Research Article

Tracer Study of Teacher Education Graduates of Western Philippines University - Puerto Princesa Campus: Basis for Curriculum Review and Revision

Jupeth T. Pentang*, David R. Perez, Katherine H. Cuanan, Mailyn B. Recla, Romelyn T. Dacanay, Rastanura M. Bober, Cheche E. Dela Cruz, Susana P. Egger, Ruth L. Herrera, Carolyn M. Illescas, Josephine M. Salmo, Manuel L. Bucad, Jr., Joann V. Agasa, Nur-aina A. Abaca

College of Education, Western Philippines University, Puerto Princesa City, Philippines

ABSTRACT

Graduates' employability indicates the excellent education and relevant preparation they obtained from their respective degrees. Tracer studies have enabled higher education institutions to profile their graduates while also reflecting on the quality of education they provide. With the foregoing, a tracer study determined the demographic and academic profile of teacher education graduates from 2017 to 2020 in a state university in the West Philippines. It also ascertained the advanced studies they attended after college, their employment data, the relevance of college preparation with their current employment, difficulties they encountered while securing employment and in their present job, and recommendations to strengthen the teacher education program. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design with 80 non-random samples chosen based on availability. The survey was based on the Philippine Commission on Higher Education with modifications elucidated from previous studies. Results showed that graduates took the teacher education program with a strong passion for the teaching profession. More graduates received honors and awards, passed the licensure examinations for teachers, attended advanced studies for professional development, and are employable. Besides, the graduates' college preparation is relevant to their current employment. Further, difficulties and problems encountered and recommendations to strengthen the teacher education program were noted. These findings may serve as a baseline for curriculum review and give suggestions for future tracer studies.

Background

Graduates of teacher education programs are key players in today's educational paradigm shift. Assuring quality graduates has presented a challenge for higher education institutions (HEIs) offering teacher education programs in providing relevant teacher training and preparation to meet the demands of a growing society and challenging times (Aquino et al., 2015; Daguplo et al., 2019; Coman et al., 2020; Pentang et al., 2021). It is the responsibility of HEIs to produce quality and competitive graduates (Abela et al., 2020; Caingcoy & Barroso, 2020) and to ensure that they are employed (Abas et al., 2020; Aclan et al., 2018). Higher education is valued based on its capacity to give possibilities for graduates seeking future employment and creating a strong professional path (Ali & Jalal, 2018; Rojas & Rojas, 2016) since one can only obtain a successful career if they have obtained appropriate education and training (Bihag-boholano, 2012; Ulanday, 2021). Indeed, graduate characteristics are critical factors in the development of any university undergraduate program curriculum (Kankaew et al., 2021), which has an impact on the local and global labor market and contributes to the nation's economic development (Cornillez et al., 2021). As a result, it is necessary to track graduates to assess their employability and the relevance of the knowledge and skills they acquired during their college years.

Graduate Tracer Study

The Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) is a tool for tracking graduate background. Schomburg (2016) defines GTS as a standardized survey of graduates from educational institutions that occurs sometime after graduation or the end of the training and includes questions on study progress, the transition to work, work entrance, job career, use of learned competencies, current occupation, and bonds to the educational institution. It is widely used to document graduate's profile and employment status (Badiru & Wahome, 2016; Gines, 2014), as well

as to collect and analyze data on the graduate's college experience and skills learned, the quality of instruction, and its relationship to employability (Tutor et al., 2019). GTS is critical for educational institutions since it allows them to accept changes in society, notably the expectations of current and potential employers (Cañizares, 2015) and a realistic procedure for obtaining reliable and timely inputs that ensure educational institutions' human capital is relevant and ready for the ever-changing job market (Reusia et al., 2020). One of the important metrics in the implementation of quality and relevant education is the realization of the graduates of the program in attaining their professional goals (Daguplo et al., 2019). Further, GTS makes it possible for quality assurance to be institutionalized and mainstreamed in HEI operations (Badiru & Wahome, 2016).

GTS and related studies are seen to be beneficial to HEIs. Teacher education is the brain of all educational disciplines since it provides education to prepare future teachers (Iqbal & Arif, 2011). Along these lines, GTS is useful for teacher education institutions (TEIs) to monitor and evaluate its graduates and program offering. Bok (2017) has mentioned that research is urgently needed to improve the quality of undergraduate education. Schomburg (2003) supported that graduate and employer surveys are critical for assessing higher education output and outcomes. GTS can appropriately provide valuable information for evaluating the results of education and training of a specific institution of higher education can appropriately provide valuable information for evaluating the results of the education and training of a specific institution of higher education (Aquino et al., 2015), and one of the best tools for determining the effectiveness of a program and providing feedback on its relevance in the workplace (Oboza, 2017). Data collection on labor market outcomes of higher education attainment through GTS and research on labor market skills have been identified as measures to increase employability (National Commission for Further & Higher Education, 2016).

One of the research priorities of TEIs is to assess the impact of teacher education programs on their graduates (Diana, 2015).

Related Studies

Several teacher education institutions in the Philippines conducted Graduate Tracer Studies (GTS) to track and profile their Bachelor in Elementary Education (BEED) and Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) graduates (Abas et al., 2020; Abela et al., 2015; Aclan et al., 2018; Almejas et al., 2017; Antiojo, 2018; Aquino et al., 2015; Bihag-boholano, 2012; Caingcoy & Barroso, 2020; Cañizares, 2015; Cornillez et al., 2021; Daguplo et al., 2019; Gines, 2014; Oboza, 2017; Rojas & Rojas, 2016; Reusia et al., 2020; Tutor et al., 2019; Ulanday, 2021).

Abas et al. (2020) showed that the majority of the graduates are hired, notwithstanding the various competencies gained throughout their college years. Abela et al. (2015) displayed a high employment rate for BSED and BEED graduates. Aclan et al. (2018) found that most graduates encountered problems pursuing their college degrees. Antiojo (2018) revealed that most graduates were engaged in teaching-related jobs. Aquino et al. (2015) described that graduates pursued teacher education programs because they thought teaching was a fulfilling and difficult career. Bihag-boholano (2012) discovered that teacher education graduates who concentrated in English, Mathematics, and Sciences are an academically talented and motivated group with high aspirations to be teaching models. Caingcoy and Barroso (2020) found that the majority of graduates had jobs relevant to their education and training. Cañizares (2015) indicated that the majority of teacher education graduates passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), and the majority are working as full-time permanent teachers. Cornillez et al. (2021) maintained that the teacher education program backed up the graduates' employability.

Besides, Daguplo et al. (2019) realized that the strategies used for employment demonstrate that advertisement, recommendations, and personal contacts were the most common approaches used by education graduates for employment. Diana (2015) learned that the majority of respondents found work shortly after college, where there was a high level of satisfaction with the University's services, learning environment, and facilities. Gines (2014) reported that teacher education graduates are dominated by females and in their early twenties, who enrolled in the institution because of the low tuition and personal reputation linked to the name for a better job and professional growth. Having very adequately provided the skills such as knowledge and technical, communication, human relations, leadership, research, problem-solving, and other competencies specific to the area of specialization were major factors considered for immediate job acquisition on top of the area of specialization and reputation of the university. Oboza (2017) described that the majority of the graduates were females, single, working as contractual basic education teachers, and whose parents were extremely important in their job decision. The graduates believed the abilities they gained were quite beneficial in their present jobs. Furthermore, they considered their training in communication, human relations, leadership, and problem-solving to be highly appropriate.

Furthermore, Rojas and Rojas (2016) established that graduates are proven to be skilled and competent enough to work in government schools. The institution trained graduates for employment, emphasizing personality over other preset characteristics. Academic preparation and professional performance demonstrated evidence of successful teaching employment at a public school. Reusia et al. (2020) revealed a very high employability rate of graduates of the university. Their educational experience and skills learned are very relevant in their current workplace. These graduates also suggested that content and pedagogy among pre-service teachers be enhanced. Tutor et al. (2019) surveyed graduates from several programs, which showed that graduates are motivated by wages and career advancement in their choice of baccalaureate programs. Ulanday (2021) denoted a high employment rate among teacher education graduates. Among the scopes of the employability skills acquisition gathered, the majority of graduates highly acquired employability skills from the university.

Problem Statement

Today, high-quality education and graduate preparation are critical (Kankaew et al., 2021), especially for future teachers (Bautista & Pentang, 2022; Domingo et al., 2021; Pentang et al., 2021). In pursuit of its commitment towards sustainable development (Pentang, 2021), the Western Philippines University - College of Education (WPU-CED) is strongly engaged in developing quality teacher education graduates ready for local and global employment. Bok (2017) emphasized that colleges and universities must restructure programs to better prepare aspiring professors for teaching. To date, a tracer survey was not conducted for graduates from 2017 to 2020. Through GTS, WPU-CED was able to determine the status of its graduates, which could serve as a guide for achieving its ultimate goal of providing quality education to students. Besides, results may provide critical information on graduate employment status and other related data that will serve as the foundation for developing the college's guidelines and policies to make its programs more responsive to society's current needs. Furthermore, this study may serve as a benchmark for further graduate surveys.

With the foregoing, the study traced the graduates of WPU-CED Puerto Princesa Campus graduates from 2017 to 2020. Specifically, it aimed to determine the following:
1. demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, and residence;
2. the academic profile of the respondents in terms of program reasons for taking the teacher education program, honors and awards received, and licensure examination for teachers (LET) performance;
3. training and advance studies attended by the respondents after college;
4. employment data of the respondents in terms of employment status, nature of employment, means of finding employment, time spent in securing employment, and gross monthly earning;
5. relevance of college preparation with the respondents' current employment;
6. problems and difficulties encountered by the respondents in securing employment and in the present job; and
7. respondents' recommendations to strengthen the teacher education program.

Methods
Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research method utilizing a survey to examine the current situation (Williams, 2007), which is more concerned with what rather than how or why (Nassaji, 2015). Accordingly, the method was employed to describe the profile and employability, as well as other details about the undergraduate experience and status after graduation of Western Philippines University - College of Education graduates from Puerto Princesa Campus who completed their studies from 2017 to 2020.

Participants and Sampling Procedures

Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) and Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) graduates from 2017 to 2020 served as the respondents of the study. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents according to year graduated and program attended. Initially, total population sampling was employed. However, a total of eighty (80) available samples comprised the study. Availability sampling is a method of selecting participants based on their availability, which is usually in terms of geographical proximity but may also include other types of accessibility, such as known contacts (Frey, 2018).

Table 1. Respondents of the Study according to Year Graduated and Program

YEAR GRADUATED	BEED		BSED		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
2017	5	6.25	8	10.00	13	16.25
2018	5	6.25	21	26.25	26	32.50
2019	5	6.25	29	36.25	34	42.50
2020	2	2.50	5	6.25	7	8.75
TOTAL	17	21.25	63	78.75	80	100.00

Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

The researchers obtained permission from the Department of Education (DepEd) Schools Division Superintendent of Puerto Princesa City and the province of Palawan to conduct the study in their respective schools, where most graduates are employed. An informed consent form, along with the survey questionnaire, was distributed to the respondents, while Google Form was used to survey graduates not employed under DepEd and proximity concerns. Utmost ethical consideration was considered, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study.

The study utilized a questionnaire patterned from the Commission on Higher Education and was based on related studies (Abas et al., 2020; Abela et al., 2015; Aclan et al., 2018; Almejas et al., 2017; Antiojo, 2018; Aquino et al., 2015; Bihag-boholano, 2012; Caingcoy & Barroso, 2020; Cañizares, 2015; Daguplo et al., 2019; Gines, 2014; Oboza, 2017; Rojas & Rojas, 2016; Reusia et al., 2020; Tutor et al., 2019; Ulanday, 2021). The instrument contains the graduate's demographic and academic profile, training attended after college, employment data with problems or difficulties encountered in securing employment, and knowledge/skills acquired from the course/degree program.

Data gathering commenced from early 2020 to mid of 2021. The longer time was spent due to the low response rate, travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, remoteness, and poor internet connectivity. Data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. This corresponds with the research design that describes the samples concerning the objectives of the study.

Results and Discussion
Teacher Education Graduate's Demographic Profile

Age. Table 2 shows that sixty (75%) are 21 t0 24 years old, while 12 (15%), 6 (7.5%), and 2 (2.5%) are 25 to 28, 29 to 32, and 33 to 36 years old, correspondingly. Data shows that the respondents are comprised mainly of youths, which is quite similar to Gines (2014), Oboza (2017), Reusia et al. (2020), and Ulanday (2021), whose respondents are composed mostly of 20 to 25 years old. The finding is also in agreement with Almejas et al. (2017), where the majority are 21 to 30 years old. This result implies that the graduates are in their developing career in the teaching profession.

Sex. Fifty-six (70%) are females, while 24 (30%) are males. Almejas et al. (2017), Aquino et al. (2015), Caingcoy and Barroso (2020), Gines (2014), and Oboza (2017) also showed that the majority of the teacher education graduates are females. The graduate tracer study on Philippine higher education of Tutor et al. (2019) obtained the same result. This confirms that the teaching profession is dominated by females (Ulanday, 2021), where they are provided with opportunities to serve and lead the school and community. Ramachandran et al. (2005) revealed that female teachers had chosen the teaching profession because of its respectability and security. Nonetheless, this contrasts with Reusia et al. (2020), who discovered that male graduates outnumber female graduates in the science education program.

Civil Status. Seventy (87.5%) are still single, while 10 (12.5%) are married. The data shows that most respondents remained single after graduation, which adheres to the result of Almejas et al. (2017), Aquino et al. (2015), Oboza (2017), Reusia et al. (2020), and Ulanday (2021). This could be attributed to the fact that the graduates are still young to marry.

Residence. 45 (56.25 percent) live within the city, whereas 35 (43.75 percent) live in the municipality, indicating that the majority live and/or work in the urban area. This supports the findings of Oboza (2017), who concluded that graduates chose to stay in the city for prospective career opportunities. Besides, the result confirms that the institution could serve aspiring teachers in its jurisdiction and be still able to cater services to the rest of the province.

Table 2. Teacher Education Graduate's Demographic Profile

PROFILE	FREQUENCY (n=80)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Age		
21-24 years old	60	75.00
25-28 years old	12	15.00
29-32 years old	6	7.50
33-36 years old	2	2.50
Sex		
Female	56	70.00
Male	24	30.00
Civil Status		
Single	70	87.50
Married	10	12.50
Residence		
City	45	56.25
Municipality	35	43.75

Academic Profile

Program. Table 3 reveals that 64 (80%) took Bachelor of Secondary Education, while 16 (20%) Bachelor of Elementary Education. Similar to Aquino et al. (2015), Gines (2014), and Rojas and Rojas (2016), most graduates specialized in Secondary Education programs. Undeniably, the majority chose BSED since it offers several specializations such as English, Filipino, MAPEH, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Values Education. In addition, this could also be attributed to their desire to teach high school students.

Reasons for Taking the Teacher Education Program. Graduates give a variety of reasons for enrolling in the program. Fifty-one (63.75%) have a strong passion for the teaching profession, related to Aquino et al. (2015), who noted graduates' belief that teaching is a rewarding and challenging profession. Besides, Bihag-boholano (2012) also recorded that teacher education graduates had strong aspirations to be teaching models. Nonetheless, a strong passion for the profession ranks fifth in Oboza (2017). It is promising that these teacher aspirants are motivated by a desire to serve rather than personal, political, and economic interests or social factors.

Forty-six (57.5%) were influenced by their parents and relatives, 38 (47.5%) were inspired by a role model, and 30 (37.5%) had good grades in high school. These statements ranked second to fourth; however, Oboza (2017) has shown that these ranked first to third. Twenty-five (31.25%) regarded the availability of course offerings in the chosen institution, but this reason comes first in Reusia et al. (2020). While 19 (23.75%) had a prospect for immediate employment, 18 (22.5%) had high grades in the subject area related to the course, 17 (21.25%) have seen the availability of scholarship grants for the course, 16 (20%) had a prospect of career advancement, 13 (16.25%) were influenced by their peer, 9 (11.25%) had a prospect of attractive compensation, 8 (10%) had seen the status or prestige of the profession, 4 (5%) had seen the opportunity for employment abroad, and 3 (3.75%) had no particular choice or no better idea.

Generally, results are different with Tutor et al. (2019) found that graduates are motivated by wages and career advancement, whereas Gines (2014) discovered that teacher education graduates enrolled in the program because of the affordable tuition fee, personal prestige of being at the university, prospect for better employment, and career advancement. Graduates of the current study chose either BSED or BEED for a passion for the noble profession and as influenced by others, not for financial stability or professional development.

Honors and Awards Received. Forty-three graduates received honors and awards. Twenty (46.51%) were recipients of government scholarships from the Department of Science and Technology, Commission on Higher Education, and Local Government Unit, 13 (30.23%) received grants from private entities or non-

government organizations, while 6 (13.95%) and 4 (9.30%) are academic excellence and leadership/service/athlete awardee, respectively. This finding shows available public and private grants for the graduates during their college years. Also, the result implies that some graduates excelled both in academics and extracurricular activities.

LET Performance. Fifty-five (68.75%) passed the licensure examinations for teachers (LET), while 23 (28.75%) and two (2.50%) are waiting for the LET schedule and have pending LET results, respectively. Data shows that the majority could pass the board exam administered by the Professional Regulation Commission. Results are similar to Aquino et al. (2015) and Cañizares (2015), where more graduates took and passed the LET. LET is a basic entry-level requirement for public and some private institutions in the Philippines; the findings imply that only seven out of 10 graduates are qualified for employment.

Table 3. Teacher Education Graduate's Academic Profile

ACADEMIC PROFILE	FREQUENCY (n=80)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Program		
Bachelor of Secondary Education	64	80.00
Bachelor of Elementary Education	16	20.00
Reasons for Taking the Teacher Education Program*		
Strong passion for the profession	51	63.75
Influence of parents and relatives	46	57.50
Inspired by a role model	38	47.50
Good grades in the high school	30	37.50
Availability of course offering in the chosen institution	25	31.25
Prospect for immediate employment	19	23.75
High grades in the subject area related to the course	18	22.50
Availability of scholarship grant of the course	17	21.25
Prospect of career advancement	16	20.00
Peer influence	13	16.25
Prospect of attractive compensation	9	11.25
Status or prestige of the profession	8	10.00
Opportunity for employment abroad	4	5.00
No particular choice or no better idea	3	3.75
Honors and Awards Received (n=43)		
Government Scholarship (DOST/CHED/LGU)	20	46.51
Private/NGO Scholarship	13	30.23
Academic Excellence	6	13.95
Leadership/Service/Athlete Awardee	4	9.30
LET Performance		
Passers	55	68.75
Waiting for LET Schedule	23	28.75
Pending LET Result	2	2.50

*multiple responses

Training and Advanced Studies Attended after College

Forty-eight out of 80 graduates attended training and advanced studies after obtaining a college degree (Table 4). The table reflects training on computer literacy (23 or 47.92%) and teaching methodology (10 or 20.83%) top the list. Trailing is the livelihood (6 or 12.50%), English proficiency (4 or 8.33%), and research capability training (2 or 4.17%). One (2.08%) graduate was able to first-aid, radio-based instruction, and real state training, respectively. It can be inferred that the graduates attended training relevant to their profession. Likewise, Oboza (2017) found that graduates of teacher education attended intensive professional training or seminars.

Forty-eight (100%) attended training and advanced studies for professional development, 37 (77.08%) for personal growth, and 26

(33.33%) for promotion. This implies that these teacher education graduates are into enhancing their professional knowledge and skills and improving themself. Similarly, Reusia et al. (2020) identified that most science education graduates contemplate pursuing postgraduate courses for professional development, while just a minority do so for promotion.

Further, Oboza (2017) showed that more graduates are into advanced studies for professional development while few for promotion. However, the findings contradict the results of Belecina and Ocampo (2017), who claimed that graduates of mathematics education choose to pursue advanced studies to get promoted.

Table 4. Teacher Education Graduate's Training and Advanced Studies Attended after College

TRAINING AND ADVANCE STUDIES ATTENDED	FREQUENCY (n=48)	PERCENTAGE
Nature of Training		
Computer Literacy Training	23	47.92
Teaching Methodology Training	10	20.83
Livelihood Training	6	12.50
English Proficiency Training	4	8.33
Research Capability Training	2	4.17
First-Aid Training	1	2.08
Radio-based Instruction Training	1	2.08
Real State Training	1	2.08
Reasons*		
For Professional Development	48	100.00
For Personal Growth	37	77.08
For Promotion	26	33.33

*multiple responses

Employment Data

Employment Status. Table 5 reveals that the majority of graduates who are currently employed are permanent (44 or 55%). The rest (26 or 32.5%) are contractual, temporary, substitute/volunteer, and self-employed, while 10 (12.5%) are still unemployed. Equally, Abas et al. (2020) and Reusia et al. (2020) reported that there are more employed than unemployed graduates. This finding also accords with Almejas et al. (2017), Cañizares (2015), Cornillez et al. (2021), Gines (2014), and Rojas and Rojas (2016), whose findings revealed that most teacher education graduates are permanent. This means that WPU-CED graduates are employable and that there is work available in the area. Results further revealed the relevance of the curriculum to the graduates, which relate to several studies (Abas et al., 2020; Abela et al., 2015; Antiojo, 2018; Aquino et al., 2015; Caingcoy & Barroso, 2020; Cañizares, 2015; Daguplo et al., 2019; Gines, 2014; Oboza, 2017; Rojas & Rojas, 2016; Reusia et al., 2020; Ulanday, 2021). Meanwhile, graduates who are not yet working may nevertheless fall into the

category of individuals who are fresh graduates and unable to take the LET. Ulanday (2021) also attributed this case to health-related reasons or family concerns.

Nature of Employment. Most graduates (56 or 80%) were employed as teachers/instructors, while others were employed in finance/marketing firms (6 or 8.57%), supervisory/administrative positions (5 or 7.14%), and clerical works (3 or 4.29%). Abas et al. (2020), Reusia et al. (2020), Rojas and Rojas (2016), and Ulanday (2021) have results alike where there are more graduates employed as a teaching personnel. Per the findings, the majority of graduates are engaged in jobs linked to their course of study. The remaining graduates are working in non-teaching positions while completing the professional license required to teach in a public school and some private institutions. Abas et al. (2020) mentioned that this could be due to their desire to earn a living; therefore, they accepted the employment, although it was unrelated to their college preparation.

Means of Finding Employment. The graduates landed their job as walk-in applicants (36 or 51.43%), through referrals (13 or 18.57%), and in response to an advertisement (9 or 12.86%). Six (8.82%) were able to find their job with means such as job fair or public employment service office, and as arranged by the school's job placement officer, correspondingly. Reusia et al. (2020), Rojas and Rojas (2016), and Ulanday (2021) also reported that teacher education graduates dominantly acquired their jobs as walk-in applicants. It does, however, contradict Oboza (2017), who determined that more graduates secured a job through referrals.

Table 5. Teacher Education Graduate's Employment Data

EMPLOYMENT DATA	FREQUENCY (n=70)	PERCENTAGE
Employment Status (n=80)		
Permanent	44	55.00
Contractual	13	16.25
Temporary	7	8.75
Substitute/Volunteer	4	5.00
Self-employed	2	2.50
Unemployed	10	12.50
Nature of Employment		
Teaching/Instruction	56	80.00
Finance/Marketing	6	8.57
Supervisory/Administrative Function	5	7.14
Clerical Works	3	4.29
Means of Finding Employment		
As walk-in applicant	36	51.43
Referral from someone	13	18.57
Response to an advertisement	9	12.86
Job fair or public employment service office	6	8.57
Arrange by school's job placement officer	6	8.57
Time Spent in Securing Employment		
Three years to less than four years after graduation	1	1.43
Two years to less than three years after graduation	2	2.86
One year to less than two years after graduation	6	8.57
7 to 11 months after graduation	13	18.57
1 to 6 months after graduation	28	40.00
Less than a month after graduation	20	28.57
Gross Monthly Earning		
₱25,000.00 and above	2	2.86
₱20,000.00 to less than ₱25,000.00	16	22.86
₱15,000.00 to less than ₱20,000.00	9	12.86
₱10,000.00 to less than ₱15,000.00	14	20.00
₱5,000.00 to less than ₱10,000.00	21	30.00
Below ₱5,000.00	8	11.43

Time Spent in Securing Employment. Twenty-eight (40%) graduates spent one to six months securing employment after graduation. Twenty (28.57%), 13 (18.57%), and six (8.57%) were able to find work in less than one month, seven to 11 months, and one year to two years after graduation, respectively, while three (4.29%) graduates found work two or more years after graduation. Similarly, Aclan et al. (2018), Cornillez et al. (2021), and Reusia et al. (2020) discovered that the majority of graduates found work within six months after graduation. Besides, Ulanday (2021) presented comparative results where graduates found jobs two to six months after graduation. More graduates, like Aquino et al. (2015) and Diana (2015), found work in a decent amount of time, which may show evidence of the employability

of the graduates. Nonetheless, the results are incomparable to Oboza (2017), who found that more graduates were employed within a month of graduation.

Gross Monthly Earning. Twenty-one (30%) have a gross monthly income of ₱5,000.00 to less than ₱10,000.00. The finding opposes Abas et al. (2020), Almejas et al. (2017), Reusia et al. (2020), and Ulanday (2021), who revealed that more graduates earned a monthly income of ₱15,000-₱24,999, ₱16,000-₱20,999, and ₱20,000-₱25,000.00 correspondingly. This data shows that more graduates may be classified as poor. Domingo (2020) reported that as of 2018, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies identified that poor social class earns below ₱10,957 monthly income.

Relevance of College Preparation with the Teacher Education Graduate's Current Employment

Relationship of College Preparation and Current Job. From Table 6, 52 (74.29%) graduates mentioned that their college preparation is related to their current job, while 18 (25.71%) stated otherwise. This shows that the academic preparation of more graduates prepared them well for their current employment, which is similar to the results of Aquino et al. (2015), Cañizares (2015), Cornillez et al. (2021), and

Tutor et al. (2019). Since some were employed in non-teaching positions, they may have viewed their college preparation as unrelated to their current employment. This demonstrates the high quality of services that WPU-CED consistently provides to its clients (Pentang, 2021).

Competencies Found Useful in Current Job. Employers expect graduates to display various broader skills and traits such as teamwork, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, and managerial talents (Lowden et al., 2011). This study revealed that 65 (92.86%) graduates have found that communication skills were useful in their current job, which is similar to the study of Aquino et al. (2015), Cornillez et al. (2021), Oboza (2017), Reusia et al. (2020), and Ulanday (2021). Communication skills may have topped the list because it is considered that teachers are good oral and verbal communicators. This skill topping the list can be maintained with the aid of educational technology (De Souza et al., 2021). Meanwhile, 62 (88.57) found problem-solving skills to be useful. Cornillez et al. (2021) and Ulanday (2021) also showed that problem-solving skills ranked next to communication skills. As Domingo et al., (2021) and Pentang et al. (2021) emphasized, problem-solving skill is necessary for teacher education graduates.

Table 6. Relevance of College Preparation with the Teacher Education Graduate's Current Employment

RELEVANCE OF COLLEGE PREPARATION WITH CURRENT EMPLOYMENT	FREQUENCY (n=70)	PERCENTAGE
Relationship of College Preparation and Current Job		
Related	52	74.29
Not Related	18	25.71
Competencies Found Useful in Current Job*		
Communication Skills	65	92.86
Problem-solving Skills	62	88.57
Human Relation Skills	53	75.71
Information Technology Skills	48	68.57
Critical Thinking Skills	46	65.71
Technical Skills	42	60.00
Entrepreneurial Skills	18	25.71
Leadership Skills	5	7.14

*multiple responses

Fifty-three (75.71%), 48 (68.57%), 46 (65.71%), and 42 (60%) graduates have also

shared that human relations, information technology, critical thinking, and technical skills are

helpful in their current employment. The results, in general, connect with Daguplo et al. (2019), Diana (2015), Gines (2014), Oboza (2017), and Reusia et al. (2020). They established the applicability of communication, problem-solving, human relations, information technology, critical thinking, and technical skills to the current job of the graduates. These skills have been tested with the numerous challenges that teachers are facing especially in this time of crisis (Agayon et al., 2022).

Accordingly, results imply that the graduates were able to acquire the necessary competencies successfully during their college years. On the contrary, Tutor et al. (2019) stated in their study that college graduates, including those from the teacher education programs, considered they did not develop sufficient communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. This can be related to the results of Domingo et al. (2021) and Pentang et al. (2021), where teacher education students do not possess problem-solving, critical thinking, and comprehension skills. TEIs may further put a value on academic integrity (Bautista & Pentang, 2022) which binds all the skills together.

Difficulties and Problems Encountered

Difficulties Encountered in Securing Employment. Obtaining a teaching post was challenging for the graduates due to various factors (Table 7). Ranking standards (29 or 41.43%) are at the top of the list, followed by limited training and a lack of teaching experience (23 or 32.86%). This data shows that employing teachers in the Philippines takes more than simply a college degree but a wide range of qualifications to sustain educational quality. Other graduates have concerns with work location, limited teaching positions, and no linkages established. The graduates perhaps experienced difficulties since some had recently obtained their degrees while others do not have their license yet. Gines (2014) and Oboza (2017) also showed that teacher education graduates have trouble with limited teaching positions and lack of teaching experience.

Problems Encountered in the Present Job. Several problems were recorded in the present job of the graduates. Topping the lists are numerous forms/reports and paper works (27 or 38.57%), poor and unstable internet connection (26 or 37.14%), financial instability (25 or 35.71%), students' behavior and interest in learning (24 or 34.29%), unavailability of textbooks and instructional materials (23 or 32.86). Data shows that the graduates were not only challenged in finding work, but they also encountered various problems in their current job.

Table 7. Problems and Difficulties Encountered in Securing Employment and the Present Job

DIFFICULTIES AND PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED*	FREQUENCY (n=70)	PERCENTAGE
Difficulties Encountered in Securing Employment		
Ranking Standards	29	41.43
Limited Trainings Attended	23	32.86
Lack of Teaching Experience	23	32.86
Work Setting	19	27.14
Limited Teaching Positions	17	24.29
No Linkages Established	14	20.00
Problems Encountered in the Present Job		
Numerous Forms/Reports and Paper Works	27	38.57
Poor and Unstable Internet Connection	26	37.14
Financial Instability	25	35.71
Students' Behavior and Interest towards learning	24	34.29
Unavailability of Textbooks and Instructional Materials	23	32.86
Work Setting	19	27.14
School Management	15	21.43
Lack of Technical Skills	11	15.71
Unfamiliar DepEd Orders, Memos, Forms, Reports	11	15.71
Relationship with Colleagues, Parents and Students	9	12.86
Field Mismatch	8	11.43
License Renewal	3	4.29

*multiple responses

This finding supports Jomuad et al. (2017), who discovered that newly hired teachers in the Philippines face workload, instruction, classroom management, and school location challenges. Also, new teachers abroad face a lack of support, time management and curriculum adjustments, discipline issues, and a sense of being overwhelmed (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). These concerns among teachers may become more difficult with the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Agayon et al., 2022), thus, TEIs have to prepare their graduates with the fundamental know-how to overcome possible changes and challenges posed by untimely crises.

Recommendations to Strengthen the Teacher Education Program

Table 8 presents the list that topped the recommendations made by the graduates to strengthen the teacher education program. Unanimously (100%) suggested enriching the curriculum to meet the demands of future employment, while mostly reiterated emphasizing personality development and values formation (93.75%) and having faculty development programs to improve instruction (88.75%). Besides, the majority suggested more exposure of students in human and public relations (73.75%), emphasize the development of technological skills (67.5%), strengthen basic English written and oral communication skills (61.25%), offer new and relevant degree/course needed in industry/company (52.25%). Data indicates that the institution is encouraged to realize its services to meet the needs and demands of the graduates. Relative to this finding, Abela et al. (2015) reported that graduates proposed more relevant training/seminars and workshops, modifying K-12 curricula, and offering additional communication and human- relation skills courses, while Reusia et al. (2020) agreed that graduates suggested that programs for pre-service teachers' content and pedagogy be improved. Since the graduate attributes are linked with the curriculum and college preparation (Kankaew et al., 2021), the result of the study may aid the concerned TEI to strengthen its curriculum and equip its faculty members with the fundamental pedagogies as they train and prepare would-be teachers. Considering technological advancements in the educational realm (De Souza et al., 2021), TEIs may venture on integrating technology in both the curriculum and instruction as it helps develop the skills and capabilities of teacher education students.

Table 8. Recommendations to Strengthen the Teacher Education Program

RECOMMENDATIONS*	FREQUENCY (n=80)	PERCENTAGE
Enrich curriculum to meet the demands of future employment	80	100.00
Emphasize personality development and values formation	75	93.75
More faculty development programs to improve instruction	71	88.75
Hire faculty members who specialize in prof ed and major courses	65	81.25
More exposure of students in human and public relations	59	73.75
Emphasize more on the development of technological skills	54	67.50
Strengthen basic English communication (written and oral) skills	49	61.25

*Multiple responses

Conclusion

The graduates succeeded in the licensure examination and are employed in teaching positions with a monthly income of ₱5,000.00 to less than ₱10,000.00. They applied as walk-in applicants and were employed within six months. However, the graduates need extra assistance to be employed in a permanent teaching position with a higher salary grade. As a result, the Western Philippines University - College of Education (WPU-CED) may establish active alumni and placement office to assist the graduates in securing employment.

The graduates faced challenges due to employment standards and a large number of clerical jobs in the teaching profession. They also suggested expanding the curriculum to strengthen the teacher education program.

With these, WPU-CED may conduct relevant activities to prepare the graduates for future jobs and boost their employability. Since the graduates' college preparation was relevant to their current employment, the WPU-CED may continually develop communication, problem-solving, human relations, information technology, critical thinking, and technical skills.

With the limitations on generalizability due to the low response rate, an extensive yearly tracer study is recommended to track the employability and employment status of the graduates.

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