
BLA Graduate Tracer Study: Examining the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Curriculum Efficiency through the Learner's Perspective

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Abstract

In today's competitive job market, educational institutions must evaluate the effectiveness of their programs in preparing graduates for successful employment. Graduate tracer studies gather valuable information on graduates' employment status and satisfaction with their education and training. These studies serve as a tool to evaluate the relevance and impact of the curriculum on students' career prospects and marketability in the workforce. The study explores the effectiveness of the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture program's curriculum in the Philippines, focusing on the perspectives of its graduates. It employed a learner-centered approach, gathering data directly from program alumni to understand their experiences, career trajectories, and perceptions of the program's strengths and weaknesses. The results of the study provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the program curriculum and the graduates' work experiences. According to the findings, a significant percentage of participants reported that their field of study correlated effectively with their current work, with skills such as computer application, planning and design, and architectural drawings being highlighted as valuable for career development. The study also revealed that landscape architectural design, planting design, softscape materials, and hardscape materials were identified as the most useful subjects by the participants. These findings indicate that the curriculum of the landscape architecture program aligns well with the needs and demands of the industry. Moreover, study acknowledges the importance of the learner's perspectives for continuous improvement in higher education, benefiting the academic institution and contributing to the ongoing development of the landscape architecture profession in the country.

Keywords: graduate tracer study, landscape architecture, learner's perspective, curriculum, program alignment

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I. Introduction

A. Background

The Landscape Architecture profession has existed in the Philippines for over half a century. The degree of Bachelor of Landscape Architecture started at UP Diliman, introduced by architect/landscape architect Idefonso P. Santos (National Artist for Architecture, 2016) in the early 1970s after his stint in the US. Because of the growing demand for landscape architects, IP Santos initiated the idea of offering a degree program for Landscape Architecture. The first university that offered the program was UP Diliman under the College of Architecture. Other universities soon offered the program: the University of San Carlos (USC) in 2003, Bulacan State University (BulSU) in 2007, and the University of San Agustin (USA) in 2013 (Galingan & Basman, 2016).

The program underwent four curriculum revisions from 1975 to 2018 to better align with industry demands. The last survey on the status of BLA graduates in the Philippines was conducted in 2016 when Galingan and Basman (2016) studied the career choices of UP Diliman BLA graduates from 1975 to 2011. Because of the need to conduct another graduate tracer study, it was necessary to include other BLA graduates from other universities that offer BLA (BulSU (public), USC, and USA (private)). Based on the records gathered from these different universities, the total population of BLA graduates from these four (4) universities was 994 over a span of 55 years. Table 1 shows the distribution of graduates by university.

Table 1. Number of BLA Graduates from 1975-2022

School	Year of Graduation	No. Graduates	No. of years offering the program
University of the Philippines	1975-2022	562	51
University of San Carlos	2008-2022	48	18

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Bulacan State University	2011-2022	327	15
University of San Agustin	2017-2022	10	9

This graduate tracer study targeted all Bachelor of Landscape Architecture graduates from four universities in the Philippines that offer BLA. It was conducted by the Environmental Landscapes and Studio Laboratory (ELSL) of the UP Diliman College of Architecture with the objective of assessing the efficiency of the BLA curriculum in producing competent and skilled landscape architecture graduates. To allow the researcher to illustrate the relationship between college experience and labor market outcomes and formulate courses of action for the higher education sector.

B. Research Objectives

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements, evolving job markets, and changing educational landscapes, the assessment of the outcomes and impacts of higher education programs is of paramount importance. Graduate tracer studies serve as invaluable tools to shed light on the effectiveness and relevance of educational institutions in preparing graduates for the challenges of the modern world. In an article published in Harvard Business Review (2019), the biggest challenges graduates face in entering the workforce is that young people of this generation are overwhelmed with the 'real world'. According to the article, the main reason for this struggle is not generational but cultural, specifically the significant transition between college and professional culture. As discussed in the article, cultural shift focuses on three dimensions: feedback (received from work performance), relationships (in a professional environment), and accountability (personal/professional responsibility). Another challenge is the changing of the learning and work environment because the modality has shifted from face-to-face to hybrid mode due to problems brought about by the recent pandemic. This study examines the BLA curriculum to determine whether these challenges are considered or if it is still in accordance with the needs of challenging times.

To gain a broader viewpoint from the graduates themselves on their engagement, quality of teaching, student support services and overall college experience, a study by Tutor et al. (2019) was considered in developing the following research objectives: (1) to evaluate the effectiveness of the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture program; (2) to better understand the skills that professional landscape architects look for when hiring graduates; (3) to ascertain the current employment status of the graduates and the work-related issues they are

facing; and (4) to identify mechanisms for strengthening alumni relations.

1. This study aims to answer the following questions:
 1. What is the status of landscape architecture graduates? (job title, employer, location, salary)
 2. What skills or knowledge are acquired during their education that have been the most valuable in their current jobs?
 3. What are the perceptions of landscape architecture graduates in the importance of the study provisions provided by the school and how satisfied they were with these provisions?
 4. What improvements or changes would they suggest in enhancing the quality of education and postgraduate support from the university?

II. Review of Related Literature

A. The role of conducting graduate tracer study in curriculum efficiency

The success of graduates is influenced by various factors, and one significant factor is the efficiency of the curriculum (Chen, 2017; Ba et al., 2018). The efficiency of the curriculum refers to its effectiveness in equipping students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attributes for successful employment (Balkar, 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2021). Curriculum efficiency is crucial as it ensures that the content of the curriculum remains current and in line with the demands of the job market (Ma'dan et al., 2020; Jardim & Silva, 2018). Curriculum studies play a vital role in assessing curriculum efficiency from a learner's perspective (Canizares, 2015). Tracer studies enable learners to reflect on the outcomes of their education and training, providing them with an opportunity to evaluate whether they have acquired the necessary skills to thrive in the workforce (Cuadra et al., 2019). They provide graduates with an avenue to identify any gaps or deficiencies in the curriculum that may have hindered their transition into the workforce. This feedback from graduates is invaluable for educational institutions as it allows them to make necessary adjustments and improvements to their curriculum to better meet the needs of future learners and increase the employability of their graduates. Furthermore, tracer studies not only assess curriculum efficiency but also contribute to the overall improvement of educational institutions (Mubuuke et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2020). Using tracer studies, institutions can evaluate and assess the current and future career prospects of their graduates (Setiawan et al., 2021; Romadlon & Arifin, 2021).

This information is essential for institutions to align their curriculum with industry demands and ensure that their graduates are equipped with the necessary

skills and attributes for successful employment (Jam et al., 2022; Ma'dan et al., 2020). Tracer studies also serve as a means of maintaining curriculum relevance and providing targeted benefits to graduates (Neset et al., 2020) (Grabowsky & Weisbrod, 2020). By tracking the career paths and employment outcomes of graduates, tracer studies provide valuable information on the relevance of the curriculum (Romadlon & Arifin, 2021) (Senekal & Munro, 2019). They also allow institutions to gather quantitative data on the productivity and employability of their graduates (Penera et al., 2021; Lopes et al., 2019). Data gathered can be used to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing students for the workforce and identify areas of improvement (Vaitsis et al., 2014).

Through tracer studies, institutions can determine the duration of graduates' work search and their job positions in the industry (Samsudin & Lubis, 2022). Moreover, they enable institutions to evaluate the horizontal and vertical alignment of learning outcomes with job requirements. In addition, graduate tracer studies can also contribute to higher education quality assurance (Romadlon & Arifin, 2021). By gathering data on graduate employment status and the relevance of the curriculum, tracer studies provide evidence for the effectiveness of educational institutions in fulfilling their vision, mission, and objectives (Kalinga State University, 2021; Nevhudoli & Netshandama, 2023). In conclusion, tracer studies are an essential tool for evaluating curriculum efficiency from the perspective of learners (Mumghamba, 2013). These studies provide valuable feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing graduates for employment (Hardin-Ramanan et al., 2020). Tracer studies offer insights into the career trajectories, job positions, and work search duration of graduates. By tracking the employment outcomes of graduates, tracer studies enable institutions to identify areas of improvement in their curriculum and align them with industry demands.

B. Understanding the Learner's Perspective

To ensure the effectiveness and relevance of a curriculum, it is crucial to understand the perspective of the learners themselves (Rider et al., 2023). Learners are the ones directly impacted by the curriculum and its effectiveness in preparing them for employment (Piedrahita & Sucerquia, 2020). Tracer studies provide valuable insights into the experiences and outcomes of graduates, allowing institutions to assess the extent to which their curriculum meets the needs and expectations of the learners. By tracking the career paths and employment outcomes of graduates, institutions can gather data on factors such as job satisfaction, salary levels, and career progression (Jeffery & Taylor,

2022). This enables institutions to understand the success and impact of their curriculum in the real-world job market. By analyzing the data from tracer studies, institutions can identify any gaps or areas for improvement in the curriculum and make necessary adjustments to better meet the needs of the learners.

The learner-centric approach ensures that the curriculum is continuously refined to enhance the marketability and employability of graduates (Mtebe et al., 2020; Habiburrahim, 2021). By conducting graduate tracer studies, institutions can assess the effectiveness of their curriculum in equipping learners with the necessary knowledge and skills for successful employment. Furthermore, tracer studies provide valuable data on the relevance of educational qualifications to work skills required in the job market.

This information is vital for institutions to evaluate the alignment between the curriculum and the demands of the labor market, thus ensuring that graduates are equipped with the relevant skills and competencies needed for their chosen careers. By using tracer studies to evaluate curriculum efficiency based on the learners' perspective, institutions can make data-driven decisions and improvements to enhance the educational experience and outcomes for their graduates (Okoye et al., 2020). Graduate tracer studies are essential for evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of a curriculum in preparing graduates for employment (Senekal & Munro, 2019) (Deblois, 2021).

III. Methods for Conducting a Graduate Tracer Study

Participants were asked to answer an online survey questionnaire using Google Forms through a snowball sampling technique, which allowed for a diverse representation of graduates from different backgrounds and experiences. This approach helped to capture a wide range of perspectives and ensure the richness and depth of the data collected. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher and presented in a faculty workshop for polishing. The methodology used in the graduate tracer study involved a mixed-methods approach that combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

A survey questionnaire was then administered to gather quantitative data on graduates' employment status, job satisfaction, salary levels, and career progression. Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured survey questionnaires. BLA graduates were identified using the alumni database and contact information from the four universities that offered the program. Participants were invited to answer an online survey that ran for one month. The survey form is divided into six parts: Personal Information on Educational Attainment and Future

Plans, Retrospective Assessment of Study at Your University, Post-Graduation Assessment, Current Employment and Work, Job Requirements and Use of Qualifications, and Concluding Comments. A total of 165 BLA graduates answered the survey form, resulting in a confidence level of the sample size of 93 percent, with a 7 percent margin of error. Based on the population per university, the sample size margin of error for UP was 12 percent, BuLSU was 8.6 percent, USC was 48 percent, and USA was 50 percent. Two universities, USC and the USA, were not able to reach an acceptable sample size.

The data analysis process included both descriptive statistical analysis for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative data (Indra et al., 2022). The integration of both types of data allowed for a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns and trends, while the qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed to extract key themes and patterns.

IV. Results and Discussion

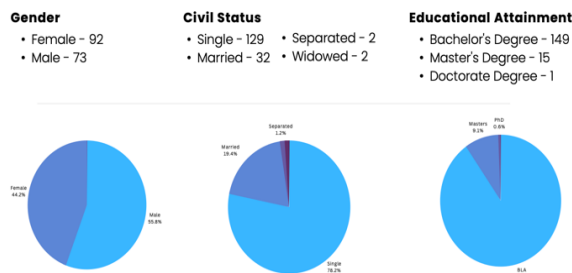
A. Overview of Respondents

Of the total population of 980 BLA graduates from 1975 to 2022, only 165 participated in the survey. Most participants who answered the survey were graduates from 2009 to 2022 under the 2012 BLA curriculum. 72.12 percent of the respondents are 22-30 years old. Most participants have just starting their careers. Almost 13.9 percent were 31-40 years old, 9.7 percent are 41-55 years old, and approximately 4 percent are above 56 years old. Almost 78.2 percent of graduates are single, and around 19 percent of graduates are married, while 2.4 percent are widow/separated. The participants are 55.8 percent female and 44.2 percent male.

All participants were graduates of the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from four universities: UP, BuLSU, USC, and USA. 9.1 percent of graduates have a master's degree, 7.1 percent are currently pursuing it, and less than 1 percent have a doctoral degree. Masters in Tropical Landscape Architecture is the most common degree program they are taking at UP Diliman (59.3 percent) and a Master's in Urban and Regional Planning (11.1 percent). Meanwhile, 14.8 percent of the participants took their master's degree abroad and 14.8 percent in other universities in the country. 62 percent of the graduates were enrolled under the 2012 BLA curriculum. The percentage of respondents to the overall population of graduates yielded 17 percent, and a confidence level of 93 percent.

Figure 1. Graduate's Demographics

Demographics

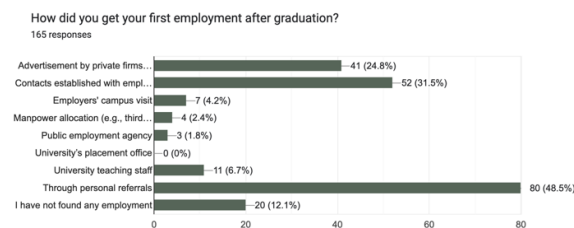


B. Employment Outcomes

1. Employment Status

The results of the survey show that 44.2 percent of BLA graduates seek their first employment 1-3 months before graduation; however, 41.25 percent have searched for employment 1-6 months after graduation before landing their first job. 48.5 percent of graduates relied on personal referral contacts to obtain their first employment. Meanwhile, 31.5 percent depended on contact established with employers through work experience in their course study. Some 24.8 percent looked for advertisements posted by private firms and offices to search for their first job after graduation. Very few graduates used career offices, job fairs, and government and commercial agencies to search for employment.

Table 2. How Graduates Get Their First Job

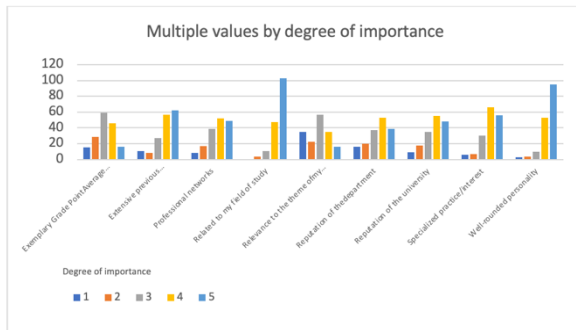


Factors related to graduates' employment and degrees of importance were assessed. These factors were Exemplary Grade Point Average (GPA) at graduation, extensive previous work experience, professional networks related to my field of study, relevance to the theme of my thesis/projects (if applicable), reputation of the department, reputation of the university, specialized practice/interest, and well-rounded personality. Using an Excel data analysis tool, the results showed that employability should be related to one's field of study, and a well-rounded personality is significant for getting a job. The degree of importance of extensive work experience, professional networks, and specialized practice/interest were highly correlated. Studies show that if a high percentage of graduates are employed in their field of study and

are satisfied with their jobs, this suggests that the institution or program has effectively prepared its graduates for their careers (Aydinan, 2019). Upon their employment, most of the graduates received initial training (57.6 percent), while others (24.8 percent) had no initial training from employers and 17.6 percent answered not applicable.

Specialized practices/interests appear to be highly determined by factors related to the field of study. Professional networks appear to be highly correlated with extensive work experience and department reputations. The reputation of the university was noticeably higher than that of its field of study. These data indicate that professional networks and department reputations are highly correlated.

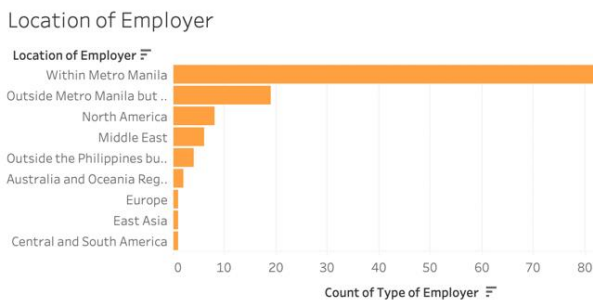
Table 3. Factors related to graduates' employment and their degree of importance



2. Job Types and Industries

Most participants (75.8 percent) were currently employed; 13.9 percent were unemployed but sought employment; and 10.3 percent had never been employed, most of whom were new graduates. Graduates were mostly located in Metro Manila (44.8 percent) and outside of Metro Manila (48.8 percent). Others were employed and were located in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, North America, Australia, and Europe (6.4 percent). More than half of the female graduates were located outside the metro.

Table 4. Location of employers



The top five industries where most of the graduates landed employment are landscape architectural firms, design outsourcing, architectural and multidisciplinary firms, design and build offices, and academic institutions. A small number of graduates work in government agencies, private organizations, non-government organizations, real estate developers, media and publishing companies, research institutions, freelancing, and other non-LA-related fields. Years of employment vary from less than one year to more than three years, depending on the type of employer. Landscape architecture firms, academe, design and build, and outsourcing companies (overseas based) are offices in which most graduates stay longer. These industries provide competitive compensation, with salaries ranging from 22,000 to 200,000 pesos.

Table 5. Type of Employers

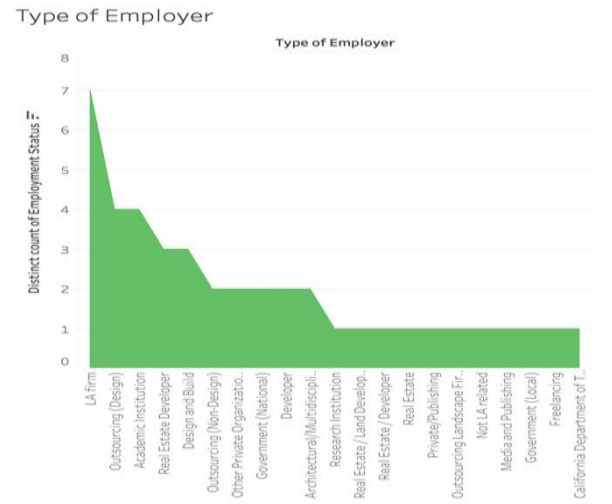


Table 6. Type of Employers, Years of Stay, Salary Range

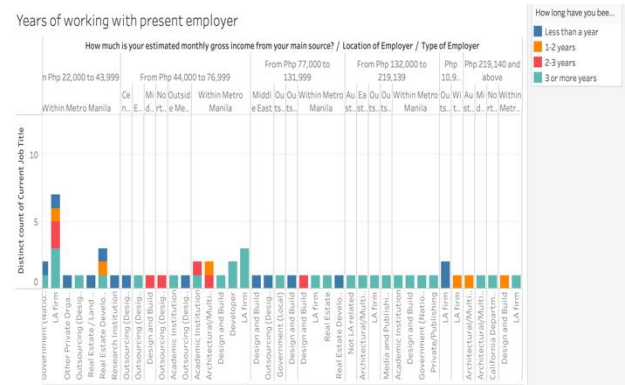


Table 7. Expected Income

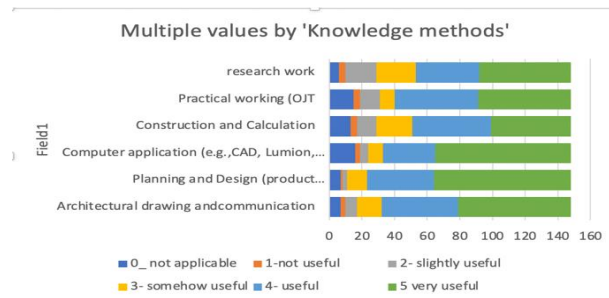
Income, Employer's Location and Location of graduate		Location of the Graduate							
How much is your estimate..	Location of Employer	Null	Australia and Ocea..	Europe	Middle East	North America	Outside Metro M..	Outside the Philli..	Within Metro M..
Null	Null								
Php 10,999 and below	Outside Metro Manila but within the Phil.								
	Within Metro Manila								
From Php 11,000 to 21,999	North America								
	Outside Metro Manila but within the Phil.								
	Within Metro Manila								
From Php 22,000 to 43,999	Middle East								
	North America								
	Outside Metro Manila but within the Phil.								
	Outside the Philippines but within Sout..								
	Within Metro Manila								
From Php 44,000 to 76,999	Central and South America								
	Europe								
	Middle East								
	North America								
	Outside Metro Manila but within the Phil.								
	Within Metro Manila								
From Php 77,000 to 131,999	Middle East								
	Outside Metro Manila but within the Phil.								
	Outside the Philippines but within Sout..								
	Within Metro Manila								
From Php 132,000 to 219,139	Australia and Oceania Region								
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	Outside the Philippines but within Sout..								
	Within Metro Manila								
Php 219,140 and above	Australia and Oceania Region								
	Middle East								
	North America								
	Within Metro Manila								

C. Study Competencies and Their Application and Relevance to Work

Graduates were asked to assess their competencies in the study program and their usefulness at work. Each competency must be selected on a 5-point scale ranging from "0 - Not applicable" to "5 - Very useful." These are: 1) Knowledge of Methods, 2) Knowledge of Non-technical Areas, 3) Scientific and Technical Knowledge, 4) Landscape Architecture, and 5) Soft Skills. Rating the skills and competencies students learn in a university can be a valuable exercise for both students and educators. It helps students reflect on their learning and provides feedback to universities for program improvement.

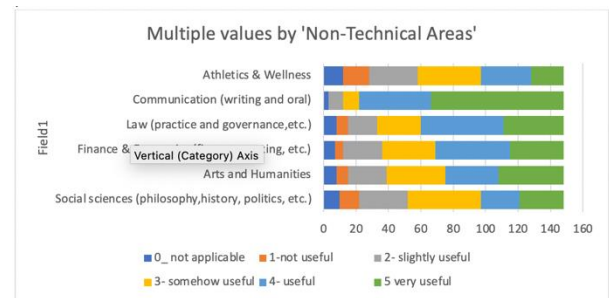
Each competency/skill was further categorized in detail. For the knowledge methods, graduates rated their skills and knowledge methods on the following items: Architectural drawing and communication, Planning and Design (product and process-oriented), computer application (for example, CAD, Lumion, SketchUp, Photoshop, etc.), Construction and Calculation, Practical working (OJT), and Research work. Computer application, Planning, and Design were the most useful skills for graduates, followed by architectural drawing and communication. Planning and design appear to be highly related to research and practical work (OJT). Planning and Design are highly correlated with research work, practical work, construction, and calculation. Architectural drawing and computer application appear to be highly correlated too.

Table 8. Knowledge competencies



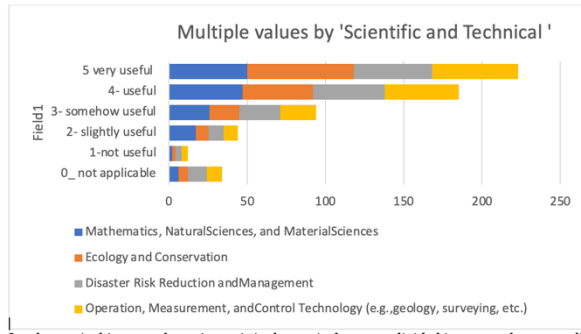
Non-technical areas of knowledge are non-technical (GE) subjects such as social sciences (philosophy, history, politics, etc.), Arts & Humanities, Finance & Economics (finances, costing, etc.), law (practice and governance, etc.), communication (writing and oral), and Athletics & Wellness. The results showed that communication skills, whether oral or written, were very useful in their jobs. Finance, economics, and law are also useful. Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, and Athletics and Wellness were rated as useful in their work. Law, finance, and economics appear to be highly determined through communication (both oral and written).

Table 9. Non-technical competencies



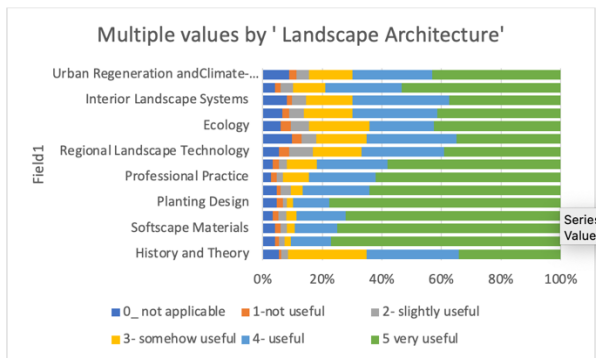
In the Scientific and Technical Knowledge areas, subjects are Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Material Sciences; Ecology and Conservation; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; and Operation, Measurement, and Control Technology (e.g., geology, surveying, etc.). These knowledge skills are useful, based on the data results. Ecology and conservation, Operation, Measurement and Control technology, and DRRM appear to be highly correlated.

Table 10. Scientific and Technical Competencies



Landscape Architecture, the major course in the curriculum, was divided into several courses offered at the university. These courses included history and theory, landscape architecture design, scape materials, scape construction materials, planting design, site grading and landscape design, professional practice utilities, regional landscape technology, landscape geography and information science, ecology, landscape ethics and public policy, interior landscape systems, landscape maintenance, urban regeneration, and climate-responsive design. Among graduates, 67 percent answered that the most useful subjects were landscape architectural design, planting design, softscape materials, and hardscape materials. Most of the subjects were highly correlated, such as interior landscapes and landscape maintenance.

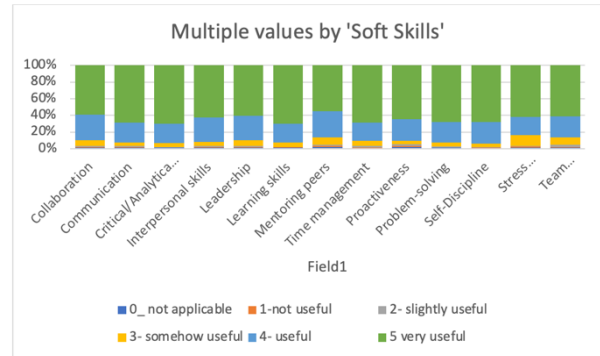
Table 11. Landscape Architecture Competencies



Soft skills are essential for graduates as they play a crucial role in career success and personal development. The key soft skills that graduates should possess are Collaboration, Communication, Critical/Analytical Thinking, Interpersonal Skills, Leadership, Learning Skills, Mentoring peers, time management, proactive problem-solving, self-discipline, stress management, and team management. The survey results show that all the aforementioned soft skills are very useful for graduates in career development. The data revealed that collaboration is highly correlated with learning skills, Proactiveness, Problem-solving, and Self-discipline based on the analysis. However, the importance of these skills may vary depending on the specific field or the industry graduates enter;

however, having a strong foundation in these soft skills will generally benefit their personal and professional growth.

Table 12. Soft skills



Moreover, the survey also wanted to determine the extent to which the following attributes were expected from them in their current job: Their answers were ranked from “1- not expected to 5- highly expected.” When seeking employment, graduates must possess attributes that make them attractive to potential employers. According to the survey, the following attributes were expected: willingness to learn, willingness to perform or commit, ability to express oneself, ability to solve problems, ability to accept constructive criticism, ability to maintain a positive outlook, leadership skills, organizational skills, and being a team player. All these attributes are highly expected from students after their graduation from the BLA. Willingness to perform and commit top the list of attributes. It is important for graduates to display these attributes through their resumes, cover letters, interviews, and professional interactions, to create a strong impression of potential employers. Tailoring these attributes to a specific job or industry can also be beneficial.

Regarding the relationship between the study program and their work, 63.5 percent of the participants gave a higher score on the extent of their field of study to their current work. In terms of current work tasks, 50 percent said that they used the knowledge and skills acquired during the course of their studies. Moreover, 54 percent of the respondents believed that their position and status were relevant to their educational level.

D. Learner's Perspective of the Study Program

The survey asked about graduates' perceptions of the importance of the study provisions and conditions during their stay at the university. These provisions and conditions were categorized into three areas: campus facilities and administration, curricula and instructions, and student college experience and engagements. This section required participants to rate the study provisions and

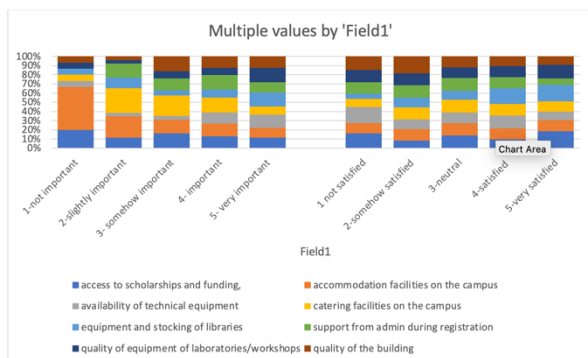
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conditions that they experienced as a student on a 5-point scale basis from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The satisfaction rates for these provisions and conditions were also gathered. Each of the applicable options was rated on a 5-point scale, with 1 as "Not Satisfied" and 5 as "Very Satisfied."

The under-campus facilities and administrations, questions such as access to scholarships and funding, access to support to health and wellness facilities (e.g., psych services and sports facilities), availability of technical equipment (e.g., computer, measuring instruments), accommodation facilities on the campus, catering facilities on the campus, equipment, and stocking of libraries, support from admin during registration, quality of equipment of laboratories/workshops, and quality of the building. The results confirmed that most of the areas mentioned regarding school facilities and admin were perceived as important provisions in students' studies, except for school catering facilities. This may be due to the existence of other food facilities found within or near the campus. In terms of how satisfied they were with the provisions, dissatisfaction with the availability of technical equipment and quality of the building received equally unsatisfactory ratings. Satisfaction with access to scholarship and funding varied from neutral to satisfactory. Equipment and library stockings received a satisfaction rate of 41 percent.

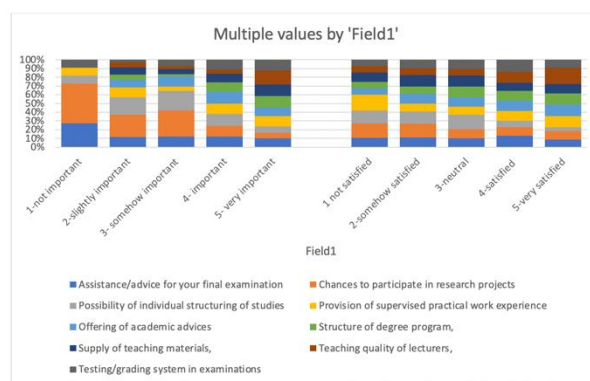
Table 13. Perceived importance and satisfaction for campus facilities and administration



The sections that discussed the curricula and instruction were divided into the following aspects: assistance/advice for your final examination, opportunities to participate in research projects, possibility of individual structuring of studies, provision of supervised practical work experience, offering of academic advice, structure of degree program, supply of teaching materials, teaching quality of lecturers, and testing/grading system in examinations. The data show that the curricula and instructions are important. The teaching quality of lecturers received 81 percent very important ratings, followed by the supply of teaching materials, the structure of the degree program, and the testing/grading system in examination, which are

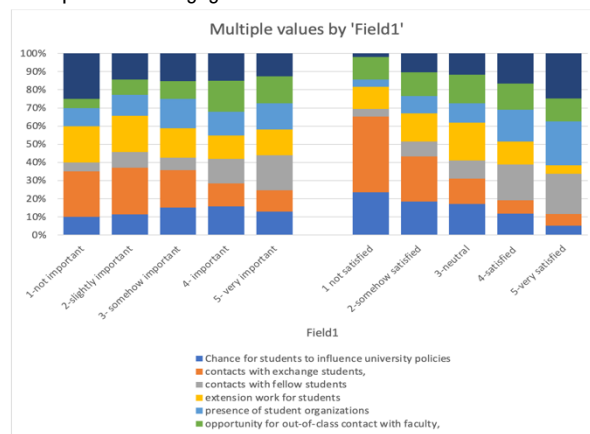
all equally important provisions. In terms of satisfaction ratings, the teaching quality of lecturers and teaching materials received high satisfaction ratings, and 43 percent of the participants were satisfied. Ten percent of the participants believed that they were cut short on provision for supervised practical work experience and opportunities to participate in research projects.

Table 14. Perceived Importance and Satisfaction for Curricula and Instructions



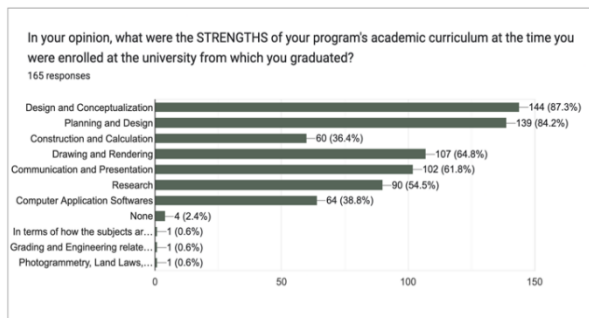
Students' participation and engagement discussed the following provisions: opportunity for students to influence university policies, contact with exchange students, contact with fellow students, extension work for students, presence of student organizations, opportunity for out-of-class contact with faculty, and opportunity to participate in student organizations. Participants rated extension work for students, the opportunity for students to influence university policies, contact with fellow students, and the opportunity for out-of-class contact with faculty as "very important." These types of activities allow students to be in the loop after graduation, which is important for expanding their networks and building post-graduation relationships. These results also showed a high correlation with satisfaction ratings. The presence of a student organization also received a very high satisfaction value.

Table 15. Perceived Importance and Satisfaction for Student Participation and Engagement



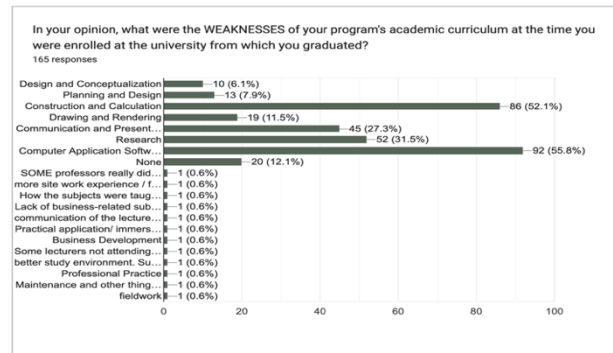
The learner's perspective plays a crucial role in providing feedback to educational institutions about the outcomes of their programs. It will enable institutions to identify areas for improvement in terms of curriculum and skills development. Graduates were asked to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the study program based on their perspectives and experiences. The choices of strengths and weaknesses for the program's academic curriculum at the time they were enrolled in the university from which they graduated were as follows: design and conceptualization, planning and design, construction and calculation, drawing and rendering, communication and presentation, research, and computer application software. Most of the graduates from the four universities answered that design and conceptualization, together with planning and design, are the greatest strengths of the program. This was followed by drawing, rendering, communication, presentation, and research. One mentioned that, in terms of how the subjects are taught, students' capability in critical thinking and the overall UP culture of "para-paraan" and "kanya-kanyang kayod" is a strength.

Table 16. Strengths of the Program's Academic Curriculum



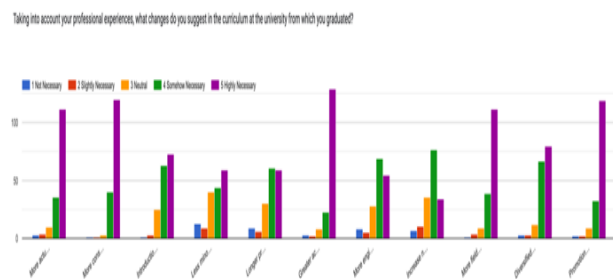
The areas they believed to be the weaknesses of their programs were construction, calculation, and computer application software. Others commented that these are the weaknesses of the program during their stay at the university that need to be addressed, a better study environment and support from the admin, how the subjects were taught, and the lack of other auxiliary subjects, such as ecology, botany, horticulture, basic statistics, basic business management, and more time for OJT. There were also some concerns regarding professors who did not teach much but expected the students to be able to grasp 100 percent of the concepts they were teaching, which resulted in many remaining behind during the course. Also, the lecturer's way of communication is to explain why students need to learn what they are teaching and their relationship to the work.

Table 17. Weaknesses of the Program's Academic Curriculum



Furthermore, changes were suggested in the university curriculum from which they graduated, which they considered necessary. Using a 5-point scale, 1 = "Not Necessary" and 5 as "Highly Necessary" in rating these changes. Receiving a highly necessary rating includes more actual design projects, more construction classes, greater access to design software, more fieldwork exposure and community engagement, and promotion of native plants and planting systems to become more abreast with the demands of the growing industry. They also pointed out that introducing business-related core subjects, more engineering courses, diversified specialization, and increasing the number of research writing activities are necessary to further enhance their knowledge and skills and become more competent designers. Taking fewer minor or GE courses received neutral ratings.

Table 18. Necessary Changes in the Curriculum



V. Conclusion and Recommendation

Curriculum improvement from the learner's perspective is a crucial aspect of education. It acknowledges that students are at the center of the educational process and that their needs, interests, and feedback should be considered when designing and revising curricula (Rider et al., 2023). The findings of this study can serve as a basis for discussions on curriculum improvement from a learner's perspective.

The study was able to determine the current status of landscape architecture graduates, specifically regarding their employment status. 75.8 percent of

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the participants are currently employed, while most of them (48.8) are based outside Metro Manila. The main industries of employment included landscape design outsourcing, architectural and multidisciplinary firms, design and build offices, and academic institutions. Varying years of employment were also linked to the type of employer. It is noted that the study was not able to gather more than 50 percent of the population of graduates, which may be attributed to the sampling (snowball) method used. However, an overall confidence level of 93 percent was reached which indicates that 93 percent of the times a confidence interval is calculated will contain the true value of the parameter.

Regarding the relationship between the study program and their work, 63.5 percent of the participants reported a higher score on the extent of their field of study to their current work. Fifty percent of the participants reported that their position and status are relevant to their educational level. Useful skills included computer application, planning and design, architectural drawings, and communication. The study also found that the soft skills mentioned earlier are very useful for career development. 67 percent of the participants also declared that the most useful subjects were landscape architectural design, planting design, softscape materials, and hardscape materials. With these results, it is safe to say that the BLA curriculum prepares graduates for the modern challenges they face in entering the professional environment.

On the perceptions of the participants on study provisions, the study found an overall satisfactory response with the provisions in all areas. Moreover, most participants declared that design and conceptualization, and planning and design are the greatest strengths of the program. Defined weaknesses include construction, calculation, and computer application software. Improvements can be made by integrating more actual design projects, more construction classes, greater access to design software, more fieldwork exposure, and community engagement. Introduction of business, and engineering courses, as well as a more diversified specialization, and the increase in research writing activities to the curriculum are deemed necessary by the participants to further enhance their knowledge and competency skills. Access to scholarships and funding is also suggested to have a commitment to ongoing learning and professional development to stay relevant in their field.

The perspectives resulting from the graduate tracer study in Bachelor of Landscape Architecture are twofold. Firstly, the study provides a valuable perspective from the alumni themselves, highlighting their experiences and perceptions of the curriculum and its effectiveness in preparing them for the professional world. This perspective can assist in identifying areas for improvement and tailoring the curriculum to better meet the needs of

future graduates. Such as subjects or courses that were beneficial and useful in their work, knowledge they gained and applied and courses that needed to be enhanced or added. Secondly, the study offers a perspective from employers and industry professionals who interact with graduates. Data gathered from the study showed the graduates' skills and competencies needed and thus provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of the curriculum in meeting industry demands. This study is a useful tool to inform updates to the curriculum and ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge for successful careers in landscape architecture. Overall, the graduate tracer study in Bachelor of Landscape Architecture provides a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, as well as the expectations and perspectives of both alumni and industry professionals. This understanding can inform improvements to the curriculum and enhance graduates' employability in the field of landscape architecture.

Furthermore, the study recommends the following to further improve and utilize graduate tracer studies for curriculum review and development. Implementation of a continuous feedback loop to integrate GTS into an ongoing process of curriculum improvement rather than a one-time assessment. Institutions should engage in open discussions and collaborative efforts involving educators, students, and other stakeholders to successfully implement and refine curricular changes. In relation to the GTS conducted the author also suggests additional questions that will provide insights into the inclusivity of the education provided by institutions to make the curriculum more inclusive and responsive to the needs of a diverse student body. Moreover, the current educational landscape, universities are facing the need to adapt and incorporate new learning modalities in response to various factors such as technological advancements and the demands of a global knowledge economy. These new learning modalities, which often involve the integration of technology and innovative teaching methods, have the potential to greatly impact the delivery of the curriculum and the overall learning experience of students. The author recommends that further studies be conducted in universities to gain a better understanding of the implementation and effects of these new learning modalities. These studies should investigate whether new learning modalities are being implemented in each university and how they affect the delivery of the curriculum and students' perceptions of this new normal mode of education.

In summary, using graduate tracer studies to determine curriculum improvement points from the learner's perspective can help higher education institutions create more relevant, effective, and responsive programs that would cater to the needs of the graduates as they step outside the institution.

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