

Understanding Employer Perspectives on the Competencies and Performance of Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Graduates

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HOW TO CITE:

Catherine B. Caranguian, Promil A. Bistayan, Magda L. Frutas and Gay Maribel Lynda M. Mina (2026). Understanding Employer Perspectives on the Competencies and Performance of Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Graduates. International Journal of Special Education, 41(11s), 1547-1558

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ABSTRACT:

This qualitative study focuses on how employers evaluate the skills and professional performance of graduates from a public university's early childhood education program. The research used a researcher-developed written interview guide, and the participants were nineteen school administrators from public and private kindergarten and elementary schools in Cagayan Province, Philippines. The findings show that the graduates demonstrate strengths in instructional competence, classroom management, assessment practices, professionalism, collaboration, and adaptability. These allows them to contribute positively to both learner outcomes and school operations. However, the employers also pointed out some areas where graduates need to be better, such as inclusive education, action research, and the use of technology for teaching. The paper stresses the crucial role of employer feedback in curriculum review in order to meet professional standards, workplace demands, and societal expectations.

Keywords: curriculum alignment; preschool pedagogy; qualitative inquiry; school leadership; workforce readiness

Introduction

Globalization has changed what society expects from higher education institutions (HEIs), especially their roles in preparing graduates for a labor market that is more complex and competitive than ever. Thus, the quality of higher education is no longer judged by academic results alone, but by the degree to which graduates can show their effectiveness and employability in professional environments.

Employability, defined as the achievement of the intended graduate outcomes (Pamittan et al., 2022), includes not only obtaining a job but also having the essential skills, flexibility, and level of professionalism that allow one to be successful in various work settings. Some of the most common measures of employability are the relevance of skills, job retention, the extent to which academic programs correspond to industry needs, and the satisfaction of employers (Cook, 2022; Behle, 2020; Tomlinson, 2012).

Collectively, these measures show the degree to which higher education institutions help their students bridge the gap from academic studies to workplace performance.

In that context, employer feedback has become a very important way of measuring graduate employability. Since employers are the ones who see how the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom are translated into the workplace, they can be a great source of information about graduate abilities, work attitude, and willingness to meet the challenges of the workplace. Mendoza (2021) pointed out that employer feedback is an excellent source of data, which can lead to curriculum development, further instructional enhancement, and career development activities in higher education.

In the case of teacher education, this kind of feedback is very important as it is a record of the various aspects of teaching practice such as instructional effectiveness, classroom management, professionalism, collaboration, and engagement with school communities. Through these views, schools are able to move away from theoretical standards and observe how teacher education programs operate in authentic and real-life settings.

In the Philippines, the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (BECED) program specializes in the preparation of teachers responsible for supporting the development of young children, especially in their cognitive, moral, social, and emotional needs. The Commission on Higher Education's Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 76, series of 2017 outlines the program's policies and standards, which emphasizes key competencies such as pedagogy, professionalism, and community responsiveness. Despite the growing number of studies on employability and employer feedback in teacher education, few are tailored specifically on BECED graduates. This dearth in the body of research hinders relevant input on how effectively do early childhood teacher preparation programs cater to the current demands of early learning environments and meet employer expectations.

In the case of Cagayan State University-Andrews Campus (CSU-Andrews), it is the sole higher education institution in the Province of Cagayan offering the BECED program. As such, this entails a significant responsibility for the institution in providing qualified early childhood educators who must meet both national standards and the distinct needs of local schools. However, empirical evidence on the perception of employers regarding the competencies and professional readiness of BECED graduates from CSU-Andrews remains insufficient. As a result, this shortage in evidence limits the opportunity for curriculum enhancement and program development.

Hence, this study seeks to elicit insights from employers which will be used to inform efforts in enhancing the curriculum, recognize strengths in graduate preparation, and identify competencies in need for further development. By focusing on employer perspectives, this research serves to provide a more grounded understanding on the performance of BECED graduates and supports evidence-based strategies in strengthening both employability and professional effectiveness.

Objectives

Overall, the study examined the competencies and professional performance of BECED graduates as perceived by their employers. Specifically, the research aimed to:

- a. Examine how employers appraise the core competencies exhibited by the BECED graduates;
- b. Assess the employers' evaluations of the BECED graduate's performance with regard to student learning and institutional development; and
- c. Identify areas for improvement to strengthen the competencies and professional practice of BECED graduates based on the recommendations of the employers.

Literature Review

Employer Perceptions of the Competencies of Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Graduates

Understanding employer perceptions is essential, especially in early childhood education. These provide insights into whether pre-service training equips graduates with the needed competencies for authentic classroom engagement. Several studies about BECED graduates have revealed that employers notice the graduates' strong theoretical grounding, yet they have expressed concerns about how they apply knowledge in varied learning environments. For example, Boyd et al. (2020) found that BECED graduates exhibit limitations in implementing inclusive and differentiated instructional strategies, despite demonstrating sound understanding of child development theories. A later study by Boyd et al. (2023) showed that the graduates' readiness for complex classroom realities is inhibited by program design inconsistencies and practicum exposure insufficiency.

Aligned with these findings, Mikuska et al. (2023) reported that employers perceived awareness of institutional policies and developing frameworks to be important traits of graduates. However, such competencies may often go unnoticed due to limited contextual practice opportunities. Throughout these studies, employers consistently emphasized affective and interpersonal skills like empathy, motivation, team-building and professionalism over or at a comparable level to academic merit. This focus is indicative of a wider trend in early childhood education that places relational abilities and emotional intelligence at the core of effective teaching practice (Mankki et al., 2025)

Collectively, existing studies imply that employers are looking at the competence of teachers with a more comprehensive view. Under such view, cognitive, technical, and socio-emotional domains are integrated. This is consistent with calls to bridge the current theory-practice gap in education by strengthening practice-based learning, structured

mentorship, and extended field experiences. The implementation of these policy-level recommendations in BECED programs within the Philippines remains insufficiently unexplored. Although the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) and CMO No. 76, series of 2017, articulate expected graduate competencies, limited studies investigate the employment perspective to provide evidence-based indicators on how local employers perceive these specific competencies on BECED graduates. This indicates a need to solicit localized input of employers for evidence-based assessment of the BECED program.

Job Performance of Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Graduates

Job performance provides a practical lens through which graduate competencies are applied in the workplace. In early childhood education, performance encompasses a broad range of competencies including instructional effectiveness, classroom management, communication, collaboration, and adherence to professional and ethical standards. It reflects not only mastery in pedagogy but also the ability to utilize knowledge in real classroom contexts.

Empirical evidence generally indicates satisfactory to high levels of performance among early childhood education graduates. Employers frequently report positive evaluations across multiple domains, especially in relational and affective skills. Among the skills in sustaining effective professional practice are adaptability, communication, and emotional regulation (Peter et al., 2024). Additionally, professional experience and educational attainment are also observed to significantly contribute to the enhancement of instructional and organizational competence (Hyuk-jun Moon et al., 2023). Similarly, an earlier work by Nurbiana Dhieni et al. (2008) found that high academic performance was strongly associated with employment within one's field of specializations. This suggests a link between academic rigor and employability.

Despite these positive responses, challenges still persist, specifically during the transition from

academic preparation to professional practice. Mischo (2015) noted that perceived competencies of graduates often decline upon entering the workforce. This reflects constraints in adjusting to the expectations of institutions and realities in the classroom. Nonetheless, attributes such as compassion and emotional regulation have been shown to cushion these challenges by sustaining engagement and reducing occupational stress (Li et al., 2021; Aboul-Ela et al., 2017).

Beyond these individual factors include structural and systemic conditions that significantly influence performance outcomes. Silberfeld et al. (2018) pointed that limited teaching positions and funding led to employment instability. This shows how organizational and policy contexts shape professional experiences. In the Philippines, teacher performance is formally assessed through the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) which is aligned with the PPST. This framework emphasizes learner-centered instruction, collaboration, and continuous professional development as performance indicators. However, research examining BECED graduates' performance through an employer-based assessment within these systems remains scarce.

Employer Feedback as a Measure of Graduate Performance

Employer feedback functions as a measure for professional competence and as a mechanism in support for the continuous improvement among employees. For BECED graduates, such feedback comprises both formal evaluations and informal appraisals that reflect teaching effectiveness and workplace behavior. In the context of Brookfield's Reflective Practitioner Model, feedback encourages self-assessment and professional growth, while Domain 7 of the PPST highlights its role in teacher development.

Evidence supports the positive influence of structured feedback on performance improvement. Casey and McWilliam (2011), in their study of early childhood intervention, unveiled that personalized and consistent

feedback resulted in more observable changes in professional practice than traditional workshop training. Their analysis highlighted that the effectiveness of feedback is dependent on factors such as frequency and the mode of delivery. In addition, employer credibility and employee characteristics were also considered as key determinants.

Employer feedback also reflects how the education sector values its professionals. It is observed that the inadequacy of recognition among qualified educators, such as offering a comparable compensation to both degree and non-degree holders, signals undervaluation which can negatively affect teachers' motivation and self-efficacy (Moloney and Pope, 2015). Such conditions may, in turn, influence their job commitment and performance. Moreover, Boyd et al. (2020; 2023) emphasized that employer feedback serves not only to evaluate graduates but also to diagnose how effective teacher education programs are. While employers often praise graduates' theoretical foundation, persistent concerns regarding the application of theory to practice remain.

Within the context of the Philippines, feedback methods are institutionalized and regulated through frameworks such as the RPMS–PPST, which integrate mentoring and performance appraisal. However, studies that specifically examine employer feedback on BECED graduates remain limited. Addressing this gap is crucial in strengthening the connection between academic preparation and professional practice in early childhood education.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement in Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Programs

The effectiveness of the BECED program remain to be continuously examined in relation to its ability to produce competent, reflective, and adaptable educators. Continuing gaps in curriculum content, faculty training, and experiential learning opportunities result in a misalignment between academic instruction and workplace demands. According to Hyson et al. (2009), minimal exposure of faculty members to

current early childhood studies limits the relevance of their teaching. Additionally, Chu et al. (2016) points out that graduates are less prepared to address developmental needs of younger learners due to inadequate emphasis on infant and toddler education.

Boyd et al. (2022) also highlighted that inconsistencies in program design and practicum experience among institutions leads to a disparity in student competence and makes seamless transition to professional life difficult. As a result, advocates call for multidimensional reforms such as strengthening field experience, mentorship integration, and the utilization of current research and pedagogy practices.

In the Philippine setting, aligning the BECED program implementation with CMO No. 76, series of 2017 and the PPST remains imperative to ensure coherence with national standards. Employer feedback provides specific and contextually-grounded evidence for identifying the program strengths and weaknesses. Through the incorporation of employer perspectives, HEIs can enhance the practice-based, responsiveness, and sustainability of not just the BECED program but teacher education programs as a whole.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a descriptive qualitative research design to explore employers' views on the competencies and professional performance of BECED graduates. The said design was deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth examination of the participants' experiences, beliefs, and their evaluations in the real-life setting (Creswell, 2021). In order to gather detailed responses from the participants, written interviews were used. This allowed the researchers to capture insights that structured or quantitative methods might miss (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Using this method, the paper was able to find out how employers evaluate the competencies of graduates, their role in institutional development and student learning, as well as opportunities for further professional growth.

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted in 19 schools across Cagayan, Philippines, where BECED graduates from Cagayan State University-Andrews Campus are employed as kindergarten or primary school teachers. Among these institutions, 14 were public schools and five were private schools, which includes two Catholic and three non-sectarian schools. The basis on selecting the said institutions was the availability of direct supervisory and administrative perspectives on the professional performance of BECED graduates. The inclusion of both public and private schools enabled the study to analyze a wide range of organizational contexts and expectations, thereby offering a broader understanding of graduate performance in different educational environments.

Study Participants

The study involved 19 school administrators belonging to public and private elementary and early childhood education institutions in Cagayan Province. The said participants have direct supervisory experience with BECED graduates. They hold major leadership roles including, principals, school administrators, a teacher-in-charge, and a school president, placing them in roles where they regularly evaluate teachers' professional competencies and performance. Thirteen out of the 19 participants were female and six were male, while their age ranged from 37 to 72 years old, with the average age of 52 years. They had two to 16 years of administrative, with an average of eight years. All participants have education-related doctoral or master's degrees.

Participants were purposively selected based on the following criteria: (1) currently holding an administrative position for at least two years, (2) possessing direct supervisory and evaluative experience with BECED graduates, (3) demonstrating the capacity to provide informed assessments grounded in professional practice, and (4) expressing willingness to participate voluntarily in the study. The principle of data saturation guided participant selection, with

recruitment concluding when no new substantive themes or insights emerged from the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Instrument

Considering the participants' administrative duties, a written interview guide was used as a research instrument. It is a researcher-developed instrument that consists of open-ended questions and aligned with the objectives of the study. The use of said instrument allowed the participants to reflect and respond at a pace convenient to their schedule. In order to establish the content validity of the instrument, it underwent validation by experts in the field of teacher education and educational research. Modifications were made based on the feedback of the said experts.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before the research started, permission to conduct it was sought from proper officials of Cagayan State University, as well as those from the Schools Division Office of Tuguegarao City and Cagayan. An orientation was given to the participants that includes explanation of the study purposes, ethical consideration, as well as their role in the study. Written interview guides were distributed only after informed consents were collected. Two weeks were given to the participants to accomplish the instruments. After that, the researchers personally collected the responses. To keep confidentiality, participant identities were anonymized, and all data were securely handled in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Ethical issues such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, and participant's welfare were given topmost consideration during the course of this study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted according to the six-phase thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). Firstly, the researchers got to know the data through multiple readings of the interview responses. Next, initial codes were created in order to identify the units of data that were most meaningful and relevant to the

research objectives. These codes were later reviewed, and the themes were arranged to reflect the shared patterns in employer perspectives. To bolster reliability, member checking was done by giving the initial themes back to the participants for verification and confirmation of accuracy. This step was beneficial in making certain that the results truly represented the participants' views and therefore, strengthened the reliability of the analysis.

Findings

Core Competencies of BECED Graduates

The participants have consistently perceived BECED graduates as having diversified skills which equip them to perform well in early childhood and elementary education fields. classroom management, technological expertise, assessment competence, professionalism and work ethics, community engagement and teamwork, as well as adaptability and problem-solving skills. As a whole, these areas represent the main pillars supporting teaching effectiveness.

In terms of teaching competence, the participants highlighted the graduates' in-depth knowledge of the content areas, as well as their readiness to use student-centered teaching approaches like game-based and differentiated instruction. One administrator (P5) noted that the BECED graduates *"demonstrate mastery of the subject matter and employ different strategies that engage learners as active participants"*. Another participant (P7) claimed that the graduates are *"very capable and competent in engaging learners through gamified strategies and differentiated instruction that respond to the learning styles of the learners"*. These remarks from the participants indicate that the graduates are able to translate pedagogical knowledge into engaging classroom practices.

With regard to classroom management, the participants noted the graduates' ability to foster positive and child-friendly learning environments based on respect and cooperation. They were described as establishing good relationships with the learners and setting clear classroom routines. To illustrate this, one of the

participants (P3) said, *"They apply effective classroom strategies to promote order, respect, and engagement while fostering a supportive and inclusive atmosphere"*. On the other hand, an administrator (P8) mentioned that the BECED graduates *"build rapport with students before starting the lesson and promote respect and cooperation"*.

The graduates were also noted to be very capable in the use of educational technologies that makes lessons highly engaging. One school head (P5) revealed that graduates *"use smart televisions and laptops in creating presentations and interactive activities"*. Similarly, a principal (P12) pointed out that *"the teacher displays skill in the use of educational technology to make the teaching and learning process more effective"*.

The employers likewise recognize that the graduates of the BECED program competently uses different ways of assessing the learners' progress. One participant (P18) said that they *"are very good at using different types of assessment to measure students' achievement"*, while another (P1) observed that *"the teacher is employing different forms of assessment to track students' learning"*. Such practices allow the graduates to identify and cater to the specific needs of individual students and implement a differentiated style of teaching.

Another notable strength of the BECED graduates that emerged from the participants is their capability to show professionalism and work ethics. A teacher-in-charge (P2) remarked, *"She is always showing a high level of professionalism through punctuality, clear communication, and dedication to pupils' success"*. Another participant (P3) added that the BECED graduate under his supervision, *"manifest and uphold the code of professional ethics and are professional in following organizational mandates"*.

In addition, graduates were characterized as being deeply involved in school and community activities, and as working well with colleagues and parents. As one administrator (P10) noted, *"They participate actively in joint planning, parent-teacher conferences, and community outreach initiatives to support school goals"*. Graduates also exhibited a certain degree of agility and problem-solving abilities in the way they deal with classroom difficulties and changes in the curriculum.

Participant 11 shared that the graduate *"adjusts her strategies based on individual student needs and remains calm and understanding toward learners"*.

Performance and Contributions of BECED Graduates

In addition to core competencies, employers expressed that the BECED graduates offer valuable contributions to student learning and organizational development.

In terms of student learning, participants reported that the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) of graduates enhance learner engagement and motivation. One administrator (P7) observed that graduates' KSAs *"motivate learners to be active and engaged during the teaching-learning process"*. Another participant (P8) commented, *"Your graduate foster supportive and inclusive environments that inspire academic achievement and personal growth"*. These accounts indicate that graduates positively influence both academic and personal learner outcomes.

Employers also highlighted the BECED graduates' contributions to organizational development. They noted their involvement in innovation, leadership, and teamwork. Participant 4 shared that one of the graduates *"brings new perspectives and innovative teaching practices that positively impact the school and community"*. Another administrator (P5) highlighted the range of talents of graduates by saying, *"some are expert in beginning reading, others in arts, music, or coaching besides being leaders they are also very effective team members"*. These types of contributions were seen as ways of boosting the school capacity and culture.

Areas for Improvement Identified by Employers

The employers of the BECED graduates pointed out that there are still some aspects that need to be developed despite the positive feedbacks they shared.

One of the most frequently raised areas for improvement was the need for stronger preparation in inclusive and special education. One of the school leaders (P5) commented: *"Training on inclusive education can further equip*

graduates to meet the diverse needs of all learners". Employers additionally pointed out the benefit of enhancing competence in action research, especially when it comes to solving difficulties in teaching and students' performance. As one participant (P7) put it, *"knowing how to carry out action research is essential for improving the teaching, learning process and enhancing student outcomes"*.

Finally, participants highlighted the need for continued professional growth in emerging technologies. This was noted despite their recognition of the technological competence of the BECED graduates. One administrator (P3) noted that an additional training along this *"could further enhance their skills and adaptability inside the classroom"*. These insights point to specific areas where curriculum enhancement and professional development may further strengthen graduate readiness.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the BECED graduates demonstrate a broad and integrated set of competencies essential for effective early childhood and elementary teaching. At the same time, areas that require further strengthening to respond to evolving educational demands were also revealed

The feedback from the employers indicate that BECED graduates are well equipped in the aspect of teaching. They possess the ability to design developmentally appropriate lessons and employ learner-centered instructional strategies. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing that effective early childhood teaching depends on pedagogical responsiveness and content clarity tailored to young learners' developmental needs (Fabry et al., 2022). On the other hand, the graduates' classroom management skills are consistent with the idea of focusing on developing positive, inclusive, and orderly learning environments, which are crucial factors for continuous learner engagement and effective teaching.

The usage of educational technologies by the graduates also highlights their willingness and ability to adjust to modern teaching environments, which is in line with Schindler et

al. (2017) who noted the growing importance of digital competence in early childhood education. At the same time, employers' acknowledgment of the assessment skills of the BECED graduates implies that the graduates know how to implement assessment techniques not only for accountability, but as tools for guiding instruction and supporting learner development (Stone-MacDonald et al., 2018).

Besides instructional skills, employers emphasized graduates' professionalism, work ethics, and collaborative orientation. These attributes are increasingly seen as essential for effective teaching, particularly in early childhood settings where strong relationships with children, families, and colleagues matter most. This is consistent with Maxwell & Schwimmer's (2016) claim that ethical and responsible professional behavior helps build trust and consistency within school communities. Likewise, the graduates' flexibility and capability for problem-solving show that they are able to manage different classroom situations and adapt to changing educational environments. This aligns with research findings showing that flexibility and reflective practice are key to sustaining teacher effectiveness over time (Green et al., 2020; Boylan et al., 2018).

Employers' feedback about graduates' roles in enhancing student learning and contributing to school development further reinforce the impact of quality teacher preparation. Graduates were seen as helping students become more engaged and creating inclusive classrooms, which supports research showing that strong teacher preparation can improve student outcomes (Kraft & Papay, 2014). Their participation in school activities, taking on school leadership positions as well as collaborative activities, also highlights their role in strengthening institutional capacity. This supports Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Desimone & Garet (2015) who found that continuous professional development and participatory leadership help improve schools, retain teachers, and strengthen organizations.

On an organizational level, findings from the study imply that BECED graduates play a role in shaping adaptive and cooperative school cultures. The accounts from the employers indicate that graduates bring innovation, specialized skills, and a willingness to engage in collective work. These qualities support schools' responses to 21st-century educational challenges. Literature on professional learning communities and collaborative school structures highlights how these contributions help sustain educational reform and community engagement (Baniqued & Bautista, 2024; Mansour & David, 2021; Powell et al., 2010).

The study also affirms the importance of employer feedback as a meaningful lens for examining graduate performance and program effectiveness. Employers recognized that graduates have strong theoretical knowledge but need more practical experience, reflecting the common gap between theory and practice in teacher education (Boyd et al., 2023). These types of feedback highlight the need for reflective mechanisms such as mentoring, structured feedback and peer review to support teachers in their transition into practice and to inform curriculum improvement (Moloney & Pope, 2015; Casey & McWilliam, 2011).

Remarkably, employers noted that graduates need to improve in action research, inclusive and special education, and emerging technologies showing the changing expectations in the education sector. The focus on action research shows the growing need for teachers to study and improve their own practice while addressing classroom challenges. Similarly, the need for stronger preparation in inclusive and special education reflects the increasing importance of equity, accessibility, and support for diverse learners (Meissel et al., 2016). The emphasis on emerging technologies also shows that teacher education programs must keep up with digital changes and new ways of teaching (Quintos, 2024; Dubé & Wen, 2021; Bergdahl et al., 2020).

Altogether, these insights strongly emphasize the importance of employer feedback in

connecting academic preparation and professional practice. Employers' perspectives bring important and context-sensitive viewpoints that not only assess graduate performance but also inform curriculum development, program evaluation, and sustained professional growth. By addressing identified gaps in inclusivity, research capacity, and technological proficiency, BECED programs can better prepare graduates for employment and remain relevant in the changing field of early childhood education.

Conclusion

This study shows that employers of BECED graduates teaching in kindergarten and primary levels in public and private schools in Cagayan Province generally view them positively. The employers recognized their strengths in teaching, classroom management, assessment, technology use, professionalism, work ethics, community involvement, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving. These skills help graduates support student learning and contribute to school improvement.

However, the findings also show areas that need further improvement, particularly in inclusive and special education, action research, and the use of emerging technologies in teaching. Strengthening these areas can help graduates better respond to diverse learners, use evidence-based practices, and adapt to changing educational needs. The study also highlights the importance of employer feedback in improving BECED programs and ensuring that teacher education remains aligned with professional standards, workplace demands, and societal expectations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The College of Teacher Education of CSU-Andrews may strengthen the integration of inclusive education across professional and major courses. This should go beyond theory. More attention may be given to

practical strategies for teaching learners with different abilities, needs, and backgrounds. In doing so, graduates are better prepared to handle inclusive classrooms and respond to the changing realities of early childhood education.

2. The Research in Education course may be improved by giving stronger emphasis to action research. Pre-service teachers should be guided on how to conduct classroom-based research using the formats and standards required by the Department of Education. This can help them become more reflective, make evidence-based decisions, and meet professional expectations in the field of basic education.
3. Emerging technologies should be integrated throughout the BECED curriculum. These may include digital tools, smart devices, and artificial intelligence applications. Technology should not be taught only in one subject. Instead, it should be used across different courses to strengthen instruction, assessment, and professional adaptability, preparing graduates for the demands of Education 4.0.
4. Future researchers may conduct longitudinal studies to examine employer feedback on BECED graduates over time. This can show patterns in graduates' professional growth and changing competency needs. Comparative studies with similar early childhood education programs in other institutions may also be useful. These studies

can provide insights into program effectiveness, best practices, and ways to improve teacher education based on workplace expectations.

Limitations and Study Forward

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights into employer perspectives on the competencies and performance of BECED graduates, some limitations should be acknowledged. The study was limited to a small, purposively selected group of school administrators within a single province. This may limit the transferability of the findings to other institutional or regional contexts. Additionally, the use of written interviews, while appropriate for accommodating participants' schedules, may have limited opportunities for follow-up probing and deeper clarification of responses. In order to better understand how BECED graduates develop and how teacher education programs can be improved, future studies may use long-term, interview-based, mixed-method, and comparative approaches across institutions or regions.

Acknowledgement

The researchers are sincerely grateful to Cagayan State University for approving and funding the research project from which the study stemmed, as indicated in Special Order OP-5005-SO-2025-04-259. They also extend their gratitude to Prof. Dr. Antonio I. Tamayao and Prof. Dr. Rudolf T. Vecaldo for their mentorship and technical assistance in the completion of the study.

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