

School Administrators' Assessment of the Performance of Teacher Education Graduates: A Mixed Method Study

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Abstract. This study aimed to investigate the school administrators' assessment of the performance of teacher education graduates and identify areas requiring further exploration. Using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the quantitative phase involved a random selection of respondents from private and public schools in Davao City, while the qualitative phase included purposively chosen participants for in-depth interviews. Data were collected using adapted survey tools and interview guides, with mean and standard deviation used for quantitative analysis and coding and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Results showed high satisfaction levels among school administrators. The qualitative phase provided deeper insights into these findings, highlighting key themes. Regarding soft skills, themes included time management, student-centered support, communication, and a collaborative work environment. For hard skills, themes encompassed leadership, task completion, subject mastery, instructional design, and professional development. The study suggests that academic institutions should enhance support systems to address graduates' developmental needs and learning barriers, focusing on curriculum enhancement, recruitment, feedback, and personalized professional development.

Keywords: Teacher education; School administrator; Graduate performance; Philippines.

1.0 Introduction

The success of educational institutions is intrinsically tied to the employability and performance of their graduates in the workplace. Many pursue degrees, expecting to secure jobs that offer career advancement and financial stability. However, recent surveys indicate that 65% of school administrators express dissatisfaction with the performance of teacher education graduates, raising concerns about the adequacy of teacher preparation programs (Muneer & Hashim, 2022; Kim et al., 2023). These concerns often stem from gaps in essential competencies, such as hard and soft skills, which are critical for teaching effectiveness (Nguyen & Tran, 2021).

Administrators report that numerous graduates lack vital competencies, including effective communication, critical thinking, and adaptability – indispensable for classroom success (Alvarez & Baltazar, 2023). Despite the increasing demand for well-rounded educators, the disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application remains a significant issue for graduates and academic institutions (Garcia & Salazar, 2022). Teacher preparation programs emphasize pedagogical theories while underdelivering equipping graduates with the practical skills necessary for navigating the complexities of contemporary classrooms (Reyes & Mendoza, 2023).

This gap between academic training and real-world demands often results in suboptimal learning experiences for students and frustration among educators, further intensifying dissatisfaction (Chen & Wang, 2021). Addressing these challenges necessitates establishing robust support systems, including ongoing professional development and resource allocation, that enable educators to bridge the skill gap and fulfill institutional expectations (López & Rivera, 2021). In this context, the perceived support from school leaders is crucial for teacher satisfaction and performance. Administrators who offer emotional, informational, and material support significantly impact teachers' job satisfaction, commitment, and overall effectiveness (Martinez et al., 2023). Effective leadership fosters a collaborative environment where educators can excel, improving teacher performance and student outcomes (Fernandez & Santos, 2022).

This study is grounded in Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics theory, which posits that job satisfaction is influenced by specific job characteristics, such as skill variety, task significance, and feedback. In the current study, school administrators' satisfaction with teacher graduates is likely shaped by how well they meet role demands, particularly their hard and soft skills (Khan & Anwar, 2021). The primary aim of this research is to assess school administrators' satisfaction with the performance of teacher education graduates. By identifying skill gaps, this study aims to provide actionable insights that can assist educational institutions in refining their programs to align more effectively with industry needs. Ultimately, these findings will improve teacher education quality, benefiting students, educators, and schools.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, specifically an explanatory sequential design. Mixed-methods research integrates quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). The design involved two phases: first, quantitative data was collected and analyzed; second, qualitative data was gathered to explain and expand upon the quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2021). This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the school administrators' satisfaction with the performance of teacher education graduates.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Davao City, a highly urbanized city in Mindanao known for its public and private educational institutions. Davao City was selected due to its diversity of schools, which allowed for a broader assessment of graduates' performance across different educational settings.

2.3 Research Participants

The study involved 15 school administrators, principals, supervisors, and subject coordinators from Davao City who participated in the quantitative phase through purposive sampling. Based on the quantitative results, five participants were selected for in-depth interviews (IDIs) in the qualitative phase, as recommended for heterogeneous groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2020).

2.4 Research Instruments

The study employed adapted survey questionnaires for the quantitative phase, validated by Assumption College of Davao experts. The questionnaires were based on the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities of Ontario (2021). An interview guide was developed, validated, and used for the qualitative phase to explore further the school administrators' satisfaction with graduates' performance.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

Quantitative data were collected via a 5-point Likert scale survey and analyzed using descriptive statistics. For the qualitative phase, IDIs were conducted to explore the administrators' experiences and perspectives. Ethical considerations, such as confidentiality and informed consent, were strictly observed throughout the research.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

All research procedures adhered to ethical guidelines set by the Assumption College of Davao Research Ethics Committee and the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (2020), protecting participants' rights and confidentiality.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 School Administrators' Assessment of the Performance of Teacher Education Graduates

Table 1 presents the level of school administrators' assessment of the performance of teacher education graduates in Davao City. The overall mean rating is 4.11, which is described as high. This implies that school administrators' satisfaction with the performance of teacher education graduates is often manifested. In addition, the overall standard deviation is .60, meaning that the responses are clustered to the mean and are not so dispersed.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of school administrators' assessment of the performance of teacher education graduates

Indicator	SD	Mean	Descriptive
A. Soft Skills			
1. Speaks in a clear, concise, and correct manner.	0.75	4.24	Very High
2. Write in a clear, concise, and correct manner.	0.70	4.12	High
3. Demonstrates understanding by restating information, ideas, and concepts.	0.66	4.06	High
4. Applies math techniques with the accuracy required to solve problems and make decisions.	0.97	3.76	High
5. Uses computers and other technological tools necessary to perform required tasks.	0.56	4.24	Very High
6. Evaluate his/her thinking throughout the steps and processes used in problem-solving and decision-making.	0.75	4.06	High
7. Evaluates the validity of arguments based on qualitative and quantitative information.	0.88	3.82	High
8. Set priorities and allocate time efficiently to complete several tasks within specific deadlines.	0.64	4.18	High
9. Determines tasks and resources to complete project objectives.	0.70	4.12	High
10. Interacts with others in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and achievement of goals.	0.61	4.35	Very High
11. Collects, analyzes, and organizes relevant necessary information.	0.73	4.18	High
Category Mean	0.60	4.10	High
B. Hard Skills			
1. Demonstrates conceptual knowledge related to the work.	0.70	4.12	High
2. Uses specific technical skills related to the work being done.	0.81	4.18	High
3. Performs tasks accurately and pays attention to detail.	0.60	4.12	High
4. Is productive in the completion of tasks.	0.66	4.24	Very High
5. Creates innovative strategies and products that meet identified needs.	0.83	3.94	High
6. Adapts to new situations and demands by applying and updating his/her knowledge and skills.	0.81	4.18	High
7. Takes responsibility for her/his actions and decisions.	0.60	4.12	High
Category Mean	0.63	4.13	High
Overall Mean	0.60	4.11	High

The result of this study reveals that school administrators' satisfaction with the performance of teacher education graduates is high. This implies that teachers' soft and hard skills in education graduates are evident and often manifested. Hence, the teacher interacts with others in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and achieving goals, demonstrates conceptual knowledge related to the work, performs tasks accurately, pays attention to detail, and is productive in completing tasks. Further, the school administrators' satisfaction with the performance of teacher education graduates is analyzed in two dimensions, namely, soft skills and hard skills.

The high result of this variable aligns with the Job Characteristics Theory, which has been explored in various modern contexts, including educational settings. Recent studies build on Hackman and Oldham's framework, emphasizing that job characteristics such as task significance, autonomy, and feedback are crucial in fostering job satisfaction among school administrators, leading to better outcomes for the school community (Simone, 2020). In educational institutions, effectively designing roles with these characteristics in mind can promote motivation and satisfaction, ultimately contributing to the overall success of students and the institution. Additionally, this study's findings support the conclusions of recent research, highlighting that school administrators seek a combination of hard and soft skills in potential hires. While technical training and subject expertise (hard skills) remain important, interpersonal skills (soft skills) like communication, teamwork, and active listening are equally valued as they contribute to a positive and collaborative school environment (Manninen & Campbell, 2021; Herrity, 2023).

3.2 Items that Need Further Explanation for Soft Skills

Figure 1 presents the items that require further clarification. The quantitative data results revealed three major themes that emerged through thematic analysis: Time Management and Task Prioritization, Student-Centered Support and Communication, and a Collaborative and Supportive Work Environment.

Items that Need Further Explanation

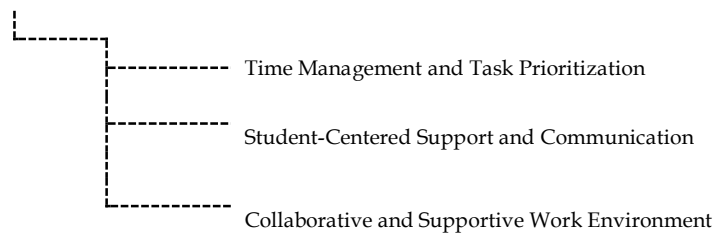


Figure 1. Standpoints of the participants regarding the salient findings in terms of soft skills

Time Management and Task Prioritization

One of the key themes identified was Time Management and Task Prioritization. School administrators highlighted the importance of teacher education graduates demonstrating effective time management by organizing their workload, prioritizing tasks, and meeting deadlines without compromising teaching quality. For instance, a participant shared, *“Our graduates know how to balance their teaching responsibilities and administrative tasks. They’re always on time and meet deadlines.”* This theme is congruent with the statement that school administrators want teachers to exhibit a strong work ethic and professionalism (Manninen & Campbell, 2021). Additionally, administrators appreciated that these graduates were proactive in helping others complete tasks in the dynamic environment of a school (University of Missouri, 2020).

Student-Centered Support and Communication

The second major theme identified was Student-Centered Support and Communication. School administrators noted that teacher education graduates displayed strong verbal and written communication skills, which helped foster a supportive learning environment. One administrator explained, *“Our teachers are approachable, and students feel comfortable asking questions. They know how to communicate effectively, not just with students but also with parents and colleagues.”* This reflects findings from Herrity (2023), who emphasized the importance of effective communication in education. Administrators also valued teachers who recognized individual student needs and provided appropriate support, which aligned with the qualitative data that confirmed the importance of student-centered communication in achieving positive outcomes.

Collaborative and Supportive Work Environment

The final theme under soft skills was the Collaborative and Supportive Work Environment. Participants noted that graduates demonstrated collaboration by seeking help from colleagues and creating a cohesive atmosphere within the school. One participant remarked, *“The teachers work well with each other. They share best practices and support one another, which creates a positive working environment.”* This observation aligns with recent studies emphasizing the critical role of collaboration in educational settings, which fosters a sense of community and enhances creativity, innovation, and collective problem-solving within schools (Low, 2023).

3.3 Items that Need Further Explanation for Hard Skills

Figure 2 presents the items that require further explanation. Three major themes emerged through thematic analysis from the quantitative data that require clarification: Collaborative Leadership and Task Completion, Effective Subject Mastery and Instructional Design, and Continuous Improvement and Professional Development.

Collaborative Leadership and Task Completion

The first theme identified was Collaborative Leadership and Task Completion. School administrators expressed high satisfaction with graduates who displayed strong leadership abilities in the workplace. Participants emphasized how graduates efficiently organized their workload, prioritized tasks, and met deadlines without compromising teaching quality or student support. One administrator shared, *“Our teachers know how to manage their time well and lead by example, even when not in formal leadership roles. They take the initiative and help others when needed.”* This theme aligns with the expectations that administrators want teachers who can lead and complete tasks efficiently in a dynamic school environment (Manninen & Campbell, 2021; University of Missouri, 2020).

Items that Need Further Explanation

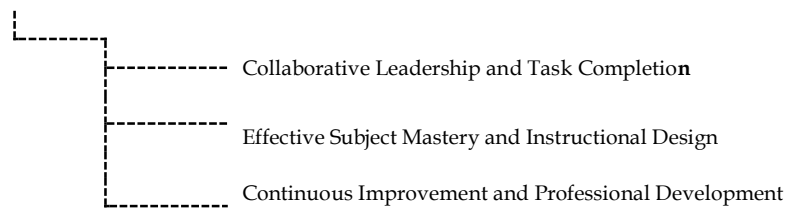


Figure 2. Standpoints of the participants regarding the salient findings in terms of hard skills

Effective Subject Mastery and Instructional Design

The second major theme was Effective Subject Mastery and Instructional Design. Participants highlighted the importance of teachers' deep understanding of their subjects and the ability to design effective instructional plans. One participant noted, *"Our graduates have a strong command of their subject matter and can design lessons that engage students across different learning styles."* This observation aligns with recent literature emphasizing the need for educators to not only master their content but also implement diverse instructional strategies that cater to various learners. Moreover, administrators underscored the effectiveness of real-life, discovery-based, and other learner-centered activities in enhancing student engagement and understanding (Tomlinson, 2021).

Continuous Improvement and Professional Development

The final theme identified was Continuous Improvement and Professional Development. Administrators emphasized the importance of ongoing learning and development among teachers, with some expressing that while many teachers excelled in their roles, there were still areas that needed enhancement. One administrator explained, *"Some of our teachers need more training, especially in integrating technology into their teaching. They're doing well, but continuous improvement is necessary."* This aligns with recent literature highlighting the importance of continuous professional development for educators to remain effective in an evolving educational landscape. Teachers' dedication to their professional growth ensures they can adapt to new challenges and provide high-quality learning experiences (Bryk, 2021).

4.0 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, several key conclusions and their implications were drawn.

The high satisfaction ratings of school administrators toward ACD teacher education graduates highlight that the graduates possess both the soft and hard skills necessary for effective performance in the workplace. This suggests that the teacher education program is succeeding in equipping its graduates with essential skills. However, continuous support and development are needed to maintain and enhance these competencies. School administrators play a crucial role in this process by providing opportunities for professional growth and fostering an environment where employees feel valued as assets to the school community. This investment in teachers' development can increase motivation, retention, and overall school performance.

Regarding the qualitative insights, several essential themes emerged that offer a deeper understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement among teacher education graduates. The emphasis on Effective Time Management, Student-Centered Support and Communication, and a Collaborative and Supportive Work Environment suggests that graduates are well-prepared to manage their responsibilities and foster positive relationships with students and colleagues. These skills are crucial for creating a productive and engaging learning environment, impacting student outcomes and overall school success.

Regarding hard skills, the prominence of themes such as Effective Leadership, Subject Mastery and Instructional Design, and Continuous Improvement and Professional Development reflects the importance of technical competence in education. Graduates who excel in these areas can deliver high-quality instruction and are poised to take on leadership roles and adapt to evolving educational demands. This indicates that teacher education programs must continue to prioritize these areas, ensuring that graduates are capable instructors and leaders who contribute to the continuous improvement of their schools.

Since this study focused on participants in the downtown area of Davao City, expanding the research to include a broader geographic scope—across the entire Davao region and nationwide—would offer a more comprehensive understanding of school administrators' satisfaction with teacher education program graduates. This would provide valuable insights that could inform the development of teacher education programs on a larger scale, ensuring that they meet the needs of diverse educational contexts across the country.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Dr. Edwin A. Acain: Dr. Acain conceived the research idea and played a pivotal role in the study's design and methodology. He developed the initial research framework, formulated the hypotheses, and oversaw the overall implementation of the study. His expertise in data analysis was crucial for ensuring the rigorous and accurate interpretation of the results. Additionally, Dr. Acain contributed significantly to drafting the manuscript, particularly in the theoretical framework and discussion sections, and he was actively involved in the revision process to enhance the clarity and coherence of the final document.

Dr. Cristy Q. Efono: Dr. Efono was instrumental in refining the research design and provided expert guidance on the methodological approach to ensure the study's alignment with current academic standards. She played a critical role in the data analysis phase, offering valuable insights that enriched the interpretation of the results. Dr. Efono also contributed to writing the manuscript, focusing on the results and conclusions sections, and was actively engaged in revising the manuscript to ensure accuracy and address feedback from peer reviews.

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This research was funded by Assumption College of Davao, which provided the financial support necessary for the study's design, data collection, and analysis. The funding institution played a crucial role in enabling the research but was not involved in the study's design, data interpretation, or manuscript preparation.

7.0 Conflict of Interest

A research conflict arises when an investigator's personal, financial, or professional interests could impact their study's impartiality, integrity, and validity. Since outside interests may have influenced the research's design, conduct, analysis, or reporting, these conflicts may jeopardize the validity of the study's conclusions. Declaring conflicts of interest openly and demonstrating compliance with ethical guidelines protects the credibility of the research and the participating researchers.

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