

**Tracer study on the employability of Elementary Education (BEEd) graduates
for the academic years 2019 to 2024**

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ABSTRACT

Tracer studies serve a vital role in assessing the employability of graduates and evaluating the relevance of academic programs to labor market demands. This study was conducted to determine the demographic and employment profiles of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) graduates of Palompon Institute of Technology, Tabango Campus, for the academic years 2019 to 2024. The study employed a descriptive quantitative research design utilizing a survey questionnaire administered to 126 BEEd graduates from academic year 2018-2019 to 2023-2024, of which 72 respondents participated. Data were collected on demographic characteristics, employment status, income levels, period of seeking the first job, and the relevance of the graduates' degree to their current employment. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the results. The results revealed that the majority of respondents were single (93.05%), female (94.44%), and primarily residents of Tabango (75.00%). Most graduates came from the 2021-2022 batch (34.72%), indicating a predominance of recent alumni. In terms of employment, 54.17% were employed, 37.50% were unemployed, and 8.33% had never been employed. The largest proportion of employed graduates held contractual positions (30.56%), with only 26.39% attaining regular or permanent employment. Income distribution showed that most graduates earned between P5,000 and P15,000 per month, reflecting modest entry-level wages. Fifty percent obtained their first job in less than a month after graduation. Additionally, 63.89% reported that their current job was related to their degree, while 36.11% were employed in fields unrelated to their program. Most BEEd graduates transition quickly into the workforce, but many remain in non-permanent positions with modest income. The study highlights the need for stronger industry-academe linkages, enhanced career preparation support, and improved alignment between the BEEd curriculum and industry demands to ensure better employment outcomes for future graduates.

Keywords: Tracer study, graduate employability, job relevance, employment profile, income level

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INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines mandates that all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) conduct graduate tracer studies to examine the

employability of their graduates and the alignment of university programs with industry demands (Gines, 2014). Tracer studies serve as important indicators of educational effectiveness, providing universities and colleges with reliable data on alumni employment outcomes, career trajectories, and the extent to which academic training meets real-world labor market requirements. The results of tracer studies constitute a critical evidence base for curriculum enhancement, program revision, and the continuous improvement of instruction and support services (Mendoza, 2023).

Globally, universities and colleges conduct tracer studies to monitor graduate employability and evaluate the effectiveness of their academic programs. In Ethiopia, Tefera (2018) conducted a tracer study to gather data that could improve educational standards at Debre Berhan University. In Poland, Dabrowska-Resiak (2019) traced how higher education facilitated career development among university graduates enrolled under the Erasmus program. In Southeast Asia, the Royal University of Phnom Penh conducts biannual tracer studies to advance understanding of alumni employability and satisfaction with their academic program (Chet, Sok, Vong, & Sok, 2021). In the Philippines, Pardo and Pichay (2019) traced 2016 graduates of the College of Teacher Education at the University of Northern Philippines and found that most graduates were employed in private entities related to their course within six months of graduation, identifying communication and practice teaching as the most useful subjects and recommending greater focus on practical skill application in the curriculum.

The quality of elementary education is critically dependent on the preparedness and competency of its teachers. Teacher quality and classroom performance are central determinants of educational success, and the continuing education of teachers through graduate studies and professional development programs significantly strengthens teaching skills, instructional approaches, and curriculum management (C.M.O. No. 53, s. 2007). With the implementation of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, the Philippine educational system has undergone substantial transformation, and teachers are now expected to meet the high expectations of 21st-century learners in a rapidly changing global context.

In this context, the present tracer study was conducted to assess the current employment status and career outcomes of graduates from the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) program of Palompon Institute of Technology (PIT), Tabango Campus, for the academic years 2019 to 2024. The study aims to evaluate how well the BEEd program aligns with the needs of the job market, to identify patterns in graduate employability, and to support the institution's ongoing efforts to enhance curriculum design and career preparation. The findings are intended to inform improvements in the BEEd program to ensure that future graduates possess the skills, values, and competencies necessary for successful employment and meaningful contribution to their communities.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the employability of BEEd graduates of Palompon Institute of Technology, Tabango Campus, from academic years 2019 to 2024, specifically with respect to the following:

1. The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of civil status, sex, residence, and school year graduated.
2. The employment profile of the respondents in terms of employment rate, employment status, level of income, period of seeking the first job after college, and relevance of the college degree to the present job.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to conduct a tracer study of BEEd graduates from academic years 2019 to 2024. The descriptive quantitative approach is appropriate for this type of study as it enables the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to describe and summarize patterns in graduate outcomes without manipulating variables or altering the study environment (Baker, 2017).

The respondents of the study were 72 out of 126 BEEd graduates of the General and Teacher Education Department, Palompon Institute of Technology, Tabango Campus, across six graduating cohorts from academic year 2018-2019 to 2023-2024. The batch-level distribution of respondents was as follows: 9 from 2018-2019 (out of 14 graduates), 1 from 2019-2020 (out of 1), 10 from 2020-2021 (out of 27), 25 from 2021-2022 (out of 32), 13 from 2022-2023 (out of 26), and 14 from 2023-2024 (out of 26), for a total of 72 surveyed from 126 graduates.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire adapted from the Commission on Higher Education Graduate Tracer Study format, anchored to the CHED Graduate Tracer Study questionnaire as standardized under applicable CHED Memorandum Orders including CMO No. 53, s. 2007 on global competitiveness and CMO No. 15, s. 2019 on graduate program quality assurance. The instrument gathered data on demographic characteristics (civil status, sex, residence, and year of graduation), employment rate, employment status, monthly income from the first job, period of seeking the first job after college, and relevance of the degree to current employment.

Data were collected through a well-structured Google Form distributed via email, Messenger, and other social media platforms to reach BEEd alumni. Participation was entirely voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, with all digital data stored in password-protected files accessible only to the research team. The study adhered to the core ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice throughout the data collection and reporting process.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis. Frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency were computed to identify prevailing patterns in graduate employment outcomes, income distribution, job-seeking duration, and degree relevance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses findings organized according to the two main objectives of the study: the demographic profile of the respondents and their employment profile.

Demographic profile of the respondents

In terms of civil status, the overwhelming majority of respondents were single (93.05%), with only 5.56% married and 1.39% widowed. This distribution suggests that most BEEd graduates are relatively young and in the early stages of their careers and personal lives, with limited family responsibilities that might otherwise constrain geographic or occupational mobility. The limited diversity in civil status reflects the age profile typical of recent program completers. Regarding sex, the respondents were predominantly female (94.44%) with only 5.56% male, indicating a highly female-dominated graduate cohort consistent with the broader gender composition of elementary education programs and the teaching profession in the

Philippines. This gender distribution is well-established in the literature on Filipino basic education, where female participation in teacher education programs substantially outpaces male enrollment.

With respect to location of residence, three-quarters of respondents (75.00%) resided in Tabango, the municipality hosting the Palompon Institute of Technology Tabango Campus. Smaller proportions came from San Isidro (8.33%), Villaba (5.56%), Calubian (2.78%), Isabel (2.78%), and individual respondents from Palo, Ormoc, Palompon, and Leyte (1.39% each). This strong concentration in Tabango reflects the localized catchment area of the institution and suggests that the BEEd program primarily serves the immediate host community and its surrounding municipalities within Leyte. Concerning graduation year, the 2021-2022 cohort constituted the largest group of respondents (34.72%), followed by the 2023-2024 cohort (19.44%), the 2022-2023 cohort (18.05%), the 2020-2021 cohort (13.89%), and the 2018-2019 cohort (12.50%), with the 2019-2020 cohort the smallest (1.39%), reflecting the minimal number of graduates during the COVID-19-disrupted academic year. The predominance of recent graduates means that the study findings largely reflect the early career experiences of alumni who entered the labor market within the past three years.

Employment profile of the respondents

With respect to employment rate, 54.17% of the 72 respondents were currently employed, 37.50% were unemployed and actively seeking work, and 8.33% had never been employed since graduating. While the majority employment rate indicates that the BEEd program produces graduates with marketable qualifications, the substantial proportion of unemployed and never-employed respondents underscores the persistent challenges facing new teacher education graduates in transitioning to the formal labor market. These findings are consistent with broader trends in Philippine higher education, where graduate employment rates in teacher education programs reflect both the competitiveness of the education sector and structural limitations in the supply of permanent teaching positions.

Among employed respondents, the largest group held contractual positions (30.56%), followed by those in regular or permanent employment (26.39%) and self-employed individuals (20.83%), while temporary (13.89%) and casual (8.33%) workers made up smaller proportions. The predominance of contractual arrangements reflects the reality of the Philippine public school system, where many beginning teachers enter the profession through contract-based appointments before securing permanent items. The finding that only slightly more than one quarter of employed graduates have attained regular employment is consistent with Apostol and Susada (2022) and Abana et al. (2021), who similarly found that non-permanent employment arrangements characterize the early careers of elementary education graduates in Philippine institutions. This pattern points to the need for stronger institutional and policy support in facilitating graduates' transition from contractual to permanent employment.

Income distribution at the time of the first job revealed that 33.33% of respondents earned between P5,000 and less than P10,000 monthly, 29.17% earned between P10,000 and less than P15,000, and 20.83% earned below P5,000. A smaller proportion (12.50%) received P15,000 to less than P20,000, and only 4.17% earned P25,000 or above, while none reported earnings in the P20,000 to less than P25,000 range. These results indicate that the majority of BEEd graduates enter the workforce at modest income levels typical of entry-level positions in education and related fields. The concentration of initial earnings below P15,000 reflects both

the competitive landscape of the teaching labor market and the limited bargaining power of graduates in non-permanent employment arrangements.

Regarding the period of seeking the first job after graduation, half of the respondents (50.00%) secured their first employment in less than one month, and an additional 19.44% found work within one to six months. A smaller proportion took between seven and eleven months (11.11%), and 13.89% required one to less than two years to obtain initial employment, while only 1.39% each reported waiting two to three years or three to four years. The high proportion of graduates employed within one month of graduation suggests strong immediate demand for BEEd completers in the local labor market and reflects positively on the program's alignment with labor market needs. These findings are consistent with Pardo and Pichay (2019), who similarly found that most teacher education graduates secured employment within six months of graduation. Nevertheless, the notable minority who experienced extended job-seeking periods signals that a segment of graduates faces barriers to timely employment that warrant continued institutional attention.

In terms of degree relevance, 63.89% of respondents reported that their current job was directly related to their BEEd degree, while 36.11% were employed in fields unrelated to their academic program. The majority alignment between degree and employment reflects the program's capacity to prepare graduates for teaching and education-adjacent roles, consistent with Enriquez et al.'s (2023) findings on BEEd graduate employment relevance. However, the substantial proportion of graduates working outside their field indicates that curriculum enhancement, stronger industry-academe partnerships, and targeted career guidance are necessary to improve degree-to-employment alignment and to expand the range of relevant career pathways available to BEEd graduates. Montuerto and Arevalo (2024) similarly noted that post-graduation career trajectories in technology education programs often diverge from degree-specific paths due to limited permanent positions, reinforcing the importance of broadening graduates' marketable competencies through the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

This tracer study of 72 BEEd graduates of Palompon Institute of Technology, Tabango Campus, from academic years 2019 to 2024 yields the following conclusions. The graduate population is predominantly composed of young, single, female alumni primarily residing in Tabango, Leyte, with the 2021-2022 cohort constituting the largest represented batch. More than half of the respondents are currently employed, though the employment landscape is characterized by a dominance of contractual and non-permanent arrangements, with only 26.39% having secured regular or permanent positions. Entry-level monthly income is modest, with the majority of graduates earning below P15,000 upon entering the workforce. Encouragingly, half of all graduates obtained their first job within one month of graduation, reflecting the program's relevance to immediate labor market demands. A majority of employed graduates work in positions related to their degree, though more than a third are employed outside their field.

These findings collectively indicate that while the BEEd program at PIT Tabango effectively prepares graduates for initial entry into the labor market, significant gaps remain in securing long-term career stability, competitive income, and consistent alignment between academic training and employment. To address these outcomes, it is recommended that the institution strengthen career programs by offering job placement assistance, internship opportunities, and skills development activities, and by cultivating partnerships with the education sector and relevant industries to support unemployed graduates. Specialized training, certifications, and continuing education programs should be made available to enhance

employability and earning potential. Regular tracer studies and active alumni engagement mechanisms should be institutionalized to monitor employment outcomes continuously and to build networks that benefit succeeding graduates. Strengthening community linkages and extension programs will further expand local employment opportunities, while curriculum review informed by tracer study data will ensure that the BEEd program remains responsive to evolving industry needs and aligned with the professional realities faced by its graduates.

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