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Graduate Employability and Career Outcomes of Beed Pre-School Major Graduates: A Tracer Study

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abstract

Background: Graduates serve as important indicators of the quality and relevance of higher education programs. However, limited attention has been given to the employment outcomes of preschool education graduates, resulting in insufficient evidence regarding their employability and preparation for early childhood education contexts.
Aims: This study examined the employability and productivity of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) preschool major graduates from a state university in Pampanga from academic years 2014–2019.
Methods: A quantitative descriptive research design was employed. Data were collected from 180 of 242 graduates using the standardized Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) questionnaire and analyzed through frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and ranking.
Results: Findings revealed that 76.67% of the respondents were employed, with the majority occupying professional positions in public and private institutions and some working abroad. Many graduates obtained employment within six months after graduation, indicating a relatively smooth transition into the workforce. Most respondents considered the curriculum relevant to their first job and identified problem-solving, critical thinking, and other workplace-related competencies as useful in their employment. Despite these positive outcomes, contractual employment and relatively low starting salaries remained notable concerns.
Conclusion: The findings provide empirical evidence on the employment outcomes of preschool education graduates and identify areas for program improvement. Specifically, teacher education institutions may strengthen practicum experiences, technology integration, career preparation, and graduate support initiatives to enhance graduates' readiness for the evolving demands of early childhood education and related employment contexts.

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1. Introduction

Education For All as they say, quality education must be given to all the citizens of our country regardless of gender and status. Access to quality tertiary education is recognized as a fundamental driver of national development and social mobility. In the Philippines, the

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enactment of Republic Act 10931 otherwise known as the *Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act,* every citizen must be provided by free tuition and other school fees in State Universities and Colleges, Local Universities and Colleges, and State-Run Technical-Vocational Institutions. In that note, everybody has the right to study as long as they are willing to pursue and finished a degree so that they could land a better job and would have a brighter future ahead of them.

Fabunan (2024) provides recent findings on employment outcomes and relevance of teacher education programs to workplace performance, linking employability to mission fulfillment of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's). The University now has the means to give quality education to all the students who were given an opportunity to passed the admission qualification. The higher education institution now will develop the abilities and capabilities of each student so that they could prepare them to become highly employable citizens of our society that can compete internationally. University curriculum should also be consistent with the demands of employment and self-employment, especially at higher education levels (Martin, 2014). As stated by Aclan (2018), ensuring that their graduates are highly employable is the main responsibility of Higher Education Institutions. Cuadra (2019) states that in order to comply with ASEAN higher education, the university needs to give priority to quality control, credit transfers and student mobility. As a result of that education and employment are interrelated with one another. Collaborative efforts of the local and global governments to find solution with regard to employability, yet unemployment increasingly predominantly every year as each institutions produce graduates on a yearly basis and rates are particularly high in other regions and countries. According to Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in December 2025 the country's unemployment rate is 4.4% translating into 2.26 million unemployed individuals.

1.1 Graduate employability

Graduate employability has become a central indicator of higher education quality in the global knowledge economy, where institutions are increasingly evaluated based on their ability to produce work-ready graduates equipped with relevant competencies and transferable skills. Despite the expansion of access to tertiary education, concerns regarding skills mismatch and graduate underemployment persist, highlighting the need for stronger alignment between academic preparation and the demands of the market. Recent studies emphasize that employability is being shaped not only by disciplinary knowledge but also by the development of soft skills, adaptability, and workplace readiness (Succi & Canovi, 2020; Jackson, 2021).

1.2 Teacher education and tracer studies

Within a broader discourse, teacher education occupies a critical role, as the quality of graduates directly influences educational outcomes and learner development. Higher education are therefore expected to ensure that teacher education programs effectively prepare graduates for professional practice. Evidence revealed that tracer studies provide valuable insights into program performance and institutional quality, serving as a basis for curriculum improvement and quality assurance processes (Schomburg, 2016; Cofino et al., 2023). Recent tracer studies in teacher education demonstrate that employment rates, job alignment, and skill utilization are critical indicators of program success, while also highlighting the importance of institutional support and industry linkages in facilitating graduate transition to workforce.

1.3 Curriculum relevance and skill development

A key determinant of graduate employability is the relevance of the curriculum to labor market demands. Contemporary literature underscores the importance of aligning curricular content with industry needs, particularly through the integration of practical experiences, competency-based training, and transferable skills such as communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Recent findings indicate that program relevance significantly influences employment success, as graduates who perceive their education as aligned with job requirements demonstrate smoother transitions into the workforce and higher levels of professional competence. In teacher education, practicum experiences and field-based training are particularly crucial, as they bridge theoretical knowledge and classroom practice. Consequently, curriculum responsiveness has become a central focus of higher education reforms aimed at enhancing graduate employability and professional readiness. The competition nowadays in finding a decent job not only here in the Philippines but in abroad is quite tough, passing all the qualifications is needed for you to be employed so aside from the name of the school, the credentials of the applicant really matter. According to Ismail and Mohammed (2015), employability skill is the most required skills beside technical knowledge in an attempt to compete for employment and sustain job at the industrial global market. As stated in the study conducted by Misra and Khurana (2017) employability of graduates has become a global issue that is not easy to be ignored in the global economy. Cornillez (2021) and Clemencio (2019) in the study conducted studies on salary and benefits as the primary drivers behind the majority of the employees' continued employment and most of them think that the program they studied is relevant to their work, they discover that the communication abilities that they acquire are really beneficial at the labor market. Andaya et al., (2024) cited in his recent tracer study that curriculum relevance support graduate employability whiach are the concepts applicable in teacher education. In the study of Arranz, et al (2022), they discovered that a successful cooperation between higher education institutions and businesses make major impact on the improvement of job readiness among graduates.

Sarsale, et al., (2024), demonstrates how tracer studies are used to measure curricular relevance and competencies that contribute to employment success, especially transferable skills valued in the workplace. As stated by Pardo and Relon (2023), tracer studies allow higher education institutions to acquire valuable evidence for their improvement, gauge their relevance, contribute to the accreditation process, and inform stakeholders about their accomplishments. Tracer studies can also provide information to gauge the higher education outcomes to be used as material for improvement and quality assurance of higher education institutions concerned (Aquino et al 2015). A tracer study must be conducted annually to determine a graduate's employment status accurately according to Cofino et al (2023). As mentioned in the study of Alejandro and Foronda (2025), elementary education graduates highlights employment outcomes and relevance in teacher education, supporting the need to align academic training with workplace demands. Lardizabal (2025) offers evidence on employability indicators for teacher education graduates suggest program improvements aligned with graduate needs.

Recent Philippine tracer studies have examined the employability and career outcomes of teacher education graduates. Alejandro and Foronda (2025), for instance, investigated the employability, career pathways, curriculum satisfaction, and employment outcomes of BEEd

graduates from Isabela State University. Similarly, Lardizabal (2025) examined the employability of BEEd and BSEd graduates, including the skills acquired during their teacher education preparation and recommendations for programme improvement. Although these studies provide important evidence on teacher education graduate employability, they considered BEEd or teacher education graduates more broadly. The employment experiences of graduates specifically specialising in preschool education remain comparatively underexamined. This distinction is important because preschool graduates are prepared for early childhood education contexts that require specialised knowledge and competencies. Thus, the present study extends existing tracer research by specifically examining the employability, productivity, curriculum relevance, and competencies of BEEd preschool major graduates.

1.4 Conceptual framework

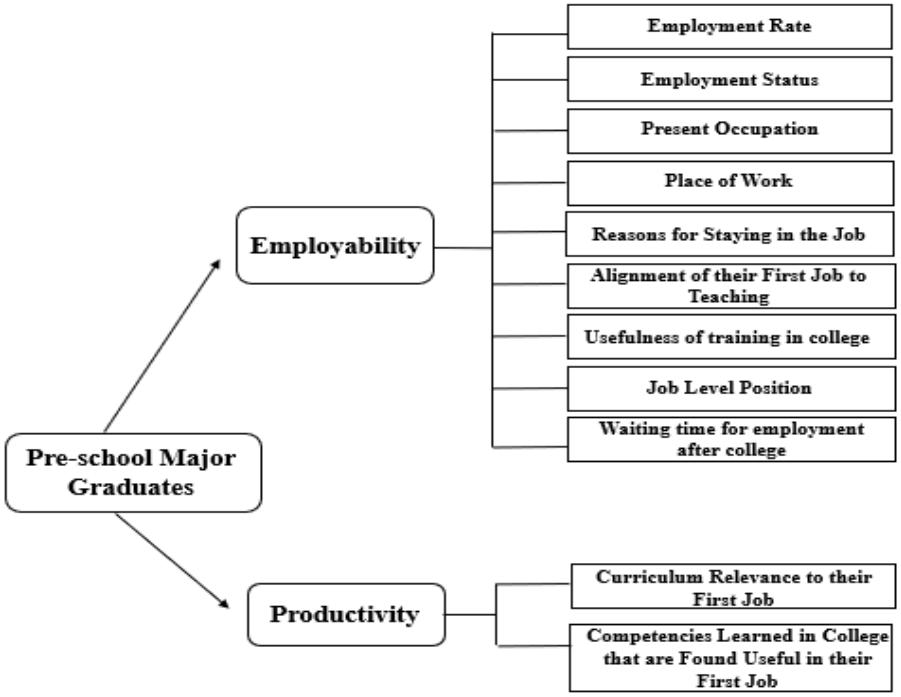


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Figure 1 presents the framework of the study highlighting on the employability and productivity of the pre-school major graduates of the Bachelor of Elementary Education from the College of Education.

The study is grounded in Human Capital Theory, which essentially views the years spent in the program not just as a period of study, but as a strategic investment in a person's professional value. Knowledge and trainings they acquire accumulate a specific pedagogical knowledge and classroom skills that make them more effective and marketable once they enter the workforce (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1993). A tracer study acts as a reality check to see if the university's curriculum actually translates into real-world productivity and career success. Looking at how these educators perform in their current roles and listening to their feedback on how to improve the curriculum, the university can now identify if the human capital being produced might be falling short of what modern pre-schools actually need (Hanushek, 2013).

The purpose of the research is to determine the employability and productivity of the pre-school graduates under the Bachelor of Elementary Education program of the College of Education, Main Campus batch 2014-2019. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How can graduates' employability be characterized in terms of their employment rate, employment status, current occupation, place of employment, reasons for remaining in their current jobs, relevance of their first job to the teaching profession, perceived usefulness of college education and training, job position or occupational level, and waiting period between graduation and obtaining their first job?

2. How can graduates' productivity be assessed in terms of the relevance of the curriculum to the requirements of their first job and the applicability of competencies acquired during college to their first-job responsibilities?

2. Methods

2.1 Research design

The researcher used a quantitative-descriptive design. Quantitative descriptive research is a non-experimental type of research whereby the variables are measured using numerical terms although the variables under interrogation are not manipulated by the researcher. The researcher makes use of this design to get data on population or phenomena. It provides valuable perceptions into a specific issue by observing and collecting data on it (Sirisilla, 2023). This is considered as the most suitable to use since the study's objective was to trace graduates' employability and productivity.

2.2 Participants

The population of the study consisted of 242 graduates of the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd), major in Preschool Education, from the College of Education, Main Campus of Pampanga State University. These graduates represented six graduating cohorts, covering Academic Year 2013–2014 to Academic Year 2018–2019. All 242 graduates constituted the target population and were considered eligible to participate in the study. To be included, respondents had to be graduates of the identified program and belong to one of the six specified graduating cohorts. Voluntary response sampling was employed because all members of the target population were invited to participate, while actual participation depended on their willingness and availability to complete the survey. Of the 242 eligible graduates, 180 completed the questionnaire, representing a response rate of 74.38%. This approach enabled the researcher to reach graduates from all six cohorts while recognizing the practical challenges associated with tracing graduates who had already left the university and were geographically dispersed. No eligible graduate was intentionally excluded from the invitation to participate. Nevertheless, because participation was voluntary, the possibility of non-response bias is acknowledged, as graduates who responded may differ in some characteristics from those who did not participate.

2.3. Research instruments

The study utilized the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) questionnaire developed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) as the primary data-gathering instrument. The

instrument was selected because it was specifically designed to collect information on the employment outcomes and experiences of graduates of Philippine higher education institutions. It provided a standard framework for gathering information relevant to the objectives of the present tracer study. The questionnaire covered information on the graduates' demographic and educational background, employment status, nature and status of employment, present occupation, type of employing organization, transition to first employment, job relevance, initial salary, curriculum relevance, and competencies acquired during their undergraduate education. The CHED GTS questionnaire was adopted to maintain consistency with the indicators commonly used in graduate tracer studies. Items relevant to the objectives of the present study were retained and organized according to the variables examined. The study adopted an established CHED tracer study instrument, its content and structure served as the basis for measuring the graduate employment indicators examined in the study. No new psychometric scale was developed for the research. Accordingly, the analysis focused primarily on descriptive employment indicators rather than the construction of latent variables or composite psychological measures.

2.3. Data collection

The researcher sought permission from the University Registrars to get the list of graduates needed in the study. After getting the list, the researcher contacted the respondents using different social media platforms like messenger, email and via personal phone numbers as indicated in the list given by the registrar's office. A google form was provided by the researcher to get the information needed. The respondent's willingness to participate would be of great help to collect the necessary information needed in the completion of the study.

2.4. Data analysis

Data gathered about employability and productivity of the pre-school majors was validated, tabulated and treated through the use of various statistical instruments such as frequency, percentage distribution, weighted mean and ranking system.

2.4. Ethical considerations

The researcher followed the proper procedure in conducting the study. The researcher followed the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The consent of the respondents was obtained before the conduct of the study. Informed consent was also given. Respondent' privacy and anonymity were also considered. The information they'll be giving was treated with utmost confidentiality and have the authority to withdraw anytime.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The employment status and reasons for unemployment of the BEED graduates

The employment status of BEED graduates provides an important indication of the program's effectiveness in preparing students for professional opportunities. Beyond examining their current employment conditions, it is also essential to identify the reasons why some graduates remain unemployed. Table 1 presents the employment status of the BEED graduates and the factors contributing to their unemployment.

Table 1. The data of employment status and reasons for unemployment of the BEED graduates

	Frequency (f)	*Percentage (%)*
Employment		
Employed (Yes)	138	76.67
Unemployed (No)	42	23.33
Employment Status (Employed only)		
Regular/Permanent	65	47.10
Contractual	50	36.23
Casual	15	10.87
Temporary	8	5.80
Reasons for being Unemployed		
Advance or further study	34	80.95
No Job Opportunity	6	14.29
Family concern and decided not to find a job	2	4.76

The table 1 shows that, out of 242 graduates, 180 participated in the study. Most of the BEED graduates are employed, with 138 or 76.67% of the respondents. Only 42 or 23.33% are not employed. This study reported a high employment rate of elementary education graduates 85.16%, indicating that most education graduates successfully entered the labor market and often secured work aligned with their training, which aligns with the present study's finding that 76.67 % of BEEd graduates are employed.

The employment status distribution of BEEd graduates shows that while nearly half 65 or 47.10% have secured regular or permanent positions, a substantial proportion remain in temporary 8 or 5.80% roles. This pattern aligns with workforce trends identified by Ingersoll et al. (2014), who observed that early-career teachers frequently begin in non-permanent appointments before transitioning to stable positions. Such arrangements often reflect institutional hiring practices, budget constraints, and probationary requirements rather than a lack of competence among graduates. The findings suggest that while employability outcomes are generally positive, employment stability remains an important dimension in assessing long-term graduate success and professional security.

The table 1 indicates that while the majority of BEED graduates are employed, a portion remain unemployed due to pursuing further studies 34 or 80.95% and family-related concerns 2 or 4.76%. This trend is consistent with prior research. Minto et al. (2017) explained that graduate unemployment in the education sector is often transitional, as some graduates intentionally delay workforce entry to pursue postgraduate qualifications that enhance long-term career prospects. Additionally, limited job availability and geographic or personal constraints may contribute to temporary unemployment among education graduates. These findings suggest that unemployment among BEEd graduates may not necessarily reflect program inadequacy but rather career planning decisions and contextual labor market factors.

3.2. The employment profile of the BEED graduates in terms of occupation, affiliation and work settings

The employment profile of BEED graduates provides further insights into their career pathways and the extent to which their academic qualifications translate into professional

opportunities. Examining their current occupations, institutional affiliations, and work settings helps illustrate the diversity of employment destinations and the extent of their participation in the education sector and other professional fields. Table 2 presents the employment profile of BEED graduates in terms of occupation, affiliation, and work settings.

Table 2. The data of the employment profile of the BEED graduates in terms of occupation, affiliation and work settings

	Frequency (f)	*Percentage (%)*
Present Occupation		
Professional	130	94.20
Officials (Gov't/Special-Interest Org), Executives, Managers, & Supervisors	4	2.90
Clerks	2	1.45
Special Occupation	2	1.45
Affiliations		
Private Sector	54	39.13
Department of Education (DepEd)	44	31.88
Abroad	20	14.49
Business	9	6.52
SUC (State Universities and Colleges)	1	0.72
Did Not State	10	7.25
Line of Business		
Education	79	57.25
Not related to Education	40	28.99
Prefer not to say	19	13.76
Place of Work		
Local	120	86.96
Abroad	18	13.04
Total Respondents	*138*	*100*

The high proportion of BEEd graduates holding professional occupations 130 or 94.20% and 2 or 1.45 are clerks and has special occupation reflects a common trend in teacher education tracer studies, where most graduates secure roles that align with the expectations of their qualifications. Cornillez, Caminoc, and Basas (2021) reported similar findings among teacher education alumni, with the majority of respondents occupying professional, technical, or supervisory positions, indicating that teacher education programs effectively prepare graduates for meaningful careers in education and related fields. The observable concentration in professional roles suggests that the competencies developed during the BEEd program—such as instructional skills, classroom management, and educational planning—are valued by employers and contribute to graduates' successful transition into the workforce.

The distribution of BEEd graduates across various affiliations—private institutions 54 or 39.13% and 1 or 0.72% representation in state universities—demonstrate the diverse career pathways available to teacher education graduates. This pattern is consistent with tracer research indicating that higher education graduates often secure employment across public, private, and international sectors depending on labor market demand and personal career goals (Orence & Laguador, 2013). The presence of graduates working abroad further suggests the global competitiveness of their qualifications, while those managing businesses reflect the

adaptability and entrepreneurial potential fostered during their academic preparation. These findings highlight that BEEd graduates are not confined solely to public school teaching but are capable of navigating varied professional environments.

The distribution of employment sectors among BEEd graduates, with 79 or 57.25% working in the field of education and 40 or 28.99% employed in non-education industries, aligns with existing literature on education graduate trajectories. Alibudbud (2023) reported that although a majority of teacher education graduates secure roles within schools due to the direct relevance of their qualifications, a notable share also finds opportunities in other sectors where transferable skills such as communication, organization, and problem-solving are valued. The presence of graduates in non-education fields highlights the versatility of BEEd training and suggests that competencies learned during the program support employability beyond traditional classroom settings. This pattern underscores the importance of broadening curriculum and career guidance to equip future graduates for diverse professional pathways.

As shown in Table 2, 120 or 86.96% of the respondents works locally and 18 or 13.04% are working abroad. It aligns with broader trends in graduate labour mobility. Rodrigo and Jayme (2020) report that Filipino graduates predominantly find employment within the country, but an appreciable proportion pursue overseas opportunities due to factors such as competitive compensation abroad and the global demand for qualified professionals. This suggests that while the domestic education sector continues to absorb most BEEd graduates, international opportunities remain viable alternatives for those seeking different career pathways or improved economic prospects. The data highlight the dual nature of graduate employment outcomes—strong local engagement alongside meaningful participation in the global labor market.

3.3. The employment experience, job relevance and career motivations of BEED graduates

Understanding the employment experiences of BEED graduates provides valuable insights into their transition from higher education to the professional workforce. Beyond securing employment, examining the relevance of their jobs to their academic preparation, the factors influencing their employment decisions, and their motivations for remaining in or changing jobs offers a broader perspective on their career development and professional satisfaction. Table 3 presents the employment experiences, job relevance, and career motivations of BEED graduates.

Table 3. The data of the employment experience, job relevance and career motivations of BEED Graduates

	Frequency (f)	*Percentage (%)*
First Job After College		
Yes	95	68.84
No	43	31.16
Relevance of Job to College Course		
Yes	84	60.87
No	54	39.13
Reasons for Accepting the Job		
Salaries and Benefits	94	68.12
Proximity to Residence	18	13.04

Related to Special Skills	26	18.84
Reasons for Staying on the Job		
Salaries and Benefits	64	46.38
Proximity to Residence	34	24.64
Career Challenge	24	17.39
Related to Course or Program of Study	16	11.59
Reasons for Changing Job		
Related to Special Skills	37	26.81
Proximity to Residence	23	16.67
Salaries and Benefits	78	56.52
Duration of Employment		
1 to 6 months	37	26.81
7 to 11 months	15	10.87
1 year to less than 2 years	30	21.74
2 years to less than 3 years	41	29.71
3 years to less than 4 years	15	10.87

The finding that 95 or 68.84% of BEEd graduates are currently in their first job and 43 or 31.16% are not reflects a common trend identified in graduate tracer studies, where a majority of alumni secure initial employment directly after graduation. Al-Lamki (2019) reported that a large proportion of graduates enter their first job soon after completing their studies, and this first employment experience significantly influences early career trajectories. That nearly one-third of respondents in the present study are no longer in their first job may indicate healthy career mobility, as these graduates pursue better opportunities or positions more aligned with their professional goals. This pattern suggests that while securing a first job is an important milestone, continued career progression remains a key marker of graduate success over time. 84 or 60.87% of BEEd graduates are employed in jobs related to their field of study while 54 or 39.13% are in unrelated occupations is consistent with broader research on skills-job match in the labor market. According to Finegold, Leung, and Beggs (2010), although many graduates work in roles that align with their educational background, a significant share often finds employment in occupations not directly tied to their degree due to labor market conditions, limited opportunities in specific sectors, or personal career choices. This suggests that while the BEEd program prepares a majority of its graduates for relevant employment, external factors such as job availability, regional demand, and evolving career aspirations also influence how graduates apply their training in the world of work.

The reasons BEEd graduates cited for accepting their current positions—most notably salaries and benefits 94 or 68.12% and proximity to residence 18 or 13.04% reflect well-established determinants of job choice among early-career professionals. Findings by Nguyen and Taylor (2018) demonstrate that recent graduates often prioritize competitive compensation when evaluating job offers, and that non-monetary factors such as the convenience of location and the alignment of job tasks with personal skills and career interests significantly influence acceptance decisions. This suggests that BEEd graduates, like many of their counterparts in other fields, balance financial incentives with lifestyle considerations and the desire for meaningful work that leverages their competencies when making employment decisions.

The reasons BEEd graduates cited for staying in their jobs—primarily salaries and benefits 64 or 46.38% and alignment with their course of study 16 or 11.59%—are consistent with

findings in the organizational behavior and graduate employment literature. Afolabi and Adebowale (2020) reported that competitive compensation packages, meaningful work, opportunities for career advancement, and convenience of location are key retention factors in both public and private sectors. This suggests that BEEd graduates tend to remain in positions that offer not only adequate financial reward but also personal and professional satisfaction, manageable commute, and opportunities for growth. Understanding these retention determinants can help both employers and educational institutions develop strategies that support graduate career stability and long-term professional engagement.

The reasons that graduates reported for changing employment—especially the salaries and benefits 78 or 56.52%, and proximity to residence 23 or 16.67%—are consistent with broader literature on job mobility among early-career professionals. Research by Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) indicates that employees often seek new positions when their current roles do not adequately match their skills or career aspirations, when compensation and benefits are not competitive, or when they seek improved work–life balance and career growth opportunities. These findings suggest that graduates are actively navigating their early careers by pursuing roles that better align with their competencies, offer greater convenience and rewards, and provide meaningful professional challenges, reflecting an ongoing process of career refinement rather than dissatisfaction alone.

The varying periods of first-job tenure observed among the graduates, where sizeable proportions stayed for 2 to less than 3 years 41 or 29.71% and 7 to 11 months 15 or 10.87%, mirrors patterns reported in longitudinal labor market research. Nguyen and Schindler (2019) found that first job durations among recent graduates show considerable variability, with many leaving early positions within a year while others stay longer depending on career goals, job satisfaction, and opportunities for advancement. The distribution of job tenure in the present study suggests that some graduates transition quickly in search of better alignment with their professional aspirations, while others secure greater stability in their initial roles. This variation underscores the importance of understanding both early mobility and retention as integral aspects of graduate career development.

3.4. The job search characteristics, initial level of position, and compensation of the beed graduates

Examining the job search characteristics of BEED graduates provides insights into their strategies and experiences in securing employment after completing their studies. In addition, understanding their initial job positions and compensation levels offers an indication of their entry into the labor market, professional opportunities, and economic outcomes. Table 4 presents the job search characteristics, initial employment positions, and compensation of BEED graduates.

Table 4. The data of job search characteristics, initial level of position, and compensation of the BEED graduates

	Frequency (f)	*Percentage (%)*
Sources of Job Information		
As walk-in applicant	62	44.93
Ranking	25	18.12
Recommended by someone	18	13.04

Response to an advertisement	15	10.87
Information from friends	12	8.70
Arranged by school's job placement officer	6	4.34
Job Search Duration		
Less than a month	54	39.13
1 to 6 months	36	26.09
7 to 11 months	13	9.42
1 year to less than 2 years	19	13.77
2 years to less than 3 years	16	11.59
Job Level Position		
Professional Technical or Supervisory	130	94.20
Rank or Clerical	5	3.62
Managerial or Executive	2	1.45
Self-employed	1	0.73
Initial Gross Monthly Earning		
P 5 000.00 to less than P 10 000.00	64	46.38
P 10 000 to less than P 15 000.00	27	19.57
P 15 000 to less than P 20 000.00	43	31.16
P 20 000 to less than 25 000.00	2	1.45
P 25 000 and above	2	1.45
Total Respondents	*138*	*100*

The variety of job information sources reported by the graduates—with the largest share 62 or 44.93% securing work through walk-in applications, while only 6 or 4.34% were placed through the school's job placement officer—mirrors findings in the literature on graduate job search behavior. Schoenherr and Kuo (2019) found that graduates commonly rely on direct applications and personal networks to secure their first jobs, while use of institutional career services remains relatively low. This suggests that graduates, like many others, tend to adopt proactive strategies such as walk-in applications and leveraging personal contacts, underscoring the importance of equipping students with effective job search skills and strengthening career support services within higher education institutions.

The range of job search durations observed among graduate where 54 or 39.13% secured employment in less than a month, while 16 or 11.59% found a job within 2 years to less than 3 years, aligns with research on graduate job search dynamics. Gati and Levin (2014) highlight that first-job search periods vary considerably, influenced by labor market conditions, the effectiveness of job search strategies, and individual readiness to transition into professional roles. This suggests that while many graduates can enter the workforce relatively quickly, others may require extended periods to secure employment that matches their qualifications and career goals. Understanding these patterns can help educational institutions tailor career preparation support to assist students in navigating early career transitions more efficiently.

The table 4 summarizes the job levels positions of BEED graduates. Majority 130 or 94.20% hold professional, and self-employed 1 or 0.73%. Afolabi and Olaniyan (2021) examined the employment patterns of teacher education graduates and found that the vast majority of respondents were employed in professional teaching roles soon after graduation, with only a small proportion in clerical, administrative, or non-professional positions. This reflects the trend seen in your data, where 94.20% of graduates hold professional, technical, or supervisory positions, while only minority fractions occupy rank/clerical or other roles,

indicating strong job alignment with their academic preparation and professional identity as educators.

The table 4 presents the initial gross monthly earnings of BEED graduates in their first jobs after college. The table further reveals that 64 or 46.38% of the respondents had an initial gross monthly earning of P 5,000.00 to less than P 10,000.00 and 2 or 1.45% had a salary range from P 20,000.00 to less than P 25,000.00 and P 25,000.00 and above respectively. Research by Nguyen et al. (2026) demonstrates that wage outcomes for teacher education graduates are shaped by job-education match and labor market dynamics, with lower earnings often observed for those in entry-level positions or in sectors where professional qualifications are not fully capitalized, whereas stronger job alignment can lead to relatively higher initial earnings. This supports the notion that initial salary levels among graduates may vary widely due to the interplay of occupational placement, local market pays scales, and the degree to which their qualifications are utilized in the workplace.

3.5. Curriculum relevance and acquired professional competencies of the BEED graduates

Assessing curriculum relevance and the professional competencies acquired by BEED graduates is essential to understanding how effectively the academic program prepares students for the demands of the workplace. Examining the alignment between the curriculum and graduates' first jobs, together with the competencies developed during their college education, provides insights into the program's contribution to graduate employability and professional readiness. Table 5 presents the graduates' perceptions of curriculum relevance and the professional competencies they acquired during their college education.

Table 5. Curriculum Relevance and Acquired Professional Competencies of the BEED Graduates

	Frequency (f)	*Percentage (%)*
Curriculum Relevance to Frist Job		
Yes	112	81.16
No	26	18.84
Acquired Competencies Learned in College		
Problem Solving Skills	96	53.33
Critical Thinking Skills	94	52.22
Human Relation Skills	94	52.22
Entrepreneurial Skills	87	48.33

Table 5 shows that 112 or 81.16% of graduates perceived their college curriculum as relevant to their first job aligns. This aligns with the findings, while 26 or 18.84% did not., with broader research on curriculum–workplace alignment. Aina and Moahi (2017) reported that graduates who experience strong alignment between their academic preparation and employer expectations are more likely to view their program as relevant and feel prepared for professional responsibilities. This suggests that the curriculum successfully equips a majority of its graduates with the knowledge and competencies needed in early teaching roles. However, the nearly 19% who did not find a strong connection between coursework and first job duties point to opportunities for further curricular enhancement to ensure even closer alignment with evolving job requirements in the education sector.

The distribution of competencies valued by graduates with a majority citing problem-solving skills 96 or 53.33% and entrepreneurial skills 87 or 48.33% mirrors the broader literature on employability skills. Jackson (2016) found that employers and graduates alike frequently identify transferable competencies such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and interpersonal abilities as crucial for effective performance in the workplace. Although entrepreneurial skills were less frequently mentioned, their recognition by nearly half of the respondents suggests that graduates value a broad set of abilities that extend beyond traditional instructional competencies. These findings underscore the importance of cultivating both cognitive and socio-emotional skills in teacher education to prepare graduates not only for classroom roles but also for the complex demands of contemporary work environments.

3.6. BEED graduates' suggestions to improve the curriculum

Gathering graduates' suggestions for curriculum improvement is essential for evaluating the extent to which the existing academic program addresses their professional needs and workplace challenges. Their feedback provides valuable insights into areas requiring enhancement, including instructional content, professional development opportunities, practical training, and the integration of relevant competencies. Table 6 presents the BEED graduates' suggestions for improving the curriculum to better align the academic program with evolving professional demands and workplace expectations.

Table 6. BEED graduates' suggestions to improve the curriculum

Rank	Suggestions for Curriculum Improvement	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Conduct more seminars for professional development	98	54.44
2	Offer additional training sessions related to the course	97	53.89
3	Integrate Stress Management and Mental Health courses	86	47.78
4	Align curriculum with student needs and professional relevance	82	45.56
5	Provide opportunities to pursue a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education	64	35.56
6.5	Strengthen literacy and numeracy instruction methods for young learners	54	30.00
6.5	Increase lessons and coverage regarding Special Education	54	30.00
8	Align lesson planning standards with public school requirements	46	25.56
9	Develop a flexible curriculum to support career shifts after college	45	25.00
10	Focus on life and career skills	35	19.44
11	Reduce the number of learners per class/session	26	14.44
12.5	Incorporate real-world relevance and practical applications	24	13.33
12.5	Integrate technology to enhance learning experiences	24	13.33
14	Clearly state learning goals and objectives	15	8.33

15	Regularly update content with latest industry trends and research	14	7.78

The table 6 shows the suggestions of BEED graduates for improving the curriculum. The respondents significant demand for professional readiness and personal well-being, led by suggestions for more seminars 98 or 54.44%. Further suggestions included regularly updating content 14 or 7.78% to maintain industry standards.

5. Limitations and future research

Despite providing valuable insights into the employability and productivity of BEEd preschool major graduates, this study has several limitations. First, it was conducted at a single state university in Pampanga and involved graduates from academic years 2014–2019, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other institutions and geographical contexts. Second, the quantitative descriptive design and standardized Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) questionnaire provided an overview of employment outcomes but offered limited opportunities to explore graduates' career experiences, job satisfaction, professional challenges, and employers' perspectives in depth. Third, the reliance on self-reported data from 180 respondents may have introduced potential recall bias and subjective perceptions. Future research should involve graduates from multiple higher education institutions and diverse geographical settings to provide broader evidence of graduate employability. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to examine changes in employment status, career progression, job stability, and professional development over time. Furthermore, mixed-methods research incorporating interviews with graduates, employers, and educational administrators could provide deeper insights into curriculum–workplace alignment. Future studies should also evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum enhancement initiatives, particularly literacy and numeracy instruction, technology integration, practicum experiences, professional development seminars, and hands-on training. Additionally, investigating the contributions of career placement services, institutional partnerships, and mental health support may help identify effective strategies for strengthening graduates' employability, professional readiness, and long-term career development in early childhood education.

6. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that most BEEd preschool major graduates successfully transitioned into employment, particularly in professional roles within public and private educational institutions. Their relatively rapid transition to work and the reported usefulness of competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and human relations indicate the relevance of their undergraduate preparation to workplace demands. However, concerns related to contractual employment, job–program mismatch, and relatively low starting salaries suggest that employability extends beyond obtaining employment to include the quality, relevance, and stability of work. By focusing specifically on preschool major graduates, the study addresses the limited evidence on the employment outcomes of this particular group within teacher education tracer research. The findings therefore contribute institution-specific evidence while also providing a clearer understanding of how early childhood teacher preparation relates to

graduates' transition into professional employment and their application of acquired competencies in the workplace.

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