

Industry Profile of Sponsoring Organizations of Language Practicum Trainees

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Abstract

This study forms phase 3 of a research project titled. “Language Practicum 2013 and Beyond.” Language Practicum (LP) refers to the On-the-Job Training (OJT) for AB English students of Bicol University, Philippines. Specifically, the research profiles the sponsoring organizations that accommodated the Language Practicum trainees for 2013; enumerates job descriptions in the market fit for trainees and lists down competency requirements of such job descriptions. The study is anchored on the questions-oriented model of evaluation, or more appropriately quasi-evaluation. It began with questions that can happen to give evidence on the worth and merit of the LP and its continued place in the AB English curriculum. This phase of the study addresses the “beyond” part as it attempted to profile future host organizations and their competency requirements so that trainees are properly fielded. Initial data yielded these results: 61.30% of sponsoring organizations are government agencies while 38.70% are private offices further categorized as bank/financial (6.40%), airlines (6.40%), direct selling/marketing (6.40%), BPO (6.40%), construction (3.20%), events organizing (3.20%) and others (3.20%). Based on documents evaluation, the five top job jobs handled by the trainees include those of: administrative officer, information officer, customer service representative, clerk and technical/speech writer. Competency required from trainees mentioned: interpersonal skills, workplace-readiness, oral presentation, public speaking, organizational skills, among others. Study 3 asserts that AB English Language Practicum trainees have the best chance in these three industry types, depending on where (local, national, international) they wish to hold their student internship in the future.

Keywords: *practicum, on-the-job training, industry profile, AB English*

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Introduction

This research is the third of three studies that make up a research project forming a quasi-evaluation of the AB English Language Practicum 2012-2013. 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 looked into the attainment of objectives of the newly-implemented requirement for graduates, the training experience of the students, and the job performance of the Language Practicum Trainees. It also went as far as industry profiling of host organizations willing to accommodate AB English trainees in the future.

Consequently, 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 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) Of 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.

Specific objectives are as follows:

1. To describe the profile of the sponsoring employers that responded to the Language Practicum of AB English;
2. To describe the profile of other organizations willing to accommodate AB English trainees;
3. To enumerate specific job descriptions in the market fit for AB English trainees; and
4. To list down competency requirements of such job descriptions.

Research Framework

This research is anchored on the quasi-evaluation approaches/model of program evaluation.

The researchers adhered to the restraint of the source in using the term evaluation theory, referring to the “more advanced” notion of evaluation. Evaluation Theory is here reserved for “creatively developed yet more rigorously tested conceptualization of program evaluation” (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2013, p. 63). Because more demanding requirements and higher standards are required for the meaning of theory, the term model/approaches is preferred. This refers to “an evaluation theorist’s idealized conceptualizations for conducting program evaluation” (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2013, p. 63).

The question-oriented approaches address specified questions (often employing a wide range of methods) and the method-oriented approaches typically use a particular method. Whether the methodology or questions addressed in these approaches are appropriate for assessing a program’s merit and worth are secondary consideration. The questions-oriented begins with a set of questions and the methods-oriented may start with an overriding commitment to employ both qualitative and quantitative methods. Both approaches stress that it is usually better to answer a few pointed questions well than to attempt a broad assessment of a program’s merit and worth (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2013).

This study, like study 1, is also anchored on the questions-oriented model of evaluation, or more appropriately quasi-evaluation. It began with questions that can happen to give evidence on the worth and merit of the LP and its continued place in the AB English curriculum. This portion of the study addresses the “beyond” part in the title as it attempts to present a profiling of host organizations and their competency requirements so that trainees are properly fielded, with the industry acting as extensions of the academe in providing the preparation required of the program.

The elements for quasi-evaluation, true to the expert’s conceptualization, “may not meet the requirements of a sound evaluation” (Stufflebeam & 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.

Equally important as well is the anchoring of the research on Kirkpatrick’s Training Evaluation Model which seeks to meaningfully measure learning in organizations through the four levels: “reaction (what they thought and felt about the training), learning (the resulting increase in knowledge or capability), behavior (extent of behavior and capability Improvement and implementation/application), and results (the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee’s performance)” (“Kirkpatrick’s Learning”, 2013). These components are addressed in the ensuing questions, except for level 4, which may be a subject of subsequent studies. Level 3 on the other hand is modified to focus more on the learning in the academe as applied to job performance, instead of the intended application of learning from the training to the actual job.

To graphically represent the framework, a model follows:

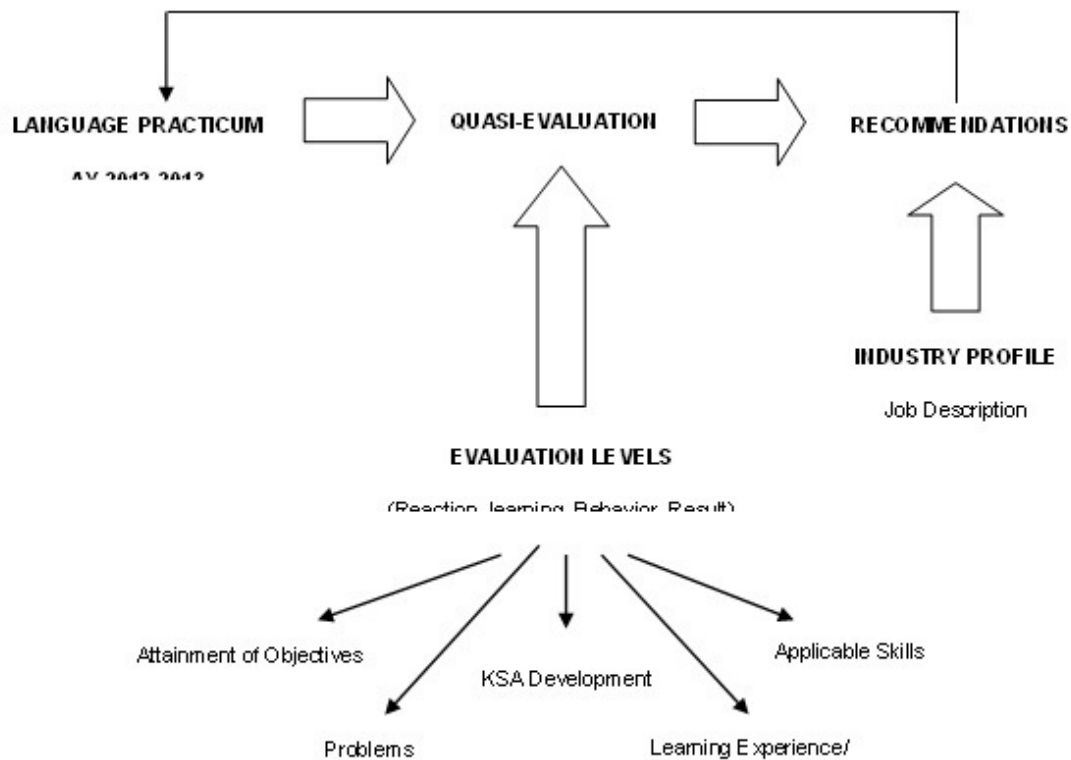


Figure 1. Research Model

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 websites. 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.

Results and Discussion

Industry Classification of Sponsoring Organizations that Accommodated LP Trainees

To gain a better perspective of the sponsoring organizations, here is a look at the list and the classification. The researchers arbitrarily classified the industries as schools, government agencies/offices, media centers and private agencies as these are industry classifications which previous studies used. It is a classification derived from the list

of possible job placements for AB English as stated in the approved curriculum and from research results of tracer studies.

Table 1. List of Sponsoring Organizations 2013

Government Agencies	Years in Service	Private Companies	Years in Service
Provincial Gov't of Albay	178	Avon	128
City Civil Registry City of Legazpi	158	Phil. Airlines	73
Department of Trade & Industry	116	Dev't Bank of the Phil	67
Bureau of Immigration	115	ALECO	22
Bureau of Internal Revenue	110	Zest Airways	19
Philippine national Bank	98	Canon Marketing Phils.	18
Securities & Exchange Commission	81	SLTCFI BPO	15
Department of Education	71	Goodfound Cement	14
Maritime Industry Authority	40	South AsiaLink Credit	11
Philippine Information Agency	38	Sutherland	9
Fiber Industry Dev't Authority	33	Eventertainment Co.	
Dep't of Science & Technology V	27		
DPWH Region V	27		
DENR V	27		
Land Transportation Office	27		
DILG Region V	23		
Bureau of Fire Protection	23		
Commission on Higher Education	20		
Philhealth	17		

Of the total number, 63.33% or 19 employers are classified as government agencies. These are public offices, such as cabinet offices and bureaus, Local Government Offices, and other government arms in the province, namely: (1) the Provincial Government of Albay, (2) Civil Registry of Legazpi, (3) Bureau of Immigration (BOI), (4) Bureau of Internal Revenues (BIR), (5) Philippine National Bank (PNB), (6) Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), (7) Department of Education (DepEd), (8) Fiber Industry and Development Authority (FIDA), (9) Philippine Information Agency (PIA), (10) Department of Science and Technology (DOST), (11) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), (12) Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), (13) Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), (14) Bureau of Fire Protection, (15) Commission on Higher Education (CHED), (16) Land Transportation Office (LTO), (17) Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), (18) Maritime Industry Authority, and (19) Philhealth.

The remaining 36.67% or 11 are private companies which are also varied in the nature of trade or business such as banking, finance, entertainment, Business Process Outsourcing, manufacture, and services. These companies are: (1) Avon Cosmetics, (2) Philippine Airlines, (3) Development Bank of the Philippines, (4) Albay Electric Cooperative (ALECO), (5) Zest Airways, (6) Canon Marketing, Phils., (7) SLTCFI,

(8) Goodfound Cement, (9) South Asian Link Credit, (10) Sutherland, and (11) Eventertainment Company.

For this initial batch, no sponsoring organization comes from the local educational institution and media centers. Figure 1 shows these data graphically.

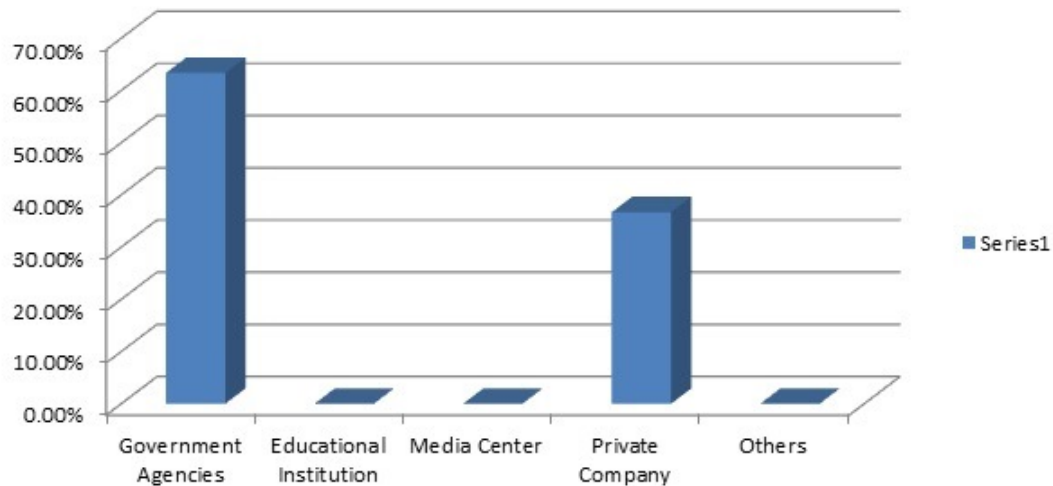


Figure 1. Classification of Industries that Accommodated the LP Trainees 2013

In terms of years in service, the government agencies range from 17-178 years while private agencies range from 9-128 years which means that mostly have been long established and are therefore, reputable.

This profiling in terms of classification and years in service is valuable as it gives the academe direction where to field the student trainees and what competencies must be developed by the academe for the students to land student internship, and future jobs. The information that AB English are mostly accepted in government and private agencies, but not in schools and media centers implies which industry type is most and least likely to hire them in the future. Thus, the competencies needed in government and private agencies such as interpersonal communication (76%); work-readiness (57%); business letter writing (%); oral presentation (53.20%); public speaking, (53.20%) (Bartolata, 2015), must be strengthened while those geared for schools and media centers must be reconsidered.

Industry Classification of Sponsoring Organizations Willing to Accommodate LP Trainees in the Future

To further substantiate the listing of industry for future placements, and to validate the general observation made earlier in this paper, a survey is conducted. The attempt is made at expanding the scope to Metro Manila (national) and ASEAN (international) levels. However, after exhausting possible measures at alternative data gathering procedure, this researcher was only able to obtain data on the international level through synthesis of available information online.

Local

Because part of the objective of this research is to look into possible placement for Language Practicum trainees in the future, a random survey of ten (10) possible sponsoring organizations from four (4) different industry categories was made.

Seven (70%) of the government agencies are willing to accommodate AB English Language Practicum trainees, and 3 (30%) are not. Two of these reasoned: “we prefer graduates of IT courses” and one said: “we do not accept OJT’s.”

Seven (70%) of the private agencies are willing to accommodate AB English Language Practicum trainees from Bicol University. Three of these are in finance/credit; one is in Business Process Outsourcing; one is in transportation; one is in sales/direct selling; and one is in hotel/accommodation. The remaining three (30%) are not willing to accommodate for the following reasons: “we prefer skills-oriented trainees like graduates of electrical technology or similar vocational courses” and “we do not have need for trainees.” These organizations are into business outsourcing, construction, and direct selling.

Four (40%) of the media centers are willing to accommodate AB English Language Practicum trainees “for clerical tasks only” while six (60%) are not. The reasons given vary as: “we hire correspondents or part-time writers,” we prefer Law students,” and “the management does not allow trainees.”

Two (20%) of the educational institutions/schools are willing to accommodate AB English Language Practicum trainees and eight (80) percent are no. Most respondents said that “we have our own OJTs and student assistants from our own school.”

This is again an affirmation of earlier studies and this study’s claim that the government agencies and private companies/organizations are most willing to accommodate AB English Language Practicum trainees while educational institution/schools and media centers are not. However, it is quite clear that the type of industry nor the nature of business or trade does not determine whether an organization accepts or rejects. Apparently, it is the local industry’s own need that is a prime factor.

National

On the national level, the same random sampling was adopted. Ten (10) organizations per industry type were taken as respondents.

Ten (100%) of the government agencies are willing to take in AB English Language Practicum Trainees from Bicol University.

Six (60%) of the private companies are willing to accommodate AB English trainees. These are those in BPOs, ICT, retail, manufacturing and telecommunications. Four (40%) are not willing citing for a reason “preference for students of IT, Finance, Marketing or other Business courses.” These companies are more or less of the same nature of business as those who are willing to accommodate.

Eight (80%) of the media centers are willing to accommodate AB English trainees while 2 (20%) are not. One of the reasons given for non-willingness is preference for student trainees within Metro Manila.

Three (30%) of the educational institutions are willing to accommodate, while seven (70%) are not. Schools mentioned that the non-willingness is due to any of these reasons: preference for other students of other courses, non-availability of program for OJT, program for paid student assistants from their own schools, OJTs from their own school.

Again, even on the national level, this is an affirmation of information derived from the locality that the government agencies and private companies are most willing to accommodate AB English trainees from Bicol University. Interestingly, it also revealed answer to question that has baffled earlier researchers, that which pertains to why educational institutions often reject Language Practicum trainees. These very reasons were hinted at during the focus group discussion.

International

Originally, to gain more valid data for this, the researcher sent electronic questionnaires to the top 20 organizations of each ASEAN nation. However, only one of these responded. Despite successive follow-ups, only electronically generated and perfunctory replies were received. As it was also expensive to continue the research using telephone interview or courier, the researcher made use of desk research by looking for information in their websites.

Ten (10) organizations from the countries Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, Malaysia, Hongkong and Vietnam generated information about student internship. Nine (9) of these are private companies and one (1) is an educational institution. Eight (80%) of these are willing to accommodate student trainees from other countries while two (20%) are not.

International internship is possible for AB English Language Practicum trainees. There are companies which can arrange student internship such as Asia Exchange, Internship Indonesia Ltd., Global Placement and Internship Asia, which could probably be tapped for this purpose. Bicol University can make future arrangements for international internship for AB English students.

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 also 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.

Local

Table 2 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%), Encoder/translator (93.5%),

Frontline/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 2. 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 Bernal (Media Center representative); Officer, administrative posts, social work, training specialist and these are dependent on skills because hiring process is competence-based according to Mora (DOT); Any job so long as one performs well according to Rasco (LGU, and; any job that requires communication skills because other technical skills can just be learned along the way said Martinez (Private sector).

National

Table 3.3 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%); Copywriter (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 3. 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
Customer Service Representative	16	59.3	10
Events Coordinator	14	51.9	12

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 thought general communication theory and practice, but more so be geared to specific communication purposes, that of sharing information within a business.

Competency Requirements from AB English LP Trainees

Using the 21st Century Competencies developed by Melbourne University as a gauge, varied local industry 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 4 shows the findings on the competencies required by the local industry from the Language Practicum trainees.

Table 4. 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 literary; 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, Mateos, 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 (Mateos, 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 critical thinking?” 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.

Conclusions

These are the conclusions derived from the findings, and the recommendations advanced in the light of these findings:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

4. 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.

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