Research Article

Career Trajectories of Bachelor of Secondary Education Graduates: A Tracer Study for Strategic Educational Enhancements

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the employability and career trajectories of Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) graduates of Sultan Kudarat State University (SKSU)—Kalamansig Campus from 2018 to 2022. It employs a descriptive research design to gather data.

The respondents were 137 BSED graduates selected using convenience sampling. The study utilized the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) standardized questionnaire but modified it to align with its objectives. This questionnaire was distributed via an online survey platform. Statistical treatment involved frequency and percentage.

Results revealed that most graduates were in the 26-30 age group, with females outnumbering males and most residing in municipality areas. Graduates cited career advancement and attractive compensation as key reasons for taking the BSED program, supported by institutional scholarships and awards.

Employment status showed a high employment rate, with many graduates securing stable teaching positions locally. Graduates rated the relevance of their degree to their present work as highly relevant, highlighting competencies in research, communication, and leadership as pivotal in meeting workplace demands.

The study concludes that the university's programs effectively prepare graduates for the teaching profession, though further improvements are needed to address gaps in leadership opportunities and long-term career progression. Recommendations include enhancing curriculum design to integrate emerging competencies, strengthening pre-graduation training to reduce unemployment due to lack of experience, and developing targeted leadership programs to support career advancement. These initiatives aim better to align the university's offerings with labor market needs, ensuring sustained employability and professional growth for graduates.

Keywords: Tracer Study, Graduate Employability, Employment Status, Teacher Education

Introduction

One of the critical challenges facing higher education institutions today is ensuring that graduates are equipped with the relevant and responsive skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the rapidly evolving job market. Every learning institution has its role in developing the country, and higher education institutions are essential in preparing a nation for global competition by producing competent human capital.

Following UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG, 2019), higher education institutions should provide responsive, high-quality education to support national development and nation-building. The provision of educational programs can help UNESCO achieve its objectives. This will increase the number of people capable of reaching the required development. Therefore, this will provide graduates with career prospects. The evolving landscape of higher education demands a continuous assessment of how well academic institutions prepare their graduates for the workforce. Thus, there is a growing need to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs in fostering employability among graduates.

On the other hand, tracer study establishes a link between graduates and their alma mater. Graduates were allowed to evaluate the curriculum, learning opportunities, and employment prospects (Brownell et al., 2019). It helps the institution evaluate its capacity to provide high-quality education and generate competent and productive graduates. It aims to establish the curriculum's efficacy and relevance and the impact of students' learning experiences on post-graduation employment. It assesses the graduates' employment placements and their progress since the day of their graduation.

According to Pentang et al. (2022), tracing graduates investigates the suitability of a particular institution in meeting the labor requirements of all industries. It was necessary to analyze the level of employment, the unemployment status of recent graduates, the employer perspective, the competency and relevance of graduate employees, and the feelings of both graduates and employers to achieve this objective. The tracer study of graduates may also collect information regarding the Curriculum's applicability and graduates' satisfaction with their academic preparation (Daguplo et al., 2019).

The conduct of the tracer study is pivotal as it provides empirical data on the employability of Sultan Kudarat State University—Kalamansig Campus graduates. The data and insights gathered from this study would serve as a baseline for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the university's programs. Such information is vital to inform policymakers on instructional and curriculum development, distribution of learning resources, and policy recommendations.

Recent studies have underscored the importance of tracer studies in higher education. According to Khadabux (2022), tracer studies are essential for understanding the direct outcomes of academic programs and providing data on employment performance, work relevance, and workplace satisfaction. Sanchez et al. (2023) stressed that higher education institutions proactively employ tracer studies to inform their academic planning to see better alignment with labor market needs and improved graduate employability. Moreover, a 2023 tracer study conducted by the University of the Philippines (UP) demonstrated the importance of conducting tracer studies, which reveals specific areas to enhance the curriculum in response to industry requirements.

The primary objective of this study is to assess the employability of graduates from Sultan Kudarat State University – Kalamansig Campus. Specific objectives include determining the employment rate of graduates, identifying the sectors in which they are employed, evaluating the relevance of their current jobs to their fields of study, and gauging their job satisfaction levels. Additionally, the study aims to gather feedback from graduates on how their education has contributed to their professional success and identify areas for improvement.

The tracer study on the employability of graduates from Sultan Kudarat State University – Kalamansig Campus will provide critical insights into the effectiveness of the university's educational programs in preparing students for the workforce. By systematically analyzing its alumni's employment outcomes and career

trajectories, the study aims to identify strengths and areas for improvement, guiding efforts to enhance the alignment between academic offerings and market needs.

Research Objectives

The study aimed to trace the socio-demographic, academic, and employment status of BSED graduates from 2018 to 2022.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following research objectives.

1. Determine the socio-demographic profile of the graduates relative to:
   a. age;
   b. gender;
   c. civil Status; and
   d. residence.
2. Determine the academic profile of the BSED graduates relative to:
   a. reasons for taking the program;
   b. awards and honors;
   c. training and advanced studies attended after college; and
   d. licensure/civil service exam performance.
3. Determine the employment status of BSED graduates relative to:
   a. reasons for unemployment;
   b. place of work;
   c. present employment status;
   d. present occupation/nature of employment;
   e. means of finding employment;
   f. job search period;
   g. gross monthly income;
   h. job level position after graduation; and
   i. job level position after advanced studies
4. Determine the relevance of a college degree to the present work
5. Identify the competencies/skills developed by the university in meeting the demands of the present job/work

Related Literature

Tracer Studies Based on Global and National Perspectives.

Tracer studies are essential for assessing the effectiveness of educational programs by tracking graduates' employment outcomes and career trajectories. A study on Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) graduates majoring in Mathematics from Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences, and Technology (KCAST) from 2022 to 2023 revealed significant insights. The research indicated that 73.5% of the graduates were employed, with a substantial number finding jobs relevant to their field of study. This underscores the importance of tracer studies in evaluating program success and guiding curriculum development.

The perception of HEIs in the Philippines is entwined with their reputation for producing graduates who will find decent, stable employment following graduation. Educational institutions frequently use tracer studies to assess the employability of their graduates. A Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) is also helpful for educational policy and equity implications, according to Daño (2023). They have proposed that policies should pay particular attention to university students from underfunded schools and at the beginning of their studies rather than only focusing on offering solutions for the school. Additionally, they contended that rather than addressing study choices to address graduate unemployment, it would be more beneficial to concentrate on enhancing the fit between these graduates and the labour market by addressing the oversupply-side issues and accounting for how employer preferences and employment practices shape labour demand. (Cuadra et al., 2019).

As a research technique, the tracer study emphasizes that education mismatches capture distinct components of the correctness of the job-worker pairing and, as a result, have distinct financial and non-financial effects for workers. Employers view skill gaps as more significant and pertinent than education mismatches (Sumande et al., 2022).

In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has ordered HEIs to carry out tracer studies to identify a center of excellence and design degree programs. Data from a tracer study could be used to reevaluate the factors influencing and contributing to graduates' employment status. The graduate profile is also one of the documentation requirements of the higher education accrediting

body, such as the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP), Inc. Most graduates found local employment, especially in the government sector, according to the literature now in publication (Cuadra et al., 2019).

Cuadra et al. (2019) also stress the importance of tracer surveys in offering deep insights into the efficacy of program interventions. These surveys use comprehensive data gathering and analysis to clarify the elements that lead to success and failure, enabling program administrators to make evidence-based choices, improve tactics, reallocate resources, and maximize results. Within the program structure, this promotes sustainability and ongoing progress.

The conduct of the tracer study is pivotal as it provides empirical data on the employability of Sultan Kudarat State University—Kalamansig Campus graduates. The data and insights gathered from this study would serve as a baseline for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the university's programs. Such information is vital to inform policymakers on instructional and curriculum development, distribution of learning resources, and policy recommendations.

Tracer studies have emerged as pivotal tools in evaluating the alignment of educational programs with labor market demands, particularly in teacher education. Sanchez et al. (2023) underscore the importance of systematically tracking the career trajectories of graduates to enhance institutional accountability and ensure continuous improvement in academic programs. These studies serve as a feedback mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of curricula, graduate employability, and alignment with professional requirements.

Employability

According to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), employability is a set of attributes, skills, and knowledge that all labor market participants should possess to ensure they can be effective in the workplace—to benefit themselves, their employer, and the broader economy.

Employability was introduced by one of the architects of the British welfare state, William Beveridge, in his book Unemployment: A Problem of Industry. The concept was developed in the United States, and the objective was to identify the difference between employable and unemployable. Glazier (1999), as cited by Misra et al. (2017), named it "dichotomic employability." Here, the primary focus was on labor market conditions, which gave rise to stages of employability. These seven stages are dichotomic employability, socio-medical employability, workforce policy employability, flow employability, labor market performance employability, initiative employability, and interactive employability.

The above-mentioned stages of employability are quite relevant to the economies of the 21st century, such as workforce policy employability, which emphasizes the gap between an individual's possessed.

The employability of Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) graduates has been a focal point in several studies. A tracer study conducted by Asoy and Ozaraga (2023) on Mathematics majors revealed that 73.5% of graduates were employed in education-related fields. This finding highlights a strong alignment between the academic preparation provided by institutions and the actual demands of the teaching profession. Similar trends were observed in Filipino majors, where graduates expressed satisfaction regarding the relevance of their academic training to their current jobs. These outcomes indicate that a well-designed curriculum fosters employability and job satisfaction, essential for sustainable career progression.

However, challenges persist, such as job mismatches and underemployment. The persistence of these issues calls for strategic educational enhancements that address gaps between academic training and labor market needs. The U.S. Department of Education's Strategic Plan for 2022–2026 emphasizes the importance of aligning teacher preparation programs with emerging educational reforms. This includes integrating digital literacy, inclusive education practices, and culturally responsive teaching strategies into teacher education curricula. These reforms aim to prepare graduates for the evolving demands of 21st-century classrooms.

The role of professional development in shaping career trajectories cannot be understated. Continuing professional development (CPD) has been identified as a critical factor in enhancing teacher retention and career satisfaction. A report by Panorama Education (2023) highlights that strategies such as mentorship, professional growth opportunities, and supportive work environments significantly contribute to retaining high-quality educators. By providing CPD opportunities, institutions ensure that teachers remain updated with the latest pedagogical practices and technologies, enabling them to meet diverse student needs effectively.

Despite these efforts, challenges such as inadequate preparation for licensure examinations and limited teaching opportunities in rural areas remain prevalent. A study by Silongan et al. (2024) noted that many graduates struggle to secure positions due to poor licensure examination performance. Institutions can address this issue by implementing robust review programs and fostering partnerships with local educational systems to create more job opportunities for graduates. This would also help bridge the gap between urban and rural educational settings, promoting equity in employment outcomes.

Methods

This study used a descriptive quantitative research method. The quantitative design involves objective measurements and statistical, mathematical, or numerical data analysis gathered through questionnaires and surveys to describe a specific occurrence. This approach uses a survey questionnaire to collect data that systematically describes an event, circumstance, or population (Cabello & Bonotan, 2021). In addition, Ghanad (2023) stated that the descriptive method is more concerned with "what, where, and when" to describe accurately a population, situation, and phenomenon than "why" it happened.

Moreover, it frequently uses observational and survey methods to gather descriptive data and uses graphs and charts to aid the audience in understanding the data distribution visually. This design is appropriate as it utilized a survey to examine and determine the BSED graduates' demographic profile, academic profile, and employment status. It will also determine and describe the perception of the graduates as to the relevance of their degree to the present work and the needed competencies and skills for graduates' employment.

Moreover, the study's respondents are Bachelor of Secondary Education graduates at the SKSU-Kalamansig campus from 2018 until 2022. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to the year of graduation. Initially, total enumeration sampling was employed; however, convenience sampling was considered in this study. Out of the target population, only 137 respondents completed the online survey. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method of selecting participants based on their accessibility and availability, usually in terms of geographical proximity, but may also include another type of accessibility, such as known contacts (Frey, 2018).

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents according to Year Graduated

Year Graduated	Bachelor of Secondary Education	
	f	%
2022	35	24.64
2021	24	16.90
2020	14	9.85
2019	41	28.87
2018	27	19.01
TOTAL	**141**	**100.00**

Furthermore, the instrument used to collect the data is the standard tracer study developed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and modified to align with the study's specific objectives. The changes include vital information while removing unnecessary elements irrelevant to the study's objectives. Data was collected through Google Forms, an online survey tool that facilitated efficient dissemination and response gathering.

The questionnaire was divided into five parts. The first part of the questionnaire contained the graduates' socio-demographic profile, including age, gender, civil status, and residence. The second part included the academic profile, such as the reasons for taking the program, awards and honors, training and advanced studies attended after college, reasons for taking the training and advanced degrees, and licensure/civil service exam performance. The third part contained the employment status of the graduates, which included the reasons for unemployment, place of work, present employment status, present occupation/nature of employment, means of finding employment, job search period, gross monthly income, job level position after graduation, job level position after advanced studies. The fourth part is the relevance of a college degree to the present work, while the fifth part is the competencies/skills developed by the university in meeting the demands of the present job/work.

In analyzing the data, the study utilized frequency and percentage count as statistical tools to describe the distribution of demographic and employment-related data, the relevance of the degree to the present job/work, and the competencies/skills developed by the university in meeting the demands of the present work. This statistical method is appropriate as it explains the graduates' trajectories and the university's impact on professional development.

The study adhered to ethical considerations. These considerations are strictly observed to ensure the integrity of the research process and protect the rights of the respondents. The researchers sent a letter of request to the SKSU-Kalamansig Campus Director for approval to allow the researchers to conduct the study. After the approval, the researchers prepared again a letter addressed to the Campus Registrar to secure the list of BSED graduates.

Informed consent was obtained by providing respondents with detailed information about the study's purpose, scope, and confidentiality measures. Participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time. All personal data collected were anonymized and securely stored to protect respondents' identities, ensuring that information was used exclusively for research purposes. No pressure or coercion was applied to respondents to participate, respecting their autonomy. The research was conducted with the approval of SKSU's ethics review board. By incorporating these ethical principles, the study ensured the trust and cooperation of participants, contributing to the validity and reliability of its findings.

Result and Discussion
Table 2. Graduates' Socio-Demographic Profile

Profile	Bachelor of Secondary Education (n=137)	
Age	**f**	**%**
21 – 25	47	34.30
26 – 30	54	39.41
31 – 35	31	5.33
36 – 40	5	3.64
Gender		
Male	59	43.06
Female	78	56.93

Profile	Bachelor of Secondary Education (n=137)	
Civil Status		
Single	57	41.60
Married	75	54.74
Separated/Divorced	2	1.45
Born a child but not married	3	2.18
Residence		
Municipality	123	89.78
City	14	10.21

Table 2 indicates the socio-demographic profile of the BSED graduates relative to their age, gender, civil status, and residence.

As indicated, 47 BSED graduates (34.30%) are between 21-25 years old, and 54 or 39.41% of the graduates are between 26-30 years old (the largest age group). 31, or 5.33%, fall between 31-35 years old, while 5 or 3.64 BSED graduates are between 36-40 years old. This finding indicates that most graduates are early in their careers, which makes this a prime time to assess how well their education has prepared them for employment. It further indicates a typical age range for early career professionals recently entering the workforce.

Regarding gender distribution, 59 or 43.06% of the graduates are male, while 78 or 56.93% are female graduates. This implies that a higher portion of the BSED graduates are female, which aligns with the general trend in education where women often dominate. While females slightly outnumber males, this diversity ensures a balanced perspective in assessing the program's effectiveness.

Regarding civil status, 57 BSED graduates, or 41.60%, are single, and 75 graduates, or 54.74%, are married. 2 graduates, or 1.45%, fall in the separated/divorced while 3 graduates, or 2.18%, were born a child but were not married. This means that a significant percentage of graduates are married, indicating that many have familial responsibilities alongside their professional roles. With over half of the graduates married, work-life balance and family-oriented benefits may be crucial in job satisfaction and career progression.

Relative to residence, 123 graduates, or 89.78%, reside within municipalities, while 14, or 10.21%, reside in the cities. This finding suggests a preference to stay in rural areas due to job availability, family ties, or the lower cost of living. This high number of graduates in municipalities suggests a potential alignment of the university's program with local labor market needs, although it might also highlight a lack of urban job opportunities.

Table 3. Graduates' Academic Profile

Academic Profile	Bachelor of Secondary Education (n=137)	
Reasons for Taking the BSED Program	f	%
Strong passion for the profession	85	62.04
Influence of parents and relative	21	15.32
Inspired by a role model	17	12.40
Good grades in the high school	1	0.72
Availability of course offerings in the chosen institution	16	11.67
Prospect for immediate employment	101	73.72
High grades in the subject related to the program	2	1.45
Availability of scholarship grant for the program	117	85.40

Academic Profile	Bachelor of Secondary Education (n=137)	
Prospect of career advancement	127	92.70
Peer influence	50	36.49
Prospect of attractive compensation	121	88.32
Status of prestige of the profession	121	88.32
Opportunity for employment abroad	115	83.94
No particular choice or idea	3	2.18
Awards and Honors Received		
Government Scholarship (TDP/DOST/CHED/LGU)	127	92.79
Academic Excellence	101	73.72
Leadership/Service/Athlete Award	121	88.32
Institutional Scholarship	131	95.62
Award of Distinction	119	86.86
No Award	7	5.10
Training and Advanced Degree Attended after College Level		
Computer Literacy Training	51	37.22
Teaching Methodology Training	135	98.54
Conference and Events	131	95.62
Mentoring Programs	47	34.40
Technical Certification/National Certification	117	85.40
Proficiency Training	135	98.54
ICT Training	51	37.22
Special Education Training	21	15.32
Action and Basic Research Training	122	89.05
Radio-Based Instruction Training	113	82.48
First-aid Training	100	72.99
Leadership and Supervision Training	119	86.86
MA/MS Graduate	96	70.07
PhD/EdD/ Post Graduate	32	23.35
Eligibility		
LET	105	76.64
CSE - Professional	9	6.56
CSE – SubProfessional	5	3.64
Not Applicable	32	23.35

Table 3 outlines the academic profile of the BSED graduates from Sultan Kudarat State University—Kalamansig Campus in terms of reasons for taking the BSED program, awards and honors received, training, and advanced degrees attended.

As outlined, the most notable reasons for taking the BSED program were prospects for career advancement (92.70%) and attractive compensation (88.32%), emphasizing the practical considerations driving students toward the teaching profession. The availability of scholarships (85.40%) and the opportunity for employment abroad (83.94%) also played a significant role, highlighting the importance of financial support and international mobility in career planning.

The finding supports the idea of Aquinoet al. (2015), who mentioned the role of employability and financial factors in program selection. This aligns with the findings that career prospects and scholarships are critical motivators.

Many respondents, 127 or 92.79%, received government scholarships, with many also earning academic excellence and leadership awards. The data suggests significant institutional support and a high-performing student body for the BSED graduates of the SKSU-Kalamansig campus. The emphasis on scholarships and academic performance mirrors trends observed by Cuadra et al. (2019), who noted the impact of institutional or government support on the graduates' success. This also means that the higher the institutional support, the higher the possibility of performing well in the school and the workplace environment.

In terms of training and advanced studies attended, most BSED graduates of the SKSU-Kalamansig campus pursued proficiency training (98.54%), teaching methodology training (98.54%), and action and basic research training (89.05%). This figure indicates that the BSED graduates showed genuine commitment to continuous professional development. A significant proportion pursued advanced degrees, with 70.07% earning master's degrees and 23.35% achieving doctoral-level qualifications.

As Panorama Education (2023) highlighted, continuing development is essential for teachers to keep in touch with the latest trends in education and maximize their effectiveness inside and outside the four corners of their classrooms. The report also advocated professional development to meet the ever-changing educational landscape.

The Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) was the most common qualification achieved, with 76.64% underscoring the graduates' alignment with the regulatory requirements for teaching. Studies such as those by Abao et al. (2023) reflect the significance of licensure for employability, identifying licensure performance as a key determinant of employment.

Table 4. Graduates Employment Status

Employment Data	Bachelor of Secondary Education (n=137)	
Reasons for Unemployment	*f*	*%*
Waiting for a permanent position	5	3.64
Lack of work experience	32	23.35
Soft skills deficiency	11	8.02
Prepare to take the licensure exam	32	23.35
No job opportunities	5	2.64
Pregnant	10	7.29
Health concern	2	1.45
Take a break	5	3.64
Unmotivated	3	2.18
Enrolled in TESDA/ Other vocational courses	17	12.40
Not applicable	100	72.99
Place of Work		
Local	96	70.07
Abroad	4	2.91
Not applicable	37	27.00
Present Employment Status		
Regular/Permanent	79	57.66
Self-employed	4	2.91

Employment Data	Bachelor of Secondary Education (n=137)	
Contractual	7	5.10
Temporary	7	5.10
Job order/Casual	3	2.18
Not applicable	37	27.00
Present Occupation/Nature of Employment		
Professional/Instructor/Teacher	68	49.63
Supervisory/Administrative Function	11	8.02
Clerks	11	8.02
Private Sector Employee	10	7.29
Not applicable	37	27.00
Means of Finding Employment		
Recommended by someone	2	1.45
Walk-in applicant	87	63.50
Media/newspaper	7	5.10
Advertisements	2	1.45
Information from friends	2	1.45
Not applicable	37	27.00
Job Search Period		
1 – 6 months	15	10.94
7 months – 12 months (1 year)	38	27.73
13 months – 18 months	16	11.67
19 months – 24 months	21	15.32
More than 24 months	10	7.29
Not applicable	37	27.00
Gross Monthly Income		
P25,000.00 and above	82	59.85
P20,000.00 to less than 25,000.00	8	5.83
P15,000.00 to less than 20,000.00	10	7.29
P10,000.00 to less than 15,000.00	0	0.00
P5,000.00 to less than 10,000.00	0	0.00
P5,000.00 and below	0	0.00
Not applicable	37	27.00
Job Level Position after Graduation		
Rank or clerical	28	20.43
Professional, Technical, or Supervisory	68	49.63
Managerial or Executive	0	0.00
Self-Employed	4	2.91
Not applicable	37	27.00
Job Level Position after Advanced Studies		
Rank or Clerical	30	21.89
Professional, Technical, or Supervisory	65	47.44

Employment Data	Bachelor of Secondary Education (n=137)	
Managerial or Executive	5	3.64
Not applicable	37	27.00

Table 4 presents the employment status of the BSED graduates of SKSU-Kalamansig Campus from 2018-2022 in terms of reasons for employment, place of work, employment status, nature of employment, means of finding employment, job search period, gross monthly income, job level position after graduation, and job level position after advanced studies.

In terms of reasons for unemployment, a significant proportion of graduates were unemployed due to lack of work experience (23.35%) and ongoing preparation for the Licensure Examination for Teachers (23.35%). Other reasons for unemployment included pregnancy (7.29%), health concerns (1.45%), soft skills deficiency (8.02%), no job opportunities (2.64%), taking a break (3.64%), being unmotivated (2.18%), and being enrolled in TESDA (12.40%).

Moreover, the lack of work experience (23.35%) and preparation for the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) (23.35%) are the most cited reasons for unemployment. This highlights two key areas of concern: the transition from academic learning to practical teaching and the pressure to pass the LET before securing stable employment. Many teacher education graduates struggle to secure immediate employment due to a lack of hands-on experience. While practice teaching is embedded in the curriculum, it may not fully replicate the challenges of full-time teaching. Employers, particularly in public schools, often prioritize candidates with actual classroom experience, creating a paradox where fresh graduates need experience to get a job but cannot gain experience without employment. Strengthening internship programs and school partnerships can help bridge this gap by offering extended teaching assistantships, shadowing programs, or post-graduation fellowships to help graduates gain the necessary exposure.

The heavy focus on LET preparation also suggests that many graduates delay entering the workforce until they pass the exam. This could be due to the perceived necessity of professional licensure for career stability. However, this delay can have unintended consequences, as some graduates may become disengaged from the teaching profession or explore alternative careers. A possible intervention is integrating more structured LET review programs within the final year of study, reducing the need for long post-graduation preparation periods.

Beyond licensure and experience, soft skills deficiency (8.02%) was another factor in unemployment. This suggests that while graduates may be technically competent, they might lack confidence, adaptability, or classroom management skills that employers seek. Schools should consider embedding real-world teaching simulations, conflict resolution training, and communication workshops into their programs to address this concern.

These findings align with Abao et al. (2023), which emphasized the importance of early exposure to work environments and preparatory programs to reduce unemployment. Strategies such as pre-graduation training or internships can address this gap by enhancing practical skills and readiness for licensure.

In terms of place of work, 96 or 70.07% of the BSED graduates are employed locally, with only 2.91% working abroad. This raises an important question: Are graduates choosing local employment due to strong regional job availability, or do they lack the resources and qualifications to work overseas? Several factors likely contribute to this trend. First, the demand for teachers in local municipalities remains high, especially with government programs expanding access to education in rural areas. The Department of Education (DepEd) continues to hire teachers, providing stable employment opportunities close to home.

However, personal and social factors also play a role. Many graduates may feel culturally and emotionally tied to their families, making them less inclined to seek opportunities

outside their immediate communities. This aligns with global studies showing that job seekers from tight-knit, family-oriented cultures tend to prioritize local employment over international opportunities.

Additionally, international mobility in teaching is often limited by certification barriers. Many countries require additional training, English proficiency exams, or country-specific licensure before hiring foreign educators. If the university intends to expand graduates' international employability, offering globally recognized certifications, English proficiency training, or partnerships with international schools may be a viable strategy. This finding aligns with findings by Aquino et al. (2015) on regional employability and institutional alignment with local labor market demands.

In terms of employment status, most BSED graduates have a permanent or regular position (57.66%). This means these graduates hold regular positions in government sectors, particularly in the Department of Education (DepEd). This highlights the success of the graduates in securing stable employment. This supports the need for continuous curriculum alignment with labor market needs, as emphasized by Teichler (2018).

Relative to their present occupation/nature of employment, almost half (49.63%) of the BSED graduates are employed as professionals in teaching or instructional roles. As Panorama Education (2023) mentioned, this outcome reflects the curriculum's alignment with the teaching profession and the development of subject-specific skills.

For means of finding employment, the respondents found employment through walk-in applications, suggesting that traditional job-seeking methods remain effective for these graduates. However, limited use of networks or media points is needed to enhance career services at the university level and facilitate broader opportunities.

For the search period, 38 respondents, or 27.73%, found employment within 7-12 months, considered the most common timeframe. 15 or 10.94% secured the job within 1-6 months, indicating a shorter transition period for some. A notable 21, or 15.32%, took 19-24 months, while 10, or 7.29%,

required over 24 months. The distribution suggests that while many graduates find a job quickly, a significant portion faces an extended job search period. A protracted job search for some graduates may indicate a misalignment between graduate qualifications and job market demands. Factors such as preparation for licensure exams (23.35% of unemployment reasons) and limited work experience could contribute to more extended job search periods.

One of the study's most promising findings is that 59.85% of graduates earn P25,000 or more, suggesting that teaching remains a financially viable profession. This is an encouraging sign that the program successfully produces employable graduates who secure decent wages.

However, while entry-level salaries are strong, the study shows limited progression into managerial or executive roles. Many graduates remain in rank-and-file teaching positions (49.63%), and even after advanced studies, only 3.64% reached managerial positions.

This stagnation suggests a bottleneck in career advancement opportunities for teachers. Unlike other professions, where experience and performance can lead to quick promotions, the education sector often requires formal graduate studies (e.g., a Master's or Doctorate) for career progression. However, even among those with advanced degrees, few ascend to leadership positions. To address this, the university could introduce targeted leadership development programs, mentorship initiatives, and administrative training to prepare teachers for higher roles in school management. Offering electives on educational leadership, policy-making, and institutional management could also give graduates a competitive edge for promotions. Similar trends were observed in the study by Aquino et al. (2015), which linked graduate earning potential to curriculum alignment and professional preparedness.

In terms of job level positions after graduation and advanced studies, the jobs after graduation of the BSED graduates were predominantly professional or technical (49.63%), with clerical roles at 20.43%. After advanced studies, managerial or executive roles increased to 3.64%. This progression demonstrates the im-

pact of further education on career advancement, though managerial representation remains low. As Misra and Khurana (2017) noted, this progression highlights the importance of leadership development in higher education curricula to enable upward mobility.

Table 5. Relevance of College Degree to the Present Job

Description	Bachelor of Secondary Education (n=137)	
	f	**%**
Very Relevant	61	44.52
Relevant	27	19.70
Neutral	10	7.29
Irrelevant	2	1.45
Very Irrelevant	0	0.00
Not Applicable	37	27.00

Table 5 presents the BSED graduates' perception of the relevance of their degree program to their present work/job.

The study found that 64.22% of graduates rated their degree as "Very Relevant" or "Relevant" to their job. This indicates that the curriculum is well-aligned with the skills required in the teaching profession. However, for the 7.29% who rated their degree as "Neutral" and the 1.45% who found it "Irrelevant," a deeper analysis is necessary.

One possibility is that these graduates have transitioned into non-teaching roles, such as administrative work, private sector jobs, or entrepreneurship. The curriculum may not have prepared them for these alternative career paths, leading to perceptions of irrelevance.

The university could explore curriculum enhancements that introduce modules on educational technology, content creation, business aspects of private tutoring, and alternative education careers (such as corporate training or instructional design). This way, graduates who do not pursue traditional teaching can still find value in their degrees.

Additionally, those who found their degree irrelevant may have encountered skill mismatches between their academic training and real-world job demands. This could be addressed by conducting employer feedback sessions, allowing educators to refine the curriculum based on industry needs.

Table 6. Competencies/Skills Developed by the University in Meeting the Demands of the Present Work/Job

Competencies/Skills	Bachelor of Secondary Education (n=137)	
	f	**%**
Communication Skills	135	98.54
Human Relation Skills	127	92.70
Critical Thinking Skills	131	95.62
Technical Skills	105	76.64
Research Skills	137	100.00
Information, Media, and Technology Skills	123	89.78
Cooperation and Collaboration Skills	105	76.64
Problem-solving and Analytical Skills	131	95.62
Leadership Skills	136	99.27
Entrepreneurial Skills	101	73.72
Numeracy Skills	121	88.32
Ethical and Professional Skills	133	97.08

Table 6 displays the competencies and skills developed by the university among the BSED graduates to meet the demands of the present job/work.

As displayed, communication skills (98.54%), critical thinking (95.62%), and leadership skills (99.27%) rank highly, indicating the university's fulfilment in fostering soft skills. Ethical and professional skills (97.08%) underscore the focus on cultivating professionalism. Cuadra et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of ethical training in producing competent and responsible educators, echoing this study's strong emphasis on ethical and professional skills.

Also, all respondents (100%) reported research skills, showcasing the institution's emphasis on integrating research into the teacher education program. Problem-solving and analytical skills garnered 95.62%, which indicates the alignment of the university's strategic planning to the educational priorities.

Moreover, information, media, and technology skills gained 89.78%, and cooperation and collaboration skills gained 76.64% from the respondents. This means that BSED graduates demonstrate readiness for 21st-century teaching-learning environments. It also means that the institution equipped the BSED graduates with the knowledge, skills, and modern mindset needed for their teaching profession.

Entrepreneurial skills (73.72%) and numeracy skills (88.32%) are less prominent but still significant. This figure reflects the university's efforts and strategies to develop well-rounded skills among the BSED graduates.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made;

1. The majority of graduates are young professionals, primarily from rural areas, highlighting the university's role in producing educators who cater to local community needs. This suggests the importance of strengthening rural education initiatives and expanding support systems for early-career teachers.
2. Graduates' primary motivations for enrolling in the BSED program—career advancement, attractive compensation, and scholarship availability—underscore the need for continued institutional support in providing accessible education and financial assistance. Strengthening industry-academe linkages can further enhance job placement and career progression opportunities.
3. The employment rate of BSED graduates is high, with most employed locally and in stable teaching positions. A significant proportion works as teachers, indicating alignment between academic preparation and labor market needs. Reasons for unemployment, such as lack of experience and preparation for licensure exams, highlight the need for enhanced pre-graduation training and licensure review programs.
4. The perceived relevance of the BSED degree to current jobs affirms the university's alignment with labor market needs. However, the findings also suggest the need for curriculum diversification to accommodate graduates pursuing careers beyond traditional teaching roles.
5. The strong development of competencies such as communication, research, and leadership skills reflects the university's commitment to holistic education. However, gaps in managerial career progression indicate a need for targeted leadership training and professional development pathways.

Recommendations

Based on the study's conclusions, the following recommendations were formulated.

1. The university may strengthen internship programs and partnerships to provide graduates with hands-on experiences by implementing structured mentorship programs with experienced educators and providing internship stipends to encourage participation in rural areas.
2. The university may enhance career services to support graduates in job-seeking strategies by establishing annual career fairs with school representatives and education agencies and developing an online job portal exclusive to university graduates.

3. The university may introduce targeted leadership development programs by creating mentorship initiatives with senior educators and school principals and providing leadership training focused on classroom management and policy-making.

4. The university should review and update curricula to integrate emerging skills, particularly entrepreneurship and advanced technologies. They may integrate entrepreneurship training for self-employment and private tutoring, include modules on advanced digital literacy and educational technology, and enhance the research component to align with modern educational challenges.

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