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## EMPLOYABILITY OF BA-ECONOMICS GRADUATES: A TRACER STUDY

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**ABSTRACT** : The study aimed to evaluate the employability of the graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in Economics of Surigao del Sur State University – Tandag Campus from 2011 to 2016. Specifically, the conducted study was administered in the municipalities of Surigao del Sur during the academic year 2016 - 2017. This study used the simple frequency, percentage, ranking, weighted mean and modal value to determine the employability of the graduates under study. The respondents of this study were the BA – Economics graduates from 2011 to 2016. Out of 107 total graduates, 84 graduates answered the questionnaire. Majority of them were single and located in the City of Tandag. Most of the respondents were male who graduated in school year 2010 – 2011. Noted that among the 18 multiple responses of the respondents were receiving first job's gross monthly earnings of less than 10,000 and those who were locally employed answered that their present employment is still their job after graduation.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Regarding the employment profile of the graduates of the BA Economics, it showed that the BA Economics of Surigao del Sur State University were competitive in job seeking. More than half of them or 64.3% were presently employed. The percentage shown implies that the graduates of BA Economics can also compete with other colleges and universities in landing a job. In addition, they possess qualities of an employee that can meet the standard of the employer which helps them to be accommodated in different mode of employment such as in the government, as bank employee, service worker and others.

Researchers recommend that in the time of campaign and even in the orientation, the college objectives must be explained thoroughly so that the students who will take the program BA-Economics will not be mis-led as to their choice or decision pursuing the course. This is the reason why some of the respondents responded that they have no particular choice or better idea regarding the course. The curriculum of the BA Economics maybe revisited to suit the needs of the industries here in Tandag as well as the neighbouring cities and provinces. Internship program must be essentially imposed by the college to make the students be fully equipped especially in the world of job. Exposure such as field trips, seminars and program related activities shall be given emphasis to the students. Human relation skills will be enhanced since it is relevant for the graduates to land a job. If the skills of the students on their On-the-Job (OJT) training will not be thoroughly polished and practiced, it is a factor that they can offer a quality service by the time they seek for employment.

### Background Information about the Research Project

Education today must go beyond the academic realm. It must focus on the output based-education, developing skills, knowledge and values that will enable graduates to contribute meaning to accelerate the socio-economic development and thus enhance their role in the society which make thematic, responsible and productive citizens. There is the relationship between education and development that shall be delved into this study, the education and labor market.

A tracer is a follow-up study. This will tell the situations of the BA Economics graduates if they were hired after they graduate, or the waiting time before they land a job. Furthermore, this paper reports on the tracer study and emphasizes how it can help trace the graduates. To make education institutions more efficient, one should know whether the graduates were having their job. Conduct the tracer study will help assess the labor market and the leavers. (CHED)

### Conceptual Framework

Ensuring the employability of the graduates is an intrinsic part of good education and government priority. One thing to consider that graduates will be competing from the graduates from other Higher Education Institution (HEI) in finding job; and market job in the Philippines is limited, that, employable courses are able to look for a job easily. Graduates of BA Economics are lesser than the other courses offered in Surigao Del Sur State University – Tandag Campus, to the fact that this course is complex due to its application as quantitative and qualitative.

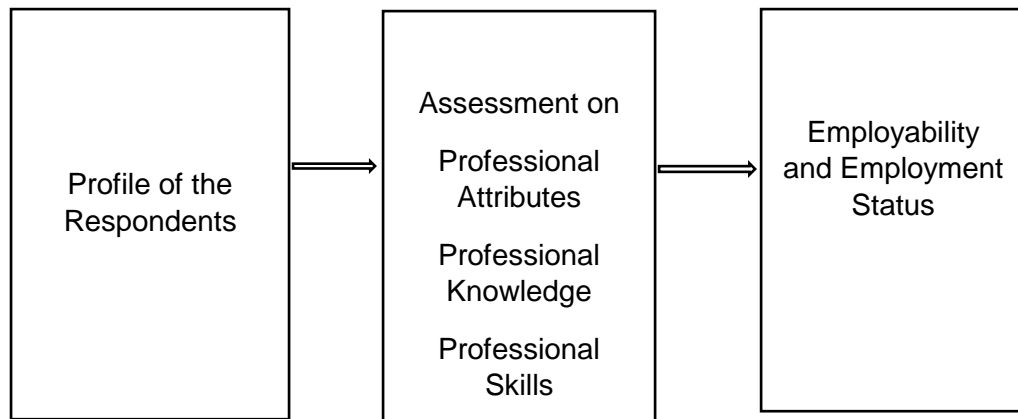


Fig. 1 Schematic Diagram

The figure above shows the profile of the respondents which includes the following variables: age, sex, civil status, location. Then, it describes how it was conducted, to consider the sampling from the respondents of the graduates in the year 2011-2016, distributed by a questionnaire adopted from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). After the validation comes the employability and employment status which has the following variables: present work, status of employment, gross monthly income, nature of the current employment, place of employment, present occupation as first job, first job as related to the course, length of stay in the first job, tools in finding the first job, and, competencies learned in college that the respondents find useful in the first job.

### Significance of the Study

The study is much significant for future use of the faculty and the university to uplift the standards used in molding the students in order for the graduates to compete in the more complex economy and the world. This may be a guiding principle to cope-up with the time.

### Objectives of the Study

The study has six (6) objectives that serve as the guiding statements in the conduct of the study. The following are:

1. Identify the profile of the respondents;
2. Identify the professional skills acquired by BA-Economics in SDSSU;
3. Know the reason for pursuing the degree;
4. Know the professional attributes;
5. Know the employment profile of the respondents regarding the present employment, the employment status, gross monthly income, nature of work, and place of employment, and,
6. The significant relationship of gaining income of the respondent and the employment profile.
- 7.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITRATURE

Enhancing graduate employability is a priority for many stakeholders in higher education and this research explores graduates' experiences of, and attitudes towards, the inclusion of employability-related support in undergraduate degree programs. A literature review is supplemented by primary research on a targeted sample of 104 graduates' humanities, sciences, engineering and social sciences, who span several generations and have over 2250 years of employment experience. The findings are triangulated to a workshop with 23 graduate careers advisory professionals. The result signal some important trends in experiences and attitudes, as well as variations by discipline and gender. While in one of 10 graduates prefer a disciplinary focus with just indirect attention to employability, nine in 10 want employability to have greater emphasis, albeit those

preferences vary between optional and integrated approaches. Experiences of employability-related support signal a significant shift over recent decades in how that support is provided, with professional service groups such as careers taking a much more active role and the overall level of provision rising. A cautionary note however is that the link with the discipline remain critical and the right balance needs to support and embedding it into curriculum. *Journal of Education and Work* 30 (1), 84-105, 2017

Employability and productivity are central issues in the strategic direction of higher education institutions. The interest is associated with the human capital theories of innovation and economic performance. Growth in the stock of human capital is essential for economic growth. In the words of Ramirez, Cruz, and Alcantara (2014), a nation's economy runs on the knowledge and skills of its people. The requirements for skills evolve with external investment, technological advances, and globalization. To keep pace with the challenges, people need to acquire skills to be productive and earn a living, and all of these can be achieved through education. Education is considered to be the most important mechanism for the empowerment of the people. Baking, Enrique G. Quiambao, Dolores Cruz, Reynaldo C Buenviaje Laura Miriam B. Nuqui, Alvin V.

The human capital theory argues that education increases individuals' employability and productivity. Education provides functional knowledge and marketable skills which include professional skills, language skills, and other life skills, and this gives highly educated people greater chances to employment and better opportunities to become productive. (Cai, 2012)

### III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used was a descriptive type of research. Sloven formula was generated in coming up of the number of graduates to be surveyed with a total of 86 respondents out of 107 graduates from class year 2010-2016. It was drawn by lot of who will be surveyed. If the researcher cannot trace out the graduate, she will then pick again on the remaining names. The researchers adopted the official tracer questionnaire from the Commission of Higher Education (CHED). The questionnaire consists of several parts which need for the respondent to think and even look again to their documents. That is why it takes a lot of time in gathering data. The researchers collected the data and contacted the respondents through meeting in person, messenger, cellular phones, and e-mail. It is a hard thing to gather data in a cellular phone because it requires more patience. Going to unidentified places also adds to the difficulty of the team. The truth is, tracer cannot only be conducted in just a year.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. Respondent's Age, Gender, and Civil Status

Civil status	SINGLE		MARRIED		SINGLEPARENT		WIDOWED		TOTAL		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
AGE										Total Male	Total Female
21-22	13	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	13	9
23-24	7	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	17	8	9
25-26	7	7	6	1	0	1	0	0	22	13	9
27-28	4	4	4	2	0	0	0	0	14	8	6
29-30	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	0
31-32	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	2	1
32 Above	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	32	29	18	4	0	1	0	0	84	50	34
<b>Percentage</b>										<b>59.5%</b>	<b>40.5%</b>

The findings of the study revealed that among the 86 respondents, majority of them were on the bracket of 25-26 years of age, others were 21-22 years old, and one above 32 years old. Most of them were male and at the middle age. They were located at the province of Surigao del Sur, mostly were in Tandag City where the University is found with 47.6%; others in the Municipality of Tago with 27.4%; and others were in other neighboring municipalities and barangays.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents Regarding the Location

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Tandag City	40	47.6
Tago	23	27.4
San Miguel	5	6
Cagwait	3	3.6
Cortes	4	4.8
Maribatag	2	2.4
Madrid	0	0
Lanuza	2	2.4
Bayabas	3	3.6
Barobo	0	0
Other Provinces	2	2.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>

The graduates of BA Economics were located at the province of Surigao del Sur, mostly in Tandag City where the University is found with 47.6%; others in the Municipality of Tago with 27.4% and the rest in other neighboring municipalities and barangays.

**Table 4. Respondent's Reasons in taking BA Economics**

<b>RESPONSES</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Affordable for the Family	50	1
Good Grades in High school	42	2
High grades in the subject area related to the course	28	3
More job opportunities are available	26	4
Peer influence	21	5
Availability of course offering in chosen institution	17	6
Prospects for immediate employment	11	7
Influence of parents or relatives	9	8
Strong passion for the profession	8	9
Inspired by a role model	5	10.5
Provide with a college scholarship (or other means to attend college)	5	10.5
Status prestige of the profession	4	12
Followed the choice of parents	3	13.5
No particular choice or no better idea	3	13.5
Opportunity for employment abroad	2	15.5
Prospects of attractive compensation	2	15.5
Prospects of career advancement	1	17

The reason of the graduates in taking Bachelor of Arts in Economics from their 17 multiple responses, the primary reason is, it is affordable for the family, 50 from the respondents agreed. The least responded, as the prospect of career advancement. In addition to, interview while answering the questionnaire, some other said that they thought it was an easy course and the subject offerings, realizing that it was most perplex course.

#### **The Employment Profile of the Respondents**

This portion discussed the data relative to the employability of graduates of BA Economics program. It answered the problem whether the graduates were presently employed, their status of employment, income and other variables that would determine to the extent to which the course offered by the college have relevance to the job market of the industries.

**Table 5.** Respondents' response whether they are Presently Employed, Status of Employment, Gross Monthly Income in their First Employment.

#### **5.A Proportion of Respondents who are Presently Employed**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	60	71.4
No	16	19.1
Never employed	8	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings of the study revealed that the BA Economics registered a 71.4 percent employment rate for the 2011-2016 graduates. On the other hand, 19.1 percent were not employed, meaning that they were laid-off, and 9.5 percent those who were never employed.

### 5.B Job Status of Employment

Status of Employment	Frequency	Percentage
Regular	19	22.6
Self- employed	7	8.3
Contractual	5	6
Unemployed	8	9.5
Casual	9	10.7
Temporary	29	34.5
Job Order	7	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>

The status was categorized into: regular, self-employed, contractual, unemployed, casual, temporary, job order. It was found out that most of the graduates got only the temporary status with 34.5 percent. The regular in status rated 22.6 percent. This result simply tells that those who were not in permanent position do not have the civil Service Eligibility.

### 5.C Gross Monthly Income in the First Employment

1st Job's Gross Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
Below 5,000	15	27.8
5,000 to less than 10,000	28	51.9
10,000 to less than 15,000	9	16.67
15,000 to less than 20,000	1	1.9
25,000 above	1	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>

Most of the graduates received a salary between Php 5,000 to less than Php 10,000. Those who were higher paid were the graduates employed outside the country, and the other one got the managerial position in a motorcycle company. The highest percentage were employed within Mindanao and Visayas, to consider the rate of salary which is meager in these areas.

**Table 6. Nature of Employment**

Nature of present employment	Frequency	Percentage
Critical of Gov't & special organization, corporate executive, manager, managing, proprietor, supervisor.	24	44.4
Military, police force	1	2
Professional	1	2
Technical, associate professional	2	3.7
Clerk	2	3.7
Service worker in shop, market	10	18.5
Sales worker	2	3.7
Trader, related works	2	3.7
Laborer, unskilled worker	1	2
education	2	3.7
other community, social and personal services activities	1	2
Others	6	11.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>
Self- employed	6	
Unemployed	24	

It revealed that 44.4 percent of the respondents work under critical of government and special organization, corporate executive, manager, proprietor, supervisor. On the other hand, Service worker on shop/market followed where the graduates can be found and that is 18.5 percent. Unemployed graduates got the third in rank with 24 respondents.

This only tells that BA Economics graduates cannot only be employed in low level of employment but they were deemed to be consultants and managers.

**Table 7. Respondents Response on the Place of Employment and whether the Present Employment is their First Job after College**

**7. A Respondent's Response on the Place of Employment**

Place of Employment	Frequency	Percentage
Local	53	98.1
Abroad	1	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>

Graduates were more employed locally. They refused going out of the country because according to them they are willing to help and augment the labor force of the country with 98.1 percent total respondents, and only one graduate who work abroad. In addition, their present job was already their job after graduation with a frequency of 64.8 percent, and those who responded No has only 35.1 percent, meaning their job in the present is not their first job after they graduated. It shows in the table below.

**7.B. Respondents Response whether the Present Employment is the First Job after College**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	64.8
No	19	35.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 8. Length of Stay in the First Job**

LENGTH OF STAY IN 1 <sup>st</sup> JOB	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a month	3	6
1 to 6 months	16	29.6
7 to 11 months	24	44.4
1 year to less than 2 years	7	13
2 years to less than 3 years	4	7.4
3 years to less than 4 years	0	0
5 years to less than 6 years	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>

Graduates who became employees stayed only in their job for 7-11 months with 44.4 percent; others stayed 1-6 months with 29.6 percent; others also stayed for 1 year to less than two years with 13 percent of the total respondents; 2 years to less than 3 years is 7.4 percent. The situation simply tells that not most of them are not eligible as to Civil Service policy, under contract and others were not willing to work to the fact that it was not in line with their course.

**Table 9. Tools in finding the job in terms of competencies learned in the University that respondents find useful in their first job.**

**9A. Responses on the Tools in Finding the First Job**

RESPONSES	Frequency	Rank
As walk- in applicant	38	1
Recommended by someone	12	2
Employment service office or (PESO)	3	3
Arranged by school's job placement officer	1	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>	

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked their tool in finding their first job, they were given choices of four and the result prevails that they were walk-in applicants. They said self-confidence and believe to the capacity as graduate were the only weapon a graduate may bring forth in applying for a job.

### 9B. Competencies learned in University that the respondents find useful in their first job

RESPONSES	Frequency	Rank
Communication skills	38	1
Speaking skills	30	2
Entrepreneurial skills	19	3
Human relation skills	17	4
Writing skills	15	5
Information technology skills	12	6
Critical thinking skills	7	7

While the competencies they learned from the university which they find very useful in the job is communication skills. It is very true that communication skills will be developed in order to be ready for the future jobs. It is important that one may know it for it is in smooth communication that everything may follow smoothly too.

### V. CONCLUSION

Regarding the employment profile of the graduates of the BA Economics, it can be concluded that the BA Economics of Surigao del Sur State University are competitive in finding a job. More than half of them or 64.3% are presently employed. This implies that the graduates of BA Economics can also compete with other colleges or in other programs in landing a job. Also, the BA – Economics graduates can be accommodated in a different mode of employment such as in the government, as a bank employee and service worker.

### Recommendation

It is therefore recommended by the researchers that in the time of campaign and even in the orientation, the college objectives must be explained so students who took up BA Economics will be aware of the nature of their course as it reflects that some of the respondents have no particular idea about their course. The curriculum of the BA Economics must possibly be revisited to suit the needs of the industries here in Tandag as well as the neighbouring cities and provinces which are locally available. Internship program must be attuned to the industry needs and must meet the demand of the community. Exposure of the students such as field trips, seminars, and program related activities must be emphasizing for every student. Human relation skills shall be enhanced since it is an important competency for the graduates to land a job. The human relation skills shall be given more importance to the students' internship program to help students improve their attitudes towards their employer and to the customers, and to acquire knowledge, skills and attitude that will eventually be utilized in their job.

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