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RESEARCH ARTICLE

RECCEING THE STEP UP SCHOLARS' GWA AND THEIR PERCEIVED TEACHING SKILLS COMPETENCE: BASIS FOR IDENTIFYING PRIORITY TRAINING AREAS

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ABSTRACT

Constant efforts to produce quality pre-service teachers have been undertaken by teacher education institutions. As such, initiatives, like scholarships that promote the pre-service teachers' acquisition of teaching competencies, have been widely supported by universities and colleges that offer teacher education programs. In order to identify the priority training areas to be developed, 45 STEP Up scholars' data from the Teaching Skills Survey (TSS) and their academic grades were obtained. Using weighted means, findings revealed 'teamwork' as the highly learned skill while 'initiative and self-direction' was identified the least. A significant difference of the TSS scores was noted only when the scholars were grouped by year level. A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD revealed that the CTP scholars' mean scoresare significantly different from the Juniors and the Seniors' scores. Considerably, the study showed a negative correlation between the scholars' TSS and their grade weighted average. While 'good' grades are potent indicators of performance, constant effort of both the mentors and the mentees shall be done to deepen teaching competence. While level and program-specific interventions can be done to continually hone the teaching skills of the pre-service teachers, they can benefit from the activities that foster their sense of initiative and self-direction. It is imperative that scholars mentoring plan be anchored on the results of the TSS and unified mentoring activities may be done to enhance their academic performance along with their teaching competence.

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INTRODUCTION

Quality pre-service teacher training has been identified as a strong determinant of quality teachers. Over the years, teacher education institutions (TEIs) in the Philippines have conscientiously invested and supported on programs that promote the pre-service teachers' acquisition of technological, pedagogical and content knowledge needed before their induction in the Department of Education (DepEd). One of the programs offered to the selected TEIs is the Scholarships in Teacher Education Program to Upgrade Teacher Quality in the Philippines (STEP UP). It is sponsored by the Philippine Business for Education (PBED), a non-profit organization founded in 2006, in partnership with the Australian Government. The scholarship program aims to provide DepEd with 1000 quality teachers ready for school employment by 2019 through an improved and innovative teacher development system. The scholarship is offeredto the identified top performing TEIs in the country, namely, Mariano Marcos State University, Philippine Normal University-Manila, University State University, Cebu Normal University, Xavier University – Ateneo De Cagayan, and University of Southeastern Philippines-Obrero and Tagum. Student-scholars went through a rigorous process of selection using the approved program guidelines and protocols. As part of the scholarship benefits, STEP Up scholars will enjoy the full tuition and miscellaneous fees coverage, a monthly stipend and allowances for the book, uniform, dormitory, thesis or practice teaching, LET review and examination, among others. They are also provided with periodic seminars and workshops, and a one-on-one mentoring activity which shall be conducted regularly to monitor and enrich the scholars' content and pedagogical knowledge. In Cebu Normal University (CNU), there are a total of 82 STEP Up scholars across the two programs-Bachelor of Elementary Education and Bachelor of Secondary Education (to include the students taking Certificate/ Diploma for Teaching Profession). One Lead Mentor and five School Mentors are designated to handle the activities and mentoring sessions. Part of the mentors' work is to craft and work on the scholars' development plan for the year based on the results of the needs assessment survey. Normally, at the start of the academic year, all STEP Up scholars are required to take the Teaching Skills Survey (TSS)- a character trait survey which measures their perceptions of the acquisition of their teaching

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skills. The survey contains list skills and attitudes and level of assistance the scholars will need to facilitate their school success as well as help them in the transition to their pre-service qualities to the professional level. With seven aspects, each with five indicators, the TSS, as a form of self-assessment, measures the students' level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA) and level of assistance they will need to attain each. Al-Sharif (2010) purported that evaluation of teaching competency is vital in addressing quality teacher preparation through teachers' adequacy programs.

As such, the crafting of the mentoring plan has been very crucial to ensure that each STEP Up is not shortchanged with the needed guidance not just to meet the requirements of the scholarship but to become effective teachers in the future. For the past year, the Individual Development Plan (IDP) of the scholars was not fully maximized owing to the fact the scholarship was still in its initiation stage. Major adjustments were done and an intensified training to inspire school mentors was conducted. It is believed that the scholars can greatly benefit from well-crafted IDPs. It is in this context that this paper is conceptualized. The 45 Step UP scholars (10 Juniors, 17 Seniors, and 18 CTP students) enrolled in CNU were purposively selected to compose the respondents of the study. They were the qualifiers of the scholarship in the undergraduate level last School Year 2017-2018, after having passed the Proficiency Aptitude Test given at the start of the school year. This paper examined the STEP Up scholars' perceived teaching skills' competence and its relationship with their grade weighted average (GWA). Specifically, it determined answers to the following questions:

1. What is the scholars' distribution when grouped by sex, degree program, and year level?
2. What is the mean grade of the scholars when grouped by year level and sex?
3. What is the scholars' Teaching Skills mean scores in terms of the following:
   - Communication;
   - Critical thinking and problem-solving;
   - Creativity
   - Information, ICT and media literacy;
   - Initiative and self-direction;
   - Decision making; and
   - Teamwork?
4. What is the distribution of the scholars' Teaching Skills mean scores when grouped by sex, year level, and degree program?
5. Is there a significant difference between the scholars' Teaching Skills mean scores when grouped by level and sex?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the scholars' grade weighted average (GWA) and their TeachingSkills scores?
7. Is there a significant mean difference of the scholars' scores in the seven Teaching Skills components?

Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

The succeeding discussions outline the salient findings that answer the stated questions posed in this study. Interpretations and implications are provided to highlight relevant observations and analysis.

STEP Up Scholars' Distribution: The scholars in the undergraduate level are purposively chosen to compose the samples of the study. Table 1 presents the scholars' distribution when grouped according to sex, year level, and degree program. Table 1 presents the distribution of the scholars. When grouped according to the degree program enrolled in, there are more scholars who are taking the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) (34 of the 45). When grouped according to year level, there are more scholars enrolled in the CTP program (18 of 45). True to most of the teacher education institutions where the enrollees are more on females, the accepted STEP scholars are more on females- (34 of the 45) or 76%.) When grouped by program, there are more scholars who are in the BSED program (34 or 76%) precisely because those in the CTP are categorized in the secondary program taking into account their first bachelor's degree as a basis for their specialization. Between the regular BEED and BSED, it is observed that there is an almost equal is the distribution of Senior scholars by program, where eight (8) scholars are from the BEED and nine (9) are from the BSED program, while a clear disproportion is observed among the Junior scholars- with seven (7) or 70% are from the BSED program and only three (3) or 30% are from the BEED program. The said disparity is reflective with the nature of the enrollment and applicants in the College of Teacher Education where the majority of the student population comes from the BSED program. This is attributed to the many specializations offered in the secondary program.

STEP UP Scholars' Mean Grade

One of the bases for retaining the scholarship is the scholars' grade weighted average (GWA). Per guidelines, all scholars must have a GWA of not lower than 2.0 to keep the scholarship. The scholars with a GWA higher than 1.74 will be awarded during the annual 'Scholars' Time and Recognition (STAR) at the end of the school year. This is to motivate each scholar to perform at their best. Table 2 presents the scholars' mean grade for the last academic term. Highest mean grade is observed when scholars are grouped according to sex while a 0.05 mean difference is noted between the composite mean grade by year level and degree program with 1.70 and1.65, respectively. More homogeneous groupings are noted among BEED, male and Senior scholars with an SD of 0.14, 0.13 and 0.14.

This means that the grades of the group of scholars in the aforementioned groupings are clustered closely around the mean grade, hence their grades are pretty close to the mean grade. The grades of scholars in the Junior level, the females, and those enrolled in the BSED program are more spread out, but not relatively large,as evidenced by the SD of 0.28, 0. 23 and 0.24. As grades are bunched around the mean grade, it denotes homogeneity among the scholars that can be used as a starting point when formulating enrichment tasks to enhance their potentials and capabilities. The larger spread of grades among the Juniors implies that their academic preparation, though diverse like the Seniors, can be a real challenge especially when they have a grade requirement in order to keep the scholarship. Most notably, the males' grades are mostly clustered around the mean grade. Moreover, they have a higher mean grade when compared with the female scholars. Figure 1 shows the scholars' grade distribution in five (5) intervals.

Table 1. Scholars' Distribution by Degree Program

	BEED (n=11)		BSED (n=34)	
Sex				
Male	2	18%	9	26%
Female	9	82%	25	74%
Year Level				
Juniors(n=10)	3	30%	7	70%
Seniors (n=17)	8	47%	9	53%
CTP (n=18)	-		18	100%

Table 2. Scholars' Mean Grade

	n (45)	Mean Grade	SD
Year Level		(1.70)	
Juniors	10	1.83	0.28
Seniors	17	1.57	0.14
CTP	18	1.96	
Sex		(1.58)	
Male	11	1.46	0.13
Female	34	1.70	0.23
Degree Program		(1.65)	
BEED	11	1.53	0.14
BSED	34	1.76	0.24

Table 3. Distribution of Scholars' Teaching Skills Mean Scores

	Teaching Skills Mean Scores		Description
Year Level	74%		Fair
Juniors		79%	Fair
Seniors		78%	Fair
DPE		66%	Low
Sex	75%		Fair
Male		79%	Fair
Female		71%	Fair
Degree Program	76%		Fair
BEED		79%	Fair
BSED		72%	Fair

Table 4. One-Way Analysis of Variance of the Scholars' Scores in TSS by Sex

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between Groups	1	505	505	2.46	0.124
Within Groups	43	8840	206		
Total	44	9345			

Table 5. One-Way Analysis of Variance of the Scholars' Scores in TSS by Level

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between Groups	2	1700	850	4.67	0.015
Within Groups	42	7645	182		
Total	44	9345			

Table 6. Correlation between the Scholars' GWA and their TSS Scores

Variables	df	Mean	SD	F	r	p-value
Teaching Skills	44	73.36	212.38	1.68	---0.280	0.062
GWA	44	1.78	0.07			

Table 7. One-Way Analysis of Variance of the Scholars' TSS Scores

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between Groups	6	953	159	0.56	0.760
Within Groups	308	86938	282		
Total	314	87891			

Majority of the scholars' (31 out of 45) have grades higher than 1.91 and only six have grades below 2.10. It can be deduced that efforts had been made to keep the scholarship in force. They are already in their second year of scholarship and maintaining a GWA higher than 2.0 is very crucial. As to the case of the scholars with a grade lower than 2.0, the STEP Up committee members agreed to have the scholars in the probationary period for one (1) semester. This only happens when the assigned school mentor provides the STEP Up committee with justifications and efforts, as well as commitment to improve, have been deliberately made by the scholars themselves.

Scholars' Teaching Skills Competence

The self- assessment result on Teaching Skills possessed by the STEP Up scholars indicates their perceived knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as the level of assistance to attain each trait. Using a four-point Likert scale code- 1 as low, 2 as fair, 3 as satisfactory and 4 as high, the scholars identified their competence in each of the seven indicators. The scholars' perceived competence on the seven components of the Teaching Skills surveyed and the level of assistance required to meet the desired traits is presented in Figure 2. The scholars' perceived Teaching Skills' competence is manifested in their assessment of their acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes in the seven areas. The three Cs- Communication, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving and Creativity are traits under Learning and Innovation while the last three traits are the Life and Career Skills. It can be gleaned from Figure 2 that the scholars got highest in Teamwork (with 76.71%) and lowest (70.44%) in Initiative and Self-Direction component. This denotes that they are better in their life and career skills than in learning and innovation skills. The result can be attributed to their exposure to thevarious teaching-learning activities in the institution. Among others, they have exposed in working collaboratively with their peers/classmates, soliciting input by valuing other's ideas and expertise, placing team agenda before personal agenda and supporting and/ or acting in accordance with the group's decision. This trait allows them to share credit for team accomplishments and to accept joint responsibility for team shortcomings.

On the other hand, their competence in critical thinking and problem-solving is not promising. This implies that their skills in taking initiatives, reflecting critically on learning experiences and processes, interpreting information and drawing a conclusion based on the best analysis and solving different kinds of non-familiar problems in both conventional and innovative ways have to be honed. Overall, the scholars' perceived level competence in the other five traits as evident by their means that range from 73%- 76%. Such a score, interpreted as 'Fair,' means they believe that they will benefit from further training that develops in their skills in the aforementioned traits. As future teachers, they hold the importance of speaking and writing clearly and effectively in both languages- English and Filipino. As such, tailoring one's language, tone and style, and format to match the audience is of paramount consideration. Furthermore, the mean (73%) for Information, ICT and Media Literacy can be attributed to the fact that the scholars are influenced by technologically-aided instructions. Training in advancements and appropriate use technological tools in teachingmaybe considered in their development plans. The move to assist the pre-service teachers is in consonance with the idea of Hobson, et al (2012) that is, providing school-based experiences that nurture the students with the necessary behaviors and strategies.

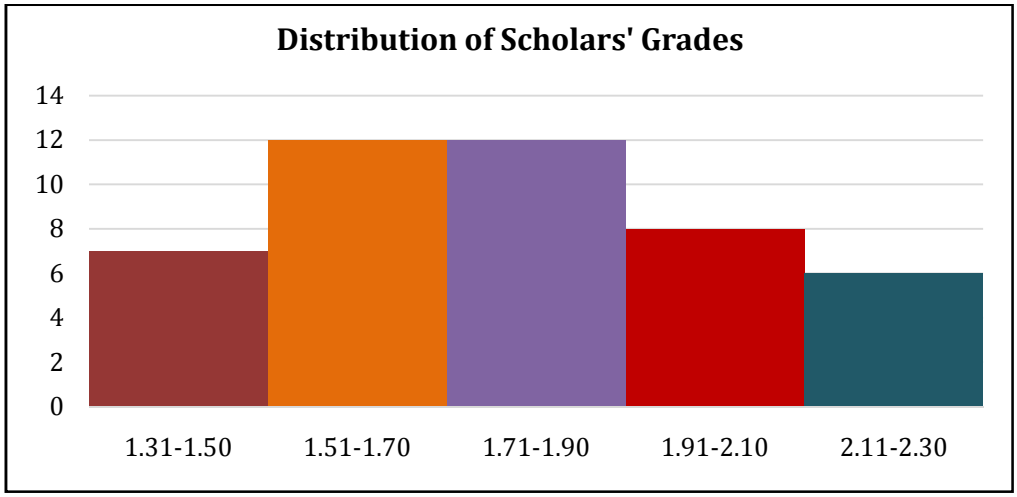

Figure 1. Distribution of Scholars' Grade

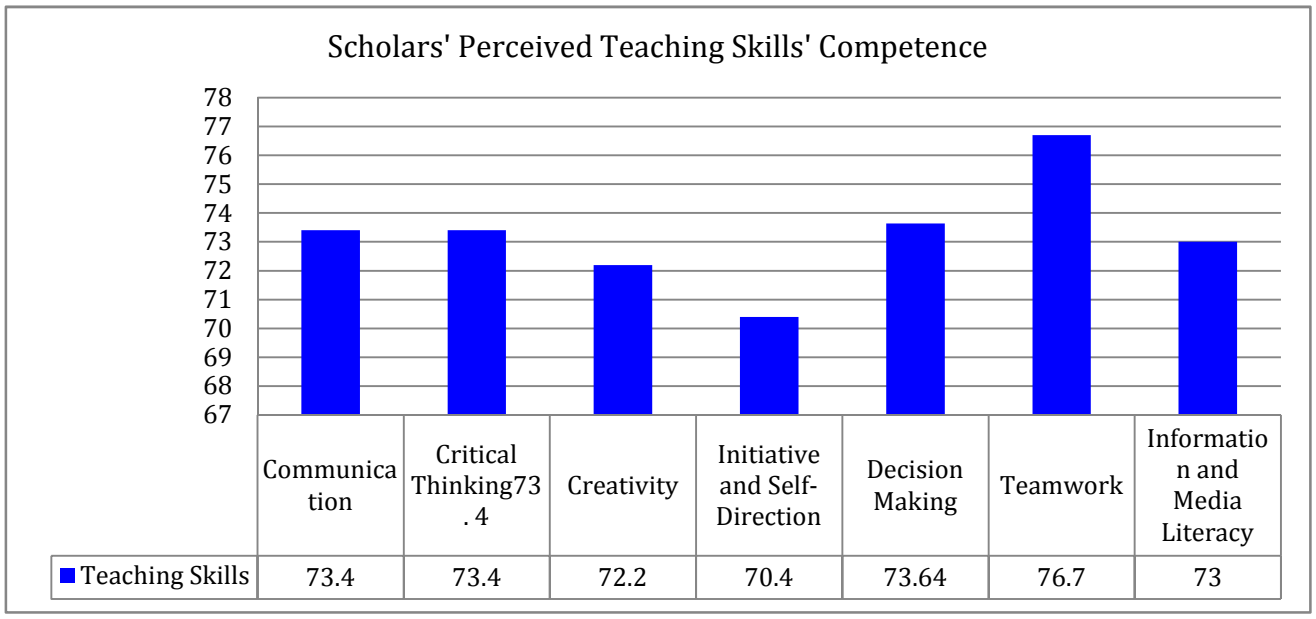

Figure 2. Scholars' Teaching Skills' Competence

Mentoring relationships are instrumental in the development of the desired teaching skills needed in the 21st century.

Distribution of Scholars' Mean Scores in the Teaching Skills Survey

Owing to the many factors that influence the respondents' perception on the extent to which they possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required in the teaching profession, their competence varies when they are grouped according to year level, sex and degree program enrolled in. Table 3 presents the distribution of the scholars' mean level of competence in the traits surveyed. As shown in Table 3, the mean level of competence is 74%, 75% and 76%, interpreted as 'Fair' when the respondents are grouped by year level, sex and by degree program. This means that they need further training in the specified areas to enhance effectiveness in teaching. They will greatly benefit from level specific and program-specific seminars and trainings to hone their skills as a person and as a teacher. Individually, the male respondents have a higher competence level than the females. This means the former have higher regard toward the extent of their possessed character traits necessary for teaching.

Such competence among the male respondents implies that although they are competent, they would still benefit from further training. However, in order to maximize the potentials, scholarship trainings and scholars' development plans may be sex-specific. Contrary to the principle of inclusiveness, scholars in particular, and students, in general, can still and will still benefit from group-specific tasks and activities and programs. Similarly, Ludwig, Kirshtein, and Sidana (2010) in Hobson (2012) maintained that teacher training programs for pre-service teachers can ensure to produce graduates who are equipped to teach diverse learners and turnover rates may be reduced.

The Significant Difference of the Scholars' Teaching Skills Mean Scores when Grouped by Level and Sex

At the onset of every academic year, the qualified scholars are given a needs assessment survey, in a four-point Likert scale, which assesses their Teaching Skills. The obtained scores are given to the assigned school mentor as the basis for the crafting of the Individual Development Plan. It was hypothesized that there was no significant difference between the scholars' Teaching Skills Scores (TSS) when they are grouped by level and sex. To determine the difference, a one-

way ANOVA was conducted. Table 4 presents the result of the analysis of variance of the scholars' scores in TSS by sex. As seen in Table 4, the scholars' mean scores [F(1, 43)=2.46, p=0.124] indicate that at α 0.05,there is no significant difference in their performance Teaching Skills scores. The mean scores of the male scholars (M=79.16, S=16.61) did not significantly differ from the mean scores of the female scholars (M=71.36, S=13.57) with the eta (ŋ= 0.05), thus accepting the null hypothesis of no significant difference. The 5% of the total variance is accounted for by the sex with the scores of both males and females closely clustered to the mean. This finding suggests that the tool used in the choice and acceptance of the students to the scholarships serves its purpose. The basis upon which they are qualified is the extent to which their knowledge and skills are manifested through the interview and teaching demonstration. This implies that when crafting for the scholars' individual development plan, the school may consider using the same nature of the plan, may organize a seminar or training where both groups can be benefited without undermining also the social and cultural factors in crafting the plans. Conversely, it was hypothesized that there was no significant difference between the scholars (Juniors, Seniors, and CTP) mean scores. To determine the difference, a one-way ANOVA of the scholars' scores in Teaching Skills Survey was conducted. Table 5 presents the results of the performed analysis of variance between the scholars' scores in TSS by level. It can be gleaned in Table 5 that there was a significant difference of the means scores of the scholars when they are grouped by level-Juniors, Seniors and CTP [F(2, 44)=4.67,p=0.015] thus, accepting the alternative hypothesis that at least one of the means is significantly different. To test which mean score, a post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD was conducted revealing that the CTP scholars' mean score (M=65.74, SD=17.24) was significantly different from the means of the Juniors (M=78.57, SD=9.58) and that of the Seniors (M=78.11, SD=10.51) with ŋ= 0.18. Thus, the level accounts for 18% of the total variance. Looking at the SDs of the three groups, the largest spread is noted among the CTP scholars' scores. This is attributed to the fact that they are not that exposed to education principles, theories and pedagogies since their academic preparation is different. The scores might be attributed to their limited stay in the university as an education student (2 semesters only to complete the 18 units required to take the licensure examination) compared to the regular students who are already on their third and fourth year (6 or 8 semesters). Kigugundu and Nayimuli (2009) acknowledged that the various challenges faced by the pre-service teachers could militate against a positive teaching practice experience if not addressed dealt with favorably. The mentoring program espoused by Hobson, et al (2012) and Hudson (2017) gives credence to the need to prepare the pre-service teachers to work in both rural and urban settings with high diversity. Mentors must assist their mentees along content and pedagogical issues to lessen the felt gap among the CTP scholars.

The Significant Relationship between the Scholars' Grade Weighted Average (GWA) and their Teaching Skills Survey Scores

One of the requirements in qualifying and in keeping in the scholarship are the grades of the students. A scholar must not have a grade point average lower than 2.0 while the scholarship in force. In rare cases, special consideration shall be applied to those whose grades fall below the required grade. Table 6 presents the correlation between the scholars' Teaching Skills Survey scores and their grade weighted average. Table 6 shows the correlation of the scholars TSS scores and their GWA. Overall, a negative correlation between the scholars' Teaching Skills scores (M=73.36, SD=212.38) and grade weighted average (M=1.78, SD=0.07), r = -0.280, p= 0.062, n=45 was noted. Such results revealed that the GWA of the scholars is not associated with their scores in TSS. The effect of grades on scholars' TSS scores is not statistically significant, such that the increase in grades does not mean an increase in their TSS scores. Furthermore, the variance explained is 18%. This means that 82% of the variance is unexplained. This suggests that no association is found a number of factors could be contributive to the students' perceived competence in teaching. Academic success, in this case, the students' higher marks, though found to be connected with other disciplines, is a composite understanding of the totality of the students' performance. This supports the possibility that of having the best student teacher who is not a class topnotch or having an academic awarded but performing average during the pre-service internship.

The significant mean difference of the scholars' scores in the seven Teaching Skills components

The Teaching Skills survey contains a list of skills and attitudes identified to facilitate the scholars' school success that helps them in their transition from their pre-service qualities to the professional level. On the four-point Likert scale, the scholars identify their knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA) and the level of assistance they will need to attain each in each of the seven components- Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Initiative and Problem Solving, Information and ICT Literacy, Decision Making and Teamwork. It was explained to them that they should be truthful and forthright with their answers as the result of their self-assessment will be the basis of the mentoring plan specifically crafted according to their needs. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the significant difference between the scholars' mean scores in the seven components of the Teaching Skills Survey. Table 7 presents the results of the Pearson r correlation of the mean scores in the TSS. Results in one-way ANOVA, as reflected in Table 7, [F (6, 45)= 0.56, p=0.760], indicates that there is no significant mean difference of the scholars' scores in the seven components of Teaching Skills Survey. This means that their perceived assessment of the competence they possess in the three major areas, namely: learning and innovation, information/ICT literacy and life and career skills are close to each other, with a pooled SD of 16.80. The scholars got the highest mean (M=76.71) and greatest SD in 'Teamwork' component (SD=19.35) of the test and lowest mean is observed the component on Initiative and Self-direction (M=70.44) lowest SD in Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (SD=12.64) (See Appendix E for the summary of the scholars' mean and standard deviations. In view of this, relevant plans must be crafted to strengthen the scholars' regard for their teaching skills specifically on their sense of initiative and self-direction. Ambrosetti (2011) suggested providing pre-service teachers with opportunities that allow them to experience authentic teaching situations where they need to consciously exercise their ingenuity and resourcefulness. In general, the result implies that equal premium must be placed in the development of all the seven components of the teaching skills. The mentoring plan must be viewed holistically such that each component is well

represented and well- allocated in the scholars' plan. The means, in all of the seven components, which are below 80, interpreted as "Fair" indicates that much must be done to address their needs relative to teaching and learning.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The distribution of enrollees and the rigorous admission policy of the university have been contributive to the keeping of the STEP UP scholars in the program. While level and program-specific interventions can be done to continually hone the teaching skills of the pre-service teachers, the scholars can benefit from the activities that foster their sense of initiative and self-direction without losing sight of equally nurturing their ICT and media literacy skills. While 'good' grades are potent indicators of performance, constant effort of both the mentors and the mentees shall be done to deepen their technological, content and pedagogical knowledge. Henceforth, the crafting of the scholars' mentoring plan is crucial as this will determine the quality and success of the scholarship program. Unified activities that enhance their academic performance and teaching competence must be covered in order to enhance their overall teaching skills.

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