

A Survey of Employers' Feedback on the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Graduates of One State University

Elaine Rose G. Nachon, Jonalyn O. Ilagan, Aira M. De Jesus, Arlene G. Advento, Aurora S. Sion, Dale Joseph Prendol, Harold De Guzman, Jerry C. Reyes, Joan Marfel, Judelyn A. Sena, Kathleen D. Baldivicio, Mark Dexter L. Reyes, Rubilyn Fernandez, Rubylyn H. Cortez, Mercy Grace I. Saliendra, Varona V. Zoleta

Laguna State Polytechnic University - Siniloan Campus

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the feedback from employers on the graduates of the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (BECED) program at Laguna State University - Siniloan Campus from the academic year 2009 to 2022. The study aims to assess the attributes of BECED graduates in the workforce and investigate employers' perspectives on the program's relevance to industry needs. The research employs a qualitative design, specifically a thematic analysis, to capture employer insights on graduates' teaching performance, areas for improvement, and suggestions. The study involves interviews with four principals and supervisors from various schools, using convenience sampling to ensure accessibility and willingness to participate.

The identified themes from the interviews highlight the positive qualities of BECED graduates. The graduates are recognized as competent teachers who come prepared, possess teaching strategies, and demonstrate the necessary skills for early childhood education. Additionally, employers emphasize the graduates' flexibility, adaptability to different situations, and resourcefulness in utilizing limited resources. The theme of resilience emerges, depicting graduates as enduring and committed individuals who tackle challenges effectively.

The results also reveal positive feedback on the curriculum, addressing the needs of students. However, employers suggest areas for improvement, such as enhancing graduates' diligence in meeting deadlines and providing orientation on work obligations not explicitly stated in contracts. Recommendations include workshops on teaching strategies, methodology enhancement, and research, aiming to strengthen graduates' skills and passion for research. The findings underscore the importance of employer feedback in shaping educational programs, emphasizing the need for ongoing improvement and alignment with industry requirements. Overall, the research confirms the competence, flexibility, and resilience of BECED graduates while identifying opportunities for enhancement to further contribute to their success in the teaching profession.

Keywords: early childhood education, employer's feedback, thematic analysis

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive job market, a bachelor's degree is often required for entry-level positions in many fields. Bachelor's degree programs in different institutions must ensure that their curriculum and training are relevant and updated. It is also crucial for schools and colleges to assess and evaluate themselves as to whether or not they are offering quality education and creating a lasting impact on their graduates.

Employer feedback is a critical component in shaping the performance and development of graduates, particularly in the field of teacher education. Research has shown that performance feedback is an evidence-based practice when training special education preservice teachers, and it can significantly impact student outcomes Cornelius & Nagro (2014). However, the individuals providing feedback to preservice teachers are

often not the faculty members who are most likely to provide feedback in fieldwork experiences, highlighting a gap in the feedback process (Schles & Robertson, 2017). Specific performance feedback from a coach has been identified as beneficial for preservice teachers, especially those in special education preparation programs, emphasizing the importance of targeted feedback in teacher education (Peeples et al., 2018).

Moreover, the role of feedback in identity development and professional preparation has been highlighted, indicating that certain learning experiences afford more identity resources, such as access to feedback and opportunities to assume central roles (Luehmann, 2007). Additionally, employer feedback on the quality of university graduates has been studied extensively, providing insights into the factors that influence the employability of teacher education graduates in competitive job markets (Shah et al., 2015). Furthermore, feedback from candidate surveys has been instrumental in informing teacher education units about areas for self-reflection and continuous improvement (Bhatnagar et al., 2014).

In the context of teacher preparation, the importance of effective and efficient feedback during the student-teaching experience has been emphasized, indicating that feedback is paramount for the development of core teaching practices (Gibson & Musti-Rao, 2015). Additionally, the use of bug-in-ear coaching for teacher candidates has been identified as a valuable tool for providing performance feedback and supporting learning in special education teacher preparation programs (Regan & Weiss, 2019). Moreover, technology-enhanced assessment feedback has been found to motivate student teachers to engage with feedback, resulting in improved teaching practicum performance tasks (Nel & Marais, 2022).

The Laguna State Polytechnic University - Siniloan Campus had its first Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (BECED) graduates during the academic year 2008-2009. In the last many years, the population of this educational program has been increasing. Meanwhile, this research undertaking aims to gather employers' feedback on BECED graduates. It further investigates some of the employers' perspectives related to the program. Thus, it delves to find out the degree to which the BECED graduates have demonstrated attributes in the workforce.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper aims to gather employers' feedback on the graduates of Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (BECED) from the College of Teacher Education students at the Laguna State University Siniloan Campus from A.Y. 2009 - 2022. Specifically, it aims to find out the employers' rating of various attributes of the graduates. It also explores employers' opinions on the aspects that make a university program more relevant to industry needs and producing graduates who are competent and employable.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Employer feedback plays a crucial role in shaping employee performance and development. The impact of feedback interventions on performance has been extensively studied (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Feedback from employers provides reliable information about the readiness and performance of employees, which is essential for organizational success ("Analyzing Employers' Feedback Using Text Analytics: An Associative Based Approach", 2020). It has been established that receiving feedback from colleagues and leaders is a significant aspect of building employees' employability, especially when the feedback relates to current performance (Wiśniewska et al., 2021). However, seeking feedback from diverse sources may not be sufficient for stimulating creativity, as the role of performance dynamism and creative time pressure in shaping the impact of feedback on employee creativity has been highlighted (Sijbom et al., 2017). Moreover, employees seek more peer feedback when tasks are interdependent, especially in psychologically safe working environments, and supervisors view employees who seek more peer feedback as better team contributors (Stobbeleir et al., 2019).

The quality of feedback also significantly influences employee reactions and job performance. It has been proposed that congruence between expected feedback quality and delivered feedback quality influences leader-member exchange and job performance (Qi et al., 2023). Additionally, involving employees in the design of feedback systems in cooperative settings has been found to yield benefits, emphasizing the importance of deliberative involvement in feedback processes (Grasser et al., 2021). Furthermore, employees use

performance feedback to reassess their beliefs about the benefit of their effort, which may lead to increased or reduced effort, thereby impacting productivity (Awaysheh et al., 2022).

The significance of employer feedback is further underscored by its implications for employability. Research has shown that university reputation impacts the likelihood of receiving positive feedback during the evaluation process, offering insights to students on how to enhance their employability in competitive job markets (Kertechian et al., 2021). Moreover, feedback sharing is a critical tool in the workplace to encourage improved behavior and performance, and understanding the factors that encourage or discourage this behavior is crucial (Hymas, 2022).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This survey adopted a qualitative research design, specifically, a thematic analysis study, which aims to investigate the employer's perspective on the graduates' work and teaching performance, areas for improvement, their suggestions, and recommendations. Hopefully, some common themes can be identified, and feasible recommendations are offered to further enhance the curriculums, training, and instruction for the BECED students.

Thematic analysis is a widely used method for analyzing qualitative data in primary research. It involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within the data (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Thematic analysis can be conducted using a hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding, allowing for a comprehensive interpretation of the raw data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This method is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, making it adaptable to different theoretical perspectives (Huff et al., n.d.). Thematic analysis has been described as a foundational method for qualitative analysis and is often used to analyze a wide range of topics, from healthcare experiences to social inclusion. It is a systematic and rigorous approach that involves a thorough and careful examination of the data to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Ejegi-Memeh et al., 2021; Siddiqi, 2020). The process of thematic analysis typically involves several steps, and there are checklist criteria available to ensure the quality of the analysis (Filia et al., 2018). Thematic analysis is essential for capturing the meanings people attach to social phenomena and is valuable for enhancing clinical knowledge and care (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008).

Participants/Respondents

For this study, the researchers interviewed four (4) principals and supervisors from different schools and institutions; public and private institutions to share their insights and comments on the teaching and work performance of the BECED graduates of LSPU - Siniloan Campus. Moreover, convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling method widely used in various fields, including social science research, developmental science, and psychological studies. It involves selecting participants based on their easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability, or willingness to participate. Convenience sampling is often considered a low-cost alternative to probability sampling and has been used as a practical approach in research.

The use of convenience sampling in the study facilitated the inclusion of participants who were easily accessible and willing to contribute to the research, thereby providing valuable insights into working with the BECED graduates.

Instrumentation

The research questions used in this study were obtained from brainstorming and were also based on the typical questions used in gathering employers' perspectives. The research questions of the study are as follows: 1. What is your assessment of the teacher education graduates' workplace preparedness in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes? 2. How do you describe the performance of the teacher education graduates? 3. What are the strengths that you have observed among the teacher education graduates? 4. How effective do the teacher education provide the competencies needed by the students in their respective field of specialization? 5. Based on your assessment, in what aspects do the teacher education graduates need support? 6. As our partner school, what suggestions can you give for the improvement of our Teacher Education Curriculum?

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and survey questions. The researchers went to the participants' schools to conduct the interview which consisted of 6 (six) questions, potentially with a follow-up question to clarify answers.

The interview answers were transcribed from the interview recordings to ensure accuracy in capturing participants' responses, including verbal nuances, pauses, and non-verbal expressions. Initial readings were conducted with the interview transcripts to become familiar with the content. This initial reading helped the researchers gain a sense of the overall context and identified potential patterns or themes.

The data were then coded by assigning labels or codes to segments of text that represent concepts, themes, or patterns. This was done through open coding, where the researchers let categories emerge naturally based on the research questions. The codes were grouped into broader themes or categories. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data.

Ethical Consideration

This study adheres to ethical principles in its design, implementation, and dissemination. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured of their voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences, and the confidentiality of their information. To protect participant identities, pseudonyms are used in reporting findings.

Additionally, the study acknowledges potential power dynamics between the researchers and participants; efforts were made to establish a transparent and collaborative relationship, ensuring participants felt comfortable expressing their perspectives. Any potential conflicts of interest have been disclosed, and steps have been taken to minimize bias and ensure the integrity of the research process. Throughout the study, data security protocols have been implemented to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of participant information. The findings of this research are reported with the utmost respect for the dignity and well-being of the individuals who contributed to this study, and every effort has been made to minimize any potential harm that may arise from their involvement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A teacher should embody a diverse set of qualities and characteristics that contribute to effective education and the holistic development of students. Moreover, teachers should prioritize the needs and well-being of students. Understanding and catering to diverse learning styles and individual differences contribute to a student-centered approach. The following themes were identified from the interviews conducted:

Competent. All of the participants said in their respective interviews that the BECED graduates working with them are competent teachers. They always come to class prepared, and they know exactly what it is that they are teaching. Over and above that, they know how to teach what they know. Additionally, they are equipped with teaching strategies and methodologies that they use in different situations and depending on the needs of their students. Another respondent made a remark that they are also equipped with the necessary skills and competencies needed in their field of specialization, which is teaching early childhood students.

“Sa aking pong experience as school head ano po regarding po sa mga teacher na produkto po ng lspu ay ekwip naman po sila ng mga necessary skills and competencies na kinakailangan po sa isang guro. At sila naman po ay may kakayanan na makaadopt sa mga programa tyaka po mga stratehiya na iniimplement po namin sa school nato.”

“ah regarding naman po sa performance po ng ating mga teacher graduate very competent naman po sila at yung pong performance natin nila sa paaralan base po sa kanilang competencies ay matataas naman po nakakakeep up naman po yun nga po sa katotohanan nga po wala po tayong mga teacher na bumababa po sa

level ng very satisfactory lahat po sila ay ah nagfoform po don sa very satisfactory at meron pa nga po ilan na umaabot po yung performance nila sa outstanding”

This implies that BECED graduates are fully equipped teachers who meet the standards of their employers, their students, and their community in general. Competent teachers play a crucial role in shaping the learning outcomes of students. Several studies have highlighted the significance of teacher competence in enhancing teaching effectiveness and student learning (Alimmudin, 2022; Rizki et al., 2023; Zulkipli et al., 2022; Aimah et al., 2017; Billik, 2020). Teacher competence encompasses various dimensions such as work discipline, work motivation, school facilities, leadership competencies, and pedagogical skills (Rizki et al., 2023; Zulkipli et al., 2022; Aimah et al., 2017). The impact of teacher competence on work performance has been found to be positive and significant, emphasizing the importance of competent teachers in delivering quality education (Rizki et al., 2023). Furthermore, the development of teacher professionalism competence has been identified as a critical factor in improving teaching effectiveness (Siraj & Milfayetty, 2017).

Flexible. Three of the four participants answered that the graduates are also flexible. According to them, the teachers they have are adaptive, and can easily adjust to certain scenarios and situations. One participant said that even if they are experiencing heavy rainfalls, blackouts, and typhoons, Teacher A who works with them reported to school without any hesitation and asked for assistance from the local government. Not only did Teacher A help the school, but she also helped the entire community. This was also supported by another respondent who claimed that the graduates are indeed flexible because of the training that they have undergone while studying like their teaching internship and other trainings.

“siguro po di ko lang po masakto kase ang bawat isa po ay may ibat ibang kakayanan ano ho may ibat ibang skills at ibang attitudes minsan lang po halimbawa po may bagay na kailangang gawin na lampas sa kanilang trabaho di ba meron tayong job description na sinasabi pero alam niyo po may bagay na pinapagawa sa atin in exigency of our service e kaya lang po siguro yong mga bagay na dapat na handa sa kalooban ng ating mga guruan na pagdaing ninyo sa field ay hindi lang basta iyon ang andiayn maraming mga kailangang harapin na nakatago po sa ating mga pinirmahan na kontrata na kung бага ay hindi natin maibo box na ito lang ang kailangang gawin kundi meron pa tayong ibang skills na dapat yong willingness na I extend yong tulong natin.”

In relation to this, another participant also stated that the graduates who work with them are also resourceful. Given the limited resources, they are making the best out of those and still able to deliver high quality for their students.

Flexibility in teaching has been associated with various benefits, including the capability to adapt to different learning styles, enhance student satisfaction, and promote interactive and student-centered learning experiences (Dost et al., 2020). Additionally, flexibility in teaching has been linked to the improvement of critical thinking ability, information processing, and the creation of sociocultural knowledge-sharing routines (Sarala et al., 2014; Tella & Obim, 2022). Furthermore, it has been emphasized that flexibility in teaching methods can lead to the enhancement of efficiency and the teaching process (Grabiński et al., 2020).

Resilient. Resilience, described as "enduring commitment," is a key factor in the exploration of teacher resilience (Stone-Johnson, 2011). Additionally, the enduring obstacle of isolation faced by high school teachers, particularly those teaching specialist disciplines, highlights the importance of endurance in the teaching profession (Wu et al., 2021). The informants mentioned that their employees are enduring. When certain challenges arise, they do not just easily give up. They look for ways on how to solve the problems that they are facing and eventually, they come out victorious.

In terms of curriculum enhancement, all four respondents agreed that the curriculum is just fine, and it addresses the needs of their students.

However, despite the respondents' positive feedback, they also mentioned points where they see opportunities for improvement. A respondent mentioned that one of the things that the graduates should improve is their

diligence in meeting deadlines. She made mention of guiding and teaching future educators the importance of working diligently, and the importance of the documents and school forms that have to be submitted on time.

Teachers' diligence is a crucial aspect of their professional commitment and effectiveness in the educational setting. For instance, Huillery et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of measuring diligence through self-reported and teacher-reported measures, highlighting the significance of subjective perceptions in understanding teacher diligence (Huillery et al., 2021). Additionally, it underscores the high levels of dedication and enthusiasm reported by teachers in their work, indicating a strong personal involvement and pride in their profession (Philipp & Schüpbach, 2010).

Furthermore, another informant stated that graduates have to be **oriented on their obligations**, whether or not it is directly stated in the contract that they have signed upon working. She said that there are tasks that employers cannot box into words and sentences legibly articulated in the work contracts that they are providing, and employees should understand that these are still responsibilities that they have to be held accountable with. In addition to this, employees should always extend a helping hand during these occasions. Also, a respondent suggested **workshops for future educators to further enhance their knowledge of the different teaching strategies and methodologies.** According to her, future educators must also be equipped with skills in socializing with other stakeholders. like the students' parents and with the whole community. She also suggested **research trainings and workshops** for them to develop and understand the importance of conducting research and studies, because according to her, less than 10% of their entire teacher population does action research, and she finds it hard to encourage them to do research and studies. This is why she thinks there should be training and workshops, to strengthen the love and passion in doing research and studies.

“Siguro po tama nga po na survey na kakausapin niyo sa school para po maisuggest kung ano mga kailangan ng mga teachers kung ano man po yong kailangan nilang gawin siguro sa linya po ng research napakahirap pong mag encourage ng mga teachers di man lang pong itong graduates po natin sa LSPU ano po lahat din namn po ay ganun ang na encounter nahihirapan po kami na mag encourage na mag gawa ng research action research para magawa para sa school kase siguro mga less than 10% po ang nakakagawa sa aming paaralan. At syempre po sa mga innovations yong pong mga existing conditions po natin na dapat makaisip na hindi lang basta nakasulat sa ating job description na maano ka noka nakafocus di ko din kailangan din mag innovate mag isip ng bago kung paano ma improve yong teaching learning situations kase naiiba din namn po yong sitwasyon ng pagtuturo ng paaralan naiibia din po yong mga attitude ng mga estudyante naiiba din ang kakayanan nila.”

Enhanced teaching methodologies and strategies play a crucial role in improving the learning process and outcomes in various educational settings (Coletti et al., 2021). It emphasizes the necessity of reviewing and improving teaching strategies to ensure that the learning process benefits from the adopted methodologies. Liou et al., (2013) further support this by demonstrating the effectiveness of innovative teaching strategies, such as collaborative learning and research projects, in helping students attain course objectives. Additionally, Lane et al. (2020) highlight the importance of creating teaching assignments that encourage interaction between faculty with different teaching practices, emphasizing the need for diverse and interactive teaching methodologies.

The significance of research for teachers cannot be overstated, as it plays a crucial role in shaping educational practices and professional development. Willemse & Boei (2013) emphasize the importance of introducing new teacher educators to the aims and skills of research, highlighting the need to integrate research into the education field. Lamanaskas et al. (2020) also stress the importance of motivating teachers to be interested in educational research results, indicating the value of research in driving professional development.

Feinstein & Hammond (2004) discuss the contribution of adult learning to health and social capital, underscoring the broader societal impact of research in education. Alomari et al. (2020) emphasize the vital role of teachers in facilitating research in schools, further underlining the importance of research for educators and educational institutions.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing findings, the researchers had the following conclusions. The Laguna State Polytechnic University - Siniloan Campus was able to produce BECED graduates who are competent, flexible, and resilient. Also, the curriculum for the BECED graduates is relevant to the needs of the schools and students. Generally, the employers commended the working and teaching performance of the BECED graduates who are working with them. This paper also confirms opportunities and areas for improvement for the BECED graduates such as attending seminar and workshops on teaching strategies and methodology enhancement and research, and orientation on diligence and teaching and work obligations to further enhance the whole performance of the graduates in their respective schools.

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