

Demographic Characteristics and Attainment of Expected Graduate Attributes of Prospective Elementary Teachers

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Abstract: *This study explored the demographic characteristics and assessed the attainment of expected graduate attributes (EGA) among prospective elementary teachers enrolled in a public higher education institution (HEI) in Leyte province that offers an elementary teacher education program. Employing a quantitative descriptive survey research design, the study involved 40 prospective elementary teachers selected through purposive sampling. A 5-point Likert-type scale questionnaire was administered to assess EGA attainment; the questionnaire incorporated items from relevant literature and the program's Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) syllabi. The results revealed that the prospective elementary teachers possessed the essential competencies of future primary school educators. Their well-developed problem-solving, analytical, and imaginative skills, honed throughout their academic journey, demonstrate their preparedness to excel in their chosen profession. Bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application is necessary for prospective elementary teachers to gain valuable experiential learning and exposure to diverse classroom scenarios.*

Keywords: *Attainment, Demographic Characteristics, Expected Graduate Attributes, Prospective Elementary Teachers*

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions face a fundamental and enduring challenge in actively nurturing graduate attributes or generic abilities within undergraduate curricula. Across institutions, there is a shared understanding of the essential graduate attributes undergraduates should acquire through their academic endeavors (Wong et al., 2021; Chhinzer & Russo, 2018). These core academic competencies are complemented by acquiring supplementary knowledge, skills, and experiences (Wagiran et al., 2019; Lourie, 2020), collectively called generic graduate competencies. Collet et al. (2015) and Barradell et al. (2018) highlighted the broader scope of generic skills that exceeded traditional core courses centered on disciplinary knowledge and technical expertise. These skills encompass the qualities necessary for graduates to navigate an uncertain future with competence.

Meanwhile, some studies go a step further, contending that generic traits are not merely generalized skills but rather specific versions of such skills (Czyż & Moss, 2016; Messum et al., 2015; Haviz et al., 2018) that are crucial for applying disciplinary knowledge and effectively applying academic learning in unfamiliar scenarios (Kärner et al., 2017; Butler et al., 2017). Enabling students to tailor their learning outcomes to practical applications brings a meaningful transformation in academic education. There is also a consensus among higher education institutions regarding the essential attributes that undergraduates must develop, encompassing core academic competencies and broader generic skills. However, challenges arise in integrating these attributes across disciplines and bridging the theory-practice gap.

Moreover, these challenges highlight the need to strengthen the links between theoretical knowledge and practical learning experiences to enhance teachers' readiness in the classroom. Integrating graduate attributes in the teaching process and linking them across the curriculum can better prepare students for their future careers. Plus, equipping students with essential skills and values is crucial for job placement and workplace success. Although few studies discuss graduate attributes in various national and international contexts, it is essential to note that these studies have predominantly focused on fields other than teacher education (Wong et al., 2021; Wagiran et al., 2019; Collet et al., 2015). To address this scarcity of research, this survey delves into the attainment of expected graduate attributes (EGA) within the unique context of elementary teacher education at a public higher education institution in Leyte Province. Being one of the newest programs in the said institution, this survey aims to enhance the effectiveness of the elementary teacher education program and proactively address potential challenges that may arise in the future. The survey also seeks to provide valuable insights for teachers and school administrators, facilitating the continuous improvement and refinement of the program's curriculum to ensure the development of well-rounded graduates who meet the expected standards.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative descriptive survey research design to determine the demographic characteristics and EGA attainment level of the prospective elementary teachers. A descriptive survey aims to characterize the specific qualities of a selected group of entities or individual instances. The study was conducted at a public higher education institution (HEI) in Leyte province that offers an elementary

teacher education program. A total of 40 prospective elementary teachers enrolled in the academic year 2022-2023 participated in the survey, selected using purposive sampling. The study employed a 5-point Likert-type scale questionnaire to assess the attainment of expected graduate attributes (EGA). The questionnaire was carefully developed, incorporating items from relevant literature and the program's Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) syllabi (Magulod et al., 2020; Pal, 2021; Quibilian, n.d.; CMO no. 74, 2017). Prior to its administration, the questionnaire underwent expert validation and pilot testing to ensure its validity and reliability.

Before conducting the study, the researchers obtained permission from the department head in a request letter. The researchers assured respondents that participation was voluntary, their identities would be kept confidential, and the collected data would be treated with the utmost confidentiality. The data were collected using Google Drive's survey administration software, a tool for creating online survey forms. The data were presented in tabular and graphical forms and simple frequency counting and percentages were used to describe the respondents' demographic characteristics. The weighted mean and standard deviation were used to summarize the respondents' EGA attainment level. MS Excel was used to process the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section shows the demographic characteristics of the prospective elementary teachers in terms of age, sex, guardian's occupation, educational attainment, and monthly income.

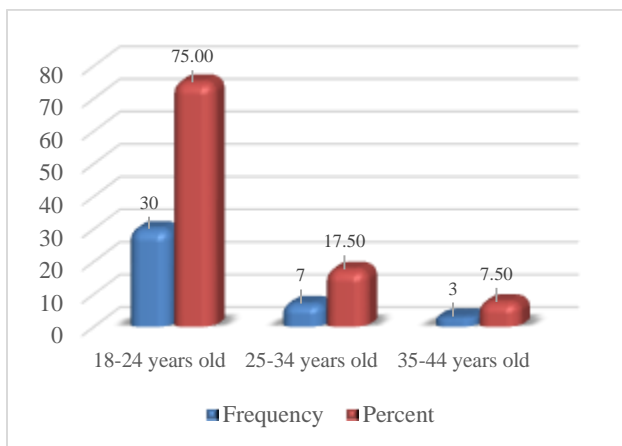


Fig. 1. Age Distribution of the Respondents

The respondents' age group belonged from 18-24 years old (75%) which is a typical age group for teacher-practitioners with prospective status. Further, some respondents were older than the traditional college age which could mean that they may have stopped their education for other personal reasons but managed to continue their education despite their age. Studies highlighted that adults who return to school commonly face challenges such as balancing education with a busy schedule, limited financial resources, and self-doubt regarding

their readiness for college (Coelli, 2012; Krakoff, 2019). Most respondents were female (85%) which could indicate that teacher education programs are more attractive to women than men. Further, Thompson (2021) noted that women have earned more bachelor's degrees than men highlighting a significant gender gap in higher education enrollment and completion rates.

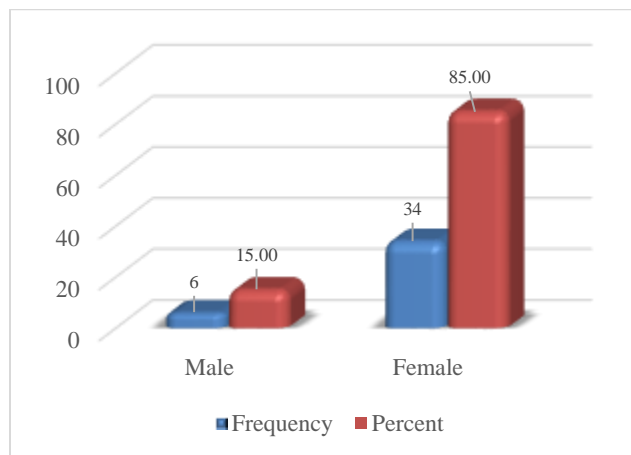


Fig. 2. Distribution of the Respondents according to Sex

Meanwhile, the survey found that housewives, professional teachers, and vendors were the most common occupations of the respondents' guardians. Stankovska et al. (2017) indicated that securing a well-paying job is a common objective for individuals seeking to enhance their livelihood, often achieved through acquiring a university degree. Similarly, other studies also documented that pursuing a university degree serves as a means to enhance livelihoods (Ali et al., 2018; Shen et al., 2020; Vuolo et al., 2016).

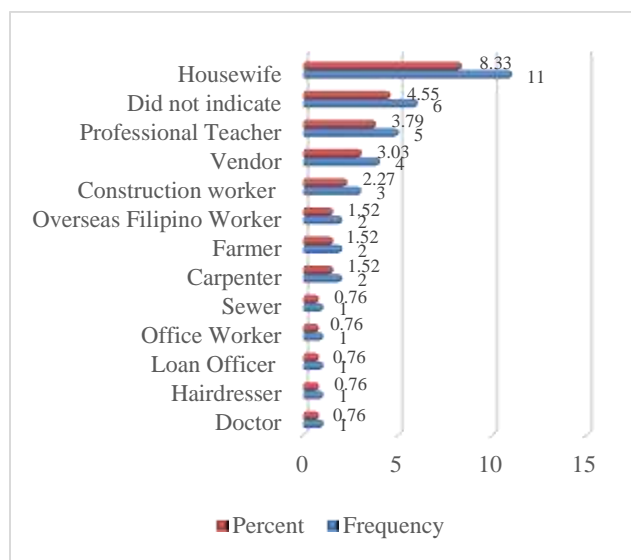


Fig. 3. Occupation of the Respondents' Guardians

Consequently, Inceoglu et al. (2019) acknowledged the imperative of equipping students with essential skills and values to facilitate their job placement and workplace success

(McKenzie et al., 2021), particularly considering the high graduate unemployment rates across countries. Educational bodies use these essential skills, values, and graduate attributes as guiding statements to shape curricula and provide valuable learning opportunities. However, Solomon et al. (2022) made a compelling argument regarding the relationship between education and job outcomes. They found that individuals with higher levels of education not only have access to more job resources but also tend to face higher job demands. These increased demands are closely linked to elevated job stress and reduced job satisfaction, effectively counteracting the positive benefits of having more significant resources.

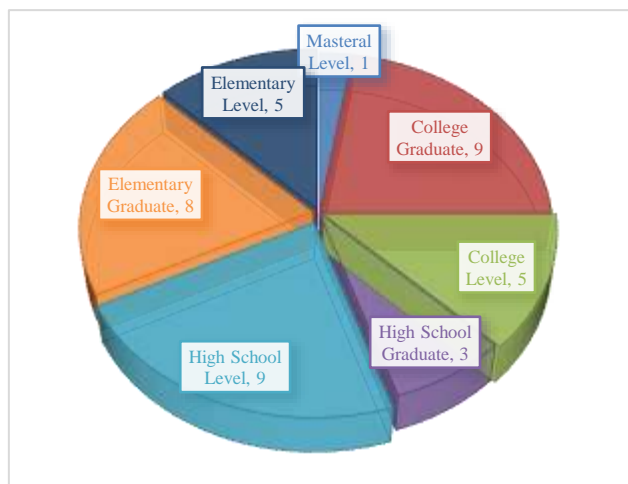


Fig. 4. Highest Educational Attainment of the Respondents' Guardians

Regarding educational attainment, slightly more than one-third (35%) of the parents were college-level or college graduates. Giani et al. (2019) and Ma et al. (2016) further noted that individuals with a college degree are statistically more inclined to secure employment and command higher salaries than those with a high school diploma. The finding further exemplifies that they can exhibit decreased reliance on government services and actively contribute to society through volunteer work and humanitarian endeavors. The decreased dependence on government services benefits the individuals themselves and alleviates the burden on public resources, enabling governments to allocate funds to other pressing societal needs (Winchester et al., 2021). Further, through education, graduates develop cultural awareness and a global perspective (Reimers, 2020), enabling them to address the global economic and sustainability challenges that higher education institutions face (Aver et al., 2021; Tien et al., 2020). The graduates' development of cultural awareness and a global perspective through education enables them to navigate and contribute to the interconnected global economy, fostering innovative solutions to economic and sustainability challenges for higher education institutions worldwide.

As to the monthly income of the parents, the majority (60%) indicated an income group below ₱ 9,000 which falls in the poor category. Likewise, seven respondents are in low-

income families, while one is in the middle class. This may suggest that poverty is a significant issue in the Philippines, with a large proportion of families living below the poverty threshold. Grech (2014) and Pasha (2022) mentioned that poverty makes it difficult for many learners to continue their schooling due to the lack of affordable resources and opportunities. The results further revealed the occupation of the respondents' parents, with housewives leads on the list, followed by professional teachers, vendors, and construction workers.

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents' Family Income Group

Income Group	Frequency	Percent (%)
Middle class	1	2.50
Low income (but not poor)	7	17.50
Poor	24	60.00
Did not indicate	8	20.00

Note: Income classification is based on the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (as cited in Albert et al., 2018); N=40

Rank	Income Range	Income Group
7	≥₱182,000	Rich
6	₱109,200 - ₱182,000	High income (but not rich)
5	₱63,700 - ₱109,200	Upper middle income
4	₱36,400 - ₱63,700	Middle class
3	₱18,200 - ₱36,400	Lower middle class
2	₱9,100 - ₱18,200	Low income (but not poor)
1	<₱9,100	Poor

Furthermore, the result in Table 2 revealed that the respondents achieved a weighted mean of 3.75, indicating that they could enhance the learning experience by incorporating real-life examples to foster meaningful understanding. It also suggests that using relevant, real-world examples in classroom settings could enhance learning outcomes and make them more meaningful and effective. Connecting abstract concepts to real-world applications fosters deeper understanding and retention in students. By grounding abstract knowledge in practical situations, learners can grasp the relevance and applicability of their learning, leading to more meaningful knowledge acquisition. Additionally, ensuring that the quality of education remains in line with the present curriculum and standards and identifying when the lesson materials need to be improved further depends on cultivating meaningful student understanding of the subject.

The table likewise displays a weighted mean of 3.45, indicating that the respondents possessed the problem-solving, analytical, creative, and evidence-based skills required by prospective primary teachers. This finding strongly suggests

that upon completing the BEED program, the respondents are prepared to showcase their aptitude as future primary educators and effectively navigate the challenges inherent to their field. Shermukhammadov (2022) also supports this view, emphasizing that creativity is an important feature of good teachers. Teachers can use their creativity to create an engaging and supportive learning environment, and by combining traditional and online teaching, teachers can actively engage students in class. As further seen in the table, the problem-solving, analysis, creativity, and relevant skills that the respondents acquired expressed their willingness to play the role of primary school teacher skills. The skills acquired are designed to enhance critical thinking, encourage new learning, and create rich student learning experiences (Birgili, 2015; Cabuquin & Abocejo, 2023). The learned skills can likewise engage students, encourage participation, and create a love of learning.

Table 2: Attainment of the Respondents’ Expected Graduate Attributes (EGA)

No.	Indicators	WM	SD	QD
	<i>I possess the ability to . . .</i>			
1.	Recognize and cater to diverse types of learners by offering culturally relevant learning activities and experiences tailored to their needs.	3.70	1.11	Attained
2.	Create and utilize pertinent materials that align with learners’ learning styles, goals, and cultural backgrounds.	3.50	1.09	Attained
3.	Apply learning theories to design effective learning-teaching experiences.	3.48	0.88	Attained
4.	Ensure a clear, accurate, and comprehensive explanation of the subject matter content.	3.78	0.90	Attained
5.	Integrate the latest advancements in education and the specific field to enhance and enrich the learning experience.	3.50	0.88	Attained
6.	Incorporate developmentally appropriate activities when teaching various learning areas.	3.58	1.22	Attained
7.	Showcase proficiency in creative and critical thinking, logical reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making across diverse classroom scenarios.	3.45	1.10	Attained
8.	Establish connections between current content and past/future lessons to enhance understanding and continuity.	3.68	1.02	Attained
9.	Employ suitable technologies to effectively accomplish the desired learning outcomes.	3.63	1.05	Attained
10.	Enhance the learning experience by incorporating real-life examples to foster meaningful understanding.	3.75	1.10	Attained
11.	Utilize suitable teaching-learning methods and technology tailored to the specific subject matter content.	3.63	1.08	Attained
12.	Design authentic assessment instruments, evaluation tools, and alternative assessment methods.	3.60	1.01	Attained
13.	Interpret assessment results and utilize them to enhance both learning and teaching practices.	3.58	1.08	Attained
14.	Maintain accurate and up-to-date records of learners’ performance using technology tools when feasible and suitable.	3.60	1.01	Attained
15.	Deliver timely feedback on assessment results to parents and other stakeholders.	3.53	0.99	Attained
16.	Craft learning experiences that foster the development of learners’ higher-order thinking skills.	3.58	0.96	Attained
17.	Offer opportunities that facilitate the development of learners’ communication skills.	3.55	0.96	Attained
18.	Inspire and motivate others toward goal achievement by providing clear vision, support, and encouragement.	3.65	0.98	Attained
19.	Harness tools and technology to enhance the process of learning and teaching.	3.60	1.03	Attained
20.	Adhere to the professional norms of the teaching profession when interacting with students, parents, colleagues, and other stakeholders.	3.58	0.98	Attained
21.	Seek and engage with diverse perspectives from others to effectively navigate complex relationships.	3.63	1.00	Attained
22.	Demonstrate positive personal and professional qualities that exemplify a teacher’s role.	3.45	1.11	Attained
23.	Exhibit integrity and professionalism when addressing issues, conflicts, and controversies pertaining to student welfare, as well as concerns raised by parents and the community.	3.58	1.26	Attained
24.	Demonstrate honest and ethical behavior, drawing upon my strong sense of self and personal values	3.50	1.22	Attained
25.	Exhibit resilience in challenging situations and possess the capacity to adapt positively to and embrace change through an ongoing commitment to learning and personal growth.	3.60	1.10	Attained
26.	Promote personal growth and professional development by actively engaging in seminar workshops, participating in demo fests, conducting action research, and participating in other education-related activities.	3.63	1.13	Attained
27.	Take an active role in participating in the school’s community outreach activities.	3.65	1.10	Attained
28.	Act with integrity and take responsibility for my actions.	3.63	1.08	Attained
29.	Consider the impact of my actions on others and the environment.	3.70	0.94	Attained

Note: No. of Cases = 40; 4.21 – 5.00 = Highly Attained; 3.41 – 4.20 = Attained; 2.61 – 3.40 = Neutral; 1.81 – 2.60 = Somewhat Attained; 1.00 – 1.80 = Poorly Attained; Grand Mean = 3.59 (Attained); Std. Dev. = 0.934

Moreover, the grand mean of 3.59 indicated that the respondents possessed significant competencies of future primary school teachers. The problem-solving, analytical, and imaginative skills they honed throughout their college journey demonstrate their readiness to excel in their chosen field. Likewise, a weighted mean of 3.55 indicated that the respondents provided opportunities that effectively fostered the development of learners’ communication skills. Also, their teacher education journey nurtured their personal and professional growth by providing opportunities to actively engage in seminar workshops, participate in demo fests, conduct action research, and immerse themselves in other education-related activities, as indicated by a weighted mean of 3.63. Desak (2015) highlighted that workshops and field teaching practice were two program features that played a pivotal role in preparing future educators for the rigors of professional teaching. Preservice teachers’ self-reflections on their growth and transition from university students to teaching professionals offer invaluable insights into their professional development journey (Garza et al., 2016).

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey sought to explore the demographic characteristics of prospective elementary teachers and assess their attainment of expected graduate attributes. The results revealed that the most prevalent occupations among respondents’ guardians were housewives, professional teachers, and vendors. Regarding educational attainment, slightly over one-third of the parents obtained college-level qualifications or college degrees. Regarding monthly parental income, the majority fell within the low-income bracket. The survey further indicated that prospective elementary teachers demonstrated the essential competencies required of future primary school educators.

Considering the outcomes, the researchers recommend continuously refining the program’s curriculum to ensure that aspiring elementary teachers graduate with the essential employability skills required for effective teaching. Bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application is necessary for prospective elementary teachers to gain valuable experiential learning and exposure to diverse classroom scenarios. Likewise, enriching the professional development of prospective elementary teachers through relevant seminars and training sessions can broaden their understanding of the teaching profession, equipping them with fresh perspectives and practical strategies for effective classroom management. The school administration should implement comprehensive support programs to assist teacher education students, especially those facing financial or academic challenges, ensuring their continued success in their college education.

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