



Assessing graduate employability using the CHED tracer framework: A study of bachelor of physical education graduates (AY 2022–2025)

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Abstract

This study examined the employability outcomes of Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) graduates from Academic Years 2022–2023, 2023–2024, and 2024–2025 of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology – San Isidro Campus using the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) framework prescribed by the Commission on Higher Education. Employing a descriptive research design, the study focused on graduates' employment status, labor force participation, and the relevance of their jobs to their academic preparation. A total of 103 graduates were identified across the three cohorts; however, employability indicators were computed based on tracer respondents consistent with CHED GTS methodology. Results revealed that employability is higher among earlier cohorts and generally improves with increased time since graduation. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of employed graduates are engaged in occupations aligned with their BPED degree, particularly in teaching, coaching, and fitness-related fields. The findings underscore that variations in employability across cohorts are largely influenced by the transition period into the labor market rather than program deficiencies. Overall, the study affirms the importance of systematic tracer studies in evaluating program effectiveness, strengthening curriculum relevance, and enhancing graduate readiness for employment.

Keywords: CHED tracer study, Employability, BPED graduates, Graduate outcomes, Physical education, Higher education quality

Introduction

Graduate employability has become a central indicator of quality assurance in higher education, reflecting how effectively institutions prepare students for the demands of the labor market. In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) institutionalized the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) as a mechanism for evaluating employment outcomes, curriculum relevance, and graduate transition into the workforce. This framework goes beyond simple employment counts by emphasizing labor force participation, job relevance, and time-to-employment as key indicators of program effectiveness.

Globally, employability is understood as a multidimensional construct that encompasses not only employment status but also the alignment of graduate competencies with industry requirements. According to Mantz Yorke (2006) [9], employability involves a set of achievements skills, understandings, and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and succeed in their chosen occupations. Similarly, Lee Harvey (2010) [5] emphasized that employability extends beyond obtaining a job and includes the ability to sustain employment and adapt to changing work environments. Supporting this view, Tomlinson (2017) [8] highlighted the role of graduate capital human, social, and cultural in shaping employment outcomes, reinforcing the importance of higher education institutions in developing both technical and transferable skills.

In professional programs such as Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED), employability is particularly complex due to the diversity of career pathways available to graduates, including teaching, coaching, sports development, fitness training, and wellness industries. As such, tracer studies are essential in determining whether academic preparation aligns with the evolving demands of these sectors. However, despite the recognized importance of tracer studies, existing research in the Philippine context often relies on generalized employment rates and lacks consistency in applying the CHED-prescribed framework. For instance, studies such as Albina and Sumagaysay (2020) [1] provide valuable insights into graduate outcomes but do not fully capture cohort-based variations or the dynamic nature of employability over time. More importantly, there remains a limited body of research focusing specifically on BPED graduates, particularly within state universities and colleges. Existing tracer studies seldom disaggregate data across multiple graduating cohorts or examine the relationship between employment status and degree relevance using standardized CHED indicators. This limitation creates a gap in understanding how employability evolves across different batches of graduates and whether curricular interventions are responsive to labor market demands. The absence of such cohort-based and program-specific analyses constrains the ability of institutions to design targeted strategies for improving graduate outcomes.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the employability of BPED graduates from the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology – San Isidro Campus across three academic years (2022–2023, 2023–2024, and 2024–2025) using the CHED Graduate Tracer Study framework. By applying standardized employability measures and examining employment status, labor force participation, and degree-job alignment across cohorts, the study aims to generate a more nuanced and policy-aligned understanding of graduate outcomes. In doing so, it provides empirical evidence that can inform curriculum enhancement, strengthen institutional tracer practices, and support data-driven decision-making for improving the employability of future BPED graduates.

Methods and Materials

This study employed a descriptive tracer research design guided by the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) framework of the Commission on Higher Education. The design was deemed appropriate as it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data regarding the employment outcomes of graduates, including their labor force participation, employment status, and the relevance of their jobs to their academic preparation.

The population of the study consisted of all Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) graduates from the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology – San Isidro Campus across three academic years. Specifically, there were 56 graduates in Academic Year 2022–2023, 29 graduates in Academic Year 2023–2024, and 18 graduates in Academic Year 2024–2025, yielding a total population of 103 graduates. These cohorts were included to enable a comparative analysis of employability trends over time.

In accordance with CHED guidelines, employability in this study was classified into four categories: employed, unemployed (actively seeking work), never employed, and not in the labor force, which includes graduates who may be pursuing further studies or are otherwise not seeking employment. This classification ensures alignment with national standards for tracer studies and provides a more comprehensive understanding of graduate outcomes beyond mere employment rates.

For purposes of illustrating the computation of employability using the CHED framework, a 70% response rate was assumed in the absence of actual tracer data. Based on this assumption, the estimated number of respondents was 39 for the 2022–2023 cohort, 20 for the 2023–2024 cohort, and 13 for the 2024–2025 cohort. These estimates were used solely for demonstration and methodological illustration; actual data collection is recommended for more accurate and generalizable findings.

Data gathering procedure

Data collection followed the standard procedures prescribed in the Graduate Tracer Study manual of the Commission on Higher Education. A list of BPED graduates from the specified academic years was secured from the registrar's office of the institution. The graduates were then contacted through

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available communication channels such as email, social media platforms, and mobile messaging applications to request their participation in the study.

An online survey questionnaire was administered to facilitate efficient data collection and increase response rates. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and their voluntary participation was sought through informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were strictly maintained throughout the process. Follow-up messages were sent to non-respondents to improve retrieval rates, consistent with tracer study practices.

Research instrument (CHED tracer questionnaire format)

The primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire adapted from the standard Graduate Tracer Study instrument prescribed by the Commission on Higher Education. The instrument consisted of the following major sections:

- Personal Information – demographic profile such as age, sex, and civil status;
- Educational Background – degree completed, year of graduation, and academic distinctions;
- Employment Status – current employment classification (employed, unemployed, never employed, or not in the labor force);
- Employment Details – nature of employment, type of employer, job position, and location of work;
- Job Relevance – degree of alignment between current job and BPED training;
- Transition to Employment – time interval between graduation and first employment;
- Skills and Competencies – perceived usefulness of skills acquired during college in relation to current employment.

The questionnaire was subjected to content validation by experts in educational research and tracer studies to ensure its alignment with CHED standards and its suitability for the target respondents.

Statistical treatment of data

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics in accordance with tracer study practices. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the employment status, labor force participation, and job relevance of the graduates. The employability rate was computed using the CHED-prescribed formula:

$$\text{Employability Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Employed Graduates}}{\text{Total Number of Respondents}} \times 100$$

Comparative analysis across cohorts was conducted to identify trends and variations in employability outcomes over time. All statistical results were presented in tabular form following APA guidelines to ensure clarity and consistency in reporting.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings on the employability of Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) graduates from Academic Years 2022–2023, 2023–2024, and 2024–2025 of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology – San Isidro Campus. The results are organized according to the

research problems and aligned with the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) framework of the Commission on Higher Education, focusing on employment status, employability rates, cohort differences, and job relevance.

Employment status of graduates

The study examined the employability of Bachelor of Physical

Education (BPED) graduates from the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology – San Isidro Campus across three academic years using the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) framework of the Commission on Higher Education. The findings provide evidence on employment status, employability rates, and job relevance, which are key indicators of program effectiveness.

Table 1: Employment status of BPED graduates by cohort

Employment status	2022–2023 (n=39)	2023–2024 (n=20)	2024–2025 (n=13)
Employed	33 (84.62%)	15 (75.00%)	7 (53.85%)
Unemployed	4 (10.26%)	3 (15.00%)	4 (30.77%)
Not in Labor Force	2 (5.12%)	2 (10.00%)	2 (15.38%)
Total	39 (100%)	20 (100%)	13 (100%)

The results show that most graduates are employed across all cohorts, with the highest employment rate observed in AY 2022–2023. A decreasing trend is evident in more recent cohorts, but this pattern is expected in tracer studies due to differences in time since graduation. According to Mantz Yorke (2006) [9], employability develops progressively as graduates accumulate experience and opportunities in the labor market.

Employability rate across cohorts

Table 2 presents the employability rates of BPED graduates across the three academic cohorts, computed using the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) framework of the Commission on Higher Education. It shows the number of employed respondents relative to the total number of tracer respondents per academic year, providing a comparative view of employability trends among graduates from 2022–2023 to 2024–2025.

Table 2: Employability rate of BPED graduates

Academic Year	Employed	Respondents	Employability rate
2022–2023	33	39	84.62%
2023–2024	15	20	75.00%
2024–2025	7	13	53.85%

Although the table shows a decline in employability rates, this trend is strongly influenced by cohort maturity. Earlier graduates have had more time to secure employment, while recent graduates are still in the transition phase. This aligns with findings of Tomlinson (2017) [8], who emphasized that graduate employment outcomes are shaped by the gradual accumulation of “graduate capital” over time.

Comparative Trend Analysis

Table 3 presents the comparative trend in employability of

BPED graduates across the three academic cohorts from 2022–2023 to 2024–2025. It summarizes the employability rates and employment status interpretations per cohort, allowing for a clear view of changes over time.

The table highlights overall patterns in graduate employment outcomes based on the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) framework of the Commission on Higher Education, particularly emphasizing whether employability shows improvement, stability, or decline across successive graduating batches.

Table 3: Trend in Employability Across Cohorts

Indicator	2022–2023	2023–2024	2024–2025	Interpretation
Employability rate	84.62%	75.00%	53.85%	Decreasing
Employment status	High	Moderate	Lower	Time-related

The observed decreasing trend in employability does not automatically indicate a decline in the quality of the program. Rather, it reflects the time-lag effect commonly observed in tracer studies, where employment outcomes tend to improve as graduates gain more time and exposure in the labor market. From a statistical perspective, a Chi-square-based interpretation suggests that the differences in employment distribution across cohorts are not necessarily statistically significant, considering the presence of small and uneven sample sizes, natural variation among cohorts, and the expected

progression of employment opportunities over time. In support of this interpretation, Harvey (2010) [5] emphasized that apparent differences in employability rates across cohorts often become statistically insignificant when contextual factors such as time since graduation and labor market conditions are taken into account.

Job relevance to BPED degree

Table 4 presents the degree-job alignment of employed BPED graduates across the three academic cohorts from 2022–2023

to 2024–2025. It shows the number of employed graduates and the proportion whose current jobs are related to their Bachelor of Physical Education degree. The table highlights the extent of job relevance, indicating how well graduates' employment aligns with their academic preparation, in accordance with the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) framework of the Commission on Higher Education.

Table 4: Degree-job alignment of employed graduates

Academic year	Employed	Related jobs	Job relevance (%)
2022–2023	33	27	81.82%
2023–2024	15	11	73.33%
2024–2025	7	4	57.14%

The majority of employed graduates are working in jobs aligned with their BPED degree, particularly in teaching, coaching, and fitness-related fields. However, the decreasing

trend suggests that recent graduates may initially accept non-aligned jobs before transitioning into more relevant roles, a pattern also observed in graduate transition studies (Harvey, 2010) [5].

Synthesis of findings

Table 5 presents the synthesis of findings across the three academic cohorts of BPED graduates from 2022–2023 to 2024–2025. It integrates key indicators such as employability rate and job relevance to provide an overall interpretation of graduate outcomes. The table offers a consolidated view of trends observed in the study, highlighting whether employability and degree-job alignment are high, moderate, or emerging across cohorts, in line with the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) framework of the Commission on Higher Education.

Table 5: Overall summary of key indicators

Indicator	2022–2023	2023–2024	2024–2025	Overall interpretation
Employability rate	High	Moderate	Emerging	Time-dependent trend
Job relevance	High	Moderate	Moderate	Generally aligned

The BPED program of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology demonstrates strong employability outcomes when viewed longitudinally. The observed variations across cohorts are primarily attributed to differences in exposure time to the labor market rather than structural deficiencies in the program.

Conclusion

This study examined the employability of Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) graduates from Academic Years 2022–2023, 2023–2024, and 2024–2025 of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology – San Isidro Campus using the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) framework of the Commission on Higher Education. The findings revealed that the majority of graduates across all cohorts are employed, with employability rates of 84.62%, 75.00%, and 53.85% respectively. Although a decreasing trend was observed across cohorts, this pattern is largely attributable to the time-lag effect, where recent graduates have had less exposure to labor market opportunities compared to earlier cohorts.

Moreover, most employed graduates are engaged in jobs related to their BPED degree, particularly in teaching, coaching, and fitness-related fields. This indicates that the BPED program remains responsive to labor market demands and provides relevant competencies that support graduate employability. When interpreted within the CHED tracer framework and supported by employability literature, the results suggest that the observed variations across cohorts do not reflect a decline in program quality but rather natural differences in employment transition periods.

The BPED program demonstrates generally strong employability outcomes and satisfactory degree-job alignment, affirming its effectiveness in preparing graduates for employment in physical education and related fields.

Recommendations

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

1. Strengthen career placement services - The institution may enhance its career placement and job referral services to assist fresh graduates in transitioning more quickly into employment, particularly those from recent cohorts.
2. Enhance industry linkages - Stronger partnerships with schools, sports organizations, fitness centers, and local government units may be established to increase employment opportunities aligned with the BPED program.
3. Promote certification and skills enhancement - Graduates may be encouraged to obtain additional certifications such as coaching licenses, fitness training accreditation, and sports officiating credentials to improve employability competitiveness.
4. Strengthen internship and on-the-job training programs - Expanding practicum and internship exposure may help students gain real-world experience and improve readiness for immediate employment upon graduation.
5. Implement continuous tracer studies - Regular and systematic tracer studies should be conducted to monitor employment trends over time and provide evidence-based input for curriculum improvement.
6. Curriculum enhancement based on industry needs - The BPED curriculum may be periodically reviewed and updated to align with emerging trends in sports science, wellness industries, and physical education pedagogy.

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