



# A Tracer Study of the First Batch of Teacher Education Graduates of Pangasinan State University, Alaminos City Campus

Jenylyn V. Oboza, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
Pangasinan State University

**Abstract** –One best tool to gauge the effectiveness of a program is through a tracer study. The tracer study provides feedback as to the relevance of the program in the world of work. Premised on this view, this study investigated whether Alaminos City Campus, operating on its fifth year this 2015 and the ninth campus of Pangasinan State University (PSU), has been successful in producing its first batch of graduates vis-à-vis the needs of employers. Of the six programs of the Campus, only three were considered, to wit: Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English (BSE English), Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Mathematics (BSE Math), and Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED). Using a descriptive design, 38 alumni were surveyed barely a year after college to determine their demographic profile, employment characteristics, applicability of trainings received in PSU in their current jobs, and their retrospective evaluation of their academic programs. Data showed that the majority of the graduates were females, single, employed as contractual basic education teachers within Alaminos City, and whose parents were very influential in their choice of career. They believed that the skills they learned in PSU were very useful in their current work. Also, they found their training very adequate along communication, human relations, leadership, and problem-solving. To assess the overall performance of the Campus through its first batch of graduates, there be tracer study which includes the other programs.

**Keywords** –tracer study, teacher education program

## INTRODUCTION

Bound by a common goal, the national and local government units together with the PSU administration opened the ninth campus of the university to spread education to more clientele on June 15, 2010.

The Sangguniang Panglungsod of the City of Alaminos through the initiative of then City Mayor Hon. Hernani A. Braganza unanimously approved the establishment of Pangasinan State University Alaminos City Campus as contained in Resolution No. 2007-84 dated November 16, 2007. With the vision of providing quality but affordable education to the less fortunate but deserving youths in Western Pangasinan, the PSU Board of Regents sitting en banc approved the establishment of the University's ninth campus on April 19, 2009, at the University Hotel, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.

The signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between the LGU of Alaminos and PSU duly represented by the City Mayor Hernani A. Braganza and University President Dr. Victoriano C. Estira on September 4, 2009, was followed by the ground-breaking ceremony on December 13.

The school building worth twenty-five million and seven hundred thousand was built in the 3.5-hectare land

purchased by the local government unit of Alaminos City.

Now on its fifth year of operation and having been able to produce its first batch of graduates in 2014, this paper looks at a tracer study to determine the relevance of the curricular programs offered in the Campus. The results gathered from the first batch of graduates will provide necessary inputs that will help the Campus better its services along the mandated fourfold functions. Moreover, it will give feedback to the LGU of Alaminos City on the kind of education the Campus provides. Through this study, the LGU may further upgrade the structure, facilities, and equipment it provided the Campus to promote a better learning environment. The Commission on Higher Education mandates all higher education institutions (HEIs) to conduct a tracer study. In fact, tracer studies are required of HEIs seeking accreditation from accrediting bodies like the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCU) for state universities and colleges like PSU.

This study is supported by Scromburg (2003) who stressed that a graduate or an employer survey gives helpful information for evaluating a particular program of education in a specific institution. He also added that the information obtained in a tracer study might be used



to develop curricular programs in the perspective of quality assurance. Further, Sito (2007) mentioned that tracer study results could help assess the usefulness of the programs as well as the extent of their effectiveness, and eventually, determine their success or failure.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The graduates of any academic institution are the best source of information as regards relevance of its programs in the business world. Now that they are in the field, they are in better position to assess whether the skills and competencies they developed in PSU match the requirements of their jobs or whether PSU provided enough trainings and experiences to students that enable them to address the demands of a fast-changing community. Considering this, this study sought to review and assess the Teacher Education Programs of PSU Alaminos City Campus which include the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSE) major in English, BSE major in Mathematics, and Bachelor in Elementary Education through a tracer study of its first batch of graduates. Specifically, this study aimed to: determine profile of the Teacher Education graduates in terms of sex, age, location, civil status, professional exams taken, and employment characteristics; assess the extent to which the skills learned in college such as knowledge and technical skills, communication skills, human relation skills, leadership skills, research skills, and problem-solving skills are used in their current jobs; and establish the degree of adequacy of training provided by the Campus.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Materials**

The questionnaires used in the tracer study conducted by Gines (2014), Nivera, Toledo, Sualibio, Boral, and Asuncion (2013), and Mercado (2010) provided inputs to the researchers in designing the questionnaire for this study to obtain quantitative and qualitative feedback from the graduates about their course-related skills and attitudes, employment, and retrospective evaluation of the programs. The researcher took items from these questionnaires which were relevant to the objectives of the present study. Afterwards, the researcher sought suggestions and comments from her colleagues.

The questionnaire was then tried out to ten alumni of other programs in the Campus. Revisions were made based on the results of the tryout.

#### **Participants**

Out of six degree programs offered at PSU Alaminos City Campus, only the students under the Teacher Education Program, i.e., Bachelor in Elementary Education and Bachelor of Secondary Education majors in English and Mathematics were considered.

From 83 graduates of the said programs, only 46% or 38 respondents responded to the questionnaire. This, of the total population, however, falls within the expected response rate of 30 to 60 percentage recommended by Schomburg (2003) on the conduct of graduate tracer studies.

The questionnaire was administered to those who personally came to the Campus to secure their academic records. Majority were visited in their respective workstations within Alaminos City. Others were reached through their Facebook accounts.

#### **Research Design**

The tracer study employed the descriptive research design to evaluate the effectiveness, relevance, and adequacy of the curricular offerings of PSU – Alaminos City Campus through its first batch of graduates by determining how well they have achieved the goals of their respective programs.

After seeking approval to conduct the study from the Campus Executive Director of Alaminos City, the researcher initially secured a copy of the names, addresses and contact numbers of the intended respondents from the Registrar's Office. The researchers started to administer the questionnaire to the graduates who were visiting the Registrar's Office for their credentials. Only a handful of the graduates responded to the request sent through their Facebook accounts. The Facebook was found indispensable in the conduct of this study especially in gathering data from those who worked outside the City or province. Since most of the respondents were employed and could no longer visit the Campus, the researcher went to the institutions or companies within the City to personally administer the questionnaire. The data gathered from the survey were subjected to proper statistical treatment and interpretation.

Frequency counts, percentage, mean and ranking were primarily employed to analyze the data gathered from the tracer questionnaire. The researcher adopted the mean scales for interpretation from the tracer study conducted by Gines (2014) and Nivera, et al. (2013). The rating scales are as follows:



Scale	Interpretation	
	Extent of Adequacy of Trainings	Extent to which skills learned are used in jobs
1.00 – 1.50	Not Adequate	Not at all
1.51 – 2.50	Somewhat Adequate	Very limited extent
2.51 – 3.50	Adequate	Limited extent
3.51 – 4.50	Very Adequate	Some extent
4.51 – 5.00	Extremely Adequate	Great extent

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As mentioned earlier, this study aims to provide relevant information that will help improve the curricular programs offered at PSU-Alaminos City Campus. Thus, the outputs of the study include the demographic profile of the graduates, their employment characteristics and their retrospective assessment of their undergraduate programs.

As shown in Table 1, out of 38 respondents, 31 were female, and only 7 were males. This implies that the Teacher Education program is still dominated by females as expressed by CHED Chairperson Patricia Licuanan in her statement during the 55<sup>th</sup> Session on the Commission on the Status of Women in New York (2011). The result further corroborates with the study conducted by Feistritz (2011) on Profile of Teachers in the United States which reveals that 84% of public school teachers are female despite the government’s effort to get more males to teaching.

Further, it shows that two-thirds of the respondents (f – 25, 66%) fell within the age range of 20-21; 9 (24%) were aged 22-23; 3 (8%) were 24-25 years old, and only one was over 25. This states that a great number of the respondents graduated within the prescribed period and that they finished college in accordance with the appropriate age bracket. During the conduct of the study, only one got married while 37 remained single after college.

Table 1. Demographic Data of the Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Female	31	82%
	Male	7	18%
Age Range	20 – 21	25	66%
	22 – 23	9	24%
	24 – 25	3	8%
	26 – 27	1	3%
Location	Alaminos City	33	87%

Other Towns in Pangasinan	4	11%	
	Outside Pangasinan	1	3%
Civil Status	Single	37	97%
	Married	1	3%
Course	BSE Math	3	8%
	BSE English	10	26%
	BEED	25	66%
Professional Exams Taken	LET	30	79%
	CSC	1	3%
	(Professional)	8	21%
	None		

Data also show that the graduates preferred staying within the City after graduation as indicated in the number of respondents employed within the City, that is, 33 (87%) out of 38 respondents were able to get a job as compared to four who found jobs in other towns of Pangasinan and one outside the Province. This data imply that the City provides enough job opportunities to the graduates. Further, it shows that graduates of PSU are readily employable considering that this study was conducted barely one year after college.

Expectedly, a great majority (f = 25, 66%) are BEED graduates, 10 (26%) are BSE English majors, and only 3 (8%) are BSE Math majors. This only matches their number during college, i.e., a great number of enrollees and graduates come from the BEED, and the least enrolled program is Math with only five graduates; next is English with 16 graduates in 2014.

As for professional exams taken, one third (f = 30, 79%) reported to have passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) and only 8 (21%) did not take it. Also indicated in the table is that 1 of them took the Civil Service Exam for Professionals. This is consistent with the official LET results from PRC which show high passing rates for the graduates of PSU.

When asked about their reasons why they took their respective degrees, Table 2 shows that *Influence of parents or relatives* was ranked as number 1 by the respondents. A number of respondents revealed in a casual interview that most of them were only influenced by their parents or relatives who were teachers themselves and who convinced them that employability rate in the teaching profession is much higher due to the implementation of the K-12. Ranked second on the list was *they were inspired by a role model* followed by *having good grades in high school*. As required in the Teacher Education Program, the enrollees should meet

the General Point Average (GPA) of 85 in high school to be admitted. The respondents also expressed that taking the course was *affordable for the family* having ranked as fourth and fifth was *they had a strong passion for the profession*.

Table 2. Reasons for Taking the Course or Pursuing the Degrees

Reasons	Frequency*	Percentage	Rank
Good grades in high school	22	58%	3
Influence of parents or relatives	27	71%	1
Peer Influence	4	11%	11.5
Inspired by a role model	23	61%	2
Strong passion for the profession	19	50%	5
Prospect for immediate employment	12	32%	7
Status or prestige of the profession	9	24%	8
Availability of course offering at PSU	14	37%	6
Prospect of career advancement	7	18%	9.5
Affordable for the family	20	53%	4
Prospect of attractive compensation	7	18%	9.5
Opportunity for employment abroad	4	11%	11.5
No particular choice or no better idea	-	-	-

\*Multiple responses possible

On the other hand, Table 3 shows that none of the respondents neither occupies a permanent status nor is self-employed. Only three were temporary while twenty-eight (74%) were contractual. The table further reveals that seven were jobless. Since the respondents only finished college in 2014, it is understood that they had difficulty getting a permanent position in the institution or company where they are recently employed. Most (f = 28, 74%) of whom are teachers while only three were saleslady, factory worker, and English Coordinator Assistant. It is interesting to note that majority of the respondents have a job suited to their

baccalaureate degree. This implies that they have been prepared to consistently pursue their chosen career track.

Half of the respondents were able to acquire their first job in less than a month; 21% landed a job in one to six months, and the remaining 13% had a job in seven to eleven months.

In terms of conditions in acquiring first job, many (42%) got their first job through recommendation by someone; nine were hired by means of walk-in application; six got their job because of information from friends; and only one was admitted in response to an advertisement. Since most of the graduates were within the City, the job vacancies may have been recommended to them by people working in those same institutions or by their relatives and friends.

Table 3. Employment Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Status of Employment</b>		
Permanent	-	-
Temporary	3	8%
Contractual	28	74%
Self-Employed	0	0%
<b>Present Occupation</b>		
Teacher	28	74%
Saleslady	1	3%
Factory Worker	1	3%
English Coordinator Assistant	1	3%
<b>Length of time in Acquiring First Job</b>		
Less than a month	19	50%
1 to 6 months	8	21%
7 to 11 months	5	13%
<b>Conditions in Acquiring First Job</b>		
Response to an advertisement	1	3%
As walk-in applicant	9	24%
Recommended by someone	16	42%
Information from friends	6	16%
<b>Difficulties Encountered in Looking for a Job</b>		
Few job vacancies/lack of position or item	23	61%
Inadequate experience	10	26%
Mismatch of educational qualifications	1	3%
Personality factors	1	3%
Not meeting the paper requirements	2	5%

While half of the PSU graduates were hired less than a month after graduation, they still encountered difficulties in looking for a job. A great majority (61%) ranked few job vacancies/lack of position or item first in list; ten said they had “inadequate experience.” Two of them had difficulty because of mismatch of educational qualifications and personality characters while the remaining two (2) said they did not meet the paper requirements. A similar tracer study by Gines (2014) showed that graduates at the Philippine Normal University had difficulty acquiring a job because of few vacancies/lack of position or item having yielded 46.76%.

Table 4 shows that only 12 of the respondents had training after college. Five enrolled in Advanced Studies or Graduate Program; six underwent intensive professional training or seminar while only one had other work-related training.

**Table 4. Training Attended after College**

<b>Training</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Advanced Studies or Graduate Program	5	13%
Intensive Professional Training or Seminar	6	16%
Other Work-related Training	1	3%

Eight revealed that they pursued advanced studies and trainings for professional development while only two said it was for promotion. The data corroborates with the study conducted by Mercado (2010) at Manuel S. Enverga University Foundation in Lucena City (MSEUF) which revealed that their graduates pursue advanced studies for professional development.

**Table 5. Reasons for Pursuing Advanced Studies**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
For promotion	2	5%
For professional development	8	21%
Other Reason	-	-

Table 6 shows that all the skills namely: Communication Skills, Human Relations Skills, Knowledge/Technical Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Critical Thinking Skills, Leadership Skills, Research Skills and Information technology Skills are used to some extent by the respondents in their current work as evidenced by the Average Weighted Mean (AWM) of three-point ninety seven (3.97) to four point forty seven

(4.47). However, it is noteworthy that research skills got the lowest AWM as compared to the other skills which may be explained by their years of service in the teaching profession. Most of them have been in the profession for less than a year. One can expect that the demand for research would increase as they stay longer in the profession.

**Table 6. Extent to which skills learned in school are used in current work**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>AWM</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Communication skills	-	1	2	11	20	4.47	Some extent
Human Relations skills	-	-	2	16	16	4.41	Some extent
Knowledge/Technical skills	-	-	1	16	16	4.47	Some extent
Problem-solving skills	-	-	5	17	12	4.21	Some extent
Critical Thinking skills	-	-	3	15	16	4.38	Some extent
Leadership Skills	-	-	4	14	16	4.35	Some extent
Research Skills	1	-	4	23	6	3.97	Some extent
Information Technology Skills	-	-	6	14	14	4.24	Some extent

Legend: 1 Not at all  
2 Very limited extent  
3 Limited extent  
4 Some extent  
5 Great extent

The succeeding table numbers 7-10 present the degree of adequacy of training on the four (4) clusters of skills provided by PSU to the graduate alumni.

Table 7 shows that the overall communication skills were rated by the graduates “Very Adequate” as indicated in its overall mean of 4.21. The ability to listen with objectivity to gain an understanding of the ideas of others is noted highest with a mean of 4.37. Conversely, the lowest mean of 4.11 was noted on the expression of ideas in clear and logical manner and the use of various forms and styles of written communication. Consequently, this study has proven that PSU has developed the communication skills of the first batch of graduates.

**Table 7. Adequacy of Training on Communication Skills**

<b>Communication Skills</b>	<b>AWM</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Express ideas in clear and logical manner	4.11	Very Adequate
2. Use various forms and styles of written communication	4.11	Very Adequate
3. Use grammatically correct language and vocabulary	4.24	Very Adequate
4. Listen with objectivity to gain understanding of the ideas of others	4.37	Very Adequate
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.21</b>	<b>Very Adequate</b>

With regard to adequacy of training on human relation skills, it likewise resulted in an overall mean of 4.22 interpreted as “Very Adequate” as shown in Table 8. Highest among the skills is the ability to foster professional relationships with people in the workplace with a mean of 4.32.

On the other hand, the ability to apply effective conflict resolution skills has appeared at the bottom with a mean of 4.32. Hence, PSU has provided the alumni in this study with “Very Adequate” skills on human relations.

**Table 8. Adequacy of Training on Human Relation Skills**

<b>Human Relation Skills</b>	<b>AWM</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Demonstrate effective social behavior in a variety of setting and under different circumstances	4.26	Very Adequate
2. Respond to the needs of colleagues in the workplace	4.18	Very Adequate
3. Apply effective conflict resolution skills	4.05	Very Adequate
4. Foster professional relationships with people in the workplace	4.32	Very Adequate
5. Exhibit cooperative and supportive relations with others	4.29	Very Adequate
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>Very Adequate</b>

For adequacy of training in leadership skills, Table 9 shows that the ability to organize and coordinate people and tasks to achieve the organization’s goal

ranked highest with a mean of 4.21 interpreted as “Very Adequate.” While the ability to maintain self-control in the midst of stressful encounters with group members has the lowest mean of 4.00 although interpreted too as “Very Adequate.” Nevertheless, this study has shown that all other leadership skills have an overall mean of 4.09 interpreted as “Very Adequate.” Thus, the results confirmed that PSU was able to harness the leadership skills of its graduates.

**Table 9. Adequacy of Training on Leadership Skills**

<b>Leadership Skills</b>	<b>AWM</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Stimulate collaborative efforts with colleagues in the workplace	4.13	Very Adequate
2. Motivate, mobilize and inspire people to move toward the goal of organizations	4.13	Very Adequate
3. Organize and coordinate people and tasks to achieve the organization’s goal	4.21	Very Adequate
4. Facilitate effective implementation of programs of the departments/school/organization	4.03	Very Adequate
5. Maintain self-control in the midst of stressful encounters with group members	4.00	Very Adequate
6. Take responsibility and risks in making decisions	4.05	Very Adequate
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>Very Adequate</b>

Table 10 shows that the ability to develop a clear plan to solve problem earned a mean of 4.16 which made it number 1 among the skills on the adequacy of training on problem-solving skills.

**Table 10. Adequacy of Training on Problem Solving Skills**

<b>Problem-solving Skills</b>	<b>AWM</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Identify the underlying issues in a problem	4.03	Very Adequate



2. Examine alternative solutions and strategies to make an informed decision on the problem	4.03	Very Adequate
3. Develop a clear plan to solve the problem	4.16	Very Adequate
4. Evaluate action for making future decision	4.11	Very Adequate
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>Very Adequate</b>

Conversely, the lowest mean of 4.03 was noted on the ability to identify underlying issues in a problem and the ability to examine alternative solutions and strategies to make an informed decision on the problem.

Though training at PSU Alaminos City Campus was found very adequate, respondents suggested during the FGD that the Campus provide more seminars and conferences that will equip them to new ideas, strategies, and methods in teaching from experts in the field. Moreover, educational field trip is also recommended to expose them to the outside world and benchmark from other institutions, especially on state-of-the-art facilities and equipment.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The information gathered from this study is very significant primarily to recognize and address the existing curriculum’s strengths and weaknesses, its adequacy, quality and relevance of pre-service training about the competencies needed in the market both locally and internationally. Moreover, it will provide inputs to the LGU which supports the Campus to continually provide the necessary facilities and structure to achieve optimal learning and experience. Hence, the researchers present the following conclusions and recommendations.

The sample size is predominantly females and are relatively young in the teaching profession; their parents are very influential in their choice of a career path, passed the LET, employed immediately after graduation through a recommendation by someone, prefer working in the City than outside due to the proximity of residence. These characteristics conform with the kind of graduates PSU is ought to produce, that is, graduates who are responsive to the demands of the community.

As regards the applicability of the skills learned in the Teacher Education Program, the skills in communication, human relations, and problem-solving,

knowledge/technical, leadership and research proved to be very useful in their current work.

The training gained in the Campus is very adequate along communication, human relations, leadership, and problem-solving skills development. This finding advances the relevance and quality of the Teacher Education Program.

The researcher recommends that: the tracer study be expanded to include other programs in the first batch of graduates and add the information to the results yielded by the present tracer; the Teacher Education Program may be strengthened further by making the program adaptive to current global trends in education and technology, providing better facilities, resources, and equipment; and by hiring additional faculty with highly competitive and diverse qualifications; and communication, human relations, and problem-solving skills, which are used in the workplace to a great extent, be sustained in the various courses under the Teacher Education Programs.

Through this study, it is hoped that the Campus administrators and LGU of Alaminos are given insights into improving the services they provide to assure their clientele quality education and for future researchers to conduct similar tracer studies.

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