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Examining the Employability of the BS Architecture Graduates of Isabela State University, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the employability of the Bachelor of Science in Architecture graduates of Isabela State University at Ilagan Campus in the province of Isabela, Philippines. The respondents were determined using purposive sampling, considering accessibility. The interpretation of the collected data was based on frequency, percentage, and mean. The results of the study showed that all the respondents were immediately employed within one year after their graduation. The respondents perceived that their educational qualifications and the recommendations of friends and relatives helped them in getting their first and present job. The graduates claimed that the problem solving and critical thinking skills they learned in the university are the essential abilities that they find useful in their careers. According to the graduates, their college degree is very relevant to their present job hired. The tight competition, no immediate vacancy, and lack of financial support for job hunting cause the delay of employment to some of the graduates. The study implies that the architecture graduates are employable, although some find it difficult to get work immediately. Campus alumni office must provide services on the job placement of graduates to help them in finding direct employment. Also, the study revealed that some graduates did not acquire entrepreneurial skills. The architecture program should contemplate entrepreneurship in the development of a new curriculum to help the graduates in the development and establishment of their own architectural and design businesses.

Keywords : architecture, employability, curriculum, graduates

1 INTRODUCTION

The Bachelor of Science in Architecture program (BSA) is a Five-year academic program compliant to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) under the Memorandum Order No. 61, s 2006: Policies, Standards, and Guidelines for Architecture Education [1]. It aims to train and develop students' proficiency in the theories, practices, and techniques of the architectural profession. The course includes programs or fields of study relevant to architecture. The Republic Act of 9266 and Architect National Code (RA 9266)[2] specified the interior design, landscape architecture, urban design, urban planning, environmental planning, housing, real estate development, educational management, business management, project management, construction management, and technology, building administration and maintenance, engineering and architectural research are related programs to architecture. The offering of the BS Architecture program started offering in 2003 in Isabela State University in Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines . At present, architectural education has made its way to sustainable education. According to Khan, A. Z., et al. (2013)[3], sustainability has become a conventional consideration in design thinking in the practice of the architectural profession and education. Also, Taleghani, M. et al. (2011)[4] indicated that architecture education now covers the renewable energy in the curriculum while Porras Álvarez et al. (2016)[5], claimed that attaining a system of sustainable buildings and cities is through architectural education. Also, Rieh, S. Y. et al. (2017)[6] sustainability principles are integrated into the architectural programs. The development of cities and the challenge of climate change motivated the change in architecture education. Likewise, architectural education is about developing the learning habits needed for the discovery, integration, application, and sharing of knowledge over a lifetime, stated by Petry, E. (2004)[7]. Indeed the change in architecture education will offer a wide range of employment to its graduates. However, a university must prioritize monitoring the employability of graduates to check on the effectiveness of its curriculum. According to Antiojo, L.P. (2018), [8] monitoring and evaluating the employability of graduates indicate the relevance of the curriculum offered by the university. Besides, Maina, J. J., & Daful, C. K. (2017)[9], to be competent and employable; therefore, a person requires not only the right knowledge and skills but must also possess the right personal attributes and traits. It is for this purpose why this study is conducted. A tracer study provides essential information for evaluating the program and training acquired in the university. This data will be a basis for further innovation and development of the university in providing quality education, as stated by Schomburg (2003), as cited by Hazaymeh, E. N., & Dela Peña, M. K. (2017)[10].

The Isabela State University –Ilagan Campus has a record of its graduates and its architecture board examination passers. However, there are no updated records or documents as to who is employed productively commensurate to their architecture education and training that equipped them to work in the construction industry. Hence the conduct of this study is deemed necessary for the improvement of the architecture program at Isabela State University. The results of this study may provide essential information for evaluating the architecture program.

Objectives of the Study

This study examined the employability of architecture graduates. It determined the factors that influence the employability of graduates. It aimed to provide intervention for the improvement of the BS Architecture program of the Isabela State University and to fill the gap in their employability.

Significance of the Study

This study may provide baseline information to the university academic administrators and faculties in coming up with evidence-based recommendations to further improve the curriculum of the program in achieving quality education and produce competent graduates. Faculties may be guided to plan activities and enhance and develop techniques to solve the determined deficiencies. This study may also guide other researchers in doing tracer study of the graduates on what factors to consider to provide the basis for evaluating their program.

2 METHODOLOGY

The study site is the Isabela State University at Ilagan Campus in the City of Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines. The researchers determined the respondents using purposive sampling. A total of 51 respondents who were architecture graduates from 2009 to 2019 participated in this study. The questionnaire provided the necessary information about the respondents, their work status, and perceptions about the factors that contributed to their employability using the Five Point Likert Scale (Table I). The researchers used tables showing the frequency, percentage, and mean results in the presentation and interpretation of data.

Table I. Five-point Likert-scale on Perceptions of respondents of the skills learned by graduates that they find useful in their job

Scale	Descriptive Rating
5	Very Useful
4	Useful
3	Barely Useful
2	Not Useful
1	Not Acquired

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The study site

The ISU, in the City of Ilagan, is one of the twelve satellite campuses of Isabela State University. It offers technical courses, and one of these is the Bachelor of Science in Architecture. The offering of Architecture education program started in 2003 and produced its first batch of graduates in 2009. The campus is situated about 400 kilometers north of Manila, located in Barangay Calamagui 2nd at the City of Ilagan in the Province of Isabela, Philippines. It has a rolling area of 2.11 hectares and caters to a population of about 5,000 students, faculty, and personnel.

3.2 Profile of the respondents

The profile of the respondents is shown in Table II. The 51 respondents involved 24 registered architects and 27 graduates who have not yet taken the board examination. 33 (65%) ages from 20 to 25 years old and 5(10%) ages 31 years old, and above. 31 (61%) are mostly male, and 20 (39%) were female. The respondents are composed of 31 (61%) males and 20 (39%) females. Out of the 51 respondents, only 6 (12%) were married, while 45 (88%) are still single. Most of the respondents belong to the graduate batch of 2019, with 13 (25%). At present, 2% enrolled in a masters degree. 24 (47%) of the respondents were already licensed architects, and 2(4%) of the 47% also have registration in professional licensed teachers and master plumbers while 27 (53%) are not licensed yet.

3.3 Type and Status of Employment

Table III shows the length of finding a job, type, and status of employment. As to their employment status, only 45 (88%) were employed in a government and a construction firm while 6 (12%) were self-employed and have established their architectural firm. According to, Navarro, et al., (2003) as cited by Rabang-Alonzo, F. N. (2018)[11] stated that employability is a measure of the productivity of education because it is reflective of the economic value added to the person who underwent the educative process; On the length of time in finding the job, 51 (100%) of the respondents' claimed that they employed within the year after graduation. As to their employment status, 23 (47%) had permanent status while 9 (18%) were under temporary status, 15(29%) were in casual or under contract, and 3(6%) were under Job Orders status.

3.4 Place of Employment

The result of the survey (Table IV) shows that most graduates were employed in the Cagayan Valley Region, specifically in the province of Cagayan and Isabela, with 32 (63%). In contrast, the rest of the respondents, 19 (37%) employed in Metro Manila. Based on the survey, it shows that most of the respondents were employed privately in various companies or construction firms, with 38 (74%). In comparison, 8(16%) employed in the government, and 5(10%) have already established their architectural firm. The result indicates that the construction industry in the Cagayan Valley region and Metro Manila requires architecture graduates. The result implies that very few graduates are being employed by the government agencies as compared to private construction industries. Regardless, the result shows that Architecture graduates of ISU are employable.

Table II. Profile of the respondents

DESCRIPTION	SUBTOTAL	PERCENTAGE
AGE		
20-25	33	65%
26-30	13	25%
31-Above	5	10%
	51	100%
GENDER		
MALE	31	61%
FEMALE	20	39%
	51	100%
CIVIL STATUS		0%
SINGLE	45	88%
MARRIED	6	12%
WIDOW	0	0%
	51	100%
YEAR GRADUATED		
2009	1	2%
2010	1	2%
2011	3	6%
2012	1	2%
2013		0%
2014		0%
2015	2	4%
2016	8	16%
2017	17	33%
2018	5	10%
2019	13	25%
	51	100%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
BS	50	98%
MS	1	2%
Ph.D.	-	0%
		100%
ELIGIBILITIES		0%
Architecture	24	47%
Civil Service	-	0%
Others	2	4%
None	27	53%
		104%

3.5 Reasons for the delay in employment and unemployment of graduates

Although all of the graduates employed within one year after their graduation, some graduates find it difficult. The result of the survey (Table V) showed that 39 (71%) graduates were immediately employed however 5(9%) of the respondents answered that the reasons for the delay of their employment were due to tight competition while the rest was because of no immediate hiring 3 (5%). In contrast, the rest of the respondents reasoned out that issuance of school credentials, delay in passing the board exam, not emotionally ready, and delay in the

issuance of other documents and tight competition in the job. The result reveals that their employment primarily depends on the availability of the need in the construction industry, while some are secondary factors that caused the delay in their employment.

Table III. Length of Finding a Job, Type, and Status of Employment

LENGTH OF TIME FINDING JOB		
	SUBTOTAL	PERCENTAGE
1 year after graduation	51	100%
2 years after graduation		0%
3 years after graduation		0%
4 years after graduation		0%
	51	100%
TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT		
	SUBTOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Employed	45	88%
Self-Employed	6	12%
OFW		0%
Unemployed		0%
	51	100%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
Permanent	24	47%
Temporary	9	18%
Casual/Contractual	15	29%
Job Orders	3	6%
Others	0	0%
	51	100%

Table IV. Place of Employment

Place of Employment	Number of Graduates			%		
Metro Manila			19			37%
Region 2			32			63%
TOTAL			51			100%
Employment	Male	Female	Total	%	%	%
Government	7	1	8	14%	2%	16%
Private Company	19	19	38	37%	37%	75%
Self-Employed	5	0	5	10%	-	10%
	31	20	51	61%	39%	100%

3.6 Necessary skills learned by graduates that they find useful in their job

Based on the result of the study (Table IV) it shows that the essential skills acquired by graduates that they find helpful in their career are problem-solving skills and critical thinking skills with the highest frequency of 20 (39%) and 19 (37%), respectively. Communication, leadership, and skills in information technology contributed to their employability, which are the skills that they acquired in architecture education with 16 (31%). Results of the survey revealed that 4 (8%) of the graduates claimed that they did not learn entrepreneurial skills, which should entail attention for improvement of the program because as revealed in the survey, only 13 (25%) of the graduates have established their architectural firm, as shown in Table II above. According to Henry et al. (2005), as cited by Elmuti, D., Khoury, G., & Omran, O. (2012)[12], entrepreneurial skills have three distinct categories, technical skills, business management skills, and personal entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurs also should have personal skills such as innovation, risk-taking, and persistence. According to Gafar, M. et al. (2012)[13], entrepreneurial education in the discipline in architecture is essential to prepare the students in the competitive construction industry. The study also suggests that entrepreneurial skills are necessary as this will enable a graduate to develop his/her architecture firm and not rely on employment to the construction firms and government agencies.

Table V. Reasons for the delay in employment and unemployment

Factors/reasons for the delay of employment	Frequency of Response	%
Delay in the issuance of School credentials	1	2%
Delay in taking/passing the board exam	1	2%
Delay in the issuance of other (outside) needed documents	1	2%
No immediate vacancy	3	5%
Tight competition for the job	5	9%
Available job/s is/are not in line with specialization	1	2%
Lack of financial support for job hunting	2	4%
Health reasons	0	0%
Early Marriage	0	0%
Not emotionally ready	1	2%
Already been employed	39	71%
Others (pls .specify)	1	2%
TOTAL	55	100%

3.7 Factors that facilitated the graduates in getting their job

Table VII shows the factors that facilitated the graduates in getting their first job. The employability of graduates is an important concern of Higher Education institutions, as stated by Antiojo, L.P. (2018)[14]. Based on the perceptions of the respondents on the elements that assisted them in getting their job is their educational qualifications with 30 (34%) respondents. Likewise, to be competent and employable, a person requires not only the right knowledge and skills but must also possess the right personal attributes and traits conferring to Maina, J. J. et al. (2017)[15]. Also, other factors that facilitated the graduates in getting their jobs to include the recommendations of their family and friends with 22 (25%) respondents. At the same time, the rest of the reasons were through the aid of government agencies, media advertisements, recommendations from teachers, recommendations from personnel of the company, and online applications. In the study conducted by Trần, T.T. (2016)[16], the employability of graduates from universities shall require input from and collaboration with industry to achieve their mission of equipping their students for the labor market. The result of the survey revealed that the assistance of ISU's placement office and guidance from a politician did not facilitate in getting their job. According to the study of Rabang-Alonzo, F. N. (2018)[17], that job hunt for graduates from a provincial state institution is stiffer compared to urbanized cities such as the University of Sto. Tomas (UST), University of the Philippines (UP), and Saint Louis University (SLU) in Baguio City. The results suggest that the alumni office must consider getting linkages from other industries for the job placement of the architecture graduates to help them for their immediate employment.

Table VI. Necessary skills learned by graduates that they find useful in their job

Basic Skills	very useful	useful	barely useful	not useful at all	Not acquired
Communication Skills	16	33	2	0	0
	31%	65%	4%	0%	0%
Human Relation/ Interpersonal Skills	15	32	4	0	0
	29%	63%	8%	0%	0%
Leadership/ Managerial	16	31	4	0	0
	31%	61%	8%	0%	0%
Entrepreneurial Skills	4	23	8	3	13
	8%	45%	16%	6%	25%
Information Technology	16	25	7	3	0
	31%	49%	14%	6%	0%
Problem – Solving Skills	20	22	5	1	3
	39%	43%	10%	2%	6%
Critical Thinking Skills	19	27	3	1	1
	37%	53%	6%	2%	2%
Research and Extension Skills	15	20	12	1	3
	29%	39%	24%	2%	6%

Table VII. Factors that facilitated the graduates in getting their first job

Factors that facilitated you in getting your job	Frequency of Response	%
Educational Qualifications	30	34%
The assistance of the ISU's Placement Office	0	0%
Government employment office	1	1%
Media advertisement	4	5%
Recommendations from relatives/ friends	22	25%
Recommendations from politicians	0	0%
Recommendations from former teachers	3	3%
Personnel office of the company	10	11%
Job fair/DOLE	4	5%
Former employer/s	2	2%
On line applications	9	10%
Others (please specify)	2	2%
	87	100%

3.8 The relevance of their college degree and educational training in their present job

Table VIII shows the respondents' perception of the relevance of their college degree and educational training in their present job. Employability of graduates serves as evidence of the performance of graduates, relevance of the curriculum, and the satisfaction of alumni with their academic preparations, as pointed out by Antiojo, L.P. (2018)[18]. In addition, Trần, T.T. (2016)[19], universities are hardly able to achieve their mission if without input from and collaboration with industries. Based on the result of the survey, perceptions on the importance of their college degree and educational training in their current position, 36 (71%) claimed that it is very relevant. In comparison, 12 (24%) claimed that it is relevant, and 3 (6%) answered fairly relevant. According to Shannon, S. (2012)[20], most recruiters attribute to the design knowledge skills and the possession of expertise in the computer-aided design of the graduates. The employment of the graduates is mostly involved in the project construction, site inspector, and CADD Operator. The result shows that the graduates were able to acquire the training required for the labor market, which is an indicator that the curriculum is very relevant to the present employment of the graduates.

Table VIII. Respondents' perception of the relevance of their college degree and educational training in their present job

Perception	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Relevant	36	71
Relevant	12	24
Fairly Relevant	3	6
Total	51	100

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result of this study, within one year after graduation, all the graduates were employed. Most of them found employment in the Cagayan Valley region while others are in Metro Manila. Private construction industries hire more architecture graduates compared to government agencies. The graduates' perceived that their training and education are very relevant to their present job, which is an indicator that the curriculum was able to meet the requirement of the labor market, which also suggests why the graduates of architecture program were all employable. No immediate hiring and even lack of finances to search for a job caused the delay in employment and unemployment of graduates. ISU's alumni office should consider expanding its linkages, especially for job placement of the architecture graduates. At present, only 6(12%) of the respondents were able to establish their architectural firms, and 13(25%) claimed that entrepreneurial skills should be taught in college. The inclusion of the entrepreneurial subjects in the architecture program should be considered in the new curriculum to guide the architecture graduates in establishing their architectural firm and design services in order not to rely on employment to construction firms and government agencies.

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