

Employers' Feedbacks on the Performance of Teacher Education Graduates

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Abstract - Higher education institutions in the Philippines play a vital role in the economic, social and cultural advancement of the country. As they are entrusted with the responsibility of turning in graduates with employable skills and good attitudes, they experience pressure to enhance their curricula and improve the quality of instruction. This study was conducted to investigate the performance of Batangas State University ARASOF College of Teacher Education graduates through the feedbacks given by their employers as employers' feedback of teachers, which can generate evidence on the quality of graduates, their capabilities and performance in the school, and, as a consequence, the quality of education provided by a teacher education institution. Descriptive in nature, it utilized a survey questionnaire to collect assessment of principal and school heads of 18 schools about the level of satisfaction on graduates' application of teacher proficiencies in the areas of foundations, research, subject matter, learning and development, reflective skills, technologies, pedagogical and professional skills, assessment, dispositions, diversity, collaboration and initiative. The findings showed that employers are satisfied with teachers prepared at BatStateU ARASOF. Employers find the proficiencies explored in the study as very useful for an entry level teacher. When responses are compared, a gap exists between the employers' assessment of graduates and the degree of usefulness of these proficiencies. In spite of this gap, principals and school heads are very much willing to continue hiring graduates of the school of study.

Keywords: *employers' feedbacks, employers' assessment, teachers, teacher education graduates, graduates,*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions in the Philippines play a vital role in the economic, social and cultural advancement of the country. They are recognized as one of the best agents who will bring about development of the nation's human capital through the delivery of quality education and relevant training. Accordingly, they are expected to prepare graduates for employment. Higher education institutions have the economic responsibility to produce graduates with the skills and attitudes that are highly regarded by employers and are considered valuable to the country's prosperity and human capital.

The quality of education provided by higher education institutions may affect the quality the employability of its graduates [1]. Graduates, as former students, directly experience the relevance and content of an institution's curriculum and are openly exposed to the consequences of the quality of

instruction as delivered by its faculty members combined with the institution's provision of favorable learning environment. As higher education institutions are entrusted with the responsibility of turning in graduates with employable skills and good attitudes, they experience pressure to enhance their curricula and improve the quality of instruction. This enhancement is a complex process that demands many things and among them is the involvement of different stakeholders.

One of these stakeholders whose inputs are sought after is the group of employers. In recent years, universities have involved employers in many ways to enhance the curriculum and improve instruction. One of which is to gather their feedbacks of graduates they employed. Through employers' feedbacks, universities are guided in enhancing their curriculum and estimating how they perform against the standards

they set in consideration of their legal and educational mandates.

Employers are also involved in articulating a university's own set of graduate's attributes. The graduates' attributes give universities a clear picture of what kind of competencies, attitudes and skills are needed in the workplace, thus enabling their graduates to be employable. Universities need to involve employers to identify these attributes since after graduation, the fate of the graduates to be employed lies in their hands and decision to hire them.

By its very nature, a project investigating employers' feedback of its graduates and their employability emphasizes the role that an institution of higher learning plays in developing human capital, as part of local, national and international economies. Taking advantage of employers feedback or evaluation results raises a number of challenges such as feeding information on performance back to those who provide educational services to the graduates, most notably faculty members and college deans; developing mechanisms for faculty development in particular the improvement of teaching practices; establishing support systems and consequences that flow from feedback results; and developing the channels to ensure that information generated by graduates evaluation through employers feedback is used for educational policy development. These challenges highlight the importance of knowledge management.

Employer's feedback can generate evidence on the quality of graduates, their capabilities and performance in the school[1,2] and is usually reported as the employers' level of satisfaction of the graduates. Further, it can provide information on proficiencies and qualities they considered very important and useful in the work place. The level of satisfaction as a form of employers' feedback on graduates is as important as their assessment of the usefulness of the proficiencies needed in the work place. These two types of feedbacks can be compared and analyzed using a gap analysis. A high gap value means a big disparity between the employers' perception of usefulness and their level of satisfaction of graduates proficiencies or performance. For higher education institutions, a small gap is desirable and shows how well their graduates compare with the expectations of different employers.

The issue of satisfaction as a form of employer's feedbacks of graduates is very important for teacher

education institutions, so much so with the advent of implementing a longer basic education and thus resulting to an increased demand for teachers. It can be used as a measure of how well a teacher education institution prepared their graduates and can also indicate the quality and relevance of the teacher education curriculum. Research shows the characteristics of a program of study have great impact on the relevance of the program in the world of work[3]. Moreover, the level of satisfaction as a form of employer's feedback can also provide information on the relevance and responsiveness of pre-service teacher's preparation and an overall impact of its teacher education curriculum.

When viewed in this manner, employer's satisfaction will serve as point of reference for enhancing a teacher education institution's curricular content and providing relevant activities. This enhancement may enable it to turn – in graduates who are employable – those who are competent and possess relevant proficiencies very much needed in the teaching work place. These proficiencies include, but are not limited to, graduates' knowledge of philosophy and history of education, research, subject matter, learning and development, reflective skills, technologies, pedagogical and professional skills, assessment, dispositions, diversity, collaboration and initiative.

Consequently, conducting assessments of employers' feedback will be valuable in determining future directions and requirements of teacher education programs. Further, the teacher education curriculum can be customized according to employment and school needs, and most importantly, help teacher education institutions clarify whether the learning outcomes of their programs have been achieved.

As an institution of higher learning, Batangas State University and its campuses aspire to be more effective, more competitive, and more innovative in its provision of higher education. It persistently and continuously explores different approaches and avenues to realize these aspirations. It sets up assessment system to monitor the quality of services it provides to its stakeholders and the greater community. Through an assessment of employers' feedback, the university, in general, will be given baseline information about the quality of its graduates and the requirements of employers, which may prove indispensable in enhancing the curriculum of different

programs. For the College of Teacher Education, in particular, the feedbacks of school heads and principals on the performance of its graduates will yield evidence on the relevance of its curriculum and the quality of education it provides. These data can be used to enhance its program offering to enable exiting pre-service teachers better prepared for teaching and have better opportunities for employment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to investigate the performance of BatStateU ARASOF College of Teacher Education graduates through the feedbacks given by their employers, who are either the school principal, head teacher or teacher – in – charge. In particular, it collected the employers' level of satisfaction on graduates' application of teacher proficiencies in the areas of foundations, research, subject matter, learning and development, reflective skills, technologies, pedagogical and professional skills, assessment, dispositions, diversity, collaboration and initiative. Moreover, the study examined employers' perceptions of usefulness of these proficiencies for an entry – level teacher. Likewise, the study examined employers' inclination towards hiring of BatStateU ARASOF graduates. To enrich the findings of study, the employers' level of satisfaction on the attributes of graduates and the usefulness of these attributes are compared using gap analysis. Thereafter, gap analysis was used as basis for identifying priorities for improvement.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used the descriptive survey method of research employing a survey questionnaire to collect data needed. The questionnaire was benchmarked against the employer survey questionnaire of University of New Haven[2]. The review of the instrument led the researchers to its revision to make it appropriate to the present study with the nature of participants taking primary consideration. There was a considerable degree of assurance that the questionnaire's constructs were relatively stable, while care was taken to adapt specific aspects to the current research locale context. The revision yielded only 11 items in each of the two parts of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was shown to faculty members for review. Afterwards, the questionnaire was tried to employers who were not participants of the study to evaluate its reliability. Cronbach alpha

values of 0.76, 0.72 and 0.74 were obtained signifying its reliability.

To collect data, the researchers prepared the list of schools, both public and private, where their graduates are hired or working as classroom teachers. They solicited the assistance of third year and fourth year students enrolled in the college. They oriented them about the study and asked if they know the head teacher/principal/ teacher – in – charge of target schools. They gave questionnaires to those who answered affirmatively and requested them to administer it to target schools. They also distributed questionnaires to faculty members who have connections with the target schools.

The first part of the survey invited respondents to assess, from their perspective as an employer, the performance of teachers prepared at BatStateU ARASOF by indicating their level of satisfaction on 11 proficiencies. The second part requested their perceptions of these 11 proficiencies for an entry – level teacher. The questionnaire also asked employers their willingness to hire graduates of the aforementioned school and their comments.

A total of 23 schools were approached and 18 agreed to participate in the survey. All of the administrators - head teacher/principal/ teacher – in – charge - submitted valid responses. The response sample was 78% of all schools in the area of survey and included both public and private schools. All in all, it took five months to collect data from these schools.

Afterwards, the data were tallied, analyzed and interpreted. Weighted mean, percentage, frequency were used to describe the typicality of responses. The interpretations used to interpret verbally weighted means obtained on employers' level of satisfaction are as follows: "very satisfied" (VS) for average values of 3.51-4.00; "satisfied" (S) for average values of 2.51-3.50; "dissatisfied" (D) for weighted means of 1.51-2.50 and "very dissatisfied" (VD) for 1.00–1.50. The verbal interpretations on employers' perceptions of usefulness of certain proficiencies for an entry – level teacher are "very useful" (VU) for average values of 3.51-4.00; "useful" (U) for average values of 2.51-3.50; "slightly useful" (SU) for weighted means of 1.51 -2.50 and "not useful at all" (NA) for 1.00–2.50.

To substantiate the findings of the study, the answers to the level of satisfaction and usefulness questions was compared. Gap analysis is used to

show the difference between how useful to respondents the attributes investigated in the study, and how satisfied they are with the attributes of graduates prepared at BatStateU ARASOF. After comparing usefulness and satisfaction scores, gap analysis is used as basis for identifying priorities for improvement in the college concerned.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the level of satisfaction of respondents on teachers prepared at BatStateU ARASOF.

Table 1. Employers' level of satisfaction of teachers prepared at BatStateU ARASOF

	Proficiencies	WM	VI	Rank
1.	Knowledge of Philosophy and History of education	3.22	S	7.5
2.	Research Skills	3.00	S	11
3.	Mastery of Subject Matter	3.44	S	1
4.	Learning and Development	3.28	S	3.5
5.	Reflective Skills	3.22	S	7.5
6.	Educational Technology	3.39	S	2
7.	Pedagogical and Professional Skills	3.22	S	7.5
8.	Assessment	3.22	S	7.5
9.	Dispositions	3.22	S	7.5
10.	Management of Diversity of Learners	3.22	S	7.5
11.	Collaboration and Initiative	3.28	S	3.5
	Composite Mean	3.25	S	

For the employers' level of satisfaction of teachers prepared at BatStateU ARASOF College of Teacher Education, a cursory glance at Table 1 shows that all 11 items have weighted means ranging from 3.00 – 3.44, verbally interpreted as satisfied.

Topping the list is the graduates' proficiency level on subject matter (3.44) they handle. Proficiency on subject matter includes the graduates' knowledge of his specialization and its interaction with other subject areas. It also takes into account graduates/teacher's ability to promote their own critical thinking and their students. Likewise, it encompasses the teacher's ability to develop and deepen content knowledge and pedagogy.

The weighted mean of 3.44 indicates that some respondents are very satisfied with the graduates but still a majority are only satisfied with the way graduates demonstrate this proficiency hence resulting

to a rating of satisfied only. In spite of this distribution of satisfied and very satisfied responses, this assessment can be taken as a good rating and underscores the fact that employers have observed the depth of knowledge and critical thinking skills demonstrated by graduates, which could have made the employers to assess them satisfyingly.

The respondents evaluated graduates' proficiency on technologies at the level of "satisfied" with a weighted mean of 3.39. This weighted mean signifies that some employers have high appreciation of the graduates' knowledge and skills in the use of instructional technologies but majority of them only adjudge these at the level of "satisfied".

Employers regarded two graduates' proficiencies, that of learning and development and that of collaboration and initiative, in the same intensity of satisfied (3.28). The rating stresses participants' general approval of the way graduates handle learning and development of their students.

The respondents rated 6 proficiencies of graduates with the same weighed mean of 3.22, all at the "satisfied" level. The ratings reveal that a few respondents are very satisfied but majority are only satisfied with the graduates' proficiencies in foundations, reflective skills, pedagogical and professional skills, assessment, dispositions and diversity.

The analysis of data shows that research proficiency of graduates receives the lowest rating, however, it must be noted that the value of 3.00 still falls under the level of "satisfied". Teachers' proficiency on research embraces the graduates' knowledge and use of educational research base to inform their beliefs, choices, actions, and to help develop empirically sound curriculum.

In general, employers give a favorable feedback to the teachers prepared at BatStateU ARASOF. Albeit the slight differences in the weighted mean for each proficiency, the respondents generally indicated an approval level of "satisfied" with the proficiency on subject matter as the highest and research as the lowest.

The favorable findings reported in the present study is similar to what is found by Lowden, Hall, Elliot, and Lewin[5]. They reported that majority of employers are satisfied with their graduate recruit. Employers expect graduates to demonstrate a range of skills and attributes that include team working,

communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and often managerial abilities or potential [5].

This study yields favorable employers' feedback similar to the study of Barrera about teacher education graduates [6]. In another similar study by Shah and Chenicheri, employers ranked six items out of 10 high importance capabilities relatively low [7]. These abilities are on effective communication; work organization and effective time management; willingness to face and learn from errors and listening openly to feedback; setting and justifying priorities; flexibility and adaptability and open-mindedness [7].

Table 2 presents the employers' perceptions of usefulness of proficiencies for an entry – level teacher.

Table 2. Perceptions of usefulness of proficiencies for an entry – level teacher

Proficiencies	WM	VI	Rank
1. Knowledge of Philosophy and History of Education	3.67	VU	1.5
2. Research	3.06	U	10
3. Mastery of Subject matter	3.61	VU	3
4. Learning and Development	3.50	U	6.5
5. Reflective Skills	3.44	U	9.5
6. Educational Technology	3.67	VU	1.5
7. Pedagogical and Professional Skills	3.50	U	6.5
8. Assessment	3.56	VU	4
9. Dispositions	3.50	U	6.5
10. Diversity of Learners	3.50	VU	6.5
11. Collaboration and Initiative	3.44	U	9.5
Composite Mean	3.50	VU	

Employers expect graduates to demonstrate various skills and abilities relevant in the work place and these consist of team working, good communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and leadership abilities or potential [3]. In general, employers consider all proficiencies enumerated in the study as essential qualities for entry – level teachers. The weighted means of 3.06 -3.67 verbally interpreted as useful to very useful confirm the employers' perceptions of great importance of these attributes. It can be noted that 6 items are appraised as useful and 5 items as very useful for an entry – level teacher. Furthermore, two items get the highest rating of 3.67; one item gets the lowest rating; and the rest of the items spread themselves into the middle of the list. In addition, the table shows small

variances in the weighted means of the 11 items as assessed by employers.

As mentioned above, two items top the list. These are proficiencies concerning the use of technologies and that of knowledge of philosophy and history of education. The weighted mean of 3.67 suggests that majority assess them as very useful with only a few regarding them as useful only. Further, the weighted mean implies respondents' high expectations of these attributes among entry – level teachers.

The weighted mean of 3.56 as very useful for the aspect of assessment implies that slightly more than one – half of the respondents considers this as very useful. The rest are happy to say that this is only just useful for an entry – level teacher.

Four items, namely; proficiencies on learning and development, pedagogical and professional skills, dispositions and diversity of learners, sharing the same rank recorded a rating of 3.50. These ratings imply that respondents were split into two opinions, with the first group rating them as useful as opposed to the second group who view these items as very useful for entry – level teachers.

The weighted mean of 3.44 for reflective skills and collaboration and initiative means that some employers perceive them as very useful but majority regard it only as useful, hence a weighted mean rating that is so close to the “very useful” mark. Moreover, this rating implies respondents perceive this item to be not as useful as technologies and foundations or either assessment for an entry – level teacher.

The proficiency on research receives a weighted mean of 3.06, which is the lowest among the 11 items but is still under the level of “useful”. This connotes that employers deliberate on teachers' other proficiencies first before they look into this kind of ability. Their predispositions could be a consequence that in the past, basic education teachers were not typically expected to conduct research and only those who are interested conduct research.

The findings of the study are somewhat consistent with Vescio's investigation on successful graduates of nine higher education degree programs in Australia [8]. The study uncovered only two additional capabilities as important, that of being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong and a willingness to persevere when things are not working out as anticipated [8].

Table 3. Gap Analysis of usefulness and level of satisfaction of graduates' proficiencies

Proficiencies	Usefulness of proficiencies	Satisfaction on Graduates Proficiencies	Mean Gap
1. Foundations	3.67	3.22	0.45
2. Research Skills	3.06	3.00	0.06
3. Mastery of Subject Matter	3.61	3.44	0.17
4. Learning and Development	3.50	3.28	0.22
5. Reflective Skills	3.44	3.22	0.22
6. Educational Technology	3.67	3.39	0.28
7. Pedagogical and Professional Skills	3.50	3.22	0.28
8. Assessment	3.56	3.22	0.34
9. Dispositions	3.50	3.22	0.28
10. Diversity of Learners	3.50	3.22	0.28
11. Collaboration and Initiative	3.44	3.28	0.16
Composite Mean	3.50	3.25	0.25

Table 3 presents the employers' level of satisfaction of teachers prepared at BatStateU ARASOF and perceptions of usefulness of proficiencies for an entry – level teacher. The employers' level of satisfaction is compared with their perceptions of usefulness of proficiencies for an entry – level teachers. The results are presented below using the mean gap for usefulness and proficiency. The mean gap is the difference between employers' perception of usefulness and their level of satisfaction on graduates' proficiencies, which can be equated to their performance. A high gap value means a big disparity between the employers' perception of usefulness and their level of satisfaction of graduates proficiencies or performance.

Generally, employers' assess graduates' proficiencies, and consequently their performance, to be lower than their expectations of their usefulness. The table shows a gap in all proficiencies investigated in the study. A mean gap of 0.25 stresses disparity between employers' perceptions of usefulness and their satisfaction of the graduates' proficiencies. The highest gap can be seen to be that on "foundations" (0.45), with the gap in assessment (0.34) following next. The gaps on educational technology, pedagogical and professional skills, dispositions and diversity of learners trail in third, with a value of 0.28. The smallest gap of 0.06 is recorded on research skills.

The findings on gap analysis bear similarity to the study of Shah and Chenicheri [7]. They found that employer responses shows a gap between what employers see as most important in terms of the skills, knowledge and attributes of recent graduates and their satisfaction. Some of the key areas identified in the

survey where such gaps exist include communication, the organization of work and managing time effectively, the willingness to face and learn from errors and listening openly to feedback, the ability to set and justify priorities, being flexible and their adaptability and willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision.

The findings of the study means that graduates who are already employed as teachers need to enhance their teaching proficiencies. This is consistent with the findings of Barerra [6] who also noted that there is need for graduates who are working as professional teachers to achieve excellent level of skills relative to development of instructional materials, assessment tools, application of teaching approaches, research involvement, collaboration with colleagues and stakeholders and managing resources and records.

Employers' Inclination towards hiring of BatStateU ARASOF graduates

Although gaps exist between usefulness and satisfaction level, employers generally turn in good ratings for graduates who prepared at BatStateU ARASOF. This could only mean one thing in terms of hiring BatStateU ARASOF graduates - they would continue hiring graduates of the aforementioned school. This is supported by the findings that majority or 17 (94.44%) of them indicated such response whereas only 1 (5.56%) respondent was uncertain. It is interesting to note that numerous graduates of the College of Teacher Education of BatStateU ARASOF were former students of the different schools whose principal or head teachers are participants of the present study. Being so, they have a stake in the professional and personal success of these graduates

and thus, hiring them and getting them employed would also mean that they have contributed in the graduates' success for employment. Likewise, the college involved in the study is the primary source of qualified teachers for basic education in that part of the province.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study generally provides a picture of the needs of public and private schools in the service area of BatStateU ARASOF in terms of their requirements for teachers. This is as shown by their expectations of the usefulness of teacher proficiencies in the areas of foundations, research, subject matter, learning and development, reflective skills, technologies, pedagogical and professional skills, assessment, dispositions, diversity, collaboration and initiative. In addition, the findings of the study can be synthesized to mean that employers have good assessments of graduates and therefore very much willing to hire graduates of the school concerned. Notably, there is a gap between their perceptions of usefulness of teacher proficiencies and the level of satisfaction on graduates' application of teacher proficiencies in the areas of foundations, research, subject matter, learning and development, reflective skills, technologies, pedagogical and professional skills, assessment, dispositions, diversity, collaboration and initiative.

The analysis of findings of this study brings forth many advantages particularly in the review and development of teacher education curriculum. Bowden and Marton believe that the curriculum for any university should prepare students based on the needs of the industry[9]. The study points out that there are gaps in the perceived usefulness and satisfaction in the proficiencies of graduates, although employers as a whole, reported favorable ratings. The areas where gaps exist could be the emphasis of enhancement activities for education students. Moreover, these gaps can positively identify shortfall in the teacher education curriculum and therefore, can serve as framework in its development to turn in prospective teachers who would meet the expectations of school principals and school heads. The college administration and its faculty members should further reflect on the findings of the study and take them into consideration as they engage more deeply in the development of their students who would be future teachers. With more at stake, students themselves should take the study as a basis in effective learning

and to prepare for their profession ahead. They should take responsibility to optimize educational opportunities they are provided with in the college. Through these concerted efforts, the employability of the graduates may then be enhanced.

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