Tracer Study of Teacher Education Graduates of the Eastern Visayas State University-Tanauan Campus, **Philippines**

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ABSTRACT

The study's purpose was to examine the employment characteristics of teacher education graduates from the classes of 2013 to 2017. Specifically, to explore a graduate's perception of the extent of the relevance of their chosen program curriculum learning areas to employment, and the extent of the use of competencies and values they learned at university. A survey study design that is descriptive was utilized in the study with a random sample of 179 graduates identified as the primary study respondents. Based on the results, the majority of respondents were employed with permanent or regular employment status and worked locally within the region. Graduates' initial and current employment levels were professional, technical, or supervisory, and they were hired within 1 to 6 months of graduation. Salaries and benefits were the major factors in changing the first job careers of graduates. Moreover, graduates perceived the extent of the curriculum offered as relevant, and the general education and teaching practicum learning areas were found to be the most relevant areas that contribute the most to their employment. Communication, human relations, and self-assurance skills are the most useful workplace competencies and values. Students' university 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, learned values, teacher education graduates, the relevance of curriculum, tracer study.

Published Online: July 26, 2021

ISSN: 2736-4534

DOI: 10.24018/ejedu.2021.2.3.143

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I. 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 [1]-[4]. Despite significant efforts by local and global development governments and groups to reduce unemployment, global unemployment remains worse, with rates particularly high in emerging economies [5]-[9]. 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% [10].

From the local perspective in the eastern part of the Philippines, the labor regional director, Forter Puguon, came up with a projection that the region's unemployment rate in the Eastern Visayas region was expected to increase each year with thousands of fresh graduates seeking employment. According to [11] 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. 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 of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the

Philippines Inc., for example, requires documentation reports of graduate profiles as one of the documented requirements of higher education recognized bodies. Graduate employability, according to [12], 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 [12]. [14], "Employability of graduates, therefore, has become an issue that is not easy to be ignored in the global economy." 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 [15]. 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 [16]. 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 [17]. 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 [18]-[22].

The Tanauan campus of Eastern Visayas State University is one of the universities in the Philippines' Eastern Visayas region 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 university's 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.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper examined the employment backgrounds of Eastern Visayas State University Tanauan campus teacher education graduates, as well as their perceptions of the relevance of their selected program curriculum, useful competencies, and values learned throughout their studies in the workplace. The study particularly answered the following research objectives.

- 1. Determine the graduates' demographic profile in terms of:
 - 1.1 age;
 - 1.2 sex;
 - 1.3 civil status;
 - 1.4 year of graduation;
 - 1.5 degree program;
 - 1.6 reasons for program selection; and
 - 1.7 enrollment to another program.

- 2. Determine the characteristics of graduates' employment in terms of the following:
 - 2.1 present employment classification;
 - 2.2 employment place of work;
 - 2.3 first job level position;
 - 2.4 present job level position;
 - 2.5 duration of acquiring the first job; and
 - 2.6 gross monthly income.
- 3. Assess the extent of relevance of the program curriculum on employment of graduates in terms of:
 - 3.1 general education;
 - 3.2 professional education;
 - 3.3 major courses;
 - 3.4 industry immersion; and
 - 3.5 teaching practicum.
- 4. Identify useful competencies and values acquired of the graduates in the university on their employment.

III. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The theory of Human Capital formed the basis for this paper [23], [24]. 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 [25]. 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 [26]. Because technological advancements require a bettereducated workforce for the productive system to operate properly, these skills will be recognized by demand in the labor market. [27], 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 competencies and values 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 university about the graduates' current status after graduation, as well as the quality of the academic curriculum and services provided by the university.

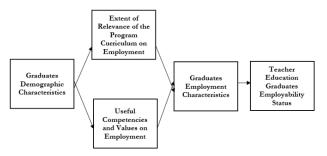


Fig. 1. Schematic Diagram showing the Conceptual Framework of the Study.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The researchers utilized a quantitative approach employing the descriptive survey research design [28], [29]. 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 university's curriculum program on their employment.

B. Research Respondents

A total of 249 teacher education graduates majors in Food Technology, Civil Technology, Electrical Technology, CITRA/Garments, Fashion and Design, and Physical Science of EVSU Tanauan campus were the target respondents of the study who graduated in the academic year of 2013 to 2017. For the study, a sample of 179 students was chosen using the sample size formula for a finite population with a 4% margin of error, a 95% level of confidence, and a proportion of 50% of the population [30]. In addition, to guarantee a good representation of graduates' respondents per school year, a stratified random sampling technique was applied in the sample's selection phase [31]. The proportionate study samples were chosen as follows: 15 graduates from the academic year 2013 were chosen, 18 from 2014, 27 from 2015, 45 from 2016, and 74 from 2017.

C. Research Instrument

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, civil status, year of graduation, reasons for enrolling in the program, and enrollment in another degree program; Part II is concerned with the respondents' employability status, which includes their current employment status, current occupation, and place of work, duration of landing the first job, job level positions, and gross monthly earnings; Part III is concerned with the graduates' perceptions of the degree of relevance of the course program curriculum in terms of general education, professional education, major courses, industry immersion, and teaching practicum learning area competencies; and Part IV evaluated the graduates' university-learned useful competencies and values in their jobs.

D. Data Gathering Procedure

Written approvals were acquired from the head of the HEI where the study was conducted before the start of the study. A letter request was sent to the office of the registrar of the campus to ask for the list of the graduates' batches from 2013 2017. 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 September 2019, until February August 2020.

E. Treatment of Data

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, learned competencies, and values while study. Besides, the weighted mean (WM) and standard deviation (SD) were computed to assess the extent of relevance of different program curriculum offered. All the analyses were done using Microsoft Excel.

V. RESULTS

A. Graduates Demographic Profile Characteristics

Table I presents the university graduates distribution according to their age, sex, civil status, and year of graduation. The majority of the 179 samples (36.87%) were between the ages of 32 and 37. It was followed by 34.64% of graduates ranging in age from 26 to 31 years old. Most of the graduates at 70.95% were females, and 81.01% were single.

TABLE I: DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES ACCORDING TO PROFILE

VARIABLES				
Graduates Profile	Frequency	Percentage		
Age				
32 to 37 years old	62	34.64		
26 to 31 years old	51	28.49		
20 to 25 years old	66	36.87		
Sex				
Female	127	70.95		
Male	52	29.05		
Civil Status				
Single	145	81.01		
Married	28	15.64		
Single Parent	4	2.23		
Common Law	1	0.56		
Separated	1	0.56		
Year Graduated				
2017	74	41.34		
2016	45	25.14		
2015	27	15.08		
2014	18	10.06		
2013	15	8.38		

Note: n = 179.

Moreover, the study was mostly represented by the samples at 41.34% graduated in the graduation year of 2017, while there was only 8.38% of graduates coming from the graduation year of 2013.

TABLE II: DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES ACCORDING TO DEGREE PROGRAM ATTENDED

T ROGIC III TH TEXPER			
Degree Program	Frequency	Percentage	
BSIEd major in:			
Food Technology	58	32.40	
CITRA	26	14.53	
Electrical Technology	10	5.59	
Automotive	5	2.79	
Civil Technology	7	3.91	
BSED Physical Science	73	40.78	

Note: n = 179.

Table II shows how graduates were distributed based on their degree program and specialization. The majority of graduates from the BSIEd program (32.40%), are in Food Technology, followed by graduates majoring in CITRA (14.53%). Only 2.79% were automotive specialists, with the remainder being electrical and civil technologists. On the other hand, 40.78% of teacher education graduates with a specialization in Physical Science took part in their studies.

TABLE III: DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES ACCORDING TO REASONS OF

Reasons for Taking the Course	Percentage	Rank
High Grades in Subject Area	16.76	8
Good Grades in High School	32.96	2
Influence of Parents	35.20	1
Peer Influence	15.64	10
Inspired by Role Model	32.40	3
Strong Passion for the Profession	24.58	5.5
Prospect for Immediate Employment	17.32	7
Status or Prestige of the Profession	10.06	11
Availability of the Course Offering	24.58	5.5
Prospect of Career Advancement	16.20	9
Affordability of the Family	28.49	4
The prospect of Attractive Compensation	3.35	12
Opportunity for Employment Abroad	1.12	14
No particular choice.	2.23	13

Note: Multiple responses

Table III reveals the distribution of graduates according to their reasons for enrolling in the program at the university. Parents' influence ranks number 1 as the primary reason for their program selection and is followed by having good grades in high school and being inspired by a role model in the third. The reasons for the availability of the course offerings and the strong passion for the profession were at the same rank, at 5.5.

TABLE IV: DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES ACCORDING TO ENROLLMENT IN OTHER PROGRAM

IN OTHER I ROGRAM				
Degree/Program	Frequency	Percentage		
BS Related Program	9	6.87		
Master's Program	36	20.11		
BS Unrelated Program	3	1.68		
Non-Takers of other	131	73.18		
degree programs				

Note: n = 179.

Table IV shows that 73.18% of graduates did not enroll in another program after graduating from university. However, 20.11% of graduates were enrolled in graduate studies, a master's degree program and 6.87% were enrolled in a BSrelated related program.

B. Graduates Employment Profile Characteristics

Table V shows the employment status of graduates by current job level, first job level, place of employment, specific work position, and the number of unemployed graduates. According to graduates' current employment

status, there were 87.71% of graduates were employed and only 12.29% were unemployed. Out of these employed graduates, the majority, at 40.78%, were in a regular or permanent position. At 20.11% and 18.99% were in temporary and contractual positions, respectively. There were only 12.29% of unemployed graduates.

TABLE V: DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES BASED ON THEIR EMPLOYMENT

CHARACTERISTICS				
Employment Status Frequency Percentage				
	Regular or Permanent	73	40.78	
Employed	Casual	7	3.91	
1 2	Self-Employed	7	3.91	
	Temporary	36	20.11	
	Contractual	34	18.99	
Not Employed	Unemployed	22	12.29	
DI C	Local within the Region	146	81.56	
Place of Work	Local outside the Region	10	5.59	
	Abroad	1	0.56	
	Rank or Clerical	66	36.87	
	Professionals,	5 0	20.11	
First Job	Technical or	70	39.11	
Level	Supervisory			
Position	Managerial or Executive	4	2.23	
	Self-Employed	17	9.50	
	Rank or Clerical	47	26.26	
	Professionals,			
Present Job	Technical or	96	53.63	
Level	Supervisory			
Position	Managerial or	4	2.23	
	Executive Self-Employed	10	5.59	
Note: n = 170	2111 =111,10) 04	10	/	

Note: n = 179.

Moreover, most of the graduates at 81.56% are working locally or within the region. A large number of graduates at 39.11% are in the job level position as professional, technical, and supervisory, and 36.87% are in the clerical or rank position. In the present job level position of the graduates, there was an increasing percentage of graduates at 14.52% who are now working as professional, technical, and supervisory in comparison in the graduate's fist job level position. A significant proportion of teacher education graduates were professionally employed, based on the findings of the study of [32].

TABLE VI: DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES BY FIRST EMPLOYMENT

STATUS			
Duration of Acquiring First Job	Frequency	Percentage	
Less than a Month	12	6.70	
1 to 6 months	60	33.52	
7 to 11 Months	34	18.99	
1 year to less than 2 years	34	18.99	
2 years to less than 3 years	9	5.03	
3 years to less than 4 years	8	4.47	
Reasons for Changing a Job			
Salaries and Benefits	87	48.60	
Career Challenge	42	23.46	
Related to Special Skills	14	7.82	
Proximity to Residence	14	7.82	

Note: n = 179.

It can be gleaned in Table VI the transition time from graduation to the first employment of the graduates, and the reasons why they left their first job and sought another one. The most of graduates, 33.52%, find their first employment within one to six months of graduation. Sixty points seventyone percent (6.71%) of graduates obtain their first job within a month of graduation, while just 4.47% had to wait for 3 to 4 years after graduation to get their first employment. On the one hand, after graduating, the highest percentage of graduates, 48.60%, left their first job and sought another for salary and benefits reasons. This is followed by career challenges for nearly 24% of the reasons. And other reasons for leaving the first job were related to special skills and proximity to residence. Similar results were found in the tracer studies conducted by [32], and [33] that the major factors for shifting jobs are career challenges, salary, and benefits.

TABLE VII: DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES BY GROSS MONTHLY INCOME

G	ross Monthly Income	Frequenc y	Percentage
	25,000 and Above	-	-
	20,000 to less than 25,000	41	22.91
First Job	15,000 to less than 20,000	12	6.70
First Job	10,000 to less than 15,000	40	22.35
	5,000 to less than 10,000	49	27.37
	Below 5,000	15	8.38
	25,000 and Above	1	0.56
	20,000 to less than 25,000	64	35.75
Present	15,000 to less than 20,000	13	7.26
Job	10,000 to less than 15,000	18	10.06
	5,000 to less than 10,000	44	24.58
	Below 5,000	17	9.50

Note: n = 179.

Table VII demonstrates the gross monthly income of the graduates based on their initial job and current job. Most graduates have a monthly income of 5,000 to less than 10,000 according to their first job. There are 22.91% of graduates with incomes ranging from 20,000 to less than 25,000. Most graduates (35.75%) have a monthly income of 20,000 to less than 25,000 in their current job. There was 1 or 0.56% whose income was 25,000 and above. The results show that the salary and benefits reasons in Table VI for why graduates leave their first job are very visible in the number of graduates who have a higher income in their current job than in their first job. Similar findings were yielded in the tracer study of [34] that most of the teacher education graduates earned a monthly salary of 20,000 to 25,000 pesos.

TABLE VIII: EXTENT OF RELEVANCE OF THE PROGRAM CURRICULUM

Learning Areas	WM	SD	Interpretation
General Education	4.12	0.46	Relevant
Professional Education	4.07	0.52	Relevant
Major Courses	4.08	0.67	Relevant
Industry Immersion	3.91	0.85	Relevant
Practice Teaching	4.10	0.40	Relevant
Overall	4.06	0.58	Relevant

Note: 1.00-1.80 - Not relevant; 1.81-2.60 - Slightly relevant; 2.61-3.40 -Moderately relevant; 3.41-4.20 - Relevant; 4.21-5.00 - Highly relevant.

As shown in Table VIII, the graduates perceived the extent of relevance of their chosen program curriculum to be relevant overall (WM = 4.06, SD = 0.58). All the learning areas were found by the graduates as relevant factors in their employment. It can be observed that the general education (WM = 4.12, SD = 0.46) and practice teaching (WM = 4.10,SD = 0.40) learning areas obtained the least variation in responses among the learning areas identified, which implies that the graduates perceived these factors consistently and homogeneously to be relevant to their employment. On the other hand, graduates in the industry immersion learning area obtained the lowest mean (WM = 3.91, SD = 0.85),

interpreted as relevant. According to [35] and [45], 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. Also, [46] and [47] emphasizes the significance of practice teaching in preparing the graduates in becoming a teacher and its impact on the performance of certain educational institutions.

TABLE IX: LEARNED USEFUL COMPETENCIES ON EMPLOYMENT

Learned Competencies	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Communication Skills	126	70.39	1
Human Relation Skills	100	55.87	2
Entrepreneurial Skills	42	23.46	6
Information Technology Skills	68	32.40	4.5
Problem-Solving Skills	68	32.40	4.5
Critical Thinking Skills	70	39.11	3

Note: Multiple responses.

Table IX shows that among the competencies learned by the graduates in the university, the communication skills at 70.39% 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 to human relations at 55.87% and critical thinking skills at 39.11%. Further, the skills linked to information technology and communication (ICT) and problem-solving were discovered to be in the same ranking as very useful learned competencies on the job. Entrepreneurial related skills were the least chosen skills of the graduates that were useful in their employment. The results were supported by the studies [36]-[38] that possessing good English 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 [34] and [40] 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, according to [41].

TABLE X: LEARNED USEFUL VALUES ON EMPLOYMENT

Values learned	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Competence	103	57.54	2
Compassion	74	41.34	6.5
Honestly	94	52.51	3
Punctuality	68	37.99	8
Leadership	86	48.04	4
Confidence	105	58.66	1
Faith	65	36.31	9.5
Diligence	65	36.31	9.5
Zeal for Service	64	35.75	11
Sociability	74	41.34	6.5
Commitment	54	30.17	14
Hope	59	32.96	13
Work	78	43.58	5
Creativity	61	34.08	12

Note: Multiple responses.

Table X denotes that the confidence value at 58.66% was the most useful value for employment that the graduates perceived that they learned at university. This was followed by 57.54% for competence, 52.51% for honesty, and 48.04% for leadership. Whereas the values of commitment and hope were ranked the least among the values identified. Also, the values of having faith and being diligent in employment were perceived by the graduates in the same manner as being useful, as these values were ranked the same at 9.5.

VI. 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 university degree as influenced by their parents and good academic performance in high school. Most of the graduates of the batch of 2013 to 2017 were employed with regular or permanent job status. Graduates work as professionals and earn salaries ranging from 20,000 to less than 25,000 pesos. The majority of them took 1 to 6 months to get their first job, and the primary reason for leaving their first job was salary and benefit considerations. All of the program's learning areas were deemed relevant to graduates' employment, with the general education and practice teaching learning areas getting the highest mean score. Communication and human relations skills were found by the graduates to be the most useful competencies in the workplace. Confidence and competence were the most useful values for employment, according to the graduate's evaluation. Entrepreneurial skills and commitment to value, on the other hand, were perceived as the least useful competencies and values for employment by teachers' education graduates. 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 [42]-[44].

The researchers suggest that the university's teacher education department should continue strengthening the program curriculum areas of the BSEd and BSIEd 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 onthe-job training to provide them with meaningful experiences and the skills required in the workplace, particularly in the present pandemic situation. The university should continue to develop, monitor, and strengthen students' communication and human relations skills, as these are regarded as the most useful skills acquired by graduates for employment. Students' confidence and competence must be developed continuously. 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 university facilities, and professional examinations such as the Licensure Examination.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Eastern Visayas State University Office of the Research, Development, and Extension (EVSU-ORDEx) in the Philippines for granting them to conduct the study. Also, appreciation to all of the teacher education graduates from 2013 to 2017 who took part in the study.

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