

From campus to career: Secondary teacher education graduates' employment profile, programme satisfaction, and recommendations for improvement

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Abstract

Alumni employment serves as a critical indicator of an educational institution's quality. Furthermore, alumni feedback provides valuable information for programme sustainability. This graduate tracer study investigated the employment profile, programme satisfaction, and recommendations of Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) graduates from a Philippine State University between 2019 and 2023, with the majority of respondents graduating in the two most recent years. Data were collected via a graduate tracer survey. The findings reveal a high overall employment rate of 87.86% among the traced graduates. However, a near-even distribution was observed between those employed as teachers (46.24%) and those in non-teaching roles (41.62%). Furthermore, private-sector employment (47.98%) surpassed public-sector employment (36.71%). An in-depth analysis reveals that among employed teachers, the private school sector predominates, whereas this trend is reversed for non-teaching roles. Notably, a significant proportion of graduates (68.22%) secured employment within six months of graduation. The respondents also reported being "very adequately prepared" in 21st-century skills. These results collectively underscore the graduates' commendable employment and employability skills, as well as their overall satisfaction with their undergraduate training in secondary education. Finally, their recommendations for programme improvement coalesced into six overarching themes: curriculum and course content, experiential learning and practical training, student support and development, facilities and resources, administrative and policy improvements, and faculty and pedagogy.

Keywords: *tracer study, Bachelor of Secondary Education, 21st-century skills, employment, employability*

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1. Introduction

The primary mission of higher education institutions (HEIs) is to facilitate the successful transition of their graduates into the professional workforce. Consequently, the employment status and employability of graduates serve as critical indicators of institutional efficacy and the quality of higher education provision (Gines, 2014). These vital parameters are systematically measured through specialised methodologies known as Graduate Tracer Studies (GTS), an empirical assessment tools designed to systematically track the post-graduation trajectories of alumni. Their primary objective is to determine graduates' professional conditions, particularly their employment status (Gines, 2014). Fundamentally, GTS establishes and delineates the intricate relationship between educational attainment and labour market outcomes (Ramos, 2024; Tutor et al., 2021).

The findings from GTS provide invaluable insights for higher education institutions (HEIs), directly informing curriculum improvement and reform initiatives (Agoylo et al., 2024; Cuadra et al., 2019; Gaite et al., 2022; Pentang et al., 2024; Saong et al., 2023). Furthermore, these results provide empirical data crucial for refining career guidance and counselling services for prospective and current students (Gines, 2014) and for objectively assessing the attainment of an institution's vision, mission, goals, and objectives (Dela Cruz, 2022; Sotero et al., 2024). Given their comprehensive utility in quality assurance, it is therefore standard practice for regulatory bodies, such as the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and various accreditation agencies to mandate the conduct of GTS by all HEIs (Patulin et al., 2024; Sarsale et al., 2024).

In response to these directives, numerous researchers have undertaken GTS to systematically track graduates and gather feedback on their experiences with academic programmes. The research instruments employed in many of these studies are frequently adapted from tools recommended by CHED. Published GTS literature predominantly focuses on specific disciplinary programmes, including education, information technology, and tourism. Of these programmes, GTS involving teacher education graduates, specifically from state HEIs, are particularly prevalent. (e.g., Daminar et al., 2022; Pamittan et al., 2022; Vidania et al., 2023).

At the institutional level, the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) programme has been the subject of four previous tracer studies since 1993. The initial investigation by Sito et al. (2008) focused on ascertaining graduate employability through the identification of

employment status (employed or non-employed), employing agencies, job descriptions, time to employment, and teaching levels. Subsequently, Parcasio et al. (2015) augmented the employment data with qualitative feedback from employers regarding graduates' work performance. Bansiong et al. (2020) then explored the relationship between graduates' employment profiles and their motivation towards teaching. Most recently, Bansiong and Alawas (2024) solicited feedback from BSED alumni on their undergraduate training and gathered recommendations for programme enhancement.

The continuous and evolving conduct of GTS by HEIs is imperative, given the dynamic, unique, and diverse nature of graduate cohorts. This initiative is particularly salient for SUCs, which often provide tuition-free education. Through comprehensive GTS, taxpayers and policymakers receive transparent information regarding the post-graduation status of alumni, thereby ensuring accountability and demonstrating the return on public investment in higher education.

This current study was therefore conceptualised to extend the ongoing systematic tracking of the employment and employability of BSED graduates from 2019 to 2023. More specifically, this study aimed: to describe the nature, status, and sector of employment of the graduates; determine their time of employment after graduation; identify their reasons for unemployment and underemployment; determine their assessment of their level of attainment of the 21st-century skills; and gather their recommendations for the improvement of the BSED programme.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This tracer study is informed by three primary theoretical frameworks: human capital theory, signaling theory, and career development theories. These theories provided a lens for interpreting the study's findings.

According to human capital theory, education and training are investments that enhance an individual's productivity and earning potential (Becker, 2002). Tracer studies, through this framework, measure how a graduate's level and quality of education influence their career trajectory and income. The theory posits that educational institutions play a crucial role in improving graduates' employment outcomes.

Signaling theory suggests that a college degree functions as a signal to employers about an applicant's underlying abilities, talent, or work ethic (Connelly et al., 2025). From this perspective, tracer studies assess the strength of this signal by analyzing how factors like university prestige or degree type affect a graduate's hiring potential and career progression, often irrespective of their actual skills.

Finally, career development theories encompass a group of interrelated theories, such as Super's life-span, life-space theory (Super, 2020) and Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environment (Mumme, 1997). These theories provide a structure for understanding the stages of career development and the factors that influence career decisions. Using this lens, tracer studies can analyze graduates' long-term career trajectories, including job satisfaction, career transitions, and the alignment of personal interests and values with work.

2.2. Employment and Employability

While the terms employment and employability are often used interchangeably, they represent distinct concepts in scholarly discourse. Employment refers to the straightforward state of being engaged in paid work or self-employment. In contrast, employability is a more complex, multifaceted construct with varying definitions. Some researchers define employability as the acquisition of qualities and competencies that enable an individual to secure and retain a job (Alrifai & Raju, 2019). This perspective emphasizes the personal attributes and abilities a person possesses. Another view regards employability as the capacity for lifelong learning and development of these abilities and qualities throughout one's career (Harvey, 2010). This definition highlights the dynamic nature of skills required in the modern workforce. Employability is also conceptualized as the set of skills a person possesses that align with the specific needs of the labor market (Arif et al., 2023). This perspective gave rise to the term "employability skills," which are aptitudes that enable graduates to perform effectively in any profession.

2.3. Employment and Employability of Graduates

Tracer studies are a common form of research in the Philippines, particularly within higher education institutions. A scoping review by Fahmy et al. (2025) found that a significant portion of recent tracer studies originated from the Philippines. Some of these tracer studies

have focused on hospitality, tourism, and restaurant management/services (e.g., Abad et al., 2025; Gaite et al., 2022), and food service management (Lagatic et al., 2024), information technology and computing sciences/studies (e.g., Andaya et al., 2024), legal management (Agustin, 2021), business administration (e.g., Estrellado et al., 2025), and accountancy (Abella et al., 2024).

2.4 Employment and Employability of Teacher Education Graduates

Tracer studies focusing on teacher education graduates are particularly common in the Philippines, with a significant number of these studies published in recent years. Some of these studies focus specifically on elementary (e.g., Abana et al., 2021), secondary (e.g., Arbis et al., 2023; Francisco & Aquino, 2024), or both groups (e.g., Daminar et al., 2022; Vidania et al., 2023). With secondary education graduates in focus, many studies report high employment rates (Salendab & Dapitan, 2025). The employment time was short (Sensal et al., 2023). However, non-permanent positions are prevalent, and private school employment (e.g., Caingcoy et al., 2021). Career advancement and attractive salaries are the key motivators for pursuing a degree in education (Salendab & Dapitan, 2025). As regards the skills acquired by the graduates in their institutions, communication, critical thinking, research, and problem-solving are frequently mentioned (Sensal et al., 2023). Graduate respondents generally rate their teacher education programs as effective, and the skills and competencies gained were highly relevant to their jobs (e.g., Sensal et al., 2023).

The primary reasons for unemployment are often cited as family concerns, lack of job opportunities, and insufficient work experience (Abas et al., 2020). To improve the programme, respondents identified curriculum enhancement, personality development, and values formation (Pentang et al., 2022) and faculty development and facility updating (Pardo et al., 2021).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study was descriptive in nature, employing survey procedures to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative approach was used in determining the BSED graduates' employment data, their reasons for unemployment and underemployment, and their extent of attainment of 21st-century skills. The qualitative approach was used in identifying

the graduates' recommendations for programme improvement. There was no attempt to use both approaches in any of the objectives. Thus, based on the explanation of Creswell and Pano (2010), the study does not qualify as mixed-method research.

In the interpretation of the qualitative data, the authors' epistemological stance was both constructivist and pragmatist. The alumni respondents were assumed to have responded to the survey based on their individual experiences and interpretations (constructivism) and that their responses were based on how well the program prepared them for the realities of teaching (pragmatism).

3.2. Participants of the Study

The study's participants were 346 BSED graduates from the years 2019 to 2023. The distribution of respondents across the graduation cohorts is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of the respondents per year

Year	F	%
2019	70	20.23
2020	16	4.62
2021	18	5.20
2022	123	35.55
2023	119	34.39
Total	346	100.00

A notable concentration of respondents originated from the 2022 cohorts. The higher participation rate among more recent graduates is likely attributable to increased accessibility and recall, given their more recent graduation. This demographic profile has potential implications for interpreting findings related to initial employment patterns and sectors, as these recent graduates are more likely to be in the early stages of career establishment or seeking permanent positions. Conversely, the 2020 cohorts exhibited lower response rates, as they were the graduates who did not undergo the senior high school curriculum.

Demographically, the respondent pool demonstrated strong academic credentials, with over half (52.20%) being honour graduates. Furthermore, a substantial majority (96.95%) of the respondents held a professional teaching licence, and a considerable number also held Civil

Service eligibility. These academic and professional qualifications are critical variables with significant implications for the employment and employability outcomes of the graduates.

3.3. Instrumentation and Data Gathering Process

A three-part CTE Graduate Tracer Questionnaire Version 2 (CGTQv2) was developed for this study and administered in both online and print formats. The CGTQv2 is a streamlined and programme-specific adaptation of the comprehensive graduate tracer survey instrument developed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The instrument collected the respondents' demographic profile and the pertinent information that satisfied the study objectives.

3.4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the survey instrument were analysed using descriptive statistics. The open-ended responses were subjected to thematic analysis, following the systematic procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved a rigorous six-phase process: data familiarisation, initial code generation, theme search, theme review, theme definition and nomenclature, and reporting. The themes were inductively generated from the responses, modifying the initial inductive analysis process outlined by Naeem et al. (2023).

All responses were written in English. Coding and thematization were done manually. The two authors reviewed and deliberated on the clustering of statements into subthemes and themes until a consensus was reached.

3.5. Research Ethics

Before the administration of the CGTQv2, all prospective participants were presented with a comprehensive informed consent form. This document meticulously outlined the study's objectives, the nature of their involvement as research participants, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Completion of the questionnaire was considered an implicit affirmation of their consent to participate in the study.

Participants did not receive any monetary compensation for their involvement. Throughout the data collection and analysis phases, stringent measures were implemented to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of all provided data. Participants were explicitly

assured that their identities would not be linked to their responses and that their data would be protected from unauthorised access or disclosure.

For data management, all collected responses were securely transcribed into an electronic spreadsheet format. In adherence to ethical research protocols for data retention, all electronic files containing raw research data were permanently deleted one year following the completion of the study. This procedure ensured the long-term protection of participant privacy and data security.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the employment profiles of the respondents. Employment profile covers the respondents' nature, sector, and time of employment. It also reveals their level of attainment of the 21st-century skills, and their recommendations for program employment.

4.1. Employment Profile of the Respondents

Table 2 presents the employment profile of the BSED graduates, detailing the nature, sector, and location of their employment. Of the 346 respondents, a substantial majority (87.86%) reported being currently employed, while the remaining 12.14% indicated unemployment.

The observed high employment rate among these secondary education graduates aligns with findings from previous tracer studies conducted at the same institution (Bansiong et al., 2020). The consistently high employment rate among the traced BSED graduates suggests that the programme is strongly responsive to the labour market. As supported by the human capital theory (Becker, 2002) and the signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2025), the case college and programme have helped enhance the graduates' employability skills.

The results likewise imply that the graduates possess a notable degree of professional flexibility as they were successfully employed outside of the teaching sector. This adaptability underscores the comprehensive training received within the BSED programme, preparing graduates for a wide range of diverse professional opportunities. Additionally, the high employment rate suggests that these graduates are proactive in their job-seeking and willing to accept entry-level or lower-paying positions to secure initial employment. Such results

exemplify the basic tenets of the career development theories (Mumme, 1997; Super, 2020), particularly on how personal interest and values with work align with their career trajectories.

Table 2

Employment profile of the respondents according to the nature and sectors of employment

	F	%
Nature of Employment		
Teaching	160	46.24
Non-teaching	144	41.62
Unemployed	42	12.14
Sector of Employment		
Public sector	127	36.71
Private sector	166	47.98
Abroad	5	1.45
Not indicated	6	1.73
Unemployed	42	12.14
Nature-Sector of Employment		
Teaching in Public Schools	37	10.69
Teaching in Private Schools	115	33.24
Teaching abroad	4	1.16
Teaching in unknown Sectors	4	1.16
Non-teaching in Gov't Sectors	90	26.01
Non-teaching in the Private Sectors	51	14.74
Non-teaching abroad	1	0.29
Non-teaching in Unknown Sectors	2	0.58
Unemployed	42	12.14
TOTAL	346	100.00

The unemployment rate among the traced graduates in this study is 12.14%. While this figure is higher than the unemployment rate of 2.63% reported by Arbis et al. (2023), it is notably lower than those documented in several other studies. For instance, Francisco and Aquino (2024) observed an unemployment rate of 18.08%, followed by Caingcoy et al. (2021) with 20.40%, Palao et al. (2022) with 22.43%, and Sensal et al. (2023) with 48.57%. This comparative analysis suggests that the unemployment rate of the current cohort of traced graduates is relatively favourable compared with findings from similar groups.

Among employed graduates, there is a marginal majority working as teachers (46.24%). However, this proportion is considerably lower than the teaching employment rates observed in similar studies. For example, Caingcoy et al. (2021), Palao et al. (2022), and Arbis et al. (2023) reported proportions of graduates employed as teachers ranging from 58.35% to 83.78%. Conversely, the underemployed graduates are engaged in various sectors, including government and private offices. Many graduates are employed as police, jail, and fire officers, aligning with the findings of Pamittan et al. (2022). Some are also self-employed. These findings suggest important implications regarding graduates' career preferences and the current availability of teaching positions in the job market.

The employment landscape for the traced graduates reveals a notable distribution across various sectors. Nearly half of the employed cohorts are situated within the private sector, while a lower proportion are engaged in the public sector. A smaller fraction has secured employment internationally. This finding conforms with Bansiong et al. (2020), Caingcoy et al. (2021), and Francisco and Aquino (2024), but contrasts with Arbis et al. (2023) and Biscante et al. (2019).

The divergence in the results may be attributable to variations in the demographic composition and programme focus of the graduate cohorts analysed in the respective studies, underscoring the influence of specific contextual factors on employment outcomes. The higher private employment is consistent with the demographic profile of the respondents, many of whom are recent graduates from 2022 and 2023. It is a recognised pattern in the Philippine labour market that new professionals often commence their careers in the private sector for entry-level opportunities.

A contributing factor to the lower proportion of graduates employed in public schools is the relatively limited submission rate for public school teacher (Teacher I) positions, with only 27% of the traced respondents submitting the requisite documents. This phenomenon is mainly attributable to the prevailing requirement for new teaching professionals that includes teaching experience. Conversely, a greater proportion of traced graduates pursuing non-teaching careers is concentrated in the public sector. Within this non-teaching cohort, the number of individuals employed in government offices is approximately twice that of those in private firms. These government agencies encompass local government units (LGUs) and uniformed services. While these underemployed graduates may have opted for career trajectories divergent from their initial academic specialisation, their engagement across these

sectors undeniably signifies their productive contribution to society. Notably, certain public agencies, including the police force, express a preference for applicants holding degrees in education, highlighting the versatility of these qualifications.

The remaining cohort of graduates who participated in this tracer study is employed internationally, predominantly in teaching roles. A small number of respondents did not specify their sector or location of employment.

4.2. Time of Employment after Graduation

A substantial majority of the surveyed alumni (68.22%) secured employment within six months post-graduation (Table 3), indicating strong employability among graduates and the availability of relevant job opportunities. The result may also imply the employers' trust and confidence in the graduates of the case institution. As explained by the signalling theory, employers tend to employ graduates from reputable institutions (Connelly et al., 2025).

The average time to employment for these alumni is eight months. This finding aligns favourably with previous studies of BSED graduates. Specifically, Caincgoy et al. (2021) reported a 19.00% employment rate within the first six months, while Arbis et al. (2023) observed a 59.11% rate.

Table 3

Time of employment after graduation

Number of months to get employed	F	%	Rank
0 to 6 months	176	68.22	1
7 to 12 months	28	10.85	2
13 to 18 months	30	11.63	3
19 to 24 months	6	2.33	5.5
25 to 30 months	6	2.33	5.5
31 months and above	12	4.65	4
No data	4	1.55	
Total	258	100	

Furthermore, these results are competitive when compared to broader tracer studies encompassing all teacher education graduates. Employment rates within the initial six-month period in these studies have varied, ranging from 29.31% (Pardo et al., 2021) to 71.00% (Pacleb-Ulanday, 2021).

4.3. Graduates' Reasons for Unemployment

Table 4 presents the self-reported reasons for unemployment among the traced graduates. Respondents were provided with a predefined list of potential reasons and were permitted to select all applicable options, as well as provide additional, unlisted reasons.

Table 4

Alumni respondents' reasons for unemployment

Reasons for Unemployment	F	Rank
Lack of work experience	14	1
Family concerns and decided not to find a job	11	2.5
Pursuing advanced studies	11	2.5
No job opportunity	6	4.5
Opted to be self-employed	6	4.5
Did not look for a job	4	6
Health-related concern/s	2	7
No eligibility	2	8

The primary reasons for unemployment among the traced graduates include lack of professional experience, family concerns, and the pursuit of advanced studies. These findings align with previous research by Albina and Sumagasay (2020) and Refugia (2021), indicating consistent patterns in the drivers of graduate unemployment. Conversely, health-related issues and non-eligibility for certain positions were less frequently cited as contributing factors to unemployment.

The significant emphasis placed on prior experience by employers is well-documented (Husin et al., 2021), as it is perceived to reduce training costs and accelerate productivity. This trend poses a considerable barrier for recent graduates entering the job market, limiting their immediate employment opportunities. Consequently, these findings highlight the crucial importance of providing robust experiential learning opportunities to improve the graduates' human capital.

4.4. Reasons for Underemployment

The primary determinants for pursuing professions outside of teaching are the earlier availability of non-teaching employment opportunities, the scarcity of teaching positions, and a stronger inclination towards their current roles (Table 5).

Table 5*Underemployed respondents' reasons for underemployment*

Reasons	F	Rank
Present job came earlier	69	1
Unavailability of teaching jobs	44	2
More interested in the present job	36	3
No self-confidence to teach	22	4
Long process of application and no chance in the ranking	2	5.5
Planning to study again	2	5.5
Lack of teaching experience	1	12
Needs	1	12
God's calling	1	12
Took another degree	1	12
Waiting for the result of RQA	1	12
Took a break from teaching	1	12
Interested in other jobs (uniformed personnel)	1	12
Low salaries in private schools	1	12
Looking for a face-to-face teaching	1	12
To have a permanent position	1	12
Work abroad first	1	12

These findings suggest that, based on the career development theories (Mumme, 1997; Super, 2020), graduates prioritize economic exigency over personal interests or vocational ideals when making career decisions. This pragmatic approach is particularly beneficial given the country's prevailing economic climate. Securing any form of employment is crucial, and graduates who obtain positions outside their initial field of study still make positive contributions to the economy as productive members of the workforce. This outcome also mitigates the rise in unemployment figures, underscoring the societal value of diverse career paths.

A significant reason for underemployment among education graduates is the scarcity of available teaching positions. This is particularly challenging for individuals who specialise in highly popular fields, such as English and Social Studies. This issue has direct implications for academic advising within teacher education programmes, suggesting a need to guide students toward specialisations with greater labour market demand.

Two other critical factors contributing to underemployment are directly related to motivation and self-confidence. A notable finding indicates that many graduates express a preference for careers outside of teaching. While it is clear that individuals should not be compelled into roles they dislike, this highlights a potential mismatch between graduates' aspirations and the teaching profession itself. As many educators and experienced teachers often assert, the teaching profession demands a unique blend of dedication and passion that not everyone possesses. Despite this, it is encouraging to see that these education graduates are still effectively utilising their degrees in their current, diverse employment.

A significant concern observed among graduates is the persistent lack of self-confidence in teaching, even after completing a substantial five-month teaching internship. This finding aligns with recommendations from alumni, including Bansiong and Alawas (2024), who advocate for extending the duration of the teaching internship to foster greater pedagogical self-efficacy among aspiring educators.

Among the less prominent yet significant factors contributing to underemployment is a palpable disillusionment with the bureaucratic nature of the Department of Education's (DepEd) application process. Graduates often perceive these procedures as overly cumbersome, which can exacerbate an already diminished motivation to pursue teaching. Additionally, a segment of graduates who may have felt compelled into an education degree are now contemplating alternative academic pursuits, suggesting a fundamental mismatch with their initial field of study.

Furthermore, personal reasons also play a role in underemployment. Some graduates choose to pursue entirely different degrees or career paths. Others opt for a temporary hiatus from teaching, while the pursuit of higher salaries or greater job security as permanent employees drives some. These multifaceted and interconnected reasons underscore the need for multi-sectoral interventions to effectively address the complexities of underemployment among education graduates.

4.5. Respondents' Assessments on Their Attainment of 21st-Century Skills

When asked to assess the level of adequacy in their attainment of 21st-century skills, the respondents provided very positive feedback. As shown in Table 6, their undergraduate training on 21st-century skills is very adequate and even extremely adequate.

Table 6*Graduates' level of attainment of the 21st-Century Skills*

Skills	Mean	DI	Rank
Communication Skills	3.43	Very adequate	2
Human Relations	3.40	Very adequate	3
Leadership skills	3.35	Very adequate	4
Problem-Solving Skills	3.30	Very adequate	5
Research skills	3.07	Very adequate	6
Information Technology Skills	3.50	Extremely adequate	1

Graduates of the program demonstrated the highest perceived adequacy in information technology skills, while research skills received the lowest mean score. This pattern aligns with findings from a previous study involving the same institution (Bansiong & Alawas, 2024). However, other studies on BSED graduates have identified communication skills as the most well-developed (*e.g.*, Caingcoy et al., 2021). Conversely, BSED alumni respondents in Palao et al.'s (2022) study also considered research skills to be the least developed.

These results collectively suggest that graduates who were traced are generally satisfied with their undergraduate training. This outcome underscores the college's and program's dedication to equipping graduates with essential 21st-century knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The cultivation of these skills is crucial for success in the modern workforce, making the program's effectiveness in this regard highly commendable.

4.6. Graduates' Recommendations for Program Improvement

The alumni recommendations for program improvement were categorized into six overarching themes (Figure 1) with their subthemes described in the following sections.

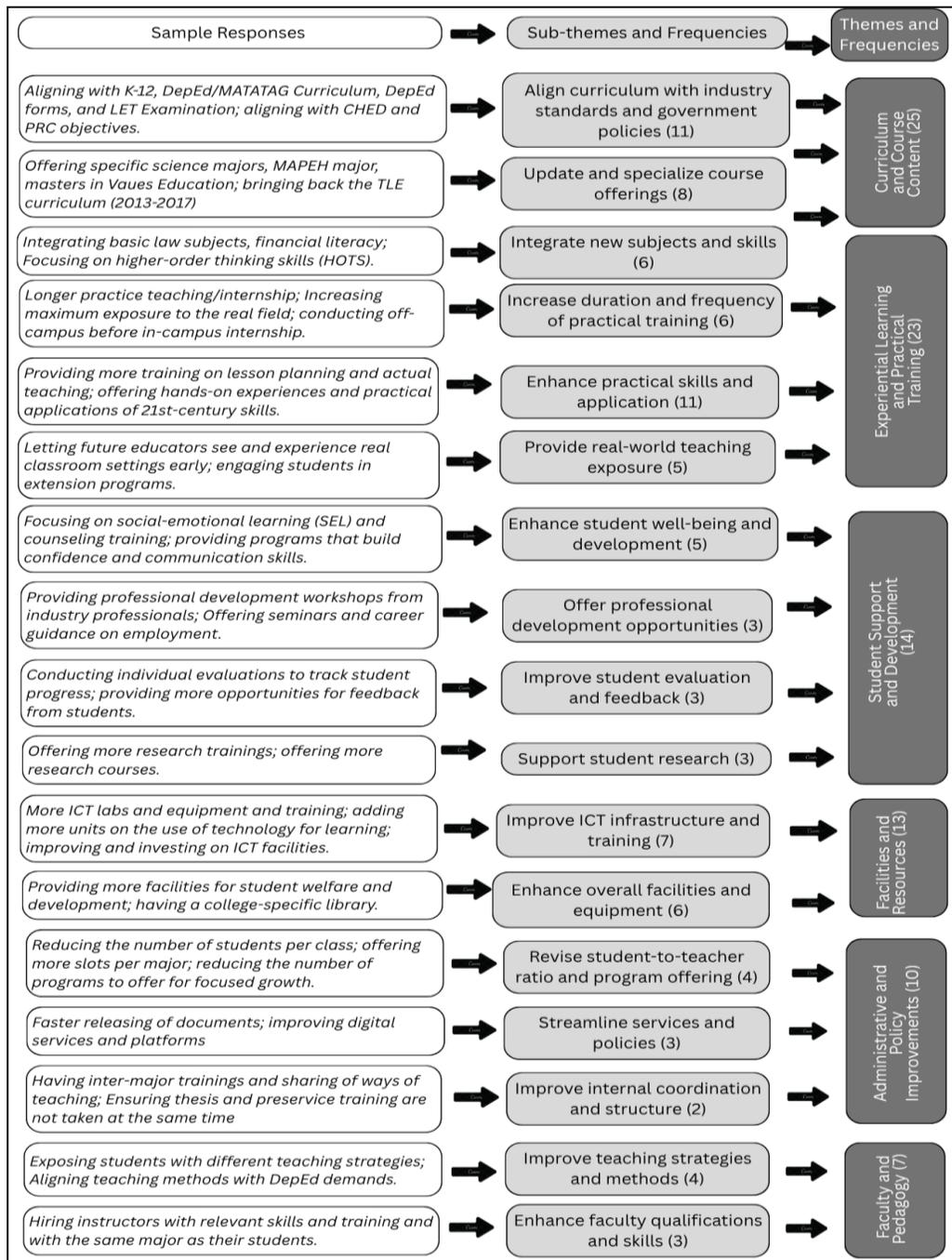
Curriculum and course content (25 responses). Under this theme are subthemes aligning curriculum with industry standards and government policies (11 responses), updating and specializing course offerings (8 responses), and integrating new subjects and skills (6 responses). These responses suggest a push for a more specialised and relevant curriculum. The call for aligning with frameworks like the K to 12 and MATATAG curricula indicates a need to bridge the gap between academic preparation and professional requirements.

The Philippine government's educational policies, such as the MATATAG agenda, serve as a clear directive for educational institutions. The emphasis on specialisation and

integrating practical skills like financial literacy and law aligns with the global trend of competency-based education. Implementing these changes ensures that teacher education graduates are both knowledgeable and skilled for the modern workplace, increasing their human capital.

Figure 1

Alumni-respondents' recommendations for program improvement



Curriculum enrichment also emerged as a major recommendation of the graduates in the tracer studies of Pardo et al. (2021), Pardo and Relon (2025), and Pentang et al. (2024). A responsive curriculum is crucial as it balances the needs of students, workplaces, and society. Here, students are trained to cope with unpredictable situations and complex problems in the workplace (van Bommel et al., 2025).

Experiential learning and practical training (23 responses). Three subthemes – “increasing duration and frequency of practice teaching” (6), “enhancing practical skills and application” (11), and “providing real-world teaching exposure” (5 responses) - constitute this theme. These recommendations, grounded in experiential learning theory and constructivism, emphasise the critical role of hands-on experience in teacher education. The high frequency of responses about increasing the duration and quality of practice teaching underscores its importance. Students want more than just contrived experiences; they seek real-world teaching exposure and hands-on workshops.

In a previous study, the alumni respondents identified a related theme on maximizing experiential learning (Bansiong & Alawas, 2024). Specifically, some respondents quipped: “*Provide more time or opportunities for practice teaching*” (English alumna) and “*longer practice teaching*” (Social Studies alumnus). The clamour for an extended immersion into actual classroom settings mirrors the global standard for teacher training (UNESCO, 2019), which typically includes extensive practicum components. Institutional policy makers need to restructure their programmes to allow for longer internships to provide varied and meaningful experiences.

Student support and development (14 responses). This theme underscores the importance of holistic student support. The responses cover a range of needs, from mental health and well-being to professional development and research skills. Four subthemes constitute this main theme - “Enhancing student well-being and development” (5 responses), “Offering professional development opportunities” (3 responses), “Improving student evaluation and feedback” (3 responses), and “Supporting research (3 responses).

Some notable responses under this theme include the following:

“Students nowadays have many socio-emotional concerns. Thus, teachers should develop a deeper understanding of students' social, emotional, and psychological needs Also, an incorporation of counseling training as preparation for future teachers could be beneficial.” (Values Education alumna)

“Offer more research courses other than the research course requirement done in the last semester of the program. ... a strong foundation in education research increases competence in the field.” (English alumna)

The emphasis on social-emotional learning (SEL) and counselling reflects a growing understanding of the link between well-being and academic success (Maronne et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the clamour for professional development and the LET review programme are direct responses to the pressure of passing licensure exams and securing employment. There is then a need for the case college to create robust support systems (e.g., counselling services, career guidance), and to integrate professional development into the curriculum.

Facilities and resources (13 responses). Two subthemes constitute this theme – “Improving ICT infrastructure and training” (7 responses) and “Enhancing overall facilities and equipment” (6 responses). This feedback focuses on the need for better ICT and other infrastructure and technology.

This theme reflects education’s increasing reliance on technology. A lack of modern facilities and reliable internet access is a significant barrier to effective teaching and learning. The integration of ICT into pedagogical practices is a key policy objective in many countries, including the Philippines. Policy makers must then consider allocating resources to upgrade their digital and physical infrastructure to increase the graduates’ ICT capital and meet the demands of 21st-century education.

This pervasive call for enhanced infrastructure is well-supported by empirical evidence, as robust school facilities and infrastructure have been demonstrably linked to significant impacts on both student learning outcomes and academic achievement (Barrett et al., 2019). Improved facilities and resources also arose among the recommendations in the works of Pardo et al. (2021) and Pardo and Relon (2023). Incidentally, the case institutions in these studies are state-owned universities with meagre budget allocations.

Administrative and policy improvements (9 responses). Under this theme are subthemes “Revising student-to-teacher ratio and program offerings” (4 responses), “Streamlining services and policies” (3 responses), and “Improving internal coordination and structure” (2 responses). All these responses point to the need for administrative efficiency and strategic planning.

Some of the related responses are as follows:

Reduce the number of students in each class.” (Filipino alumna)

“Faster releasing of documents.” (TLE alumnus)

“Thesis and Pre-service training should not be taken at the same time.” (Biology alumna)

The concerns about class sizes and programme focus are common in institutional management, and the request for a feedback mechanism involving all stakeholders aligns with best practices in governance and quality assurance (Belash, 2018). Meanwhile, the call for faster document processing and improved digital services points to a need for administrative modernisation. It is then suggested that the case college and institution may focus on improving internal processes, investing in digital platforms, and establishing clear channels for communication and feedback. These initiatives help ensure a more efficient and responsive academic environment.

Faculty and pedagogy (7 responses). Under this final theme are subthemes “Improving teaching strategies and methods” (4 responses) and “Enhancing faculty qualifications and skills (3 responses). These recommendations highlight the need for faculty development and the adoption of modern teaching strategies. The responses indicate a desire for instructors who are not only content experts but also skilled pedagogues who can cater to diverse learning styles. Such results highlight the importance of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in instruction. About enhanced faculty qualifications, two respondents remarked,

“Hire instructors that possess the skills and training relevant to the job” (TLE alumnus)

“Assign professors with the same major as the students” (PEHMA alumna)

Incidentally, such concerns were raised in the works of Pardo and Relon (2023) and Pentang et al. (2022). Additionally, more faculty development programs to improve instruction are recommended in the studies of Pardo et al. (2021) and Pentang et al. (2022). Teacher trainees desire that effective teaching methods be modelled for them. As one English alumnus respondent commented,

“Professional education teachers should show or demonstrate how a teaching strategy is done. It should not just be mentioned.”

The call for upgrading teaching strategies aligns with modern pedagogical research that promotes student-centred learning. The suggestion to hire instructors with majors that align with the courses they teach is a common practice in many academic institutions. Policy

implications involve investing in ongoing professional development for faculty, particularly in areas like higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and digital literacy, to ensure they are equipped to train the next generation of educators.

The analysis of alumni feedback on their undergraduate programme reveals a strong consensus on the need to align educational practices with current industry standards and governmental policies. These recommendations must be taken seriously as the alumni are considered central pillars for institutional quality (Okogbaa, 2016).

5. Conclusion

This study provides compelling evidence of the employability of the programme's graduates and their credibility among employers. It also confirms the continued availability of teaching positions, albeit predominantly within the private education sector. A notable finding is the incidence of underemployment among some graduates, primarily attributed to their acceptance of job offers at an earlier stage, often driven by immediate economic considerations. Furthermore, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse that the teaching profession may not be suitable for all individuals.

Concurrently, the programme demonstrates considerable strength in cultivating 21st-century skills, including robust pedagogical and content knowledge, among its students. These outcomes underscore the programme's dynamic and market-responsive characteristics. Nevertheless, the findings reveal a clear desire among respondents for a more practical, technologically integrated, and relevant teacher education programme. Such a programme, as suggested by alumni, should prioritise real-world experience, equip future educators with specific, in-demand skills, and actively support their overall well-being, all while ensuring strict alignment with contemporary educational standards and the evolving demands of the teaching profession.

To further enhance graduate employability, it is imperative for the programme and the college to strengthen academe-industry partnerships. The recommendations of the alumni, especially the more pressing ones, must be seriously considered for programme improvement. The college's best practices must be maintained and even enhanced to further strengthen its graduates' human capital. The college and programme should also develop initiatives aimed at cultivating students' self-confidence in pedagogical practice.

One of the limitations in this study is the unbalanced distribution of the respondents over the five years covered. Also, the use of manual procedures in the qualitative data analysis may influence the objectivity of the results. The readers are therefore advised to interpret the results considering these limitations. Moreover, other researchers may consider these limitations when they plan research similar to this study. Finally, since this study involved only the BSED program, other research may also consider tracing the graduates of other teacher education programmes.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines set by (Benguet State University. The conduct of this study has been approved and given relative clearance(s) by the College of Teacher Education of Benguet State University.

AI Declaration

The authors declare the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in writing this paper. In particular, the authors used Grammarly in checking the grammar and writing mechanics. The author takes full responsibility for ensuring proper review and editing of the contents generated using AI.

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