



STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT: AN EXPLORATORY ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT: *Employability is an issue of concern in many areas of economy. It is a critical issue for both government and Higher Education Institutions. There is a growing pressure for new graduates looking for lucrative employment and to compete for jobs fit for their educational attainment. That is why the current trend of placing importance on skills mandates the Higher Educational Institutions curriculum to integrate opportunities to develop the needed skills in collaboration with subject-specific skills and knowledge. This study was conducted to explore the students' perceptions on the fundamental skills needed for employment. This study was conducted at the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy of Cagayan State University- Andrews Campus, Tuguegarao City where the respondents were the graduating students of the Bachelor of Science in Accounting Technology. The respondents of the study were 111 graduating BSAT students for the School Year 2018-2019. Random sampling was used by the researcher in obtaining the results. The survey questionnaire used was patterned from the study conducted by Romer C. Castillo. The data gathered were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted using the descriptive statistics like frequency counts, rank, percentage and weighted mean. Descriptive method was used to come up with a good result of the study. Result of the study revealed that from the 4 factors of the fundamental skills, managing information got the highest category mean of 4.16 and thinking and problem solving got the lowest with a mean of 4.00. The study further unveiled that there is no significant difference on the perceptions of the student-respondents with regard to the fundamental skills needed for employment when grouped according to age and sex. From the results generated it is therefore recommended that the research should target more respondents and they should get sufficient sample with a longer time frame and additional studies should be conducted to identify other employability skills needed for future employment.*

KEYWORDS: *Employability skills, fundamental skills, communicating, managing information, using numbers, thinking and problem solving, Bachelor of Science in Accounting Technology*



INTRODUCTION:

Employability is an issue of concern in many areas of economy. It is a critical issue for both government and Higher Education Institutions. One of the key reasons and motivations why many students invest in higher or university education is not to study a particular subject in depth, but to enhance their employment status (Stewart and Knowles, 2000). Employability is about the skills and abilities that allow you to be employed. Employers value people who have undertaken work experience, been able to reflect upon that experience and then go on to articulate and apply what they have learned. According to the Confederation of British Industry (2008), employers expect students to have well developed employability skills so that they can make an immediate contribution to the workplace when recruited. According to Harvet et.al. (1997), employability was highlighted as concern for employers and hence became the focus of a major study conducted. Therefore, tertiary education plays an important role in the prospect of employability. Today, people believe that higher education would be of great help. Students enrol in colleges and universities to earn a degree to be able to have a competitive edge in the job market.

Employability skills are not job specific, but are skills which are needed in all industries and all jobs from entry level to the highest position in an organization. According to Robinson (2000), employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job. McCoy (1991, p. 94), defined employability skills as skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions. A lot of graduates leave the university without the skills, attitudes, and understanding that are necessary to successfully enter the world of work. Jobs are available anytime, but these graduates lack the skills needed to obtain and land in the jobs specially employers are looking for a workforce who is flexible and could adopt easily in his working environment as these workforce would seek to transform their companies into being more flexible and adaptable in response to the changing needs of the market. The changing environmental demands emphasize the importance of education for employability which will focus on key skills and experience development.



There is a growing pressure for new graduates looking for lucrative employment and to compete for jobs fit for their educational attainment. Determined colleges and universities motivated by globalization are aspiring to supply the global market with the manpower they require through producing competent and competitive graduates. That is why the current trend of placing importance on skills mandates the Higher Educational Institutions curriculum to integrate opportunities to develop the needed skills in collaboration with subject-specific skills and knowledge. This could improve or develop the applicants' potential success in the hiring process by producing graduates who are ready and competent and could be able to make a good start and quickly adapt to change.

Baxter and Young (1982) have indicated that employers need entry level workers who are dependable and trustworthy, have basic communication, thinking and problem solving skills, and have the desire to learn and advance the ability to work as part of a team, and possess a proper attitude. Hence, this study assessed the fundamental skills needed for employment as assessed by the Bachelor of Science in Accounting Technology graduates of Cagayan State University to identify and examine the fundamental skills for improvement to qualify them in their field and become future professionals.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to assess the students' perceptions on fundamental skills for employment of the Bachelor of Science in Accounting Technology students of the College of Business Entrepreneurship and Accountancy of Cagayan State University, Andrews Campus.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the student-respondents relative to:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
2. What is the perception of the student-respondents with regard to the fundamental skills for employment relative to:
 - 2.1 Communicating
 - 2.2 Managing information
 - 2.3 Using numbers
 - 2.4 Thinking and problem solving



3. Is there is a significant difference in the perceptions of the student-respondents on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to:
 - 3.1 Age
 - 3.2 Sex

HYPOTHESES

This study is guided by the following hypotheses:

1. That there is no significant difference in the perception of the student-respondents on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to their age.
2. That there is no significant difference in the perception of the student-respondents on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to sex.

METHODOLOGY

This study made use of the descriptive research method employing the questionnaire as main data-gathering instrument. The researcher made use of structured questionnaires to gather the needed data which were given to the respondents.

This study was conducted at the Cagayan State University, Andrews Campus, Tuguegarao City where the respondents were the graduating students of the BS in Accounting Technology.

The respondents of this study were 111 BSAT graduating students for the School Year 2018-2019. Random sampling was used by the researcher in obtaining the results.

The data gathered were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted using the descriptive statistics like frequency counts, rank, percentage and weighted mean.

The weighted mean was interpreted using the following criterion scale:

Numerical Value	Mean Range	Descriptive Scale
5	4.20-5.00	fully equipped
4	3.40-4.19	almost equipped
3	2.60-3.39	partially equipped
2	1.80-2.59	slightly equipped
1	1.00-1.79	not equipped



To test any significant difference in the perceptions of the student-respondents on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to sex, t-test was used and ANOVA was used to treat the age of the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1.1

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Student-Respondents' Profile

Relative to Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
19	21	18.92
20	76	68.47
21	11	9.91
22	3	2.70
Total	111	100

Table 1.1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the student-respondents profile relative to age. As seen on the table the ages range from 19 to 22. Majority of the respondents with frequency of 76 or 68.47 percent are aged 20 years old. The least numbered, 3 or 2.70 percent are 22 years of age and still those who are 19 years old are 21 in number or 18.92 percent and there are 11 or 9.91 percent who are 21 years old. The mean age is 19.96 years and this implies that majority of the student – respondents are already at the age of majority.

Table 1.2

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Student-Respondents' Profile Relative to Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	34	30.63
Female	77	69.37
	111	100.00

Table 1.2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the student – respondents' profile relative to sex. As shown by the table, the female student – respondents out-



numbered the males with the frequencies of 77 and 34 or 69.37 and 30.63 percent respectively which implies that the Bachelor of Science in Accounting Technology program of CSU are female – dominated.

Table 2.1

Item Mean, Descriptive Value and Rank Distribution of the Student-Respondents' Perception with Regard to the Fundamental Skills for Employment Relative to Communicating

COMMUNICATING	Item Mean	Descriptive Value	Rank
1. Can read and understand information presented in a variety of forms	4.22	Fully Equipped	1
2. Can write and speak in a way that others pay attention and understand	4.15	Almost Equipped	2
3. Can listen and ask questions to understand and appreciate the points of view of others	4.12	Almost Equipped	4
4. Can share information using a range of information and communication technologies	4.13	Almost Equipped	3
5. Can use relevant scientific, technological and mathematical knowledge and skills to explain or clarify ideas	4.13	Almost Equipped	3
Category Mean	4.15	Almost Equipped	

Table 2.1 shows the item mean, descriptive value and rank distribution of the student respondents' perception with regard to the fundamental skills for employment relative to communicating. As seen on the table 1 out of 7 variables under communicating got a "fully equipped" descriptive value and the rest got "Almost equipped" descriptive value. As seen on the table, "Can read and understand information presented in a variety of forms" got the highest mean of 4.22 which shows that BSAT students are well trained in understanding information coming from various sources and presented even in various forms. "Can listen and ask questions to understand and appreciate the points of view of others" got the lowest mean of 4.12 or "Almost equipped" which means that BSAT students need more training and also exposure to various activities pertaining to listening and the right way of



questioning. The category mean of 4.15 or with a descriptive value of “almost equipped” implies that the BSAT students perceived that they are already almost equipped and prepared with the fundamental skills for employment relative to communicating.

Table 2.2

Item Mean, Descriptive Value and Rank Distribution of the Student-Respondents’ Perception

with Regard to the Fundamental Skills for Employment Relative to Managing Information

MANAGING INFORMATION	Item Mean	Descriptive Value	Rank
1. Can locate, gather and organize information using appropriate technology and information systems	4.18	Almost Equipped	1
2. Can access, analyze and apply knowledge and can explain or clarify ideal skills from various disciplines	4.14	Almost Equipped	2
Category Mean	4.16	Almost Equipped	

Table 2.2 shows the item mean, descriptive value and rank distribution of the student respondents’ perception with regard to the fundamental skills for employment relative to managing information. “Can locate, gather and organize information using appropriate technology and information systems’ got a mean of 4.18 and “Can access, analyze and apply knowledge and can explain or clarify ideal skills from various disciplines” got a mean of 4.14. Both variables got an “almost equipped” descriptive value. From the result, it can be seen that BSAT students somewhat possess the skills needed under the factor managing information as seen on its category mean of 4.16 which implies that in their tertiary education they were exposed to activities related to the proper way on managing information. With the said result, BSAT students perceived that they are already almost equipped and prepared with the fundamental skills for employment relative to managing information.



Table 2.3

Item Mean, Descriptive Value and Rank Distribution of the Student-Respondents' Perception with Regard to the Fundamental Skills for Employment Relative to Using Numbers

USING NUMBERS	Item Mean	Descriptive Value	Rank
1. Can decide what needs to be measured or calculated	4.12	Almost Equipped	2
2. Can observe and record data using appropriate methods, tools and technology	4.14	Almost Equipped	1
Category Mean	4.13	Almost Equipped	

Table 2.3 shows the item mean, descriptive value and rank distribution of the student respondents' perception with regard to the fundamental skills for employment relative to using numbers. The two variables got an "almost equipped" descriptive value. The category mean of 4.13 implies that BSAT students are almost equipped in using numbers since in their tertiary education they are exposed to numbers, analysis and decision making. The category mean of 4.15 or with a descriptive value of "almost equipped" implies that the BSAT students perceived that they are already almost equipped and prepared with the fundamental skills for employment relative to using numbers.



Table 2.4

Item Mean, Descriptive Value and Rank Distribution of the Student-Respondents' Perception with Regard to the Fundamental Skills for Employment Relative to Thinking and Problem Solving

THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING	Item Mean	Descriptive Value	Rank
1. Can assess situations and identify problems	4.14	Almost Equipped	1
2. Can seek different points of view and evaluate them based on facts	4.14	Almost Equipped	1
3. Can recognize the human, interpersonal, technical, scientific and mathematical dimensions of a problem	3.98	Almost Equipped	4
4. Can identify the root cause of a problem	3.96	Almost Equipped	5
5. Is creative and innovative in exploring possible solutions	3.94	Almost Equipped	7
6. Can readily use science, technology and mathematics as ways to think, gain and share knowledge, solve problems and make decisions	3.86	Almost Equipped	8
7. Can evaluate solutions to make recommendations or decisions	4.05	Almost Equipped	2
8. Can implement solutions	3.95	Almost Equipped	6
9. Can check to see if a solution works, and act on opportunities for improvement	4.01	Almost Equipped	3
Category Mean	4.00	Almost Equipped	

Table 2.4 shows the item mean, descriptive value and rank distribution of the student respondents' perception with regard to the fundamental skills for employment relative to thinking and problem solving. It shows further that the descriptive values were unanimously "Almost equipped" with the highest mean value of 4.14 on both "Can assess situations and



identify problems” and “Can seek different points of view and evaluate them based on facts.” This implies that the students are good in handling situations and identifying problems and that all situations and decisions that are given are based on the various information gathered. On the other hand, “Can readily use science, technology and mathematics as ways to think, gain and share knowledge, solve problems and make decisions” got the lowest mean of 3.86. All the different variables got an “Almost equipped” descriptive value. The category mean of 4.00 or with a descriptive value of “almost equipped” implies that the BSAT students perceived that they are already almost equipped and prepared with the fundamental skills for employment relative to thinking and problem solving.

Table 3.1

***Test for Significant Difference in the Perceptions of the Student-Respondents
on the Fundamental Skills for Employment when Grouped According to Age***

Factors	Mean Square		df	P-value	F	Interpretation
Communicating	Between groups	.067	3	.810	.321	Not significant
	Within groups	.209	107			
Managing Information	Between groups	.117	3	.747	.409	Not significant
	Within groups	.286	107			
Using Numbers	Between groups	.213	3	.668	.552	Not significant
	Within groups	.407	107			
Thinking and Problem Solving	Between groups	.350	3	.377	1.043	Not significant
	Within groups	.336	107			

Table 3.1 shows the results on the test of significant difference in the perceptions of the student - respondents on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to age. As seen from the table, the P value of communicating, managing information, using numbers and thinking and problem solving are .810, .747, .668 and .377 respectively which is evidently more than the significant level of 0.05, therefore it is suggested that the null hypothesis which states “There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the student – respondents on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to age” is accepted which implies that the student respondents does not significantly differ in their perceptions on the on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to



age. This therefore implies that the respondents who belong to the different age are unanimous in their perceptions on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to age.

Table 3.2

**Test for Significant Difference in the Perceptions of the Student-Respondents
on the Fundamental Skills for Employment when Grouped According to Sex**

Factors	Sex	Mean	SD	Df	P-value	t-value	Interpretation
Communicating	Male	4.21	.48614	109	.372	.897	Not significant
	Female	4.12	.43908				
Managing Information	Male	4.06	.62480	109	.194	1.308	Not significant
	Female	4.20	.48163				
Using Numbers	Male	4.06	.67155	109	.460	-.742	Not significant
	Female	4.16	.61910				
Thinking and Problem Solving	Male	3.99	.61464	109	.766	-.299	Not significant
	Female	4.02	.56759				

Table 3.2 shows the results on the test of significant difference in the perceptions of the student - respondents on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to sex. As seen from the table, the P value of communicating, managing information, using numbers and thinking and problem solving are .372, .194, .460 and .766 respectively which is obviously more than the significant level of 0.05, therefore it is suggested that the null hypothesis which states “There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the student – respondents on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to sex” is accepted which implies that the student respondents does not significantly differ in their perceptions on the on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to age. This therefore implies that the respondents who belong to the different age are unanimous in their perceptions on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to sex.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Profile of the Respondents in Terms of the following Variables:
 - 1.1 Age – Majority of the respondents, 76 or 68.47 percent are aged 20. The mean age is 19.96 years and this implies that majority of the student – respondents are already at the age of majority.
 - 1.2 Sex – The females outnumbered the males with the frequency of 77:34.
2. perception of the student-respondents with regard to the fundamental skills for employment relative to:
 - 2.1 Communicating - The category mean of 4.15 or with a descriptive value of “almost equipped” implies that the BSAT students perceived that they are already almost equipped and prepared with the fundamental skills for employment relative to communicating.
 - 2.2 Managing information - The category mean of 4.16 or with a descriptive value of “almost equipped” implies that the BSAT students perceived that they are already almost equipped and prepared with the fundamental skills for employment relative to managing information.
 - 2.3 Using numbers - The category mean of 4.13 or with a descriptive value of “almost equipped” implies that the BSAT students perceived that they are already almost equipped and prepared with the fundamental skills for employment relative to using numbers.
 - 2.4 Thinking and problem solving - The category mean of 4.00 or with a descriptive value of “almost equipped” implies that the BSAT students perceived that they are already almost equipped and prepared with the fundamental skills for employment relative to thinking and problem solving
3. Significant difference in the perceptions of the student-respondents on the fundamental skills needed for employment grouped according to:
 - 3.1 Age – The null hypothesis which states “There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the student – respondents on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to age” is accepted which implies that the



student respondents does not significantly differ in their perceptions on the on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to age.

3.2 Sex - The null hypothesis which states “There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the student – respondents on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to sex” is accepted which implies that the student respondents does not significantly differ in their perceptions on the on the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to sex.

CONCLUSION:

The research was conducted among the graduating students of the Bachelor of Science in Accounting Technology students of the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy with the aim of looking into the fundamental skills for employment and become competitive in the market. It was disclosed by the researcher that the factors used in the study is divided into four which is communicating, managing information, using number and thinking and problem solving..

In the factor communicating, “Can read and understand information presented in a variety of forms” got the highest mean of 4.22 and from among all the various factors this is the only variable that got a “Fully equipped” descriptive value. The category mean is 4.15 with a descriptive scale of “Almost equipped.” BSAT students somewhat possess the skills needed under the factor managing information as seen on its category mean of 4.16 which implies that in their tertiary education they were exposed to activities related to the proper way on managing information. In using numbers, the mean of 4.15 or with a descriptive value of “almost equipped” implies that the BSAT students perceived that they are already almost equipped and prepared with the fundamental skills needed for employment relative to using numbers. In the factor thinking and problem solving, “Can assess situations and identify problems” and “Can seek different points of view and evaluate them based on facts” both got an item mean of 4.14. The category mean is 4.00 with a descriptive value of “Almost equipped.” From the four factors presented, the factor on managing information



got the highest category mean of 4.16. Further, from the results generated it was unveiled that there is no significant difference on the perceptions of the student-respondents with regard to the fundamental skills for employment when grouped according to age and sex.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The respondents should maintain and improve on their almost equipped skills and should strive to become competent and competitive graduates.
2. Though the result shows that respondents are almost equipped in their fundamental skills, it is recommended that teachers should continuously motivate and teach their students with the necessary skills needed to compete in the corporate world.
3. The curriculum should be revisited and it should be updated as well as enriched to meet the changing demands of the industry.
4. Enhancement on instruction and curriculum should be targeted aiming for outstanding employability skills of students and graduates as outcome giving more importance on the fundamental skills.
5. The university should come up with a program which will focus on career awareness.
6. Teachers should teach and assist students to build employability portfolios that would provide a more precise image of the student's command of the traits and skills employers value most.
7. Employers should work together with schools to provide learning experiences that will promote students' development of employability skills.
8. The research should target more respondents and they should get sufficient sample with a longer time frame.
9. Additional studies should be conducted to identify other employability skills needed for future employment.

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