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## Employability of teacher education graduates of Nueva Ecija university of science and technology, San Isidro campus

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### Abstract

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are responsible for supplying the labor market with professionals that not only possess knowledge, but also the competencies and skills demanded by the workplace. In order to evaluate the relevance of their program offerings to the demand of the labor market, colleges and universities, like the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST), conduct tracer studies on the employability of their graduates. With this, the researchers conducted this tracer study to determine the employability of the teacher education graduates of NEUST, San Isidro Campus from 2016 to 2020. It further aimed to trace their employment and the skills or competencies that they have acquired from the university which proved to be useful in their current employment, as well as their correlation with each other. It used descriptive-correlation method. The findings revealed that there is positive correlation between the graduates' select profile variables and their employment and their perceived useful competencies and skills. There was also a direct correlation between their employment and their perceived useful competencies and skills. Recommendations for future tracer study initiatives were also made.

**Keywords:** employability, employability competencies, labor market

### Introduction

The concept of employability has been the focus of interest of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for the past decades. Several studies aimed at tracer and employability studies are carried out to gather essential information relating to the employment profile of graduates (Aquino, *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[3]</sup> and to design a responsive curriculum for each program to fit the demand of potential employers (Woya, 2019) <sup>[15]</sup>.

With the current competitive market, it is not surprising that HEIs puts emphasis in developing job-related skills among its students in order to prepare them for their future workplace. Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) are not an exemption to this. TEIs aim to improve the quality of education and delivery to increase the employability of their teacher graduates.

Moreover, with thousands of teacher graduates produced by different Philippine colleges and universities annually, developing the employability skills of students has become increasingly important. Therefore, the employability of its teacher graduates has become an important factor to reflect the success of any teacher education institution in its role as mandated by the Philippine Constitution (Leyale, 2016) <sup>[9]</sup>. Beyond the academic knowledge, Navida (n.d.) and Cardona and Andres (2014) argued that the academic institutions in higher education are responsible in ensuring that their graduates are prepared to enter and meet the demands of the labor market. This further reinforces the need for tracer studies on graduates' employability.

Defined by Leyale (2016) <sup>[9]</sup> as the graduate's capacity to function effectively in a job, employability is an essential skill that graduates need in order to secure and maintain an employment. It includes competence-based dimensions (Romgens, Scoupe, and Beusaert,

2019)<sup>[12]</sup>, which means that employability is more than just looking into who and how many of the graduates are employed or not. It also involves the identification of the knowledge, competences, soft and hard skills, and attributes that influences the graduates' performance in the contemporary labor market.

The College of Education at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) is one with the goal of providing competitive training to teacher-education students in order to give them the best chance at employment in the teaching profession. With hundreds of annual graduates, the college also aims to monitor the teacher-education graduates' employment and determine the competencies and skills that proved to be useful in the current labor market. Among these employability competencies are written/oral communication skills, information literacy (Leyale, 2016)<sup>[9]</sup>, team work/ collaboration skills, time management, decision-making skills (Abelha, *et al.* 2020)<sup>[2]</sup>, critical analysis and evaluation, presentation skills, hard work, independent study skills, and technology literacy, etc. (Boholano, 2012)<sup>[4]</sup>.

It is in this context that this study was conducted. It aimed to describe the employability of the teacher education graduates in terms of their current employment and the competencies and skills they have acquired from the university that are useful in their employment. This further aimed to provide data that the university's curriculum designers, policy makers, and educators may use in developing suitably skilled teacher graduates to the workplace.

### Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to describe the employability of the Teacher Education graduates of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, San Isidro Campus from the academic year 2016 to 2020.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

#### 1. How may the profile of the respondents be described in terms of:

- Sex;
- Age;
- Civil status;
- Year graduated;
- Course;
- Major/field of specialization; and
- Eligibility?

#### 2. How may the employability of the respondents be described in terms of:

- Employment;
- Nature of employment
- Type of institution;
- Employment status;
- Monthly income; and
- Length of job search after graduation?

3. What competencies or skills acquired by the graduates from the university were useful to employment?

4. Is there significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their employability?

5. Is there significant relationship between the respondents' profile and the competencies and skills they acquired from the university?

6. Is there significant relationship between the respondents' employability and the competencies and skills they acquired from the university?

### Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their employability.
2. There is no significant relationship between the respondents' profile and the competencies and skills they acquired from the university.
3. There is no significant relationship between the respondents' employability and the competencies and skills they acquired from the university.

### Materials and Methods

#### Research Design

This research utilized the descriptive-correlation design to determine the employability of the teacher education graduates of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology in terms of their employment and employability competencies and skills.

#### Respondents of the Study

This study involved 678 teacher education graduates of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, San Isidro Campus from 2016 to 2020.

#### Instrumentation

The questionnaire used in this study was developed based on the statement of the problem and drawn after a review of literatures related to the study. The instrument is a three-part questionnaire – a profile part, an employment part, and the employability competence checklist part. The instrument's face and content validity were evaluated by experts. It was pilot tested to elementary and secondary teachers who were not respondents to this study. Changes recommended by the validation panel, when appropriate, and those identified as needed during the pilot test were incorporated into the instrument.

#### Procedure

After a series of evaluation, pilot-testing and validation of the instrument, the researchers distributed them to the graduates by sending the link to the google form via the FB messenger app. This is to gather data faster, observing health and safety protocols.

#### Statistical Treatment

Frequency count and percentage were used in determining the profile variables and employment information of the graduates, while ranking was utilized in describing the useful employability competencies and skills. Correlation formulas were used in determining the correlation of the respondents' profile variables with their employment and their competencies/skills, as well as the correlation between the graduates' employment and their competencies/skills.

### Results

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the participants of the study.

#### 1. Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the profile of the 678 respondents in terms of their sex, age, civil status, the year they graduated, their course, major or field of specialization, and their eligibility.

**Table 1: Profile of the Respondents**

Characteristics	Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Sex	Male	158	23.3%
	Female	520	76.6%
Age	20 - 29 years old	652	96.2%
	30-39 years old	23	3.4%
	40-49 years old	3	0.4%
Civil Status	Single	608	89.7%
	Married	70	10.3%
Year Graduated	2016	92	13.6%
	2017	141	20.8%
	2018	195	28.8%
	2019	211	31.1%
	2020	39	5.8%
Course	Bachelor of Elementary Education	234	34.5%
	Bachelor of Secondary Education	410	60.5%
	Bachelor of Science in Industrial Education	34	5%
Major/Field of Specialization	Basic Education	234	34.5%
	English	122	18%
	General Science	88	13%
	Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health	137	20.2%
	Mathematics	63	9.29%
	Industrial Education	34	5.01%
Eligibility	Licensure Examination for Teachers	448	66.1%
	Civil Service Eligibility	2	0.3%
	Both	12	1.8%
	None	215	31.7%
	Others (TOEIC)	1	0.1%

## 2. Employment of the Respondents

Table 2 presents the data regarding the 678 graduates' employment in terms of their employment, nature of

employment, type of institution that they are affiliated to, their employment status, their monthly income, as well the length of time it took them before landing their first job.

**Table 2: Employment of the Respondents**

Characteristics	Categories	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Employment	Employed	469	69.2%
	Unemployed	145	21.4%
	Self-Employed	64	9.4%
Nature of Employment	Teaching	358	52.8%
	Not Teaching-Related	175	25.8%
	Not Applicable	145	21.4%
Type of Institution	Public	143	21.09%
	Private	293	43.22%
	Not Applicable	242	35.69%
Employment Status	Permanent	223	32.89%
	Part-Time/Contractual	279	41.15%
	Not Applicable	176	25.96%
Monthly Income	Less than 10,000	186	27.43%
	10, 001 - 20, 000	205	30.24%
	20, 001 - 30, 000	120	17.7%
	30, 001 - 40, 000	12	1.77%
	More than 40, 000	9	1.33%
	Not Applicable	146	21.53%
Length of Job Search after Graduation	less than a month	157	23.2%
	1-6 months	155	22.9%
	7-12 months	79	11.7%
	more than a year	171	25.2%
	Not Applicable	116	17.1%

## 3. Employability Competencies/Skills

Table 3 presents the competencies/skills that the respondents perceived to be useful in their employment.

**Table 3: Useful competencies or skills in employment**

Competencies or Skills	No. of Respondents	Percentage	Rank
Written/Oral Communication Skills	558	82.3%	1
Hard Work	545	80.4%	2
Team Work/ Collaboration Skills	521	76.8%	3
Time Management	496	73.2%	4

Technology Literacy	456	67.3%	5
Decision Making Skills	453	66.8%	6
Presentation Skills	407	60.0%	7
Independent Study Skills	394	58.1%	8
Critical Analysis and Evaluation	383	56.5%	9
Information Literacy	379	55.9%	10

#### 4. Relationship the Respondents' Profile and their Employment

**Table 4:** Correlation of the Employability of Graduates and Respondents' Profile

Respondents' Profile	Correlation	Decision	Interpretation
Sex	0.648**	Reject Ho	Significant
Age	0.033	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.587**	Reject Ho	Significant
Year Graduated	0.904**	Reject Ho	Significant
Course	0.007	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Major	0.009	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Eligibility	0.884**	Reject Ho	Significant

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

#### 5. Relationship Between the Respondents' Profile and their Perceived Useful Employability Competencies/Skills

**Table 5:** Correlation of the Graduates Profile and their perceived useful employability Competencies/Skills

Respondents' Profile	Correlation	Decision	Interpretation
Sex	-0.043	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Age	-0.031	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.057**	Reject Ho	Significant
Year Graduated	0.814**	Reject Ho	Significant
Course	0.964**	Reject Ho	Significant
Major	0.973**	Reject Ho	Significant
Eligibility	0.941**	Reject Ho	Significant

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

#### 6. Relationship Between the Graduates' Employment and their Perceived Useful Employability Competencies/Skills

**Table 6:** Correlation Analysis the Graduates' Employment and their Perceived Useful Employability Competencies/Skills

	Factors	Decision	Interpretation
Employability	0.958**	Reject Ho	Significant

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

#### Discussion

This study involved 678 teacher-education graduates of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, San Isidro Campus from 2016 to 2020. Of these, 520 or 76.6% were female. This is consistent with Gines' (2014) <sup>[7]</sup> argument that teaching is more attractive to women than to men. Also, the findings showed that 608 or 89.7% were relatively young within the age bracket of 20 to 29 years old. Table 1 presents that of the traced graduates, 92 or 13.6%, 141 or 20.8%, 195 or 28.8%, 211 or 31.1 %, and 39 or 5.8% graduated on 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020, respectively. Out of these graduates, 410 or 60.5% were Bachelor of Secondary Education graduates, of which 137 or 20.2 % were MAPEH majors, while 448 or 66.1% of the graduates have passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers (Table 1).

Of the 678 traced graduates, 469 or 69.2% were employed, of which 358 or 52.8% were in the field of teaching while 175 or 25.8% were employed in a not teaching-related position. These findings are similar to that of Torres (2015) <sup>[14]</sup> and Abas, *et al.* (2020) <sup>[1]</sup>. These data imply that the graduates prioritized the need to secure a living over

pursuing the field that they trained for. The graduates were mostly employed in the private sector (293 or 43.22%). Of the employed graduates, 279 or 41.15% were on part-time or contractual employment status, while 205 or 30.24% of them had a monthly income between 10, 001 - 20, 000 pesos. Also, 171 or 25.2% of the graduates took more than a year to find a job while 157 or 23.2% took less than a month only to be employed (Table 2). This implies that graduates of teacher education department of the campus were able to secure employment in the field of teaching, albeit the majority of the employed were still unable to secure a permanent employment status. This reflects the employability of the graduates which complements the results of the survey conducted by Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in 2017 where they found that the country had recorded a 94.3% employment rate.

Table 3 presents the ranking of the various employability skills or competencies that the graduates thought to be useful in their employment. Of the skills enumerated, written/oral communication skills, hard work, team work/collaboration skills ranked first, second, and third, respectively. This implies that in order to secure and maintain employment, graduates must possess written and oral communication the most, which is not surprising considering that a teacher, according to Silver (2018), must have good communication skills in order to listen to students and explain things clearly to them; to communicate genuine concern and care by their tone of voice and use of body language; to communicate with parent to report student progress; and to interact with colleagues and supervisors.



Additionally, all other employability skills enumerated - hard work, team work/collaboration, time management, technology literacy, decision making skills, presentation skills, independent study skills, critical analysis and evaluation, and information literacy - received over 50% of the respondents' approval in terms of their usefulness (Table 3). This implies that the Education Department of the university hones the skills and competencies that were relevant to the current industry. Therefore, the university may use this as a reflection of the sufficiency and effectiveness of their teacher education programs, but the administration may still need to initiate improvement plans to better the employability of their graduates.

Correlation analysis of the graduates' profile and their employment showed that the graduates' sex, civil status, year graduated, and eligibility had positive correlation with their employment. The graduates' sex showed a significant relationship with their employment, which is similar to the report of Napallaton and Baquiller (2017) <sup>[10]</sup> that more females are employed in both private and public institutions than males. This could further be attributed to the fact that there were more female graduates than males in the College of Education. Also, the results showed that the respondents' civil status had relationship with their employment. Moreover, the year that the respondents graduated and eligibility had significant relationship with their employment which could be attributed to the fact that graduates of 2019 and 2020 were still unable to take the Board Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (BLEPT) due to its postponement in light of the pandemic. Hence, they are unlikely to get permanent employment, nor be employed in a teaching position in the Department of Education or state universities, unlike those who graduated earlier. According to Caingcoy and Barroso (2020) <sup>[5]</sup>, employment in government institutions generally involves hiring and ranking process that require work experience and eligibility. Thus, landing a permanent position in public schools would be unlikely for fresher graduates than those who graduated earlier. In conclusion, there is significant relationship between the respondents' sex, civil status, year graduated, and eligibility and their employment. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Moreover, correlation analysis of the graduates' profile and their competencies/skills they find useful in their employment reveals that their civil status, year graduated, course, major, eligibility had relationship with their perceived useful employability competencies/skills. In a study conducted by Leyaley (2015) results showed that the employability competence and skills perceived to be useful by the graduates varied depending on their course or program and area of specialization or major. Overall, the graduates' civil status, year graduated, course, and major have positive correlation with the employability competencies and skills they perceive to be useful in the job. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Finally, the findings of the study revealed that the graduates' employment and their perceived useful employability competencies/skills have significant relationship. This implies that the nature of employment, the employment status, and monthly income, and the length of time it took for the graduates to land their first job related to their perceived useful employability competencies and skills. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This concurs to

the findings of Abas, *et al.* (2020) <sup>[1]</sup>, who also found out that the graduates' skills and competencies affect their employability. This means that it is important that the graduates acquire both knowledge and skills before they are sent into the workplace or the labor market. If the university hopes for its graduates to have a chance at a decent employment related to their field of specialization, then students must be equipped with necessary and appropriate skills and competencies needed in their field, because according to Leyaley (2015), most employers require specific employability skills that will be useful in the attainment of their institution's vision and mission.

In conclusion, the higher education institution has an important role to play in helping their graduates secure and maintain a job related to their training. The HEIs administration and faculty members can do this by helping the students acquire the necessary and relevant skills demanded by the labor market. They may initiate improvement plans of their program offerings that will highlight the importance of the acquisition of competencies and skills for the improvement of the graduates' employability. Moreover, the university may also engage their faculty members in trainings to update their approach and delivery of instruction congruent to the demands of their students and their future. According to Woya (2019) <sup>[15]</sup>, delivery of education is one of the effective measurements of education quality, and education quality is vital in learning outcomes for a job.

Lastly, despite the efforts of the researchers to collect data from the entire target population, many of the graduates were unable to respond to the questionnaire. Therefore, future researchers may conduct a study to a more focused scope. The College of Education must also consistently conduct a tracer study on the employability of their graduates to serve as an evaluating factor in the performance of its programs. Future researchers may also conduct a tracer study that includes the employers or direct supervisors of the graduates in order to get their feedback on the efficacy and performance of the graduates.

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