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Research Article

Policy Analysis on Internship and Job Placement Programs in NU Baliwag: Strengthening Industry–Academe Linkages for Graduate Employability

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ABSTRACT

Graduate employability remains a critical performance indicator for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) amid rapidly evolving labor market demands that require both technical competencies and career adaptability. This study adopts a descriptive evaluative research design for evidence-based policy formulation to assess the effectiveness of internship and job placement programs implemented through the Academe–Industry Linkages and Placement Office (AILPO) of National University Baliwag. Data were collected from 120 graduates from Academic Years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 using a validated survey instrument. Findings revealed that 71.7% of graduates were employed and 11.6% were self-employed, resulting in an overall employability rate of 83.3%. The effectiveness of AILPO services received an overall mean rating of 4.04, with job vacancy dissemination and career guidance services obtaining the highest ratings. However, post-employment follow-up emerged as the lowest-rated service area, indicating a significant policy gap in long-term graduate support and career monitoring. Program-level differences in employability were observed, with graduates from business and technology-related disciplines demonstrating stronger employment outcomes than those from tourism-related programs. Guided by Tomlinson's Graduate Capital Theory, the study proposes a lifecycle-based employability framework that integrates graduate tracking systems, alumni engagement initiatives, industry collaboration, and curriculum-embedded career readiness programs. The findings provide empirical evidence for strengthening institutional employability policies and advancing sustainable graduate career development beyond initial employment outcomes.

Keywords: *Evidence-based policy formulation, Graduate capital theory, Graduate employability, Industry-academe linkages, Internship effectiveness, Tracer studies*

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Introduction

Graduate employability has become one of the most important indicators of institutional effectiveness in higher education. Contemporary universities are increasingly expected not only to provide academic knowledge but also to cultivate the competencies, adaptability, and professional readiness necessary for success in an increasingly complex labor market. Consequently, employability is no longer defined solely as obtaining a first job after graduation but encompasses career sustainability, professional growth, lifelong learning, and adaptability across changing employment contexts.

This evolving understanding is supported by Tomlinson's (2017) Graduate Capital Theory, which posits that employability is shaped through the interaction of human capital, social capital, cultural capital, psychological capital, and identity capital. The theory suggests that graduates' career outcomes depend not only on academic qualifications but also on professional networks, workplace experiences, adaptability, and career identity formation. Within this context, internship programs, career guidance initiatives, and industry engagement activities serve as critical mechanisms through which higher education institutions facilitate the development of graduate capital and strengthen employability outcomes.

At National University Baliwag, these functions are primarily implemented through the Academe-Industry Linkages and Placement Office (AILPO). AILPO serves as the University's central mechanism for facilitating internship placements, disseminating employment opportunities, coordinating employer partnerships, and supporting graduate transitions into the labor force. Through these initiatives, the institution seeks to strengthen industry-academe linkages and improve graduate employment outcomes.

While previous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of internship programs and placement services on graduate employment, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of these initiatives within the context of NU Baliwag. More importantly, little is known about how institutional support extends beyond initial job placement and contributes to sustained employability and long-term career development.

Responding to this gap, the present study adopts a descriptive evaluative approach for evidence-based policy formulation. Specifically, it evaluates the effectiveness of internship and job placement programs implemented by AILPO and examines how survey findings can inform institutional policy improvements. The study recognizes employability as a continuous developmental process and seeks to identify policy interventions that can strengthen graduate tracking, alumni engagement, career sustainability, and industry-academe partnerships.

Materials and Methods

This study utilized a descriptive evaluative research design aimed at generating empirical evidence to support institutional policy formulation and improvement. Rather than merely describing graduate employment outcomes, the study evaluated the effectiveness of the internship and job placement services provided by the Academe-Industry Linkages and Placement Office (AILPO) and identified policy areas requiring enhancement to strengthen long-term graduate employability.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 120 graduates from Academic Years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 who had directly utilized AILPO services. The sample was drawn from the School of Engineering and Technology (SET), School of Business Administration (SBA), School of Education, Arts and Sciences (SEAS), and Tourism programs. The chosen sample size was considered adequate because it represented graduates across major academic clusters and reflected diverse employment pathways relevant to the University's employability objectives. Furthermore, respondents were specifically selected based on their direct engagement with internship placement, career guidance, and job referral services, making them appropriate information sources for evaluating program effectiveness and generating policy recommendations.

A structured questionnaire was developed and validated by experts in higher education research, career development, and employability studies. Reliability testing yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.80 or higher, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data were analyzed using frequency distributions, percentages, and weighted means. The resulting findings served as evidence for identifying institutional strengths, existing employability gaps, and policy interventions related to graduate tracking, post-employment support, alumni engagement, and industry partnerships.

Research Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured, researcher-developed questionnaire designed to capture relevant information aligned with the study objectives. The instrument consisted of four sections:

1. Demographic profile
2. Awareness and utilization of AILPO services
3. Perceived effectiveness of AILPO services
4. Employment outcomes

Content validity was established through expert review by three specialists in education research and career development to ensure the relevance and clarity of the items. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded an acceptable level of internal consistency ($\alpha \geq 0.80$), indicating that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

The survey was administered through an online platform to facilitate accessibility and efficient data gathering among graduates. Throughout the data collection process, ethical standards were strictly observed, including the provision of informed consent, assurance of

confidentiality and anonymity, and adherence to voluntary participation.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequency distribution and percentage were employed to describe the demographic profile and employment status of the graduates. Meanwhile, the weighted mean was used to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the services provided by the Academe-Industry Linkages and Placement Office (AILPO). These statistical tools enabled the researchers to systematically summarize, interpret, and assess graduate employability outcomes as well as the effectiveness of institutional support services.

Results and Discussion

Employment Outcomes and College-Level Distribution

The employment outcomes of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The findings revealed that the majority of graduates were successfully employed after graduation, with 71.7% identified as employed and 11.6% categorized as self-employed. Combined, these results indicate an overall employability rate of 83.3%, demonstrating the effectiveness of NU Baliwag's internship and job placement initiatives in facilitating the transition from school to work. However, 16.7% of the respondents remained unemployed, suggesting the need for strengthened institutional interventions and long-term employability support mechanisms.

Table 1. Employment Outcomes and College-Level Distribution

No.	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Interpretation
1	Employed	86	71.7	The majority successfully transitioned to employment
2	Self-Employed	14	11.6	Indicates entrepreneurial engagement
3	Unemployed	20	16.7	Suggests the need for enhanced support
4	SEAS	30	25.0	Broad career paths; needs stronger guidance
5	SET	50	41.6	High employability due to technical demand

No.	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Interpretation
6	SBA	30	25.0	Competitive fields requiring certification
7	Tourism	10	8.4	Industry-sensitive employment patterns
Total		120	100.0	Strong overall employability (83.3%)

The college-level distribution further revealed variations in employment pathways across academic disciplines. Graduates from the School of Engineering and Technology (SET) represented the highest proportion of respondents at 41.6%. The strong employability performance of this group may be attributed to the high labor market demand for technical and technology-related professions such as Information Technology and Civil Engineering.

Meanwhile, graduates from the School of Education, Arts, and Sciences (SEAS) and the School of Business Administration (SBA) each accounted for 25% of the respondents. SEAS graduates often pursue broader and more flexible career pathways, which may require stronger career guidance and adaptability support. In contrast, SBA graduates typically enter more competitive professional environments where certifications and licensure requirements influence employability outcomes.

Tourism graduates comprised 8.4% of the respondents. Employment opportunities within this sector are highly influenced by industry conditions, economic fluctuations, and tourism market recovery trends, making employment outcomes more sensitive to external factors.

These findings suggest that while NU Baliwag demonstrates strong overall graduate employability, labor market conditions differ across academic programs. This indicates the importance of implementing discipline-specific employability strategies rather than relying solely on generalized placement interventions.

Effectiveness of AILPO Services and Structural Gaps

Table 2 presents the evaluation of the effectiveness of the services provided by the Academic–Industry Linkages and Placement Office (AILPO), including the institutional factors affecting long-term employability support.

Table 2. Effectiveness of AILPO Services and Structural Gaps

No.	Service / Factor	Mean Rating	Interpretation	Structural Insight	Impact
1	Job Vacancy Dissemination	4.20	Very Effective	Strong industry linkage	Facilitates job access
2	Career Guidance	4.10	Very Effective	Active pre-employment support	Improves readiness
3	Internship Placement	4.00	Effective	Structured coordination	Enhances experience
4	Job Referral System	3.98	Effective	Functional placement system	Supports transition
5	Post-Employment Support	3.80	Moderate	No centralized tracking system	Limits long-term career growth
6	Alumni Engagement	—	Weak	Lack of structured programs	Reduces mentoring/networking
7	Resource Allocation	—	Limited	Focus on placement over follow-up	Constrains sustainability

No.	Service / Factor		Mean Rating	Interpretation	Structural Insight	Impact	
8	Policy	Orienta- tion	—	Short-term	Employment-fo- cused metrics	Weak	career lifecycle support
Overall Mean			4.04	Effective	Strong front-end system	Gap in long-term employability	

The overall mean rating of 4.04 indicates that AILPO services are generally perceived as effective by the respondents. Among the evaluated services, job vacancy dissemination received the highest rating (4.20), suggesting that strong industry linkages significantly contribute to graduate employment opportunities. Career guidance services also received a high rating of 4.10, reflecting the effectiveness of institutional support in preparing students for employment.

Internship placement and job referral systems were likewise evaluated positively, with mean ratings of 4.00 and 3.98, respectively. These findings demonstrate that AILPO effectively supports graduates during the transition phase from education to employment through structured placement and coordination mechanisms.

Despite these strengths, post-employment support received the lowest rating of 3.80, indicating moderate effectiveness and revealing a critical structural gap within the institution's employability framework. The absence of a centralized graduate tracking system limits the institution's ability to monitor alumni career progression and evaluate long-term employment outcomes.

Furthermore, weak alumni engagement mechanisms reduce opportunities for mentoring, networking, and sustained institutional support. Limited resource allocation also constrains the office's capacity to conduct long-term follow-up activities, as existing operational priorities remain heavily focused on immediate placement functions.

The findings also suggest that institutional policies remain largely outcome-oriented, emphasizing short-term employment rates rather than career sustainability and professional development. This short-term policy orientation weakens the institution's capacity to support graduates throughout their career lifecycle.

The identified structural gaps may significantly affect graduates' career adaptability, particularly in responding to industry changes, navigating career transitions, and upgrading professional competencies. Consequently, employability becomes primarily outcome-based rather than dynamic and sustainable.

Discussion

Although the findings indicate a strong employability rate of 83.3%, the results reveal an important policy concern regarding post-employment support. The relatively lower rating received by post-employment follow-up services suggests that institutional support mechanisms are concentrated primarily on facilitating graduates' entry into the labor market rather than monitoring their longer-term career development.

This finding is particularly significant within the Philippine labor market context, where many graduates encounter employment challenges after obtaining their first job. Early-career professionals often experience contractual employment arrangements, job mobility, career transitions, and skills mismatches that require continuous institutional support. Without a structured graduate tracking system, universities may lose valuable opportunities to monitor these employment trajectories and assess whether graduates continue to achieve meaningful and sustainable career outcomes.

Furthermore, the absence of comprehensive alumni engagement programs limits opportunities for mentoring, professional networking, industry feedback, and lifelong learning initiatives. Strong alumni relationships can provide valuable support for career advancement while simultaneously helping universities evaluate curriculum relevance and labor market responsiveness.

The findings therefore suggest the need for a shift from an outcome-based employability

model toward a lifecycle employability framework. Such an approach recognizes that employability extends beyond initial job acquisition and encompasses continuous career progression, adaptability, professional development, and lifelong engagement between graduates and the institution.

Proposed Policy Framework with Measurable Indicators

To address the identified gaps, the study proposes a policy-oriented framework presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Policy Framework with Measurable Indicators

No.	Policy Action	Description	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Expected Outcome
1	Graduate Tracking System	Centralized alumni database and tracer study	≥80% response rate; tracking at 6 months, 1 year, and 3 years	Improved career monitoring
2	Post-Employment Support	Mentoring, coaching, and upskilling programs	≥4 programs/year; ≥60% participation; ≥4.0 satisfaction	Stronger career sustainability
3	Industry Partnerships	Expanded employer collaboration	≥10% annual growth; ≥4.0 employer rating	Increased job opportunities
4	Curriculum-Embedded Employability	Integration of career readiness skills	100% program inclusion; ≥20% skill improvement	Enhanced graduate readiness
5	Internship-to-Employment Alignment	Strengthen the transition from internship to employment	≥50% conversion rate	Improved employment linkage

The proposed framework emphasizes the institutionalization of long-term employability support through centralized graduate tracking, strengthened alumni engagement, expanded industry collaboration, and curriculum-integrated employability competencies. Collectively, these policy actions aim to transform employability from a short-term employment outcome into a sustainable and lifelong developmental process.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that NU Baliwag's internship and job placement programs effectively contribute to graduate employability, as evidenced by the overall employability rate of 83.3% and the positive evaluation of AILPO services. Specifically, the high ratings for job vacancy dissemination, internship placement, and career guidance indicate that the institution has successfully established strong front-end employability support mechanisms.

However, the study also identified a significant policy gap in post-employment follow-up and career sustainability support. The lower evaluation of post-employment services, combined with the absence of a centralized graduate tracking system and structured alumni engagement programs, limits the institution's capacity to monitor long-term employment outcomes and support graduates beyond initial workforce entry.

Based on these findings, the study recommends the institutionalization of a graduate tracking system, expansion of alumni engagement initiatives, strengthening of industry partnerships, implementation of structured post-employment support programs, and integration of career readiness competencies across academic curricula. Each recommendation directly addresses an empirical finding identified in the study. Collectively, these policy interventions can strengthen long-term graduate employability, improve labor market

responsiveness, and foster sustainable industry-academe partnerships, thereby supporting NU Baliwag's commitment to quality education and workforce development.

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Main Findings (Novelty)

This study provides an evidence-based evaluation of the internship and job placement programs implemented by the Academe–Industry Linkages and Placement Office (AILPO) of National University Baliwag and their contribution to graduate employability. The findings revealed a strong overall employability rate of **83.3%**, comprising **71.7% employed** and **11.6% self-employed** graduates. Moreover, respondents rated the effectiveness of AILPO services positively, with an overall mean score of **4.04**, indicating that the University's internship placement, career guidance, and job dissemination initiatives substantially facilitate graduates' transition into the workforce.

The study's key contribution lies in identifying a critical policy gap that extends beyond immediate job placement outcomes. While internship and placement services effectively support graduates in securing employment, the findings reveal the absence of a structured mechanism for post-employment monitoring, graduate career tracking, and continuous professional support. This gap limits the institution's capacity to evaluate long-term employment outcomes, monitor career progression, and respond to emerging workforce development needs.

Anchored on Tomlinson's (2017) Graduate Capital Theory, the study advances the perspective that employability should be viewed as a lifelong developmental process rather than a single employment outcome. Consequently, the study proposes a policy-oriented employability framework that institutionalizes graduate tracking systems, strengthens alumni engagement programs, expands industry partnerships, and embeds career-readiness competencies within academic curricula.

The proposed policy framework offers practical and strategic value for higher education institutions seeking to strengthen industry-academe collaboration and promote sustainable graduate success. By shifting employability initiatives from short-term placement metrics toward long-term career sustainability, NU Baliwag can further enhance its responsiveness to labor market demands, support graduates throughout their professional journeys, and establish stronger evidence-based institutional policies for workforce development.

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