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**Employment Trajectories of Bachelor of Elementary Education Graduates of Ifugao State** University, Philippines

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#### **Abstract**

Graduate employability is a vital benchmark of higher education institutions, particularly for teacher education programs mandated to supply competent professionals for the Philippine basic education system. This study examined the employment trajectories of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) graduates of Ifugao State University Lagawe Campus, focusing on their status one year after graduation, one year after passing the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT), and their present employment conditions. Using a descriptive survey and a validated questionnaire, results revealed that most graduates secured employment within a year of graduation, with employment rates rising significantly after passing the licensure examination professional teachers. During the conduct of the study, the majority hold regular teaching positions in government schools, though

contractual and private school employment remain common. Salary levels clustered around entry-level brackets, reflecting early career stages. Job acquisition was shaped by both informal and formal mechanisms: referrals and recommendations were most common, but school job fairs and advertisements also provided important entry points, while online job portals and direct applications were least utilized. Current unemployment of the graduates during the course of the study was predominantly attributed to the pursuit of advanced education, familial obligations, and the scarcity of local employment opportunities. Overall, the findings highlight licensure as a gateway to stable employment, while also underscoring the importance of both social networks institutional mechanisms in supporting graduates' career outcomes.

Keywords: graduate employability, teacher education, BEEd graduates, licensure examination, employment outcomes





## INTRODUCTION

Universities and higher education education institutions are faced with the challenge of providing quality education, most often measured by the performance of their graduates on national standardized tests and in the workplace. Graduates of known universities are usually given preference by employers. This necessitates examining how educational institutions can prepare graduates, particularly those with a Bachelor of Elementary Education, to navigate the complexities of the labor market and secure meaningful employment (Thetsane & Mokhethi, 2020). This focus on employability underscores the multifaceted nature of educational quality, extending beyond academic metrics to include the transition of graduates into the workforce and their career progression (Zahid, 2014) (Chen et al., 2025).

In the Philippine context, higher education institutions (HEIs) are mandated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to conduct graduate tracer studies as part of their accountability in ensuring relevance and responsiveness of their programs (CHED, 2017). For teacher education institutions, employability is particularly significant, as the country continues to face challenges in teacher supply, quality of instruction, and workforce distribution (Bernardo, 2017).

The Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) program plays a crucial role in producing competent teachers for the nation's basic education system. Employment trajectories of BEEd graduates, however, remain influenced by multiple factors such as licensure examination performance, geographic location, access to employment opportunities, and salary disparities between public and private schools (Pring, 2013; Cruz & Sosa, 2018). Studies in the Philippine setting have shown that passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) is a critical gateway to stable employment, particularly in public schools where permanent teaching positions are regulated by the Department of Education (DepEd) (Garcia, 2019). Conversely, graduates who have not passed the LET are often limited to contractual or private school employment, which typically offers lower wages and less job security (Ramos, 2016).

Several tracer studies highlight that while many teacher-education graduates eventually secure teaching-related employment, a significant portion remain unemployed, underemployed, or shift to non-teaching professions due to economic pressures and limited openings in their locality (Albina, 2016; dela Cruz, 2020). Employment mismatches have also been documented, where graduates trained for classroom teaching enter clerical, managerial, or even uniformed services (AFP, PNP), underscoring the need to examine graduates' adaptability and job-seeking strategies (Tan & De Guzman, 2019). Additionally, the means by which graduates secure employment, whether through referrals, advertisements, job fairs, or social networks, illustrate both the formal and informal mechanisms influencing career outcomes (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2020).

In Ifugao, a predominantly rural province, employment opportunities for BEEd graduates may be further shaped by geographic isolation, limited school openings, and competition for scarce public school teaching positions (Tayaban & O'Leary, 2022). Although Ifugao State University (IFSU) is the only university in the province, and has been consistent in producing BEEd graduates, there remains a lack of systematic research on how these graduates fare in terms of employment status, work conditions, salary, and pathways into the teaching profession. Without such evidence, it is difficult for the university and its stakeholders to assess whether the BEEd program is responsive to both local and national workforce needs.

Despite the importance of teacher education in strengthening the country's basic education system, there is insufficient empirical data on the employment trajectories of BEEd graduates. Specifically, little is known about their employment status one year after graduation and the year after passing the licensure examination; their work conditions as self-employed, temporary, contractual, or regular employees; their employment type (teaching or non-teaching); their monthly salary range; and the strategies they use to secure employment. Furthermore, the reasons for unemployment among these graduates remain

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Volume 1 Issue 9 (2025)

undocumented. This lack of knowledge hampers policymakers' efforts to align the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) program with the needs of the labor market and to enhance graduate employability.

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1. What is the employment status of BEEd graduates one year post-graduation and one year following their success in the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT)?
- 2. What is the present employment status of BEEd graduates, nature of employment, employment status classification, type of employer (government or private sector), monthly salary range, means of seeking employment, and reasons of unemployment?

Guided by these questions, the study aims to:

- 1. Determine the employment status of BEEd graduates one year after graduation and one year after passing the LEPT.
- 2. Examine the present employment conditions of BEEd graduates in terms of nature and classification of employment, employer type, monthly salary, means of seeking employment, and reasons for unemployment.

# **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to trace the employment outcomes of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) graduates of Ifugao State University (IFSU) Lagawe Campus. The approach was considered appropriate as it enabled a systematic collection and analysis of data to describe the current status and experiences of graduates in terms of employment, licensure, job search strategies, and career trajectories. From a total of 446 graduates, only 120 graduates voluntarily participated, representing cohorts from academic years 2011 to 2024. Participation was based on informed consent, with no form of coercion, in keeping with ethical research standards.

The study was conducted at IFSU Lagawe Campus, the third largest among the university's six campuses, located in the capital town of Lagawe in the province of Ifugao, part of the Cordillera Administrative Region in northern Luzon, Philippines. Graduates were contacted through multiple channels, including group chats created per batch, university records of emails and phone numbers, and verified social media accounts, to maximize the chances of reaching them across batches and locations.

The main data collection tool was a structured questionnaire originally developed by the University Alumni Office and validated with the assistance of the University Research and Development Office. For this study, the instrument was modified to align with the research objectives, capturing details on employment status, nature and type of employment, licensure, job acquisition methods, and graduate recommendations for program enhancement. Questionnaires were disseminated online, allowing wide accessibility and convenience for participants.

Responses were consolidated and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages to present a clear profile of graduate employment outcomes. Throughout the study, ethical principles were strictly observed. Graduates were assured of confidentiality, with responses used solely for academic purposes and access restricted to the researchers. No personal identifiers were disclosed in the reporting of results, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without consequence.

## **RESULTS**

# Employment status one year after graduation.

The employment trajectories of the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) graduates of Ifugao State University revealed varied patterns across the first year after graduation. Moreover, majority of BEEd graduates were able to secure employment within a year after graduation. Out of the 120 respondents, 78 (65.0%) were employed within one year after graduation, while 42 (35.0%) remained unemployed.

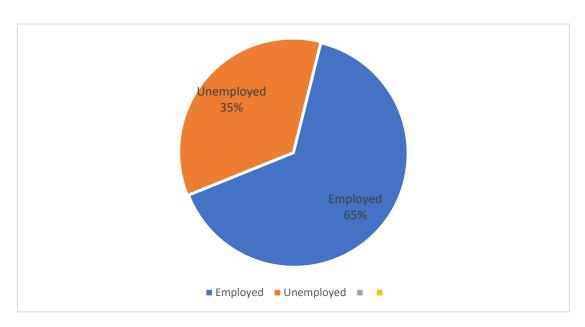


Figure 1. Employment status of graduates one year after graduation.

# Employment status one year after passing the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT)

Employment increased significantly after passing the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT), with 98 (81.7%) securing jobs, though 22 (18.3%) continued to report unemployment. This upward trend suggests that licensure substantially improved employability, positioning graduates more competitively in the labor market.

The findings revealed an observable increase in employment rates following the successful completion of the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). The data suggest that licensure serves as a gateway credential, significantly enhancing employability in the teaching profession. A smaller proportion of graduates remained unemployed beyond one year.

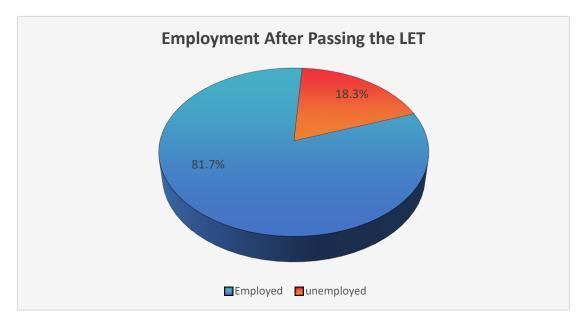


Figure 2. Employment status one year after passing the LEPT.

# **Current Employment Status of Graduates**

Majority of the graduates (81.6%) are currently employed, reflecting strong employability and labor force participation among them. A very small proportion (2.0%) have never been employed, suggesting minimal difficulty in entering the job market. However, 16.3% are reported as not currently employed, which implies that a segment of the graduates still face challenges in sustaining or securing jobs after graduation.

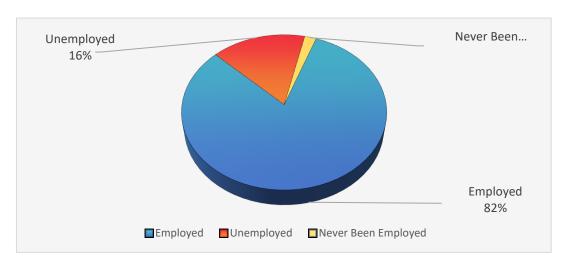


Figure 3. Current employment status of graduates.

# **Nature of Employment of Graduates**

Most of the graduates (67.9%) hold regular or permanent positions, which reflects stable employment and successful integration into the workforce. A notable share (23.6%) are employed under contractual arrangements, suggesting that while they are able to secure jobs, their employment conditions may be less stable. Meanwhile, 6.6% are in temporary jobs, which could indicate either transitional employment or limited availability of long-term positions. Only a small portion (1.9%) are self-employed, showing that entrepreneurship is not a common pathway among the graduates. Overall, the findings highlight that most graduates are able to secure stable employment, though a considerable number still rely on contractual or temporary work arrangements.

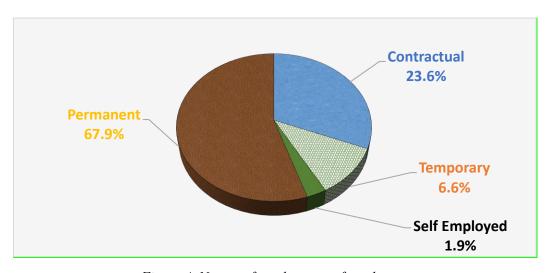


Figure 4. Nature of employment of graduates.

### **Employment Status Classification**

The type and nature of employment further demonstrated the dominance of the teaching profession among graduates. A majority of 68 respondents (69.38%) reported employment in teaching positions, with 55 or 56.12% in elementary schools, 10 or 10.20% in Pre-schools, 2 or 2.04% in the tertiary schools, and 1 or 1.02% as school head in an elementary school. This distribution underscores the alignment of the BEEd program with its intended professional outcomes.

A significant portion, 30 or 30.61% entered non-teaching professions, with 15 or 15.31%) engaged in clerical work, 3 or 3.06% in managerial or administrative posts, and 8 or 8.16% in uniformed services either the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Bureau of Jail and Penology (BFP), or the Philippine National Police (PNP), and 4 or 4.08% in entrepreneurship. This also highlights the adaptability of graduates in entering diverse employment fields beyond actual teaching.

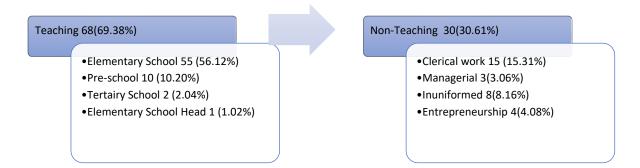


Figure 5. Graduates' employment status classification

### Type of Employer: Government vs. Private Sector

Employment by sector showed a similar concentration within the government. Among those employed, 60 (61.2%) reported working in the public sector, primarily in the Department of Education (DepEd), while 38 (38.8%) were in private institutions. This finding aligns with national trends wherein the majority of licensed teachers seek permanent placements within DepEd due to the stability and benefits of government service, while others take temporary roles in private schools as stepping stones toward public sector employment.

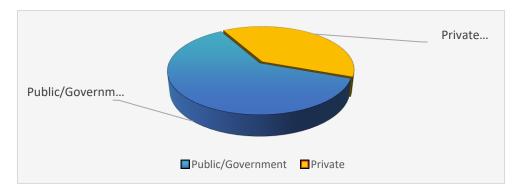


Figure 6. Type of employer: Government vs. Private Sector

#### **Monthly Salary Range**

Graduates' income levels revealed modest salary ranges typical of early-career professionals. Approximately 45 respondents (45.9%) earned between ₱15,000 and ₱20,000 per month, consistent with entry-level pay scales for private school teachers and temporary public-school appointees. Another 30 (30.6%) reported monthly earnings between ₱21,000 and ₱25,000, generally reflective of public-school teachers with Teacher I appointments. Smaller numbers earned either below ₱15,000 (10 respondents, 10.2%) or within higher brackets of ₱26,000–₱30,000 (10 respondents, 10.2%) and above ₱30,000 (3 respondents, 3.1%). These results suggest that while the majority of graduates earned modest incomes, opportunities for higher salary progression remained limited in the early stages of employment.

Graduates' monthly income varied, with many falling within entry-level salary brackets. Those employed in the government, particularly as public school teachers, generally reported higher salary ranges compared to those in the private sector or in non-teaching roles.

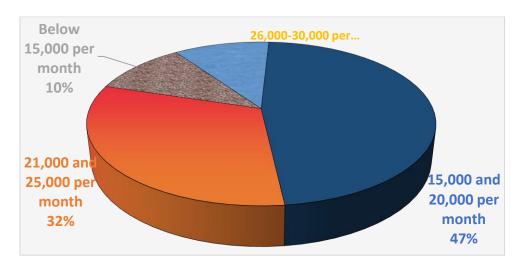


Figure 7. Monthly salary range of graduates.

# **Means of Seeking Employment**

Regarding the means of seeking employment, personal and social networks played the most influential role. 30 respondents (30.6%) indicated they obtained employment through personal referrals, while 25 (25.5%) were hired through recommendations from friends or colleagues. Formal avenues such as school job fairs 20 (20.4%) and advertisements accounted for 15 (15.3%) of hires, respectively. Fewer graduates accessed employment opportunities through direct applications and online job portals 10 (8.2%). This suggests that social capital and informal networks remain highly significant in the employment process for BEEd graduates, a trend consistent with rural and provincial employment contexts.

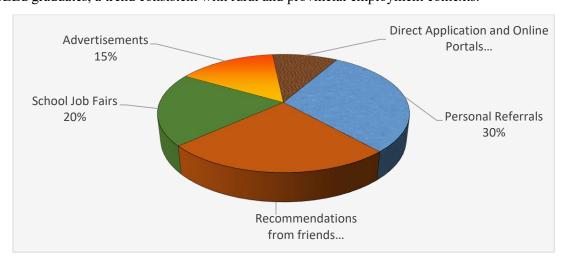


Figure 7. Means of seeking employment.

#### **Reasons for Current Unemployment**

Of the 42 respondents who remained unemployed within the first year, 15 (35.7%) cited the pursuit of further studies as their primary reason. Family responsibilities accounted for 10 (23.8%), while another 10 (23.8%) reported limited job opportunities in their localities. A smaller proportion 7 (16.7%) attributed unemployment to personal reasons, such as health concerns or a lack of readiness to enter the workforce. These findings suggest that while structural employment opportunities are available, personal, academic, and contextual factors significantly shape employment decisions and outcomes.

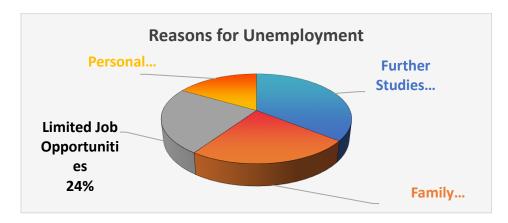


Figure 8. Reasons for current unemployment.

#### DISCUSSION

### **Employment Status One Year Post-Graduation and Post-Licensure**

The findings revealed that 65.0% of the BEEd graduates secured employment within one year after graduation, while 35.0% remained unemployed. This suggests that although a majority of graduates successfully transitioned into the workforce, a substantial portion still faced barriers during their first year. Employment rates significantly improved following the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT), where 81.7% were employed and only 18.3% remained unemployed. The observed upward trajectory underscores the critical role of licensure in enhancing employability.

These results support previous studies emphasizing licensure as a gateway credential that enhances graduates' marketability in professional teaching (Pascual, 2019; Caballero et al., 2011). In the Philippine setting, passing the LEPT is a statutory requirement for permanent teaching positions, particularly in the Department of Education (CHED, 2018). The increase in employment rates post-LEPT affirms that credentials not only validate professional competence but also open pathways to secure government service, which remains the preferred sector for many education graduates (Uy & Manalo, 2020).

Volume 1 Issue 9 (2025)

# **Current Employment Status of Graduates**

At the time of data collection, 81.6% of graduates were employed, 16.3% were unemployed, and only 2.0% reported never having been employed. The high employment rate reflects a strong absorptive capacity of the labor market for teacher education graduates. These results resonate with Arellano (2015), who found that education graduates typically demonstrate favorable employability due to the continuous demand for teachers in basic education.

However, the proportion of unemployed graduates indicates persistent challenges, such as geographic mismatch and localized scarcity of teaching positions, as also noted by Haberman and Post (2012). Furthermore, the small percentage of graduates who never entered the workforce suggests that individual circumstances—such as pursuit of graduate studies or domestic roles—continue to shape career trajectories beyond academic preparation.

## **Nature of Employment**

The majority of graduates (67.9%) held regular or permanent positions, while 23.6% were under contractual arrangements, and 6.6% were in temporary roles. Only 1.9% engaged in self-employment. These patterns suggest that while most graduates were able to secure stable placements, a sizeable minority still rely on less secure, short-term contracts. The persistence of contractual employment mirrors the trend of precarious work among young professionals in developing contexts (ILO, 2020).

The limited incidence of self-employment also indicates that entrepreneurship is not a common pathway for BEEd graduates, which may be attributed to their specialized preparation for formal teaching rather than entrepreneurial ventures. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening support systems for early-career teachers, particularly those navigating temporary or contractual appointments.

## **Employment Status Classification: Teaching and Non-Teaching Fields**

A majority of the employed graduates (69.38%) pursued teaching, consistent with the program's intended outcomes. Of these, most (56.12%) were in elementary schools, followed by Pre-school (10.20%), tertiary institutions (2.04%), and 1.02 still in the elementary as school head. This distribution reinforces the alignment of BEEd training with the demand for elementary school teachers.

Meanwhile, a minority entered non-teaching fields such as clerical work (15.31%), managerial roles (3.06%), and uniformed services (8.16%), and entrepreneurship (4.08%). These results affirm that teacher education graduates also exhibit adaptability and employability in broader professional domains. Garcia and De Guzman (2021) noted similar findings where education graduates leveraged transferable skills to access roles outside the teaching sector. While these shifts demonstrate versatility, they may also reflect a response to limited teaching opportunities.

#### Type of Employer: Government vs. Private Sector

The government sector absorbed the majority of graduates (61.2%), primarily in DepEd schools, while 38.8% were employed in private institutions. This preference for public-sector employment aligns

Volume 1 Issue 9 (2025)



# Aloysian Interdisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences, Education, and Allied Fields

with national trends, where government teaching posts offer security, standardized salaries, and long-term benefits (David et al., 2017).

Private schools, however, continue to serve as stepping stones for graduates awaiting permanent public-school appointments. Uy and Manalo (2020) similarly observed that many teacher education graduates begin in private institutions before transitioning to DepEd once eligible positions open. Thus, the sectoral distribution not only reflects employment preference but also the structural pathway through which graduates progress toward permanent government service.

# **Monthly Salary Range**

The majority of graduates reported earning between ₱15,000 and ₱25,000 monthly, consistent with entry-level teaching salaries in both government and private schools. Government-employed graduates, particularly those with Teacher I positions, were more likely to fall within the ₱21,000—₱25,000 bracket, while those in private schools or non-teaching roles often earned below ₱15,000. A smaller proportion earned higher salaries (₱26,000 and above), particularly those in managerial roles or overseas employment.

This distribution affirms earlier findings by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018), which identified standardized public school pay as a major incentive for teaching graduates. However, wage disparities between the public and private sectors remain a challenge, echoing David et al.'s (2017) observation that private school teachers often face lower pay despite similar workloads.

# **Means of Seeking Employment**

The most significant means of job acquisition were referrals (30.6%) and recommendations from friends or colleagues (25.5%). School job fairs (20.4%) and advertisements (15.3%) were also important, while direct applications and online job portals were less utilized (8.2%).

The reliance on personal and social networks reflects Granovetter's (1995) theory on the "strength of weak ties," which highlights the pivotal role of informal connections in employment. In rural or provincial contexts such as Ifugao, where formal recruitment mechanisms may be less accessible, social capital becomes an especially vital resource. Nevertheless, the relatively low use of digital job portals underscores the need to strengthen graduates' digital job-seeking skills, as emphasized by OECD (2020).

#### **Reasons for Unemployment**

Among the unemployed, the most common reasons were pursuit of further studies (35.7%), family responsibilities (23.8%), and limited local job opportunities (23.8%). Personal reasons, such as health concerns, accounted for 16.7%. These findings suggest that unemployment is shaped not only by structural labor market conditions but also by personal and contextual factors.

Similar findings were reported by Garcia and De Guzman (2021), who argued that teacher education graduates' unemployment often stems from competing family obligations and delayed licensure completion. The impact of geographic limitations further reflects challenges in rural employment, where graduates may struggle to find teaching positions within their home provinces. This underscores the need for broader placement opportunities and flexible employment policies to address localized constraints.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined the employment outcomes of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) graduates from Ifugao State University, focusing on their employment status one year after graduation, one year after passing the licensure examination, and in their present career paths. The findings reveal that the majority of graduates were able to secure employment within a year after graduation, particularly after passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). The results confirm the critical role of professional licensure in improving employability and job security, with regular positions in government schools being the most common employment type.

However, despite encouraging employment outcomes, a notable proportion of graduates experienced temporary or contractual arrangements, reflecting broader challenges in the Philippine education labor market. Reasons for unemployment included lack of available positions, preference to pursue further studies, and family responsibilities. Graduates found work primarily in the teaching profession, though others diversified into clerical, managerial, or uniformed services. Furthermore, personal networks—such as referrals from friends and recommendations—emerged as the most common means of securing employment, underscoring the importance of social capital in job placement.

The findings underscore the effectiveness of the BEEd program in preparing graduates for professional employment in the education sector, while also highlighting persistent gaps in job stability, salary range, and equitable opportunities for all graduates.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

#### 1. Strengthening Job Placement Services

The university should enhance its career guidance and job placement programs, including regular job fairs, stronger linkages with DepEd and private institutions, and structured alumni networking platforms.

### 2. Faculty Development and Program Review

Continuous curriculum review should be conducted to align graduate competencies with evolving demands of the teaching profession and alternative career tracks. Incorporating employability skills (communication, digital literacy, research skills) may further enhance versatility in the labor market.

#### 3. Support for Contractual and Underemployed Graduates

Advocacy with partner institutions and government agencies should be pursued to create more regular teaching positions and provide support systems for contractual teachers, including professional development opportunities and mentoring programs.

#### 4. Policy Implications for Government and CHED

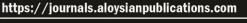
Policymakers should revisit hiring practices in the education sector, especially the overreliance on temporary and contractual appointments, which may hinder professional growth and financial stability of new teachers.

### 5. Future Research

Further tracer studies should track longitudinal employment trends of graduates beyond the first few years of employment, examine gender-specific employment outcomes, and explore the role of graduate school enrollment in shaping career trajectories.

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Volume 1 Issue 9 (2025)

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