 2009) thus:

Table 6. The relationships of contributory factors and perceived employment skills

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS	FACTORS		
	Instructor-guided r	Developmental activities r	Self-system r
Teamwork	0.545****	0.422****	0.556****
Communication	0.394****	0.364****	0.455****
Problem-solving	0.403****	0.332****	0.434****
Self-management	0.481****	0.386****	0.495****
Responsibility	0.515****	0.413****	0.519****
Math	0.230****	0.289****	0.267****
IT/Computer literacy	0.269****	0.269****	0.314****
Visualization	0.408****	0.336****	0.390****
Reading	0.297****	0.262****	0.329****
Writing	0.300****	0.252****	0.367****

“To live to the challenge of globalization ... the strength of a nation is strongly dependent on the ability of its citizens to be highly intellectual and skillful. The development of human capital is thus important and necessary since it drives the nation to the envisioned vision and mission. Without a quality human capital, a nation will be weak as there is no human factor that is capable to embark on new initiatives and perspectives. A quality human capital comes from a quality education process. A carefully designed and well planned education system is critical to developing such human capital. Thus, the institution of higher learning plays a very important role to produce a human capital that is highly knowledgeable and skillful to meet the demands and expectations of many people. The teaching and learning processes in institutions of higher learning should be capable of providing such knowledge and skills to future graduates”.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Modern day authorities in education and in industry stress that students have to acquire what are of value. What are of value refer to what students know and can do with what they know alongside their attitudes that would make them productive and confident in any endeavor. The findings indicate that the respondents will be able to apply what they have acquired from their curricular programs and experiences in the university. It implies that they are confident and ready for the world of work and the opportunities of the ASEAN integration. The BSU mentors and the administration have prepared them for the challenges in the real world thus attesting that BSU is moving towards the realization of its vision. With these, it can be concluded that they believe they have been developed along the four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, to live together and learning to be.

Relative to the differences in employment skills according to sex and type of program, such

variations enhance diversity and the uniqueness of each group. As long as these differences do not disadvantage a group, these can be honed to enable one to be more sensitive to the characteristics and needs of learners in support of their total development.

The development of employment and life skills are attributed to self-system, instructors' teaching methods and strategies as well as developmental activities. The more that these factors are in place, the more capable the graduates are along employment and lifelong skills. The findings imply that the quality of socialization, training and education from an early age has a lifelong effect. The collaboration of parents, teachers, authority figures and social institutions is essential for the realization of each student's potentials.

Recommendations

While it is gratifying to note that the respondents of the study felt capable in terms of employment skills, this has yet to be validated. Interview with the mentors and staff members of the institution can validate the data. Moreover, a survey of the employers of earlier batches can objectively corroborate the claim of the respondents. The data gathered can also serve as a feedback from the perspective of the employers as valuable input and suggestions about the hard and soft skills needed for each type of job. This can address the perpetual call for a satisfying match of skills between what the academe provides and the demands from the industry/employment sector. The feedback can be considered by the BSU Administration in enhancing its curricula alongside enhancing the teaching methods and strategies.

Along the finding that students in the technical courses were not as confident about their capacity regarding teamwork, communication, Math, IT/ Computer, reading and visualization, it would be worthwhile for the mentors to engage students in learning activities that would enhance these skills. Teaching methods and strategies can be adopted that will engage students in more group work and activities, do more math and computational activities and read more. To enhance their

communication skills, students can be given the opportunity to express their ideas through reporting in class using Filipino or English languages and coaching them to be specific and exact with their vocabulary in the process. They can be assigned tasks related to treasure hunting (in the websites), and using or preparing materials with IT skills to showcase their learning outputs.

Benguet State University through the Office of the VP for Academic Affairs, the colleges, and the Office of Student Services can coordinate with the DOLE's "My First Job" Program that intends to provide skills training and promote employment among the youth. The

OSS, particularly the Placement and Guidance Units can craft trainings along lifelong skills to better prepare the students for employment.

Educational reform in all levels of education may be undertaken. The curricula can be enriched and enhanced to meet the demands of human capital in response to the ASEAN Integration and to meet the mandate of globalization. This entails an assessment of learners every step of the way to monitor if long term goals of lifelong skills and the four pillars of education are met.

A similar study involving other pertinent variables can be carried out to cover a broader perspective.

LITERATURE CITED

- BANDURA, A. (1994). Self-efficacy in V. S. Ramachandran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of human behavior*, 4. New York: Academic Press, pp. 71-81. Ret. 11-11-2013, 8:44PM
- BEARD, D., SCHWIEGER, D. and SURENDRAN, K. (2008). Integrating Soft Skills Assessment through University, College and Programmatic Efforts at an AACSB Accredited Institution, *Journal of Information Systems Education*, Volume: 19, Issue: 2: Pages: 229-241 Ret. 1-16-2013, 9:06PM
- BRADLEY, K. (n.d). The Gender Differences in a Classroom, http://www.ehow.com/info_8064403_gender-differences-classroom.html Ret. 6-22-2012, 9 15PM
- CBC News. May 8, 2013. Global youth unemployment set to rise; UN warns <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/global-youth-unemployment-set-to-rise-un-warns-1.1325203> ret. 3-26-2014, 9:34PM
- DOLE. 9-11-2011. At Job Street's Career Congress 2011. <http://www.dole.gov.ph/news/view/1487>, ret. 5-14-2013, 9 04PM
- The ECONOMIST, Apr. 27, 2013. Around-world-almost-300m-15-24-year-olds-are-not-working-what-has-caused...<http://www.economist.com/news/international/21576657->, Ret. 5-14-2013, 9 46M
- GILLIGAN, C. 1982. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press R. Ret. 12-16-2014, 11:24 AM
- HANSEN, R.S and K. HANSEN. 2012. Quintessential Careers <http://www.quintcareers.com/job-skills-values/> Ret. 1-14-2013, 8:48PM
- HANSEN, R.S & K. HANSEN. 2012. What Do Employers Really Want? Top Skills and Values Employers Seek from Job-Seekers in http://www.quintcareers.com/job_skills_values.html Ret. 1-16-2013
- HELSINKI, 2011. Country Report on Adult Education in Germany http://www.eaea.org/media/resources/ae-in-europe/germany_country-report-on-adult-education-in-germany.pdf
- ILO HRD Recommendation 195, 2004. Enhancing youth employability: What? Why? and How? Guide to core work skills in http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_213452.pdf Ret. 11-11-2012, 8:24PM

- JAIN, V. Feb. 22, 2009. Importance of Soft Skills Development in Education in <http://schoolofeducators.com/2009/02/importance-of-soft-skills-development-in-education/>
- JANTZ, G. 2014. Brain Differences Between Genders Psychology today in <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hope-relationships/201402/brain-differences-between-genders> Ret. 12-16-2014, 11:24 AM
- JONES, L. 2013. Job Skills for the 21st Century http://www.careerkey.org/asp/career_development/foundation_skills.html Ret. 1-14-2013, 8:13M
- KOCH, S.C., S.M. MULLER, & M. SIEVERDING. 2008. Women and Computers: Effects of Stereotype Threat on Attribution of Failure. *Computers and Education*. 51. 1795-1803. Ret. 12-16-2014, 7:44 AM
- LORENZ, K.. 2009. Top 10 Skills for Job Hunters in <http://jobs.aol.com/articles/2009/01/26/top-10-soft-skills-for-job-hunters/sret>. Apr. 9, 2012 Ret. 1-14-2013, 9:03M
- McKEACHIE, W.J. and M. SVINICKI . 2006. McKeachie's Teaching Tips in http://www.cengage.com/search/productOverview.do?N=16&Ntk=P_
- PAVLINA, S. 2010 Ten Reasons to Develop Your Technical Skills <http://www.stevepavlina.com/blog/2006/08/10-reasons-to-develop-your-technical-skills/> Ret. 6-14-2014 , 4 48PM
- PERREAULT, H. 2004. "Business Educators Can Take a Leadership Role in Character Education." *Business Education Forum* . 59(1):23-24 Ret. 10- 24-2013, 10:56PM
- PERELMAN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE. 2013. Brain connectivity reveals striking differences between man and women. University of Pennsylvania.Retrieved at Science Daily: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/12/13120161935.htm
- POLICK, A.S., K.L. CULLEN, W. BUSKIST. 2010. How Teaching Makes a Difference in Students' Lives <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2010/september-10/how-teaching-makes-a-difference-in-students-lives.html> Ret. 10-24-2013, 9:45 PM
- PHANI, R. 2007. The Top 60 Soft Skills at Work in <http://www.rediff.com/getahead/2007/jan/08soft.htm> Ret. 1-16-2013
- RAMSDEN, P. 1992. Learning to Teach in Higher Education. New York: Routledge Ret. 12-18-2014, 9:48AM
- SABO, R. 2012, The 6 Job Skills You'll Need In 2012. Schools.com in <http://jobs.aol.com/articles/2012/01/26/the-6-job-skills-youll-need-in-2012/> Ret. 9-12-2013
- SANTOS, L. MAY 9, 2013, Number of Unemployed Youth Drops in PH in <http://www.rappler.com/business/28586-unemployed-youth-ph-ilo> Ret. 9-12-2013
- SELF- MANAGEMENT UK, 2015. What is self-management? In <http://selfmanagementuk.org/what-is-self-management> Ret. 2-15-2016, 8:12PM
- SHARMA, A. 2009, Softskills? Posted by Vishal Jain, February 22, 2009 <http://schoolofeducators.com/2009/02/importance-of-soft-skills-development-in-education/> Ret. 9-25-2013, 10.20pm
- SUTTON, N. 2002. "Why Can't We All Just Get Along?" *Computing Canada* 28(16):20. Ret. 1-14-15, 9: 43PM
- TANNEN, D. 1990. You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation. New York: Ballantine Books Ret. 7-22-2014, 8:50PM
- UNESCO, Education in <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/networks/global-networks/aspnet/about-us/strategy/the-four-pillars-of-learning/> Ret. 1-14-2015, 10:23 PM

The US Department of Labor. 2009. Teamwork in [http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/soft skills/Teamwork.pdf](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/soft_skills/Teamwork.pdf)). Ret. 9-15-2013, 8:00 PM

WEIMER, M. 2008. Effective Teaching Strategies: The Importance of Marrying Content and Process in <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/effective-teaching-strategies-the-importance-of-marrying-content-and-process/>.Ret. 6-15-2014, 9 45PM

WILHELM, W. J. (2004). Determinants of moral reasoning: Academic factors, gender, richness of life experiences, and religious preferences. Delta Pi Epsilon Journal 46 , 105-121. Ret. 2-06-2013 7:47 PM

ZERNIKE, H. 2010. Ability of Teachers to Profoundly Impact Lives of Individual Children <http://www.teacherscount.org/wannateach/why/impact.shtml> Ret. 7-22-2014, 8:50PM