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## **Graduate Tracers Study of the Bachelor of Arts in Communication in Biliran Province State University**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Bachelor of Arts in Communications is one of the youngest programs in Biliran Province State University, the only state university in an island province of Biliran. This study assesses the graduates of the program from 2011 to 2017. This study used quantitative design using survey-questionnaire crafted by the Commission on Higher Education. Results show that most of the graduates of the program are employed in their jobs related to the communication field. Only 20 percent got unemployment mostly because of family concerns and some advanced in their studies. Improvement for the curriculum, lack of facilities and more hours during internships are some of the recommendations given by the graduates to improve the program.

Keywords: BA Communication, tracer study, graduates, communication

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### **Introduction**

Tracer study is a study used to trace the graduates of higher education. It seeks to assess the quality of graduates, employment status, competencies, and learning experiences. (Phi, 2011) According to Obando & Shisanya (2013), it is also an essential way of understanding the relevance and quality of programs offered by the universities as well as the labor market. Bachelor of Arts in Communications is one of the youngest programs of the university. The program begins in year 2007 and its first graduates produced in year 2011. This will be the first tracer study of the said program and there is no study yet conducted by the department to trace its graduates. This study assesses the graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in Communications in Biliran Province State University.

Education and training systems have a key role to play in ensuring that opportunities are provided for all individuals to develop their skills continually in a lifelong learning perspective, enabling them to adapt to rapidly changing labour market requirements and conditions. Tracer studies provide information that is valuable for all these actors; and this helps to inspire education, training and employment policies, curricula of education and training courses, guidance to help individuals decide on their education or training paths, and clearer judgements about (re)-skilling the labour force. (ETF, 2017) A tracer study enables the institution of higher education to get information on possible deficits in a given educational programme which can serve as a basis for curricular improvement. (Hazaymeh et al, 2014) This information may be used for further development of the institution in the context of quality assurance (Schomburg 2003).

Biliran Province State University is the only state university in the province of Biliran. The university aims to offer quality education and produce world-class graduates. It operates two (2) campuses- Main campus in Municipality of Naval (capital town) and its satellite campus in Municipality of Biliran. Over the years, it has produced thousands of competent graduates, many whom excelled in various fields such as education, engineering, IT, nursing and communications to name a few.

As part of College of Arts and Sciences, Bachelor of Arts in Communications stand out as the only communication and media-related degree program in the university. The program aims to produce professional graduates in different fields of print media and advertising, public relations, journalism, government service and non-government organizations. The competencies of the graduates of the program, the improvement of the curriculum, employment data and demographic profiles of the graduates from 2011 to 2017 will be determined in this study.

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## Objectives

The study aimed to trace graduates of Bachelor of Arts in Communications in Biliran Province State University. Specifically, the study aimed to know the following questions:

1. What are the profile of the respondents in terms of the following:
  - 1.1 sex;
  - 1.2 civil status;
  - 1.3 region of origin;
  - 1.4 province;
  - 1.5 location of residence;
2. What are the educational profile of the respondents in terms of the following:
  - 2.1 educational attainment;
  - 2.2 professional examination passed;
  - 2.3 reason/s for taking bachelor's degree;
  - 2.4 reason/s for advanced study;
  - 2.5 trainings attended after college;
3. What are the employment data of the respondent's status in terms of the following:
  - 3.1 employment;
    - 3.1.1 present employment status;
    - 3.1.2 present occupation;
    - 3.1.3 place of work;
  - 3.2 unemployment;
    - 3.2.1 reason/s for not being employed
4. What are the competencies learned in college that were found useful for the first job?
5. What is the employment of the respondents in terms of the following:
  - 5.1 relation of first job to communication/ allied field;
  - 5.2 length of time to land their first job after college;
  - 5.3 source of income before looking for a job;
  - 5.4 first job level position;
  - 5.5 way/s of finding the first job;
  - 5.6 source of recommendations;
  - 5.7 reason/s for accepting the job;
  - 5.8 respondents who already change their first job;
  - 5.9 reason/s for staying the job;
  - 5.10 reason/s for changing the first job;
  - 5.11 length of time stayed in the first job;
  - 5.12 initial monthly gross income;
  - 5.13 relevance of the curriculum to the first job;
6. What are the suggestions of the graduates to improve course curriculum?

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## Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the theory of evaluation and the teaching effectiveness model. Wolf and Gowin (1980) asserted that the standards for delivering the worth of a program are set by the program's intent. These intents or objectives are measured by its outcomes, establish the criteria for rendering judgement. Gronlund (1981) supports this theory when he stated that the main purpose of evaluation is to determine to what extent the instructional objectives are achieved by the students. Gines (1998) cited that evaluation is the systematic process involving collection and analysis of data in order to make decisions. Leveriza (1990) cited that evaluation is a management responsibility. It is a managerial responsibility designed to maximize the use of the organization's resources in the attainment of its planned goals.

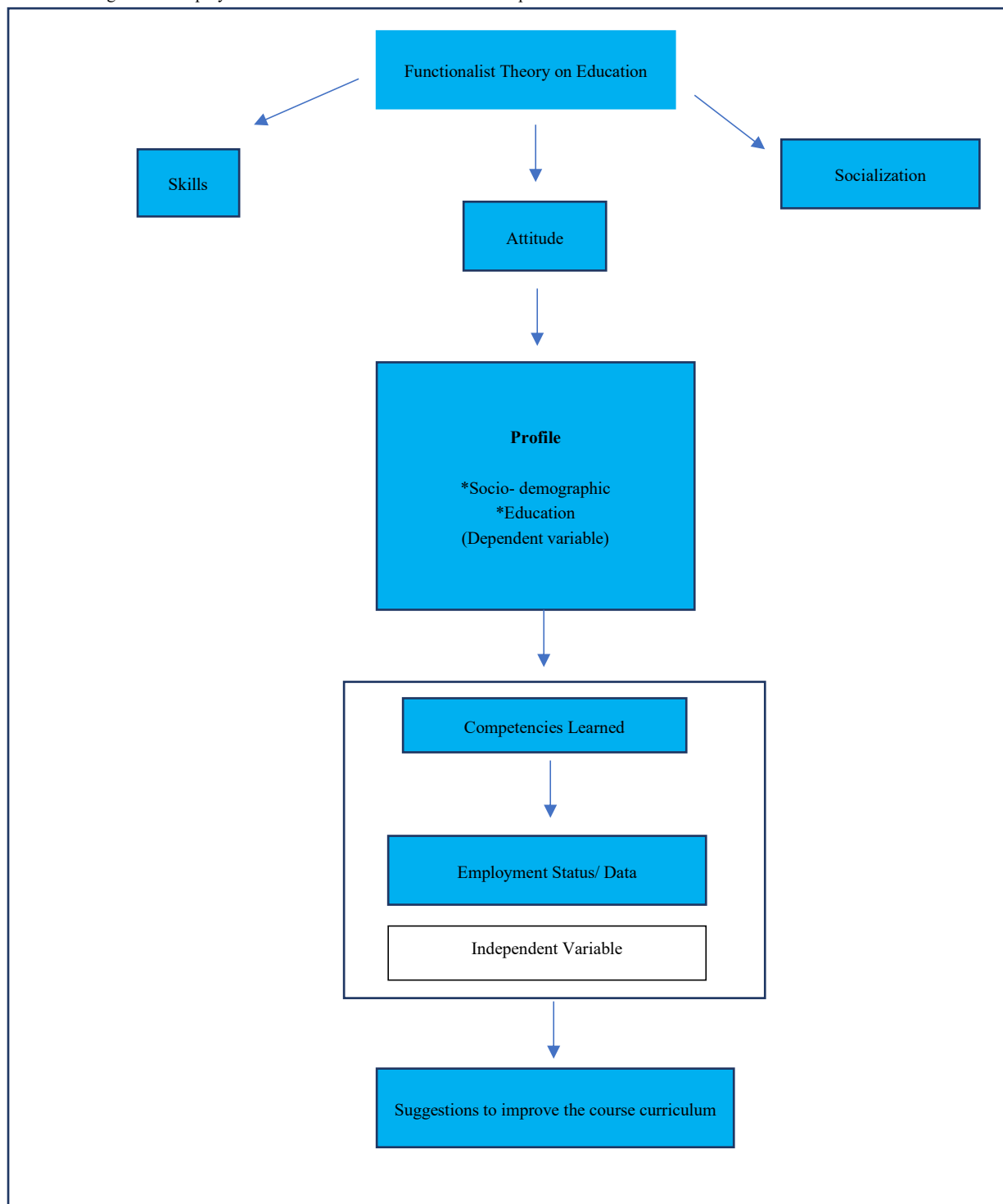
This study is also supported by the functionalist perspective, or also called functionalism. It is one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology. It is developed by Emile Durkheim in 1984.

The functionalist perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of society by focusing on how each part influences and is influenced by other parts. Functionalists use the terms functional and dysfunctional to describe the effects of social elements on society. Elements of society are functional if they contribute to social stability and dysfunctional if they disrupt social stability. Some aspects of society can be both functional and dysfunctional. (Mooney, Knox, and Schacht, 2007)

Within functionalist theory, the different parts of society are primarily composed of social institutions, each of which is designed to fill different needs, and each of which has particular consequences for the form and shape of society. The parts all depend on each other.

According to functionalist theory on education, skills, attitudes, and socialization are important aspects of school. The importance of achievement, competition, and equality of opportunity are attained through education. Education provides the students the necessary skills needed for the economy and it utilizes each individual to the most applicable jobs according to their talents and qualifications. Education for Emil Durkheim is forming community and cooperation through social solidarity. Schools provide cooperation, interaction, and standardized rules. Efforts and abilities of an individual is the basis for achievements and rewards. Meanwhile, Melvin Tumin, also cited by (Bryan, 2013), believed that rewards in the workplace make the jobs important.

The theory shows the role that education and school played in order to produce competent individuals that will help the job market to develop. This study showed how education and learning experiences in Biliran Province State University impacts the lives of the communication graduates according to their employment status and achievements in the workplace.



*Figure A. Conceptual Framework of the Study*

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**Methodology**

This chapter presents an overview on how the study was undertaken. It described the operational design which embraces all approaches and procedure in the conduct of this study. It includes research designs, locale, respondents, instrument, data gathering procedure and statistical treatment of data.

This study used quantitative research in nature and adopted a descriptive research design. The purpose of the study was to evaluate and determine the profile of the Biliran Province State University graduates in terms of their educational experiences, employment status, and professional success.

The respondents of the study are the Bachelor of Arts in Communications graduates of Naval State University since year 2011 to 2017. There were a total of 53 graduates of the program and used as the respondents. The researcher used the most readily group of people as respondents. There were 34 respondents responded to the request of the researcher.

This study used the survey- questionnaire as main tool in data gathering. The survey- questionnaire composes is from Commission on Higher Education (CHED format) on Graduate Tracer Survey. It has four parts: first, the demographic profile of the respondents; second, respondent's educational background; third, the trainings and seminars attended by the respondents; and lastly, the employments' data.

Biliran Province State University (formerly known as Naval State University) is the only state university that is located at the Municipality of Naval, Province of Biliran, Philippines. It is located at P.I. Garcia Street, Naval, Biliran.

The Bachelor of Arts in Communications is one of the youngest programs of the institution. It started in 2007 and produces its first graduates in 2011.

On-going improvements in the organization were sought from accredited evaluation bodies such as the Accrediting Agencies of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP) and ISO Certified. The department and the program were awarded with Level 2 status after submitting to an accreditation from AACCUP and ISO in the year 2016 and 2018 respectively.

At present, the department is committed to improve the program as facilities are continuously being improved to support the needs of the department that aims to provide good quality education.

Prior to data gathering, transmittal letters were sent to the Chairperson of the Communications Department, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Director of Research Services Office, and to the OIC University President. Upon the approval to conduct the study from respective authorities, the researcher requested the list of names, addresses and contact numbers of the graduates from the University Registrar. The administration of the questionnaire was done in two manners, namely: (1) the alumnus/ alumna was visited to their home or workplace, (2) the questionnaire was distributed through electronic mail and social media e.g. Facebook and Google Mail. Data was collected through a Graduate Tracer Survey Questionnaire adopted from Commission on Higher Education which was crafted in 2009. After the retrieval of the questionnaire, data analysis and interpretation then followed.

Filled in questionnaires was checked for completeness and consistency of the responses. Data from the questionnaires were then transferred to excel for tallying. Data were analyzed by running frequencies and checking for out of range responses. This was followed by a statistical analysis and presentation of findings.

Before data collection, consents from the research participants was secured. A letter to the respondents was attached as part of the questionnaire wherein details of the study are written such as purpose, condition and other information on confidentiality and also the names and contact number of the researcher.

## Results and Discussions

These are the following results of the study after the data were analyzed and interpreted in line with questions about the problem under investigation.

Table 1.

**Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Variables	f	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	9	26.47
Female	25	73.53
Total	34	100
<b>Civil Status</b>		
Single	26	76.47
Married	4	11.76
Single Parent	4	11.76
Total	34	100
<b>Region of Origin</b>		
Region VIII	34	100
Total	34	100
<b>Province</b>		
Biliran	27	79.41
Leyte	7	20.59
Total	34	100
<b>Location of Residence</b>		
City	11	32.35
Municipality	23	67.65
Total	34	100

### A. Demographic Profile

Results show that most of the graduates in Communications program are females with 73.53 percent while only 26.47 are men. Most of the graduates are still single and only 11.76 percent are both married and single parent respectively. It also shows that most of the graduates came from region 8 where the institution is located. Among the respondents, 79.41 percent came from the province of Biliran and 20.59 percent were from the Province of Leyte. Currently, 67.65 percent of them are resided in their local Municipality while 32.35 percent already lived in the city because of the nature of their work.

Table 2.

**Educational Background**

Variables	f	%
<b>Educational Attainment*</b>		
Baccalaureate Degree	34	100
Master's Degree	10	29.41
Total	34	100
<b>Professional Examination Passed</b>		
Kapisanan ng Brodkasters ng Pilipinas	1	2.94
Civil Service Commission	2	5.88
LET Board Examination	1	2.94
Real Estate Regulatory Agency	1	2.94
NAPOLCOM	1	2.94
Total	34	100
<b>Reason/s for Taking Bachelor's Degree*</b>		
High grades in the course	19	55.88

Good grades in High School	19	55.88
Influence of parents	8	23.53
Peer influence	8	23.53
Inspired by a role model	20	58.82
Strong passion for the profession	20	58.82
Prospect for immediate employment	19	55.88
Status or prestige of profession	10	29.41
Availability of course offering	19	55.88
Prospect for career advancement	9	26.47
Affordable for family	19	55.88
Prospect of attractive compensation	10	29.41
Opportunity for employment abroad	9	26.47
<b>Reason/s for Advance Study*</b>		
Promotion	10	29.41
Professional Development	16	47.06
Requirement of Employer	2	5.88
<b>Trainings Attended*</b>		
Arabic Language Course	1	2.94
Dutch Language Course	1	2.94
General Education courses	4	11.76
OBE Syllabi- Making	4	11.76
Gender Sensitive Training	4	11.76
Syllabus Course Plan	4	11.76
Statistical Package for Social Studies	1	2.94
Performance Review	1	2.94
Project Implementation	1	2.94
KC- NCDDP	2	5.88
InEight Document	2	5.88
ISO Orientation	2	5.88
5s & Records Management	1	2.94
Economics of Living & Planning	1	2.94
Personal Efficacy & Integrity	1	2.94
Corporate Image Enhancement	1	2.94
Safety Awareness	1	2.94
Customers Are Really Everything	1	2.94

**Legend** \*- Multiple Responses

## B. Educational Background

This is composed of the educational attainment of the graduates, reasons why they choose the program, trainings that they have in their work, and reasons why they advance for studies.

Results show that 29.41 percent of the graduates proceeded for their post-graduate studies. According to them, they study for their professional development with 47.06 percent over the two variables such as promotions with 29.41 percent and requirement of employer with 5.88 percent. Results also show that they have few of them who passed in the different professional examinations. Only 5.88 percent passed the Civil Service Examination while the others such as KBP, LET, NAPOLCOM and Real Estate only have 2.94 percent. Also, only few of them had trainings in their workplace. Results show that most of the training came in the academe and BPO. Four trainings got 11.46 percent all from the academe such as OBe syllabi-making, gender sensitive training and others. There are so many reasons why the graduates took this program, however, reasons of strong passion to profession and inspired by role model prevails with 58.82 percent.

Table 3.

**Employment Data**

Status	f	%
<b>Employment</b>		
Yes	27	79.41
No	7	20.59
Total	34	100
<b>Present Employment Status</b>		
Regular	16	59.26
Temporary	2	7.41
Contractual	9	33.33
Total	27	100
<b>Present Occupation</b>		
Instructor	5	18.52
Disc Jockey	1	3.70
Barangay Secretary	1	3.70
Internal Controls	1	3.70
Administrative Assistant	1	3.70
Resolution Specialist	1	3.70
Call Center Representative	10	37.04
ESL Teacher	1	3.70
Consultant	1	3.70
Police Office 1	1	3.70
Quality Assurance Specialists	1	3.70
Subject Matter Expert	1	3.70
Office Staff	2	7.41
Freelancer	1	3.70
Total	27	100
<b>Present Places of Work</b>		
Local	26	96.3
Abroad	1	3.70
Total	27	100
<b>Reason/s for Unemployment</b>		
Advance/ Further study	2	28.57
Family concern/ Decided not to find	5	71.43
Total	7	100

**Legend** \*- Multiple Responses**C. Employment Data**

This section composed on the data and analysis of the employment status of the graduates.

Results show that majority of the graduates' secure employment. There are 79.41 percent of the total respondents with 59.26 of them are currently regular, 33.33 percent are contractual, and 7.41 percent are with temporary status. Most of the graduates are call center representatives with 37.04 percent followed by instructors with 18.52 percent and office staff with 7.41 percent. The graduates are currently working in our country and only 3.7 percent work abroad.

Only 20.59 of the graduates are currently unemployed. Most of them have family concerns and had a hard time to find a job with 71.43 percent. Meanwhile, 28.57 percent advanced in their studies.

Table 4.

**Employment Data of the Respondents (Part II)**

Variables	f	%
<b>Relation of first job to Communication field</b>		
Yes	26	96.3
No	1	3.7
Total	27	100
<b>Length of time to land their first job</b>		
Less than a month	15	55.56
1 to 6 months	10	37.04
7 to 11 months	1	3.7
Days after graduation	1	3.7
Total	27	100
<b>Ways of Finding the First Job*</b>		
Response to an advertisement	9	33.33
As walk-in applicant	9	33.33
Recommended by someone	9	33.33
Information from friends	1	3.7
Direct hire	1	3.7
Online	1	3.7
Total	27	100
<b>First Job Level Position</b>		
Clerical	14	51.85
Professional	13	48.15
Total	27	100
<b>Current Job</b>		
Clerical	8	50
Professional	8	50
Total	16	100

**Legend** \*- Multiple Responses**D. Employment Data**

Results show that the first job of the graduates are related to the Communications field. It takes 96.3 percent with only 3.7 percent that is not related because the graduate pursued her dream as a policewoman. It also shows that this program has a lot of opportunities to take with. Results show that graduates of 55.56 percent landed their first job with less than a month after they graduated. Some of them took 7 - 11 months with 37.04 percent and even there is 3.7 percent got his job days after their graduation. The graduates also took a lot of ways in finding their first job. With 33.33 percent, they found their job in a response to an advertisement, walk-in applicant, and recommended by someone.

Almost 52 percent of the graduates are having clerical level position and 48 percent of them are in professional level. There are also 16 out of 27 graduates who have their first job changed and found their second job. Currently, both 50 percent of them are clerical and professional levels.



Table 5.

**Employment Data of the Respondents**

Variables	f	%
<b>Relevance of curriculum to first job</b>		
Yes	27	79.41
No	7	20.59
Total	34	100
<b>Length of Time to stay in first job</b>		
Less than a month	1	3.7
1 to 6 months	5	18.52
7 to 11 months	8	29.63
1 year to less than 2 years	6	22.22
2 years to less than 3 years	6	22.22
5 years and counting	1	3.7
Total	27	100
<b>Reasons for Changing Job*</b>		
Salaries & Benefits	15	55.56
Career Challenge	11	40.74
Related to Special Skills	12	44.44
Proximity to Residence	13	48.15
Career Shift	1	3.7
Total	27	100
<b>Respondents who already change first job</b>		
Yes	16	59.26
No	11	40.74
Total	27	100
<b>Initial Monthly Gross Income</b>		
Below 5,000	1	3.7
5,000 to less than 10,000	5	18.52
20,000 to less than 25,000	8	29.63
10,000 to less than 15,000	5	18.52
15,000 to less than 20,000	7	25.93
25,000 and above	1	3.7
Total	27	100

**Legend** \*- Multiple Responses**E. Employment Data**

Results show that graduates changed their first job because of salaries and benefits with 55.56 percent. The more salary and benefits that you could get to your company, the more you will get attracted to the work that you want to have. However, other factors also prevail. Based on results, 48.15 percent, 44.44 percent and 40.74 percent are proximity to residence, related to special skills, and career challenge respectively. A commanding 96.3 percent of the graduates said there is relevance of curriculum to their first job.

Results also revealed that 29.63 of the graduates stayed for 7 to 11 months in their first job while some stayed for 1 year to less than 2 years and 2 years to less than 3 year with both have 22.22 percent. A total of 59.26 percent already changed their first job, meanwhile 40.74 did not. Currently, 29.63 percent of the graduates have 20 thousand to less than 25 thousand pesos monthly gross income. Meanwhile, 25.93 % of the graduates got 15 thousand to less than 20 thousand. Based on the results, graduates have sufficient income to their applied job that could help sustain their everyday needs and expenses.

Table 6.

**Employment Data**

Status	f	%
<b>Competencies useful in job*</b>		
Communication skills	22	64. 71
Human Relation skills	15	44. 12
Entrepreneurial skills	12	35. 29
Problem- solving skills	19	55. 88
Critical thinking skills	15	44. 12
Total	34	100

**Legend** \*- Multiple Responses**F. Competencies**

This section reveals some competencies of the students that the program contributed to be useful in their job.

Results show that communication skill is the number one competencies that the program provides to its graduates with 64. 71 percent. Going to the second spot is the problem- solving skills with 55. 88 percent and both human relation skills and critical thinking skills are with 44. 12 percent.

Table 7.

**Employment Data**

Status	f	%
<b>Suggestion/s*</b>		
Six months internship	8	23. 53
Behavioral skills	1	2. 94
Compassionate with confidence	1	2. 94
Enhancement of Social Studies	1	2. 94
Computer Literacy	9	26. 47
Media Literacy	1	2. 94
Laboratories/ Facilities	16	47. 06
Information Drive	1	2.94
Better Agencies	1	2.94
Opportunities	4	11. 76
Total	34	100

**Legend** \*- Multiple Responses**G. Suggestions**

In the survey questionnaire, the researcher put a section where graduates could freely suggest some things that need improvement for the program. These are the following results to their suggestions:

Results show that most of the graduates saw the lack of laboratories and facilities of the program. Almost 50 percent of the graduates eyed this factor in order to enhance the delivery of knowledge to the teachers for their students. Another suggestion that is worth- taking is the computer literacy of the students with 26. 47 percent and lastly is having six months internship training for the graduates with 23. 53 percent.

**Conclusion**

Most of the graduates of Bachelor of Arts in Communications programs have already got their jobs. They also gained a lot of competencies coming from the said program. This study revealed that province of Biliran and Leyte are the two provinces are the first clients of the said program. They also have good income with their respective jobs. In other words, the curriculum of the program is beneficial to its stakeholders and the program provides clear opportunities for them.

However, there are also graduates who did not have their job. With this, this study highly recommends that the institution especially the external affairs office to reach the graduates and provide them list of opportunities that they will be taking to minimize unemployment. We need to also

support them in giving opportunities. It also highly recommended for the program to change the curriculum and give more time in internship for more exposure of the students in their on-the-job training. And above all, as suggested by the graduates, the program and the institution must provide laboratories and equipment for the program in order not just to attract students but to improve student's capabilities and give them good quality education that they deserve. This study also recommends to study the capability needs of the partner agencies, update this tracer study in the next upcoming years and others.

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