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## Research Article

### The Graduates Tracer Study: Bachelor of Elementary Education Program

Adona S. Abana\*, Andy B. Ramos, Bernardo K. Gumarang Jr, Jaine Z. Tarun

Isabela State University Cabagan Campus

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#### \*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

[adonabana10@gmail.com](mailto:adonabana10@gmail.com)

#### ABSTRACT

The study assessed the impact of the Bachelor of Elementary Education program in the life of its graduates in terms of their employability and professional competencies based on the perceptions of graduates and their employers. The survey method was used in the study to determine the graduates' status and performance. There are 250 BEEed graduates involved in the study. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percent, and arithmetic mean were utilized to determine and describe the profile of graduates and employers, the trend in the employment of graduates for the term being studied, the employers' assessment of the graduates in terms of their knowledge and understanding of their field of specialization, qualities, general skills and specialized skills generally expected of them in order to succeed in their teaching performance, and the over-all preparation of graduates acquired from the University for the type of work they are currently engaging and other skills needed for their future demands. The data generated from the employers' assessment of the variables mentioned was further analyzed and categorized to generate interrelated thoughts/themes that will emerge from the data. The results of the study showed that graduates of the program are competent because most of the graduates are licensed professionals, employed with regular or permanent status. However, it has been found that graduates need to gain innovative skills such as, research and the use of information communication and technology. The findings can be used as the basis of the program in improving the curriculum and instruction.

**Keywords:** *Graduates employability, LET performance, Tracer study, Work performance*

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## Background

Today's educational trend is to produce quality and competent professionals who will

play a significant role in society as responsible and productive individuals. It must provide the knowledge, skills, and values possessed by the

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graduates to help contribute to economic growth and educational development. Hence, it is the responsibility of higher education institutions to ensure that graduates are prepared to meet the possible demands of the labor call and supply the emerging needs for highly skilled human capital through teaching, research and outreach programs (Gines, 2014).

Tracer studies, which are surveys of graduates of institutions of higher education, are regarded vital tools of institutional development, according to Mugabushaka (2002), especially in an ever-changing world of work. He saw this project as a way to get systematic input on the graduates' whereabouts, job conditions, and retrospective evaluations of the programs.

However, the goal of any curricular program is always to provide a quality and excellent education. In particular, teacher education envisions producing quality future teachers and enhancing the qualifications of in-service educators in tertiary and basic education for their own academic and professional development through advanced training and educational innovations. The quality and relevance of the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) program is determined by the extent to which its objectives are attained according to a set of standards. This can be measured by the quality of graduates in terms of their employability, competency in the teaching profession, skills in leadership and management and their role in the improvement of the socio-economic and cultural life of their family, their community and the world.

To determine the quality and relevance of a bachelor's program, there is a need to find out what happened to its graduates, how their education and or training at the university made a difference in their lives and in their ability to respond to the demands of their profession, family, and community. Hence, the study.

### **Why Tracer Study?**

Tracer studies are retrospective evaluations of graduates conducted by a standardized survey conducted after graduation (normally between 6 months and 3 years). Graduate surveys, alumni surveys, and graduate tracking are all terms used to describe tracer investigations.

The target population is typically a homogeneous group of students/trainees who have completed their courses at the same time (generation or graduation cohort). Tracer studies are widespread in higher education, but they are growing in popularity in vocational education as well. The overall goal is to assess the impact of educational programs throughout the medium to long term. Improve the content and study circumstances of education and training, improve the transition of graduates from school to the job market, and better match the supply of skills with the demand for them are some of the more concrete goals (Tracer studies, background note, 2017).

Graduate (and employer) surveys, according to Schomburg (2016), are one type of empirical study that might provide useful information for evaluating the outcomes of a certain institution's education and training. In the context of quality assurance, this information could be used to help the institution grow.

Tracer studies, as described by Boaduo et al., allow graduates of a certain institution to be contextualized through a dynamic and trustworthy method in order to estimate their career trajectory. These studies also allow for the examination of institution-provided training, graduates' career pathways, employment kind and position, professional and job satisfaction, and regional dispersion.

Hence, Educational providers can evaluate the success of their academic programs using the data of tracer studies (Fisher and Chapman 1995; Kongmanus 2016).

### **Objective of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to assess the impact of the Bachelor of Elementary Education program in the life of its graduates in terms of their employability and professional competencies based on the perceptions of graduates and their employers.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study can provide valuable information for evaluating the results of the education and training of a specific institution of higher education. It will also help the college determine whether its graduates in this program are provided with an education that is

appropriate to their interests and ability. Similarly, whether the graduates' advanced knowledge and skills help them to further develop their teaching competencies, leadership skills, and aspirations as in-service teachers or administrators in both tertiary and primary education.

This study will also enable the college to document the basis for curriculum revision and enhancement in order to make the BEE program relevant and responsive to the teaching and learning process and management of academic institutions as a whole.

### **Scope and Delimitation**

The study was focused on mapping out the employability of the BEE graduates in terms of the trend of their employment. It also dwelt on employers' assessment of the graduates in terms of their knowledge and understanding of their field of specialization, and qualities, general skills and specialized skills generally expected of them in order to succeed in their teaching performance. In addition, the over-all preparation of graduates for the type of work they are currently doing and other skills needed for their future demands were also assessed by the employers.

The subjects of the study were the graduates for the five-year period (2015-2019).

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

This study utilized the quantitative method of research.

### **Sources of Data**

The subjects of the study were the 250 out of 338 BEE graduates of the College of Education of the Isabela State University of Cabagan Campus during the period of 2015 to 2019 as shown below. The employers of graduates were also included as sources of data.

Year	No. of Graduates	No. of Surveyed Graduates
2019	115	41
2018	76	62
2017	58	58
2016	51	51
2015	38	38
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>250</b>

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The survey questionnaire was personally conducted among graduates who are employed in the Department of Education (DepEd) and other agencies situated in the nearby town. On the other hand, the questionnaires were sent to the schools or agencies for those graduates who are employed outside the province. Posting of questionnaires on line was also undertaken in order to reach out to the majority of the alumni

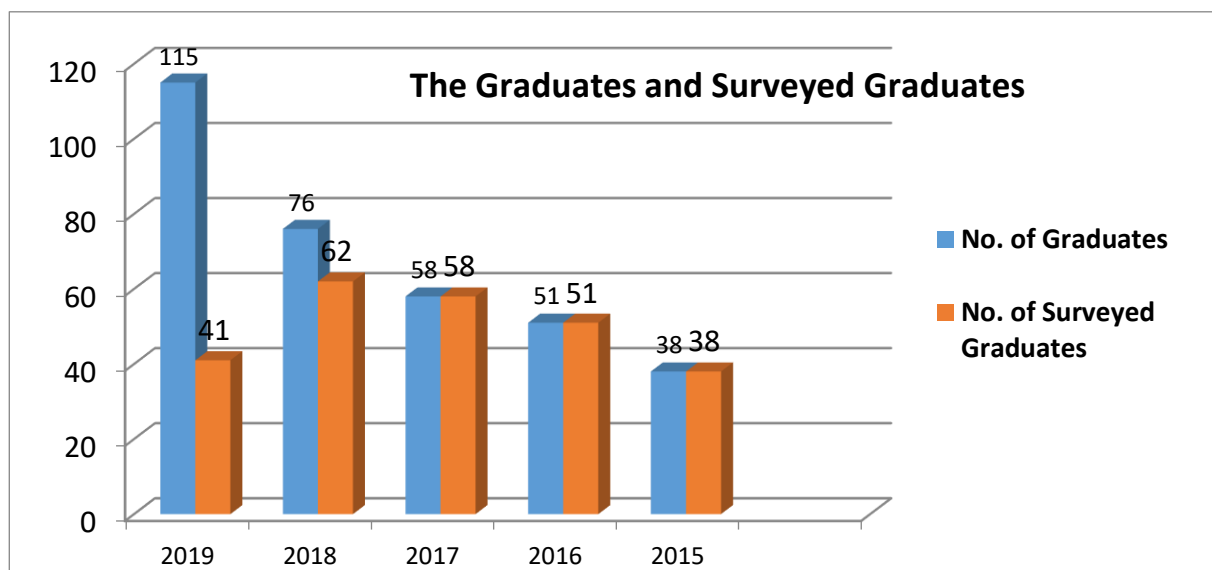
### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percent, and arithmetic mean were utilized to determine and describe the profile of graduates and employers, as well as the trend in the employment of graduates for the term being studied. These statistical tools were also used to describe the employers' assessment of the graduates in terms of their knowledge and understanding of their field of specialization, and qualities, general skills and specialized skills generally expected of them in order to succeed in their teaching performance. Also, for the employers' assessment of the over-all preparation of graduates acquired from the University for the type of work they are currently engaging and other skills needed for their future demands.

Also, the data generated from the employers' assessment of the variables mentioned above was further analyzed and categorized to generate interrelated thoughts/themes that will emerge from the data.

## Results and Analysis

### The Graduates and Surveyed Graduates of BEEd Program



The graph shows that the number of respondent-graduates in the year 2015 to 2017 is one hundred percent (100 %) and for the years 2018 and 2019 is 81.58 % and 35.65%, respectively.

#### **Graduates Let Performance and Employability**

Licensure examination performances and employability gauge the effectiveness of the curricular program. The high performance of

the graduates in the licensure examination as well as their employability indicates their skills and competencies acquired in their teacher-preparation degree. As a valuable program of the College of Education, the BEEd also produces quality and effective graduates who are passers and topnotchers in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) granted by the Philippine Regulatory Commission (PRC), and performing teachers and employees in the different schools and jobs in the region.

Table 1. LET Passing Percentage of the BEEd Graduates for the Last 5 Years Including First Timers of Previous Graduates

Year/Month	No. of Takers	National Rating (%)	50% Higher the National Level	Institutional Rating (%)	Description
<b>2014</b>					
August	55	35.75%	53.625	67.27%	Higher than the 50% above national level
<b>2015</b>					
September	39	31.36%	47.04	48.72%	Higher than 50% above the national level
<b>2016</b>					
September	54	30.18%	45.45	61.11%	Higher than 50% above the national level
<b>2017</b>					
September	55	26.33%	39.495	54.55%	Higher than 50% above the national level
<b>2018</b>					
September	77	20.29	30.435	62.34	Higher than 50% above the national level

*LET Passing Percentage of the BEEd Graduates/Batch for the Last 5 Years  
(S.Y. 2013-2014 to 2017-2018)*

	No. of Graduates	No. of Takers	No. of Passers	National Rating (%)	50% Higher the National Level	Institutional Rating(%)	Description
<b>2013-2014</b>							
August	52	52	33	35.74	53.61	63.46	Higher than the 50% above the national level
<b>2014-2015</b>							
September	38	36	18	27.42	41.13	50	Higher than the 50% above the national level
<b>2015-2016</b>							
September		47	31	30.18	45.27	65.957	Higher than 50% above the national level
<b>2016-2017</b>							
September	66	50	29	26.33	39.495	58	Higher than the 50% above the national level
<b>2018</b>							
September	76	75	46	20.29	30.435	61.33	Higher than the 50% above the national level

The tables show that the graduates of the BEEd program produced highly competent individuals for five years, as indicated in the description. The rating of the institutional is higher than 50% above the national level.

*Table 2. BEEd Graduates Employability*

Employability matters more than ever. Graduates' ability to find or create work after studying at a higher level is a critical component of a university's or program's reputation

and ranking, and a key deciding factor in a student's decision making process.

It is noted from the above data that teaching is the highest-rated work employability of graduates. This indicates that the majority of the graduates still practice their profession. However, with the reflected data, most of the graduates are successfully employed. Thus, it indicates that graduates of the program took the degree by choice and not by chance.

*Table 2. Distribution of Occupation of BEEd Graduates other than Teaching*

Occupation	Frequency
1. Office of Gov't & Special Interest Organization, Corporate Executive, Manager, Managing Proprietor, Supervisor	12
2. Military, Police Officer	10
3. Technical, Associate Professional	2
4. Sales Worker in Shop, Mark	11
5. Farmer, Forestry worker, Fishermen	5
6. Plant and Machine Operator, Assembler	
7. Other Community, Social and Personal Service Activities	10
8. Private Household with Employed Persons	15
9. Clerk	12
10. Professional	5
11. Health and Social Work	12
12. Labour, Unskilled Worker	10
13. Extra-territorial Organization	
14. Others, please specify: <u>Self-employed</u>	13

The table above shows that graduates of this program also work in various occupations. It indicates that graduates possess skills attesting their flexibility.

Table 3. Work Performance of the Graduates

Year	Number of Employed in Teaching	Work Performance Employed in Teaching	
		Outstanding	Very Satisfactory
2015	34	11	23
2016	22	9	13
2017	33	16	17
2018	28	14	14
2019	16	12	4

It is clearly shown in the data above that graduates of the program are performing well in their jobs. Such remarks as "outstanding" and "very satisfactory" indicate that graduates are efficient enough in their teaching and learning function.

Table 4. Position/Designation of Employed BEEd Graduates

Position/Designation	Frequency	Percent
1. Teacher 1	133	82.10%
2. Discipline Coordinator	5	3.09%
3. School Coordinator	1	0.62%
4. Class/School Paper Adviser	22	13.58%
5. Others	1	0.62%

The table above shows that graduates of the program start with the position of Teacher 1. This indicates that employees will always start with the least position in the job.

Table 5. Reasons in Pursuing BEEd Program

Reasons	Frequency
1. High grades in the course or subject area(s) related to the course	185
2. Good grades in high school	170
3. Prestige in our community	50
4. Influences of parents and relatives	10
5. Influences of friends/peers	2
6. Prospect for immediate employment	7
7. Provided with the college scholarship	2
8. More job opportunities are available for ISU graduates	13
9. Availability of course offering in ISU	9
10. Wants to get prestigious job	12
11. Affordable for the family	120
12. Opportunity for employment abroad	-
13. Strong passion for the profession	135
14. No particular choice or no better idea	-
15. Others, please specify	-

The result in table 5 shows that the very reason graduates pursue the course is that they have good grades in high school and high grades in the course or subject area/s related to the course.

Table 6. Ratings and Descriptions of the Extent of Influence of the College in Knowledge and Skills of Graduates

Competencies	Mean Ratings	Description
1. IT skills (Use of Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Adobe, AutoCAD, etc.)	3	Moderate
2. Proficiency in written English	4	High
3. Proficiency in spoken English	4.5	Very High
4. Proficiency in written Filipino	4.33	High
5. Proficiency in spoken Filipino	4.5	Very High
6. Interpersonal communication skills	4	High
7. Creative and Critical thinking skills	4	High
8. Analytical Skills	4.17	High
9. Problem Solving Skills	4.17	High
10. Team work/ working with others in a group	4	High
11. Exposure to general knowledge and current issues	4.33	High
12. Classroom Management	4	High
13. Instructional Materials Development	4.17	High
14. Leadership and Management Skills	4	High

The table on the extent of the influence of the college on the knowledge and skills of the graduates showed that they were very high in English and Filipino proficiency, on the other hand, moderate in their skills.

Table 7. Competencies found by BEEd graduates useful in their job

Competencies	Mean Ratings	Description
Communication Skills	4	High
Human Relations	4	High
Information Technology Skills	4	High
Research Skills	0	
Leadership Skills	4.33	High
Co-Curricular Skills	3	Moderate
Problem Solving Skills	4	High
Critical Thinking Skills	4.5	Very High
Decision Skills	4	High
Classroom Management Skills	4	High
Entrepreneurial Skills	2	
Analytical Skills	4.17	High

Among the competencies, the table above showed that graduates are critical thinkers. On the contrary, graduates are poor in research and entrepreneurial skills.

Table 8. Distribution of BEEd Who Pursued Graduate Studies

	Frequency	Percent
YES	133	53.33%
NO		
<b>TOTAL (N =250)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>53.33%</b>

Table 5 shows that most of the graduates pursue higher degrees. This indicates that graduates are immersing themselves in continuing professional education.

Table 9. Advanced Degrees and Field of Specialization Pursued by BEEd Graduates

Degree Program	Frequency	Percent
MS/MAEd	133	53.33%
PhD	-	-

The table shows that most of the graduates have pursued a higher degree of education ver-tical to their undergraduate course. This indicates that graduates of the program are enhancing their degree course.

Table 10. Reasons of BEEd Graduates in Pursuing Advanced Studies

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
1. Strong interest in seeking knowledge	65	47.10%
2. Enhance academic credentials/qualification/promotion	73	52.89%
3. Family encouragement	-	-
4. Required by employer/position/office	-	-
5. Difficulty in getting employment	-	-
6. Not ready to work	-	-
7. Others, please specify	-	-

The reasons graduates are pursuing advanced studies, as reflected in the table above, are their strong interest in seeking knowledge and enhancing their academic credentials, as well as their qualifications for promotion and retention.

Table 11. Mean Ratings and Descriptions of the Ability of BEEd Graduates to Perform Job

Knowledge and Skills	Mean Rating	Description
a. Workplace adaptability	4	Moderate
b. Problem-solving and decision-making	4.33	High
c. Confidence to perform tasks required	4	Moderate
d. Working in a team	4	Moderate
e. Communication skills	4.67	Very High
f. Usage of ICT (Information and Communication Tech)	4.33	High
g. Ability to use ICT application	4.33	High
h. Technical skills in program based	4.67	Very high
i. Entrepreneurial skills	4	Moderate
j. Leadership and management skills	4.17	High
k. Performance-based test development skills	4.33	High
l. Instructional Materials (IM) Development Skills	4	Moderate
m. Ability to apply innovative teaching strategies	4	Moderate
n. Ability to contextualized instructional materials	4	Moderate
o. Overall Assessment development skills	4	Moderate
p. Overall Classroom Management Skills	4.67	Very High
q. Others please specify:		

As reflected from the table above, graduates' performance ability in technical skills in program based and management skills in the classroom are very high. This indicates that graduates of the program possessed the very vital skills that a teacher must have to develop once immersed in the world of teaching.



Table 12. Number of Months/Years for BEEd Graduates to Succeed in Gaining their Employment

No. of Months/Years	Frequency	Frequency
Within 6 months	84	50.90%
Within 1 year	36	21.82%
Within 2 years	29	17.58%
Within 3 years	11	6.67%
Within 4 years	2	1.21%
More than four years	3	1.82%

As reflected from the table above, most of the graduates succeed in gaining employment within 6 months. This only indicates that graduates of the program are very competitive.

## Discussion

It is shown that most of the BEEd graduates are licensed professional teachers. This determines that the graduates of the program are qualified to teach in the said profession. As stated in tables 6 and 7, their competencies are very high, especially in their written and spoken skills in both languages (English and Filipino), and their critical thinking skills. These skills are very significant for teachers in order for them to be effective in teaching and in imparting knowledge to the individuals they teach. Hence, it is a mark of their being competent—the most in-demand qualification needed in any field or job. "We need professionals who are culturally competent, talented, innovative and creative problem-solvers, skilled and critical thinkers" (Nessipbayeva, Olga. The competencies of a modern teacher, Part 2: Pre-service and In-Service Training Teachers (p.148).

It is noted in tables 8, 9, and 10 that for graduates to be more competent, they pursue a higher degree of education to further their knowledge, skills, and competencies, especially in the field they have started. It resulted in continuing professional development, enhancement of skills, and promotion in the job.

The graduates' competence leads them to immediate employment. As reflected in tables 2 and 3 of their status of employment, most of the graduates are regular or permanent, and their occupation is aligned to the undergraduate course they have finished, which is teaching. It showed that they started at the lowest

level of position in teaching, as Teacher I (Table 4).

In terms of their performance, table 11 shows that graduate of the program possess very high skills in communication and technical skills in program based. Another thing that is very clear is their classroom management skills. *Classroom management* creates a set of expectations used in an organized *classroom* environment. It includes routines, rules and consequences. Effective *classroom management* paves the way for the teacher to engage the students in learning (<https://apa.or/education/k12/module-classroom-management>).

Thus, the findings reflected in the study only determine that the program is producing effective graduates who are competent in their field and contribute meaningfully to the agency they are working with. Graduate performance is highly recommended. However, it has been found in the study that graduates must be immersed in research and the use of information communications and technology (ICT)

## Recommendation

The findings of the study recommend that graduates be equipped for the conduct of research and use of information communication and technology. Therefore, the program must also give focus on encouraging learners in the conduct of research and ICT use in the curriculum.

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