

Employability Characteristics of the Education Graduates in a State University

Corazon G. Pardo¹, Luzviminda P. Relon², Ma. Teresa Susan L. Manzano³,
Efren U. Galapon⁴, Leilani R. Raquepo⁵, Necy Cesaria V. Romo⁶

¹⁻⁶College of Teacher Education, University of Northern Philippines

¹corazonpardouro@unp.edu.ph

²luzviminda.relon@unp.edu.ph

³materesasusan.manzano@unp.edu.ph

⁴efren.galapon@unp.edu.ph

⁵leilani.raquepo@unp.edu.ph

⁶necycesaria.romo@unp.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

Developing and preparing competent and employable graduates is a primary goal of any educational institution. This study investigated the employability characteristics of Teacher Education graduates in a State University. The researchers used the descriptive- survey method of research and a questionnaire supported with an interview and documentary analysis to gather data. Two-hundred seventy-two (80.71%) graduates and nine randomly selected employers served as respondents of the study. Findings reveal a high percentage of employed graduates in their first-time job as teachers within seven months after graduation. The new employable teachers can effectively communicate in English and are equipped with content knowledge and pedagogical and information technology skills. Self-employed and unemployed graduates are waiting for job opportunities to exercise their degrees. Giving emphasis to skills and competencies to meet the needs of time and more authentic learning are suggestions to improve the curriculum.

Keywords: *Competencies, Curriculum standards Employment status, Teacher Education*

INTRODUCTION

One of the primary goals of any educational institution is to develop and prepare competent and employable graduates. Employment conditions and situations are always a challenge to any education institution because over the years, quality of teachers has been a national and international issue (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Therefore, tertiary institutions are accountable in providing graduates with learning outcomes to keep them employable.

Employability is defined as a multi-dimensional, competence-based construct in the field of both research on higher education and workplace learning (Romgens et al., 2020). Within the context of higher education, employability relates to the process by which students are prepared to negotiate graduate life and work. Knight and Yorke (2006) defined employability as “achievements, understandings, and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and to be successful in their chosen occupations.”

Employability is a crucial idea in higher education across the globe (Cheng et al., 2022). Policy leaders and academics alike largely concur that employability is important in an internationally competitive knowledge economy, where change is a daily reality (Peeters et al. 2019). Universities must train students to fill occupations that are not yet existing, use technologies that have not yet been created, and solve issues that no one has yet dreamed of. Graduates who want to find and keep jobs after entering the workforce must continue to improve their employability (Akkermans et al., 2013). New teachers entering the teaching profession to be employable must be proficient to teach classes in English, with complementary training to teach different subjects, skilled in team working and communication, and classroom management and conflict resolution (Capsada-Munsech, 2015), and with higher academic preparations (Capsada-Munsech et al., 2021).

Colleges and universities are faced with an evolving and more demanding environment that has forced them to become adaptive and flexible, and the pressure from the realization that their graduates should be able to compete in an increasingly global marketplace. Thus, colleges and universities need to ensure that they maintain a sound, balanced, and organized academic program based on standards, policies, and guidelines that would enhance students' development as well as the demands of the new context and trends of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Schwab, 2016).

In the Philippines, tracing graduates is a mandate of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in its NHERA-2 because it provides evidence of the quality of education delivered as well as other issues that could be associated with the institution itself (CMO 41, s. 2010). Accreditation bodies like the Accrediting Agency of Colleges and Universities of the Philippines, Inc. (AACUP) measure the relevance and quality of education through the contributions of graduates on employment. Thus, HEIs need to maintain a sound, balanced, and organized curriculum based on standards, policies, and guidelines set by CHED. Hence, programs are submitted for accreditation to conform to these standards (Conchada & Tiongco, 2015).

The University of Northern Philippines (UNP) is offering different undergraduate programs. Its College of Teacher Education (CTE) offers Bachelor of Industrial Education (BSIE), Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd), and Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd). All programs are Level III based on the evaluation AACUP. In April 2016, it was designated by the Commission of Higher Education as one of the Centers of Development (CoD) along teacher education in the country, the first and only college in the University that received such recognition.

As one of its quality control mechanisms, the UNP-CTE has been conducting studies related to employment of its graduates to also comply with the CHED and accreditation standards. These studies aimed to help the institution identify the quality of the programs offered and determine its position in the local, national, and global markets. Also, it is a mandate of the institution to keep track of its graduates to get valuable information on the effects of education and training provided and to gather data for any lacking in the curriculum provided (Pardo & Pichay, 2019). The study revealed that the UNP-CTE provided quality education and training to its 2016 graduates because of a high employment rate

(80%) in jobs related to their course and short waiting period (within six months) after graduation.

In meeting the demands of the time and in preparing graduates, the University of Northern Philippines is exhausting all its effort to meet the new challenges of the 21st century like competitions, employability and rankings, and evaluation and accreditation, hence this study.

Theoretical Underpinnings

In the interest of employability, the acceptance of the human capital theory of Schultz has come to the fore. According to it, human capital rises due to a number of reasons, but the key factor is the educational level of the individual (Galiakberova, 2019). Human capital variables such as age and education (Wanberg, Watt & Rumsey, 1996), work experience and training (Tamsah, Yusriadi & Farida, 2020), job performance and organization tenure (Kim & Kim, 2019) have been identified as elements that influence employability.

Hillage and Pollard (1998) argue that demographic or physical characteristics are critical in determining a person's ability to keep their job one has or to secure another job. Age is an important individual characteristic that influence the relationship between intellectual capital and employability. Although many employers may deny they have a tendency to stereotype on basis of age, research reveals that older workers are seen as incompetent (Fiske Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) less flexible and adaptable, less willing and able to learn new things and less physically capable (Patrickson & Ranzijn, 2003).

Competence development approaches, mostly those which focus on the development of transversal competences, are even more crucial when economies are facing recession and the need for a rapid adaptation requiring flexibility and problem solving. The current economy will demand skills that displace traditional ones (Abelha et al., 2020). In the face of a recession, the sustainability of "best practice" arguments can be influenced by how well employees use their skills. Vincent-Lancrin et al. (2019) found that a mix of skills that societies, higher education institutions, and policymakers can contribute to foster. Likewise in the industry, human resources departments are working towards identifying skills that can be more difficult to automate (Okay- Somerville & Scholarios, 2019).

Wieman (2019) remarks that the adoption of specific policies and procedures by education systems is needed, involving the effective training of teachers, similar to good training in any area of expertise, practicing the relevant thinking and actions in authentic contexts, along with feedback to guide improvement. Nagarajan and Edwards (2014), found that there are multiple and complex relationships across the categories of the eight professional skills. Communication is the dominant skill category that is related to all other categories.

The human capital theory, suggests that human capital development plays a key part in retaining quality employees and recruiting prospects. This study contributes to the human capital discourse, which is the measure of economic value provided by employees with reference to their abilities, skills, values and knowledge. It also highlights the relevance of

higher education systems and institutions in facing the challenge of equipping students with the skills required in the competitive labor market.

Objectives of the Study

This study investigated the employability characteristics of Teacher Education graduates in a State University. Specifically, it determined the graduates' profile, employment status, competencies learned and subjects useful to them in their employment, and it analyzed the suggestions of the graduates as well as their employers' feedback about the curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive-survey method of research. According to Salaria (2012), a descriptive-survey method of research deals with both the characteristics of individuals and the whole sample. The design focused on the present employment profile and status of the graduates. There were 80.71% (272/337) graduates who responded in the study. The questionnaire adapted from Pardo and Pichay (2019) gathered the profile of the graduates, employment status, teaching competencies learned, subjects useful after graduation, and suggestions for the improvement of the curriculum. Nine employers randomly selected provided feedback about the graduates' performance. The names and home addresses of the graduates were taken from the Registrar's Office, and contact information of the graduates was provided by the class advisers. The survey questionnaire was distributed and retrieved personally, while those who cannot be located were reached through their emails and messenger accounts. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire to the graduates, the objectives of the study were explained and their consent was sought. An interview with the employers was also conducted to gather feedback on the performance of the graduates. Frequency, percentage, mean, and ranking were used to analyze data and presented in tabular means.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Teacher Education Graduates

Table 1

Profile of the Graduates in Terms of Age, Sex, Civil status, and Eligibilities

Profile	BEED		BSED		BSIE		All	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
21	32	26.4	24	24	5	9.8	61	22.4
22	78	64.5	72	72	43	84.3	193	71.0
23	8	6.6	3	3	2	3.9	13	4.8
24	1	0.8	1	1	-	-	2	0.7
25	2	1.7	0	0	1	2.0	3	1.1
Total	121	100.0	100	100	51	100.0	272	100.0

Profile	BEED		BSED		BSIE		All	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
Age								
Sex								
Male	13	10.7	34	34	17	33.3	64	23.5
Female	108	89.3	66	66	34	66.7	208	76.5
Total	121	100.0	100	100	51	100.0	272	100.0
Civil Status								
Single	108	89.3	95	95	44	86.3	247	90.8
Married	13	10.7	5	5	7	13.7	25	9.2
Total	121	100.0	100	100	51	100.0	272	100.0
LET Passer								
Yes	114	94.2	86	86	28	54.9	228	83.8
No	7	5.8	9	9	13	25.5	29	10.7
No Response			5	5	10	19.6	15	5.5
Total	121	100.0	100	100	51	100.0	272	100.0
Other Eligibility, Competency*								
CS Prof	12	9.9	26	26	1	2.0	39	14.3
CS Sub Prof	2	1.7	8	8	0	0.0	10	3.7
PD 907	24	19.8	23	23	2	3.9	49	18.0
NC II	21	17.4	28	28	38	74.5	87	32.0

These findings suggest that the graduates completed on-time their teacher education courses. The graduates are female dominated, single, and passed the LET other eligibility or competencies. This imply that the single and female dominated respondents graduated on time and possessed the required competencies to face the real-world teaching.

Employment Profile of the Graduates

Table 2 presents the employment status of the graduates. As revealed on the table, on the overall, there is a very high percentage (76.5%) of employed graduates and with equal percentage of self-employed and unemployed respondents. Considering the courses, the BSED graduates (87%) have the highest percentage of employment, followed by BEED (76%), and the BSIE recorded the lowest (56.9%). This overall employment rate, however, is slightly lower by 3.5% compared with the study of Pardo and Pichay (2019).

Table 2

Employment Status of Graduates

Employment Status	BEED		BSED		BSIE		Overall	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Employed	92	76	87	87	29	56.9	208	76.5
Self-employed	13	10.7	5	5	14	27.5	32	11.8
Unemployed	16	13.2	8	8	8	15.7	32	11.8
Total	121	100	100	100	51	100	272	100

The high percentage of employment maybe associated with the high demand for public and private school teachers in the implementation of the K to 12 programs. On the other hand, the BSIE graduates tend to have the highest percentage of self-employment (27.5%). This result may be linked with the course content of the BSIE program such as entrepreneurship and other technical-vocational related activities.

Work profile of the Teacher Education Graduates

Table 3 reveals the work profile of the employed graduates. As revealed on the table, there is a higher percentage of employment of the graduates in the government agencies in general (116 or 55.77%) from the BSED and BEED, but the BSIE graduates have higher employment in the private institutions. This means that there are many job opportunities for teachers in public such as the Department of Education as well as private agencies. Generally, the graduates are employed in government agencies like the Department of Education (DepEd). The same is true with BEED and BSED graduates, but more BSIE graduates are employed in private agencies, and two of them are TESDA trainers.

On the overall, 39.4% of the graduates hold permanent positions, a slightly higher percentage are contractual (40.4%), and few are either temporary, job order, part-time, or casual. Looking into their courses, the BSED graduates have the highest percentage of permanent employment (47.1%), followed by the BEED (42.4%), while most of the BSIE graduates are either contractual (48.3%), job order (31%), or temporary employed.

Table 3

Work Profile of the Employed Graduates

Employment Status	BEED		BSED		BSIE		Overall	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Type of Work Agency								
Government	52	56.5	50	57	14	48.3	116	55.77
Private	40	43.5	37	43	15	51.7	92	44.23
Total	92	100	87	100	29	100	208	100
Appointment Status								
Permanent	39	42.4	41	47	2	6.9	82	39.42
Temporary	16	17.4	1	1.1	4	13.8	21	10.1
Casual	1	1.1	1	1.1	0	0	2	0.962
Contractual	34	37	36	41	14	48.3	84	40.38
Part Time	1	1.1	6	6.9	0	0	7	3.365
Job Order	1	1.1	2	2.3	9	31	12	5.769
Total	92	100	87	100	29	100	208	100
Monthly Income								
<5000	3	3.3	2	2.3	7	24.1	12	5.769
5,001-10,000	25	27.2	17	20	11	37.9	53	25.48
10,001-20,000	25	27.2	27	31	7	24.1	59	28.37
20,001-30,000	39	42.4	41	47	4	13.8	84	40.38
Total	92	100	87	100	29	100	208	100

As also observed in Table 3, on the overall, a high percentage (40.4%) of the graduates is receiving a monthly salary ranging from 20,001 to 30,000 pesos. This proportion came mostly from the BSED graduates (47.1%), and BEED (42.4%). On the other hand, most of the BSIE graduates (37.9%) are earning 10,001-20,000 pesos per month. This result implies that the employed graduates are receiving monthly salaries more than enough to live a decent life as professional teachers. This may also mean that they may hold a Teacher I position as permanent or contractual.

Table 4 summarizes whether the job of the respondents is related to teaching, and their area of specialization.

Table 4*Job Related Profile of the Employed graduates*

Teaching Related	BEED		BSED		BSIE		Overall	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes (Instructor, teacher, tutor, child development center worker, TESDA Trainer)	88	95.7	79	91	14	48.3	181	87.02
No (Clerk/Administrative Aide, Office Assistant, Sales Lady)	4	4.3	8	9.2	15	51.7	27	12.98
Total	92	100	87	100	29	100	208	100
Related to area of specialization								
Yes	88	95.7	78	90	11	37.9	177	85.10
No	0	0	2	2.3	4	13.8	6	2.88
Total	88	95.7	80	92	15	51.7	183	87.98
1st Job?								
Yes	82	89.1	65	75	14	48.3	161	77.4
No	10	10.9	22	25	15	51.7	47	22.6
Total	92	100	87	100	29	100	208	100

The majority (87.02%) of the graduates are employed in teaching-related positions and only 12.98 % (27) hold jobs that are not relevant to their college course. This implies that the graduates were immediately employed as teachers of DepEd, or Tutors in Private Schools, and some BSIE graduates as trainers at TESDA. These jobs are highly relevant to their college courses. A high percentage (77.4%) of the graduates also claimed that they are teaching subjects whether related to their specialization or not. This suggests that the graduates were trained to handle the K to 12 program, and they were prepared to negotiate graduate life and work (Romgens et al., 2020).

As seen also in Table 4, generally, their present employment is the first job of the 77.4 % of the graduates, which holds true to the three programs reporting that their present job is their first employment. It is interesting to note that a high percentage (51.7%) of the BSIE graduates are no longer working on their first job. This can be construed that the graduates can immediately find another job.

Waiting Time, Manner of Employment, and Reasons for Accepting the First Job of the Employed Graduates

Table 5

Waiting Time and Manner of Employment, and the Reasons of Accepting the 1st Job of the Employed Graduates

Waiting Time of Employment	BEED		BSED		BSIE		Overall	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
a- month	2	2.2	20	23	2	6.9	24	11.54
1-6 months	8	8.7	23	26	6	20.7	37	17.79
7-11 months	53	57.6	15	17	6	20.7	74	35.58
1-2 years	29	31.5	29	33	15	51.7	73	35.10
Total	92	100	87	100	29	100	208	100
Manner of Employment in 1st Job								
Personally Applied	79	85.9	71	82	23	79.3	173	83.17
Recruited	7	7.6	6	6.9	2	6.9	15	7.212
Endorsed	6	6.5	10	11	4	13.8	20	9.615
Total	92	100	87	100	29	100	208	100
Reasons in accepting 1st Job*								
Salaries	87	94.6	63	72	18	62.1	168	80.77
Career Challenge	38	41.3	23	26	8	27.6	69	33.17
Family Influence	3	3.3	3	3.4	0	0	6	2.885
Related to Skill	26	28.3	5	5.7	8	27.6	39	18.75
Proximity to Residence	17	18.5	4	4.6	8	27.6	29	13.94
Related to Course	87	94.6	71	82	22	75.9	180	86.54
Peer Influence	1	1.1	1	1.1	1	3.4	3	1.442

The profile of the graduates on waiting time and manner of employment, and the reasons for accepting the first job of the employed graduates is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 shows that the job waiting time of the graduates is within seven to 11 months (35.58%) after their graduation. They personally applied (173 or 83.17%) and accepted the first time job relevant to teaching (180 or 86.54%). The long waiting period could be associated with the four-month preparation for the LET review, and the low or even zero score out of 15 points obtained from teaching experiences required in the Registry of Qualified Applicants (RQA) as stipulated in DEPED Guidelines (DepEd Order No. 7, s. 2015, and DepEd Order No. 3 s. 2016) for the RQA policy. This suggests a longer period of employment of the graduates compared with that of Pardo and Pichay (2019) that the graduates landed on a job within six months after graduation.

It is also seen in table 5 that a great majority (83.17%) of the graduates personally applied to be employed in their first jobs, and they accepted it primarily due its relevance to their course (86.54%). This result implies that the Teacher Education graduates landed on the teaching-related job on their own. This result supports the previous finding in this study that the majority (87%) of the respondents are engaged in teaching-related jobs either as teachers of DepEd, tutors in private schools, and TESDA trainers for some of the BSIE graduates.

Profile of Self-Employed Graduates

Table 6 reflects the reasons why there are 32 graduates who are self-employed during the gathering of data needed in this study.

Table 6

Reasons Why Graduates are being Self-employed

Reasons for Being Self Employed	BEED (13)		BSED (5)		BSIE (14)		Overall (32)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Lack of experience	1	7.69			5	35.71	6	18.75
No Job Opportunity	12	92.31	5	100	9	64.29	26	81.25
Total	13	100	5	100	14	100	32	100

The majority (26 or 81.25%) of the self-employed graduates decided to engage in jobs on their own because of “no job opportunity.” This confirms the OECD (2019) findings that the share of self-employment in the workforce is growing and currently stands at 15.54% in the European Union.

Profile of Not Presently Employed Graduates

Table 7 presents the reasons why 32 graduates are unemployed. The unemployed graduates claimed that there was no job opportunity (17 or 53.13%), and others enrolled for advanced studies while waiting for the exam results (11 or 34.38%), and lack of work experience (10 or 31.25%).

Table 7

Reasons Why Graduates are not Presently Employed

Reasons for Being Unemployed	BEED (13)		BSED (5)		BSIE (14)		Overall (32)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Lack of Work Experience	7	43.75	3	37.5	-	-	10	31.25
No Job Opportunity	6	37.5	4	50	7	87.5	17	53.13
Family Concern	2	12.5	2	25	-	-	4	12.50
Waited for Exam Results	6	37.5	-	-	5	62.5	11	34.38
Advance/Further Study	4	25	5	62.5	2	25	11	34.38

It implies that only a few of the new graduates failed to land on a job in public schools even after passing the LET due deficiencies based on the hiring and selection criteria of DEPED (DepEd Memo No 3, s. 2016) that requires 15 points for teaching experience, and 10 points for specialized trainings and skills, etc. This conforms to Liboon et al. (2017) who found that applicants are highly deficient in teaching experience and English proficiency, hence they scored below the DepED minimum passing points of 75 to be qualified in the Registry of Qualified Applicants (RQA). The presence of self-employed and unemployed graduates is a challenge to UNP-CTE to provide quality and capable teacher education graduates to be hired to teach in the basic education.

Most Useful Teaching Competencies

In Table 8, communication skills (92.65%), content knowledge and pedagogical skills (92.28%), and information technology skills (88.71%) are most useful to the graduates after graduation. This could be associated with the need for the command of good English communication, content and methodologies, and use of ICT in teaching.

Table 8

Teaching/Competencies learned in the University that became very useful in the jobs of Graduates

Teaching/Competencies	Courses			Overall		
	BEED n=121	BSEd n=100	BSIE n=51	N=272	%	Rank
Content Knowledge and Pedagogical skills	117	95	39	251	92.28	2
Classroom Management skills	115	82	37	234	86.03	4
Assessment and Reporting skills	109	83	41	233	85.66	5
Communication skills	120	84	48	252	92.65	1
Information Technology skills	112	86	46	244	89.71	3

Krishnan et al. (2019) wrote that effective communication skills are very important, especially in job interviews where it is one of the major criteria of employability since the 20th century. They added that many university graduates cannot get employment within 3-6 months after graduation due to poor communication skills. They found in their study that a majority of fresh graduates were weak in communication skills in relation to clarity, completeness, conciseness, and correctness. Hence, they suggested that 4Cs must be integrated in the current communication skills course models, and simulated interviews must be conducted to assist graduates improve their communication skills before actual job interviews.

Corollary to this, s regards content and pedagogical skills, Ajadi (2019) in his study on the anxiety of teachers-in-training during practice teaching found significant negative relationship between teachers-in-training anxiety and lesson note preparation and a significant positive relationship between teachers-in- training anxiety and performance in

class management. From the findings, he recommended that teachers- in-training should prepare before the class by writing their lesson notes ahead of time. Likewise, pedagogical skills in managing either small or large classes, noisy or quiet classes must be developed by them and applied when the situation demands it. He also stressed the importance of establishing a good relationship with other teachers by interacting in a friendly manner.

Furthermore, ICT skills are highly needed and advantageous in teaching. Teachers need to enhance the delivery of instruction by showing PowerPoint or video presentations, use various platforms and apps to excite and engage students, and identify and share relevant resources from the internet to the students. Inpeng and Nomnian (2020), in their study with selected pre-service teachers on the use of Facebook in a TEFL program based on the TPACK framework, found that Thai pre- service EFL teachers were able to conduct TEFL classes using Facebook at a high level but required additional skills for online teaching from their trainers. However, most of the teacher trainers cannot provide such skills because they do not primarily use Facebook as an educational tool. The findings point to the essence of the integrating educational technologies online platform and English language education in the midst of the 21st century and the COVID-19 global pandemic crises.

Most Beneficial Courses

The graduates identified the most beneficial course in the different learning areas in their chosen curriculum. The most beneficial: general education courses, are Study and Thinking Skills (Rank 1), Basic Computer Concepts and Applications (Rank 2), and Intensive English (Rank 3). This result shows the prime importance of communication and technology skills in the teaching profession. The graduates were able to arrive at this realization after going through practice teaching and getting employed as classroom teachers. This finding supports the study of Cornillez et al. (2021) which presented that the graduates perceived general education as one of the learning areas consistently and homogeneously relevant to their employment. In the present study, the graduates were able to specifically identify which among the general education subjects were the most beneficial during their employment.

Likewise, among the professional education courses, the graduates also identified Practice Teaching, Facilitating Learning, and Child and Adolescent Development as most beneficial. This result shows these courses played a big role in the professional preparation of the graduates. The above-mentioned subjects served as their armor in their chosen field. Again, this finding supports the findings of the study of Cornillez et al. (2021) which emphasized the significance of practice teaching in preparing the graduates in becoming a teacher and its impact on the performance of educational institutions.

Along the specialization or major courses, the responses of the graduates were recorded according to their program and specialization. The Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) graduates major in General Education (Gen. Ed.) identified Listening and Speaking Skills; Early Childhood Education (ECE) – Multiple Intelligences in the Pre-School; and Special Education (SPEd) – Introduction to SPEd 1. These subjects provided the essential knowledge to the graduates as they perform their tasks as elementary teachers.

Among the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) graduates, they considered the following as most beneficial subjects: English – Afro-Asian Literature; Filipino – Pagpapahalagang Pampanitikan; Mathematics – Calculus 2; Social Studies– Local Government Code; Biological Sciences – Biological Science 1; and Physical Sciences – General Chemistry.

Likewise, among the graduates of the Bachelor of Industrial Education, the graduates claim that the following subjects are the most beneficial: Home Economics, Practical Arts, Automotive and Electronics Technology, and On-the-Job Training; Food and Service Management – Bartending and Bar Service Management; Garments, Fashion and Design – Fabric and Garment Designing Techniques and Construction; Cosmetology – Facial Treatment and Facial Make-up and On-the-Job Training. Among the most beneficial subjects identified by the BSIE graduates along the different specializations, it can be noted that almost all identified the usefulness of the On-the-Job Training. Practically, this offered them the opportunity to apply the knowledge they have learned and the skills they have developed. This finding supports the study of Cornillez et al. (2021) which found that the employability of graduates can be increased when the design of the curriculum is centered more on the apprenticeship and industry immersion of students which provides them with job training that is useful for employment.

Graduates' Suggestions to improve the Curriculum

When graduates were asked how the University would further improve the curricula to affect learning, instrumental in molding and producing more employable graduates, various suggestions were provided. Their answers were coded and analyzed thematically.

1. Responsive Curriculum and Course Content

Having a responsive curriculum and course content are considered as yardsticks of quality instruction that can be reflected from the graduates after graduation. In a study conducted by Daguplo et. al (2019) the graduate respondents were consistent in their response that the curriculum is relevant and responsive to the needs of the industry. Courses offered, academic and non-academic activities, teaching-learning environment, teacher-student relationship, and professional requirements were all considered as strengths of the teacher education program.

Undeniably, the respondents have many unforgettable accounts, both negative and positive ones, from their academic journey in a span of four years.

Positively, they shared that:

“Our foundation in majorship and all other subjects is very impressive and it really helps us in our career to cater the needs of our students as well as myself.”

“Curriculum guide/course intended for us is amazingly wonderful, it really helped us a lot in many ways. Applying it in our profession, it was of great help.”

On the other hand, they gave suggestions to better improve the curriculum. In general, they articulated the need to have a more focused curriculum or courses, additional subjects, and more time of engagement, including learning outside the four walls of the classrooms like exposure to more seminars during their pre-service years. They affirmed that adequate preparation is instrumental in producing competent future professionals. Relon (2020) affirmed that educating citizens that will comprise the labor force is a requisite in establishing a favorable environment towards the attainment of economic and sustainable development across countries. Obviously, citizens must be capacitated to perform indispensable roles in the transformation of communities. Thus, the curriculum and course content should then be carefully planned to better capacitate them.

They narrated that:

“Curriculum should be focused on what is really helpful after graduation”

“More professional subjects that would train us to handle the more aggressive student not only on content knowledge.”

“Filipino, History and other Literature subjects should be minimized. Focus should be on Foundations and Pedagogy, a separate and a more intense course for assessment”

“Update some major subjects based on international curriculum/standards”

“Longer time for Practice Teaching”

“Additional subject on instructional materials preparations, like modules, and curriculum guide”

“Add Arts subject in MAPEH. enhance the Music subject, more mathematics subjects to PS majors, additional subject on Guidance and Counselling, more focus on Pagsasalin, Pananaliksik and Obramaestra”

“For Science majors, the curriculum should be aligned to the present set up of DEPED, i.e. to teach all science areas.”

“Research outputs should be individual”

“More seminars should be attended by students”

Giving emphasis on what the students should acquire during their pre- service education affirms the study of Warraich (2008) as stressed by Gonzales et, al (2019) that graduates should have developed market-oriented skills while they are in their pre-service education to meet the challenging as well as the changing needs of the employers.

2. Relevant Teaching Strategy

The teacher plays a crucial role in the delivery of quality instruction where students will learn and apply everything both during their practice teaching and in the real world of work after graduation. As mentioned by Ajadi (2019) teachers should be trained with the

pedagogical skills of managing small, large, noisy and quiet classes so as to apply it appropriately as the situation demands (Ajadi, 2019).

The following suggestions were shared by the graduates:

“Teaching strategies should be more student-centered”

“Videos, reflections be used to avoid copying of outputs”

*“More hands-on, authentic activities and experiences,
including more time to improve skills and competence in
teaching”*

They also forwarded their observations during their practice teaching, including the importance of learning and using various technologies in teaching.

The graduates shared that:

*“During practice teaching, there should be unannounced class
observations to be conducted, and lesson plans should be
checked daily.”*

*“In-depth discussions and teachers should not only rely on
laptops or books or hand-outs”*

*“Students should be given more and longer exposure in using
the technologies in teaching”*

These remarks from the respondents further validate the study of Boholano as cited by Gonzales et al (2019) that employability in teaching depends on many factors such as educational qualification, academic performance, communication skills, technology skills, demonstration skills and among others.

3. In-depth learning obstacles

Other than relevant teaching strategies, how the faculty manages instruction is also contributory in learning effectively, without fear and pressure. A conducive learning environment and well-planned learning were given importance by the respondents.

They shared that:

*“Our instructor is our problem, just try not to set high
standards for us to better understand and feel free to
ask anything we want to clarify queries in mind. “*

*“Sometimes, due to busy teachers, we lack time to
finish all the topics in our major subjects.”*

*“Subjects should be well-explained for better
understanding”*

The respondents also believed that:

“Classes to be observed should be related to area of specialization”

“Lessen the number of observers per class”

Indeed, quality instruction is multifaceted and responding to the needs and demands of these future professionals is crucial and challenging, too. Relon (2020) stressed in her study that HEIs are duty-bound to perform their functions to guarantee that their graduates would be able to compete in an increasingly global marketplace. Several educational reforms have been instituted. However, these reforms will only be enough if HEIs are keeping pace to and embrace changes to set higher educational standards, not just contented with what is minimum requirement.

4. Improved facilities

The graduates firmly believed that facilities are indispensable in the teaching and learning process. With their four years of stay in the University, they have witnessed and experienced the lack of well-equipped classrooms and laboratory rooms. Many of them forwarded that “the facilities should be improved with a provision of more updated technology.”

This conforms with the study conducted by Penn State (2015) as cited by Gonzales et, al (2019) that with the advent of the 21st century, it is highly necessary that academic institutions offering various degree programs give emphasis and enough attention on their infrastructure, facilities, and resources since it is associated with better learning outcomes since teachers can enhance and further enrich their teaching-learning activities. Hence, the quality of such are relevant indicators and/or predictors in retaining both teachers and students. Likewise, it may contribute to better performance because the kind of school facilities may improve teachers’ commitment and effort in performing their job. In the same respect, students’ achievement may improve by having a higher degree of learning engagement.

Employers Feedbacks on the Graduates

Obtaining first-hand information as to how well the graduates are performing in their respective workplaces matters is necessary. Feedbacks, both positive and negative, will serve as inputs to improve the quality of instruction and services provided by the College and the University.

The researchers visited some schools where the CTE graduates have been teaching to gather information straight from their immediate superiors. Generally, the principals, head teachers, or school administrators, from both the public and private schools commended them on how they were prepared and trained by the College. The principals shared their personal observations and articulated that:

“The UNP-CTE graduates possess the content knowledge and competencies in handling classes.”

“Apart from exuding their excellent teaching skills, showing their talents and special skills during the interview and demonstration teaching, these were the primary reasons why they were hired in their current teaching positions. These were highly appreciated and considered. Evidently, they are now tapped as trainers and coaches in various school activities.”
“Many of them have brought laurels in the schools where they are now employed.”

The administrators also added that:

“CTE graduates are able to adapt to the changing needs and demands of the teaching profession, thus, willing to embrace change, for their own growth and development and for the benefit of the stakeholders, too.”

These positive feedbacks from the school heads are indicators that indeed, the College of Teacher Education has never failed in preparing and in equipping these students with the competencies needed in performing their chosen profession. Likewise, these will serve as a guide in improving further the services and quality of instruction that the college offers. These affirm the study of Gonzales et al. (2019) that the employers' feedback may enhance the institution's capability in conducting necessary follow-up to enrich the performance of its graduates and continually search the best practices that may improve its related academic services to attain the quality kind of education that everyone desires for future generations.

CONCLUSIONS

The graduates are young, dominated by female, single, and almost all are LET passers, and some hold other eligibilities and competencies. There is a high employment percentage of the graduates and with equal rate of 11.8% for the self-employed and unemployed. The graduates are mostly employed in jobs related to their course in government agencies like DepEd and some are working at TESDA, with permanent positions, receiving a monthly salary ranging from Php 20,001 to 30,000. They personally applied and took them seven months or more after graduation to land their jobs, and they are employed in those jobs because they are course-related and with good salaries. The self-employed graduates are engaged in their own jobs which are related to their course because of no job opportunity and holds true to the unemployed graduates. Subjects related to English communication are the most important to the graduates. In their major and professional subjects, courses that make teaching and learning more effective teaching are the most useful. Suggestions were focused on the improvement and alignment of curriculum to the K to 12, and more authentic learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that the UNP-CTE may give more emphasis on skills and competencies that students must learn in order to meet the needs of time. The methods employed in classroom activities and other venues must be geared towards developing well-rounded personality of students, concomitant with academic quality standards. The placement services may initiate more activities in enhancing the students' capabilities and readiness into job markets to facilitate better employability, and ongoing research should be initiated within the context of graduate follow-up.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This study was reviewed and approved by the University of Northern Philippines Ethics Review Committee. Ethical principles observed in the study include the conflict of interest, principle of informed consent, principle of privacy and confidentiality, principle of vulnerability, recruitment, benefits, compensation, and community considerations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank the University of Northern Philippines and the University Research and Development Office for funding this research. Gratitude is also given to the CTE 2017 graduates who served as respondents of this study.

REFERENCES

- Abelha M., Fernandes S., Mesquita D., Seabra F. & Ferreira-Oliveira A.T. (2020) Graduate Employability and Competence Development in Higher Education—A Systematic Literature Review Using PRISMA. *Sustainability*. 2020; 12(15):5900. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12155900>
- Ajadi, O. T. (2019). Anxiety and teachers-in-training performance during teaching practice during exercise at Obafemi Awolowo University. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, Sciences and Arts*. Volume 6, Issue 2, 2019, pp.9-17. <http://apjeas.apjmr.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/APJEAS-2019.6.02.02.pdf>
- Akkermans, J., Schaufeli, W. B., Brenninkmeijer, V. and Blonk, R. (2013), "The role of career competencies in the JD-R model", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 83 No. 4, pp. 356-366. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2013.06.011>
- Badiru, E. O. & Wahome, M. (2016). Conducting graduate tracer studies for quality assurance in East African Universities: A focus on graduate students voices on quality culture. *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol.7, No. 6. tinyurl.com/y7m7vd4z
- Capsada-Munsech, Q. (2015) The role of social origin and field of study on graduates overeducation: the case of Italy. *Higher Education*, 69(5), 779 – 807.

- Capsada-Munsech, Q. & Boliver, V. (2021). The early labour-market returns to upper secondary qualifications track in England, *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, 12(3), 299-322.
<https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/llcs/12/3/article-p299.xml>
- Cawthera, A. (2000). *Computers in Secondary Schools in Developing Countries: Costs and Other Issues*. The department for international development, world links for development, and the human development network of the World Bank
- CHED Memo no. 10 s. 2017, <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CMO-No.41-s2010.pdf>
- Cheng, M., Adekola, O., Albia, J. & Cai, S. (2022), "Employability in higher education: a review of key stakeholders' perspectives", *Higher Education Evaluation and Development*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 16-31. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HEED-03-2021-0025>
- Conchada, M. I. P. & Tiongco, M. M. (2015). *A Review of the Accreditation System for Philippine Higher Education Institutions*. Discussion Papers DP 2015-30, Philippine Institute for Development Studies.
https://ideas.repec.org/p/phd/dpaper/dp_2015-30.html
- Cornillez, E., Caminoc, S., Basas, B., Militante, B. & Paler, R. (2021). *Tracer Study of Teacher Education Graduates of the Eastern Visayas State University- Tanauan Campus, Philippines*, <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2021.2.3.143>
- Daguplo, M. S., Capili, P. L. G., Estrella, A. R. C., & Bano, A. L. (2019). Tracking the Employment and Employability Characteristics of the Graduates of the College of Teacher Education. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 7(2), 67-74.
<http://www.apjmr.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/APJMR-2019.7.02.03.09.pdf>
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 878–902.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.878>
- Galiakberova, A. A. (2019). Conceptual Analysis of Education Role in Economics: The Human Capital Theory. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 8(3), 410-421.
<https://doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v8i3.2256>
- Gonzales, R., Vinluan, S. and Bustamante, P. (2019). Graduates' employability, exit evaluation and employers' feedback. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 6 No. 2. 24-33. <http://apjeas.apjmr.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/APJEAS-2019.6.02.04.pdf>
- Hillage, J. & Pollard, E. (1998). *Employability: Developing A Framework For Policy Analysis*. Department for Education and Employment. London. ER
<https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net>
- Inpeng, S., Nomnian, S. (2020) The Use of Facebook in a TEFL Program Based on the TPACK Framework, <https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/LEARN/article/view/243729>
- Ingersoll, R., May, H., & Collins, G. (2019). Recruitment, employment, retention and the minority teacher shortage. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(37), 1- 37.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.3714>

- Kim, M., Lee, J., & Kim, J. (2019). The role of grit in enhancing job performance of frontline employees: the moderating role of organizational tenure. In *Advances in Hospitality and Leisure*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Liboon Jr, A., & Rodriguez, E. (2017). Teaching Deficiencies of Teacher-Education Graduates of JRMSU-TC Based on the DepEd Criteria for Hiring Teachers. *JPAIR Institutional Research*, 10(1), 14-28. <https://philair.ph/index.php/irj/article/view/529>
- Nagarajan, S., & Edwards, J. (2014). Is the graduate attributes approach sufficient to develop work ready graduates?. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 5(1), 12-28. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.204825011076855>
- Okay-Somerville, B., Scholarios, D. (2019). A multilevel examination of skills- oriented human resource management and perceived skill utilization during recession: Implications for the well-being of all workers. *Hum. Resour. Manag.* 2019, 58, 139–154. [CrossRef] OECD Self-Employment Rate (2019), 10.1787/fb58715e-en
- Patrickson, M., & Ranzijn, R. (2003). Employability of older workers. *Equal opportunities international*.
- Pardo, C. G., & Pichay, J. P. (2019). A Tracer Study on the College of Teacher Education Graduates of a University in Northern Philippines. *The Vector: International Journal of Emerging Science, Technology and Management (Formerly UNP Research Journal)*, 28(1). <https://vector.unp.edu.ph/index.php/1/article/view/45>
- Peeters, E., Nelissen, J., De Cuyper, N., Forrier, A., Verbruggen, M., & De Witte, H. (2019). Employability capital: A conceptual framework tested through expert analysis. *Journal of Career Development*, 46(2), 79–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845317731865>
- Republic Act No. 9266, CMO No. 17, Series of 2016 Commission on Higher Education. (2006). Graduate Tracer Study Manual and Lectures. ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NHERA-2.pdf
- Relon, L. (2020) Internship away from home: A case study in a state university. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, Volume 8, No. 3. 18-29. <http://www.apjmr.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/APJMR-2020.8.3.02.03.pdf>
- Romgens, S. & Beausaert, S. (2020). Unraveling the concept of employability, bringing together research on employability in higher education and the workplace, *Studies in Higher Education*, 45:12, 2588-2603. DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2019.1623770
- Schwab, K. (2016). Welcome to the Fourth Industrial Revolution. *Rotman Manag.* 25, 19–24. [Google Scholar]
- Salaria, N. (2012). Meaning of the term descriptive survey research method. *International journal of transformations in business management*, Vol. 1, no. 6, (2012), pp. 1-7. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/>
- Schomburg H. (2003). *Handbook for graduate tracer studies*. Kassel: Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work, University of Kassel.

- Tamsah, H., Yusriadi, Y., & Farida, U. (2020). Training, knowledge sharing, and quality of work-life on civil servants performance in Indonesia. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 7(3), 163-176.
- Vincent-Lancrin, S.; González-Sancho, C.; Bouckaert, M.; de Luca, F.; Fernández- Barrerra, M.; Jacotin, G.; Urgel, J.; Vidal, Q. (2019). *Fostering Students' Creativity and Critical Thinking: What It Means in School*; Educational Research and Innovation; OECD Publishing: Paris, France.
- Wanberg, C. R., Watt, J. D., & Rumsey, D. J. (1996). Individuals without jobs: An empirical study of job-seeking behavior and reemployment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(1), 76–87. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.81.1.76>
- Wieman, C.E. Expertise in University Teaching & the Implications for Teaching Effectiveness, Evaluation & Training. *Dædalus* 2019, 148, 47–78
- Yorke, M. 2006. *Employability in Higher Education: What It Is-What It Is Not*. Vol. 1. York: Higher Education Academy. [Google Scholar]
- Yorke, M. and Knight, P.T. (2006) *Embedding Employability into the Curriculum: Learning & Employability Series 1*. The Higher Education Academy, York. <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resource/embedding-employability- curriculum>