

TRACER STUDY OF TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES OF CENTRAL MINDANAO COLLEGES

Marlon M. Abing, Fidel B. Ladra and Eric John M. Molina

ABSTRACT

The study's purpose was to examine the employment characteristics of teacher education graduates from the classes of 2015 to 2019. Specifically, to explore a graduate's perception of the relevance of their chosen program curriculum to employment, and the extent of the use of graduate attributes they learned at the college. A survey study design that is descriptive was utilized in the study with a random sample of 205 graduates identified as the primary study respondents. Based on the results, the majority of respondents were employed in a fulltime status. Graduates' current employment type were teachers. Moreover, graduates perceived the curriculum offered as relevant, and BEED and BSED major in English were found to be the most relevant degree that contribute the most to their employment. Knowledge and communication skills are the most useful workplace competencies. Students' college preparation has greatly aided their employment. Similar research may be undertaken in the future, which should include other school-related and employability variables not covered in the study.

Keywords: acquired competence, employment characteristics, teacher education graduates, the relevance of curriculum, tracer study.

INTRODUCTION

One of the primary functions of any Higher Educational Institution (HEI) is to produce excellent graduates who are prepared to enter the local and global labor market and contribute to the country's long-term growth. The major key drivers that HEIs are focused on are ensuring that graduates' skills and competence are aligned with global labor market demand for skilled employees (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009). Despite significant efforts by local and global development governments and groups to reduce unemployment, global graduate unemployment remains worse, with rates particularly high in emerging economies (Okojie, 2003). In the Philippines, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) 2019 report in terms of educational attainment, the unemployment rate for junior high school graduates was 28.2%, followed by college graduates at 20.9% and a college freshman at 8.2%. From the local perspective of the Philippines, there are a huge number of HEI graduates in the region who are unemployed and do not earn income to contribute to the well-being of their families and the economic development of the region (Austero, Armenia & Serião, 2013).

Hence, unemployment and underemployment among graduates are indeed huge problems that the world is facing today. The Commission of Higher Education (CHED), as part of the Philippine government's response, is constantly monitoring and reviewing each HEI's academic and nonacademic services to see if they match local and international standards. That is why one of the indicators that the CHED monitors is the graduate's employability. The Accrediting Agency in the Philippines, for example, requires documentation reports of graduate profiles as one of the documented requirements of higher education recognized bodies. Graduate employability is described as a person's capacity and desire to be and remain appealing in the global economy, or the relative possibilities of obtaining and maintaining certain types of work (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011). Employability of graduates, therefore, has become an issue that is not easy to be ignored in the global economy (Misra & Khurana, 2017).

For graduates to be employable, they need to possess the necessary competencies and skills that are flexible in the changing labor market. Understanding the employment characteristics and factors influencing graduate employment status is critical for HEIs (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin & Zehner, 2013). The tracer study is one of the academy's monitoring measures for keeping track of its graduates' performance at work, how effective and efficient they are at completing the duties allocated to them, and the level of expectations they meet in comparison to their employer's expectations (Aina & Moahi, 2019). Similarly, through HEIs' continuous revision of curricula and evaluation through Graduated Tracer Study, the changing demands of existing and potential employers in society were effectively accommodated and assessed (Cañizares, 2019). A study that provides significant input and information when evaluating a specific higher education institution in terms of their graduates' employability status and program outcome (De Ocampo, Bagano & Tan, 2012).

Central Mindanao Colleges is one of the HEIs in Region 12 that produces a large number of graduates each year. In response to the mandate of the CHED and alarming cases of unemployment and underemployment, this tracer study of the teacher education department was realized. The study will serve as a baseline for evaluating the college response to producing exceptional and competent teachers, as well as for better understanding the employability variable that associates with the employability of teacher education graduates. Furthermore, to examine the graduates' employment service profiles and considering the significance of characteristics associated with the school in job placement. Investigating the benefits and drawbacks of the services provided and determining strategies that will help improve the graduate's employability.

This paper examined the employment backgrounds of Central Mindanao Colleges' teacher education graduates, as well as their perceptions of the relevance of their selected program curriculum, and learned graduate attributes throughout their studies in the workplace. The study particularly aimed to attain the following research objectives. 1. To determine the graduates' demographic profile in terms of: 1.1 age; 1.2 sex; 1.3 civil status; 2. To determine the educational background of the graduates in terms of: 2.1 year graduated, 2.2 degree with its major, 2.3 Master's Degree and Doctorate Degree earned; 3. To find out the employment information of graduates in terms of 3.1 current employment status; 3.2 employment type; 3.3 organization type; 3.4 job related to the course of the college; 3.5 community work involvement; and 3.6 intent to stay in the same job; 4. To assess the reasons of program selection; and 5. To evaluate the learned useful graduate attributes on employment.

The theory of Human Capital of Schultz in 1969 formed the basis for this paper. This theory explains the relationship between a graduate's educational background and the labor market. Education gives marketable skills and expertise essential to employee productivity. Therefore, the more educated a worker is, they will have a greater number of available and open employment opportunities, as well as a higher income in the labor market (Cai, 2013). The human capital theory considers skills to be commodities, and it is founded on the assumption that a person will be able to invest in his or her studies since it will lead to more marketable qualities (Weber, 2002). Because technological advancements require a better educated workforce for the productive system to operate properly, these skills will be recognized by demand in the labor market. Becker (2002) stated that the knowledge and skills acquired through education have a direct impact on worker's productivity.

The present study assessed the graduate's employment characteristics and extent of contribution, relevance, and usefulness of the skills, training, and values that graduate acquired university employment. The theory explained the current study objectives of evaluating the graduates' competencies and skills obtained during their education for their employment experience. Figure 1 presents the graduate's demographic and employment variables used in the study. The researchers determined the distribution of graduates according to the different profile variables. It includes the evaluation of the graduate's perceived relevance and usefulness of the program's curriculum and the graduate attributes they learned in their employment. Graduate employment characteristics were also explored and investigated in terms of their initial and current employment. Descriptive statistical measurements were calculated to answer the study objectives. The study's findings provided important information to the college about the graduates' current status after graduation, as well as the quality of the academic curriculum and services provided by the college.

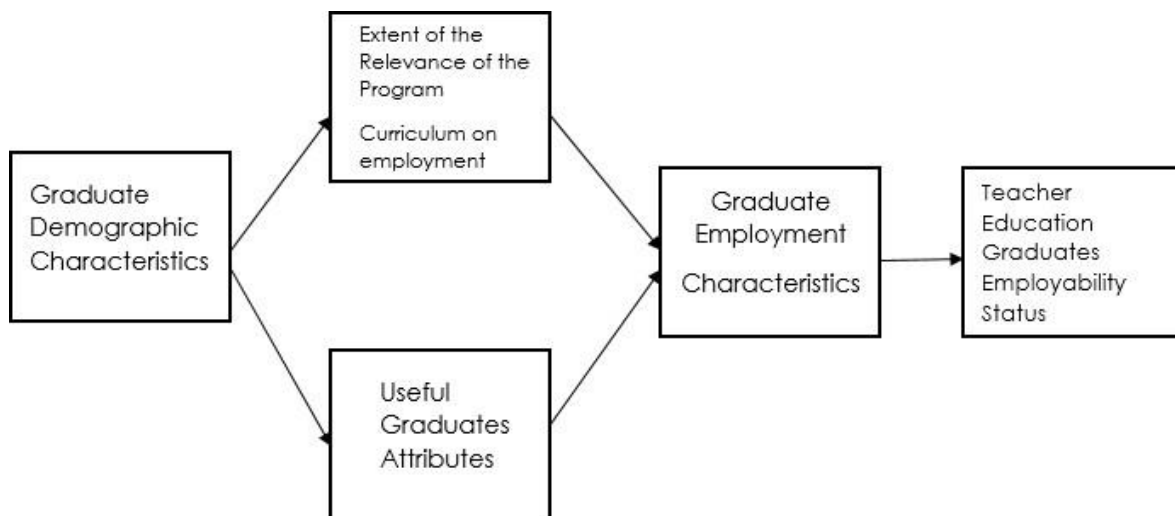


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram showing the Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODS

The researchers utilized a quantitative approach employing the descriptive survey research design (Nassaji, 2015 & Cox, 2016). The study's approach was considered suitable since the objective was to track graduates' associated employment characteristics and examine the relevance of the graduates' acquired skills, competence, and values, as well as the college curriculum program on their employment. A total of 438 teacher education graduates BEED and BSED majors in English, Filipino, Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies were the target respondents of the study who graduated in the academic year of 2015 to 2019. For the study, a sample of 205 students was chosen using the sample size formula for a finite population with a 5% margin of error, a 95% level of confidence, and a response distribution of 50% of the population [30 The graduate tracer study questionnaire, which was adopted from the Commission of Higher Education Department, was used in this study (CHED).

Some components of the questionnaire were revised to match the items with the study objectives. The questionnaire's items were all closed-ended and consisted of the following parts: Part I was concerned with the respondents' profile, which includes their age, sex, and civil status. Part II was concerned with educational background which includes year graduated, degree, and master's degree and doctorate degree earned. Part III was concerned with employment information which includes current employment status, employment type, organization type, job related, community involvement, and intent to stay in the same job. Part IV was all about reasons of the program selection; and Part V evaluated the graduates' learned useful graduate attributes in their jobs. Written approvals were acquired from the head of the College where the study was conducted before the start of the study. A letter request was sent to the office of the school President for approval. Then, another request letter was sent to the registrar to ask for the list of the graduates' batches from 2015 to 2019.

Personal distribution, telephone/cellphone connections, email addresses, and Facebook messaging with a letter informing the graduates of the study's purpose and requesting their involvement were all used to distribute the survey questionnaire. Voluntary participation of identified students' respondents was ensured. Also, for the ease of answering the online questionnaire, the researchers employed the Google form. The data collection process started in October 2021, until November 2022. After the data collection procedure, the data were recorded and tabulated and saved for analysis. Researchers calculated descriptive statistical measurements such as the frequency count, percentage, and ranking of frequency counts to explore the distribution of respondents according to profile, employment characteristics, and learned graduate attributes while study. All the analyses were done using Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Distribution of Graduates According to Profile

Graduates Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
21-25 years old	36	1.74%
26-30 years old	76	37.07%
31-35 years old	54	26.34%
36 -40 years old	21	10.24%
41-45 years old	18	8.78%
Sex		
Male	85	41.46
Female	120	58.54
Civil Status		
Single	135	65.85%
Married	67	32.68%
Widowed	2	0.98%

Note: n=205

Table I presents the college graduates distribution according to their age, sex, civil status, and civil status. The majority of the 205 samples (37.07%) were between the ages of 26 - 30. It was followed by 26.34% of graduates ranging in age from 31 to 35 years old. Most of the graduates at 58.54% were females, and 65.85% were single.

Table 2. Distribution of Graduates According to Educational Background

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Year Graduated		
2019-2020	21	10.24%
2018-2019	51	24.88%
2017-2018	72	35.12%
2016-2017	43	22.98%
2015-2016	18	8.78%
Major		
BEED	57	27.80%
English	54	26.34%
Filipino	36	17.56%
Mathematics	12	5.85%
History/Social Studies	28	13.36%
Science	18	8.78%
Earned Master's Degree	8	3.90%
Earned Doctorate Degree	2	0.98%

*Note: n=205

Presented in table 2, the study was mostly represented by the samples at 35.12% graduated in the graduation year of 2018, while there was only 8.78% of graduates

coming from the graduation year of 2016. Also, table 2 shows how graduates were distributed based on their on their degree and major. The majority of graduates were from the BEED program (27.80%), followed by graduates of BSED major in English (26.34%). Only 5.85% were mathematics major. On the other hand, 3.90% of the graduates earned master's degree while only 0.98% earned doctorate degree.

Table 3. Distribution of Graduates According to Employment Information

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Current Employment Status		
Working fulltime	97	47.31%
Working part-time but seeking fulltime	30	14.63%
Working part-time but not seeking fulltime	16	7.80%
Self-employed	44	21.46%
Not working and looking for a job	18	8.78%
Employment Type		
Teacher	139	67.80%
Principal/Administrator	12	5.85%
Others	54	26.84%
Organization Type		
Government	102	49.76%
Private	71	34.63%
NGO	32	15.61%
Job Related to the Course of CMC		
Yes	163	79.51%
No	42	20.49%
Community Work/Service Involvement		
Leader	32	15.61%
Member	173	84.39%
Intent to Stay in the same Job		
Yes	167	81.36%
No	38	18.54%

*Note: n=205

It can be gleaned in Table 3 the distribution of graduates according to employment information. The most of graduates (37.41%) find their employment working fulltime, followed by self-employed (21.46%). Only 8.78% and 7.80% not working and looking for a job and working part-time but not seeking fulltime respectively. For the employment type of graduates, a large number of graduates at 67.80% are in the job as teacher, and only 25.84 % are in the other type of employment. Only 5.85% are in the position of principal or administrators. A significant proportion of teacher education graduates were professionally employed, based on the findings of the study of (Aquino, Punongbayan, Macalaguim, et.al., 2015).

79.51% of the graduates perceived the relevance of their chosen program which means that all the learning areas were found by the graduates as relevant factors in their employment. Also, Ulla (2016) and Mahinay (2013) emphasizes the significance of practice teaching in preparing the graduates in becoming a teacher and its impact on

the performance of certain educational institutions. As to the community involvement of the graduates, 84.39% as members while only 15.61% as leaders. On other hand, majority of the graduates (81.36%) want to stay in the same job while 18.54% do not want stay in the same job.

Table 4. Distribution of Graduates According to Reasons of Program Selection

Reasons for taking the course	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Influence of Parents	117	32.96%	2
Peer Influence	61	17.32%	6
Inspired by Role Model	84	28.49%	4
Strong Passion for the Profession	87	34.20%	3
Prospect for Immediate Employment	52	16.76%	7
Status or Prestige of the Profession	49	16.20%	8
Availability of the Course Offering	75	25.58%	5
Affordability of the Family	123	35.20%	1
No particular choice.	43	15.64%	9

*Note: Multiple responses

Table 4 reveals the distribution of graduates according to their reasons for enrolling in the program at the college. Affordability of the family ranks number 1 as the primary reason for their program selection and are followed by influence of parents and the strong passion for the profession in the second and third rank respectively. The reasons for inspired by role model and availability of the course offering were at the fourth and fifth status. Peer influence ranks six while prospect for immediate employment is in the seventh rank. The least reasons for taking course were status or prestige of the profession and no particular choice at all.

Table 5. Learned Useful Graduate Attributes on Employment

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Life-Long Learning	73	35.61%	3
Knowledge	128	62.44%	1
Cultural Diversity	69	33.66%	5
Problem-Solving Skills	46	22.64%	6
Citizenship	71	34.63%	4
Communication skills	107	52.20%	2

*Note: Multiple Responses

Table 5 shows that among the graduate attributes learned by the graduates in the college, the knowledge skills at 62.44% ranks as number 1 which indicates that they perceived this skill to be very useful competence on employment. This was followed by the skills related communication at 52.20% and life-long learning at 31.61%. Further, the skills linked to citizenship and cultural diversity were ranked 4 and 5 respectively which

are also very useful learned competencies on the job. Problem-solving skills were the least chosen skills of the graduates that were useful in their employment. The results were supported by the studies of Clokie and Fourie (2016) and Bharathi (2016) that possessing good English and communication competencies were high demand and essential skills for graduates employment, while graduates with poor English and computer skills would make unemployed [39]. Also, similar findings were revealed in the tracer studies of Nagarajan (2013) and Celis, Festijo and Cueto (2018) that the most useful competencies of their graduates learned were human relations and communications. Communication and information technology skills, on the other hand, were the top skills regarded useful in the work (Macatangay, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the study's findings, the employability status of teacher education graduates was extremely favorable. The graduates chose the education-related program as their college degree as influenced by influence by the affordability of the family and influence by the parents. Most of the graduates were employed in a fulltime status as teachers. BEED and BSED programs deemed relevant to graduates' employment with the highest rating BEED program. Knowledge and communication skills were found by the graduates to be the most useful competencies in the workplace. The study results only give emphasis on the importance of a student's feedback in measuring the quality of the academic and non-academic performance of a certain higher educational institution (Cornillez, 2019). The researcher suggests that the college of teacher education should continue strengthening the program curriculum areas of the BEEd and BSEd programs to increase the perceived relevance of the graduates to employment from relevant to highly relevant. Enhancing the opportunity for students to receive incredibly beneficial on practice teaching to provide them with meaningful experiences and the skills required in the workplace, particularly in the present pandemic situation. The college should continue to develop, monitor, and strengthen students' knowledge and communication, as these are regarded as the most useful skills acquired by graduates for employment. A yearly update of a graduate's employability status should be conducted for monitoring and validation of the study results. Other employment variables that were not covered in the study should be included, such as professional training and seminars attended by graduates, reasons why graduates are not employed, the methods graduates use to find a job, graduates' perceptions of the adequacy of college facilities, and professional examinations such as the Licensure Examination.

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