



# Cultivating Career Readiness Skills of Business Students: An Intervention to Enhance Internship Skills

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**Abstract :** This study aims to determine the effectiveness of career readiness seminars in enhancing the internship skills of students. It explores the impact of the series of workshops in developing intern-students' knowledge and skills required for practicum and determining their career readiness level. The research design used in this study is descriptive. The study was conducted at the Philippine College Foundation, School of Business and Management. Floating questionnaires were used to collect data from incoming intern students through Google Forms for this study. Convenience sampling was utilized to select respondents based on their availability and accessibility. The sample size was 110 students, covering male and female business administration students who will undergo internship. The researchers developed a questionnaire consisting of 50 items to collect data. The questionnaire had three dimensions: basic computer skills, communication skills, and work ethic. The findings from the pre-intervention reveal that students have poor competencies and lack the necessary abilities for internships. Thus, a series of seminars were conducted to enhance students' skills. The study found that the intervention strategies further enhanced the competencies of students. The results indicate career readiness through the three dimensions: basic computer skills, communication skills, and work ethic. The study further confirms the usefulness of such kind of training and workshops. Therefore, educational institutions and educators, in general, should promote these kinds of competencies training to ensure the effectiveness of internship programs.

**IndexTerms -** Career readiness, internship program, computer skills, work ethic, communication skills, private higher education

## I. INTRODUCTION

Career readiness skills empower students to successfully transition from education to landing a job in their chosen career path. College institutions have considered preparing students for post-academic success a priority. These skills are often measured by student performance on assessments and measuring proficiency in academic skills in Math and English (Green et al., 2021). Relevant work experience through internships is one of the components of a career readiness strategy. It will develop the necessary skills for students to be industry-ready (Rachmawati et al., 2024).

Today's college students proceed with internship programs unprepared and unaware of the areas in which they lack competencies and professional skills. Even considering college graduates, a study revealed that only a quarter of them are prepared for work after graduation and need improvement with the gaps in career readiness and employability (Packer, 2022). Additionally, students proficient in these areas are deemed college and career-ready. However, there is a growing consensus that students need to be prepared to work in a world that demands more than just proficiency in academic skills.

In a private higher education in Valencia City, Bukidnon, Philippines, there are observed inadequacies and incompetence of students for internship programs. There is some response from evaluations of former interns indicating their lack of knowledge in computer skills, inappropriate communication skills, and not following work ethics. In addition, the school doesn't have existing programs that address these concerns. However, with the implementation of the proposed interventions, there is hope for significant improvement. Hence, this study addressed and proposed an informed series of seminars to surmise the phenomenon.

Career readiness skills are paramount at a time of constantly changing professional environments. Beyond standard qualifications, people entering or advancing in their careers must have varied abilities because industries and labor demands continually evolve. By examining crucial elements like computer literacy, work ethics, and communication proficiency, the study seeks to shed light on the complexities of career preparedness. Gaining an awareness of the subtleties of these competencies is crucial for everyone hoping to succeed in their job and for educational institutions since companies are looking for applicants who possess a comprehensive skill set. To bridge the knowledge gap between business administration courses and what businesses need, higher education institutions must be able to assist their students in developing holistically, gaining the necessary skills for graduation, and getting ready for the careers they want in the future. Moreover, an integrated approach is needed for career readiness to prepare the students for success.

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the extent of the training on career readiness for students. Specifically, to explore specific problems of career readiness skills among business students by implementing targeted interventions and evaluating their impact. Additionally, this study will investigate the effectiveness of comprehensive career programs in enhancing the preparation and success of business students during internships. Furthermore, it recommends continuous intervention to ensure students are equipped with the necessary skills needed for future endeavors and, at the same time, promote academic integrity.

### Research Objectives

The main objective of this action research is to address the need for career readiness skills among business students during their internship. These specific areas or skills where students face challenges and hinder their ability to succeed on internship program includes communication skills, work ethics, and basic computer literacy.

### Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What common career readiness challenges do business administration students face?
2. What intervention strategy can be introduced to improve the career readiness skills of students?
3. How does the intervention strategy can improve the career readiness skills of the business administration students?

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This part reviewed the related studies to comprehensively assess the existing body of knowledge relevant to the current study. This section serves to establish the context and foundation for the research problem being investigated.

### Career Readiness

The need for improved career readiness has become apparent in society as many businesses report a lack of competencies and skills essential to human resources success (Collet et al., 2015). Career readiness may include programs providing resources and opportunities for students to develop knowledge and learn skills that will help them utilize their capacities for potential careers (Horillo, 2021). Moreover, Cooney (2017) posited that career readiness is considered a priority educational goal involving productivity and self-sufficiency of student-workers.

On the authority of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), a framework identifies critical competencies for career readiness. Eight (8) skills are identified: career and self-development, leadership, communication, critical thinking, professionalism, teamwork, equity and inclusion, and technology. In the report of P21's Framework for 21st Century Learning (P21), students must also learn essential skills for success in today's changing world, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) encourages institutions to help students achieve and thrive in their future careers by adjusting to expectations and adopting creative methods of instruction to support lifelong learners and meet the needs of a workforce (Manila Bulletin, 2023)

As schools and colleges continuously seek to improve career education, analyzing the effectiveness of programs to improve career readiness is relevant. A study by Morse (2020) revealed that students with more advanced career readiness had an advantage in their preparedness for future career paths. Moreover, there are consequences of low readiness for career interventions, including premature disengagement, negative perception of skills and interests, selective acquisition of incomplete information, premature choice foreclosure, protracted exploration, dependent decision-making style, and poor evaluation of options (Sampson et al., 2013).

### Communication Skills

Practical communication skills are widely recognized as one of the most critical competencies for workplace success. Communicating ideas, information, and instructions clearly and concisely is essential for thriving professionally. To attain career growth, one must know how to use one or several modes of communication to get their ideas across, to advance their missions, to engage others, and to enlist people's support to be effective in their work and personal relationships. (Jain, 2017). Contradictory, Asemayi (2015) proved that students admitted they have deficient language backgrounds, which is mirrored in their communicative competence, and thus, they do not perform well. Moreover, this can be due to the need for improvement in the teaching and learning process.

According to Katherasala & Vinod (2023), communication and skill development in students' interpersonal communication growth and teachers' motivation affect professionalism and raise the bar. Yaseen et al. (2021) hypothesized that communication skills have a substantial impact on a student's success, and they concluded that the more a person has a better set of communication skills, the more chances there are to grow and groom.

Strong communication skills can help Business Administration (BA) students excel academically. With excellent communication, BA students can deliver great presentations, write cohesive essays, effectively interact with peers and teachers, etc. It will help them learn better, leading to their academic success. It is attested through NACE that oral/written communication skills, along with leadership and professionalism/work ethic competencies, are the three chief areas where students and employers most radically differ when evaluating proficiency. To conclude, communication skills are highly valued under normal circumstances.

### Basic Computer Skills

Computer skills are increasingly valued in today's workplaces with the probing of information technology into every walk of business. While academic work has revealed that computer skills can improve productivity, solve complex problems, create new businesses, and earn wage premiums, few studies have investigated computer skills' role in worker employment (Peng, 2017). There

are different kinds of employability skills as perceived by employers, like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, self-assessment, leadership, computational, interpersonal, entrepreneurial, and analytical skills. For business students, it is relevant that they are established to information systems via computer literacy assessment. It contributes an integrative channel for teaching information ideas and software applications in the larger context of business analysis and communications (Grenci, 2013).

Computers have fundamentally altered how we live, work, and learn and have changed the world into a global community. Moreover, business organizations have wrestled with training and turning their workforce into a computer-literate group that keeps alongside changes in computing and information technologies since most work relies on more than standardized literacy levels to perform well (Barrera, 2013). Ultimately, digital literacy in schools will assist students in accessing various information online. In technology literacy, students are introduced to and able to understand the use of the latest technology relevant to the department and work world (Lestari & Santoso, 2019).

As we are moving to the era of industrial revolution, with the introduction of artificial intelligence, employers expect graduates to have competencies related to ICT, able to do self-learning and excellent information skills that come together with analytical skills. conclude that digital literacy focuses on technological literacy and how we use technology in decision-making (NM et al., 2020). Moreover, NM et al. recommended that students should be given more empowerment in designing assignments through digital literacy so that they will be motivated to look for various forms of information and find exciting ways to deliver their findings. This skill will naturally prepare the students for employability.

### Work Ethic (Professionalism)

Work ethic is an attitude and a habit a person believes in while doing a job. A strong work ethic is one of the most essential qualities employers seek in potential candidates. Demonstrating a commitment to hard work, dedication, and reliability can set us apart and position us for success as we embark on our careers. According to a study by Ndung'u (2014), work ethic and employability skills are listed as needed for job success and must be addressed by educators. Moreover, professionalism and work ethic are the sixth workplace readiness competency (NACE).

Inspiring the art of professional etiquette into the curriculum can be demanding on its own. Business students should graduate from their programs with the polish and professionalism that affect their education and allow their ideas to be well-received in the corporate world and cross-culturally in the global marketplace (Main, 2020). A study tackled the professionalism conundrum – the lack of critical skills employers expect business students to have upon graduation and the discipline-specific or technical knowledge and skills they have developed (Abstor & Soter, 2020). Student career readiness has been linked to soft skills and professionalism in academic literature (Amoroso & Burke, 2018), and numerous other business scholars have identified soft skills and professionalism as a target behavior to develop in students (Anthony & Garner, 2016).

Work ethic is rated as one of the three “most important” applied skills considered necessary for entrants into the world of work (Simpson, 2014). Demonstrating ethical behavior, acting within “the significance of the broader community, and the potential to learn from one’s mistakes” are traits used to define an individual’s professionalism and work ethic (Molly, 2017). In addition, Rusoke, 2021) recommended that employees’ integrity and commitment should be strengthened, and work ethic should be given positive attention since an improvement in work attitude would lead to an improvement in performance. Developing a solid work ethic in students helps them compose themselves for the demands and expectations they will face in professional work environments.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive quantitative design. The descriptive research design is a study that describes the characteristics of a population being studied (Creswell, 2003). Primarily used to gain an understanding of a group or phenomenon. This involves collecting data through surveys, interviews, or observation. Additionally, a quantitative research is regarded as the organized inquiry about phenomenon through collection of numerical data and execution of statistical, mathematical or computational techniques.

The study was conducted in the Philippine College Foundation in Bukidnon, Philippines. It is a private higher education institution. The school offers internship program (Practicum) on the second semester of the school calendar. The study utilized a convenience sampling technique. There was 110 Business Administrations student considered as respondents of the study which enrolled in the Practicum course. The respondents were given consent form to guarantee privacy and protection of personal information. Floating of research instrument were done before the deployment prior to attending the seminar/workshops, and after the series of trainings. Researchers floated the questionnaire through google forms.

Survey questionnaire which is researcher-made was comprised of 48 items. It undergone validity from experts, and reliability test which resulted to a score index of 0.953. The questionnaire has three parts. The first part provided data for communication skills, the second part given data for work ethic, and the third part provided data for communication skills. Data were tabulated through a 5-point Likert scale assessing the knowledgeability of respondents to the given statement: 5-fully knowledgeable to 1-no knowledge at all. Additionally, the results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, to determine the level of knowledge on communication skills, work ethics, and basic computer skills of student interns.

Moreover, the researchers ensured that this research could cause no potential harm to the participants, whether legal, physical, psychological, or social. There will be strict adherence to the Republic Act on Data Privacy, requiring the secure collection, storage, and handling of all respondents’ information. Careful steps are taken to protect the confidentiality and integrity of research data, safeguarding against unauthorized access or misuse. Data collected will be solely use on the research study. Furthermore, as



the timeline for data storage comes due, with a predetermined retention period of three (3) years, all participant information will be disposed of in a secure manner that prevents any possibility of unauthorized access or misuse.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study looked into career readiness challenges do business administration students face in a private higher education institution; particularly in areas of communication skills, computer skills and work ethic.

##### 1. Career readiness skills challenges business administration students face.

Table 1. Career readiness challenges

Skills	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of basic computer skills	97	88.2
Lack of work ethic	65	59.1
Lack of critical thinking skills	45	40.9
Lack of communication skills	83	75.5
Total no. of Students	110	100

Table 1 presents the percentage of students who considered the career readiness skills as lacking and needs enhancement. Among the 110 students, there are 97 students who are deficient in their basic computer skills. Additionally, there are 83 of them that admitted they lacked knowledge on communicating well and expressing their ideas. In addition, there are 65 who believed they are not capable on fostering positive work ethic. Lastly, 45 students who chose critical thinking skills needs enhancement.

The result implies that students will benefit more if the identified career readiness skills will be implemented and given intervention. Therefore, the researchers identified the top three skills as priority aspects for the implementation of seminar workshop to students: (1) communication skills, (2) basic computer skills, and (3) work ethic.

##### 2. Level of knowledge prior to the intervention strategy.

Table 2. Level of knowledge on career readiness skills

Skills	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Computer skills	2.642	0.460	Some knowledge/skill but development required
Work ethic	2.675	0.537	Some knowledge/skill but development required
Communication skills	2.520	0.406	Some knowledge/skill but development required
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.612</b>	<b>0.467</b>	<b>Some knowledge/skill but development required</b>

Legend:

Scale	Range	Level of Knowledge on Career Readiness Skills
5	4.51-5.00	Fully knowledgeable/skilled - no/very little development required
4	3.51-4.50	Good level of knowledge/skill displayed, with a little development required
3	2.51-3.50	Some knowledge/skill but development required
2	1.51-2.50	A little knowledge/skill but considerable development required
1	1.00-1.50	No knowledge/skill

Table 2 illustrates the overall mean and standard deviation of career readiness skills ( $M=2.612$ ,  $SD=0.467$ ) which indicated a result of some knowledge but development required. This implies that the students have prior knowledge on the skills, but rarely practiced it, and clearly needs refinement to further enhance and improve the skill.

Among the skills, communication skills are the lowest which suggests that students are not confident in their communication skills. Students find it hard to express themselves in front of other people. This could also imply that it is hard for students to comprehend the instruction or idea leading to challenges in understanding and responding to others. This result is the same with the study of Asemanyi (2015) which found out that main findings were that students have negative perceptions towards the course even though they try to exhibit positive attitudes towards it. In addition, some of the students admitted that they weak language backgrounds which reflected in their communicative competence and thus they do not perform well. Moreover, a study of Chentez et al., (2019) indicated that oral communication and communication apprehension were the main problems for the students. These problems were caused by not frequent usage in English in daily life resulting in nervous feelings when speaking in the second language.

Also presented in the table is computer skills which also indicated some knowledge but development required. This also means that computer skills of the students are limited. This implies that students have limited understanding of the basic computer

applications. They also have inability and ineffective utilization of internet or unfamiliar with filing management. This may arise due to unavailability of laptop or desktop computers, or not knowledgeable on the professional use of computers because they cannot use it efficiently as required (Sefain, 2023). Moreover, even with the strong presence of cellphones and other smart devices, its counter-intuitive to think that some students lack even the most minimal computer skills. However, access to the web does not render a person, in this case a school aged students, as having computer literacy (Gibbs, 2018).

It also shows work ethic as some knowledge but development required which indicates students may have known proper etiquette in workplaces like professionalism and dedication. However, they displayed lack of motivation and initiative. These students may also practice inappropriate behavior like absenteeism, and tardiness. This may be explained by the study by Boateng (2021) which emphasized the reason for inability to have motivation at work due to environmental and situational antecedents. Additionally, it can have attributed to being a Gen Z, which always wanted their jobs to be aligned with their beliefs and shifts towards a more purpose-driven way of looking at work (Schurman, 2024).

### 3. Level of knowledge after the intervention strategy.

Table 3. Level of knowledge on career readiness

Skills	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Computer skills	3.768	0.613	Good level of knowledge/skill displayed, with a little development required
Work ethic	3.993	0.457	Good level of knowledge/skill displayed, with a little development required
Communication skills	3.765	0.776	Good level of knowledge/skill displayed, with a little development required
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.842</b>	<b>0.616</b>	<b>Good level of knowledge/skill displayed, with a little development required</b>

Legend:

Scale	Range	Level of Knowledge on Career Readiness Skills
5	4.51-5.00	Fully knowledgeable/skilled - no/very little development required
4	3.51-4.50	Good level of knowledge/skill displayed, with a little development required
3	2.51-3.50	Some knowledge/skill but development required
2	1.51-2.50	A little knowledge/skill but considerable development required
1	1.00-1.50	No knowledge/skill

Table 3 presents the overall mean and standard deviation of career readiness skills which indicated good knowledge with little development required. After the intervention strategy of conducting series of seminars and workshops, the results indicated on the knowledge on the different skills have improved. This implies that the learning acquired by student on attending the trainings have helped them enhanced their communication skills, computer skills, and work ethic.

The overall means and standard deviations of communication skills, computer skills, and work ethic rose up from (M=2.520, SD 0.406) to (M=3.765, SD=0.776), (M=2.642, SD=0.460, and (M=2.675, SD=0.437), respectively. This result showed a meaningful increased in the level of knowledge on the skills of students. This means that clearly our intervention strategy worked out the necessary skills of students for career readiness.

According to Hua et al., (2022), the competencies, which include critical thinking/ problem solving; oral/written communications; teamwork/collaboration; digital technology (literacy); leadership; professionalism/work ethic; career management; and global/intercultural fluency, are relevant to all academic disciplines. Students are then able to use this information to highlight how they have developed these universal competencies as they apply for internships and jobs. Even though, we have catered only three dimensions of career preparedness, we have found out that is has substantially impacted the skills of students. The result clearly emphasized that engaging career readiness workshops will give students practical tips to help them prepare for their internship and first job. This will inspire them to explore rewarding post academic and career pathways (Gee et al., 2020). Supporting college and career readiness among students who encounter significant academic and life challenges requires innovative strategies to help them envision their futures, leverage their strengths and develop dispositions that promote positive trajectories.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Providing a comprehensive seminar and programs for college students ready for internship can provide them with opportunities to develop a brighter future career paths. By implementing program to students who lacked necessary skills and providing with an avenue to learn new skills and behaviors in communication, computer skills, and work ethical behavior can offer career planning efforts in fulfilling their career aspirations. Additionally, it can be used by educators and educational administrators to leverage the strength in providing quality education and sustainable instruction to students. Our study provided options to improve innovative strategies to facilitate positive learning opportunities. Furthermore, it has opened chances for possible improvement plans to ensure internship success. Finally, the results of this study have provide more perspectives to stakeholders, even government in addressing concerns for the preparation of a more inclusive leaning environment.

In a private higher education, it is important that students' gained essential skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to successfully transition into and advance within the corporate. In line with this study, we recommend that schools will offer a more diverse seminars and workshops. Considering that the study has only involved the three dimensions of career readiness programs,

it is further suggested that all the different factors of career preparedness introduced by NACE, such as critical thinking/ problem solving; teamwork/collaboration; leadership; career management; and global/intercultural fluency will be implemented and considered as an intervention to further enhanced the readiness skills of students, not just for the internship programs, but also for career paths after graduation.

Through the implementation of career programs that aims to equip individuals with the necessary skills, experience, and resources, these career readiness programs will enhance their employability, facilitate a successful school-to-work transition, and set them up for long-term career success.

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