A Tracer Study on Graduates of Bachelor of Education in
Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) Programme in Lao PDR,
Savanhnakhet Teacher Training College,
Academic year 2019-2020*

Chaweng Sonboon[1], Lakaisone Saiyachit[2], Khambang Inthavongsa[2],
Khansai Chansomphou[2], Kaiphone Nouchansay[2], Phoutthaphone Xaikosy[2],
Phetsamai Shittedat[2], and Onnapat Marksab[3]

Abstract

The purposes of this study were to: 1) assess the graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies obtained from the Programme; 2) explore the employment situation of the graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE Programme from Savanhnakhet TTC, academic year 2019-2020; and 3) evaluate employers' satisfaction regarding the graduates' skills and competencies obtained from the Programme. There were thirty-two closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires were used to investigate research questions. SPSS Programme war used to calculate values. In this study, researcher found that the overall results of the skills and competencies of the graduates acquired from the Programme were at the high level (μ = 4.10, σ = 0.41). The employed graduates rated the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements were at the high level (μ = 4.10, σ = 0.62), especially in their 'knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research' (μ = 4.40, σ = 0.59) and in 'the use of their knowledge and experience in solving problems at work' (μ = 4.00, σ = 0.56) were also at the high level.

Keywords: Tracer study, Early childhood Education Programme

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 is 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)

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. Programme was first launched in Dongkhamxang TTC in the academic year 2013-2014, followed by Luangnamtha TTC and Salavan TTC in the academic year 2014-2015, and Luangprabang TTC, Pakse TTC, Ban Keun TTC, and Savanhnakhet TTC in the academic year 2016-2017. (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)

Savanhnakhet TTC 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, Savanhnakhet TTC 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 Savanhnakhet 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 (B.Ed. ECE) offered at Savanhnakhet TTC 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;

2) To explore the employment situation of the graduates of the Programme; and

3) To evaluate employers' satisfaction regarding the graduates' skills and competencies obtained from the Programme.

Key questions

1) Do the graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the Programme match the requirements of their jobs? What are the skills and competencies the graduates acquired during studies?

2) What are the graduates' retrospective assessments of the Programme? (e.g. satisfaction with learning experience, learning facilities and curriculum)

3) Does the training and experience provided by teacher training colleges enable the graduates to address the demands of their workplaces and communities?

4) What is the employment situation and status of the graduates? Do they work in their field of study?

5) How did the graduates transfer into employment?

6) What are the relationships between studies and current employment?

7) Are the graduates satisfied with their jobs?

8) What is the level of satisfaction of employers regarding the graduates' performance?

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; Cohen, 2004; Cooper, Hedges, and Valentine, 2019)
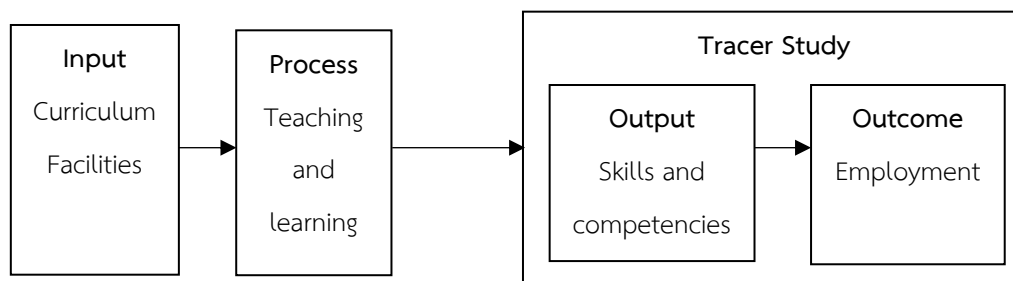

Figure 1 Research Framework

Research Methodology

Target Population

The target population of this study consists of two groups:

1) 60 Graduates from the B.Ed. in ECE Programme who graduated in 2020 from Savanhnakhet TTC, a total of sixty graduates.

2) 36 Employers of the graduates mentioned above, such as directors, deputy directors (academic department), supervisors, etc.

Timeframe

A tracer study on the graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE Programme from Savanhnakhet TTC, in the academic year 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 Savanhnakhet 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 thirty-two closed-ended and open-ended questions, and is divided into four parts; Part 1: General information, Part 2: Evaluation results of the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the Programme, Part 3: Evaluation results of the graduates' employment situation and working status and Part 4: Evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction on 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 Savanhnakhet 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 Savanhnakhet TTC, academic year 2019-2020, using the following steps and methods.

1) Distribute the graduate survey to target group B.Ed. graduates in Savanhnakhet TTC ECE Programme (2019-2020) and to distribute the employer's satisfaction survey, which provided by the graduates 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. The mean and correlation were interpreted as follows:

1) The mean values are classified against the criteria for interpreting the level of the opinion, consistency, satisfaction, appropriateness, requirement, with the following evaluation criteria:

Average	4.51 - 5.00	refers to	very high
Average	3.51 - 4.50	refers to	high
Average	2.51 - 3.50	refers to	medium
Average	1.51 - 2.50	refers to	low
Average	1.00 - 1.50	refers to	very low

2) The interpretation of the correlation coefficient (ρ, C) according to the correlation level:

The correlation value	0.81 or higher	refers to	high correlation
The correlation value	0.61 - 0.80	refers to	quite high correlation
The correlation value	0.41 - 0.60	refers to	moderate correlation
The correlation value	0.21 - 0.40	refers to	quite low correlation
The correlation value	below 0.20	refers to	low correlation

ρ, C value (+) : Positive, has the same direction /positive correlation

ρ, C value (-) : Negative, relative to the opposite /negative direction

ρ, C value zero (0) : The unrelated

3) The analysis of the answers from the open-ended questions were grouped and sorted and then conclusions were drawn.

Research Results

1. Evaluation results of the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the Programme

The evaluation of the graduates' skills acquired and competencies from the Programme was analyzed and presented on three main topics: 1) the graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the Programme and the relevance of the acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements; 2) the satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences, learning facilities and curriculum; and 3) the support from the Teacher Training College that enables the graduates to address the demands of their workplaces and communities.

1.1 Graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the Programme; and the relevance of the acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements

1.1.1 The graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the Programme

Based on the graduates' opinions of 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

Evaluation Items	N = 60		Level
	μ	σ	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.00	0.58	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	4.05	0.62	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	0.64	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	3.98	0.68	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.90	0.57	High
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.45	0.57	High
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.33	0.60	High
Summary	4.10	0.41	High

Table 1 shows that the skills and competencies that the graduates acquired during the Programme, in general, are at the high level (μ = 4.10, σ = 0.41). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.6 has the highest average rating at the high level (μ = 4.45, σ = 0.57), while the lowest average rating level is for item No.5 also at the high level (μ = 3.90, σ = 0.57).

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

The opinions of thirty-six graduates who are currently being employed regarding the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements are presented in Table 2.

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

Evaluation Items	N = 36		Level
	μ	σ	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.20	0.62	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	4.00	0.67	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	4.10	0.55	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	4.00	0.67	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	4.40	0.59	High
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	3.90	0.57	High
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.20	0.69	High
Summary	4.10	0.62	High

Table 2 shows that thirty-six graduates who are employed rated the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements, in general, at the high level (μ = 4.10, σ = 0.62). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.5 has the highest average rating at the high level (μ = 4.40, σ = 0.59). The item with the lowest average rating is No.6, also at the high level (μ = 3.90, σ = 0.57).

1.2 Skills and competencies required by the employers

The opinions of the employers on the required skills and competencies are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Skills and competencies required by the employers

Evaluation Items	N = 15		Level
	μ	σ	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.50	0.52	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	4.50	0.64	High

Evaluation Items	N = 15		Level
	μ	σ	
3. The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner	4.30	0.72	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	4.30	0.70	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	4.20	0.77	High
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.70	0.49	Very high
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.70	0.49	Very high
Summary	4.50	0.61	High

Table 3 shows that, overall, the graduates' skills and competencies which are required by the employers are at the high level (μ = 4.50, σ = 0.61). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that items No.6 and No.7 have the highest average rating at the very high level (μ = 4.70, σ = 0.49). The item with the lowest average rating is No.5, but also at the high level (μ = 4.20, σ = 0.77).

1.3 Graduates' satisfaction with learning experiences, learning facilities and curriculum

1.3.1 The satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences

The results of the analysis of the satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences

Evaluation Items	N = 60		Level
	μ	σ	
1. The teaching and learning management complies with and covers the curriculum content.	4.10	0.62	High
2. The teaching and learning management is in line with the nature and purpose of each subject of the Programme.	4.00	0.60	High
3. Activities/Programmes for development and enhancement of skills and capacities, such as promoting teamwork, are provided.	4.00	0.64	High
4. The learning assessment is in line with the curriculum.	4.00	0.65	High
5. Teacher educators are knowledgeable and experienced.	4.20	0.65	High
6. Teacher educators are a good role model for behaviors and practices.	4.30	0.62	High
Summary	4.10	0.63	High

Table 4 shows that the satisfaction rate of graduates with their learning experiences, in general, is at the high level (μ = 4.10, σ = 0.63). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.6 has the highest average rating at the high level (μ = 4.30, σ = 0.62). The lowest average rating item is No.2, also at the high level (μ = 4.00, σ = 0.60).

1.3.2 The satisfaction of the graduates with learning facilities

The analysis of the satisfaction of the graduates with their learning facilities is displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Satisfaction of graduates with learning facilities

Evaluation Items	N = 60		Level
	μ	σ	
1. Library facilities and resources are adequate for learning.	3.90	0.81	High
2. Materials and documents are suitable and can be used to facilitate learning.	3.60	0.76	High
3. The practice/training rooms have sufficient and suitable equipment.	3.70	0.72	High
4. The ICT system can facilitate self-directed research.	3.70	0.63	High
Summary	3.70	0.73	High

Table 5 shows that the overall satisfaction of the graduates with learning facilities is at the high level (μ = 3.70, σ = 0.73). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.1 has the highest average rating at the high level (μ = 3.90, σ = 0.81). The item with the lowest average rating is No.2, also at the high level (μ = 3.60, σ = 0.76).

1.3.3 The satisfaction of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum

The results of the analysis of the graduates' opinions towards their satisfaction with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Satisfaction of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum

Evaluation Items	N = 60		Level
	μ	σ	
1. The curriculum is up-to-date and relevant to the current situation.	4.00	0.69	High
2. The subjects offered in the curriculum	4.00	0.64	High
3. The subject contents covered in the curriculum	3.90	0.67	High
Summary	4.00	0.67	High

Table 6 shows that the overall satisfaction level of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum is at the high level (μ = 4.00, σ = 0.67.). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.2 has the highest average rating at the high level (μ = 4.00, σ = 0.64). The item with the lowest average rating is No.3, also at a high level (μ = 3.90, σ = 0.67).

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

1.4.1 The graduates' application of the knowledge acquired from the Programme

Table 7: The graduates' application of the knowledge acquired from the Programme

Evaluation Items	N = 36		Level
	μ	σ	
1. To what extent can you apply the acquired knowledge from the programm to perform your current responsibilities at work?	4.10	0.69	High
2. To what extent do the acquired knowledge and skills from the Programme benefit your current task?	4.20	0.64	High
3. To what extent does the Programme match with the requirements of your current work?	4.20	0.71	High
4. How sufficient are the acquired knowledge and skills from the Programme for you to perform your current work?	4.00	0.58	High
5. To what extent does the acquired knowledge and skills from the Programme match with your current work?	4.10	0.55	High
Summary	4.10	0.63	High

Table 7 shows that the graduates' use of knowledge gained from the curriculum, in general, is at the high level (μ = 4.10, σ = 0.63). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.2 has the highest average rating at the high level (μ = 4.20, σ = 0.64). The lowest average rating item is No.4, also at the high level (μ = 4.00, σ = 0.58).

1.4.2 The employers' perception of the graduates' knowledge and capacities

The results of the analysis of the employers' perception regarding the knowledge and capacities of the graduates are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8: The employers' perception of the graduates' knowledge and capacities

Evaluation Items	N = 15		Level
	μ	σ	
1. The graduates can apply knowledge and experiences to complete the assigned tasks.	4.30	0.62	High
2. The graduates can complete the tasks as required by the institution.	4.30	0.60	High
3. The graduates can complete the tasks as required by the community.	4.00	0.70	High
4. The graduates have the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for the assigned tasks.	4.30	0.70	High
5. The graduates are essential to your institution.	4.40	0.74	High
Summary	4.20	0.67	High

Table 8 shows that the employers' perception of the graduates' knowledge, in general, is at the high level (μ = 4.20, σ = 0.67). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.5 has the highest average rating at the high level (μ = 4.40, σ = 0.74). The lowest average rating item is No.3, also at the high level (μ = 4.00, σ = 0.70).

2. Evaluation results of the graduates' employment situation and working status

The results on the graduates' employment situation and working status are presented in four sub-topics: 1) the graduates' employment situation and working status, 2) the graduates' job search methods, 3) the relationships between the graduates' study and employment, and 4) the satisfaction of the graduates with their work. The data analysis results are as follows:

2.1 The graduates' employment situation and working status

2.1.1 The graduates' current working status

From the data collection of the graduates' current employment status, the analysis results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Current employment status of the graduates

Current employment status	Number (persons)	Percentage
Employed	36	60.00
Unemployed	24	40.00
Summary	60	100.00

Table 9 shows that a total of sixty graduates responded to the survey and all of them are female. Most of them are employed, which accounts for 60.00 percent.

The data analysis related to the types of work and employment of the thirty-six employed graduates is presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Types of work and employment of the employed graduates

Types of work and employment		Number (persons)	Percentage
Type of work	Teacher civil servant	-	-
	Private school teacher	28	77.78
	Volunteer teacher	6	16.67
	Others	2	5.56
Type of employment	Full-time	35	97.22
	Part-time/casual	-	-
	Freelance	1	2.78

Table 10 shows that among the thirty-six employed graduates, most of them are private school teachers, accounting for 77.78 percent; and most of them are employed as full-time employees, accounting for 97.22 percent of those employed.

The analysis of the graduates' positions indicates that most of them are employed as teachers. The results of analyzing the relevance between the graduates' qualifications and their current employment are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: The relevance between the graduates' study and their current employment

The relevance between the graduates' qualification and current employment	Number (persons)	Percentage
The current employment matches with their qualifications.	33	91.67
The current employment partially matches with their qualifications.	3	8.33
Summary	36	100.00

Table 11 shows that most graduates (91.67 percent) think that their current employment matches with their qualifications, followed by those who think their current employment partially matches with their qualifications, accounting for 8.30 percent.

In addition, the results of the survey of employers' perceptions of the work performance and types of employment of the employed graduates are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Work performance and employment type of employed graduates

Work performance and type of employment of the employed graduates		Number (persons)	Percentage
Types of employment	Full-time/Long-term	12	80.00
	Temporary/Short-term	3	20.00
Duration of employment	1 - 3 months	2	13.33
	4 - 6 months	1	6.67
	7 - 9 months	3	20.00
	10 - 12 months	6	40.00
	More than 12 months	3	20.00
The relevance between work and qualifications	The work is relevant to the graduates' qualifications	12	80.00
	The work is partially relevant to the graduates' qualifications	3	20.00

Table 12 shows that the majority of the graduates (80.00 percent) are employed full-time. In addition, most employed graduates (40.00 percent) have been working for ten to twelve months. Regarding the relevance between the work and the graduates' qualifications, it shows that mostly the work is relevant to the graduates' qualifications, accounting for 80.00 percent of the employed graduates.

On the other hand, a total of twenty-four unemployed graduates were asked to identify problems and issues which result in their unemployment status. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 13.

Table 13: The main reasons for unemployment and job search problems

Main reasons for unemployment and job search problems		Number (persons)	Percentage
Main reasons for unemployment	Not looking for employment	7	29.17
	Waiting for responses from relevant institutions/organizations	7	29.17
	Unable to find jobs	10	41.67
	Others	0	0.00
Problems with job search	I have no problems	15	62.50
	I have problems	9	37.50

Table 13 shows that the main reason for the graduates being unemployed is because they were unable to find jobs, which accounts for 41.67 percent of the total number of unemployed graduates. This is followed by those who report that they are waiting for responses from relevant institutions/organizations and those graduates who were not looking for employment, both accounting for 29.17 percent. Regarding the problems with their job search after graduation, the survey found that most graduates (62.50 percent) do not have problems. For those who have problems finding a job after graduation, their additional reasons included: no support found from others, having the assessment before having a job, insufficient salary, no place offered a job, the average grading score is not acceptable, no information about job announcement, they could not pass the assessment, and they could not find a suitable job.

2.2 Graduates' job search methods

The analysis of job search methods of the employed graduates is presented in Table 14.

Table 14: Graduates' job search methods

Graduates' job search methods		Number (persons)	Percentage
Duration of job search	Less than 3 months	20	55.56
	3 - 6 months	15	41.67
	7 - 11 months	1	2.78
Methods of job search	From job advertisements in the newspaper, internet, etc.	9	25.00
	Directly contact educational institutes	22	61.11
	Via recruitment agencies	4	11.11
	Via quota systems	1	2.78
Working period after graduation	1 - 6 months	13	36.11
	7 - 12 months	18	50.00
	More than 1 year	5	13.89
	Once	13	36.11

Graduates' job search methods		Number (persons)	Percentage
Number of times participated in employment examination	Twice	2	5.56
	3 times or more	-	-
	None	21	58.33

Table 14 shows that most graduates (55.56 percent) who are currently employed spent less than three months looking for a job. The most common method for job search was to directly contact educational institutes (61.11 percent). It also shows that most employed graduates (50.00 percent) have been working for seven to twelve months after their graduation. In addition, it shows that most employed graduates have never taken an employment examination, (21 people or 58.00 percent).

2.3 The relationship between the curriculum and the employment

The relationship between the curriculum and the employment are shown in Table 15.

Table 15: The relationship between the curriculum and the employment.

The relationship between the curriculum and the employment	Spearman's rho: ρ (Level of correlation)		Contingency Coefficient: C (Level of correlation)
	Graduates	Employers	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	0.45 (Medium)	0.50 (Medium)	0.30 (Quite Low)
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	0.61 (Quite high)	0.52 (Medium)	0.27 (Quite Low)
3. The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner	0.27 (Quite Low)	0.58 (Medium)	0.26 (Quite Low)
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	0.61 (Quite high)	0.77 (Quite high)	0.17 (Low)
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	0.45 (Medium)	0.68 (Quite high)	0.29 (Quite Low)
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	0.53 (Medium)	0.52 (Medium)	0.16 (Low)
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	0.36 (Quite Low)	0.70 (Quite high)	0.22 (Quite Low)
Summary	0.47 (Medium)	0.61 (Quite high)	0.24 (Quite Low)

Table 15 the analysis of the overall correlation between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the Programme and the required skills and competencies at work, in the 2nd column, shows that is at the medium level (ρ = 0.47), the overall relationship between the skills and competencies required by the employers and the acquired skills and competencies of the graduates for work, in the 3rd column, correlates at the quite high level (ρ = 0.61), and the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the Programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers, in the 4th column, correlates at the quite low level (C = 0.24).

2.4 The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

Table 16: The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

Evaluation Items	N = 36		Level
	μ	σ	
1. To what extent are you satisfied with your responsible task/position?	4.40	0.54	High
2. To what extent are you proud of your current responsible task?	4.30	0.58	High
3. To what extent are you motivated to complete your assigned work?	4.40	0.56	High
4. To what extent are you satisfied you're your engagement in additional assigned activities aside from your main responsibility?	4.30	0.48	High
5. To what extent are you satisfied with your salary/remuneration?	3.90	0.75	High
Summary	4.26	0.58	High

Table 16 shows that the graduates' satisfaction level with their work is at the high level (μ = 4.26, σ = 0.58). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No. 1 has the highest average rating at the high level (μ = 4.40, σ = 0.54). On the other hand, the item with the lowest average rating is No. 5, also at the high level (μ = 3.90, σ = 0.75).

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

3.1 The employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies

Table 17: The employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies

Evaluation Items	N = 15		Level
	μ	σ	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.27	0.59	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	4.33	0.62	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	4.20	0.68	High

Evaluation Items	N = 15		Level
	μ	σ	
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	4.07	0.80	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.80	0.86	High
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.47	0.64	High
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.40	0.63	High
Summary	4.21	0.61	High

Table 17 shows that the employers' overall satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies is at the high level (μ = 4.21, σ = 0.61). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No. 6 has the highest average rating at the high level (μ = 4.47, σ = 0.64). The lowest average rating level is for item No. 5, also at the high level (μ = 3.80, σ = 0.86).

Discussion

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

1. From the study, the graduates reported that the skills and competencies they acquired from the Programme and the skills and abilities required at work are at the high level (μ = 4.10, σ = 0.41). The employed graduates rated the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements, in general, at the high level (μ = 4.10, σ = 0.62), especially in their 'knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research' (μ = 4.40, σ = 0.59) and in 'the use of their knowledge and experience in solving problems at work' (μ = 4.00, σ = 0.56) both of which are also at the high level.

2. Employers' rated the level of graduates' required skills and competencies at the high level μ = 4.50, σ = 0.61). This includes their outstanding features in 'code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children' and 'the ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions', which were rated at the very high level (μ = 4.70, σ = 0.49). Arguably, this resulted in the graduates' satisfaction rating at the high level with learning experiences, learning facilities and curriculum at Savanhnakhet TTC (μ = 4.10, σ = 0.63), especially with 'teacher educators being a good role model for behaviors and practices' (μ = 4.30, σ = 0.62).

3. The results of the graduates' employment situation and working status found that among the sixty female graduates thirty-six are currently employed. Thirty-three of them are working as teachers, among which twenty-eight are private school teachers. Further, 97.22 percent of the employed graduates are employed full-time. This result matches with the

responses from the employers which indicates that eighty percent of the graduates are working full-time (not all employers responded to the survey). The fact that the graduates are employed full-time reflects the need for full-time teachers in kindergartens. The majority of the graduates were able to secure their job right after graduation and their method of job search was to directly contact educational institutes. On the other hand, twenty-four graduates are unemployed. The main reason for the graduates being unemployed is because they were unable to find jobs, followed by those who were waiting for responses from relevant institutions/organizations and, lastly, graduates who were not looking for employment. Despite being unemployed, fifteen of the twenty-four graduates reported that they do not have problems finding jobs. For those who have problems finding a job after graduation, their additional reasons were: lack of support from others, no eagerness to apply for jobs due to the pre-assessment test, insufficient salary, no place offered the job, the average grading score is not acceptable, no information about job announcement, could not pass the assessment, and could not find a suitable job.

4. Regarding the satisfaction of employers, the survey found that the employers' perception of the graduates' knowledge, in general, is at the high level (μ = 4.20, σ = 0.67). Further, they reported that 'the graduates are essential to their institutions' at the high level (μ = 4.40, σ = 0.74). And, eighty percent of employers responded that graduates can complete the tasks as required.

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 by teacher to evaluate their works, 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:

1. Teacher educators can use the results of this research to improve the teaching and learning process in the children learning 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. 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. Future research can focus more on practice rather than theory, focus more on improving the skills of teaching, designing the yearly or semester course outlines, the capacity for material development

2. Investigate and develop more training on adaptation of knowledge and skills

3. Research and to create more teaching periods for teaching English and IT in the training course

4. Research and to create more knowledge and skills for doing action research, specifically in teaching

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