

Factors on Enhancing Competitive Edge and Attributes of Graduates as Inputs to the Development of Teacher Education Enhancement Program (TEEP)

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Abstract - *In response to the CHED's Higher Education Development Project and the need to track the status of Sorsogon State College (SSC) teacher education graduates, this research was conceptualized. The study aims to gauge the teacher education program's thrust of providing a quality and relevant education that could ensure worthwhile and appropriate employment opportunity to its graduates. Descriptive research design was employed in this study. Surveys, unstructured interviews, and documentary analysis were undertaken to gather pertinent data among the respondents. The study consists of 427 teacher education graduates who were selected through stratified random technique. This tracer study determined the employability of Teacher Education graduates in SSC, Sorsogon Campus from 2009 to 2013 with an end-view of proposing a Teacher Education Enhancement Program (TEEP) to enhance the competitive edge of SSC Teacher Education graduates in all teaching job opportunities. The intellectual, social and linguistic attributes of the SSC graduates were likewise identified in this study. Some of the factors identified by the respondents that could help improve their competitive edge are the pre-service trainings, job placement program, teacher education curriculum enrichment, and Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) review program.*

Keywords: *Education, tracer study, employability of graduates, attributes of graduates, descriptive, Sorsogon City, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Human capital is the backbone of human and economic development in every nation. Almendarez [1] describes human capital as investment people make in themselves to enhance their economic productivity. Many theories explicitly connect the importance of education as one of the means of investment in human capital formation that could result to economic development and productivity growth. This has frequently been cited as a justification for government subsidies for education and job skills training which is in consonance with the objective of higher education in the Philippines. The Education Act of 1982 [2] has emphasized some of the objectives of higher education which are to train nation's manpower in the required skills for national development, and to instill and foster appropriate and required knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable each individual to become a productive and gainfully

employed member of the society. This eventually has become one of the mission statements of every higher education institution in the Philippines.

However, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has issued a moratorium thru its memorandum order no. 32 series 2010 [3] on the opening of all undergraduate and graduate programs in business administration, nursing, and teacher education effective school year 2011 to 2012. The declaration of the moratorium on the opening of teacher education program from the undergraduate courses to graduate studies which includes degree in Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Master of Arts in Education, and Doctor of Philosophy in Education is anchored on the proliferation of the Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) offering the program and the gradual decline of the result of the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) indicating the worsening state of the program.

It was also mentioned in the report of Ronda [4] that the CHED has sent out cease and desist orders (CDOs) to higher education institutions (HEIs) offering courses that do not comply with quality standards and whose graduates fare miserably in licensure examinations. The Sorsogon State College Sorsogon City Campus offers the Teacher Education Program moving towards Center of Development (COD) and is mandated to keep at pace along current reforms and innovations in education. The program aims to provide for the development and training of effective elementary and secondary teachers. Hence, the present study will provide an updated data whether the SSC Teacher Education graduates met the standards and performance indicators set by CHED and stakeholders to ensure that the program answers the needs of the community through employment of the graduates.

Baldoz [5] mentioned that the CHED moratorium complements the efforts of the DOLE at reinforcing the employability of graduates by delivering relevant labor market information to the basic education students and educating them on what courses are employable. In response to this claim, the DOLE is formulating a Philippine Human Resources Development (HRD) framework which would contain strategies to attain better and quality graduates who will find jobs after college.

The 2013 report of Philippine Statistics Authority [6] revealed that the total employed persons reached approximately 38.0 million. Employed persons include the group of workers in the services sector which comprised the largest proportion of the population who are employed. Another group of employed persons are workers in the agriculture sector which comprised the second largest group, followed by workers in the industry sector. Moreover, the unemployment rate in 2013 was estimated at 7.3 percent which is approximately 3.0 million unemployed persons where 62.1% of them were males. Age group ranges 15 to 24 years (48.8%) were the largest number of unemployed, followed by the age group 25 to 34 years (30.0%). By educational attainment, the college graduates comprised one-fifth (20.0%) of the unemployed and college undergraduates were 13.8% of the unemployed.

Moreover, based on the common recommendations of social partners during the nationwide consultations for the National Labor and Employment Summit, the Philippine HRD action

should move towards market intelligence, responsive and adequate investments for training and education programs, and more advance learning inputs and outputs that will pave the way towards better matching of the skills of Filipinos with requirements in the job market. This serves as one of the bases for the policy formulation that could be derived from study on how to maintain or to enhance the performance of the Teacher Education program of the college.

At the local setting, there are several studies conducted with regards to tracing the employment status and the training needs of the graduates of the Sorsogon State College in its different programs. The study conducted by Habla et al. [7] on the employment status of the Bachelor of Technology graduates of the Sorsogon State College AY 2001-2006. The study also includes the profile of the graduates in terms of gender, age, civil status, field of specialization and eligibility. The in service training needs of the students as suggested by the graduates are the advancement training of CAD (computer aided design) and cell phone repair of different models for Architectural Drafting, Civil Tech, and Automotive Technology, respectively. It was recommended that the curriculum planners should review its policy on the offering of some courses that are found to be less in demand by the occupational sector, especially on cases where respondents accepted jobs not according to their training or specialization. A yearly survey on occupational trend and changes be undertaken in order to forecast manpower demands in the service of the college was also recommended.

Deri and her colleagues [8] conducted a tracer study of BSEd graduates of the Sorsogon State College, Sorsogon Campus, from 2003 to 2008 focusing on the employability in relation to their profile and performance in the Licensure Examination for Teachers. The respondents are 231 BSEd graduates with specializations in Chemistry, Physics, English, Mathematics, PEHM and THE. The study found out that the relationship between profile of the respondents when grouped according to age, gender, civil status, major field of specialization, and graduate studies undertaken and their employment status is insignificantly low while their performance in the LET is moderately but significantly correlated to their employment status. Language proficiency and content course programs for mastery, intensification of both the co-curricular and curricular activities, performance

enhancement, personality development classes and exposure trips are suggested to strengthen and improve the pre-service training program of the institution.

Moreover, the descriptive study of Balingbing [9] determined the employability of BSIT graduates of Camarines Sur Polytechnic College. The study found out that most of the respondents who were females with ages 20-25 years old were TESDA certified and employed in the private sectors. The graduates encountered difficulty along knowledge, skills, and attitudes. However, there was no significant relationship in the level of competencies of the graduates and the level of difficulty encountered. The study offered measures to enhance the competitiveness of the graduates such as the conduct of review for TESDA assessment and civil service examinations, the strengthening of the English Proficiency Program, and the in-house trainings for IT faculty members.

The aforementioned study suggests that any higher education institutions (HEIs) should continuously provide program for human development of its prospect graduates to prepare them to the world of labor market competitions. Human capital theory discloses that investment in knowledge, skills, or characteristics contributes to increase worker's productivity. Thus, any individual who acquired more general knowledge and skills to perform complex tasks might result to its high probability of employment.

Bridgstock [10] emphasized in her article that contention exists regarding exactly what constitutes employability and which graduate attributes are required to foster employability in tertiary students. She stressed that in the context of a rapidly changing information- and knowledge-intensive economy, employability involves far more than possession of the generic skills listed by graduate employers as attractive. Rather, for optimal economic and social outcomes, graduates must be able to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process.

Haigh and Clifford [11] stressed the need to move away from the current emphasis on skills for jobs and individual, material betterment toward a more spiritual and world orientation. Education for the future needs to focus on an agenda of personal responsibility and on individual and social interior attributes and to move away from its present exterior systems focus.

Graduate attributes need to address levels of concern that rise through the self and the social toward the welfare of the whole planet.

The distinction between the high achievers and low achievers disposition has been elaborated by attribution theory. The theory explains that those who do not avoid tasks related to succeeding are high achievers, because they are confident enough to do them. Failure doesn't affect their self-esteem but success builds pride and confidence. On the other hand, those who doubt their ability and thus avoiding success-related tasks are low achievers. Thus, every HEIs may involved its graduates in acquiring the required skills and knowledge enough to build confidence they need to survive in the labor market economy.

This could be supported by the constructivism learning theory which states that learners learn best when they build their own ideas based from the observation and experiences provided to them. Students are able to develop the skills and confidence to analyze the world around them, create solutions or support for developing issues, and then justify their words and actions. These are the required skills that the HEIs students should acquired to ready to face the challenges of the fast changing world.

Student engagement was identified by Ya-hui and Li-yia [12] as the holistic, useful approach for the development of employability and lifelong learning among higher education students. The holistic approach reflects the fact that what is required in a workforce is not the acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions per se, but the capability to make an engagement through which knowledge, skills and dispositions are connected as a whole.

The aforementioned principles and ideas provide the framework of the present study that serves as the foundations for discussions. They were all found relevant since they focused on the attributes that will lead to the employability of the graduates. The challenge at present is on how the Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) could create alternatives to cushion the K to 12 impact. One of the various means could be through an offering of a specialized training of teacher education students and advancing their knowledge skills to be better off when they start their career. The academe has to set its course of action on the expected impact of K to 12 on HEIs. [13] Corollary to this, the present study proposes an innovative measure to address the impact of K to 12 programs specifically in

the teacher education department of the college. The output of the study, the Teacher Education Enhancement Program (TEEP), was formulated based on the data gathered from the respondents of the study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research generally aims to develop the Teacher Education Enhancement Program (TEEP) for the teacher education graduating students. Specifically it aims to: (1.) Determine the profile of the graduates in terms of highest educational attainment, licensure status and employment status; (2.) determine the attributes of SSC teacher education graduates who are employed as teachers; (3.) identify the factors that could enhance the competitive edge of the SSC graduates as perceived by the respondents; and (4.) develop a Teacher Education Enhancement Program (TEEP).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized the descriptive research design. Surveys, unstructured interviews, and documentary analysis were undertaken to gather pertinent data among the respondents. The teacher education students who graduated from 2009 to 2013 were the target respondents of the study. The stratified sampling technique determined the 427 actual respondents out of the 1,004 total graduates for the covered period. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by program. The BEED graduates compose more than half of the samples consisting of 59 percent (59%) while BSED constitutes only 41 percent (41%). This result is consistent with the observation that every year, there are more BEED students who graduate than BSED.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents per Year

Year	BSED	BEED	Total
2009	37	51	88
2010	19	33	52
2011	32	53	85
2012	41	58	99
2013	44	59	103
Total	173	254	427
%	41	59	100

Figure 1 reveals the distribution of BSED respondents in terms of their specialization. The Mathematics majors comprise the biggest percentage of 25 percent (25%) while MAPEH has only 13

percent (13%) that remained consistent to have the least number of graduates every year.

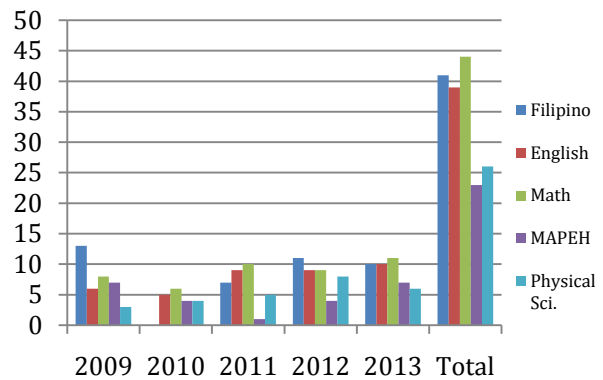


Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents Based on their Specialization

Documents and records of the graduates from the registrar’s office and the Dean’s office were first secured by the researchers to trace the respondents. The survey-questionnaire which was validated by experts of the College in different field was the main instrument used in this study. This is consists of items regarding the profile of the graduates, the attributes and the factors that could enhance the competitive edge of the teacher education graduates.

There were several strategies employed in the distribution and retrieval of the survey instrument. The researchers took advantage of technology by utilizing email and the social media such as Facebook in administering the said instrument. Snail mail and other modes of delivery were also undertaken. Referrals from students, co-teachers, and friends in the community also form part of the procedure of the study. Unstructured interview was utilized when the data were gathered personally. A total of 502 survey instruments were administered, however only 427 or 85 percent (85%) were retrieved. The results were analyzed and interpreted using frequency and percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

Out of 427 respondents, only 1 percent (1%) has completed a Master’s degree. Some respondents, or 14 percent (14%), have earned Master’s degree units.

Majority or 85 percent (85%) have not pursued graduate studies. These findings tell us that most of the graduates are employed in a kind of job whose nature does not require further studies. It may also mean financial constraints that the respondents cannot afford to enroll in graduate studies which may be due to the meager salaries they are earning. This result may also be attributed to the orientation of the respondents. They were possibly not oriented on the importance of pursuing graduate studies as a stronghold to get a teaching job. Further, this finding may also be due to DepEd Order No. 12, s., 2012 [14] or the revised guidelines on the hiring of teacher 1 position based on Basic Education Strategic Reform Agenda (BESRA) which does not give any point on units earned or degree in the advance study of teacher applicants. Moreover, promotion to teacher II and above positions only requires at the least MA completed academic requirements (CAR) as per DepEd Order No. 66, s., 2007 [15] or Guidelines on the appointment and promotion of other teaching, related teaching and non-teaching positions.

Along licensure status, Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents. It shows that most or 87 percent (87%) of the respondents are LET eligible. Non-LET passers comprise only 3 percent (3%). These results denote that the teacher education program of the college is doing well in terms of its implementation that is effectively supported by the necessary facilities, faculty complement, program administration, etc. This finding also justifies that teacher education graduates are informed of the provisions of the Republic Act 7836 [16] or the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994. They are aware that to be able to practice and be hired in their chosen career, they have to get a license to teach.

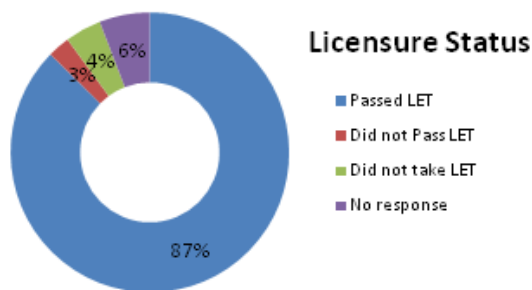


Figure 2. Distribution of Respondents Based on their Licensure Status

Majority or 81 percent (81%) of the respondents are gainfully employed as teachers. Of this number, 25 percent (25%) occupies position in the private schools while 75 percent (75%) in public schools. Sixty percent (60%) of them are holders of permanent positions with teacher 1 positions while 40 percent (40%) are non-permanent. Meanwhile, 8 percent (8%) of the respondents are employed but not as teachers. They work as clerk, call center agent, sales representative, police officer, cashier, etc. On the other hand, 9 percent (9%) are unemployed. The results are indicative that most of the graduates possess the necessary qualifications that made them acquire a teaching position in various schools. It may also imply that teaching is certainly the preference of these respondents. It follows therefore, that those who were not hired as teachers suggest that teaching is not particularly their priority. In addition, with the DepEd's K-12 curriculum implementation, creation of more plantilla items for public school teachers was made. Thus, 34,953 teachers were hired as of January 30, 2013 [17]. Private schools also hired more teachers to teach the new curriculum.

Attributes of SSC Teacher Education Graduates

The best part of the implementation of every curriculum is seeing the students get employed. This is because the employment of the students measures the effectiveness of carrying out all the aspects of curriculum implementation. The various aspects of effectiveness of the curriculum are manifested, however, on the attributes of the graduates. This study operationally defines attributes as the characteristics of the teacher education graduates that got them hired in their present teaching jobs. These attributes also suggest the employability of the graduates.

The intellectual capability, social skills and linguistic ability comprise the attributes of the graduates. Passing the LET with flying colors, honors received, topping the DepEd ranking, passing the examination and interview given by the employer, and conducting an impressive demonstration lesson are some of the reasons of the graduates that got them hired as teachers. These data indicate that the admission requirements of the college for teacher education are reasonable and adequate. These qualifications define the intellectual capability of the graduates.

The study of Mancao [18] revealed that passing the LET with higher ratings are perceived to be extremely important factor in hiring teacher applicants by the public school principals in NCR. Private school principals only perceived it to be quite important. However both require teacher applicants to be LET passers. Also, her study revealed that demonstration teaching performance, performance rating from the previous employment, and interview result are the top three professional attributes perceived by the principals to be extremely important in hiring teacher applicants in NCR.

Being sociable and having good human relations are some of the reasons that define the social skills of the graduates. These results affirm the good interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences of the graduates. The interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences of Gardner describe the understanding of one's own and others emotion respectively. These remarkable attributes of the graduates could be credited to the regular conduct of disciplinary and interdisciplinary activities sponsored by various students' organizations that helped foster social development among students. Huffcutt, et.al. [19] concludes that personality traits and applied social skills are rated more often in employment or job interviews than other types of constructs. Social skills of employees are positively related to contextual performance in team settings.

The notable communication skills of the graduates spell out their linguistic ability. This finding can also be attributed to the adequacy of admissions requirement of the college wherein the freshmen applicants are required to undergo interview. Literary oral contests are also undertaken as part of the activity during intramural meet. Likewise, the SSC teacher education department annually conducts the Language proficiency test for senior teacher education students. Passing the Language Proficiency test is among the requirements for student teaching [20]. This result is consistent with the research findings from HRM offices as emphasized by Trimble [21]. She stressed that communication skill can spell out a crucial criterion in deciding to accept or reject an applicant. Communication skills include language fluency in both oral and written form. The ability of the applicant to express broadly and coherently his thoughts and ideas is an influential factor for getting hired in any job.

Factors That Could Enhance the Competitive Edge of the SSC Graduates

The respondents perceived that measures should be made to enhance and to improve the competitive edge of SSC teacher education graduates. Competitive edge may refer to a state or condition that gives high employment regard to SSC teacher education graduates. The competitive edge of the graduates can be a product of the series of enhancement activities that the department shall undergo. These schemes are: (a) Hold pre-service trainings for graduating Teacher education students; (b) Provide job placement program for graduating TEd students; (c) Review the teacher education curriculum; and (d) establish institutional LET review program.

The pre-service trainings to be undertaken will include workshops on self-grooming, skills enhancement on effective communications, public speaking and presentations, visual arts, and computer applications. Some of the themes are not actually part of the teacher education curriculum hence; the training will serve as a supplemental activity for the students. These workshop themes were considered based on the data gathered from the respondents which they perceived as some of the ingredients needed to produce employable graduates. The need for pre-service trainings was likewise perceived by the BSED Graduates from SY 2003-2008 as one of the measures to enhance the SSC graduates' competitive edge in the global market [1].

A job placement program for teacher education was considered to address the difficulty of the graduates to secure a teaching slot in either public or private schools in the province or elsewhere. Most of the respondents who are unemployed and employed in other jobs emphasized that a teaching position is hard to find despite their qualifications. Thus, the department needs to come up with a program that will assist the graduates in seeking teaching jobs. The college may also initiate the holding of job fairs and encourage the participation of the DepEd in the city or province. The holding of job fairs regularly may also open doors for more linkages for the college which eventually will give opportunity for the graduates to be tapped.

Revisiting the teacher education curriculum is another measure identified by the respondents that will help enhance the competitive edge of the graduates of SSC. Bridgstock [10] pointed out the recent shifts in education and labor market policy that

placed universities under increasing pressure to produce employable graduates. Various international trends threaten all the higher education institutions in the country that at this early each has to think of different strategies to cope with these drastic changes. In the advent of these educational transformations, stringent and stiff competitions among applicants may soon be realized. An initial undertaking to spur a proactive action is the review and enrichment of the curriculum. Curriculum review, fortunately, is one in which the college has always the option for the purpose of equipping its graduates with up-to-date ideas and information to make them at par with the other graduates of big universities in the country or in other parts of the world.

Establishing a LET review program is another option that is feasible to enrich the competitive edge of SSC graduates. The review program will help arm the graduates with sufficient ideas and information to ensure a successful LET exam. A license to teach has remained consistent as one of the selection criteria to hire teachers in various schools in the country. Remarkable passing rates in LET will not only attract more enrollees in the teacher education program but also will give the college recognition in terms of its LET performance.

Proposed Teacher Education Enhancement Program (TEEP)

The Teacher Education Enhancement Program (TEEP) will serve the interests of the graduating students of the teacher education program. The TEEP hopes to address the needs of the graduates in terms of the competencies that they have to possess prior to their application to any teaching position. This program aims to develop the personality of the graduates by giving supplemental activities that will further enhance their knowledge, talents, and abilities that will function as their assets essential to land a teaching job.

The TEEP will run annually and will be proposed to form part of the operations of the department along student development. The TEEP shall compose a series of trainings with varied durations depending on the objectives of the activity. Speakers with appropriate expertise shall be invited during trainings. A workshop shall be conducted every last day of the training. As part of the entire program of the department, funding shall be accordingly arranged within the department or the college. The college will

provide some materials and some will come from the participants. The proponents of this study will serve as the focal persons of the program. The various teacher education organizations headed by the future educators' guild (FEG) shall be involved as members of the working committees. Experts to discuss on different topics will be invited during the training workshops. In all these activities, graduating TEd students will be the participants.

The proposed program shall cover different activities with the following topics:

Self-Grooming. This activity will provide awareness to students about proper grooming for different occasions, carrying oneself with confidence, social etiquettes, discrete gestures and body languages. Specifically it aims to enable students to learn the proper way to dress up for various occasions and carrying oneself with grace and confidence. This activity will also provide the students some professional tips and techniques in enhancing physical features through proper make-up and hair do.

Effective communication skills and public speaking enhancement. This activity will improve the student's skills in both written and oral communications. It will provide them tips and opportunity to apply the gained information on how to speak in a crowd. This activity aims to enable students to learn the following: a) the ABC's of effective communication; b) the basic proper ways of answering phone calls; c) the do's and don'ts of public speaking; and d) the power of words vs. verbal and non-verbal communication.

Computer application skills enhancement. This activity will give students the opportunity to improve their functional literacy skills in MS applications that will complement their instructional activities and practices during their actual teaching. This activity will particularly enhance their skills in Microsoft word, excel, power point and publisher.

Visual Arts Skills Enhancement. In this activity, students will be trained the basics of visual arts which they can apply during the preparation of their instructional materials, room restructuring, and other similar tasks. This will also teach students some touches of artistry in preparing reports and other formal documents. This training will also teach students in choosing styles and proper ways of letter cutting, room and bulletin board restructuring, color combinations (color wheel).

LET pre-coaching activity. The various techniques in taking the test such as following test instructions, rationalization of the choices, proper shading of answer, and time management shall be tackled in this activity. Some tips in taking and acing a test and mock LET will be undertaken in this activity.

Job Hunting Simulation. This activity will provide the students awareness of the important things to do in applying for a job. They will learn how to make effective resumes, application letters, and practice the tips in taking an interview and a test. This activity will train students how to make a proper and effective resume and application letter, learn the basics of personal interviews using contemporary skills, do mock interview, and discuss some tips in taking and acing a test.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Most of the respondents are LET passers and are employed as teachers. However, majority of them have not pursued any graduate studies yet. The attributes of the teacher education graduates are categorized along intellectual, social and linguistic skills. There are various measures identified to enhance the competitive edge of the graduates which include holding pre-service trainings, job fair program, curriculum enrichment, and LET review program. The formulation of the TEEP is the output of the research which hopes to be translated into a series of trainings and workshops for all TEd graduating students.

With these premises, this study recommends that the students be made aware of the importance of pursuing graduate studies. The teacher education department must be creative in devising ways and means to reach out to their students so that the most appropriate programs and projects will be formulated. A continuing education program in the form of trainings or seminars be regularly conducted to aid in the development of the students. Faculty members must also be constantly exposed to latest educational developments by sending them to conferences to make their instructional functions more effective. Program administration must also be constantly monitored to ensure consistency between decision-making processes and policies formulated.

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