

A Tracer Study of Employability Alignment of Bachelor of Physical Education Graduates

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Abstract

Ensuring that college graduates are equipped for the job market has become increasingly important, especially in fields like Physical Education, where practical application matters. Despite this, there is a noticeable lack of local studies examining how well Bachelor of Physical Education programs prepare students for actual employment opportunities. Anchored on Yorke's (2016) theory of employability, this study explored the employment outcomes and job relevance of Bachelor of Physical Education graduates in Eastern Visayas. The study followed a descriptive quantitative design using a tracer study approach. A total of 142 graduates were selected through simple random sampling. Data were gathered using online surveys and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage. Findings showed that 93.7% of respondents are currently employed, although 50% took more than a year to land a job. Most are working in roles related to their degree, but only 58.5% said they extensively use the skills they acquired. Communication and teaching skills were noted as the most helpful, while areas like choreography and sports management were seen as less applicable in the workplace. These results point to a need for curriculum improvement, particularly in developing broader, interdisciplinary skills and offering stronger career support. The study offers useful insights for educators and stakeholders seeking to better align academic training with industry expectations.

Keywords: Graduate employability; tracer study; physical education graduates, curriculum alignment, labor market relevance

1. Introduction

In today's fast-evolving job market, graduate employability has become one of the key indicators of the relevance and effectiveness of higher education programs. Employability refers to a graduate's ability to gain and maintain meaningful employment using the skills and knowledge acquired from their academic experience. Historically, higher education aimed to develop both specialized knowledge and holistic capabilities that respond to the needs of industries (Tomlinson, 2017). Over the years, tracer studies have emerged as a valuable tool in evaluating how well educational programs prepare graduates for the workforce. Internationally, studies like that of Clements and Cord (2020) highlight a growing mismatch between graduate skills and labor market expectations. Locally, Garcia and Malaya (2020) emphasize the importance of revisiting the curriculum of Physical Education (PE) programs in the Philippines to address gaps in job relevance and competency development.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) four (4) promotes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, directly aligning with efforts to improve graduate employability. In the Philippine context, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 18, series of 2021, urges institutions to assess employability outcomes through tracer studies as part of quality assurance and curriculum enhancement.

Despite national and institutional efforts to enhance education-to-employment outcomes, PE graduates still face unique challenges. Internationally, Martin et al. (2020) found that many physical education graduates struggle with delayed employment, often due to oversaturation of the job market and limited full-time roles in the education and fitness sectors. Locally, Smith (2021) reported that Filipino PE graduates are often forced to take jobs outside their specialization due to the scarcity of positions in schools or the need for further certification.

To cope with these challenges, several studies recommend practical strategies. White et al. (2021) emphasized the role of practicum experiences and industry exposure in bridging skill gaps. Lee (2022) noted that embedding soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and leadership into PE programs increases

graduates' chances of success in interdisciplinary roles. In the Philippines, Rivera and Garcia (2021) advocated for skills diversification and modular training to help graduates pivot across multiple sectors, including community health, wellness, and sports tourism.

In support of these strategies, educational institutions are encouraged to build stronger links with industries through internships, mentorship, and job placement programs (Walker, Chen, & Brown, 2018).

Martinez and Robinson (2019) also emphasized the importance of continuous career counselling and employability workshops to equip students with real-world competencies. CHED (2021) further supports these mechanisms by encouraging higher education institutions to adopt outcomes-based education that is responsive to local and global workforce demands.

Given these insights, this study was conducted to provide data-driven evidence on the employment outcomes of Bachelor of Physical Education graduates, especially focusing on alignment between what was learned in school and what is demanded in the workplace. By understanding this alignment, institutions can revisit their curriculum and program offerings to close existing gaps and improve future graduate outcomes.

This study is significant to curriculum developers, educators, policymakers, students, and employers. For educators and institutions, it offers insights into which parts of the curriculum work, and which need here industry-academe collaboration is needed.

The main objective of this research is to assess the employability alignment of BPED graduates in one of the universities in Eastern Visayas. Specifically, it aims to: a. identify the current employment status of the graduates; b. determine the relevance of their employment to their academic training; and explore the graduates' perceptions regarding how well their BPED program prepared them for their careers.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design using a tracer study approach to explore the employment status and curriculum relevance among Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) graduates. A descriptive approach is appropriate for presenting data in its current state without manipulation, allowing for accurate documentation of graduates' employment outcomes (Creswell, 2014). Tracer studies are particularly useful for higher education institutions to evaluate the alignment between academic preparation and labor market demands (Fletcher, 2019).

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in one of the universities located in Eastern Visayas, Philippines. It hosts a number of institutions offering Physical Education programs and serves as a regional employment center. This made it a suitable setting to examine the post-graduation employment experiences of BPED graduates, especially in the local job market context.

2.3 Research Respondents

The respondents in this study were the one hundred forty-two (142) Bachelor of Physical Education graduates. Only those who had completed their degree and were available for follow-up were included in the study. The focus on a specific graduating batch ensured relevance and consistency of responses. The inclusion criteria centered on graduates' availability, willingness to participate, and completion of the BPED program during the specified academic year.

2.4 Sampling Procedure

From a total population of 220 graduates, the sample size was determined using Slovin's Formula, resulting in a minimum of 142 respondents. To ensure fairness and eliminate bias, the researcher employed simple random sampling, a type of probability sampling technique. This approach allowed each qualified

graduate to have an equal chance of being selected. The use of this method ensures a representative subset, increasing the generalizability and reliability of the results.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made survey questionnaire designed to capture employment status, the relevance of employment to academic training, and graduates' perceptions of their program's effectiveness. The instrument underwent content validation by three experts in Physical Education who assessed it for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. To ensure reliability, a pilot test was conducted among a small group of PE graduates not included in the main sample. Based on the pilot test results, necessary revisions were made to enhance the tool before its full deployment. The reliability of the instrument, as measured by Cronbach's Alpha, was 0.83, indicating good internal consistency.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was done via Google Forms. A digital link to the survey was sent to the identified participants along with a cover letter explaining the study's purpose, ensuring transparency and voluntary participation. The form included an informed consent section that participants needed to agree to before continuing. The researcher allowed ample time for completion and sent follow-up reminders to encourage response rates. During data collection, no personal identifiers were collected. All responses were automatically stored in a secure digital format accessible only to the researcher. The process ensured that data integrity and respondent privacy were maintained throughout the study.

2.7 Data Analysis

Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, particularly frequencies and percentages, to summarize data on employment status, job relevance, and curriculum alignment. This method effectively provides a snapshot of trends and patterns among the graduate respondents.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to ethical standards in research. Before participating, all respondents were presented with a clear introductory statement in the survey form outlining the purpose of the study, assuring them of anonymity and voluntary participation. The questionnaire also included a consent checkbox for participants to confirm their agreement to take part. In compliance with Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all personal data were treated with the highest level of confidentiality. Collected data were used solely for academic purposes and were stored securely to prevent unauthorized access, in line with data protection policies.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings and interpretation of the study, guided by the research questions. A total of 142 BPED graduates participated, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Table 1. Current Employment Status

	Yes	No
Percentage	93.7%	6.3%

Table 1 indicates that a significant 93.7% of Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) graduates are currently employed, while only 6.3% are unemployed. This high employment rate suggests that BPED graduates are largely successful in transitioning into the workforce after graduation. It reflects positively on the alignment between the competencies acquired through the BPED program and the demands of the labor market. According to Pascual (2019), employability among education graduates often depends on both

professional readiness and institutional support, which may explain the favorable outcomes observed in this study. However, the small percentage of unemployed respondents’ points to the possibility of persisting challenges such as location-specific job scarcity, competition, or lack of job matching services, which align with the concerns raised by Aganon and Buenviaje (2020) regarding underemployment and employment mismatch among education graduates in the Philippines.

Table 2. Relevance of Employment to BPED Degree

	Highly Related	Partially Related	Not Related
Percentage	50.2%	38.7%	8.5%

Table 2 shows that 50.0% of respondents consider their job highly related to their BPED degree, 38.7% say it is partially related, and 8.5% view their job as not related. This indicates that 88.7% of graduates recognize at least a partial alignment between their education and current occupation. The predominance of “highly” and “partially” related roles highlights the practical applicability of the BPED curriculum, suggesting that the program prepares graduates for relevant employment. However, the notable proportion of those in only partially related roles suggests room for improvement in curricular alignment and specialization. The small percentage of unrelated employment reflects ongoing challenges such as employment mismatch and job scarcity in their field—concerns similarly reported by Tanguilig (2021), who emphasized that even professionally prepared graduates often pursue roles outside their training due to shifting market demands and personal circumstances.

Table 3. Perceptions on Education-Employment Alignment

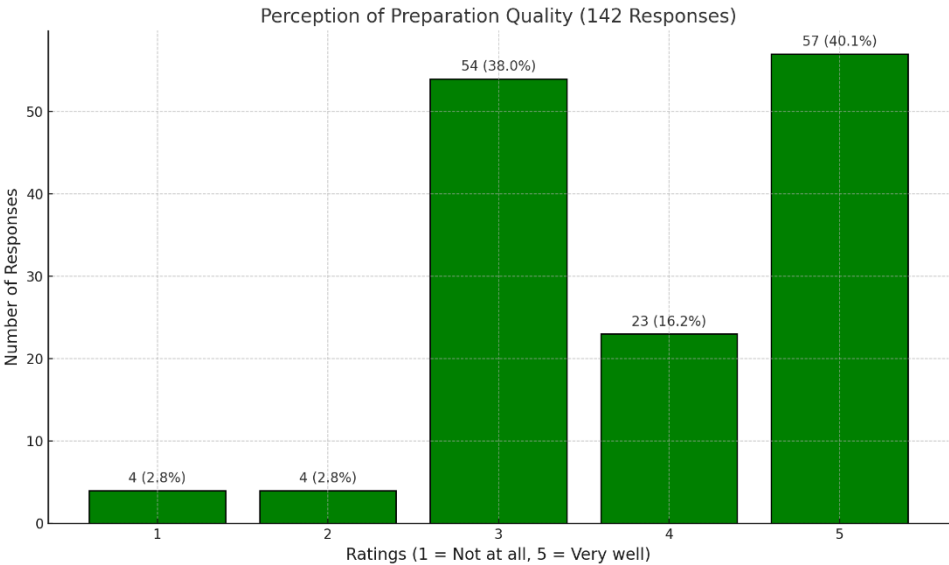


Table 3 shows that the Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) program received an average rating of 3.90, indicating a generally positive perception among graduates (Table 9). Specifically, 40.1% (57 respondents) rated the program as 5 – “Very well”, and 16.2% (23 respondents) rated it as 4, showing that these graduates found the program effective in preparing them for employment. Meanwhile, 38% (54 respondents) gave a neutral rating of 3, suggesting that while the program was satisfactory, it may not have fully met their expectations or matched industry demands. On the other hand, 2.8% (4 respondents) rated the

program as 2, and another 2.8% (4 respondents) rated it as 1 – "Not at all", indicating dissatisfaction among a small group of graduates. These responses imply that while a majority of respondents view the BPED curriculum positively, there is a notable segment with moderate or low satisfaction —pointing to potential gaps in practical training or curriculum alignment with job roles. This supports Salas and Oducado's (2022) assertion that educational programs must regularly reassess their design to ensure alignment with labor market needs and graduate expectations.

Overall, the study confirms that while most BPED graduates achieve employment and see some connection between their jobs and education, a substantial portion experience delays and only partial curriculum alignment. These findings underscore the need for curriculum improvements and institutional support mechanisms to better prepare future graduates for both traditional and emerging roles in the PE profession.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that while BPED graduates in Eastern Visayas generally achieve high employment rates, a significant portion experience delayed employment and limited alignment between their job responsibilities and academic training. Core strengths of the curriculum lie in communication and teaching, but there is a need for enhanced training in specialized areas to ensure broader employability.

5. Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, it is recommended that the BPED curriculum be revisited to integrate more industry-relevant subjects such as sports entrepreneurship, health promotion, and technology integration. These enhancements would ensure that graduates are better equipped to meet the diverse demands of the modern workforce. Strengthening career support services is also essential, particularly through the implementation of job placement programs and strategic partnerships with industry sectors to facilitate smoother transitions from education to employment. Additionally, the provision of skill enhancement training through workshops focusing on leadership, business management, and digital literacy can expand graduates' career versatility and adaptability. To build on the current research, future studies should explore long-term career outcomes of BPED graduates to gain deeper insights into their professional trajectories and to identify areas where further improvements in academic preparation may be necessary.

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Author's Bionote

The researcher, Leonah Mari Q. Creer, is a Licensed Professional Teacher who completed her Bachelor of Physical Education and is currently taking her Master of Arts in Education major in Physical Education. She works as a Physical Education Instructor and continues to pursue her studies while teaching in the field she is passionate about.

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