

Tracer Study on the Employment Outcomes of BPED Batch 2023 Graduates

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Abstract

This tracer study evaluates the employment outcomes of Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) Batch 2023 graduates, focusing on job relevance, employment status, and challenges faced. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study surveyed 69 graduates to assess their employment status, job alignment with their field of study, and the obstacles encountered in the job market. Findings reveal that while a significant portion of graduates are employed, many occupy part-time or unrelated roles, with 42.03% remaining unemployed. The study highlights challenges such as the need for licensure exam preparation, lack of professional experience, and a competitive job market. Results indicate a mismatch between academic training and job market demands, suggesting that the BPED program should enhance practical experience opportunities and career support services. Recommendations include integrating more hands-on experience within the curriculum and improving career guidance to better align graduates' skills with industry needs. These insights aim to guide program improvements and support the successful transition of future graduates into the workforce.

Keywords: BPED, employment outcomes, tracer study, job relevance, graduate challenges, career support

1. Introduction

The Physical Education profession plays a significant role in promoting lifelong fitness, wellness, sports participation, and holistic development among individuals and communities. In response to the growing demand for competent physical education teachers, coaches, fitness instructors, and sports professionals, higher education institutions offer the Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) program to equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, values, and competencies needed in the field of physical education and sports. The BPED program provides a comprehensive curriculum that integrates the science of human movement, sports management, health education, dance, recreation, and pedagogical approaches in teaching physical education. Through these learning experiences, graduates are expected to become effective professionals who can apply theoretical and practical competencies in various educational, fitness, and community settings.

As the demand for qualified physical education professionals continues to increase, it becomes essential to evaluate the effectiveness of the BPED program in preparing graduates for employment and professional practice. In higher education, the employability of graduates and the alignment of academic preparation with workforce demands serve as important indicators of program quality and relevance. One effective method of assessing these outcomes is through a tracer study, which examines the employment status of graduates, the relevance of their jobs to their academic preparation, and the challenges they encounter in the labor market.

This tracer study on the employment outcomes of BPED graduates aims to determine the employability and career experiences of graduates after completing the program. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, occupation, employment status, employment type, and employment sector. Furthermore, it aims to examine the relevance of the jobs held by BPED graduates to their field of study and investigate the challenges they encounter in securing and maintaining employment. By addressing these concerns, the study intends to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the BPED curriculum in preparing graduates for professional practice and workforce demands.

The findings of this study will serve as a basis for curriculum enhancement, program development, and institutional planning to further improve the quality of the BPED program. Moreover, the results may provide relevant information to administrators, faculty members, students, and other stakeholders regarding the strengths and areas for improvement of the program, ultimately contributing to the advancement of physical education and graduate employability.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This tracer study utilizes a descriptive research design, combined with qualitative analysis, to evaluate the employment outcomes of BPED Batch 2023 graduates. The descriptive aspect of the study systematically examines graduates' employment status, job relevance, and sector distribution. Qualitative methods are employed specifically to explore and understand the challenges faced by graduates during their transition from academia to the workforce. This mixed-methods approach provides a comprehensive view of the graduates' career experiences and the effectiveness of the BPED program.

2.2 Respondents of the Study

The study includes BPED Batch 2023 graduates as its respondents. A total of 69 graduates were surveyed. The selection of participants was based on their availability and willingness to participate, ensuring a representative sample of the cohort. This approach allows for an accurate reflection of the employment outcomes and challenges experienced by the graduates.

2.3 Research Instruments

The structured questionnaire was distributed to BPED Batch 2023 graduates through an online survey platform using Google Forms, where respondents were given a specified period to accomplish the questionnaire, and follow-up reminders were sent to ensure a higher response rate. The data collection process strictly adhered to confidentiality and ethical research standards to protect the respondents' privacy and information. After the retrieval of responses, the gathered data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools and methods. Simple percentage and frequency distribution were utilized to determine and summarize the demographic profile of the respondents, including their employment status, employment type, and employment sector, providing a clear presentation of the distribution of graduates across categories. Furthermore, thematic analysis was employed for the qualitative data by coding and categorizing responses to open-ended questions in order to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the employment challenges encountered by the graduates.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

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3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study and the corresponding discussion based on the data gathered from the respondents. The findings are organized according to the specific problems of the study and are presented using tables, interpretations, and supporting literature.

I. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented to provide a clearer understanding of the characteristics of the BPED graduates included in the study. Specifically, the profile includes the respondents' age, occupation, employment status, employment type, and employment sector.

1.1 Age of the Respondents

The age profile of the respondents is presented to describe the distribution of BPED graduates in terms of their current age. This information provides an important demographic context for the study, as age is often associated with variations in career readiness, employment decisions, and labor market entry. Understanding the respondents' age distribution helps interpret their transition from academic training to employment and provides a clearer picture of their stage in early career development.

Table 1. Age of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
22	3	44.5%
23	35	53.03%
24	23	34.85%
25	2	3.03%
28	2	3.03%
29	2	1.52%

Table 1 presents the age distribution of the respondents. The findings reveal that the majority of the respondents are 23 years old, comprising 53.03% of the total respondents, followed by those aged 24 years old with 34.85%. Meanwhile, respondents aged 22, 25, and 28 each accounted for 3.03%, while only 1.52% were 29 years old. The results indicate that most of the respondents belong to the young adult age group, which is expected considering that they are recent graduates of the BPED program.

According to Kooij et al., younger adults tend to prioritize self-actualization, career growth, and professional development in their work experiences. As individuals age, their work motivations gradually shift toward stability, security, and affiliation. This suggests that the respondents, being mostly in their early twenties, may still be in the process of exploring career opportunities, developing professional competencies, and establishing their careers in the field of physical education and related professions.

1.2 Occupation of the Respondents

The occupational profile of the respondents presents the different jobs held by BPED graduates after completing their degree. This provides an overview of their actual employment destinations, whether aligned or not aligned with their field of specialization. Examining occupational distribution is essential in determining how graduates apply their training in real-world settings and in identifying the extent of employment opportunities available to BPED graduates in the labor market.

Table 2. Occupation of the respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
High School PE Teachers	8	7.2%
College PE Teachers	8	7.2
Clerks	2	1.8
Job Orders from Local Government Units	3	2.7
Market Sales	2	1.8
Side Line Jobs	11	9.9

The data presented in Table 2 reveals the diverse occupational landscape of BPED Batch 2023 graduates six months after graduation. A small percentage, 7.2%, have secured positions as High School or College PE Teachers, indicating that while some graduates have found roles directly related to their field of study, these positions are relatively scarce. The majority of graduates are engaged in roles that diverge from their primary training, with 1.8% working as clerks and another 1.8% in market sales, highlighting a shift from the expected career path. Additionally, 2.7% are involved in job orders from local government units, and 9.9% are taking on side line jobs, reflecting a broader range of employment opportunities and the adaptability of graduates.

This reveals the diverse occupational landscape of BPED Batch 2023 graduates six months after graduation, with a small percentage securing roles directly related to their field of study. This observation aligns with findings from a study that emphasized the importance of occupational mobility, highlighting the need for university graduates to be prepared for diverse employment opportunities beyond their primary training. The study identified key components of occupational mobility, including the need for educational programs to focus on developing students' readiness to adapt to constantly changing working conditions through project-based learning and modular educational structures (Yakhina et. al, 2016). These findings suggest that further aligning the BPED curriculum with these pedagogical conditions could enhance graduates' ability to successfully navigate the varied job market landscape.

1.3 Employment Status of the Respondents

The employment status describes whether the respondents are currently employed, self-employed, or unemployed. This variable serves as a key indicator of graduate employability and reflects the overall success of

BPED graduates in entering the workforce. It also provides insight into employment accessibility and possible barriers faced by graduates in securing stable and appropriate jobs after graduation.

Table 3. Employment Status of the Respondents

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	35	50.72%
Self-employed	5	7.25%
Unemployed	29	42.03%

The data from Table 3 illustrates the employment status of BPED Batch 2023 graduates six months after their graduation. Approximately 50.72% of respondents are employed, indicating that a significant portion of the graduates has successfully secured jobs, though the nature and relevance of these positions vary. Meanwhile, 7.25% of the graduates are self-employed, suggesting an entrepreneurial spirit among some individuals, who have chosen to create their own opportunities rather than seeking traditional employment. However, a notable 42.03% remain unemployed, which highlights a significant challenge in the transition from graduation to stable employment. This unemployment rate underscores the need for the BPED program to enhance career readiness by integrating practical experiences and job placement support to better prepare graduates for the job market. Addressing these employment challenges could help improve the program's effectiveness and better align graduates' skills with industry needs.

Tomlinson (2012) notes that graduates' employability is often shaped by their personal identities and how they perceive the labor market's demands. This perspective aligns with the varied employment outcomes of BPED Batch 2023, where the ability to adapt and manage personal employability appears to be crucial in navigating a challenging job market. Thus, The findings of this study suggest a need for the BPED program to better align with job market demands and enhance career readiness.

1.4 Employment Type of the Respondents

The employment type presents the nature of work arrangements of the respondents, including full-time, part-time, and self-employed positions. This information is important in assessing the quality and stability of employment secured by BPED graduates. It also reflects the extent to which graduates are able to obtain secure and sustainable positions or are instead engaged in more flexible or non-permanent work arrangements.

Table 4. Employment Type

Employment Type	Frequency	Percentage
Employed Full time	17	42.5%
Employed Part-time	18	45%
Self-employed Full time	5	12.5%

Table 4 provides valuable insights into the employment types of BPED Batch 2023 graduates, revealing that 42.5% of those employed hold full-time positions. This substantial portion of graduates has successfully navigated the competitive job market, securing stable roles that contribute to their career development and financial stability. However, 45% of graduates are engaged in part-time employment, a statistic that highlights the challenges of market congestion and the precarious nature of part-time roles, which may not offer the same level of job security or income as full-time positions. This outcome aligns with Tomlinson's (2012) observation that even employable individuals may struggle to find suitable full-time jobs due to the competitive dynamics of the knowledge-driven economy.

Furthermore, the 12.5% of graduates who are self-employed full-time reflect an entrepreneurial spirit, choosing to create their own business opportunities rather than relying on traditional employment paths. This entrepreneurial drive resonates with Holmes' (2013), as cited in Jackson & Wilton (2016), emphasized on the importance of career management skills and adaptability in a complex and often uncertain job market. The distribution of employment types among BPED Batch 2023 graduates underscores the need for the BPED program to prepare students for a diverse range of career paths, equipping them to succeed in both full-time and part-time roles, as well as as encouraging entrepreneurial ventures that can thrive in today's dynamic economic environment.

1.5 Employment Sector of the Respondents

The employment sector identifies where the respondents are currently working, whether in the public, private, or self-employed sectors. This provides insight into the distribution of BPED graduates across different organizational environments and highlights their adaptability to various employment settings. It also helps in understanding which sectors offer more opportunities for graduates of the program.

Table 5. Employment Sector

Employment Sector	Frequency	Percentage
Public	14	35%
Private	21	52.5%
Self-employed	5	12.5%

Table 5 reveals the distribution of BPED Batch 2023 graduates across different employment sectors, with 52.5% employed in the private sector, 35% in the public sector, and 12.5% self-employed. This distribution highlights the graduates' adaptability to various work environments, suggesting that the BPED program effectively equips students with the skills necessary to thrive in both public and private sectors. This adaptability aligns with Boyne (2002) as cited in Roehrich et. al (2014) findings, which emphasize the significant differences between public and private organizations, such as the higher levels of bureaucracy in public organizations and the distinct managerial values between sectors. The presence of BPED graduates across these sectors underscores the importance of preparing students not only with sector-specific expertise but also with the versatility to navigate the unique challenges and expectations of different organizational environments.

II. Relevance of the Jobs Held by BPED Graduates to their Field of Study

This section presents the relevance of the current jobs held by BPED graduates in relation to their field of study.

2.1 Directly Related Roles

The occupations presented under directly related roles refer to jobs that are aligned with the BPED graduates' field of specialization, particularly in physical education teaching and related professions. Identifying these roles helps determine the relevance and effectiveness of the BPED curriculum in preparing graduates for intended career pathways in the discipline.

Table 6. Directly related roles

Occupation	Percentage
High School PE Teachers	7.2%
College PE Teachers	7.2

Table 6 shows that only 7.2% of BPED Batch 2023 graduates secured positions as High School or College PE Teachers, revealing a gap between educational preparation and job market needs. This low percentage indicates a need for more effective career support. emphasize that career counseling should address both technical skills and emotional and external factors impacting career decisions (Schultheiss 2007; Duffy and Dik 2009, as cited in Bridges, 2014). This suggests that personalized, one-on-one counseling could improve the alignment between training and job placement.

Additionally, Majid et al. (2019) highlight the importance of soft skills for employability and career success. Their study found that while students recognized the value of soft skills such as positive attitude, communication, self-motivation, and problem-solving, employers felt that fresh graduates often lacked these skills. They suggest integrating soft skills training into the curriculum to better prepare students for the job market. This finding aligns with the observed need for enhancing soft skills within physical education programs to improve graduates' career outcomes.

Abdiyev et al. (2023) also note a misalignment between educational programs and professional standards, pointing out that many programs list professional standards without effectively integrating them into their curricula. This underscores the need for the BPED program to align its curriculum with professional standards and develop better assessment tools to improve graduates' job readiness. Table 7. Indirectly or Unrelated Roles

2.2 Indirectly Related or Unrelated Roles

The occupations under indirectly related or unrelated roles refer to jobs that are not directly connected to physical education but are still undertaken by BPED graduates. These roles highlight alternative employment pathways and reflect the adaptability of graduates in responding to available job opportunities in the labor market, even outside their area of specialization.

Table 7. Occupation

Occupation	Percentage
Clerks	1.8
Job Orders from Local Government Units	2.7
Market Sales	1.8
Side Line Jobs	9.9

Among BPED Batch 2023 graduates, 1.8% work as clerks, handling administrative tasks that, while not directly related to physical education, build valuable organizational skills and provide a stable foundation for career growth. Similarly, 2.7% are involved in temporary or project-based roles with local government units, gaining experience in project management and public relations. Another 1.8% work in market sales, developing skills in customer service and communication. Additionally, 9.9% engage in side-line jobs that offer supplementary income and diverse skills. These roles, although divergent from the traditional BPED career path, reflect graduates' adaptability and highlight the need for the BPED program to incorporate practical experience and enhanced career services to better align with the job market and support graduates' career development.

Jackson (2021) highlights the evolving nature of graduate roles and the challenges faced by new graduates in securing positions that align with their qualifications. The study emphasizes that a degree does not guarantee employment and that the growing pool of graduates has led to a rise in credentialism, where graduates are over-qualified for available roles. This situation often results in increased career turnover and frustration due to unmet expectations. For BPED graduates in clerical roles, this underscores the importance of gaining versatile skills and considering alternative pathways to enhance career prospects. Educating graduates about the realities of the labor market and exploring various developmental pathways can help bridge the gap between academic training and professional opportunities. The study's findings suggest that while clerical positions may not be directly related to physical education, they provide valuable experience and skill development that can contribute to long-term career success.

III. Challenges Encountered by BPED Graduates Before Securing Employment

After analyzing the responses provided by the BPED graduates regarding the challenges they faced before securing their first job, several key themes emerge. These themes encapsulate the common difficulties encountered by the graduates during the transitional period from academic life to the professional workforce.

3.1 Preparation for the Licensure Examination

One of the most significant challenges identified by the graduates was the need to focus on preparing for the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Many graduates prioritized studying and reviewing for the LET, which led to a delay in seeking employment. For some, this preparation involved up to a year of focused study, obtaining additional certificates, or meeting licensure requirements. Passing the LET was seen as a crucial step for securing a job in their field, and this period of preparation was a necessary investment in their future careers. It was underscored that: *"I was focusing on my board examination and high requirements of the institutions."* (Pos 1-2).

BPED graduates often face delays in securing employment due to the extensive preparation required for the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). This preparation can take up to a year and involves additional certifications and requirements. Research by Angrist and Guryan (2008), as cited in Burgess (2016), supports this experience, showing that increased use of standardized tests for teacher certification can raise entry barriers and delay employment, without significantly improving teacher quality. Their study also found that such testing is linked to higher teacher wages but may negatively impact teacher diversity. This highlights the challenge of balancing licensure requirements with effective and equitable employment pathways for new graduates.

3.2 Lack of Professional Experience

A significant challenge for many graduates was the lack of professional experience, which made it difficult to secure employment immediately after graduation. Employers often required experience, even for entry-level positions, creating a barrier for new graduates. This lack of experience contributed to longer job searches and, in some cases, forced graduates to take positions outside their field or lower their expectations. It was articulated that: *"As a first-timer in the field of teaching, one of the gaps between obtaining my degree and my first employment is figuring out how to start practicing my profession, especially as someone who lacks strong experience in the field of teaching."* (Pos. 45, 1).

Ju, Zhang, and Pacha (2012) highlight a related issue in their study on employability skills for individuals with disabilities. They found that while certain skills are universally valued by employers for entry-level positions, there are notable differences in expectations based on whether individuals have disabilities. Their research underscores the broader challenge of meeting employer expectations, which can be exacerbated by the lack of practical experience.

Employers' varying expectations affected by industry, gender, and other factors illustrate the broader context in which new graduates, including those without disabilities, struggle to align their skills and experience with job market demands. This insight reflects the difficulties BPED graduates face in securing positions when they lack professional experience.

3.3 Personal Time and Unwinding

Several graduates chose to take time off after graduation to unwind, rest, or reflect before entering the job market. The transition from student life to professional life can be exhausting, and this period of personal time allowed them to recharge before starting their job search. While this contributed to a delay in employment, it was seen as necessary for their mental and emotional well-being. As exclaimed: "I'd just give myself time to reflect and rest." (Pos 21, 3).

Insights from Travers and Locke (2015) support the value of this personal time. Their study on self-reflection and growth goal-setting among final-year students found that both directly and indirectly related growth goals positively impacted academic outcomes and personal well-being. The research indicated that reflective growth goals enhanced students' achievements and self-efficacy during and after the program. This aligns with the experiences of BPED graduates, who found that taking time for personal reflection and goal-setting was crucial for their mental readiness and career success.

3.4 Job Market Challenges

The competitive job market posed significant challenges for the graduates. High employer standards, competition for limited job openings, and the need to meet specific qualifications or experience requirements led to delays in securing employment. Some graduates faced multiple rejections and struggled to find positions that matched their qualifications and career goals. Others found temporary or part-time jobs while continuing their search for a more suitable position. As one participant emphasized: *"I've been applying to certain companies that match with my values and passion, but I failed at the certain recruitment stage. I also have a part-time job."* (Pos 32, 3-4).

The study of Orynbassarova et al. (2019) illustrate how similar challenges are faced by employees in temporary and part-time positions. Their study highlights that a significant proportion of workers with fixed-term agreements experience over-employment, indicating high levels of job insecurity and instability. The research underscores the importance of social protection measures, such as guaranteed minimum working hours and minimum unemployment allowances, to support those in temporary or part-time roles. These measures are crucial for mitigating the challenges faced by employees who, like the BPED graduates, may find themselves in less secure employment while seeking permanent positions that better align with their career goals.

These challenges had a significant impact on the employment outcomes of BPED graduates. The delay in seeking employment due to LET preparation, coupled with the lack of professional experience, often resulted in graduates entering the workforce later than anticipated. Personal time taken for unwinding and the competitive nature of the job market further compounded these delays, leading to extended job searches. As a result, some graduates accepted positions that were not aligned with their long-term career goals, while others faced prolonged periods of unemployment or underemployment. These outcomes highlight the critical need for targeted interventions that can assist graduates in navigating these challenges more effectively.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) program successfully provides its graduates with a solid academic foundation. A notable portion of graduates are currently employed, with many engaging in part-time roles or self-employment. This reflects the program's capacity to prepare students for diverse career paths within the field of physical education. However, the study also identifies a challenge: a significant number of graduates face difficulties transitioning to full-time employment. This issue often stems from the gap between academic qualifications and the practical experience required by employers. Since many graduates are newly minted professionals, they may not yet possess the extensive experience or specialized qualifications that some positions demand.

Overall, while the current BPED program equips graduates with essential academic knowledge, expanding its focus to include practical experience and career support will help bridge the gap between education and employment. This approach will better prepare graduates for full-time positions and improve their transition from academia to the workforce, enhancing their overall career prospects and contributing positively to their professional development.

Recommendation

Based on the current data and the context of BPED Batch 2023 graduates being fresh from the program, several additional recommendations could be considered to enhance the study and address potential gaps:

1. Implement a longitudinal study to track the career progress of BPED graduates over several years. This would provide a clearer picture of how their employment outcomes evolve as they gain more experience and acquire necessary qualifications.
2. Include additional data points in future tracer studies, such as graduates' satisfaction with their jobs, the relevance of their roles to their long-term career goals, and feedback from employers on the graduates' preparedness and performance.
3. Strengthen career support services within the BPED program, including internships, job placement assistance, and mentorship programs. Providing more opportunities for practical experience and professional development can help bridge the gap between education and employment.
4. Conduct a review of the BPED curriculum to ensure it aligns with the current job market requirements. This could include integrating more practical training, such as teaching practicums and real-world projects, to better prepare students for employment.
5. Establish partnerships with schools, sports organizations, and other relevant institutions to create more job opportunities and internships for BPED students. These partnerships can also provide valuable feedback on the skills and knowledge required by employers.
6. Encourage graduates to pursue advanced degrees and certifications as part of their career development. Providing guidance and resources for continuing education can help graduates meet the qualifications needed for teaching roles and other professional positions.
7. Schedule periodic reviews of the BPED program based on updated employment data and feedback from graduates and employers. Regularly assessing the program's effectiveness can ensure it remains responsive to the evolving needs of the job market.

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