



**MENTORS' PATH: TRACER STUDY OF BSED GRADUATES OF UM
TAGUM COLLEGE (2007-2012)**

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ABSTRACT

Tracer study is an approach which is widely used in most organization especially in the educational institutions like the UM Tagum College. Purposively, this was conducted to trace the destination of the graduates since they left this institution with a view to establish among others their current activity, utilization of skills, employability and their career development. A modified Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) questionnaire was utilized in gathering the data. A total of 97 BSED graduates for 2007 to 2012 responded to a survey. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was employed in determining the targeted respondents. Biological/General Science yielded the highest percentage share among the five areas of specialization. Moreover, graduates were found to be employable: 53.6% find job in less than a year with 88.7% regular employment status, and 4.1% find their way to the highest teaching position. The effectiveness of teaching practicum to the present job has contributed to the quick employment of the graduates as they possess the top 3 competencies needed at work such as time management skills, human relation skills and having positive attitude toward work. Other graduates were successfully engaged in the community, doing extra mile as part of their social responsibilities.

Key Words: Graduate Tracer Study (GTS), graduates, employability, competencies

INTRODUCTION

The employability of graduates is now an essential concern of every institution. The employment situation remains challenging for all kinds of profession and a difficult concept to measure (Harvey, 2001). One of the important and challenging issues many graduates are facing today is the rapidly changing world of work. Hence, trade in the labor market should be paid close attention (McQuaid and Lyndsay, 2005).

Abundant evidence shows that the unemployment of graduates was due to lack of academic preparation (Dabalén, Oni and Adekola, 2001), lack of opportunities in field study or even not seeking employment (Dewan and Peek, 2007). In another perspective, Brown and Hesketh (2004) have shown that many graduates are not utilizing their knowledge and skills from their higher education that not all are able to cash in on their investment in higher education.

The higher education institutions are now challenged to develop a mechanism which helps lessened unemployment issues (Tamayo, 2015). The graduate tracer system provides valuable information for evaluating the results of the higher education and training institutions (Obando and Shisanya, 2013). This information may be used for minimizing any possible deficits in a given educational programme in terms of content, delivery and relevance and for further development of the institution in the context of quality assurance (De Ocampo and Banzuela, 2009).

This tracer study was conducted in order to assess the employability of the BSED graduates of UM Tagum College from AY 2006-2007 to AY 2011-2012. Moreover, this study attempted to gauge the effectiveness of teaching practicum and the gained competencies to their present job; and to trace graduates' career growth and their engagement in the society.

Method

The UM Tagum College commenced the graduate survey through the Office of Research and Publication Center, University of Mindanao, Davao City which has encouraged all faculty members to conduct research particularly on tracing the employability of the graduates. This tracer extended to the BSED graduates in four areas of specialization who enrolled and finished their course from SY 2007 to 2012. The identification of the graduates was primarily taken on the roster of graduates from the Registrar's office, making available the names, and addresses of the graduates.

A modified Graduate Tracer Survey (GTS) questionnaire was utilized in gathering the data which comprised the four sections, namely: general information, employment data, relevance of educational training/advancement, and leadership/volunteerism of the respondents. The survey instrument was distributed to the targeted respondents in all secondary schools of Davao del Norte and Compostela Valley Province. Other respondents were reached through mails and social media facilities such as e-mails, sms, phone calls, and facebook.

Results and Discussion

Among the three hundred ninety-six BSED graduates for a 6-year period, a total of ninety seven graduate tracer survey forms were returned which is equivalent to nearly twenty-five

percent. This retrieval rate is almost similar to the tracer study conducted by Ramirez et al. (2014) in which out of 813 graduates, only 250 responded.

Most of those who responded are graduates of 2012 at 26.8% and the lowest response rate is in the year 2011 at 9.3%. Noticeably, the retrieval rates among years 2007 to 2010 seem to be closer to one another having an average amount of not more than 20%. Additionally, the total number of male graduates is almost one-half of the total number of female graduates. Breakdown is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Profile of the Respondents by Gender and Year Graduated

<i>Year Graduated</i>	<i>f</i>		<i>%</i>	
	M	F		
2007	5	13	18	18.6
2008	6	9	15	15.5
2009	5	11	16	16.5
2010	4	9	13	13.4
2011	3	6	9	9.3
2012	10	16	26	26.8
Total	33	64	97	100

Table 2 illustrates the spread of graduates across specialization groups. As observed, biological/general science has the greatest number of respondents which yields 24.7% while English garners only 15.5%. The rest of the BSED major subjects has comparatively lower response rate of graduates.

Table 2
Profile of the Respondents by Specialization

<i>Specialization</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Biological/General Science	24	24.7
English	15	15.5
Filipino	17	17.5
MAPE	19	19.6
Mathematics	22	22.7
Total	97	100

The regular employment status of the UM Tagum College BSED graduates in their respective teaching jobs as reflected in Table 3 spells out that this institution has produced graduates who possess skills and competencies needed to progress in work. Further scrutiny of the data reveals that those who have contractual and temporary status are recent graduates who were emergency hired and still waiting for vacant teaching positions.

Table 3
Profile of the Respondents by Employment Status

<i>Employment Status</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Contractual	5	5.2
Regular	86	88.7
Temporary	6	6.2
Total	97	100

As to the length of finding the first job, Table 4 reveals that majority of the graduates have landed jobs after finishing their degrees specifically less than a year at 53.6%. Relatively long unemployment history explicitly more than 4 years has placed only 6.2%. The high employment rate of this institution's graduates can be attributed to the competencies learned in college. The most useful competencies are time management skills, human relations skills, having a positive attitude toward work, communication skills, leadership skills and problem-solving skills. In addition to competencies mentioned, Casner and Barrington (2006) profound that academic performance in college can also contribute to success rates in employment. Academic performance is closely related to the level of employment, with those having better preparation having better chances of getting employment.

Table 4
Length of Finding the First Job

<i>Period</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than a year	52	53.6
A year to 2 years	28	28.9
3 to 4 years	11	11.3
More than 4 years	6	6.2
Total	97	100

The discussion now turns to the method of recruitment in landing a job based from the survey. As shown in Table 5, the highest percentage is positioned to graduates who were selected and employed following the Deped ranking system at the rate of 76.3% while the least

percentage is cited at emergency hiring method of recruitment with 2.1%. Other methods of recruitment such as walk-in applicant and recommended by someone remarkably get lower response rates. It may seem that the procedures and processes for hiring in the Department of Education do not hinge on familiarity or popularity of applicant. Rather, it is on the ability of the applicant to comply with the DepEd requirement. It is good to note that 8 in 10 graduates are getting the job due to the ability to meet the requirements.

Table 5
Method of Recruitment in Landing a Job

<i>Method of Recruitment</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
DepEd ranking	74	76.3
As walk-in applicant	8	8.2
Emergency hired	2	2.1
Recommended by someone	13	13.4
Total	97	100

The graduates were asked how effective the teaching practicum they had in college to their present teaching job. The data in Table 6 disclose that majority responded very positively as 55 among them declared very much effective or 56.7%. It is surprising to note that none of them responded not effective or less effective.

The result is in relation to this institution teacher education curriculum which is designed to develop education graduates who are ready to face the challenges of the 21st century learning environment. Schulz (2005) professed that in order for the pre-service teachers to be effective in their teaching professions, education program must intent to appraise the knowledge, skills and attributes of learners. The academic components of the teacher education curriculum should emphasize the importance of school -based experiences. An appropriate example is the teaching practicum and students' exposure to field study courses with supervised experiences. This phenomenon has helped student teachers gain full understanding of the teacher's responsibilities (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Student teachers' exposures to the real teaching experiences have a strong effect in moulding them in becoming effective teachers (Eyers, 2004).

Table 6
Effectiveness of Teaching Practicum to Present Job

<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Very much effective	55	56.7
Much effective	28	28.9
Fairly effective	14	14.4
Total	97	100

The BSED graduates of this institution occupy various teaching positions. Many of them occupy lower rank as Teacher-1, which is expected since they are still at the start of occupational career. It will still take them some years of experience as stipulated in the DedEd ranking system before they dwell in higher level teaching position such as becoming head of the school or administrator. It can be gleaned that in year 2007, 3 graduates are placed in the highest position as heads of schools. However, 11 graduates during the last 2 years are detained as local school board paid teachers considering that they are still waiting for their regular employment status.

Table 7
Position of the Respondents by Year the Degree is Obtained

<i>Year</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>%T-3/AP3%</i>	<i>T-2/AP2</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>T-1/API</i>	<i>%LSB</i>	<i>% Total</i>
2007	3	16.7	4	22.23	16.7	8	44.418
2008		1	6.7		14	93.3	15
2009				212.5	14		87.516
2010	1	7.7			12	92.3	13
2011					8	88.9	11.1 9
2012			16	61.5	1038.5	26	
Total	4	4.1	5	5.2	5	5.2	72 74.2 11 11.397

Meanwhile, it pays to be a graduate with time management skills, human relation skills, having positive attitude toward work, communication skills, leadership skills, and problem solving skills. Table 8 shows the number of responses in every competency gained by the graduates when they were still in college.

The result is in agreement with the idea of Dodd and Sunheim (2005) stressing that time management is more than just managing time. It is about controlling the use of the most valuable and undervalued resource. It is managing oneself in relation to time. It is setting priorities and taking charge of the situation and time utilization (Rubinsteim, 2001). With good time management skills one is in control of one's time (Morgenstern, 2004), stress and energy levels. One can maintain balance between one's work and personal life. It is not how much time one has, but rather the way one uses it. The bottom line is how well one manages time.

Furthermore, human relation skills play an essential element in finding a job as what Lamberton and Minor-Evans (2002) emphasized. Workers need the ability to interact in a healthy way with others to build effective relationships (DeCenzo and Silhanek, 2002). Communication is at the heart of human relations. The ability to clearly convey messages to

others while also listening with the intent to understand is vital to strong, healthy relationships (Wilder, 1999). Also, the ability to work well through conflict and tension and come to resolution brings people together (Zeidner, Roberts, and Matthews, 2002).

Ranked third among the competencies is having positive attitude toward work. This competency helps employee to remain in his job in a longer time. Teachers need to possess this skill in order to be productive. The happier the individual, the higher is level of job satisfaction (Adeloka, 2012). It is assumed that positive attitude towards work and greater organizational commitment increases job satisfaction which in return enhances performance of the individual (Ahmad, Ahmad, and Syah, 2010).

Table 8
Competencies Needed at Work

<i>Competencies</i>	<i>Rank</i>	
Time Management Skills	1st	Human
Relation Skills	2nd	
Positive Attitude toward Work	3rd	
Communication Skills	4th	
Leadership Skills	5th	
Problem-solving Skills	6th	

Finally, a number of graduates believed in the power of serving the community as their social responsibilities. As indicated in Table 9, participation in civic and religious organizations was evident. At most 8% of the alumni were involved in volunteerism. Among the positions held are being a lector, catholic lay minister, GKK officer, ALS instructor, PTA officer, and SK councilor. Table 9

Position Held in the Community/Civic, Political, and Religious Organizations

<i>Position as Volunteerism</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	
Lector	1	1.0	
Catholic Lay Minister	1	1.0	
GKK Officer	1	1.0	
Church Choir Member	1	1.0	
ALS Instructor	2	2.1	
PTA Officer	1	1.0	
SK Councilor	1	1.0	
No Position Handled	89	91.8	Total
100			97

Conclusion

Higher educational institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines particularly the University of Mindanao in general and UM Tagum College in particular, has historically provided a dominant role in the delivery of educational services to the country's citizenry.

The image of this institution is most likely tied to its status producing excellent graduates who easily land a job after graduation. Graduates were found to be employable and a number of graduates find their way to the highest teaching position. Other graduates were successfully engaged in the community, doing extra mile as part of their social responsibilities.

Further, the effectiveness of teaching practicum to the present job has contributed to the quick employment of the graduates as they possess the top 3 competencies needed at work such as time management skills, human relation skills and having positive attitude toward work.

Recommendations

The UM administration has to continually support the conduct of a tracer study like this to keep abreast of how its graduates are doing and what actions can be done further in the curriculum and instruction to produce more worthy graduates. Noticeably, a certain degree of delayed employment was discernable among the graduates. Since some 6.2% landed a job in more than 4 years, there has to be means of decreasing this percentage rate. The expansion of linkages with some agencies that can provide employment advancement to the graduates shall be a continuing proceeding to at least augment the employability level of the graduates.

Finally, in order to gain a generalizable result and a more profound understanding of alumni career development, response rate should be at least 50%. Additional funding shall be provided which can be utilized in locating graduates who are situated in far flung areas.

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