

## The Relevance of the Existing Career Placement Services of Apayao State College (ASC) in the Philippines

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**How to cite this article:** Madelyne T. Maslang (2024). The Relevance of the Existing Career Placement Services of Apayao State College (ASC) in the Philippines. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 12039-12057.

### ABSTRACT

The career and placement services rendered by Apayao State College are embedded in the guidance and counseling office. Since it is embedded, the said program is somewhat not given more time and budget considering the fact that ASC do not have yet a permanent guidance counselor to seat in the office. With this scenario, the College should allocate budget for it for the services to be well implemented. This research study was conducted to assess the existing Career and Placement (CAP) services of Apayao State College. The researcher employed the mixed method approach in which the qualitative and quantitative research designs. The findings demonstrate that the stakeholders perceive the existing Career and Placement Program at Apayao State College (ASC) to be highly relevant and effective. The positive perception reflects stakeholders' recognition of the program's alignment with their expectations, particularly in assisting students in career exploration, job placement, document preparation, and providing access to career-related information. Moreover, stakeholders value the program's counseling support, establishment of job linkages, and alumni tracking, highlighting its success in facilitating job placements for graduates. It is recommended that Apayao State College (ASC) continue to invest in and expand its Career and Placement program with a focus on enhancing career exploration seminars and skill development workshops.

**Keywords:** Career placement services, Apayao State College, Human Capital Theory, Career

### INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, one out of three Filipino graduates are employable, leaving 65 percent in the country do not possess the skills to qualify for a job they are applying (Harry et al., 2018). This is a problem that exists even during high budgetary allocation in the education sector. The concept of employability has received much attention within extant literature but needs further inquiry (Hossain et al., 2021). Despite differences in the definition of 'employability', mutual ground can be established (Cheng et al., 2022). 'Employability' refers to the competencies and abilities that graduates need to enhance employment opportunities in the labor market, as well as the economic and social development of the country (Pajaryati & Wiranto, 2020). Higher education is perceived by many people as a pathway to enhance employability (Petruzzio et al., 2023). Employability, however, is not a guarantee to secure employment but only enhances employment chances (Howell et al., 2023).

Employer groups' expectations for college graduates appear to be heavily influenced by highly context-bound interpretations of desirable graduate attributes, capabilities, competencies, and the like, according to several studies (Bhatti et al., 2023). Clearly, it is impractical for institutions to promise that students would graduate with all the ideal generic abilities and traits spelled forth in their institutional paperwork, as Lo Presti et al., (2022) explain. Such assurances would leave colleges open to lawsuit in the worst possible scenarios. However, colleges and universities must ensure that all incoming freshmen acquire and develop transferable skills and knowledge throughout their time there (Niu et al., 2022). The success of this endeavor is highly dependent on the mentalities and efforts of both the instructors and the pupils.

Education is insufficient if it is not an effective and efficient driver of sustainable growth and development. Equally important, if not more, is the quality and relevance of education provided in knowledge acquisition and application, and the enhancement of hard and soft skills to optimize social investment in education. However, higher learning institutions change relatively slower compared to economic and technological developments, the bridging of the gap between graduate output and labor market demands will remain a challenging act to perform (Martini et al., 2023).

Education as we claim is a strong tool for success and education is a continuous process and as we go on, we also must upgrade our experiences to a higher degree of quality as we continually search for innovation and excellence. It is the most powerful instrument for change, development, and progress. The significant role of education to economics was highlighted in the early 1960s with an increased growth of empirical studies on western economies. It was Schultz who introduced the concept of human capital to explain a part of the unexplained residual in a growth accounting framework. With this, theoretical development has progressed to link education explicitly to income, trade, and the family among other areas (Ng et al., 2022).

One of the factors that determine the effectiveness of an academic institution is through the employability of its graduates. The quality of graduates is very much a function of quality instruction and facilities because this will help ensure that graduates are equipped with the knowledge, skills and values that will enable them to work in their respective field.

### **THEORETICAL GROUNDING**

The theoretical grounding of this study is primarily anchored in the Human Capital Theory, which posits that education and training are vital investments that enhance individuals' skills, knowledge, and competencies, ultimately leading to improved economic outcomes for both individuals and society (Becker, 1993). In the context of Apayao State College (ASC), this theory suggests that the effectiveness of the Career Placement Services (CAP) directly influences students' employability and career success. By equipping graduates with essential skills and facilitating their transition into the workforce, ASC's CAP plays a crucial role in fostering human capital development within the region. The theory underscores the importance of aligning educational outcomes with labor market demands, thereby emphasizing the necessity for continuous investment in career services to enhance the competencies of graduates. This alignment not only enhances the individual employability of graduates but also contributes to the broader economic growth and social development of the community. By examining the relevance and effectiveness of ASC's CAP through the lens of Human Capital Theory, this study aims to identify areas for improvement and expansion in career services, ensuring that graduates are better prepared to meet the evolving challenges of the job market.

As an HEI, it has a functional Student Affairs and Services structure. The Student Affairs and Services Structure of ASC composed of academic support services: those that relate to student welfare, student development, and those that relate to institutional development and services (CMO No. 09, s. 2013). Student welfare services are essential services needed to ensure and promote the well-being of students. Student development services will be designed for exploration, enhancement, and development of the student's full potential for personal growth, leadership, and social responsibility through various institutional and student-initiated activities. Institutional Student Program and services designed to pro-actively respond to the necessary shelter, foods, shelter, and safety concerns of students, including students with special needs and disabilities. Students are the reason for the establishment of the learning institution. Thus, the school has the responsibility to support the family and other social institutions in the development of the total personality of the students. Towards this end, a program of student services designed as an integral part of institutional effectiveness. All activities should be well planned and implemented to assist the student in attaining his/her maximum potential and becoming a worthy contributor in his/her social environment (AACCUP Instrument, 2014).

### **CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

The Career and Placement services rendered by Apayao State College are embedded in the guidance and counseling office. Since it is embedded, the said program is somewhat not given more time and budget considering the fact that ASC do not have yet a permanent guidance counselor to seat in the office. With this scenario, the College should allocate budget for it for the services to be well implemented. Apayao State College is the only higher learning institution in the province of Apayao. It has ten (10) undergraduate programs namely: Bachelor in Secondary Education (BSE), Bachelor in Elementary Education (BEED), Bachelor in Technical Teacher Education (BTTE), Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (BSCE), Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology (BSIT) Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA), Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management (BSHRM), Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BS Info Tech), Bachelor Science in Forestry (BSF) and Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA). It also has two (2) graduate programs, which are the Master of Arts in Education (MAED) and Master in Public Administration (MPA).

True to its mission which is committed to providing holistic development of citizen by delivering quality and innovative instruction, active research, responsive community engagement, and entrepreneurship to prime development of Apayao Province and the Cordillera Administrative Region and its vision of empowering lives and communities through stewardship for cultural sensitivity and biodiversity. Hence, this piece of research enables the administrators, faculty members, non-teaching personnel, students, alumni, parents, and stakeholders to be part of its growth. Through a study on the development of career and placement program of Apayao State College.

Apayao State College is an educational institution that responds to the changing demands of society. From its humble beginnings on July 1, 1971, it has grown into a premier state college upon its separation from Kalinga in 1995. Through legislative measures enacted in Congress, Republic Act 8563 brought into fruition the ideals of higher education in the province of Apayao, through Apayao State College. At present, teacher education student has their pre-service teaching within the local schools; information technology, business administration, civil engineering, hotel and restaurant students have their on-the-job trainings or work immersions locally; while, the agriculture students have opportunity to international work immersion under the agro-studies in Israel.

Apayao State College needs to formulate and enhance the Career and Placement Program not only to comply with the recommendations of accrediting agencies like Commission on Higher Education (CHED) - Certificate of Program Compliance (COPC) and Accrediting Agency for Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACUP). This is a relevant study that will provide meaning to the degree programs offered by the college in response to the needs of the province and the region. In fact, the researcher was given the green light by the College Administration to pursue research not only for such purpose but to advocate student achievements.

Moreover, the college though considerably young, in its twenty-one (25) years of existence since 1998, has produced considerable number of graduates across its program offerings. This study will contribute to the enhancement and development of the Career and Placement services rendered by the College. Likewise, it will be more responsive to the needs of the community and industry partners as they are the future employers of the graduates that Apayao State College will be producing over the years. Thus, this study is timely to provide basis and recommendations in the development of the needed career and placement program for ASC.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The research study assessed the existing Career and Placement (CAP) services of Apayao State College. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the existing status of the Career and Placement services of ASC as regards:
  - 1.1. Organizational Structure
  - 1.2. Manpower resources
  - 1.3. Office and equipment and supplies
2. What are the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) with regard to the implementation of the existing career and placement program of ASC?
3. How relevant is the Career Placement services as assessed by the following?
  - 3.1. College Administrators
  - 3.2. Faculty
  - 3.3. Non-teaching Personnel
  - 3.4. Students
  - 3.5. Parents
  - 3.6. Alumni
  - 3.7. Partner Agencies
4. What suggestions and recommendations from the findings can be integrated in the existing Career and Placement program of ASC?

#### **METHOD**

##### **Research Design**

The researcher employed in the study the mixed method approach in which the qualitative and quantitative research designs. A quantitative approach was used to determine the responses of the participants on the relevance of the existing career and placement services of Apayao State College, on the other hand, the qualitative method was employed to determine the responses of the participants on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and treats, also the recommendations and suggestions of participants for the development of Career and Placement Program of Apayao State College.

**Participants of the Study**

The participants of the study include the following: Administrators; Faculty members; non-teaching personnel; stakeholders; parents of students; alumni; and the fourth-year students of the ten (10) degree programs of Apayao State College of both Conner and Luna Campuses. The curricular programs included are the following: Bachelor of Secondary Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, and Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology, Bachelor in Technical Teacher Education, BS in Civil Engineering and BS in Hotel and Restaurant Management and Bachelor of Science in Forestry.

*Table 1. Distribution of Sampling Size*

<b>Classification of Participants</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>
Administrators	47
Faculty Members	71
Non-teaching staff	18
Stakeholders (line agencies)	50
Alumni	50
Parents	50
Students	308
Total	594

**Instrumentation**

The researcher used a self-made survey questionnaire as the primary gathering tool in generating the needed information from the participants. There was one set of questionnaires that was used to generate information from the participants. The researcher utilized a questionnaire patterned from the CHED CMO no.9 s. 2013 particularly on career and placement services. The questionnaire consists of two (2) parts that includes Part I: was the relevance of the existing career and placement services of Apayao State College, and Part II: a self-guide questions to solicit the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and treats and recommendations and suggestions in development of career and placement program of college. The following participants includes administrators, faculty members, non-teaching, stakeholders/alumni, parents and students.

**Data Gathering Procedures**

To gather the data pertinent to this study, the following The researcher secured permission and endorsement from the College President of Apayao State College of both Campuses (Luna and Conner) to conduct the study. Upon approval of the said request letters to different programs, heads received letters requesting permission to gather data from the students. Informed consent was given to the participants before data gathering and giving them the assurance that all information gathered was treated with the utmost confidentiality. The researcher scheduled a focal group discussion to identified participants to solicit the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and treats of the existing Career and Placement Services of the College and utilize this to the enhancement of the development plan of the career and placement program of the College.

**Data Analysis**

Data gathered from the survey were analyzed and treated using the following statistical tools: (1) The frequency count and percentage were used to describe the relevance of the existing career and placement services of the College; (2) Ranking and narration were applied in treating the responses of participants in the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and treats, likewise in the recommendations and suggestions for the proposed development plan of the Career and Placement Program of Apayao State College. To assess the relevance of the existing career and development program of the Apayao State College, it employed 5 point Likert scale, with 1 as the lowest and 5 as the highest with the adjectives used in this scale are "Very Relevant," "Relevant," "Moderately Relevant," "Slightly Relevant," and "Irrelevant."

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**1. What is the existing status of the Career and Placement services of ASC as regards to Organizational Structure, Manpower resources, Office and equipment and supplies, and Organizational Structure?**

To assess the existing status of Career and Placement services at Apayao State College (ASC), a documentary analysis methodology is applicable, as it involves examining relevant documents and records that provide insights into the organizational structure, manpower resources, office space and equipment, and overall effectiveness of these services. The analysis reveals that ASC's Student Affairs and Services (SAS) office, responsible for various non-academic functions, is managed by a Director for Student Affairs and Services overseeing two campuses. However, challenges such as staffing limitations—with a reliance on temporary workers in the Guidance Office and no dedicated positions for Career and Placement services—impact service continuity and effectiveness. Furthermore, the SAS office is inadequately equipped and lacks essential

resources, with staff using personal devices, which hinders productivity. The physical infrastructure is insufficient for the student population, leading to compromised service delivery. Addressing these areas through establishing dedicated offices, securing permanent staffing, and enhancing resources and training will be crucial in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of ASC's Career and Placement services.

Apayao State College (ASC) is committed to enhancing its educational services to meet student demands and adhere to the standards set by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), ISO standards, and other accrediting organizations. With the aim of transitioning into a university and becoming a center of excellence, the college's Student Affairs and Services (SAS) office plays a crucial role in addressing student needs through various non-academic services that promote holistic development, including physical, emotional, social, and moral growth. These services are categorized into three primary areas: Student Welfare Services, which encompasses guidance and counseling, career and job placement, and economic enterprise development; Student Development Services, focusing on student activities and leadership training; and Institutional Student Programs and Services, which provide essential services like admissions, scholarships, health services, and support for students with special needs.

The SAS office is managed by a designated Director for Student Affairs and Services (DSAS), overseeing both the Conner and Luna campuses. However, staffing limitations pose significant challenges, as the Guidance Office relies on two temporary workers who are not eligible for permanent positions, thereby hindering service continuity. Additionally, Career and Placement services are integrated within Guidance Services, lacking a dedicated permanent position, which may dilute effectiveness as the OIC-Guidance Counselors juggle multiple roles. Staffing is further strained by the fact that the only permanent positions are in the health office, which includes three registered nurses. This reliance on temporary staffing, combined with a high student-to-staff ratio, complicates the delivery of comprehensive and specialized support services.

Office space and equipment also present challenges for the SAS office, located within the Student Services Building on the Conner Campus and the RDE Building on the Luna Campus. The existing infrastructure is inadequate for the approximately 1,500 students on the main campus and 3,000 on the Luna campus, impacting service delivery. The SAS office lacks essential office equipment, with staff members relying on personal devices to fulfill their duties, which diminishes productivity. Furthermore, the absence of necessary resources like laptops, televisions, sound systems, and psychological testing materials limits the quality of services provided.

To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Career and Placement services at ASC, several recommendations are proposed. Firstly, establishing a dedicated office for the Career and Placement Program will facilitate specialized services and resource allocation. Secondly, securing permanent positions for career and placement officers will ensure stability and continuity in service delivery. Additionally, allocating sufficient resources for office space, equipment, and testing materials will enhance service quality and efficiency. Investing in the expansion of office spaces is also essential to accommodate the growing student population and improve service accessibility. Finally, providing training and professional development opportunities for SAS staff will equip them with the latest knowledge and skills in career services. By addressing these areas, Apayao State College can strengthen its Career and Placement services, supporting the holistic development of its students and enhancing their career pathways.

**2. What is the relevance of the existing career and placement program of Apayao State College among administrators, non-teaching personnel, faculty members, alumni, parents, stakeholders, and students as regards to Career, and Placement?**

The Table 2 provides the mean results of the relevance of the existing Career and Placement Program of Apayao State College (ASC) as perceived by different stakeholders: administrators, non-teaching staff, faculty, alumni, parents, stakeholders, and students. The mean scores are presented for each indicator on a scale of 1 to 5, with corresponding adjectival descriptions. Overall, the mean scores indicate that the stakeholders perceive the Career and Placement Program at ASC to be highly relevant (VR) across all indicators. The overall mean scores range from 4.26 to 4.80, reflecting a positive perception of the program's effectiveness and alignment with stakeholders' expectations.

**Table 2.** Mean Results of the Relevance of the Existing Career and Placement Program of Apayao State College (Career)

Indicators	Administrators (n=47)	Non-teaching (n=18)	Faculty (n=71)	Alumni (50)	Parents (n=50)	Stakeholders (n=50)	Students (n=308)
Conducts psychological test to assist students in	3.85 (R)	4.16 (R)	4.26 (VR)	4.76 (VR)	4.02 (R)	4.78 (VR)	4.79 (VR)

discovering their line of interest through the conduct of admission test on career preference before enrolment and series of psychological testing like mental ability test and school ability test.							
Provides assistance to students in career and job placement by conducting seminar – workshop, symposium and conferences and growth sessions on career guidance and labor market information like how to handle interviews, the proper manners and dress code.	3.85 (R)	4.27 (VR)	4.19 (R)	4.90 (VR)	4.02 (R)	4.76 (VR)	4.62 (VR)
Assists in preparation of application letter, resume and packaging their documents for applying work	4.91 VR	4.11 R	4.3 VR	4.96 VR	4.16 R	4.10 R	4.60 VR
Provides accessible information materials on career and job opportunities posted on bulletin boards like fliers and some related articles or reading materials.	4.8 (VR)	4.60 (VR)	4.40 (VR)	4.76 (VR)	3.94 (R)	4.08 (R)	4.01 (R)
Extends assistance to students in coping with their emotional, personal, intellectual, social and spiritual concerns/problems in life through individual or group counseling to develop proper attitude towards work and knowledge and skills for vocation and career so they can develop a keen awareness and appreciation of the occupational needs and opportunities.	4.04 (R)	4.27 (VR)	4.26 (VR)	4.54 (VR)	4.96 (VR)	4.00 (R)	4.54 (VR)
Provides linkages with other line agencies (public and private) to help our graduating students find job opportunities by having Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by exposing them to actual work experiences like work immersion, practicum, On the Job-Training (OJT).	4.12 (R)	4.22 (VR)	4.56 (VR)	4.78 (VR)	4.02 (R)	3.84 (R)	4.44 (VR)
The College designated an Alumni coordinator to follow up graduate's job performance by	4.95 (VR)	4.22 (VR)	4.47 (VR)	4.90 (VR)	3.96 (R)	4.60 (VR)	4.58 (VR)

keeping updated alumni directory and conducting tracer studies.							
Overall Mean	4.36 (VR)	4.26 (VR)	4.35 (VR)	4.80 (VR)	4.15 (R)	4.31 (VR)	4.51 (VR)

Legend: The scale used includes the following adjectival descriptions: a score of 5 (4.20-5.00) is interpreted as Very Relevant (VR), 4 (3.40-4.19) as Relevant (R), 3 (2.60-3.39) as Moderately Relevant (MR), 2 (1.80-2.59) as Slightly Relevant (SR), and 1 (1.00-1.79) as Irrelevant (IR).

The Career and Placement Program at Apayao State College (ASC) has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from various stakeholders, indicating its significant relevance and effectiveness in preparing students for the job market. Indicator 2, which emphasizes the provision of seminars, workshops, and guidance sessions, garnered high mean scores ranging from 3.85 to 4.90 (R to VR) across all stakeholder groups. This demonstrates a collective acknowledgment of the value these activities bring in enhancing students' career readiness. Similarly, Indicator 3, focusing on assisting students with application letters, resumes, and document packaging, also received impressive scores between 4.10 and 4.96 (R to VR), reflecting the stakeholders' recognition of the importance of these practical skills in improving employability.

While Indicator 4, which pertains to the availability of accessible information materials on career and job opportunities, received high ratings from administrators, non-teaching staff, faculty, and alumni (4.40 to 4.80), it was rated slightly lower by parents, stakeholders, and students (3.94 to 4.08). This suggests a need to enhance the visibility and accessibility of such materials to better serve these groups. Meanwhile, Indicator 5, which addresses the provision of counseling services for personal and career-related concerns, received high scores ranging from 4.00 to 4.96 (R to VR) across all stakeholder groups, indicating a shared understanding of the importance of emotional and personal support in students' professional development.

Indicator 6, focused on establishing partnerships with external organizations for job opportunities and work experiences, yielded varying scores, from 3.84 to 4.78 (R to VR), highlighting the necessity for further collaboration to enhance internship and job placement prospects. In contrast, Indicator 7, which involves the college's alumni coordinator tracking graduates' job performance, received strong support, with scores ranging from 4.22 to 4.95 (VR), emphasizing the stakeholders' recognition of the value of alumni engagement in evaluating the program's success.

Overall, the data indicates that the Career and Placement Program is highly regarded by its stakeholders, who appreciate its contributions to career evaluations, hands-on training, counseling services, and alumni participation. However, there are areas for improvement, particularly in enhancing the accessibility of career information and fostering stronger linkages with external organizations to broaden opportunities for students. By addressing these areas, ASC can refine its Career and Placement Program to better align with the needs and expectations of its stakeholders, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for students. These findings reflect a positive perception of the program's effectiveness while providing a roadmap for future enhancements that could significantly benefit all parties involved.

**Relevance of the existing Career and Placement Program of Apayao State College (ASC) specifically focusing on placements**

Table 3 presents the mean results of the relevance of the existing Career and Placement Program of Apayao State College (ASC) specifically focusing on placements. The table provides the mean scores for each indicator, as perceived by different stakeholder groups, including administrators, non-teaching staff, faculty, alumni, parents, stakeholders, and students. The mean scores are categorized into adjectival descriptions ranging from Very Relevant (VR) to Irrelevant (IR). Overall, the mean scores indicate that the stakeholders perceive the placements aspect of the Career and Placement Program at ASC to be highly relevant (VR) across all indicators. The overall mean scores range from 4.26 to 4.80, reflecting a positive perception of the program's effectiveness in facilitating job placements for graduates.

**Table 3.** Mean Results of the Relevance of the Existing Career and Placement Services of Apayao State College (Placements)

Indicators	Administrators (n=47)	Non-teaching (n=18)	Faculty (n=71)	Alumni (50)	Parents (n=50)	Stakeholders (n=50)	Students (n=308)
The College establish linkages with different companies to ensure that our graduates meet industry demands.	4.89 (VR)	4.55 (VR)	4.40 (VR)	4.76 (VR)	3.80 (R)	4.10 (R)	4.16 (R)

Placement of graduates on the job which is made available in coordination with government and NGO's	4.90 (VR)	4.16 (R)	4.78 (VR)	4.92 (VR)	4.00 (R)	3.92 (R)	4.07 (R)
Job posting (online, on bulletin boards, etc.) which contains relevant information for graduates seeking employment.	4.04 (R)	3.94 (R)	4.61 (VR)	4.96 (VR)	3.94 (R)	4.16 (R)	4.12 (R)
Overall Mean	4.36 (VR)	4.26 (VR)	4.35 (VR)	4.80 (VR)	4.15 (R)	4.31 (VR)	4.51 (VR)

*Legend: The scale used includes the following adjectival descriptions: a score of 5 (4.20-5.00) is interpreted as Very Relevant (VR), 4 (3.40-4.19) as Relevant (R), 3 (2.60-3.39) as Moderately Relevant (MR), 2 (1.80-2.59) as Slightly Relevant (SR), and 1 (1.00-1.79) as Irrelevant (IR).*

The findings from Table 2 indicate that the existing Career and Placement Program at Apayao State College (ASC) is perceived as highly relevant by various stakeholder groups, particularly concerning job placements. The mean scores for each indicator demonstrate a strong consensus on the program's effectiveness in facilitating placements for graduates. The overall mean scores range from 4.26 to 4.80, categorizing the placements aspect of the program as Very Relevant (VR) across all indicators, except for the perception of parents and stakeholders regarding the establishment of linkages with companies, which received a Relevant (R) rating of 3.80 and 4.10, respectively.

Among the indicators, the highest scores were observed for the establishment of linkages with different companies (mean score of 4.89 from administrators and 4.90 from non-teaching staff), indicating a robust belief that ASC effectively collaborates with industry partners to meet market demands. This aligns with the literature suggesting that strong connections between educational institutions and industry play a crucial role in enhancing graduates' employability (Meyer & Rivas, 2020). Moreover, the indicator related to job placement in coordination with government and NGOs also received high ratings (4.90 from administrators and 4.92 from alumni), further reflecting the stakeholders' appreciation for the program's proactive approach in securing employment opportunities for graduates (Bhandari et al., 2022).

However, while the job posting channels scored moderately, particularly among parents and non-teaching staff (3.94 to 4.04), this suggests a potential area for improvement in ensuring that graduates receive timely and accessible information on job opportunities. The importance of effective communication channels in disseminating job postings, highlighting that graduates who are well-informed about available positions are more likely to secure employment. The overall positive perception of the Career and Placement Program implies a strong foundation upon which ASC can build further enhancements, particularly in refining job posting strategies and increasing outreach efforts to parents and stakeholders.

The relevance of the ASC Career and Placement Program is evident, with stakeholders recognizing its contributions to job placements and career readiness. Addressing areas for improvement, particularly in enhancing communication about job opportunities, can further strengthen the program's impact and support graduates in navigating the job market successfully. By continuously refining its strategies and leveraging industry connections, ASC can enhance its Career and Placement Program to better serve its students and the wider community.

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in the Implementation of the Career and Placement Services of ASC**

Table 4 presents the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in the Implementation of the Career and Placement Services of ASC. The ASC's Career and Placement Services are well-positioned with a strong foundation and several opportunities for enhancement, addressing the identified weaknesses and external threats is crucial. By leveraging its strengths and strategically capitalizing on emerging opportunities, ASC can refine its career services to better serve students and align with evolving industry demands.

**Table 4.** Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in the Implementation of the Career and Placement Services of ASC

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Established reputation and credibility of Apayao State College (ASC) as an educational institution. Collaborative partnerships with local industries and employers. Dedicated career services staff and faculty members. Strong alumni network and engagement. Supportive administration committed to career development initiatives. Availability of resources and facilities to support career and placement activities.	Limited funding and resources for expanding career and placement services. Inadequate staffing and workload distribution within the career services department. Limited visibility and awareness of career and placement program among students and faculty. Lack of comprehensive career assessment and counseling services. Inconsistent follow-up and tracking of alumni employment outcomes. Limited integration of technology in career services delivery.	Growing demand for skilled professionals in various industries in the region. Collaboration with local government agencies and organizations to enhance job placement opportunities. Integration of technology and online platforms to expand reach and accessibility of career services. Development of partnerships with regional and national industries to increase internship and employment opportunities. Enhancement of alumni engagement and mentorship programs. Increased emphasis on entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities for graduates.	Economic downturns and market fluctuations affecting job availability. Competition from other educational institutions in attracting employers and industry partnerships. Changes in labor market trends and requirements. Limited availability of employment opportunities within the local region. Reliance on external factors, such as government policies and funding, that may impact the implementation of career and placement programs. Rapid technological advancements requiring continuous adaptation and upskilling of students and graduates.

*As to Strengths*, the implementation of career and placement services at ASC demonstrates several strengths that contribute to its solid foundation. One notable strength is the established reputation and credibility of ASC as a reputable educational institution, which can attract employers and industry partners, enhancing opportunities for collaborative partnerships. The college's partnerships with local industries and employers facilitate internships, job placements, and industry-specific training, providing students with valuable practical experience that increases their employability. Additionally, the dedication of career services staff and faculty members is a significant asset, as their commitment to career development ensures the delivery of quality services and support to students. The strong alumni network and engagement play a crucial role in mentorship, offering valuable guidance and creating a sense of community. Furthermore, the supportive administration committed to career development initiatives and the availability of resources and facilities to support these activities strengthen the overall effectiveness of the career and placement program.

*Looking at its weaknesses*, despite its strengths, the career and placement services at ASC face several weaknesses that require attention. Limited funding and resources significantly restrict the expansion and enhancement of these services, preventing the introduction of new initiatives that could engage students more effectively. The inadequate staffing and workload distribution within the career services department also present challenges, limiting the department's capacity to provide personalized support to students. Another concern is the limited visibility and awareness of the career and placement program among students and faculty, which affects the program's utilization. The absence of comprehensive career assessment and counseling services hinders students' ability to make informed career decisions based on their skills and interests. Additionally, inconsistent follow-up and tracking of alumni employment outcomes reduce the program's capacity to measure its success and support continuous improvement. Lastly, the limited integration of technology in delivering career services hampers the program's ability to engage with students in a digitally evolving world.

The analysis reveals several *opportunities* that ASC can leverage to enhance its career and placement services. There is a growing demand for skilled professionals in various industries within the region, which presents an opportunity for ASC to align its services with the needs of the local job market. By collaborating with local government agencies and organizations, ASC can enhance job placement opportunities and strengthen connections with employers. Integrating technology and online platforms into career services can expand the reach and accessibility of these services, allowing students to access resources remotely. Developing

partnerships with regional and national industries can also increase internship and employment opportunities for students. Additionally, enhancing alumni engagement and mentorship programs could provide valuable insights and support to students as they navigate their career paths. The increased emphasis on entrepreneurship and self-employment offers ASC the opportunity to integrate entrepreneurial education into its programs, fostering a culture of innovation and self-sufficiency among graduates.

Several *threats could* potentially undermine the effectiveness of ASC's career and placement services. Economic downturns and market fluctuations pose a significant risk to job availability for graduates, which may limit their career opportunities. ASC also faces competition from other educational institutions in attracting employers and industry partnerships, which could impact its ability to secure placement opportunities for its students. Changes in labor market trends and requirements necessitate continuous monitoring and adaptation of the curriculum to meet evolving demands. The limited availability of employment opportunities within the local region is another threat, which could restrict students' career options. Reliance on external factors, such as government policies and funding, further complicates the sustainability of career services. Lastly, the rapid pace of technological advancements requires continuous upskilling of students and graduates to remain competitive in the job market.

The findings from the SWOT analysis provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the career and placement services at ASC. The strengths identified suggest that ASC has a solid foundation on which to build its career services, with key assets like strong industry partnerships, a dedicated career services team, and active alumni engagement. However, the weaknesses highlight the need for increased resources, staffing, visibility, and the integration of technology to address the challenges faced by the program. The opportunities identified indicate that ASC can significantly enhance its career and placement services by aligning with industry needs, expanding its reach through technology, and fostering stronger connections with employers and alumni. Proactively addressing these opportunities could lead to improved student career outcomes and a stronger presence in the regional job market. Conversely, the threats outlined emphasize the importance of adaptability and resilience in the face of economic fluctuations, competition, and changing labor market demands. ASC must develop strategies to stay ahead of technological trends and secure sustainable funding to ensure the continuity of its career services.

**What suggestions and recommendations from the findings can be integrated in the existing Career and Placement program of ASC?**

Table 5 presents the list of suggestions and recommendations from the findings that can be integrated in the existing Career and Placement program of Apayao State College. Strengthen Career Exploration Workshops. The results suggest that strengthening career exploration workshops is seen as valuable by students and individuals who have personally benefited from them. Participants emphasize the importance of providing comprehensive information, interactive and hands-on activities, guest speakers from various industries, and resources that help students understand their interests and career options. The workshops should incorporate self-assessment activities to help students identify their strengths and align them with suitable career paths. It is also recommended to introduce students to emerging industries and non-traditional careers to broaden their perspectives. Practical advice on navigating the job market, alumni speakers sharing their experiences, and continuous support throughout a student's academic journey are also highlighted as important aspects of effective career exploration workshops. These insights emphasize the need to provide engaging and informative workshops that empower students to make informed decisions about their future careers.

**Table 5.** Suggestions and Recommendations from the Findings can be integrated in the existing Career and Placement program of ASC

<i>List of Suggestions and Recommendations</i>	<i>Description of the Suggestions and Recommendations</i>	<i>Significant Statements from the Participants</i>
<i>Strengthen Career Exploration Workshops</i>	<i>Enhance the career exploration workshops by incorporating more interactive and hands-on activities, guest speakers from various industries, and resources that provide comprehensive information on different career paths. This will help students gain a better understanding of their interests, skills, and career options.</i>	<i>"I believe that career exploration workshops are essential because they provide students with the opportunity to explore different career options and gain a better understanding of their interests and strengths." "I have personally benefited from career exploration workshops in the past. They helped me discover my passion for graphic design and guided me in choosing the right career path." "Career exploration workshops provide valuable resources and</i>

		<p>information about various industries, job roles, and potential career paths. They help students make informed decisions about their future and set realistic goals."</p> <p>"I think career exploration workshops should be interactive and hands-on. It would be great to have guest speakers from different industries share their experiences and provide insights into their respective fields."</p> <p>"These workshops should also incorporate self-assessment activities, such as personality and interest inventories, to help students identify their strengths and align them with suitable career options."</p> <p>"I believe that career exploration workshops should not be limited to traditional career paths. It's important to introduce students to emerging industries and non-traditional careers to broaden their horizons."</p> <p>"These workshops should provide students with practical advice on how to navigate the job market, such as resume writing, interview skills, and networking strategies. This will better prepare them for their future careers."</p>
		<p>"Career exploration workshops should encourage students to reflect on their values and how they align with different career paths. This will help them find fulfilling careers that align with their personal beliefs."</p> <p>"It would be beneficial to have alumni speakers who have successfully pursued different career paths share their experiences and offer insights into their respective industries. This can inspire and motivate students."</p> <p>"Career exploration workshops should not be a one-time event but an ongoing process throughout a student's academic journey. It's important to provide continuous support and resources as students refine their career goals and make decisions."</p>
<p><i>Expand Skill Development Trainings</i></p>	<p><i>Offer a wider range of skill development training courses that align with the current demands of the job market. Identify key skills that employers are seeking and provide targeted training to help students</i></p>	<p><i>"I believe that expanding skill development trainings is crucial because it equips students with the practical skills and knowledge necessary for the workforce."</i></p>

	<p><i>develop and enhance these skills. This could include workshops on communication skills, problem-solving, leadership, and technological proficiency</i></p>	<p><i>"I have personally benefited from skill development training in the past. They helped me enhance my communication and problem-solving skills, which are essential in any professional setting."</i></p> <p><i>"Expanding skill development training can help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. It provides students with hands-on experiences and opportunities to practice skills in a supportive environment."</i></p> <p><i>"These trainings should cover a wide range of skills, including technical skills specific to different industries, as well as transferable skills such as teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking."</i></p>
		<p><i>"I believe that incorporating industry-relevant certifications and qualifications into skill development trainings can enhance students' employability and give them a competitive edge in the job market."</i></p> <p><i>"Skill development training should be designed to align with the current and future demands of the job market. Regular assessment and updates to the training programs will ensure that students are equipped with the latest skills and knowledge."</i></p> <p><i>"It would be beneficial to include practical projects or simulations in skill development trainings, allowing students to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world scenarios."</i></p> <p><i>"Skill development training should also focus on fostering a growth mindset and encouraging continuous learning. This will empower students to adapt to new technologies and industry trends throughout their careers."</i></p> <p><i>"Collaboration with industry professionals and experts can greatly enhance the effectiveness of skill development training. Inviting guest speakers and organizing industry-specific workshops will provide students with valuable insights and networking opportunities."</i></p> <p><i>"It's important to create a</i></p>

		<p><i>supportive and inclusive learning environment during skill development training. Providing feedback, mentorship, and opportunities for self-reflection can help students identify their strengths and areas for improvement."</i></p>
<p><i>Enhance Internship and Experiential Opportunities Learning</i></p>	<p><i>Strengthen partnerships with local industries and organizations to provide more diverse and meaningful internship and experiential learning opportunities for students. Ensure that these opportunities align with students' career goals and offer valuable real-world experiences that enhance their employability</i></p>	<p><i>"I strongly believe that enhancing internship and experiential learning opportunities is crucial because it provides students with real-world exposure and practical experiences in their chosen field."</i></p> <p><i>"I had the opportunity to participate in an internship during my studies, and it was a transformative experience. It allowed me to apply the knowledge I gained in the classroom to real-life situations, and I developed essential skills and professional connections."</i></p> <p><i>"Enhancing internship and experiential learning opportunities can bridge the gap between academic knowledge and workplace expectations. It enables students to develop industry-specific skills, gain insights into their future career paths, and build a professional network."</i></p> <p><i>"Internships provide a valuable platform for students to explore different career options and make informed decisions about their future. It allows them to test their interests, strengths, and suitability for specific roles or industries."</i></p> <p><i>"Having access to diverse internship and experiential learning opportunities can enhance students' employability. It demonstrates to potential employers that they have practical experience and are well-prepared for the demands of the job."</i></p> <p><i>"Internships also provide an opportunity for students to develop important soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. These skills are highly valued by employers and can significantly contribute to a student's professional growth."</i></p>
		<p><i>"By enhancing internship and experiential learning</i></p>

		<p><i>opportunities, students can establish professional connections and network with industry professionals. These connections can open doors to future job opportunities and provide valuable mentorship."</i></p> <p><i>"It is important to ensure that internships are well-structured and provide meaningful learning experiences. Establishing clear learning objectives, providing guidance and support, and offering opportunities for reflection and feedback are key to maximizing the benefits of internships."</i></p> <p><i>"Collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners is crucial in enhancing internship and experiential learning opportunities. Building strong partnerships can ensure that students have access to a wide range of opportunities and can learn from experienced professionals."</i></p> <p><i>"Providing financial support or incentives for students during internships can help reduce barriers to participation and ensure that all students have equal access to these valuable learning experiences."</i></p>
<i>Enhance Career Counseling and Guidance Services</i>	<i>Provide personalized career counseling and guidance services to students, offering individualized support in exploring career options, setting career goals, and developing career plans. Implement regular workshops and one-on-one sessions with career counselors to address students' career-related concerns and provide guidance on academic and career pathways.</i>	
<i>Expand Job Placement Assistance</i>	<i>Develop stronger partnerships with employers and establish a robust job placement assistance program. This may include organizing job fairs, networking events, and career expos to connect students with potential employers. Offer resume writing workshops, interview preparation sessions, and job search resources to enhance students' job placement success</i>	
<i>Strengthen Alumni Networking and Mentorship</i>	<i>Create a platform or network that facilitates connections between current students and alumni. Encourage alumni to participate in mentorship programs, career talks, and networking events to provide guidance and support to students in their career development. This can help students gain valuable insights, expand their professional networks, and access potential</i>	

	<i>job opportunities</i>	
<i>Enhance Professional Development Workshops</i>	<i>Offer a wide range of professional development workshops that cater to the needs and interests of students. These workshops can focus on industry-specific skills, career advancement strategies, entrepreneurship, and personal branding. Ensure that the workshops are interactive, practical, and provide opportunities for students to apply their learning</i>	
<i>Improve Career Resource Center</i>	<i>Upgrade the Career Resource Center with up-to-date resources, career-related materials, and online platforms that provide easy access to job postings, internship opportunities, career guides, and professional development resources. Create a user-friendly online portal where students can access relevant information and tools to support their career exploration and job search process</i>	
<i>Strengthen Alumni Employment Tracking</i>	<i>Establish a systematic process for tracking the employment outcomes of graduates. Collect data on alumni employment status, job titles, industries, and job satisfaction levels. Use this information to improve the Career and Placement program and to provide valuable insights to current students regarding career prospects and pathways</i>	
<i>Emphasize Evaluation and Continuous Improvement</i>	<i>Implement regular evaluations of the Career and Placement program to assess its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Use the findings from evaluations to drive continuous improvement efforts and make data-informed decisions. Engage stakeholders, including students, alumni, employers, and faculty, in the evaluation process to gather diverse perspectives and feedback.</i>	

***Expand Skill Development Trainings***

The results highlight the significance of expanding skill development training to equip students with practical skills and knowledge essential for the job market. Participants emphasized the benefits they personally gained from such training, particularly in communication and problem-solving skills. They emphasized the need for a diverse range of workshops, covering technical and transferable skills, to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. Incorporating industry-relevant certifications and qualifications was seen as vital to enhance employability and competitiveness. Regular assessment and updates to training programs were recommended to ensure alignment with job market demands. Practical projects and simulations were suggested to provide hands-on experience, while fostering a growth mindset and encouraging continuous learning to adapt to industry trends. Collaboration with industry professionals, guest speakers, and workshops were seen as valuable for valuable insights and networking opportunities. A supportive and inclusive learning environment, with feedback, mentorship, and self-reflection, was identified as essential in helping students identify their strengths and areas for improvement throughout their skill development journey.

***Enhance Career Counseling and Guidance Services***

The results highlight the importance of enhancing career counseling and guidance services to provide personalized support to students in their career exploration and development. Participants emphasized the need for individualized attention to help students explore career options, set meaningful career goals, and develop concrete career plans. Regular workshops and one-on-one sessions with career counselors were identified as essential tools to address students' career-related concerns and offer guidance on academic and career pathways. By improving and expanding these services, the institution can better equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to make informed career decisions and confidently pursue their professional aspirations.

***Improve Career Resource Center***

The results indicate a strong need to improve the Career Resource Center by implementing upgrades with up-to-date resources, career-related materials, and user-friendly online platforms. Participants emphasized the importance of easy access to job postings, internship opportunities, career guides, and professional development resources to support students' career exploration and job search process effectively. A user-friendly online portal was seen as a crucial tool to provide students with relevant information and tools, enhancing their overall experience and success in navigating their career paths. By enhancing the Career Resource Center with these upgrades, students can gain better access to the resources they need, ultimately facilitating their journey towards successful career development and advancement.

#### ***Emphasize Evaluation and Continuous Improvement***

The results underscore the importance of emphasizing evaluation and continuous improvement in the Career and Placement program. Participants highlighted the need for regular evaluations to assess the program's effectiveness and identify areas for enhancement. Utilizing the findings from these evaluations was seen as crucial in driving continuous improvement efforts and making data-informed decisions. Involving various stakeholders, such as students, alumni, employers, and faculty, in the evaluation process was strongly recommended to gather diverse perspectives and feedback. This collaborative approach would foster a comprehensive understanding of the program's strengths and areas needing improvement, ultimately leading to a more effective and responsive Career and Placement program that better serves the needs of all stakeholders.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, the study has effectively developed a comprehensive Career and Placement Program for Apayao State College (ASC), aimed at enhancing student employability and career readiness. The program's strengths include ASC's solid reputation, industry partnerships, and committed staff, which support effective career development services. However, challenges such as limited funding, staffing issues, and insufficient technology integration need to be addressed. Opportunities exist to align career services with regional job market needs, expand industry partnerships, and focus on entrepreneurship education. To remain relevant in an evolving job market, ASC should implement proactive strategies to mitigate threats like economic fluctuations and technological advancements. The study also emphasizes the importance of expanding career counseling, offering skills development workshops, and maintaining a focus on hands-on experiences to build student confidence and adaptability. Continuous evaluation and updates to the program will ensure it meets the needs of both students and employers, ultimately supporting ASC's goal of becoming a university and a center of excellence in education.

To enhance its Career and Placement Program, Apayao State College (ASC) should consider establishing a dedicated Career and Placement office, distinct from Guidance Services, to ensure focused resource allocation, specialist personnel, and comprehensive career support. Addressing staffing challenges within the Student Affairs and Services (SAS) office is crucial to maintaining consistent service delivery. ASC should also prioritize gathering feedback from stakeholders through regular surveys and assessments to continuously refine the program. Additionally, it is recommended that ASC develop a strategic plan to address funding, staffing, and technology limitations while expanding industry partnerships and entrepreneurship education. Promoting the Career and Placement Program across all departments will ensure student awareness and engagement, ultimately preparing them for professional success.

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