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Getting to Know Our Future Teachers: Strengths and Areas for Improvement



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This policy brief looks at the characteristics of teacher education students. Both strengths and areas for improvement were identified. Policy recommendations are given in order to further strengthen their positive qualities and improve their weaknesses.

Studies that looked into the characteristics and abilities of teacher education students found both strengths, as well as areas for improvement in those who aspire to become teachers. Among their positive aspects are their motivation to pursue the program due to their intrinsic love for teaching and altruistic desire to help others (Abulon, 2012). Considering that the teaching profession in the Philippines is not viewed as a lucrative profession, it is somehow reassuring that many are still drawn to this profession for the love of teaching itself. On the other hand, teacher education students' below average scores on critical thinking (Obias, 2015) and poor metalinguistic knowledge in English majors (Munalim & Raymundo, 2014) are quite alarming. In terms of what employers expect from teacher applicants, their foremost considerations include good health condition, good moral character, communication skills, their educational degree, performance in teaching demonstration and interview, and NBI/police clearance (Mancao, 2012).



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Knowledge on the strengths and weaknesses of teacher education students, as well as what potential employers expect from them, are crucial in developing curricula that meet their needs.

Here is a summary of policy recommendations for these issues:

1. The motives of teacher education students for choosing this particular career path must be explored. Further, intrinsic and altruistic motivations must be nurtured (Abulon, 2012). This could be done by creating programs that would allow students to imbibe the love for teaching and view it as a means of helping others; for example, teaching as a form of community service could be integrated as part of their training.
2. Critical thinking must be integrated in the curriculum (Obias, 2015). The curriculum must be designed in such a way that it would challenge the students to think critically, as well as allow them to develop higher-order thinking strategies.
3. The treatment of grammar teaching must be reconsidered. While there are advantages in teaching literature-based English lessons, the lack of explicit grammar treatment has taken a toll on students' metalinguistic abilities (Munalim & Raymundo). It is suggested that methods of English teaching be revisited and be revised so as to put equal emphasis on all the necessary skills to be developed, including metalinguistic knowledge.
4. As early as in the first year of college, TEIs should already consider the characteristics that would increase their students' potential of being hired in the future and implement policies regarding this. These include: the implementation of health programs to ensure that their graduates are physically prepared for the job; provision of guidance services that would build good moral character; embedding activities in the curriculum that would prepare them for teaching demonstration and strengthen their interview skills; and inspiring them to finish their degree (Mancao, 2012).

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