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Curriculum Relevance Matters: Advancing Employability Outcomes in Teacher Education



S&T in Education

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Background

Graduate employability has become a critical indicator of the quality and effectiveness of higher education institutions. In an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing labor market, teacher education institutions are expected not only to produce academically competent graduates but also individuals equipped with the skills, competencies, and professional attributes required by employers. The emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, digital transformation, and evolving workforce demands has intensified the need for curricula that are responsive to labor market requirements.

In the Philippines, concerns persist regarding the mismatch between graduate competencies and labor market expectations. Although teacher education programs are designed to develop pedagogical expertise and technical-vocational competencies, some graduates continue to encounter difficulties in securing stable and relevant employment. Previous tracer studies have identified challenges related to curriculum relevance, limited industry exposure, lack of professional licensure, and insufficient workplace experience.

To address these concerns, a tracer study was conducted among graduates of the College of Teacher Education of Cagayan State University (CSU), particularly those from the Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLED), Bachelor of Technical-Vocational Teacher Education (BTVTED), Bachelor of Technical Teacher Education (BTTE), and Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Technology and Livelihood Education (BSE-TLE). The study sought to determine the factors influencing employability and provide evidence-based recommendations for curriculum enhancement and policy development.

Research Objectives

The study aimed to examine the employability of education graduates and identify the factors influencing their employment outcomes. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Determine the graduates' personal, academic, institutional, and professional profiles.
2. Assess the employment status of graduates in terms of employment, job relevance, employer type, and time required to secure employment.
3. Evaluate the graduates' acquired competencies
4. Identify factors significantly influencing employability.
5. Assess the relevance of the curriculum to current labor market needs.

Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to describe graduate employability outcomes and examine relationships among variables influencing employment. The respondents consisted of 428 graduates from the College of Teacher Education, Cagayan State University–Andrews Campus, covering Academic Years 2018–2024. A total enumeration technique was employed, wherein all identified graduates were included in the study.

Data were gathered through a validated researcher-made questionnaire covering:

- Graduate profile;
- Employment status;
- Competencies developed;
- Factors affecting employability; and
- Curriculum relevance to labor market needs.

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were utilized to analyze the data and determine significant relationships among variables.

Key Findings

1. High Employability among Graduates

Most graduates secured employment within one year after graduation, with many employed in positions aligned with their academic specialization. Graduate employability was generally favorable, indicating that teacher education programs continue to provide a viable pathway toward workforce participation.

2. Strong Competency Development

Graduates reported high levels of competency, particularly in:

- Communication and interpersonal skills;
- Technical-vocational competencies;
- Adaptability and workplace readiness; and
- Problem-solving capabilities.

These competencies significantly contributed to successful employment outcomes.

3. Licensure and Professional Development Matter

Passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) and participating in seminars, trainings, and professional development activities emerged as major contributors to employability. Notably:

- 84.8% of graduates passed the LET.
- 99.5% participated in field-related seminars and trainings

4. Curriculum Relevance Significantly Influences Employability

The study found a significant relationship between curriculum relevance and graduate employability. Programs that aligned competencies with workplace demands produced graduates who were more employable and better prepared for professional practice.

5. Institutional Experiences Enhance Employment Outcomes

Institutional experiences, including internship opportunities, skills training, practicum experiences, and industry exposure, were significantly associated with competency development and employability outcomes.

6. Employment Challenges Persist

Despite favorable employment outcomes, some graduates experienced delays in obtaining employment due to:

- Limited job opportunities;
- Labor market conditions;
- Geographic constraints; and
- Personal circumstances.

Policy Implications

The findings suggest that graduate employability is influenced by a combination of individual competencies, institutional support, and labor market conditions. Therefore, improving employability requires a comprehensive approach that extends beyond classroom instruction.

Higher education institutions must regularly review and update curricula to ensure alignment with emerging workforce needs. Stronger collaboration among universities, industry partners, government agencies, and professional organizations is necessary to provide students with meaningful workplace exposure and practical learning opportunities.

Furthermore, licensure preparation, career guidance, industry immersion, and professional development

initiatives should be institutionalized as core components of teacher education programs to improve employment outcomes and workforce readiness.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that curriculum relevance is a critical determinant of graduate employability among teacher education graduates. While graduates generally possess strong competencies and favorable employment outcomes, employability is strengthened when academic preparation is aligned with industry and labor market demands.

The significant influence of curriculum relevance, institutional experiences, professional development activities, and licensure attainment underscores the need for continuous curriculum enhancement and stronger university-industry collaboration. Through evidence-based policy reforms and strategic institutional initiatives, teacher education programs can produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also work-ready, adaptable, and responsive to the evolving demands of the labor market.

Policy Recommendations

For Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

1. Conduct periodic curriculum reviews based on labor market intelligence and tracer study results.
2. Strengthen work-integrated learning programs, including internships, practicum placements, and industry immersion activities.
3. Integrate emerging competencies such as digital literacy, educational technology, entrepreneurship, and innovation into teacher education curricula.
4. Enhance career guidance, job placement, and alumni tracking services.
5. Institutionalize continuous graduate tracer studies to monitor employability outcomes and inform policy decisions.

For CHED and Teacher Education Policymakers

1. Develop national guidelines promoting labor market-responsive curriculum design.

2. Incentivize university–industry partnerships and experiential learning initiatives.
3. Support competency-based and outcomes-based education frameworks.
4. Expand funding for faculty development and curriculum innovation programs.

For Professional Organizations and Employers

1. Collaborate with HEIs in curriculum development and review.
2. Provide internship, apprenticeship, and mentoring opportunities.
3. Participate in competency validation and graduate skills assessment initiatives.

Regulatory and Legislative Agencies Benefiting from the Results

The findings of this study may serve as evidence for policy formulation, program enhancement, and resource allocation among the following institutions:

- Commission on Higher Education (CHED)
- Professional Regulation Commission (PRC)
- Department of Education (DepEd)
- Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)
- Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)
- National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)
- State Universities and Colleges (SUCs)
- Local Government Units (LGUs)

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Editor's Note

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Note from the author: The accuracy and integrity of the content in this article are the sole responsibility of the author(s).

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