EFFECT OF CONTEXTUALIZED LEARNING MODULES ON THE JOB APPLICATION SKILLS OF JOB SEEKERS

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ABSTRACT: Employability is one of the strongest driving forces of an individual to strive for personal development and skills improvement continually. Among the job seekers of the municipality of Tuburan, on the island of Cebu, Philippines, 20 aspiring individuals were purposely chosen to undergo a training series using contextualized learning modules designed to respond to the required skills by identified prospective employers directly. Sets of pre-and post-tests were given before and after the conduct of the sessions to measure the effects of the designed modules on the job application skills of the respondents. After the training sessions, the respondents were asked to apply for jobs while being monitored by the team. The results demonstrated that using contextualized learning modules significantly enhanced respondents' abilities in terms of resume writing, interview preparation, and technical skills like using Microsoft Office and Google productivity tools, basic computer operations, and using the internet and managing emails. The researchers advise using the learning modules and maximizing their adaptability to the starting points of job seekers' knowledge.

Keywords: jobseekers, contextualized learning, job hunting, portfolio

1. INTRODUCTION

Employability is determined by an individual's knowledge, skills, and attitudes, how they use and present those assets to employers, and the context (e.g., personal circumstances and labor market climate) in which they seek work. In 2017, an India-based employment solutions firm Aspiring Minds conducted a study on the employability of Filipino college graduates. They assessed 60,000 fresh graduates from over 80 colleges based on four skill sets: cognitive, behavioral, language, and functional. The results showed that only one out of the three Filipino graduates (about 65 percent) are "employable" (Cheene Ann C. Aricheta et al., 2018). This study proves that not everyone, even those with bachelorette degrees, is equipped with the right skill sets, training, and experience for their target occupation. A two-sided equation shows the difficulty in gaining employment in the Philippines. The standards and competitions set in the labor force, such as the Alma Mater and the job experience level considered (why there is an internship part of a college curriculum), are evidence that not everyone can be qualified, degree-holder or otherwise. The On-the-job Training (OJT) programs required by the college curriculums can provide fresh graduates with the minimum job experience employers are looking for. A good track record of academic history and past task experiences on the required skill sets can boost an applicant's resume to attract the organization. Workers can attain real opportunities in various talents throughout their careers with sustainable employability. They also have the required conditions to contribute to society through employment while maintaining their health and welfare. A work environment that allows this and their mindset and ambition to take advantage of these changes is required for long-term employability (Hazelzet, Picco, Houkes, Bosma, & de Rijk, 2019).

Higher education institutions are under pressure to produce employable graduates who must contribute to sustainable economic growth and development. Universities and colleges are expected to present to the labor market graduates who are both work-ready and have attained employability, hence higher learning institutions' efforts to keep track of their graduates' employment. While graduate skills provisions offered by university faculties differ, they invariably affect graduates' employment readiness and skills outputs (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022). A study identifying the most predictive attributes among employability signals of undergraduate students conducted at the Technological

Institute of the Philippines discovered that mental alertness and manner of speaking were the first two dominant attributes in predicting students' employability (Casuat & Festijo, 2020). Thus, studies suggested that learning institutions revisit their curriculum and find out if these competencies were given considerable emphasis in instruction (Caingcoy, 2021).

Experiential learning is a process in which the learner develops information directly through activities that demand the learner to actively and critically reflect on the studied subject. Students in experiential learning programs gain knowledge, skills, and values through direct encounters outside of the classroom. Experiential learning programs, by definition, necessitate student participation and active learning, resulting in higher memory and the ability to use skills learned in the programs in future interactions. Experiential learning programs can help students succeed by teaching them essential skills for professional success, advising them on whether to go to graduate school or pursue a particular career route, increasing graduation rates, and enhancing job outcomes after graduation (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019). Experiential learning improves graduate employability by enhancing teamwork, communication and ICT skills, self-management, and problem-solving abilities (Tiessen, Grantham, & Cameron, 2018). Work-integrated learning programs that initiate experiential learning, such as practicum and internships, instigate improvements in undergraduate employability, help build students' confidence in their abilities, greater appreciation of employability skills, and introduce them to workplace customs.

2. Research Methods

Standard Operating Procedure

The main research questions that guide this quantitative study are as follows:

(1) What are the trainees' initial confidence in these job/application skills, namely communication and ICT?

(2) What will be the application skills of job seekers before and after their exposure to contextualized learning modules in terms of

    a.   Communication skills such as
1. Resume Making;
2. Application Letter Writing;
3. Speaking;

    b.   ICT skills include the following:
1. Microsoft Office;
2. Basic Computer Operation;
3. Using the internet;
4. Google Productivity Applications;
5. Managing Email Account

(3) Are there changes in the initial and final level of confidence of the trainees in the job application skills?

(4) What percentage of the trainees passed the hiring process of the actual job application in BPO?

To answer these questions, twenty job seekers were given a questionnaire developed by the researchers to gauge the initial confidence level of the respondents before implementing the designed intervention. Another set of questionnaires was also created to measure the respondents' proficiency level according to identified communications and ICT skills.

One Group Pretest-Posttest Design

The researchers conducted a One Group Pretest-Posttest Design in which they measured the results of the individuals both before and after the experiment. The participants are given the same assessments or tests. This the primary purpose of this design is to compare the results of the experimental tests.

Population and Sampling

The total respondents for this research were 20 job seekers from the different barangays in the Municipality of Tuburan. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents regardless of sex, age, educational qualification, degree program finished, gadget available, and work experience. The researchers have no preferences as long as the respondents have experienced job application rejection and are currently looking for a job. The beneficiaries were identified from Phase 1 of this extension program; 25% are Male, and 75% are Female, as seen in Table 1. They came from the different barangays in the Municipality of Tuburan such as Sandayong, Jagbuaya, Sumon, Cogon, Apalan, Daang Lungsod, Alegria, Mag-atubang, Kansi, Kabangkalan, and Poblacion areas. They completed their computer and internet operations training, Google Suite Productivity Application, and English Communications Training.

Age (years)	Male	Female	Total	Frequency
18-22		3	3	15%
23-27	2	6	8	40%
28-32	3	3	6	30%
33-39		2	2	10%
40-above		1	1	5%

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents in terms of Age and Sex

Table 1 shows that 40% of the respondents are between the age of 23-27. It further shows that the age range of the respondents is as young as 18-22 years old to as old as above 40 years old. This shows that the need for improvement in job application skills varies with age.

Alegria	1
Apalan	1
Barangay I (Pob.)	1
Barangay IV (Pob.)	2
Barangay VI (Pob.)	2
Barangay VII (Pob.)	1
Barangay VIII (Pob.)	2
Cogon	1
Daan Lungsod	2
Jagbuaya	1
Kabangkalan	1
Kansi	1
Mag-atubang	1
Sandayong	2
Sumon	1
Total	**20**

Table 2. Residence of the Respondents

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents within the municipality of Tuburan. It can be seen that the respondents came from both the central barangays as well as the remote barangays of the municipality, such as Sandayong and Kansi, supporting the assumption of the researchers that the learning capacity of the respondents using the designed training sessions is not dictated by the location of the respondent but more on the availability of equipment to be used in the sessions such as laptop, mobile phone, and internet access.

Educational Attainment		
College Graduate	13	65%
College level	6	30%
High School Graduate	1	5%
Total	**20**	**100%**

Table 3. Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Table 3 reveals the respondents' educational attainment. It is revealed that 65% of the respondents are college graduates, with 30% college level and 5% high school graduates. It is safe to say that all the respondents have gone through basic education and are, therefore ready for the design of the training sessions.

Previous Occupation		
Cashier	1	5%
J&T Sprinter	1	5%
Job Order	1	5%
Laboratory Assistant	1	5%
machine operator	1	5%
Private School Teacher	1	5%
Production Operator	1	5%
Promo Diser	1	5%
Saleslady	1	5%
N/A	11	55%
Total	**20**	**100%**

Table 4. Previous Occupations of the Respondents

Table 4 shows the previous job experience of the respondents before the training sessions. It was revealed that 55% of the respondents have no prior experience, whether or not relevant to their educational attainment. When asked, the most common response was that they were not confident enough that their skills were enough to get a job and get hired.

In casual conversations made during the sessions, the respondents expressed their gratitude to the volunteer trainers who helped them improve their skills, including preparing a resume, writing an application letter, preparing for an interview, and computer productivity skills; Microsoft Office, Basic Computer Operation, Using the Internet, Google Productivity Applications, and Managing Email Accounts.

Writing a Resume	Mean	Paired-Samples T-Test	Sig. (2-tailed)	Result	Decision
Pre-Test	2.6	-14.038	.000**	Very Significant	Reject Null
Post-Test	3.75				
Writing an Application Letter	**Mean**	**Paired-Samples T-Test**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Result**	**Decision**
Pre-Test	2.55	-11.000	.000**	Very Significant	Reject Null
Post-Test	3.65				
Interview	**Mean**	**Paired-Samples T-Test**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Result**	**Decision**
Pre-Test	1.95	-8.753	.000**	Very Significant	Reject Null
Post-Test	3.20				
Microsoft Office	**Mean**	**Paired-Samples T-Test**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Result**	**Decision**
Pre-Test	2.20	-12.337	.000**	Very Significant	Reject Null
Post-Test	3.55				
Basic Computer Operation	**Mean**	**Paired-Samples T-Test**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Result**	**Decision**
Pre-Test	2.70	-7.764	.000**	Very Significant	Reject Null
Post-Test	3.75				
Using the Internet	**Mean**	**Paired-Samples T-Test**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Result**	**Decision**
Pre-Test	3.05	-19.000	.000**	Very Significant	Reject Null
Post-Test	4.00				
Google Productivity Applications	**Mean**	**Paired-Samples T-Test**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Result**	**Decision**
Pre-Test	1.80	-12.457	.000**	Very Significant	Reject Null
Post-Test	3.20				
Managing Email Account	**Mean**	**Paired-Samples T-Test**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Result**	**Decision**
Pre-Test	2.00	-9.903	.000**	Very Significant	Reject Null
Post-Test	3.65				

Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000-.010 =	Significant @1% (Very significant)
	*.011-.050 =	Significant @5% (Significant)
	above. 050 =	Not Significant

Table 5. The difference in the job seekers' communication skills before and after their exposure to contextualized learning modules

Based on the results, it is strongly recommended that the training design be used for future training and be made as the basis for developing future training designs for community extension projects. Further, the researchers suggest that a web application is created to securely contain the training materials so that learners can review or have the option to take self-paced training sessions.

During the sessions, the male respondents made a common impression that they thought the training was more fitted for female participants but later on, towards the end of the sessions, they realized that the training sessions were designed to be appreciated by both males and females.

The questionnaire used for this quantitative study was adopted and modified from the original questionnaire designed by Gulbahar & Guven (2008), which is suitable for this research. A survey questionnaire with 19 items was used as the main instrument to analyze the training needs of the respondents. A total of 20 questionnaires were distributed. All respondents were asked to read the statements and choose their answers based on the Likert Scale Confidence level ranging from 1-Self Doubting, 2-Unconfident, 3-Neutral, 4-Slightly Confident, and 5-Confident. The questionnaires consisted of 3 sections. The first section is about the demographic background of the respondents. It consists of 11 items: Email Address, Fullname, Contact No., Age, Facebook Account, Home Address, Highest

Educational Attainment, Previous Occupation, Years/Months of experience, Productivity Gadget Owned, and Internet Service Provider. The other section of the questionnaire focuses more on the respondent's confidence level with the competencies stated. The last section of the questionnaire looks into which skills the respondent would likely improve. According to the title chosen, some of the items are designed and developed by the researchers so that the items developed can provide the answers needed for both research questions.

Data Collection Procedure

Training Preliminary
The researchers conducted a pretest about Communication and ICT skills before the training. The researchers identified the respondent's needs through the pretest.

Training Implementation
The training is divided into 12 sessions, including the Opening Program and Closing Program. The rest of the sessions include the Basics of Computer Operation, the use of Productivity Applications, and the Basics of Internet Operation.

Training Evaluation
After conducting the training, a post-test was performed. All the complete filled-up questionnaires were gathered and collected for further data analysis by the researcher to get the output and findings of the research. All the data collected from the respondents were gathered to be analyzed. The researchers used descriptive analysis to evaluate the frequency and percentage of the overall population in the demographic background to get an overview of the respondents' profiles. The pre-and post-test results were then compared to see whether the sessions helped the proficiency level of the respondents concerning the identified skills. Finally, the respondents were allowed to use their session outputs to apply for jobs of their choice. For this purpose, twenty participants were chosen from previously denied job applicants from different barangays in the Municipality of Tuburan.
Furthermore, the experimental results have also been compared with a common search engine, and an accuracy of 93% was achieved. The proposed research further produced pre-test and post-test to ensure the validity of the DRFLO approach. The proposed DRFLO System is a machine learning-based research effort that provides an efficient means for retrieving LOs while designing a course.
Frequency measures the number of occurrences of a particular value in a given data set. A percentage is calculated by dividing the frequency in the category by the total number of participants and multiplying it by 100. The median is a statistical measure that determines the middle value of a dataset listed in ascending order.
The pre-and post-training scores were then subjected to the Wilcoxon test to investigate any changes in the respondents' scores before and after the training sessions. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test is a non-parametric statistical hypothesis test that may be used to determine the location of a population from a sample of data or to compare the locations of two populations using two matched samples.

3. Results and Discussion

The following are the results and the analysis done from the data. The data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon test. Before the proper skills training, the researchers conducted profiling. The respondents were all job seekers in the Municipality of Tuburan. The researchers conducted a pre-assessment to identify their needed skills. With the pre-test result, the researchers created a training design. Proper training sessions followed it. The respondents completed the same instrument after the training sessions. The result of this study showed that the utilization of the contextualized learning modules have significantly improved the ability of the respondents in terms of writing a resume, preparing for an interview, as well as technical skills like Microsoft Office and Google productivity tools, basic computer operations as well as using the internet and managing emails. Hence the researchers recommend that the learning modules be used and its flexibility be maximized according to the baseline knowledge of job seekers.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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