

Gemma B. Bellena, 2016

Volume 2 Issue 1, pp. 1006-1016

Year of Publication: 2016

DOI- <http://dx.doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2016.s21.16661676>

This paper can be cited as: Bellena, G. B. (2016). Industry Need for AB English Language Practicum Trainees. *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 1006-1016

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

INDUSTRY NEED FOR AB ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRACTICUM TRAINEES

Gemma B. Bellena

Associate Professor, Bicol University, Legazpi City, Philippines

gemjing23@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper looks into the industry need for AB English Language Practicum trainees, which in a way is seen to be an indicator of the need for future AB English graduates. Language Practicum (LP) refers to the On-the-Job Training (OJT) for Bachelor of Arts in English of the College of Arts and Letters, Bicol University. More practically, the study enumerates job descriptions in the market fit for trainees and lists down competency requirements from them. It used as checklist job descriptions/titles identified in Hermosa, et al.'s (2014) as top job descriptions available in the market for Language Practicum trainees. The study is anchored on the questions-oriented model of evaluation, or more appropriately quasi-evaluation. It began with questions to give evidence on the worth and merit of the Language Practicum and its continued place in the AB English curriculum. For its findings, the five top jobs handled by the trainees include those of: administrative officer, information officer, customer service representative, clerk and technical/speech writer. By their ranks, the competency requirements are: collaboration and teamwork; critical thinking, problem solving; life and career; ICT literacy; communication; information literacy; personal and social responsibility; citizenship/civic literacy; creativity and innovation; and environmental awareness. It is therefore concluded that AB English students are better suited for work related to specific communication purpose, that of

sharing information within a business or organization. The recommendations are, that: (a) AB English curriculum be geared more to core competencies related to the business world, particularly on corporate/organizational communication; (b) Language Practicum insists that sponsoring organizations train students to hone these competencies more, and not solely to provide extra manpower to do menial tasks which are part of the job description.

Keywords

Language Practicum, On-the-Job Training (OJT), Industry-Academe, AB English

1. Introduction

The academe values the information provided by the industry, particularly along the latter's need for graduates who can be productive in the field and the competencies required of them. With a dynamic feedback mechanism such as this, with the industry acting as extensions of the academe in providing the preparation required of the pro-gram, both sectors provide support to each other in ensuring a productive economy and society.

This paper delves on the questions: (1) What are the job descriptions in the market fit for trainees? (2) What are the competency requirements from them? These are the questions that served as the starting point for gathering initial evidence on the worth and merit of the Language Practicum, the On-the-Job Training (OJT) for AB English students of Bicol University, Philippines, and its continued place in the AB English curriculum. Largely, the intention is to use findings to propose policy recommendations and guidelines for the improved conduct of the Language Practicum, now only on its third year of implementation.

The research aims to bridge the gap between competencies and jobs available. The continuity in information exchange, with schools updating the students about the trends in employment and with the Industry providing such information, hopefully, will resolve the pervasive mismatch between academe and industry, on a micro level at the least

The research is anchored on the questions-oriented model of evaluation, or more appropriately quasi-evaluation. Because more demanding requirements and higher standards are required for the meaning of evaluation theory, the term model/approaches is preferred. This refers to "an evaluation theorist's idealized conceptualizations for conducting program evaluation" (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2013). The elements for quasi-evaluation, true to the expert's conceptualization, "may not meet the requirements of a sound evaluation" (Stufflebeam

and Shinkfield, 2013) but they can investigate questions that will provide evidence on the program evaluated and the approaches are committed to assessing and helping improve aspects of the Language Practicum.

2. Materials and Methods

The methodology is descriptive with data coming from survey-questionnaire administered to sponsoring employers and other industries in the local and national levels. Data from the international level industries were gathered from existing web-sites. Data were tallied and collated using ranking and percentage for simple statistical analysis.

For validation purposes, the results of the research project were presented to a small group of fifteen (15), mostly sponsoring employers, and representatives from the academe, particularly the department chair of the English Department. The focus-group discussion (FGD) yielded more qualitative data meant to enrich the discussion of results.

3. Results and Discussion

The industry's role is crucial in achieving the objectives of the Language Practicum (LP), namely: (1) Provide students with practical training on the job supplemented by related theoretical instruction; (2) Offer students a venue to translate their communication and related skills to actual job performance; (3) Give students the opportunity to acquire the work values required of the job market; and (4) Afford students actual venue for job prospecting, networking and over-all development of professional work relationships. In the initial implementation of the program, the choice of the sponsoring organization was left to the students to give them the actual feel of job prospecting and networking. However, this choice was screened by the LP coordinator and the Department Chair for English, and finally approved by the Dean. Certain criteria were set. Sponsoring organization must be of (1) Reputable name and standing; (2) Capable to meet the objectives of the Language Practicum; (3) Willing to develop basic work knowledge, skills and values of the trainee; and (4) With job descriptions commensurate to the academic preparations of an AB English graduate.

3.1 Job Descriptions/Titles in the Market Available for AB English Language Practicum Trainees

Using as checklist job descriptions/titles identified in Hermosa, et al.'s (2014) as top job descriptions available in the market for LP trainees, this paper attempts to revalidate and meta-analyze data by surveying different population samples. Addressing as well the “beyond” aspect, the paper also discusses job descriptions available in the national and international levels – for LP trainees.

3.2.1 Local

Table 1 shows the job descriptions/titles available for Language Practicum Trainees in the local/provincial level.. As ranked, these are: Information Officer (100%), Clerk (100%), Communication Assistant (93.5%), and Encoder/translator (93.5%), Front a line/Administrative Clerk (48.4%), Public Relations Officer (48.4), Customer Service Representative (45.2%), Technical/Speech Writer (35.5%), Administrative Officer (35.5%), Researcher (25.8%), Copywriter (16.1%) and Events Coordinator (6.5%).

Topping the list of descriptions/titles are Information Officer (100%), Clerk (100%), Communication Assistant (93.5%) and Encoder/translator (93.5%) which echo the findings in Hermosa et al.'s (2014) research to a certain degree.

Table 1: *Job Description/Titles Available for Language Practicum Trainees*

| Job Description | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Information Officer | 31 | 100.0 | 1.5 |
| Clerical Job | 31 | 100.0 | 1.5 |
| Communication Assistant | 29 | 93.5 | 3.5 |
| Encoder/Translator | 29 | 93.5 | 3.5 |
| Frontline/Administrative Clerk | 15 | 48.4 | 5.5 |
| Public Relations Officer | 15 | 48.4 | 5.5 |
| Customer Service Representative | 14 | 45.2 | 7 |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|----|------|-----|
| Technical/Speech Writer | 11 | 35.5 | 8.5 |
| Administrative Officer | 11 | 35.5 | 8.5 |
| Researcher | 8 | 25.8 | 10 |
| Copywriter | 5 | 16.1 | 11 |
| Events Coordinator | 2 | 6.5 | 12 |

N=31

These job descriptions/titles might point to a generalization that while trainees are accommodated in entry-level positions (rank and file), these require specific communication skills. An information officer for instance “organizes, evaluates, and distributes information in different formats within and outside a company or organization. He or she should be familiar with how the media works and have writing experience” (“What does,” 2014). A clerk on the other hand performs a variety of administrative tasks, including answering telephones, typing or word processing, making copies of documents, and maintaining records. These require excellent communication skills just like that of a communications assistant and a translator/encoder. Thus, outside the academe, AB English students are valued for their skills at communication, but which are specific to a corporate world, government or private.

Interestingly, these are some of the job descriptions/titles in their respective offices which the focus-group discussants said to be suited for AB English trainees/ graduates: Sales/Account Executives because they are articulate and have great communication skills according to the Media Center representative (FGD, May 12, 2015); Officer, administrative posts, social work, training specialist and these are dependent on skills because hiring process is competence-based according to DOT (FGD, May 12, 2015); Any job so long as one performs well according to LGU guest (FGD, May 12, 2015), and; any job that requires communication skills because other technical skills can just be learned along the way said private sector representative.(FGD, May 12, 2015)

3.2.2 National

Table 2 shows the job descriptions available for AB English students on the national level. As ranked, these are: Clerk (92.6%); Communication Assistant (74.1%); Administrative Officer (70.45); Researcher (70.4%); Encoder/translator (66.7%); Copy-writer (66.7%); Public

Relations Officer (63.0%); Technical/Speech Writer (63.0%); Information Officer (59.3%); Frontline/Administrative clerk (59.3%); Customer Service Representative (59.3%) and Events Coordinator (51.9%).

The top three are: Clerk (92.6%), Communication Assistant (74.1%) and Administrative Assistant (70.4%) which tied with Researcher (70.4%).

Table 2: *Job Description/Titles Available for Language Practicum Trainees*

| Job Description | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|--|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Clerical Job | 25 | 92.6 | 1 |
| Communication Assistant | 20 | 74.1 | 2 |
| Administrative Officer | 19 | 70.4 | 3.5 |
| Researcher | 19 | 70.4 | 3.5 |
| Encoder/Translator | 18 | 66.7 | 5.5 |
| Copywriter | 18 | 66.7 | 5.5 |
| Public Relations Officer | 17 | 63.0 | 7.5 |
| Technical/Speech Writer | 17 | 63.0 | 7.5 |
| Information Officer | 16 | 59.3 | 10 |
| Frontline/Administrative Clerk | 16 | 59.3 | 10 |
| <i>Customer Service Representative</i> | <i>16</i> | <i>59.3</i> | 10 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| <i>Events Coordinator</i> | <i>14</i> | <i>51.9</i> | <i>12</i> |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|

N=27

This information can be interpreted similarly with the data obtained from industries in the locality: that seemingly, AB English Language Practicum trainees even in Manila may be given tasks related to their communication skills.

Summing up, the top 3 job descriptions available for AB English student interns, local or national levels are: clerk, communication assistant and encoder/translator.

Thus, it may be valid to insist that competencies related to the business world, particularly on corporate/organizational communication be made the core competencies of AB English curriculum. Students must not only be taught general communication theory and practice, but more so be geared to specific communication purposes, that of sharing information within a business.

3.3 Competency Requirements from AB English LP Trainees

Using the 21st Century Competencies developed by Melbourne University as a gauge, varied local industries that are willing to accommodate AB English Language Practicum trainees are asked about their competency requirements. The findings reveal pieces of information that are reflective of the dynamism even in the local workplace.

Table 3 shows the findings on the competencies required by the local industry from the Language Practicum trainees.

Table 3: *Competencies Required by the Local Industry from LP Trainees 2013*

| Competencies | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|--|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Collaboration and Teamwork | 31 | 100.0 | 1 |
| Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision-making | 30 | 96.8 | 3.5 |
| Life and Career | 30 | 96.8 | 3.5 |
| Learning to Learn, Metacognition | 29 | 93.5 | 5.5 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|----|------|-----|
| ICT literacy | 29 | 93.5 | 5.5 |
| Communication | 28 | 90.3 | 7.5 |
| Information Literacy | 28 | 90.3 | 7.5 |
| Personal and Social Responsibility | 27 | 87.1 | 8 |
| Citizenship, Civic Literacy | 26 | 83.9 | 9 |
| Creativity and Innovation | 22 | 71.0 | 10 |
| Environmental Awareness | 7 | 22.6 | 11 |

By their ranks, these competencies are ordered as: collaboration and teamwork; critical thinking, problem solving; life and career; ICT literacy; communication; information literacy; personal and social responsibility; citizenship/civic literacy; creativity and innovation; and environmental awareness.

These are all valuable, but top in the list are collaboration and teamwork; critical thinking, problem solving; and life and career. This is an enlightening information because not finding communication on top five, which previously was seen as the reason why AB English trainees/graduates are valued in the job market, calls for deeper insight. It is possible that it is not solely communication skills that land trainees in the specific jobs mentioned, but other competencies they possess, especially critical thinking, problem solving and decision making. The AB English curriculum so prides itself with the built-in intent to develop communication and critical thinking skills. In fact, Latigay, et al found out that in the 2014 enhanced AB English curriculum, communication ranked first among the competencies embedded in most courses. Critical thinking, problem, solving and decision making came second with one hundred thirty-nine (139) competencies classified under it (Latigay, et al., 2015).

Collaboration and teamwork as a competency means being able to work with other individuals in a team. “It is the ability to work with another person or group in order to achieve or do something” (Finegold & Notabartolo, 2010). While individuals who could work independently used to be valued, today’s world seemingly prize more people who could work harmoniously with others in achieving a goal, and in working for a common purpose.

Critical thinking means “making reasoned judgments that are logical and well thought out. It is a way of thinking in which you do not simply accept all arguments and conclusions you are exposed to but rather have an attitude involving questioning such arguments and conclusions. It requires wanting to see what evidence is involved to support a particular argument or conclusion” (“What is”, 2015).

Life and career is the ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age (McLean, 2013). Simply put, one must possess “skills for living in the world,” and must continue to learn so that he could adapt to the changes in his work and life environments.

The data on the competency requirement from Language Practicum trainees could already be valid basis for advancing recommendations urging the strengthening of these competencies. It is not only enough that these competencies be embedded in the upcoming curriculum for AB English, but to demand as well that these must be inculcated in the trainees while they are on practicum.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The top 3 job description/position available for AB English Language Practicum trainees are: clerk, communication assistant, encoder/translator. It is therefore concluded that AB English students are better suited for work related to specific communication purpose, that of sharing information within a business or organization. The recommendations are, that: (a) AB English curriculum be geared more to core competencies related to the business world, particularly on corporate/organizational communication; (b) Language Practicum insists that sponsoring organizations train students to hone these competencies more, and not solely to provide extra manpower to do menial tasks which are part of the job description.

The 21st century competencies mostly required from the AB English Language Practicum trainees are collaboration and teamwork, critical thinking and life and career. It is recommended that: (a) AB English courses be so defined to incorporate all 21st century competencies particularly collaboration and teamwork, critical thinking and life and career; (b) The micro-competencies targeted for inclusion in the curriculum must be aligned to specific needs business/organizational needs of the job market for AB English.

The types of industry most willing to accommodate the AB English Language Practicum trainees locally in the future are the government agencies and the private business companies. In Manila, showing promise are the government agencies and the media centers. On the international level, the thriving private business sector also provides opportunities for student interns. Thus, AB English Language Practicum trainees have the best chance in these three industry types, depending on where they wish to hold their student internship. It is recommended then, that: (a) The Language Practicum trainees be fielded in government agencies and private business sectors locally; in government agencies and media centers, nationally; and in private business sector, internationally; (b) Provide guidelines that will allow AB English student interns to hold internship in Albay, Manila or Asia, if possible.

The industry that accommodated the AB English Language Practicum trainees 2013 are mostly government agencies and private companies. No school/educational institution and media centers accommodated the trainees. It is thus a valid conclusion to make that the educational preparation of AB English Language Practicum trainees 2013 is best suited for work in the government and private business sectors. Hence, it is recommended that: (a) The Language Practicum trainees be fielded in government agencies and private business sectors; (b) The competencies intended for development in the AB English curriculum be made to complement the competencies needed in the government and private business sectors.

References

- Finegold, D. and Notabartolo A.S., "21st-Century Competencies and Their Impact: An Interdisciplinary Literature Review" <http://www.hewlett.org/uploads/21st_Century_Competerencies_Impact.pdf> (June 23, 2010).
- Focus Group Discussion on "The AB English Language Practicum 2013 and Beyond," Max's Restaurant, Pacific Mall, Legazpi City, May 2015.
- Hermosa, K. et al., (2014) "The Applicability of the New AB English Curriculum to Work Performance as Gleaned from Language Practicum 2013" (Undergraduate Thesis: Bicol University College of Arts and Letters).
- Latigay, J. et al. (2015) "21st Century Competencies Embedded in the AB English Enhanced Curriculum," (Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, Bicol University).

McLean, N. (10 January 2013) “What would be your list of the 21st century skills that all students must be exposed to?” <<http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/how-do-you-define-21st-century-skills>>

Stufflebeam, D.L. & Shinkfield, A.J. (April 22, 2013). “Evaluation Theories, Models and Applications.”<<http://books.google.com.ph/books?id=xx6UgC6UdFMC&pg=PA160&lp=PA160&dq=objectivesbased+evaluation+by+tyler&source=bl&ots=xleDCvtvBy&sig=0tkBSWVrHWxdCIRhEUWDIlr2bVk&hl=fil&sa=X&ei=IvwYUbWTNpGeiAfCvoDQAQ&ved=0CE0Q6AEwBw#v=onepage&q=objectivesbased%20evaluation%20by%20tyler&f=false>>.