

# Employability of West Visayas State University Communication Graduates Philippines

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**Abstract**—To cope with the demands of globalization, communication graduates must be provided with appropriate knowledge and skills needed in the industry. To find out how WVSU communication graduates perform in employment, this tracer study was conducted. This study looked into the employment profile of the Bachelor in Broadcasting, Bachelor in Journalism, and Bachelor of Science in Development Communication graduates of 2011-2013. It also traced the transition to employment of the graduates, their level of satisfaction towards the competencies acquired and the significance of the curriculum in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. This descriptive survey utilized a questionnaire adapted from the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) instrument used by the Universities and Colleges in the Philippines. Findings revealed that most of the graduates are females, single, and permanently employed. Graduates considered their degree programs relevant to their jobs and they were satisfied with the knowledge and skill they acquired from their degrees. The result of the tracer study is a proof that the three curricular programs play a big role in the lives of the graduates especially in acquiring several skills and knowledge needed by a professional to compete in the challenging world of employment.

**Keywords**—communication, employability, tracer study

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## A. Introduction

Global integration of economies and societies brought about by emerging technologies affects different facets of the lives of the people, said Nicholas Stern, The World Bank Chief Economist in 2000-2003. With the emergence of the global market, industries are urged to rationalize their management and strictly select employees (Debrah

and Smith, 2002). This has an adverse effect towards employment.

According to Spence (2011), competition becomes rigid because job opportunities are getting wider for well-educated than less-educated individuals. In Asia, particularly in the Philippines and Indonesia, job losses, retrenchments and irregular employment happen because of market liberalization, privatization of government-owned

and controlled companies and less intervention of the government in the economy, as cited by Viajar (2009). Sibal (2002) also explained that privatization does not only lessen government-owned enterprises and companies but intensifies private business groups that burden the employees and buyers. To adjust in the demands of the global market, local employers are looking into the productivity and competitiveness of workers.

Employers require job applicants to possess characteristics, knowledge, skills and intellectual capability elements such as knowledge of the business, knowledge in information and communications technology, problem solving, literacy and numeracy skills, good interpersonal and communication skills, leadership skills, self-management and initiative (Lowden, et al., 2011). Likewise, generic skills such as logical and analytical reasoning, and problem solving, effective communication and teamwork skills are proven to be important for higher education institutions (HEIs) and employers. For HEIs, this is important because of the increasing demand from business and employers for graduates to possess these skills (Hager, P., S. Holland and D. Beckett, 2002).

It is, thus, important to create a good curriculum and assessment design that will enable the students not just develop a thorough comprehension of subject matter but to build on skills that are aligned to the needs of the industry. These employability skills include the abilities of students to retrieve and handle information, to communicate and present information and ideas; to plan and solve problems; and to development socially and interact well with other people. A curriculum with well aligned teaching and learning activities and assessments, with regular and effective feedback, will boost a student's confidence in their ability to learn and progress (Yorke & Knight, 2006).

It is therefore of utmost importance for an educational institution to ascertain the relevance of its course offerings to the needs of the times. This may be done through graduate tracer studies to find out where a school's graduates are employed after graduation, and also to gather other needed data such as employability of graduates, usefulness of the knowledge and skills learned in school in their present work and levels of satisfaction on the delivery of instruction.

Thus several tracer studies were conducted to guide the officials of the University and the dean and

faculty of the College of Communication in their efforts to improve the Bachelor in Broadcasting, Bachelor in Journalism and Bachelor of Science in Development Communication curricular programs offered in the College.

Several revisions and improvements were done with the curricular programs to keep pace with the rapid development of the industry. Along with the updating of the curricula is the converting of the Department of Communications to the Institute of Mass Communications (BOR Resolution 105, 1993) to the College of Mass Communications (BOR Resolution 26, 2000) and to the College of Communication (BOR Resolution 14-A, 2013) which paved way to ample opportunities for the graduates of the College.

The faculty members see the need to conduct this tracer study to serve as an important reference when decisions need to be made as to the subjects to be changed, subjects to be retained and enriched, and those that need to be added. Furthermore, this tracer study will be able to evaluate the quality of education given to the graduates through their placement and positions in the industry or place of work. This study may also be used as an evaluative tool to assess the relevance of the course program to the need of the mass media and communication industry.

Specifically, this study is intended to

- 1) present the current employment profile of the WVSU Communication graduates of 2011-2013;
- 2) show the profile of the graduates' transition from WVSU to employment; and
- 3) determine the level of satisfaction towards competencies acquired and the influence of the college in the acquisition of these knowledge and skills.

## **B. Method**

### **1. Research Design**

This descriptive survey aims to find out the employability of the 2011-2013 graduates of West Visayas State University College of Communication (formerly College of Mass Communications) particularly in its three undergraduate curriculum programs – Bachelor in Broadcasting, Bachelor in Journalism, and Bachelor of Science in Development Communication.

Specifically, this study would like to determine how the competencies acquired from the three

curricular programs have satisfied and influenced the graduates in terms of their capacity in finding a job for the purpose of revisiting, updating, and revising the curriculum based on the industry needs.

## 2. Respondents and Sampling Method

The respondents of the study were the graduates of Bachelor in Broadcasting (BB), Bachelor in Journalism (BJ), and Bachelor of Science in Development Communication (BSDC) in 2011, 2012, and 2013. There were 351 graduates - 200 from Bachelor in Broadcasting, 69 from Bachelor in Journalism, and 82 from Bachelor of Science in Development Communication. From the total number of graduates, 184 or 52.42% filled out and returned or e-mailed back their accomplished questionnaires.

The sampling method used was non-probability sampling specifically the snowball sampling because it cannot meet the criteria of random sampling method since it was difficult to trace all the graduates' contact addresses and the chosen sample might not respond to the survey. With this, it is best to use non-probability sampling as long as the sample size is enough to represent the population. The sample size was more than 50% and the number of participants is already sufficient to provide reliable data about the employability of the graduates. Moreover the 52.42% response rate already falls within the recommended 30% to 60 % response rate on the conduct of graduate tracer studies (Schomburg, 2003).

## 3. Data Gathering Procedure

In gathering the data, a questionnaire adapted from the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) instrument used by the Universities and Colleges in the Philippines, was utilized. The questionnaire was distributed in August 2014 up to May 2015. Graduates who were physically accessible to the researchers were given the questionnaires to fill out; while graduates who were working in other parts of the country or abroad were reached via email, and followed up through texts, and other online social media channels.

The data about the graduates' current employment profile, transition to employment, and level of satisfaction and influence of the college in the competencies learned were gathered from the

respondents for tabulation, interpretation, and analysis.

## C. Results and Discussion

### *Employment Profile of WVSU Communication Graduates*

Employment profile consists of the graduates' sex, civil status, current employment status, job sectors employed, and ability to perform current job. Out of 351 graduates of the three undergraduate programs covering three batches from 2011 to 2013, 26% were males and 74% were females. The result indicates that communication profession is more appealing to females than males.

This is supported by the studies of Utari & Nilan (2004) and Emenyeonu (1991) that more females chose communication courses because they are drawn of the glamorous image of some female media workers like those working in television, radio, public relations, advertising, among others.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents according to Sex

Program	Frequency		
	Male	Female	N
BBroadcasting	26	91	117
BJournalism	10	23	33
BSDevCom	11	23	34
Total	47	137	184
%	25.54	74.46	100

Results in Table 2 shows that 99% of the graduates were still single at the time of the study. This implies that communication graduates prefer to focus on their careers before they settle down and have their own families. These graduates belong to the millennial generation wherein according to the study conducted by the Council of Economic Advisers of the United States of America (2014), these millennials believe that having a family and a career is important but they are more likely to prioritize a career.

Having a family will come later once they have established their career and have higher earnings. Also, according to Hervish & Charlotte (2011), delaying marriage can increase income of an employee.

Moreover, a study conducted by National Marriage Project, University of Virginia (2013), stated that young people, especially women, who

marry later, have greater chances of establishing their careers, finances and youthful passions before they have their families. This supports the many female Communication graduates who tend to focus on their careers and marry later.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents according to Civil Status

Program	Frequency		
	Single	Married	N
BBroadcasting	117	0	117
BJournalism	32	1	33
BSDevCom	34	0	34
Total	183	1	184
Percentage	99.46	0.005	100

For current employment status, a total of 95.11% are employed, while 4.89% are unemployed during the time of the study. This simply shows that communication graduates can easily find a job considering the flexibility of course and knowledge and skills they acquired from their course program.

This is affirmed by the study of de Guzman and de Castro (2008) that the employability of the university graduates particularly those in the fields of mass communication, behavioral sciences, natural sciences, and medical fields is the off shoot of their capabilities such as knowledge, skills and attitudes used in work places, not of their academic honors.

This is still an affirmation of the study conducted by the National Marriage Project (2013), which showed that that young women who prefer to marry later, get stable careers and earn more income before they have their families.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents according to Current Employment Status

Program	Frequency		N
	Employed	Unemployed	
BBroadcasting	110	7	117
BJournalism	33	0	33
BSDevComm	32	2	34
Total	175	9	184
Percentage	95.11	4.89	100

More than half (54.86%) of the respondents are permanently employed, 37.71% are temporarily employed, and there are 7.43% who are self-employed. This shows that there are still many Communication graduates who do not have a permanent job while others prefer to have a personal business rather than serve employers. This maybe because these young professionals do not stay long in their first job or with their first company and they keep on hopping from one company to find a job which they are comfortable working with or related to their courses. According to Verona (2011), these young careerists presumably do not think of retirement when starting a job and probably they will change job more than five times during a lifetime of work.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents according to Type of Employment

Program	Frequency			N
	Permanent	Temporary	Self-employed	
Broadcasting	63	39	8	110
BJournalism	15	14	4	33
BSDevcom	18	13	1	32
Total	96	66	13	175
Percentage	54.86	37.71	7.43	100

In terms of job sectors where Communication graduates are employed, 19.09% of Broadcasting graduates are working in the broadcast media, while 53.64% work in communication and media related industries. Broadcast media includes TV/cable TV stations, radio stations, and radio/TV and video production companies. According to Maslog (2007), graduates of Communication and Journalism courses have many opportunities in public information, especially in government agencies and offices. The National Communication Association (2011) backed this up with a list of careers for Communication Degree holders. This includes jobs in the media, health communication, family communication, risks and crisis communication, advertising, marketing and promotion, communication research, intercultural communication, and community and government relations.

Table 5.a. Job Sectors where Bachelor in Broadcasting Graduates were Employed

Job Sector	f	%
Broadcast Media	21	19.09
Communication and Media Related Industries	59	53.64

Others:		
Corporate Executives	14	12.73
Education	3	2.73
Clerk	9	8.18
Entrepreneurship	2	1.82
Military, Police Force	2	1.82
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

For Bachelor in Journalism graduates, only 15.15% land a job in the print media, while 27.27% work in communication and media related industries. Print media includes newspaper, magazine, newsletter and other print publications.

Table 5.b. Job Sectors where Bachelor in Journalism Graduates were Employed

Job Sector	f	%
Print Media	5	15.15
Communication and Media Related Industries	9	27.27
Others:		
Corporate Executives	4	12.12
Education	3	9.09
Clerk	3	9.09
Entrepreneurship	4	12.12
Service Worker in the Shop	4	12.12
Health and Social Work	1	3.03
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.00</b>

For BS DevCom graduates, 31.25% gain DevCom related jobs, while 28.13% are in communication and media related industries. DevCom related jobs includes corporate executives, education, clerk, entrepreneurship, service worker in shops and health and social work, while communication and media-related companies include advertising, promotions and marketing, media/market research, PR/customer relations and public information.

Table 5.c. Job Sectors where Bachelor of Science in DevComm Graduates were Employed

Job Sector	f	%
DevCom Jobs	10	31.25
Communication and Media Related Industries	9	28.13
Others:		
Corporate Executives	3	9.38
Clerk	4	12.50

Entrepreneurship	1	3.13
Service Worker in the Shop	1	3.13
Health and Social Work	4	12.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 6 reveals that the graduates consider their following abilities very good in performing their current job: working in a team; communication skills; and workplace adaptability.

It is evident, however, that technical skills has the least mean of all the abilities. This result is also consistent with the tracer study conducted by Robles (2010) wherein the Bachelor in Broadcasting graduates have *very good* abilities in performing their current jobs except for ability to use ICT applications and technical skills in broadcast media technology where majority of the graduates think they only have *good* abilities.

Table 6. Graduates' Ability to Perform Current Job

Mean Overall Ability	BB	BJ	BSDC	Mean
working in a team	3.57	3.61	3.56	3.58
workplace adaptability	3.47	3.58	3.59	3.55
communication skills	3.62	3.45	3.47	3.51
confidence to perform tasks required	3.55	3.30	3.34	3.40
use of ICT	3.39	3.24	3.25	3.29
problem-solving & decision-making skills	3.35	3.09	3.25	3.23
ability to use ICT applications	3.31	3.15	3.16	3.21
technical skills in communication technology	3.30	2.79	2.91	3.00
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>3.35</b>

Note: 3.51-4.00 - Very Good; 2.51-3.50 – Good; 1.51-2.50 – Poor; 1.00-1.50 -Very Poor

This simply implies that while the rest of the abilities are learned inside the classroom, technical skills maybe acquired by the graduates through trainings, experiences and exposure which they still lack during the conduct of the study.

#### *Graduates' Transition from WVSU to Employment*



Table 7 presents the length of time the communication graduates get a job after graduation. Nearly half of the graduates (46.86%) land a job in less than a month after graduation. Conclusively, communication graduates can easily find a job. This affirms the report of Kirby, et al. (2010) that employers consider applicants who have generic skills such as effective communication and teamwork which communication graduates possess.

Table 7. Length of Time in Landing First Job

Program	Frequency					N
	less than a month	1 to 6 months	7 to 11 months	1 year to less than 2 years	2 years to less than 3 years	
BBroadcasting	49	45	9	6	1	110
BJournalism	18	12	2	1	0	33
BSDevCom	15	11	4	2	0	32
Total	82	68	15	9	1	175
Percentage	46.86	38.86	8.57	5.14	0.57	100

In terms of competencies learned in college, almost all of the graduates (92%) affirm that communication skills are relevant in their first job. This supports the report of Kirby, et al. (2010) that effective communication is necessary to find a job. Table 8 presents the data.

Table 8. Competencies Learned in College Relevant in the First Job

Program	Frequency						
	Communi- cation	Human relations	Information technology	Critical thinking	Problem solving	Entrepre- neurial	Technical
B.Broadcasting	98	85	46	43	41	41	20
B.Journalism	33	26	19	19	15	8	4
BS. DevCom	30	30	21	19	19	5	3
Total	161	141	86	81	75	54	27
Percentage	92.00	80.57	49.14	46.29	42.86	30.86	15.43

Graduates considered their degree programs relevant to their first job.

The data shows that the curriculum offered by the College is aligned to the needs of the industry. This confirms the statement of Fallows and Steven (2000) that the institution should focus on the holistic

development of graduates by backing the knowledge of students with necessary skills needed for employment.

Table 9. Extent of Relevance of Degree Program to Graduates' First Job

Program	Mean	Interpretation
BBroadcasting	3.10	Relevant
BJournalism	3.09	Relevant
BSDevComm	3.03	Relevant

Note: 3.51-4.00 -Very Relevant; 2.51-3.50 - Relevant; 1.51-2.50 – Irrelevant; 1.00-1.50 Very Irrelevant

*Level of satisfaction towards competencies acquired and the influence of the college in the acquisition of knowledge and skills*

Table 10 presents the level of satisfaction with knowledge and skills acquired from the three undergraduate degree programs.

The graduates were satisfied with the knowledge and skills acquired from the three degree programs. Of all the knowledge and skills acquired, working with others in a group topped the list. This may be attributed to the teaching and learning strategies implemented in the three programs. Most of the learning activities in the college involved group work, team projects, and peer collaboration which helped strengthened the ability of the students to work with the group.

Moreover, what is distinct is the very satisfied response of the BSDC graduates in their knowledge and skills in working with others in a group. This may be attributed to the positive experiences they encountered during their community immersion activities and outreach programs they experienced way back in college.

However, IT courses showed the lowest mean. This may indicate that IT skills offered in the three undergraduate degree programs need to be enriched and aligned to the need of the industry.

Table 10. Level of Satisfaction with Knowledge and Skills Acquired from the Degree Programs

Mean knowledge and skills acquired	BB	BJ	BSDC	Overall Mean
working with others in a group proficiency in spoken Hiligaynon	3.41	3.42	3.62	3.48
exposure to general knowledge and current issues proficiency in written Hiligaynon	3.32	3.36	3.29	3.33
proficiency in written English	3.36	3.33	3.26	3.32
proficiency in spoken English	3.32	3.18	3.15	3.22
interpersonal communication skills	3.28	3.30	3.06	3.21
proficiency in spoken Filipino	3.31	3.18	3.12	3.20
proficiency in written Filipino	3.30	3.18	3.12	3.20
specialized knowledge	3.22	3.00	3.18	3.13
creative and critical thinking skills	3.17	2.97	3.18	3.11
analytical skills	3.22	2.88	3.15	3.08
problem solving skills	3.15	2.88	3.09	3.04
IT skills	3.08	2.88	3.00	2.99
Overall Mean	3.10	2.73	3.03	2.95
	2.99	2.55	2.94	2.83
	3.23	3.06	3.16	3.15

Note: 3.51-4.00-Very Satisfied; 2.51-3.50- Satisfied; 1.51-2.50 – Dissatisfied; 1.00-1.50-Very Dissatisfied

It is noted in Table 11 that, overall, the College was considered significant in the acquisition of knowledge and skills listed in Table 10. Finally, related researchers, literatures and findings of this study underscored the necessity of the curriculum in providing the graduates with relevant knowledge, skills and competencies they need for employment and in consonance with the need of the industry.

Table 11. Extent of Significance of the College/Course Program in the Acquisition of Knowledge and Skills

Program	Mean
Broadcasting	3.26
BJournalism	2.98
BSDevCom	3.17
Overall Mean	3.14

Note: 3.51-4.00-Very Significant; 2.51-3.50- Significant; 1.51-2.50 – Insignificant; 1.00-1.50-Very Insignificant

#### D. Conclusions and Recommendations

The quality of three undergraduate programs – Bachelor in Broadcasting, Bachelor in Journalism, and Bachelor of Science in Development Communication, offered at the College of Communication is the result of tracer studies conducted collaboratively by the faculty.

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were summarized:

Communication graduates were mostly females which simply show that communication profession is more attractive to females. Most of the graduates during the conduct of the study are single because they prefer to focus on their careers rather than get married. The percentage of permanently employed communication graduates indicates that there are still graduates who seek for stable job or work with higher salary. Furthermore, most of the graduates can be employed in their specialized industries (broadcast, print, and development communication) and other communication-related area. However, there were several graduates who opted to work in other job sectors such as education, health, military, and business and management because communication cuts across all fields of study. The graduates also considered their skills in working with the team, communication skills, and workplace adaptability very good because these are competencies being integrated in the course programs. On the other hand, technical skills in communication technology got the lowest mean which indicates that IT-related courses offered in communication degrees need to be enriched to cope with the demands of the industry.

Mostly, the graduates are employed less than a year after graduation. This is an indication that

communication graduates have vast employment opportunities and the competencies learned in college such as communication and human relation skills are relevant factors for employment. Moreover, their degree programs are significant in their job transition and employability.

Generally, the graduates were satisfied with the knowledge and skills they acquired from their degree programs. Knowledge and skills in working with others in the group got the highest mean which simply shows that the graduates highly valued and appreciated the activities that involve team work and human relations which the degree programs in the College provided. The result of the tracer study is also a proof that the three curricular programs play a big role in the lives of the graduates especially in acquiring several skills and knowledge needed by a professional to compete in the challenging world of employment.

This tracer study revealed beneficial findings which are basis of the following recommendations:

- The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) should continuously support communication courses such as broadcasting, journalism, and development communication by offering scholarships for incoming freshmen and by implementing policies aligned with the K-12 curriculum.
- Underemployment (low pay) and exploitation may be widespread social and economic problems affecting in many sectors in Philippine society, but a further investigation not only on the plight of communication graduates, but also the communication professionals may be conducted and proper measures may be instituted.
- Regular updating of the curriculum may be done to keep pace with globalization and economic development. Moreover, communication degrees may be further enhanced by enriching the content of specialized knowledge and technical-related courses. Experiential learning such as internship and field studies may be offered in two semesters to expose students to the latest development in the communication industry.
- The Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) may be institutionalized and conducted regularly every three or four years to be used as reference in the revision of curricula, enrichment of syllabi content, and improvement of teaching strategies.

Moreover, employers may also be interviewed to further establish reliable information regarding the graduate's employability.

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