

A Tracer Study of Graduates of Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education Programme from Pakse Teacher Training College, Academic Year 2019 – 2020*

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were: 1) to assess the graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies obtained from the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) programme at Pakse Teacher Training College (Pakse TTC), academic year 2019-2020; 2) to explore the employment situation of the graduates from the programme; and 3) to evaluate the employers' satisfaction regarding the graduates' skills and competencies obtained from the programme. The target population in this study was forty-two graduates from the B.Ed. in ECE programme, Pakse TTC, academic year 2019-2020, and nine employers. The instruments used for this data collection are two online questionnaires, one a quantitative questionnaire consisting of thirty-two questions and the other an employers' satisfaction questionnaire to the graduates of the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education programme at Pakse TTC, consisting of sixteen questions. The collected data was analyzed to find the frequency, percentages, mean, standard deviations and correlation value. From the study, the results show that the skills and competencies that the graduates acquired during their study, in general was at the high level ($\mu = 3.98$, $\sigma = 0.46$). The overall correlation between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the required skills and competencies at work is at the quite high level ($\rho = 0.65$). The graduates' employment situation and working status found that 23.81 per cent of the graduates are employed. 88.89 per cent of them have mainly work as a full-time/long-term teacher at private school. 88.89 per cent of work is relevant to the graduates' qualification. It also found that 76.19 per cent of graduates are unemployed, the main reason is because they were waiting for responses from relevant institutions/organizations. The graduates' satisfaction level with their work was rated at the high level ($\mu = 4.14$, $\sigma = 0.55$) and the employers rated their satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies also at the high level ($\mu = 4.14$, $\sigma = 0.49$).

Keywords: Tracer study, Early childhood Education Programme

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Introduction

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao P.D.R) aims to provide quality pre-school teachers by raising public awareness of the importance of early childhood development and preparing new pre-school teachers with an enhanced curriculum. To ensure that this goal is met the responsibility of the Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), which operate under the supervision of the Department of Teacher Education (DTE), the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES).

To realize the National Education System Reform Strategy, the Five-Year Education and Sports Sector Development Plan (2016-2020) and the Teacher Education Strategy and Action Plan from 2016-2020, the Department of Teacher Education (DTE) and the Teacher Training Colleges have developed the first-ever four-year Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE), with support from seven other TTCs and related departments under the MoES. (Department of Teacher Education, 2012, 2019)

Before 2012, the Lao teacher training colleges only offered early childhood teacher education programmes at the diploma level. The development of the first-ever four-year Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) was completed in 2012, with the support of UNESCO Bangkok. Upon Ministerial Decision No. 3663/MoES dated 28 August 2013 on the approval of the B.Ed. in ECE. (Department of Teacher Education, 2012)

Upon the completion of the first cycle of the B.Ed. in ECE programme in Dongkhamxang TTC and UNESCO Bangkok carried out an evaluation of the curriculum involving both graduates and current student teachers during November and December 2017. The findings of the evaluation highlighted areas for improvement, with a view to accomplishing its goals and objectives in preparing effective and qualified early childhood teachers. In accordance with the findings, the MoES appointed a task force responsible for carrying out a revision of the curriculum for the B.Ed. in ECE to improve the quality of the programme and ensure that it aligns with the 2012 national early childhood education curriculum, developed by the Research Institute for Educational Sciences (RIES). (Department of Teacher Education, 2019)

Pakse Teacher Training College is a teacher education institution under the supervision of the Department of Teacher Education, the Ministry of Education and Sports with a key role in training student teachers, both undergraduate and postgraduate, at the kindergarten, primary and secondary teaching levels. In the 2016 academic year, Pakse Teacher

Training College recruited and trained forty-two student teachers under this programme. All of them were females. The students studied the kindergarten teacher training programme set by the Ministry of Education and Sports and completed their studies in 2019-2020.

To assess the effectiveness and quality of the teaching and learning of the B.Ed in ECE programme, the technical team of Pakse TTC, in collaboration with DTE and UNESCO Bangkok, conducted a tracer study of graduates to assess the graduates' acquired and development skills, competencies, as well as their postgraduate employment situation and their employer's satisfaction regarding the skills and competencies the graduates' obtained from the programme.

Objectives

The overall objective is to assess the adequacy, quality and relevance of the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education programme offered at Pakse Teacher Training College in Lao PDR, and the employment situation of the graduates from this programme.

The specific objectives are:

- 1) To assess the graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies obtained from the programme at Pakse Teacher Training College, academic year 2019-2020;
- 2) To explore the employment situation of the graduates from the programme at Pakse Teacher Training College, academic year 2019-2020; and
- 3) To evaluate employers' satisfaction regarding the graduates' skills and competencies obtained from the programme at Pakse Teacher Training College, academic year 2019-2020.

Research Framework

This study is mainly based on the concept of tracer studies. A tracer study is a survey of graduates from educational institutions that takes place after they have graduated or completed their training. A tracer study may cover a wide range of topics, but popular ones include questions about study progress, the transition to work, work entry, job career, use of acquired competencies and skills, current occupation, and ties to the educational institution (Schomburg, 2003, 2016; Cohen, 2004; Cooper, Hedges, and Valentine, 2019)

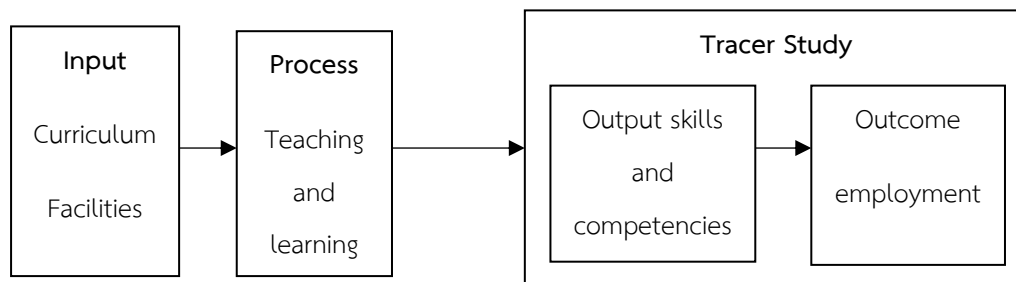


Figure 1 Research Framework

Research Methodology

Target Population

The target population of this study consists of two groups:

- 1) Graduates from the B.Ed. in ECE programme who graduated in 2019-2020 from Pakse TTC, a total number of forty-two graduates; and
- 2) Employers of the graduates mentioned above, such as directors, deputy directors (academic department), supervisors, etc., a total number of nine people.

Timeframe

A tracer study on the graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE programme from Pakse Teacher Training College, in the academic year 2019-2020 was conducted from July to September 2021.

Data collection instruments

The data collection instruments consist of two online questionnaires with details as follows:

- 1) *Graduate survey of graduates from B.Ed. in ECE programme at Pakse TTC, academic year 2019-2020*: The questionnaire consists of a total of thirty-two closed-ended or open-ended questions, and is divided into four parts; Part 1: General information, Part 2: Acquired and developed skills, Part 3: Graduates' employment situation and working status (employed graduates) and Part 4: Job application and work (unemployed graduates),
- 2) *Employer's satisfaction survey with the graduate of the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) programme, academic year 2019-2020*: The questionnaire consists of a total of sixteen closed-ended or open-ended questions. It is divided

into four parts; Part 1: General information, Part 2: The employers' perception of the graduates, and Part 3: The employer's satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies.

3) Tool creation process

(1) Study and design data collection tools.

(2) Develop two questionnaires, i.e. a graduate survey of graduates from the B.Ed. in ECE programme at Pakse TTC, academic year 2019-2020; and an employer's satisfaction survey with the graduate of the programme

(3) Create online questionnaires with Google Forms

(4) Pilot both versions of the online questionnaires with non-target participants to verify the accuracy and appropriateness of language used in the questionnaires

(5) Refine both questionnaires before distribution to the target groups

Data collection method

The study team collected data for the tracer study on the graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE programme at Pakse TTC, academic year 2019-2020, using the following steps and methods.

1) Distribute the graduate survey to graduates from the B.Ed. in ECE programme at Pakse TTC, academic year 2019-2020, to the target group and use the employers' details provided by the graduates to distribute the employer's satisfaction survey to the identified employers.

2) Collect and categorize all the data from graduates and employers answered in the questionnaires.

3) Compile and review the collected data, and conduct data analysis.

Data analysis

After the tracer study team completed the data collection process, the data was entered into the database to be analyzed. For the data analysis, the team used the SPSS programme to calculate values such as frequency, percentages, mean (μ), standard deviations (σ) and correlation.

Research Results

The evaluation of the graduates' competencies and skills acquired from the programme is analyzed and presented in three main topics:

1) Graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the programme; and the relevance of the acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements.

The graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the programme.

Based on the graduates' opinions on their acquired and developed skills and competencies from the programme, the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the programme.

No.	Evaluation Items	N = 42		Level
		μ	σ	
1	Knowledge in managing early childhood education	3.88	0.67	High
2	The ability to manage the learning-teaching according to the 3 characteristics and 5 core principles of education, in line with the national kindergarten curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Sports	4.02	0.78	High
3	The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner.	3.83	0.66	High
4	The ability to create an enabling environment for children to play and learn, regardless of their race, language, religion, gender, age, disability and socio-economic hardship.	3.86	0.78	High
5	Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.57	0.77	High
6	Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.38	0.62	High
7	The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and tradition.	4.33	0.72	High
Summary		3.98	0.46	High

From Table 1, it is found that the skills and competencies that the graduates acquired during the study, in general, are at a high level ($\mu = 3.98$, $\sigma = 0.46$). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that item No 6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children has the highest average rating at a high

level ($\mu = 4.38$, $\sigma = 0.62$), while the lowest average rating level is item No 5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research at a high level ($\mu = 3.57$, $\sigma = 0.77$).

The relevance of the acquired skills and competencies with the job requirements

From the survey, the opinions of 42 graduates who are being employed regarding the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements can be presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The relevance of the graduates' acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements.

No.	Evaluation Items	N = 10		Level
		μ	σ	
1	Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.00	0.66	High
2	The ability to manage the learning-teaching according to the 3 characteristics and 5 core principles of education, in line with the national kindergarten curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Sports	4.20	0.63	High
3	The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner.	3.90	0.99	High
4	The ability to create an enabling environment for children to play and learn, regardless of their race, language, religion, gender, age, disability and socio-economic hardship.	3.50	0.85	Moderate
5	Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.80	0.78	High
6	Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.30	0.94	High
7	The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and tradition.	4.30	0.67	High
Summary		4.00	0.60	High

From table 2, it is found that 10 graduates who are being employed rated the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirement, in general, at a high level ($\mu = 4.00$, $\sigma = 0.60$). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that

the items No 7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and tradition has the highest average rating at a high level ($\mu = 4.30$, $\sigma = 0.67$). The item with the lowest average rating is No 4. The ability to create an enabling environment for children to play and learn, regardless of their race, language, religion, gender, age, disability and socio-economic hardship at a moderate level ($\mu = 3.50$, $\sigma = 0.85$).

Graduates' satisfaction with learning experiences, learning facilities and curriculum

Regarding the analysis of the graduates' satisfaction with learning experiences, learning facilities and curriculum, the following results were presented in table 3.

Table 3: Graduates' satisfaction with learning experiences, learning facilities and curriculum

Evaluation Items	N = 42		Level
	μ	σ	
1. The satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences	4.15	0.67	High
2. The satisfaction of the graduates with learning facilities	3.76	0.62	High
2. The satisfaction of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum	3.99	0.50	High

From Table 3, it is found that the satisfaction rate of graduates with learning experiences, in general, is at a high level ($\mu = 4.15$, $\sigma = 0.67$). The overall satisfaction of the graduates with learning facilities is at a high level ($\mu = 3.76$, $\sigma = 0.62$) and the overall satisfaction level of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum is at a high level ($\mu = 3.99$, $\sigma = 0.50$).

The support from the Teacher Training College enables the graduates to address the demands of their workplaces and communities.

In the analysis of the support provided by the teacher training college which enables the graduates to address the demands of their workplaces and communities, the results are as follows:

The graduates' application of the knowledge acquired from the programme

The analysis results of the graduates' opinions towards their application of knowledge from the curriculum can be displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: The graduates' application of the knowledge acquired from the programme

No.	Evaluation Items	N = 10		Level
		μ	σ	
1	To what extent can you apply the acquired knowledge from the programme to perform your current responsibilities at work?	4.20	0.63	high
2	To what extent do the acquired knowledge and skills from the programme benefit your current task?	4.30	0.48	high
3	To what extent does the programme match with the requirements of your current work?	4.70	0.48	highest
4	How sufficient the acquired knowledge and skills from the programme are for you to perform your current work?	4.30	0.67	high
5	To what extent does the acquired knowledge and skills from the programme match with your current work?	4.30	0.48	high
Summary		4.36	0.36	high

From Table 4, it is found that the graduates' use of knowledge gained from the curriculum, in general, is at a high level ($\mu = 4.36$, $\sigma = 0.36$). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that the item No 3. the programme match with the requirements of your current work has the highest average rating at the highest level ($\mu = 4.70$, $\sigma = 0.48$). The lowest average rating item is No 1. the acquired knowledge from the programme to perform your current responsibilities at work at a high level ($\mu = 4.20$, $\sigma = 0.63$).

The employers' perception of the graduates' knowledge and capacities

The analysis results of the employers' perception regarding the knowledge and capacities of the graduates can be displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: The employers' perception of the graduates' knowledge and capacities

No.	Evaluation Items	N = 9		Level
		μ	σ	
1	The graduates can apply knowledge and experiences to complete the assigned tasks.	4.00	0.50	High
2	The graduates can complete the tasks as required by the institution.	4.11	0.60	High
3	The graduates can complete the tasks as required by the community.	4.11	0.78	High

No.	Evaluation Items	N = 9		Level
		μ	σ	
4	The graduates have the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for the assigned tasks.	4.33	0.86	High
5	The graduates are essential to your institution.	4.44	0.52	High
	Summary	4.20	0.50	High

From Table 5, it is found that the employers' perception of the graduates' knowledge, in general, is at a high level ($\mu = 4.20$, $\sigma = 0.50$). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that item No 5. The graduates are essential to your institution has the highest average rating at a high level ($\mu = 4.44$, $\sigma = 0.52$). The lowest average rating item is No 1. The graduates can apply knowledge and experiences to complete the assigned tasks at a high level ($\mu = 4.00$, $\sigma = 0.50$).

2) Evaluation of the graduates' employment situation and working status

The analysis results related to the employment situation and working status of the graduates are presented in Table 6.

The graduates' employment situation and working status

Table 6: Evaluation of the graduates' employment situation and working status

No.	Evaluation Items		Number (persons)	Percentage
1.	Current employment status	Employed	10	23.81
		Unemployed	32	76.19
2.	Types of employment	Full-time/Long-term	8	88.89
		Temporary/Short-term	1	11.11
3.	Duration of employment	1 - 3 months	1	11.11
		4 - 6 months	2	22.22
		7 - 9 months	1	11.11
		10 - 12 months	1	11.11
		More than 12 months	4	44.40
4.	The relevance between work and qualification	The work is relevant to the graduates' qualification	8	88.89
		The work is partially relevant to the graduates' qualification	1	11.11

No.	Evaluation Items	Number (persons)	Percentage
	The work is irrelevant to the graduates' qualification	0	0
5.	Duration of job search		
	Less than 3 months	7	70
	3 - 6 months	2	20
	7 - 11 months	1	10
	1 - 2 years	0	0
	More than 2 years	0	0
6.	Methods of job search		
	From job advertisements in the newspaper, internet, etc.	5	11.11
	Directly contact educational institutes	10	22.20
	Via recruitment agencies	0	0
	Via quota systems	0	0
	Others	0	0
7.	Working period after graduation		
	1 - 6 months	5	50
	7 - 12 months	4	40
	More than 1 year	1	10
8.	Number of times participated in employment examination		
	Once	1	10
	Twice	0	0
	3 times or more	0	0
	None	9	90
9.	Main reasons for unemployment		
	Not looking for employment	8	25
	Waiting for responses from relevant institutions/organizations	21	65.62
	Unable to find jobs	1	3.13
	Others	2	6.25
10.	Problems with job search		
	I have no problems	15	46.88
	I have problems	17	53.12

Table 6 shows the evaluation results of the graduates' employment situation and working status found that 23.81 percent of the graduates are employed. Graduates mainly work as full-time/long-term teachers at a private school (88.89 percent of those employed). In addition, 44.40 percent of the employed graduates have been working for twelve months. Regarding the relevance between the work and the graduates' qualifications, the survey found

that most (88.89 percent) found the work to be relevant to the graduates' qualifications. 70.00 percent of the graduates who are currently employed reported spending less than three months looking for a job, and 22.20 percent reported that their method for the job search was to directly contact educational institutes. A further 50.00 percent of the employed graduates have been working for one to six months after graduation, and 90.00 percent of graduates have never undertaken an employment examination. It also found that 76.19 percent of the graduates are unemployed. The main reason for their being unemployed is because they are waiting for responses from relevant institutions/organizations. Slightly more than half of the unemployed graduates (53.12 percent) reported that their problem in finding a job was because they did not know where or how to find the source of a job.

The relationship between the curriculum and the employment

The analysis results of the relationship between the curriculum and the employment can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7: The relationship between the curriculum and the employment.

The relationship between the curriculum and the employment	Graduates (Spearman's rho : ρ)	Employers (Spearman's rho : ρ)	Graduates VS Employers Contingency Coefficient; C)
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	0.75	- 0.19	0.41
2. The ability to manage the learning-teaching according to the 3 characteristics and 5 core principles of education, in line with the National Kindergarten Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Sports	0.63	- 0.20	0.34
3. The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner	0.35	0.00	0.49
4. The ability to create an enabling environment for children to play and learn, regardless of their race, language, religion, gender, age, disability and socio-economic hardship	0.12	0.12	0.42

The relationship between the curriculum and the employment	Graduates (Spearman's rho : ρ)	Employers (Spearman's rho : ρ)	Graduates VS Employers Contingency Coefficient; C)
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	- 0.11	- 0.37	0.39
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	0.82	- 0.35	0.18
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	0.71	0.31	0.30
Overall	0.65	- 0.12	0.54

Table 7 shows the result of the relationship between the curriculum and the graduates' employment, the analysis of the results found that the overall correlation between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the required skills and competencies at work, is at the quite high level ($\rho = 0.65$); but the relationship between the skills and competencies required by the employers and the acquired skills and competencies of the graduates for work correlates is at an opposite level ($\rho = -0.12$) and the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers, correlates at the medium level ($C = 0.54$).

The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

In the analysis of the graduates' satisfaction with their work, the results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

No.	Evaluation Items	N = 10		Level
		μ	σ	
1	To what extent are you satisfied with your responsible task/position?	4.30	0.67	High
2	To what extent are you proud of your current responsible task?	4.30	0.67	High
3	To what extent are you motivated to complete your assigned work?	4.20	0.63	High

No.	Evaluation Items	N = 10		Level
		μ	σ	
4	To what extent are you satisfied you're your engagement in additional assigned activities aside from your main responsibility?	4.00	0.66	High
5	To what extent are you satisfied with your salary/remuneration?	3.90	0.73	High
Summary		4.14	0.55	High

From Table 8, it is found that the graduates' satisfaction level with their work is at a high level ($\mu = 4.14$, $\sigma = 0.55$). In addition, the employers were asked to rate the satisfaction level of the graduates with their assignments. It is found that the employers consider the employed graduates to be satisfied with their assigned tasks at a high level ($\mu = 4.00$, $\sigma = 0.70$).

3) Evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies

The analysis results of employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies, the results are presented in table 9.

Table 9: Evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies.

No.	Evaluation Items	N = 9		Level
		μ	σ	
1	Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.11	0.78	High
2	The ability to manage the learning-teaching according to the 3 characteristics and 5 core principles of education, in line with the national kindergarten curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Sports	4.22	0.83	High
3	The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner.	4.00	0.50	High
4	The ability to create an enabling environment for children to play and learn, regardless of their race, language, religion, gender, age, disability and socio-economic hardship.	4.11	0.60	High
5	Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.78	0.66	High

No.	Evaluation Items	N = 9		Level
		μ	σ	
6	Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.33	0.70	High
7	The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and tradition.	4.44	0.52	High
Summary		4.14	0.49	High

From Table 9, it is found that the employers' overall satisfaction with the graduate' skills and competencies is at a high level ($\mu = 4.14$, $\sigma = 0.49$).

Discussion

The following are a few points of discussion derived from the study.

1) The evaluation results of the graduates' acquired skills and competencies during the study are found to be, in general, at the high level ($\mu = 3.98$, $\sigma = 0.46$), the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements, also are at the high level ($\mu = 4.00$, $\sigma = 0.60$), and the graduates' skills and competencies which are required by the employers, are at the highest level ($\mu = 4.68$, $\sigma = 0.48$). The study confirms that the graduates have the ability to manage their learning-teaching according to the three characteristics and five core principles of education, in line with the National Kindergarten Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Sports; the ability to manage playtime and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner; the ability to create an enabling environment for children to play and learn, regardless of their race, language, religion, gender, age, disability and socio-economic hardship; the knowledge and capacity to create knowledge through action research; awareness of and adherence to the code of professional ethics for teachers; love towards the teaching profession and children; and the ability to work with others and preserve Lao culture and traditions.

The satisfaction rate of graduates with learning experiences is at a high level ($\mu = 4.15$, $\sigma = 0.67$) because the teaching and learning arrangement is consistent with the curriculum content and correlates with the content and learning objectives of the course. The degree programme includes activities to develop the skills of the graduates, such as promoting teamwork, conducting assessments of learning in accordance with the curriculum, and preparing teachers with knowledge, experience to be good role models.

The graduates' satisfaction with the overall facilities is at the high level ($\mu = 3.76$, $\sigma = 0.62$) due to the fact that the library facilities and resources are adequately equipped for learning, the materials and documents are suitable and can be used to facilitate learning, the practice/training rooms have sufficient and suitable equipment, and the ICT system facilitates self-directed research.

The satisfaction of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum is also at a high level ($\mu = 3.99$, $\sigma = 0.50$) because the curriculum is up-to-date and relevant to the current situation, the subjects offered in the curriculum are appropriate, as are the subject contents covered in the curriculum. The graduates' use of knowledge gained from the curriculum, in general, is at a high level ($\mu = 4.36$, $\sigma = 0.36$) because the graduates can apply the knowledge acquired from the programme to perform their current responsibilities and tasks at work.

Finally, the employers' perception of the graduates' knowledge, in general, is at a high level ($\mu = 4.20$, $\sigma = 0.50$) due to the graduates' ability to apply their knowledge and experiences to complete their assigned tasks as required by the institution and community.

2) The evaluation results of the graduates' employment situation and working status found that 23.81 percent of the graduates are employed. The employed graduates mainly work as full-time/long-term teachers at private schools (88.89 percent). In addition, 44.40 percent of the employed graduates have been working for twelve months. Regarding the relevance between their work and their qualifications, the survey found that mostly the work is relevant to the graduates' qualifications, accounting for 88.89 percent of the employed. Seventy percent of the graduates who are currently employed spent less than three months looking for job, and 22.20 percent of them reported that their method for the job search was to directly contact educational institutes. A further fifty percent of the employed graduates have been working for one to six months since graduation. And, 90 percent of graduates have never undertaken an employment examination.

Furthermore, the survey found that 76.19 percent of the graduates are unemployed. The main reason for the graduates being unemployed is because they are waiting for responses from relevant institutions/organizations. More than half of the unemployed graduates (53.12 percent) reported that their problem in finding a job was because they did not know where or how to find the source of a job. When considering the relationship between the curriculum and employment the analysis of data found that the overall correlation between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the required skills and

competencies at work is at a quite high level ($\rho = 0.65$); while the relationship between the skills and competencies required by the employers and the acquired skills and competencies of the graduates for work negatively correlates at a low level ($\rho = -0.12$); and the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers correlates at a medium level ($C = 0.54$)

3) Evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies, is at a high level ($\mu = 4.14$, $\sigma = 0.49$). This is because the graduates have the skills and ability to manage the learning-teaching according to the three characteristics and five core principles of education, which is in line with the National Kindergarten Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Sports. They have the ability to manage playtime and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner; the ability to create an enabling environment for children to play and learn, regardless of their race, language, religion, gender, age, disability and socio-economic hardship; the knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research; the awareness of and adherence to the code of professional ethics for teachers and love towards the teaching profession and children; and the ability to work with others and preserve Lao culture and traditions.

Recommendations

The results of this research should be used as a guideline for the next research study, which could be beneficial to the further improvement and development of the curriculum. It can also be used to motivate teachers and education administrators who are involved in the development of the curriculum. The research team would officially like to offer some recommendations below.

Recommendations for further use

1. Teacher educators can use the results of this research to improve the teaching and learning process in the undergraduate teacher training curriculum.
2. Teacher educators should pay more attention to the skills and abilities of students in the field of classroom research.
3. Teacher educators should provide adequate materials, textbooks, and resources for students during the course of instruction.

4. Stakeholders, especially the government, should take steps to address the problem of graduates' unemployment.

5. Relevant educational institutions should provide job search guidance to students after graduation.

6. Facilities should address internet issues in the institution to make it easier for students to access a wide range of resources.

Recommendations for further research

1. The follow-up assessment team should conduct research on students' academic performance during their time at the institution to see if they are making progress in their studies.

2. Teacher educators should continue to conduct research with graduates in other disciplines to re-evaluate the process of curriculum development, teacher instructional arrangements, and facilities during their studies.

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