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## ข้อมูลทั่วไปของวารสาร

ชื่อวารสาร	e-Journal of Education Studies, Burapha University
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ชื่อหน่วยงานเจ้าของวารสาร	คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา
ชื่อบรรณาธิการ	ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร.สิริวรรณ จรัสรวีวัฒน์
ที่อยู่ทำการ	คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา 169 ถ.ลงหาดบางแสน ต.แสนสุข อ.เมือง จ.ชลบุรี 20131 โทรศัพท์ 038-102065 โทรสาร 038-391043
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## วัตถุประสงค์ของวารสาร

e-Journal of Education Studies, Burapha University เป็นวารสารออนไลน์ที่คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา เริ่มดำเนินการเผยแพร่เป็นรายเดือนฉบับแรกในโอกาสครบรอบ 64 ปี คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ ตั้งแต่เดือนกรกฎาคม พ.ศ. 2562 เป็นต้นไป โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อเป็นสื่อกลางในการเผยแพร่บทความวิชาการ (Academic article) บทความวิจัย (Research article) บทความปริทัศน์ (Review article) บทความปริทัศน์หนังสือ (Book Review) ของคณาจารย์ นักวิชาการ นิสิต นักศึกษาทั้งภายในและภายนอกสถาบัน ตลอดจนส่งเสริมพัฒนาการวิจัยสาขาครุศาสตร์/ศึกษาศาสตร์ และสาขาอื่น ที่เกี่ยวข้องด้วยความมุ่งมั่นให้วารสารวิชาการออนไลน์ฉบับนี้มีมาตรฐานตามเกณฑ์คุณภาพของศูนย์ดัชนีการอ้างอิงวารสารไทย (Thai-Journal Citation Index Centre: TCI) ทุกบทความจะได้รับการพิจารณากรองคุณภาพจากผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิอย่างน้อย 3 ท่าน ในรูปแบบ double-blinded peer review โดยกองบรรณาธิการจะเลือกสรรบทความที่มีคุณภาพมาเผยแพร่เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของ “ชุมชนปัญญาศึกษาศาสตร์ เพื่อสังคมอุดมความรู้”

## ขอบเขตการตีพิมพ์ของวารสาร

กองบรรณาธิการวารสาร e-Journal of Education Studies, Burapha University จะพิจารณาเผยแพร่บทความวิชาการ (Academic article) บทความวิจัย (Research article) บทความปริทัศน์ (Review article) บทความปริทัศน์หนังสือ (Book Review) และแสดงความคิดเห็นเชิงวิชาการ ที่มีสาระเกี่ยวกับการศึกษา การบริหารการศึกษา หลักสูตร การเรียนการสอน การเรียนรู้ การศึกษาปฐมวัย การฝึกอบรม การวิจัยการศึกษา จิตวิทยาการศึกษา นวัตกรรมและเทคโนโลยีการศึกษา การวัดผลและประเมินผลการศึกษา การศึกษากับการพัฒนาสังคม การศึกษาพิเศษ การพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ และสาขาวิชาอื่น ๆ ในสหวิทยาการ ด้านครุศาสตร์/ศึกษาศาสตร์

## กองบรรณาธิการ

### ที่ปรึกษาบรรณาธิการ

1. คณบดีคณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา
2. รองคณบดีฝ่ายบริหาร
3. รองคณบดีฝ่ายวิชาการ
4. รองคณบดีฝ่ายบริการวิชาการและกิจกรรมพิเศษ
5. รองคณบดีฝ่ายพัฒนานิสิตและฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพครู
6. รองคณบดีฝ่ายยุทธศาสตร์และการประกันคุณภาพ
7. หัวหน้าภาควิชาการจัดการเรียนรู้

### บรรณาธิการ

1. ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร.สิริวรรณ จรัสวิวัฒน์

### ผู้ช่วยบรรณาธิการ

1. ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร.นพมณี เชื้อวชิรพันธ์
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3. อาจารย์ ดร.ชนาสร นิมนวล
4. อาจารย์วัฒน์พร จตุรานนท์

### ผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิภายใน

#### คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา

1. รองศาสตราจารย์ ดร.สฎาญี อีระวนิชตระกูล
2. รองศาสตราจารย์ ดร.เวชฎสิทธิ์ อังกณะภัทรขจร
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### ผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิภายนอก

1. รองศาสตราจารย์ ดร.สมาน อัครภูมิ  
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17. อาจารย์ ดร.ผดุงชัย ภูพัฒน์

ข้าราชการบำนาญคณะครุศาสตร์อุตสาหกรรมและเทคโนโลยี  
สถาบันเทคโนโลยีพระจอมเกล้าเจ้าคุณทหารลาดกระบัง

18. อาจารย์ ดร.เกษนิชชา อาษา

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## รายนามกรรมการกลั่นกรองบทความ (Peer Review)

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร.รุ่ง เจนจิต | ข้าราชการบำนาญ มหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์                           |
| 2. อาจารย์ ดร.เกศนิชชา อาษา          | คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยการกีฬาแห่งชาติ                       |
| 3. อาจารย์ ดร.ณัฐณี เจียรกุล         | คณะครุศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย                              |
| 4. อาจารย์ ดร.ปวรา ชูสังข์           | คณะครุศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏนครปฐม                            |
| 5. อาจารย์ ดร.วณิชชา สิทธิพล         | คณะเทคโนโลยีคหกรรมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยี<br>ราชมงคลธัญบุรี |
| 6. อาจารย์ ดร.กัญจนา ศิลปภิจยาน      | สาขาวิชาศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยสุโขทัยธรรมิกราช                 |

### กำหนดตีพิมพ์วารสาร

กำหนดตีพิมพ์วารสาร ราย 3 เดือน 4 ฉบับ/ปี

ฉบับที่ 1 มกราคม – มีนาคม

ฉบับที่ 2 เมษายน – มิถุนายน

ฉบับที่ 3 กรกฎาคม – กันยายน

ฉบับที่ 4 ตุลาคม – ธันวาคม

### ค่าธรรมเนียมตีพิมพ์

- บุคคลทั่วไป หรือ บุคคลภายนอกคณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา 3,500 บาท
- บุคลากรและนิสิตคณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา 2,500 บาท

## บทบรรณาธิการ

วารสารวิชาการออนไลน์ e-Journal of Education Studies, Burapha University ISSN 2697-3863 (Online) ปีที่ 4 ฉบับที่ 3 กรกฎาคม – กันยายน 2565 ฉบับนี้ ถือเป็นฉบับพิเศษที่กองบรรณาธิการได้รวบรวมบทความวิจัยภายใต้หัวข้อการประเมินติดตามผู้สำเร็จการศึกษา หรือการศึกษาย้อนรอย (Tracer Study) ซึ่งเป็นบทความวิจัยประเมินติดตามผู้สำเร็จการศึกษาของวิทยาลัยครู (Teacher Training College) 7 แห่งในสาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว ได้แก่ วิทยาลัยครูหลวงพระบาง (Luangprabang TTC) วิทยาลัยครูปากเซ (Pakse TTC) วิทยาลัยครูบ้านเกิน (Bankeun TTC) วิทยาลัยครูหลวงน้ำทา (Luangnamtha TTC) วิทยาลัยครูดงคำซ้าง (Dongkhamxang TTC) วิทยาลัยครูสาละวัน (Salavan TTC) และวิทยาลัยครูสะหวันนะเขต (Savanhnakheth TTC) ซึ่งได้รับการสนับสนุนจาก UNESCO Bangkok (Thailand) ภายใต้โครงการ Capacity Development for Education (CapED) in Lao PDR Programme ร่วมกับ กรมสร้างครู (Department of Teacher Education: DTE) กระทรวงศึกษาและการกีฬา (Ministry of Education and Sports: MoES) สาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว โดยมีคณาจารย์จากมหาวิทยาลัยบูรพาให้การสนับสนุนทางวิชาการในการอบรมพัฒนาความสามารถในการทำประเมินติดตามผู้สำเร็จการศึกษาให้กับครูในวิทยาลัยครูทั้ง 7 แห่ง และเป็นที่ปรึกษาตลอดการดำเนินการวิจัย ตามเป้าหมายการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืนของสหประชาชาติ (Sustainable Development Goals: SDGs) ที่มุ่งเพิ่มจำนวนครูที่มีคุณภาพรวมถึงการดำเนินการผ่านทางความร่วมมือระหว่างประเทศในการฝึกอบรมครูในประเทศกำลังพัฒนาเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในประเทศพัฒนาน้อยที่สุด

กองบรรณาธิการหวังเป็นอย่างยิ่งว่าบทความในฉบับนี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อผู้อ่าน ผู้บริหาร การศึกษา ครู ตลอดจนบุคลากรทางการศึกษา รวมถึงนิสิต/นักศึกษา และหากท่านผู้อ่านต้องการให้มีการปรับปรุงในส่วนใดโปรดเสนอแนะมายังกองบรรณาธิการ เพื่อจะได้ปรับปรุงวารสารให้มีคุณภาพยิ่งขึ้นในฉบับต่อไป

สิริวรรณ จรัสวิวัฒน์

บรรณาธิการ

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of the e-Journal of Education Studies, Burapha University (Online), Volume 4, Issue 3 (July–September 2022), is a special one. We have collated and selected seven research articles on the theme of follow-up study or tracer study from seven Teacher Training Colleges in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, namely Luangprabang TTC, Pakse TTC, Bankeun TTC, Luangnamtha TTC, Dongkhamxang TTC, Salavan TTC, and Savanhnakhet TTC. These research articles were supported and sponsored by UNESCO Bangkok (Thailand) as part of the Capacity Development for Education (CapED) in Lao PDR Programme, in collaboration with the Department of Teacher Education (DTE), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. In addition, experts from Burapha University provided academic support and served as consultants throughout the research process in seven teacher colleges. This is consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, which aim to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, particularly least developed countries and small island developing states.

The editorial team sincerely hopes that the articles in this issue will be valuable to readers, educational administrators, teachers, and educational personnel, as well as students. If the reader has any recommendations for improvements, please share them with the journal's editors so that the next issue will be of greater quality.

Sirawan Jaradrawiwat

Editor

## สารบัญ

หน้า

### บทความวิจัย (Research Article)

- A Tracer Study on Graduates of Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education Program at Luangprabang Teacher Training College, Academic Year 2019 - 2020** 1

*Phoneapasuwerth Bounanphonh, Phatthana Sythakham, Somchit Sysouphan, Bounlai Phanthong, Chaiphone Senbounxeuane, Phetsamone Sukavisay, Wattanaporn Jaturanon, Suntorn Bumreraj*

- A Tracer Study of Graduates of Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education Program from Pakse Teacher Training College, Academic Year 2019 – 2020** 19

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## A Tracer Study of Graduates of Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education Program at Luangprabang Teacher Training College, Academic Year 2019 – 2020\*

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### Abstract

A Tracer Study is a study that can effectively evaluate the effectiveness of a higher education program in order to improve and ensure its quality. This tracer study aimed to assess the competency and skills that graduates of the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) at Luangprabang Teacher Training College (TTC) acquired from the program and investigate the employment status of the graduates of the program as well as the satisfaction of the graduates' employers. This study employed a quantitative research approach with a survey research design. Participants were sixty-eight graduates from the 2019-2020 academic year and their thirty-three respective employers. Two questionnaires were developed to evaluate graduates' program-acquired competency and skills, discover graduates' employability, and examine graduates' and their employers' satisfaction. The findings indicate that the graduates acquired adequate skills and competencies offered by Luangprabang TTC, and they are able to apply the skills and knowledge acquired throughout the program to their present jobs. Their level of satisfaction with the program's learning environment, facilities, and TTC support is relatively high. The majority of graduates are currently employed as teachers in schools (61.76 percent), and 76.19 percent can find employment within three months. Current employment is relevant to the program's curriculum. Employers were extremely satisfied with the abilities and capabilities of the graduates. However, the suggestions provided by employers should be taken into account so that future graduates are more aware and competent in research skills, professional skills, communication skills, and classroom management in order to meet the needs of the institution and society.

**Keywords:** Tracer study, Early childhood Education Program, Graduates

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## Introduction

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is committed to providing outstanding early childhood education programs in response to the growing awareness of the significance of holistic early childhood development. The Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) are responsible for preparing early childhood teachers under the direction of the Department of Teacher Education (DTE), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES).

Prior to 2012, Lao teacher training colleges only provided Diploma and Advanced Diploma level early childhood teacher education programs. With the assistance of UNESCO Bangkok, the first Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) degree program was developed in 2012 for a four-year duration (Department of Teacher Education, 2012). The program was originally implemented at Dongkhamxang TTC during the 2013/2014 academic year, followed by Luangnamtha and Salavan TTCs in 2014/2015, and Ban Keun, Luangprabang, Pakse, and Savanhnakhet TTCs in 2016/2017.

In November and December of 2017, upon conclusion of the first cycle of the B.Ed. in ECE program in Dongkhamxang, TTC and UNESCO Bangkok conducted an evaluation of the curriculum involving both graduates and current student teachers in order to achieve its goals and objectives of educating qualified and effective early childhood teachers, the evaluation's findings suggested areas for improvement. In accordance with the findings, the Ministry of Education appointed a task force to revise the curriculum for the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) in aims to enhance the quality of the program and ensure that it aligns with the Research Institute of Educational Sciences (RIES)' 2012 national early childhood education curriculum (Department of Teacher Education, 2019).

Luangprabang Teacher Training College (TTC) is a teacher education institution administered under the Department of Teacher Education, Ministry of Education and Sports. Luangprabang TTC plays a significant role in the preparation of kindergarten, primary, and secondary teaching student teachers, both undergraduate and graduate. In 2016, Luangprabang TTC's B.Ed. in ECE program was initially implemented, and the first batch consisting of 68 graduates finished their degrees in 2020 while the second batch was expected to finish their degree in 2021. To provide Luangprabang TTC, DTE and MoES with useful information regarding the employability of the first cohort of graduates, the relevance of the skills and competencies acquired throughout the program to their jobs, and the graduates' satisfaction with the program, the graduate tracer study is conducted.

A tracer study or graduation survey is a conventional (written or verbal) questionnaire administered to college or university graduates. Tracer studies are also recognized as graduate surveys, alumni surveys, or follow-up surveys. It is a study that contributes significantly to the evaluation of a specific institution of higher education in terms

of its graduates' employability and program outcomes (Schomburg, 2003). Typically, it occurs following graduation or completion of training. Academic progress, transitioning to the workforce, joining the workforce, job career, utilizing previously acquired skills, current employment, and linkages to the educational institution are often covered in the survey (Schomburg, 2016).

The term "graduate tracer study" is used to distinguish between the two target groups in this study: graduates and employers. Graduate tracer surveys are a sort of empirical study that can provide valuable data for evaluating the educational and training outcomes of a specific institution of higher education. Employer surveys typically concentrate on recruitment methods and criteria, graduate competencies and skills, and potential future requirements. The findings of tracer studies can be used to continuously improving curriculum, as Schomburg (2003) suggests that tracer studies should provide higher education institutions with data indicating apparent deficiencies in a given educational program and serve as a basis for future planning and implementation.

In addition, Schomburg (2003) asserts that tracer studies can provide administrators, educators, and students with a wider perspective of the labor market through the collection of substantial data. furthermore, tracking and monitoring of graduates could facilitate cooperation and engagement between educational institutions and their alumni. Information about the nature of the occupation and its responsibilities is a more important source for improving curriculum than labor market statistics alone. This type of content may prompt reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of the teaching of specific skills, the emphasis on general knowledge, socializing, and personality development. Numerous graduate tracer studies have been conducted in the field of teacher education in recent years to ensure the quality of teacher education programs and track the employability of graduates (Almejas et al., 2017; Cornillez Jr. et al., 2021; Pentang et al., 2022)

In order to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of the teaching and learning of the B.Ed in ECE program, the research team of Luangprabang TTC, in collaboration with DTE and UNESCO Bangkok, conducted a tracer study of graduates to assess their acquired and developing skills and competencies, as well as their postgraduate employment situation and their employer's satisfaction with the skills and competencies the graduates gained from the program.

## Objectives

The primary objectives of this study were to assess the adequacy, quality, and relevance of the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education program offered at Luangprabang Teacher Training College (Luangprabang TTC) in Lao PDR, and the employment



status of graduates from this program as well employers' satisfaction. Specifically, the following objectives were established:

- 1) To assess the graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies obtained from the program at Luangprabang TTC, the academic year 2019/2020;
- 2) To investigate the employment status of the graduates from the program at Luangprabang Teacher Training College, the academic year 2019/2020; and
- 3) To evaluate employers' satisfaction regarding the graduates' skills and competencies obtained from the program at Luangprabang Teacher Training College, the academic year 2019/2020.

### Research questions

The following questions were addressed to guide the study:

- 1) To what extent the graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the program align 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 program? (e.g. satisfaction with learning experience, learning facilities and curriculum)
- 3) To what extent 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? What are the relationships between studies and current employment?
- 6) To what extent are the graduates satisfied with their jobs?
- 7) To What extent are the employers satisfied with the graduates' performance?

### Research Methodology

#### Research design

This study utilized quantitative approach employing the descriptive survey research design through questionnaires. The survey research was conducted in response to the objectives of the study, which was to trace graduates' associated employment characteristics and evaluate the significance of the graduates' acquired ability and competence, as well as employers' views of graduates.

### Research participants

There were two target population of the participants: 1) graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE program and 2) employers of the graduates. The first target group comprised of sixty-eight graduates from the academic year 2019/2020 which were purposively selected. The second target group comprised of thirty-three previously indicated employers of graduates. The employers included owners of a workplace, administrators, directors, supervisors, or people in different positions who has the authority to make decisions concerning the work of the graduate of the B.Ed. in ECE program from Luangprabang TTC, in the academic year 2019/2020

As of recently, Luangprabang TTC had only one graduating class of B.Ed. in ECE program students, hence the entire participant population was the target respondents. It should be noted that there were no male students enrolled in this program, hence all graduates are female.

### Research Instrument and Data Collection Procedure

Two questionnaires utilized in this study were adapted from a theme proposed by Schomburg (2003), with certain items modified to correspond with the study's objectives and the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum. Two target groups of respondents were considered when developing the questionnaires: graduates and employers. Each questionnaire had both closed- and open-ended questions. A five-point Likert scale was utilized to assess the degree of opinion, consistency, satisfaction, adequacy, and requirement.

The graduate questionnaire consisted of 32 items which were divided into the following sections: Part I concerned with the profile of the graduates, which included their gender and marital status; Part II focused on the graduates' acquired skills and competencies, which included the skills and competencies acquired from the program, the relevance of the acquired competencies with the job requirements, the graduates' satisfaction with the learning experience, facilities, curriculum, and TTC's support; Part III involved the graduates' employability status, including employment status and working status; and Part IV emphasized the graduates' job application and work (for unemployed graduates).

The questionnaire for graduate employers consisted of 16 items divided into three sections: Part I focused on the demographic characteristics of the employers, including their age, level of education, work experience, and workplace; Part II emphasized on the employers' satisfaction with graduates; and Part III concerned with the employers' satisfaction with graduates' skills and competencies.

Both questions were originally developed in Thai and then translated into Lao to avoid misunderstanding of the language. They were piloted with a non-target group to verify the clarity and comprehensibility of the language. After collecting responses from non-target groups, the questionnaires were revised and sent to experts in curriculum and instruction and

early childhood education as well as the Department of Teacher Education (DTE), the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), and UNESCO Bangkok for validation. After validating the questionnaires, they were revised again and transferred to Google Forms for ease of use and delivered online to both sets of the participants. The purposes of the study were communicated through the questionnaires and the respondents' personal information (e.g., telephone number, address) was preserved to ensure their anonymity. The data collecting began from July to September of 2021.

Following the data collection process, descriptive statistics (Frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviations) were used to analyze the quantitative data. The following evaluation criteria were used to interpret the level of the opinion, consistency, satisfaction, appropriateness, requirement

Average	4.51 - 5.00	refers to extremely 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 extremely low

## Research Results

The results of the data analysis are presented in four parts: 1) Demographic information; 2) Graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the program; 3) Graduates' employability and working status; and 4) Employers' perception towards the graduates' skills and competencies

### Part 1 Demographic information

The demographic information of the respondents is presented in two sub-headings, namely the demographic information of the graduates, and the demographic information of the employers, with the following details:

#### 1.1 Demographic information of graduates

**Table 1:** Demographic information of the graduates

Graduates Profile		Frequency (n = 68)	Percentage
Gender	Male	-	-
	Female	68	100.00
Marital status	Single	46	67.65
	Married	22	32.35
	Divorced	-	-
	Widowed	-	-



Table 1 illustrates that a total of sixty-eight graduates responded to the survey, and that all of them are female, as no male students participated in this program. In terms of marital status, 67.65 percent of respondents are single. In addition, according to the statistics about the ages of the respondents, the average age of the graduates who responded to the survey is less than thirty years old.

## 1.2 Demographic information of employers

**Table 2:** Demographic information of the employers

Information of Employers		Frequency (n=33)	Percentage
Gender	Male	4	12.12
	Female	29	87.88
Age	Below 30 years-old	15	45.45
	30 - 40 years-old	8	24.24
	41 - 50 years-old	8	24.24
	Over 50 years-old	2	6.06
Educational level	Doctorate degree	6	18.18
	Master's degree or equivalent	8	24.24
	Bachelor's degree or equivalent	15	45.45
	Diploma level	4	12.12
	Lower than diploma level	-	-
Working experience	5 years and below	13	39.39
	6 - 10 years	6	18.18
	11 - 15 years	5	15.15
	16 - 20 years	4	12.12
	Over 20 years	5	15.15
Type of institution	Public school	2	6.06
	Private school	30	90.91
	Others	1	3.03

Thirty-three employers responded to the questionnaire, as shown in Table 2. This includes four male (12.12 percent) and twenty-nine female respondents (87.88 percent). Those under thirty constitute 45.45% of the overall population. The majority of the population holds a Bachelor's degree, which accounts for 45.45% of the population. In addition, the significant number of them have less than five years of work experience (39.39 percent). Two are employed by public schools (6.06 percent) and thirty are employed by private schools (90.91 percent). In addition, the majority of employers have director positions.

## Part 2 Graduates' Acquired Skills and Competencies of the Program

The data regarding the graduates' competencies and skills acquired from the program was divided into two subtopics: 1) skills and competencies acquired from the program and the relevance of the acquired competencies with the job requirements; 2) satisfaction towards learning experience, facilities, and curriculum; and the support from TTC.

### 2.1) Skills and competencies acquired from the program and the relevance of the acquired competencies with the job requirements

**Table 3:** Graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the program, the relevance of the acquired skills with the job requirements, and skills and competencies required by the employers

Items	Acquired skills and competencies		Relevance of the acquired skills with the job requirements		Skills and competencies required by the employers	
	n = 68		n = 42		n = 33	
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	$\mu$	$\sigma$	$\mu$	$\sigma$
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.21	0.56	4.38	0.58	4.48	0.57
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	0.69	4.36	0.69	4.30	0.59
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	0.72	4.31	0.60	4.36	0.70
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	4.16	0.75	4.31	0.64	4.36	0.60
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.91	0.73	4.17	0.79	4.27	0.63
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.56	0.66	4.57	0.59	4.61	0.50
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.37	0.64	4.48	0.63	4.45	0.56
Summary	4.22	0.68	4.37	0.65	4.40	0.59

Regarding Graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the program, the graduates addressed that they acquired a code of professional ethics for teachers the most from the program ( $\mu = 4.22$ ,  $\sigma = 0.68$ ). The program also enabled them to collaborate with others and expose them to Lao culture and tradition ( $\mu = 4.37$ ,  $\sigma = 0.64$ ), and they are competent to manage the learning and teaching process according to the National Kindergarten Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Sports ( $\mu = 4.22$ ,  $\sigma = 0.69$ ). However, knowledge and capacities to generate knowledge through action research obtained the lowest average rating ( $\mu = 3.91$ ,  $\sigma = 0.73$ ).

In terms of the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies to their job requirements, forty-two employed graduates rated the code of professional ethics for teachers and their love for the teaching profession and children as having the highest average rating ( $\mu = 4.57$ ,  $\sigma = 0.59$ ). The graduates stated that the program enhanced their capacity to collaborate with others, preserved the Lao culture and customs, and equipped them with the skills necessary to manage early childhood education. While knowledge and capabilities for knowledge creation through action research received the lowest average rating ( $\mu = 4.17$ ,  $\sigma = 0.79$ ).

Considering the skills and competencies required by employers, 33 employers responded to the required skills and competencies of the graduates, and the results indicate that the most important skills and competencies of the graduates are a code of professional ethics for teachers and a love for the teaching profession and children ( $\mu = 4.61$ ,  $\sigma = 0.50$ ). The employer believes that the graduates have understanding of managing early childhood education ( $\mu = 4.48$ ,  $\sigma = 0.57$ ) as well as the ability to collaborate with others and preserve Lao culture and traditions ( $\mu = 4.45$ ,  $\sigma = 0.56$ ). In contrast, knowledge and the ability to generate knowledge through action research received the lowest rating.

**2.2) Satisfaction towards learning experience, facilities, and curriculum and the satisfaction towards support from TTC to enable the graduates to address the demands of their workplaces and communities**



**Table 4** Graduates' satisfaction towards learning experience, facilities, and curriculum

Items		N = 68	
		$\mu$	$\sigma$
Learning experience	1. The teaching and learning management complies with and covers the curriculum content.	4.29	0.71
	2. The teaching and learning management is in line with the nature and purpose of each subject of the program.	4.22	0.69
	3. Activities/programs for development and enhancement of skills and capacities, such as promoting teamwork, are provided.	4.35	0.64
	4. The learning assessment is in line with the curriculum.	4.24	0.65
	5. Teacher educators are knowledgeable and experienced.	4.31	0.63
	6. Teacher educators are a good role model for behaviors and practices.	4.38	0.62
Learning facilities	1. Library facilities and resources are adequate for learning.	4.12	0.82
	2. Materials and documents are suitable and can be used to facilitate learning.	4.01	0.76
	3. The practice/training rooms have sufficient and suitable equipment.	3.81	0.83
	4. The ICT system can facilitate self-directed research.	3.79	0.86
Curriculum	1. The curriculum is up-to-date and relevant to the current situation.	4.15	0.68
	2. The subjects offered in the curriculum	4.00	0.71
	3. The subject contents covered in the curriculum	3.93	0.76
application of the knowledge acquired from the program	1. The application of the acquired knowledge from the program to perform the current responsibilities at work.	4.33	0.61
	2. The acquired knowledge and skills from the program benefit the current task.	4.43	0.59
	3. The program match with the requirements of the current work.	4.40	0.67
	4. The adequacy of the acquired knowledge and skills from the program to perform the current work	4.24	0.62
	5. The acquired knowledge and skills from the program match with the current work.	4.36	0.62

Regarding the graduates' perceptions of the learning experience and facilities of the program and curriculum, the graduates were, overall, highly impressed with the learning experience and facilities provided by the program and curriculum. Addressing learning experience, graduates significantly believed that teacher educators are great role models for behaviors and practices ( $\mu = 4.38$ ,  $\sigma = 0.624$ ), and they were satisfied with the program's activities for the development and enhancement of skills and capabilities, such as promoting teamwork. Despite receiving the lowest rating score ( $\mu = 4.22$ ,  $\sigma = 0.69$ ) for teaching and learning management that corresponds with the nature and objective of each subject in the curriculum, students were substantially satisfied with the teaching and learning.

The level of satisfaction with the learning facilities offered throughout the program may not be remarkable ( $\mu = 3.93$ ,  $\sigma = 0.82$ ). However, the graduates expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the library's facilities and resources, which are appropriate for studying; they were also satisfied with the ICT system, which facilitates independent research. Considering the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum, the graduates were indeed satisfied. They valued the curriculum's relevance to the current situation ( $\mu = 4.15$ ,  $\sigma = 0.68$ ) and the curriculum's subject offerings ( $\mu = 4.00$ ,  $\sigma = 0.70$ ).

The results of an analysis of the support offered by the Teacher Training College that enables graduates to meet the expectations of their employers and communities. Overall, the graduates successfully apply the program's acquired knowledge and abilities to their current positions. They acknowledged that the acquired knowledge and abilities greatly benefit their tasks and coincide with their current workplace's expectations. In addition, the curriculum equips graduates with the necessary knowledge and abilities to accomplish their current duties.

### Part 3 The graduates' employment situation and working status

The data analysis of the graduates' employment and working status is divided into four sub-topics. 1) the graduates' employment situation and employment status, 2) the graduates' job search strategies, 3) the graduates' study and employment relationships, and 4) the graduates' job satisfaction. The following are the findings of the data analysis:

#### 3.1) The graduates' employment situation and working status

**Table 5:** Current employment status and types of work and employment of the graduates

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Current employment status (n=68)	Employed	42	61.76
	Unemployed	26	38.24
Type of work (n=42)	Teacher civil servant	-	-
	Private school teacher	40	95.24
	Volunteer teacher	1	2.38
	Others	1	2.38
Type of employment (n=42)	Full-time	39	92.86
	Part-time/casual	1	2.38
	Freelance	2	4.76
	Others	-	-
Duration of job search (n=42)	Less than 3 months	32	76.19
	3 - 6 months	6	14.29
	7 - 11 months	3	7.14
	1 - 2 years	-	-

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
	More than 2 years	1	2.38
Methods of job search (n=42)	From job advertisements in the newspapers, internet, etc.	24	50.00
	Directly contact educational institutes	23	47.92
	Via recruitment agencies	-	-
	Via quota systems	-	-
	Others	1	2.08
Working period after graduation (n=42)	1 - 6 months	20	47.62
	7 - 12 months	16	38.10
	More than 1 year	6	14.29
Number of times participated in employment examination (n=42)	Once	20	47.62
	Twice	3	7.14
	3 times or more	1	2.38
	None	18	42.86
The relevance between the graduates' qualification and current employment (n=42)	The current employment matches with their qualifications.	39	92.86
	The current employment partially matches with their qualifications.	2	4.76
	The current employment does not match with their qualifications.	1	2.38

Currently, 42 graduates (61.76 percent) of Langprabang TTC's B.Ed. in ECE program are employed, while twenty-six are unemployed. The majority of graduates who are currently employed are private school teachers (n=40), with the remaining two serving as volunteer instructors in different contexts. The majority of graduates (n=39) are full-time employees, while one works part-time and two are self-employed. The majority of graduates who are currently employed (76.19 percent) looked for work for less than three months. Job advertisements in newspapers and on the internet are the most prevalent approach for finding work (50.00 percent). This is followed by making direct contact with educational institutions (47.92 percent). The significant proportion of employed graduates, 47.62 percent, have been working for one to six months following graduation, according to the survey. Furthermore, it was discovered that the majority of employed graduates have taken an employment examination at least once (47.62 percent). The majority of graduates (92.86 percent) believe that their current employment corresponds to their qualifications, with 4.76 percent of employed graduates believing that their current employment partially meets their qualifications.



The twenty-six graduates who responded as employed were asked to identify the problems and issues that led to their unemployment status. The primary reason that 42.31 percent of the graduates are unemployed is because they were not actively seeking employment. This is followed by the 30.77 percent who reported being unemployed due to inability to find jobs. Regarding difficulties with job searches following graduation, the survey results indicated that the majority of graduates (76.92 percent) did not have problems, while 23.08 percent reported having some difficulties.

**Table 6:** The main reasons for unemployment and job search problems

Items		Frequency (n=26)	Percentage
Main reasons for unemployment	Not looking for employment	11	42.31
	Waiting for responses from relevant institutions/organizations	4	15.38
	Unable to find jobs	8	30.77
	Others	3	11.54
Problems with job search	I have no problems.	20	76.92
	I have problems.	6	23.08

### 3.2) The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

The average degree of satisfaction among graduates with their work is high ( $\mu = 4.36$ ,  $\sigma = 0.63$ ). They were strongly motivated to fulfill the duties assigned. In addition to their primary responsibility, they were totally satisfied with participating in all other assigned tasks. Additionally, they were very pleased with the responsibility and proud of their work. However, graduates were not really content with their remuneration.

**Table 7:** The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

Items	N = 42	
	$\mu$	$\sigma$
1. The responsible task	4.43	0.63
2. Pride of the current responsible task	4.43	0.55
3. Motivation to complete the assigned work	4.55	0.59
4. Participation in other assigned activities in addition to the primary responsibility	4.50	0.60
5. The salary/ remuneration	3.88	0.80
Summary	4.36	0.63

#### Part 4: Evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies.

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

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

Items		N = 33	
		$\mu$	$\sigma$
Perceptions	1. The graduates can apply knowledge and experiences to complete the assigned tasks.	4.27	0.57
	2. The graduates can complete the tasks as required by the institution.	4.09	0.58
	3. The graduates can complete the tasks as required by the community.	4.00	0.66
	4. The graduates have the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for the assigned tasks.	4.00	0.83
	5. The graduates are essential to your institution.	4.33	0.60
Satisfaction	1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.39	0.61
	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	4.21	0.65
	3. The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner	4.27	0.72
	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	4.27	0.63
	5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	4.00	0.75
	6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.39	0.61
	7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.33	0.65

From the perspective of employers, their perceptions on the graduates' knowledge and capacities were high ( $\mu = 4.14$ ,  $\sigma = 0.65$ ). The graduates generally have adequate knowledge and skills to complete duties ( $\mu = 4.27$ ,  $\sigma = 0.57$ ). Employers also noted that graduates are essential to their workplace because they are able to effectively utilize knowledge and expertise to perform assigned institution and community-based duties.

Overall, employers were satisfied with the skills and competencies of graduates ( $\mu = 4.27$ ,  $\sigma = 0.66$ ). Employers appreciated the graduates' expertise in managing early

childhood education, as well as their adherence to the Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers and their passion for the teaching profession and children. Employers placed a high value on teamwork and the capacity to preserve Lao culture and traditions. However, employers were least satisfied with knowledge and the ability to produce knowledge through action research yet again.

Besides, the employers were invited to identify the graduates' strengths and areas for improvement, as well as to provide suggestions for curricular revisions to the B.Ed. in ECE program. In terms of strengths, the graduates are capable of managing the learning-teaching process. They can handle plays and learning-teaching activities creatively in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms, and pre-primary classes. Moreover, the graduates are patient, proactive, and responsible at work as well as they are trustworthy in their work. They are also well-versed in early childhood education administration and child care. Finally, the graduates are capable of problem-solving. However, urgent improvements are required in the areas of research skills, professional skills, communication skills, and classroom management, as well as the ability to exchange experiences with coworkers and classroom management.

Six recommendations for future curricular improvements includes: 1) increasing the amount of practice sessions and utilization of instructional materials; 2) incorporating creative activities into the curriculum; 3) Increasing the number of possibilities for students to exchange information and experiences with other college students; 4) upgrading lessons by incorporating ICT into the classroom; 5) providing more in-depth guidance on creating effective lesson plans; and 6) providing more semesters under the curriculum. Some students, for instance, must study throughout the summer semester or on weekends.

## Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions and discussions are drawn:

1) The graduates acquired adequate skills and competences provided by Luangprabang TTC. The course they took equipped them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for their development as early childhood education teachers. They can apply the skills and knowledge acquired throughout the program to their current positions. The result of this study could be implied that graduates are able to manage learning-teaching according to the 3 characteristics and 5 core principles of education, in accordance with the National Kindergarten Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Sports; code of professional ethics for teachers; and love for the teaching profession and children; the ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions; and the ability to manage playtime and

learning-teaching. In terms of the graduates' satisfaction towards the curriculum, they are highly satisfied with the program's learning experience, facilities, and TTC support. The courses and activities provided within the curriculum are claimed to adequately equip graduates with the skills and competencies required to be successful in the labor market. However, some skills, such as knowledge creation through action research and experience sharing with coworkers, required further development. This might be considered when revising the curriculum to enhance its effectiveness and be responsive to the requirements of learners, other stakeholders, and communities.

2) The majority of the graduates (61.76%) are currently working as teachers in schools and 76.19 percent can find a job within three months. This can be interpreted that the quality of the graduates matches the qualifications required by the school and that the graduates are competitive in the workforce. Furthermore, their current employment matches their program-acquired skills. However, the TTC should explore assisting unemployed individuals to enter the workforce;

3) Employers were highly satisfied with the graduates' abilities and competencies. This may result from the graduates' knowledge and skills in managing early childhood education and teaching and learning, they are able to perform the institution's and community's required tasks. The graduate can collaborate effectively with both employers and coworkers. However, the suggestions made by employers should be properly considered so that future graduates are more knowledgeable and competent in the aforementioned areas and therefore can meet the requirements of the institution and society.

The result of this tracer study can be contributed to curriculum development, accreditation, and the creation of student extracurricular activities in to enhance the quality of higher education in the future. The acquired information can demonstrate the gap between the competences of graduates and the actual needs of their users (Andari et al., 2021; Odame et al, 2021). This information is crucial as a contribution to the betterment of the educational system since it offers an awareness of the condition of graduates, their status, and the activities they are currently involved in (Sharma, 2014). In addition, tracer studies indirectly support universities' ongoing, routinely carried out initiatives for continual improvement.

## Recommendations

According to this research finding, the recommendations are made as follows;

1. The TTC should expand learning facilities, including practice rooms, opportunities for hands-on practical training, and adequate equipment, and foster the development of graduates' knowledge and skills through an action research approach. Furthermore, the TTC



should strengthen academic cooperation and practicum teaching with the private sector, as well as provide assistance in finding employment in both public and private schools.

2. The Department of Teacher Education/Ministry of Education and Sports should revise the curriculum or courses that emphasize the acquisition of knowledge through the research method and provide sufficient assistance.

3. A graduate tracer study should be undertaken every three or five years, and the results should be utilized to improve the B.Ed in ECE curriculum in order to enhance graduates' learning outcomes.

4. As the primary participants in this study were graduates and their employers, additional target groups, such as community members and parents should be included to collect more pertinent data. Moreover, it is necessary to consider additional data collection methods to increase the validity of research findings.

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## 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)

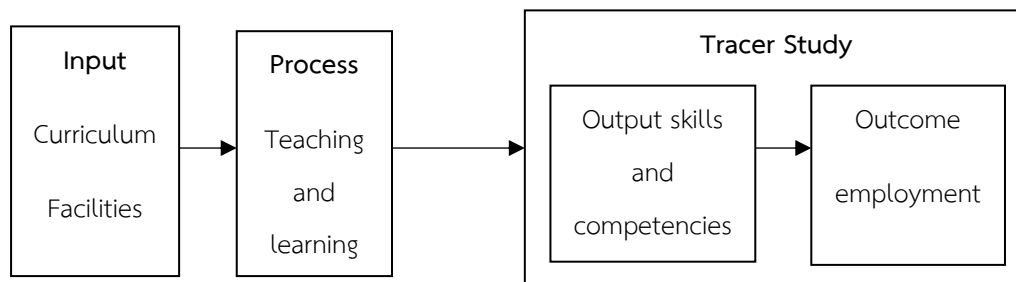


Figure 1 Research Framework

## 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 ( $\mu$ ), standard deviations ( $\sigma$ ) 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
		$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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
		$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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
		$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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
		$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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
		$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 : $\rho$ )	Employers (Spearman's rho : $\rho$ )	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 : $\rho$ )	Employers (Spearman's rho : $\rho$ )	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
		$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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
		$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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
		$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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
		$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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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## Tracer Study of the Graduates of the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) Programme in Ban Keun Teacher Training College, Academic Year 2019 – 2020\*

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### Abstract

The objectives of the 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 programme; and 3) evaluate employers' satisfaction regarding the graduates' skills and competencies obtained from the programme. The population consists of 55 graduates, and 16 employers. The instruments for this data collection were two online questionnaires. Data analysis were frequency, percentages, mean, standard deviations and correlation. The study found that : 1) the graduates' opinion was that the skills and competencies that they acquired during their study were at the high level ( $\mu = 4.07$ ,  $\sigma = 0.46$ ), furthermore the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the required skills and competencies at work is at a quite high level ( $\rho = 0.75$ ), 2) the graduates' employment situation and working status were employed 72.7 percent, most of them (87.50 percent) are private school teachers, and most of them are employed as full-time employees (92.50 percent) , and 3) the employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies found that their overall satisfaction with the graduate' skills and competencies is at the high level ( $\mu = 4.40$ ,  $\sigma = 0.43$ ).

**Keywords:** Tracer study, Early childhood Education Programme

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## Introduction

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is committed to providing quality pre-school education services by raising awareness of the importance of early childhood development. The responsibility for preparing early childhood teachers falls upon the Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) under the supervision of the Department of Teacher Education (DTE), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES).

Before 2012, Lao teacher training colleges only offered early childhood teacher education programmes at the Diploma levels. 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. The 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, Bankeun TTC, and Savanhnakhet TTC in the academic year 2016-2017.

Upon the completion of the programme's first cycle in 2017, a curriculum evaluation was carried out. The findings of the evaluation were used as a basis for curriculum revision in 2018 to improve the quality of the programme and ensure that it aligned with the 2012 national early childhood education curriculum. The revised curriculum was first adopted for the academic year 2018/2019 in Dongkhamxang TTC and Saravan TTC, and in Luangnamtha TTC and Suvanhnakhet TTC the following academic year. (Department of Teacher Education, 2012)

To implement the National Education System Reform Strategy (NESRS, 2006-2015), the Five-Year Education and Sports Sector Development Plan (ESSDP, 2016-2020) and the Teacher Education Strategy and Action Plan from 2016-2020, the Department of Teacher Education and the Teacher Development Centre developed a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) programme. Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College has served as the main implementing agency in collaboration with the other seven teacher training colleges that prepare teachers from pre-school up to secondary level, as well as related departments, with support from UNESCO Bangkok under the Capacity Development for Education in Lao PDR: Capacity Building Support in Teaching Education (CapED). The Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) programme, having been officially approved in accordance with the ministerial agreement on the curriculum endorsement and

implementation (Ministerial Agreement No.3563/MoES, dated 28 August 2013) is now fully implemented. (Department of Teacher Education, 2019)

The programme was first implemented from the 2013-2014 to the 2016-2017 academic years, with the first cohort of graduates in 2017. At that point, a curriculum evaluation study was conducted in collaboration with experts from UNESCO Bangkok. The ensuing curriculum review was conducted to improve the curriculum structure in order to focus on efficiency, reduce the number of teaching hours of theory and increase practice hours according to the national curriculum standard for Bachelor's degrees No. 4132 / HEIs / 2011, dated 03/11/2011. This also was to ensure correspondence with the early childhood education learning experience plans within the National Kindergarten Curriculum.

Ban Keun Teacher Training College is located at Kuen Nuea village, Thulakom district, Vientiane Province. Ban Keun Teacher Training College launched the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) programme since 2017, with eighty-four graduates in two cohorts yielding fifty-seven graduates in 2020. The graduates work as teachers in public and private schools. And, there are still a small number of graduates who are still unemployed.

Tracer study is common research method for educational institutions to check on the employability of their graduates. It can be used to achieve in many ways such as ; to collect the information on how well the graduates are doing in their works, to meet the needs of the employers, to get feedback from the graduates and to modify and upgrade the curriculum. (Schomburg, 2003, 2016; Cohen, 2004)

Therefore, to ensure the quality and relevance of the programme, Ban Keun TTC agreed to conduct a graduate tracer study with graduates in the academic year 2019-2020. The results of the study will help identify the areas that need to be further improved to ensure that new graduates are employable. They also can contribute to the improvement of the quality of early childhood education in Lao PDR, help develop teaching and learning management skills and provide course updates.

## Objectives

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

The specific objectives are 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 programme; and
3. 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 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 Methodology

#### Target Population

1) Graduates from the B.Ed. in ECE programme who graduated in 2020 from Ban Keun Teacher Training College, (55 graduates); and 2) Employers of the graduates mentioned above, such as directors, deputy directors (academic department), supervisors, etc. (a total number of 16 people)

#### Timeframe

The duration of this graduate tracer study was from 19 July to 30 September 2021

### Data collection instruments

There were 2 questionnaires; 1) the 4 parts questionnaires for the graduates which consists of closed-ended and open-ended questions and 2) three parts questionnaire for the employers. The questionnaires were quality check by focus group discussion.

### Data collection method

Step 1: Discuss the design of data collection tools; step 2: prepare questionnaires step 3: Create questionnaires with Google Forms and pre-test the questionnaires, and step 4 complete the questionnaires.

### Data analysis method

After the questionnaires were completed, the Team entered the into the database for data analysis, using SPSS programme to analyse the data by finding the frequency ( $\mu$ ), percentage, mean, standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) and correlation value. The mean values and correlation are interpreted as follows.

- |            |             |                     |
|------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1) 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 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        |

## Research Results

### 1.1 General information of the graduates and the employers.

There were fifty-five graduates, all of them were female, the majority of them are single, accounting for eighty percent of all respondents. And there were 16 employers who responded to the survey, five male employers (31.2 percent) and eleven females (68.8 percent). Most of them are below thirty years of age, (43.8 percent). The educational level of



most is a Bachelor's degree or equivalent, (37.5 percent). In addition, most of them have six to ten years of work experience, seven graduates are working in public schools (43.8 percent) and nine graduates are working in private schools (56.2 percent). It is found that most of the employers are school directors.

## 2. The evaluation results of the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme

### 2.1 The graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the programme; and the relevance of the acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements.

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

**Table 1:** The graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the programme.

Evaluation Items	N = 55		level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.16	0.53	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	4.16	0.60	high
3. The ability to manage playtime and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner	4.04	0.67	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	4.01	0.79	high
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.59	0.66	high
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.49	0.65	high
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.36	0.69	high
Summary	4.07	0.46	high

Table 1 shows that the skills and competencies that the graduates acquired during study are at a high level ( $\mu = 4.07$ ,  $\sigma = 0.46$ ). It 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 the high level ( $\mu = 4.49$ ,  $\sigma = 0.65$ ), while the lowest rating level, item No. 5: ‘knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research’, is still at the high level ( $\mu = 3.59$ ,  $\sigma = 0.66$ ).

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

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

Evaluation Items	N = 40		level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.18	0.60	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	4.27	0.60	high
3. The ability to manage playtime and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner	4.05	0.68	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	4.05	0.63	high
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.95	0.68	high
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.42	0.68	high
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.23	0.73	high
Summary	4.15	0.39	high

Table 2 shows that graduates who are currently being employed rated the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirement at the high level ( $\mu = 4.15$ ,  $\sigma = 0.39$ ). The items No. 6: ‘code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children’, has the highest average rating ( $\mu = 4.42$ ,  $\sigma = 0.68$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No. 5: ‘knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research’, is also at the high level ( $\mu = 3.95$ ,  $\sigma = 0.68$ ).

## 2.2 Graduates' satisfaction with learning experiences, learning facilities and curriculum

### The Satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences

**Table 3:** Satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences

Evaluation Items	N = 55		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. The teaching and learning management complies with and covers the curriculum content.	4.24	0.58	High
2. The teaching and learning management is in line with the nature and purpose of each subject of the programme.	4.09	0.59	High
3. Activities/programmes for development and enhancement of skills and capacities, such as promoting teamwork, are provided.	4.15	0.60	High
4. The learning assessment is in line with the curriculum.	4.11	0.60	High
5. Teacher educators are knowledgeable and experienced.	4.09	0.61	High
6. Teacher educators are a good role model for behaviours and practices.	4.20	0.62	High
Summary	4.14	0.44	High

Table 3 shows that the satisfaction of graduates with learning experiences is at the high level ( $\mu = 4.14$ ,  $\sigma = 0.44$ ). It found that item No. 1: 'the teaching and learning management complies with and covers the curriculum content', has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.24$ ,  $\sigma = 0.58$ ). The lowest average rating item is No. 5: 'teacher educators are knowledgeable and experienced', also at the high level ( $\mu = 4.09$ ,  $\sigma = 0.61$ ).

### The satisfaction of the graduates with learning facilities

**Table 4:** Satisfaction of graduates with learning facilities

Evaluation Items	N = 55		level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Library facilities and resources are adequate for learning.	3.98	0.73	high
2. Materials and documents are suitable and can be used to facilitate learning.	3.89	0.71	high
3. The practice/training rooms have sufficient and suitable equipment.	3.78	0.77	high
4. The ICT system can facilitate self-directed research.	3.82	0.64	high
Summary	3.86	0.60	high

Table 4 shows that satisfaction of the graduates with the learning facilities is at the high level ( $\mu = 3.86$ ,  $\sigma = 0.60$ ). The item No. 1: ‘library facilities and resources are adequate for learning’, has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 3.98$ ,  $\sigma = 0.73$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No. 3: ‘the practice/training rooms have sufficient and suitable equipment’, also registers at the high level ( $\mu = 3.78$ ,  $\sigma = 0.77$ ).

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

**Table 5:** Satisfaction of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum

Evaluation Items	N = 55		level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. The curriculum is up-to-date and relevant to the current situation.	4.18	0.64	High
2. The subjects offered in the curriculum	4.02	0.56	High
3. The subject contents covered in the curriculum	4.02	0.62	High
Summary	4.07	0.49	High

As Table 5 displays, satisfaction of graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum is at the high level ( $\mu = 4.07$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ ). The item No. 1: ‘the curriculum is up-to-date and relevant to the current situation’, has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.18$ ,  $\sigma = 0.64$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No. 3: ‘the subject contents covered in the curriculum’, also at the high level ( $\mu = 4.02$ ,  $\sigma = 0.62$ ).

### 3. The Evaluation results of the graduates’ employment situation and working status

#### 3.1 The graduates’ employment situation and working status

**Table 6:** Current employment status of the graduates

Current employment status	Number (persons)	Percentage
Employed	40	72.7
Unemployed	15	27.3
Summary	55	100.0

Table 6 shows that most of them are employed (72.7 percent) and the rest are yet unemployed (27.3 percent).

**Table 7:** Types of work and employment of the employed graduates

Types of work and employment		Number (people)	Percentage
Type of work	Teacher civil servant	-	-
	Private school teacher	35	63.6
	Volunteer teacher	5	9.1
	Others	-	-
Type of employment	Full time	38	69.1
	Part-time / casual	1	1.8
	freelance	1	1.8
	Others	-	-

Table 7 presents the finding that most of them are private school teachers, (63.6 percent) and most of those (69.1 percent) are employed as full-time employees.

**Table 8:** 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.	35	87.50
The current employment partially matches with their qualifications.	5	12.50
The current employment does not match with their qualifications.	-	-
Summary	40	100.00

Table 8 indicates that most graduates think that their current employment matches with their qualifications, (87.5 percent), while fifteen (27.3 percent) think that the current employment does not match with their qualifications.

#### 4. The evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies

##### 4.1 The employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies

**Table 9:** The employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies

Evaluation Items	N = 16		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.25	0.86	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	0.63	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	4.31	0.70	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	4.50	0.63	high
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.94	0.57	high
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.69	0.47	very high
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.53	0.50	very high
Summary	4.40	0.43	high

Table 9 shows that the employers' overall satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies is at the high level ( $\mu = 4.40$ ,  $\sigma = 0.43$ ). It 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 the quite high level ( $\mu = 4.69$ ,  $\sigma = 0.47$ ). The lowest average rating level is for item No. 5: 'knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research', but at the high level ( $\mu = 3.94$ ,  $\sigma = 0.57$ ).



## Discussion

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

1) The skills and competencies that graduates acquired during their study were at the high level ( $\mu = 4.07$ ,  $\sigma = 0.46$ ), furthermore the results of the correlation coefficients test shows that the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the required skills and competencies at work is at a quite high level ( $\rho = 0.75$ ). This study confirms that the graduates have 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; code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children; the ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions; and the ability to manage playtime and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner. The satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences is at the high level ( $\mu = 4.14$ ,  $\sigma = 0.44$ ) because the teaching and learning management complies with and covers the curriculum content; teacher educators are a good role model for behaviors and practices. Activities/programmes for development and enhancement of skills and capacities, such as promoting teamwork, are provided.

In term of satisfaction of graduates with learning facilities is at the high level ( $\mu = 3.86$ ,  $\sigma = 0.60$ ), the study showed that library facilities and resources are adequate for learning and materials and documents are suitable and can be used to facilitate learning. The satisfaction of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum, the study showed that the curriculum is up-to-date and relevant to the current situation and the subjects offered in the curriculum as well as the subject contents covered in the curriculum.

2) The evaluation results of the graduates' employment situation and working status; all of them are females. They are employed (72.7 percent) and unemployed (27.3 percent), most of them are private school teachers, (63.6 percent) and (69.1 percent) are employed as full-time employees (69.1 percent). In line with this study, it indicates that most graduates think that their current employment matches with their qualifications, (87.5 percent).

3) The evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies shows that the employers' overall satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies is at the high level ( $\mu = 4.40$ ,  $\sigma = 0.43$ ). Because the employers noted that graduates have professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children. The teacher is an important person which create the learner's quality. In the past there was a research to develop the teachers to be the quality of academic in teaching and learning process.

## Recommendations

### 1. Recommendations for applying the study results

1.The TTC should promote the development of knowledge and capacities of graduates through an action research process and should increase learning facilities, including practice rooms, hands-on practical training opportunities, and equipment that are appropriate and sufficient.

2.The TTC should increase academic cooperation and practicum teaching with the private sector, and should help providing information about finding a job, not only in government schools but also in private schools.

3.The Department of Teacher Education/Ministry of Education and Sports should adjust the curriculum or courses that focus on the development of knowledge through the research process and provide adequate support.

### 2. Recommendations for further study / research


1. A graduate tracer study should be conducted every three years, or every five years, and the results from the study should be used to improve the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum for better learning outcomes of graduates.

2. Other target groups such as parents and communities should be added to the study. It should incorporate a variety of data collection methods.

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## A Tracer Study of Teacher Education Graduates of the Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood Education- Luang Namtha Teacher Training College, Academic Year 2017 – 2018\*

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### Abstract

The purposes of this study were to 1) 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 Luang Namtha Teacher Training College (Luang Namtha TTC), academic year 2017-2018; 2) explore the employment situation of the graduates from the programme; and 3) evaluate the employers' satisfaction regarding the graduates' skills and competencies obtained from the programme. The sample size covered 31 graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE programme, academic year 2017-2018 and their 23 employers. Research tools consisted of two online questionnaires survey. Frequency, percentages, mean, standard deviations and correlation were used to analyses data. The study found that the overall results of the skills and competencies that the graduates acquired during their study were assessed to be at the very high level ( $\mu = 4.53$ ,  $\sigma = 0.21$ ). Regarding the relationship between the curriculum and the employment, the survey found that the correlation between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the required skills and competencies at work as at the high level ( $\rho = 0.81$ ). The graduates' satisfaction level with their work was rated at high level ( $\mu = 4.19$ ,  $\sigma = 0.24$ ), and the employers rated their satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies also at high level ( $\mu = 4.39$ ,  $\sigma = 0.23$ ).

**Keywords:** Tracer study, Early childhood Education Programme

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## Introduction

The Government of Lao PDR is committed to providing quality early childhood education services, following growing awareness of the importance of holistic early childhood development. The responsibility for preparing early childhood education teachers falls upon the Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), under the supervision of the Department of Teacher Education (DTE), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES).

Before 2012, Lao teacher training colleges only offered early childhood teacher education programmes at the Diploma and Advanced Diploma levels. The development of the first-ever four-year programme Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) was completed in 2012, with the support of UNESCO Bangkok. The programme was first launched in Dongkhamxang TTC in the academic year 2013/2014, followed by Luang Namtha and Salavan TTCs in 2014/2015, and Ban Keun, Luangprabang, Pakse and Savanhnakhet TTCs in 2016/2017.

Upon the completion of the programme's first cycle in 2017, a curriculum evaluation was carried out. The findings of the evaluation were used as a basis for curriculum revision in 2018 to improve the quality of the programme and ensure that it aligned with the 2012 National Early Childhood Education Curriculum. The revised curriculum was first adopted for the academic year 2018/2019 in Dongkhamxang and Salavan TTCs, and in Luang Namtha and Savanhnakhet TTCs for the following year. (Department of Teacher Education, 2012)

To ensure the quality and relevance of the programme, a graduate tracer study was conducted for the graduates of Luang Namtha TTC in the academic year 2017/2018. The results of the studies will identify the areas that need to be further improved in order to ensure that new graduates are employable and can contribute to the improvement of the quality of early childhood education in Lao PDR. (Department of Teacher Education, 2019)

## Objectives

The overall objective is to assess the adequacy, quality and relevance of the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education programme offered at Luang Namtha Teacher Training College (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.

## Research Framework

This research used the tracer study method, that is, graduates from educational institutions research. The method has been organized in many countries globally. The tracer study results provide information related to graduates and can be used as the evaluation or reference for assessing higher education institutions' quality. In the future, this information can also be used to make decisions regarding study designs and practical solutions to implement higher education (Schomburg, 2010; Cohen, 2004; Cooper, Hedges, and Valentine, 2019).

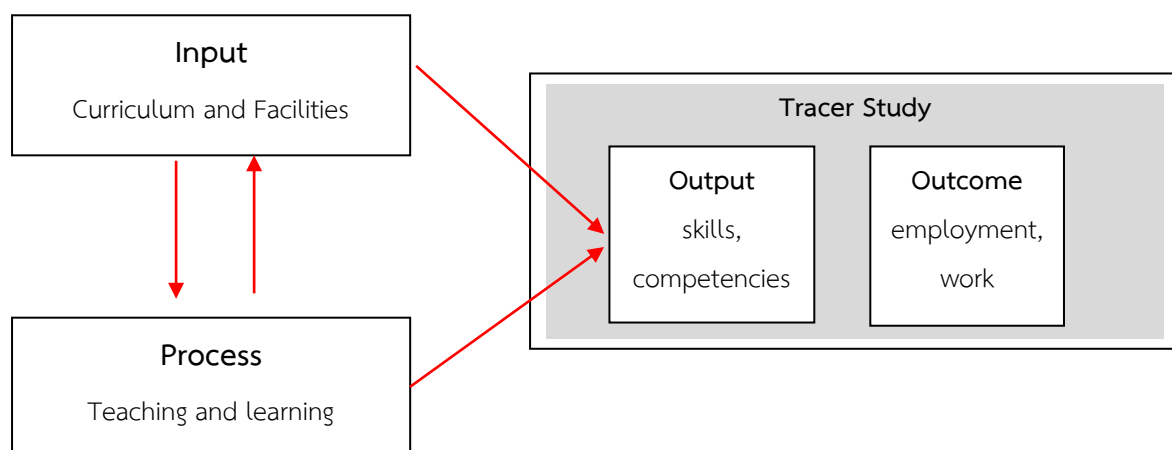


Figure 1 Research Framework of tracer study (Schomburg, 2010)

## Research Methodology

### Target Population

The target population of this study consists of two groups:

- 1) Graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE programme who graduated in the academic year 2017-2018 from Luang Namtha TTC, a total of 31 graduates.
- 2) Employers of the graduates mentioned above, such as directors, deputy directors (academic department), supervisors, etc., have a total of 23 employers.



### Timeframe

A tracer study on the graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE programme from Luang Namtha Teacher Training College, in the academic year 2017-2018 was conducted from July to September 2021.

### Data collection instruments

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

1) *Graduate survey of graduates from B.Ed. in ECE programme at Luang Namtha TTC, the academic year 2017-2018*: The questionnaire consisted of a total of 32 closed-ended and 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 2017-2018*. The questionnaire consisted of a total of sixteen closed-ended and 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

3.1) Studied and designed data collection tools.

3.2) Developed two questionnaires, i.e. a graduate survey of graduates from the B.Ed. in ECE programme at Luang Namtha TTC, academic year 2017-2018; and an employer's satisfaction survey with the graduate of the programme

3.3) Created online questionnaires with Google Forms

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

3.5) Refined 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 Luang Namtha TTC, using the following steps and methods.

1) Distributed the graduate survey to graduates from the B.Ed. in ECE programme at Luang Namtha TTC, academic year 2017-2018, 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) Collected and categorized all the data from graduates and employers answered in the questionnaires.

3) Compiled and reviewed 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 ( $\mu$ ), standard deviations ( $\sigma$ ), and correlation.

## Research Results

The results of the data analysis are presented in three parts as follows:

### Part 1: Evaluation results of the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme

The evaluation of the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme was analyzed and presented in three main topics, with the following details:

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) 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:** Skills and competencies required by the employers

Evaluation Items	N = 23		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	3.90	0.60	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	3.97	0.60	High

Evaluation Items	N = 23		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
3. The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner	3.68	0.65	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	3.74	0.68	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.68	0.65	High
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.32	0.65	High
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.19	0.60	High
Summary	4.19	0.60	High

Table 1 shows that the skills and competencies that the graduates acquired during the programme, in general, are at the high level ( $\mu = 4.19$ ,  $\sigma = 0.60$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No. 6: ‘code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children’, has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.32$ ,  $\sigma = 0.65$ ), while the lowest average rating item is No. 5 ‘knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through research search, also at the high level ( $\mu = 3.68$ ,  $\sigma = 0.65$ ).

### 1.2) The relevance of the acquired skills and competencies with the job requirements

The opinions of twenty-three 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 = 23		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.09	0.73	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	4.09	0.73	High

Evaluation Items	N = 23		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
3. The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner	3.87	0.63	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	4.09	0.67	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.87	0.69	High
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.52	0.51	Very High
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.26	0.62	High
Summary	4.11	0.24	High

Table 2 shows that twenty-three graduates who are employed rated the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements, in general, at the high level ( $\mu = 4.11$ ,  $\sigma = 0.24$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No. 6: ‘code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards of the teaching profession and children’ has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.52$ ,  $\sigma = 0.51$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No. 5 ‘knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research, also at the high level ( $\mu = 3.87$ ,  $\sigma = 0.69$ ).

## 2) 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 = 32		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. The satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences	3.88	0.22	High
2. The satisfaction of the graduates with learning facilities	3.44	0.32	Moderate
3. The satisfaction of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum	3.83	0.24	High

From Table 3, it is found that the satisfaction rate of graduates with learning experiences, in general, is at a high level ( $\mu = 3.88$ ,  $\sigma = 0.22$ ). The overall satisfaction of the

graduates with learning facilities is at a moderate level ( $\mu = 3.44$ ,  $\sigma = 0.32$ ) and the overall satisfaction level of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum is at a high level ( $\mu = 3.83$ ,  $\sigma = 0.24$ ).

### 3) The support from the Luang Namtha TTC that enables the graduates to address the demands of their workplaces and communities

The results of the analysis of the support provided by the Luang Namtha TTC which enabled the graduates to address the demands of their workplaces and communities are as follows:

#### The graduates' application of the knowledge acquired from the programme

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

Evaluation Items	N = 32		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. To what extent can you apply the acquired knowledge from the programme to perform your current responsibilities at work?	4.13	0.69	High
2. To what extent do the acquired knowledge and skills from the programme benefit your current task?	4.22	0.60	High
3. To what extent does the programme match with the requirements of your current work?	4.30	0.64	High
4. How sufficient is the acquired knowledge and skills from the programme for you to perform your current work?	4.04	0.63	High
5. To what extent does the acquired knowledge and skills from the programme match with your current work?	4.09	0.73	High
Summary	4.16	0.26	High

Table 4 shows that the graduates use of knowledge gained from the curriculum, in general, is at a high level ( $\mu = 4.16$ ,  $\sigma = 0.26$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No. 3: 'to what extent does the programme match with the requirements of your current work?' has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.30$ ,  $\sigma = 0.64$ ). The lowest average rating item is No. 4: How sufficient are the acquired knowledge and skills from the programme for you to perform your current work? also at the high level ( $\mu = 4.04$ ,  $\sigma = 0.63$ ).

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

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

Evaluation Items	N = 23		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. The graduates can apply knowledge and experiences to complete the assigned tasks.	4.48	0.51	High
2. The graduates can complete the tasks as required by the institution.	4.35	0.49	High
3. The graduates can complete the tasks as required by the community.	4.35	0.49	High
4. The graduates have the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for the assigned tasks.	4.35	0.49	High
5. The graduates are essential to your institution.	4.65	0.49	Very High
<b>Summary</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 5 shows that the employers' perceptions of the graduates' knowledge, in general, are at the high level ( $\mu = 4.43$ ,  $\sigma = 0.21$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No. 5: 'the graduates are essential to your institution' has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.65$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ ). The lowest average rating items are No. 2: 'the graduates can complete the tasks as required by the institution'; No. 3: 'the graduates can complete the tasks as required by the community; and No. 4: 'the graduates have the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for the assigned tasks, all at the high level ( $\mu = 4.35$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ ).

## Part 2: Evaluation results of the graduates' employment situation and working status

The results on the graduates' employment situation and working status are presented in three sub-topics: 1) the graduates' employment situation and working status; 2) the relationships between the graduates' study and employment; and 3) the satisfaction of the graduates with their work.

### 1) the graduates' employment situation and working status

The evaluation results of the graduates' employment situation and working status found that 74.19 percent of the graduates are employed. Graduates mainly work as full-time/long-term teachers at a private school (60.87 percent of those employed). In addition, 73.91 percent of employed graduates have been employed for more than a year. Regarding the relevance between the work and the graduates' qualifications, the survey found that all

of the employed graduates reported that their work is relevant to their qualifications, the highest percentage of graduates (39.13 percent) who are currently employed spent less than three months looking for a job. The most common method of job search was responding to job advertisements in the newspapers, on the internet, etc. (47.83 percent), followed by making direct contact with educational institutes (47.83 percent). It also shows that most employed graduates (65.22 percent) have been working for over a year after their graduation. In addition, it shows that most employed graduates (56.52 percent) have taken an employment examination once. Slightly more than half of the unemployed graduates (62.50 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.

## 2) The relationship between the curriculum and employment

The analysis results related to the relationship between the curriculum and employment are presented in Table 7.

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

The relationship between the curriculum and the employment	Graduates (Spearman's $\rho$ : $\rho$ )	Employers (Spearman's $\rho$ : $\rho$ )	Graduates VS Employers Contingency Coefficient; C)
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	0.68	0.43	0.50
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	0.39	0.43	0.45
3. The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner	0.60	0.40	0.45
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	0.39	0.54	0.40
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	0.50	0.65	0.47



The relationship between the curriculum and the employment	Graduates (Spearman's $\rho$ : $\rho$ )	Employers (Spearman's $\rho$ : $\rho$ )	Graduates VS Employers Contingency Coefficient; C)
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	0.66	0.69	0.42
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	0.72	0.50	0.31
Summary	0.81	0.66	0.47

Table 7 shows 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 high level ( $\rho = 0.81$ ), the overall relationship between the skills and competencies required by the employers and the acquired skills and competencies of the graduates for work correlates is at the quite high level ( $\rho = 0.66$ ) 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 ( $C = 0.47$ ).

### 3) The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

**Table 8:** The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

Evaluation Items	N = 23		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. To what extent are you satisfied with your responsible task/position?	4.22	0.52	High
2. To what extent are you proud of your current responsible task?	4.22	0.42	High
3. To what extent are you motivated to complete your assigned work?	4.52	0.51	High
4. To what extent are you satisfied you're your engagement in additional assigned activities aside from your main responsibility?	4.30	0.56	High
5. To what extent are you satisfied with your salary/remuneration?	3.70	0.63	High
Summary	4.19	0.24	High

Table 8 shows that the graduates' satisfaction level with their work is at the high level ( $\mu = 4.19$ ,  $\sigma = 0.24$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No. 3: 'to what extent are you motivated to complete your assigned work?' has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.52$ ,  $\sigma = 0.51$ ). On the other hand, the item with the lowest average rating is No. 5: 'to what extent are you satisfied with your salary/remuneration?'

also at the high level ( $\mu = 3.70$ ,  $\sigma = 0.63$ ). When asking the employed graduates about their desire to seek a new job, the survey found that eighteen graduates (78.26 percent) have no desire to seek a new job, while five graduates (21.74 percent) consider looking for a new job.

### Part 3: Evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies

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

**Table 9:** The employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies

Evaluation Items	N = 23		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.35	0.65	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	4.39	0.58	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	4.26	0.54	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	4.35	0.49	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	4.09	0.60	High
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.70	0.56	Very high
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.57	0.51	Very high
Summary	4.39	0.23	High

Table 9 shows that the employers' overall satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies is at the high level ( $\mu = 4.39$ ,  $\sigma = 0.23$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No. 6: 'code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children' has the highest average rating at the very high level ( $\mu =$

4.70,  $\sigma = 0.56$ ). The lowest average rating level is item No. 5: 'knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research', at the high level ( $\mu = 4.09$ ,  $\sigma = 0.60$ ).

## Discussion

### 1) The results of the assessment of skills and competencies of the graduates acquired during the programme:

The graduates rated that they received professional ethics of teachers and love for children at the highest level. Furthermore, the graduates show a high level of satisfaction with the availability of libraries and adequate teaching materials.; the curriculum relevant to their work, being up-to-date, and the range of subjects offered in the programme. In addition, the reflection of the employer also shows that the graduates are important role to their organizations at the very high level.

### 2) The results of the analysis on the employment situation and working status of the graduates:

Twenty-three graduates are currently employed, accounting for 74.19 percent, all of them are full-time employees. Most of the employed graduates work as a kindergarten teacher in private schools (60.87 percent) and public schools (39.13 percent). All of the employed graduates responded that their current employment matches their qualifications. From the employer's survey, it shows that 95.65 percent of the employed graduates are employed full-time, while 4.35 percent have temporary employment. Regarding the duration of their employment, most of them (73.91 percent) have been working for more than twelve months, and some of them (4.35 percent) have been working for a period of four to six months. From the employers' points of view, the work of the graduates is relevant to their qualifications (100.00 percent).

For the unemployed graduates, the main reason for their unemployment is because they were unable to find jobs, accounting for 50.00 percent. In addition, the majority of them (62.50 percent) reported that they have problems finding jobs. Among the employed graduates, most of them spent less than three months looking for a job (39.13 percent). Most of them to find their jobs by responding to job advertisements and by directly contacting educational institutions (47.83 percent). The majority of the employed graduates have been working for more than one year, accounting for 65.22 percent. Most of the employed graduates have taken an employment examination once (56.52 percent), while 4.35 percent of them have taken employment examinations two or three times.

### **3) The results of the evaluation of the employers' satisfaction on the skills and competencies of the graduates**

The employers' satisfaction with the graduates' performance to abide by the code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children has the highest average rating.

Conclusively, the respondents are generally satisfied with the delivery of the programmes, especially when considering the relationship analysis between skills and abilities graduates gained from the program and the required skills and competencies required at work, it was found that the program's outcomes were achieved. However, from the results of this study, there are some suggestions to improve the quality of the course. The curriculum should be improved to get along with update to the changing social environment. In teaching and learning management, appropriate technology is used. Additionally, the existing curriculum should be revised to conform to the skills required in the different job markets. The difficulty in locating the graduates and retrieving the data from them provide a need to improve the alumni network at the department level to update information on the graduates' whereabouts. To address these problems, Graduate Tracer Study should be done regularly in order to know their whereabouts, evaluate existing programs, assess study provisions and conditions, and design improvements to strengthen them, or to come up with new relevant programs in the future.

### **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:

#### **1. Recommendations for applying the study results**

1.1 Teacher Training Colleges should include courses on 1) media design and technology, 2) evaluation of students' performance in a variety of ways, and 3) development of students' capacities through research processes.

1.2 Teacher Training Colleges should adjust the curriculum and allocate more time for learning experiences from schools or training centers.

1.3 Teacher Training Colleges should improve necessary facilities, such as high-speed internet and computers.

1.4 The Ministry of Education and Sports (in particular, the Department of Teacher Education) should provide adequate textbooks and teachers' manuals on lesson planning for learning experiences for the nursery and pre-primary levels.

## 2. Recommendations for future studies or research

2.1 The Department of Teacher Education and UNESCO should compile the results of the graduate tracer studies from the seven participating teacher training colleges and make the synthesis available online for information sharing and lessons learned.


2.2 The Department of Teacher Education, UNESCO, and Teacher Training Colleges should monitor the graduates in the long run.

2.3 For future tracer studies, other target groups should be added for data collection, such as parents and communities.

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 Nimnual, C., & Bumrerraj, S. (2022) A Tracer Study of Teacher Education Graduates of the Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood Education- Luang Namtha Teacher Training College, Academic Year of 2017-2018. *e-Journal of Education Studies, Burapha University*, 4(3). 51-65. Retrieved from <https://so01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/ejes/article/view/261181>

## A Tracer Study of Graduates of the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) Programme in Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College, Academic Year of 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 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. The sample size covers 108 graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE programme, academic year 2019-2020 and their fifty-nine employers. Data was collected through two sets of online questionnaires: 1) open-ended and close-ended questions for the graduates, and 2) open-ended and close-ended questions for the employers. The collected data was analysed to find the frequency, percentage, mean ( $\mu$ ), standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) and correlation value. The study found that the graduates perceived that the skills and competencies they acquired from the programme and the skills and abilities required at work were at the high level ( $\mu = 4.17$ ,  $\sigma = 0.41$ ); and the satisfaction with the learning facilities and the programme at the high level ( $\mu = 4.26$ ,  $\sigma = 0.42$ ). The employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies was at the high level ( $\mu = 4.31$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ ). Particularly, their code of professional ethics for teachers and love towards the teaching profession and children was rated at the very high level ( $\mu = 4.51$ ,  $\sigma = 0.53$ ). The lowest rating at the high level ( $\mu = 3.97$ ,  $\sigma = 0.71$ ) was their knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research.

**Keywords:** Tracer study, Early childhood Education Programme

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## Introduction

Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College (DTTC) is located in Dongkhamxang Village, Hadsaifong District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR. It is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and provides pre-service and in-service teacher training to teachers in Vientiane Capital, Bolikhamxay Province, and other provinces nationwide. The college's vision is: "Professional Teachers, Use Local Knowledge and Technology, Care about Natural Environments, Social Development, and Regional and International Connection".

The MoES developed the first-ever B.Ed. in ECE programme in 2012, with support of UNESCO. (Department of Teacher Education, 2012). The new curriculum was firstly implemented in DTTC in the academic year 2013-2014. Before the development of this new curriculum, in 2012 the staff members of the Department of Teacher Education (DTE) and teacher educators from eight teacher training colleges undertook a study visit to learn about early childhood teacher education curriculum development and implementation at Burapha University, Thailand, with support from UNESCO. The study group had hands-on experience in developing the course outlines for the diploma and bachelor's degree level for the pre-school teacher education programme in a two week-training session.

The curriculum was firstly implemented on 21 October 2013. It included 148 credits and 3,392 teaching and learning hours for a four-year period with eight semesters. There were four subject groups including fifty-five general subjects and three elective subjects. After its implementation for two years, UNESCO supported the mid-term curriculum evaluation conducted by experts from Burapha University, Thailand. Two years later, the final curriculum evaluation was undertaken to evaluate the four-year curriculum implementation cycle. This curriculum was also adopted in two other teacher training colleges, namely Luangnamtha and Salavan teacher training colleges.

In 2018, the curriculum was revised with support of UNESCO. The revised curriculum was endorsed in 2019 (Department of Teacher Education, 2019). Within the four-year programme, there are eight semesters, consisting of sixteen weeks in each semester. The total number of teaching and learning hours is 3,312, with twenty to twenty-five hours per week. There are four subject groups and forty-nine subjects altogether. Six to nine subjects are taught in each semester. The revised curriculum is accounted for 140 credits.

To date, DTTC has enrolled eight cohorts of student teachers for the B.Ed. in ECE programme, for a total of 643 student teachers. Among them, 435 student teachers from five



cohorts have graduated with the B.Ed. in ECE degree, while 208 student teachers from three cohorts are still studying in the programme.

Regarding human resources for the B.Ed. in ECE programme, DTTC has eighteen teacher educators and four guest lecturers from the Vientiane Capital Education and Sports Services, the General Psychology Department of the Faculty of Education of the National University of Laos, the Early Childhood Education Section under the Research Institute for Educational Sciences (RIES) and the Inclusive Education Centre of MoES. The teacher educators in this programme hold MA degrees, and are selected to be in charge of teacher training each semester. Before the curriculum implementation, relevant teacher educators were trained on the revised curriculum, facilitated by academic experts who have extensive knowledge and teaching experience in the field of early childhood education, especially from Burapha University, supported by UNESCO. The resource persons from Burapha University also helped provide and guide the development of content for each subject. Moreover, the Department of Teacher Education (DTE) conducted monitoring missions to provide guidance and technical support on the curriculum implementation.

Before the curriculum implementation, relevant teacher educators participated in a capacity development workshop on curriculum implementation facilitated by experts from Burapha University and with support from UNESCO. After that, the trained teacher educators then trained their peers at DTTC. Subsequently, the Office of the Kindergarten and Primary Education of DTTC assigned relevant teacher educators to teach each subject of the revised curriculum according to the timetables. Then, they gave the course outlines to each assigned teacher educator to prepare their lessons and teaching materials. Upon completion, the developed teaching materials were stored at the Office of the Kindergarten and Primary Education. The same Office prepared monitoring sheets and held the teaching observation or lesson study two to three times in each semester. The student teachers' learning outcomes in each subject are measured in grades: A, B, B+, C, C+, D, D+ and F. The average grade of each cohort is at the good level.

DTTC is committed to improving the quality of the B.Ed. in ECE programme to reach the regional and international standards. The graduate tracer study is a method used for reflecting the curriculum effectiveness and relevance to the employment needs. Tracer studies are common research methods for educational institutions to check on the employability of their graduates (de Ocampo, Bagano, & Tan, 2012). Likewise, Rogan and

Reynolds (2016) asserted that a Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) is useful for policy and equity implication in higher education. Hence, DTTC conducted a graduate tracer study in order to use the findings to revise the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum and implement the revised/improved curriculum in the future.

### **Objectives**

1. To assess the graduates' acquired 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.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Target population**

The target groups for this tracer study include 108 graduates (all females) of the B.Ed. in ECE programme and fifty-nine employers (54 females, 4 males, 1 N.A).

#### **Timeframe**

This tracer study was conducted during a period of three months from July 12-16 2021 to September 30, 2021.

#### **Data collection methods**

1. The study team collected information regarding the graduates' and the employers' mobile phone numbers, WhatsApp, and Facebook accounts from their subject teachers and former classmates.
2. A WhatsApp group and a Messenger group were created.
3. The study team sent the link to access the online questionnaire to the graduates in WhatsApp and Messenger groups as well as to each individual, together with information regarding the objectives of the tracer study and how to answer the questionnaires. For the graduates who did not understand how to answer them, the study team connected with them directly to clarify. For the employers who did not use WhatsApp or Facebook, the study team called them to collect their answers and recorded their voices.

4. After the online questionnaire links were sent to everyone in the target groups, the study team daily checked the progress of the questionnaire responses until the deadline. Finally, the information of the graduates and their employers was completely collected.

#### **Data collection instruments**

The data collection tools were online questionnaires via Google Forms which were divided into two types:

1. The open-ended and close-ended questionnaire to evaluate the graduates, consisting of four parts and a total of thirty-two questions:
2. The open-ended and close-ended questionnaire to evaluate the employers' satisfaction towards the graduates, consisting of three parts and a total of sixteen questions.

#### **Data analysis**

After the data was collected by the study team, it was analysed using the SPSS programme to find the frequency, percentage, mean ( $\mu$ ), standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) and correlation value.

### **Research results**

The research results are presented in three parts as follows:

#### **Part 1: Evaluation results of the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme**

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

From the analysis of the graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies from the programme; and the relevance of the acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements, the following results were found:

##### **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

Evaluation Items	N = 108		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.18	0.56	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	0.55	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.	3.99	0.60	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	0.74	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.81	0.67	High
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.56	0.49	Highest
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and tradition.	4.43	0.59	High
Summary	4.17	0.41	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 ( $\mu = 4.17$ ,  $\sigma = 0.41$ ). 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 highest level ( $\mu = 4.56$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ ), while the lowest average rating level is item No 5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research at a high level ( $\mu = 3.81$ ,  $\sigma = 0.67$ ).

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

From the survey, the opinions of 68 graduates and 59 employers 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 the job requirements

Evaluation Items	Graduates		Level	Employers		Level
	N = 68			N = 59		
	$\mu$	$\sigma$		$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.21	0.56	High	4.22	0.55	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	4.28	0.54	High	4.42	0.56	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.	4.16	0.63	High	4.41	0.56	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.	4.03	0.64	High	4.46	0.59	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.90	0.62	High	4.14	0.68	High
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.46	0.55	High	4.63	0.48	Highest
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and tradition.	4.31	0.58	High	4.49	0.53	High
Summary	4.19	0.43	High	4.39	0.44	High

From Table 2, it is found that 68 graduates who are being employed rated the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirement, in general, at a high level ( $\mu = 4.19$ ,  $\sigma = 0.43$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that the item No. 6 has the highest average rating at a high level ( $\mu = 4.46$ ,  $\sigma = 0.55$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No.5 at a high level ( $\mu = 3.90$ ,  $\sigma = 0.62$ ). The overall, the graduates' skills and competencies which are required by the employers, are at a high level ( $\mu = 4.39$ ,  $\sigma = 0.44$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that the item No.6 has the highest average rating at a highest level ( $\mu = 4.63$ ,  $\sigma = 0.48$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No. 5 at a high level ( $\mu = 4.14$ ,  $\sigma = 0.68$ ).

## 2) 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 found:

### The satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences

From the analysis of the satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences, the results can be presented in Table 3.

**Table 3 The satisfaction of the graduates with learning experiences**

Evaluation Items	N = 108		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. The teaching and learning management complies with and covers the curriculum content	4.29	0.62	High
2. The teaching and learning management is in line with the nature and purpose of each subject of the programme	4.25	0.54	High
3. Activities/programmes for development and enhancement of skills and capacities, such as promoting teamwork, are provided.	4.14	0.61	High
4. The learning assessment is in line with the curriculum.	4.22	0.60	High
5. Teacher educators are knowledgeable and experienced.	4.33	0.58	High
6. Teacher educators are a good role model for behaviours and practices.	4.34	0.61	High
Summary	4.26	0.42	High

From table 3, it found that graduates' satisfaction towards learning experience is at high level (  $\mu = 4.26$ ,  $\sigma = 0.42$ ). The teachers are behavioral model is at high level (  $\mu = 4.34$ ,  $\sigma = 0.61$ ). The activities or projects to enhance skill and capacity such as enhancing team working is at high level (  $\mu = 4.14$ ,  $\sigma = 0.61$ ).

### The satisfaction of the graduates with learning facilities

The analysis of the satisfaction of the graduates with learning facilities can be displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4** Satisfaction of graduates with learning facilities

Evaluation Items	N = 108		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Library facilities and resources are adequate for learning.	3.86	0.80	High
2. Materials and documents are suitable and can be used to facilitate learning.	4.00	0.69	High
3. The practice/training rooms have sufficient and suitable equipment.	3.81	0.65	High
4. The ICT system can facilitate self-directed research	3.74	0.68	High
Summary	3.85	0.57	High

From Table 4, it is found that the overall satisfaction of the graduates with learning facilities is at a high level ( $\mu = 3.85$ ,  $\sigma = 0.57$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that the item No. 2 has the highest average rating at a high level ( $\mu = 4.00$ ,  $\sigma = 0.69$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No. 4 at a high level ( $\mu = 3.74$ ,  $\sigma = 0.68$ ).

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

From the analysis of the graduates' opinions towards their satisfaction with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum, the results can be presented in Table 5.

**Table 5** Satisfaction of the graduates with the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum

Evaluation Items	N = 108		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. The curriculum is up-to-date and relevant to the current situation	4.36	0.66	High
2. The subjects offered in the curriculum	4.09	0.67	High
3. The subject contents covered in the curriculum	4.18	0.62	High
Summary	4.21	0.55	High

From table 5, it shows graduates' satisfaction towards BA kindergarten curriculum is at high ( $\mu = 4.21$ ,  $\sigma = 0.55$ ). The current up-to-date curriculum is at high level ( $\mu = 4.36$ ,  $\sigma = 0.66$ ), it is the highest level if compared with other items. The high level ( $\mu = 4.09$  and  $\sigma = 0.67$ ) for subjects in the curriculum.

3) The support from the Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College that enable the graduates to address the demands of their workplaces and communities



### 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 6.

**Table 6** The graduates' application of the knowledge acquired from the programme knowledge and skill after the curriculum training

Evaluation Items	N = 68		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. To what extent can you apply the acquired knowledge from the programme to perform your current responsibilities at work?	4.06	0.59	High
2. To what extent do the acquired knowledge and skills from the programme benefit your current task?	4.21	0.61	High
3. To what extent does the programme match with the requirements of your current work?	4.32	0.60	High
4. How sufficient the acquired knowledge and skills from the programme are for you to perform your current work?	4.18	0.59	High
5. To what extent does the acquired knowledge and skills from the programme match with your current work?	4.16	0.70	High
Summary	4.19	0.49	High

From Table 6, it is found that the graduates' use of knowledge gained from the curriculum, in general, is at a high level ( $\mu = 4.19$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that the item No.3 has the highest average rating at a/the high level ( $\mu = 4.32$ ,  $\sigma = 0.60$ ). The lowest average rating item is No.1 at a high level ( $\mu = 4.06$ ,  $\sigma = 0.59$ ).

### 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 7.

**Table 7** The employers' perception of the graduates' knowledge and capacities

Evaluation Items	N = 59		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. The graduates can apply knowledge and experiences to complete the assigned tasks.	4.31	0.62	High
2. The graduates can complete the tasks as required by the institution.	4.32	0.62	High
3. The graduates can complete the tasks as required by the community.	4.22	0.58	High

Evaluation Items	N = 59		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
4. The graduates have the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for the assigned tasks.	4.36	0.51	High
5. The graduates are essential to your institution.	4.41	0.56	High
Summary	4.32	0.48	High

From Table 7, it is found that the employers' perception of the graduates' knowledge, in general, is at a high level ( $\mu = 4.32$ ,  $\sigma = 0.48$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that item No.5 has the highest average rating at a high level ( $\mu = 4.41$ ,  $\sigma = 0.56$ ). The lowest average rating item is No. 3 at a/the high level ( $\mu = 4.22$ ,  $\sigma = 0.58$ ).

## Part 2: The relationship between the curriculum and the employment

The relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the required skills and competencies at work and required by the employers and the acquired skills and competencies of the graduates for work

The analysis results of the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the required skills and competencies at work and required by the employers and the acquired skills and competencies of the graduates for work can be seen in Table 8.

**Table 8** The analysis of the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the required skills and competencies at work and required by the employers and the acquired skills and competencies of the graduates for work

Skills and Competencies	graduates		employers	
	Size of correlation (Spearman's rho : $\rho$ )	Level of correlation	Size of correlation (Spearman's rho : $\rho$ )	Level of correlation
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	0.65	Quite high	0.35	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	0.45	Medium	0.44	Medium

Skills and Competencies	graduates		employers	
	Size of	Level of	Size of	Level of
	correlation (Spearman's rho : $\rho$ )	correlation	correlation (Spearman's rho : $\rho$ )	correlation
3. The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner.	0.47	Medium	0.49	Medium
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.	0.46	Medium	0.64	Quite high
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	0.55	Medium	0.55	Medium
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	0.55	Medium	0.47	Medium
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and tradition.	0.42	Medium	0.58	Medium
Summary	0.55	Quite high	0.62	Quite high

From Table 8, it is found from the analysis of 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 ( $\rho = 0.55$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that the item with the highest correlation is item No.1: Knowledge in managing early childhood education, with a quite high level of correlation ( $\rho = 0.65$ ). On the other hand, the item with the lowest correlation is item No.7: The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and tradition, with a medium level of correlation ( $\rho = 0.42$ ). The results of the analysis show that the overall relationship between the skills and competencies required by the employers and the acquired skills and competencies of the graduates for work correlates at a quite high level ( $\rho = 0.62$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that the item with the strongest correlation 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 quite high level

( $p = 0.64$ ), and the item with the weakest correlation is No. 1: Knowledge in managing early childhood education at a quite low level ( $p = 0.35$ ).

**The relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers, with the analysis of data from all graduates.**

The analysis results of the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers can be presented in Table 9.

**Table 9** The analysis of the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers

Skills and Competencies	Relationship	
	Size of correlation (Contingency Coefficient; C)	Level of correlation
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	0.03	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	0.17	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.	0.31	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.	0.29	Quite low
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	0.22	Quite low
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	0.06	Low
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and tradition.	0.09	Low
Summary	0.20	Quite low

From Table 9, the results of the analysis of the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers correlate at a quite low level ( $C = 0.20$ ). When considering the evaluation items, it is found that the item with the strongest correlation is No. 3: The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner at a quite low level ( $C = 0.31$ ); and the item with the weakest correlation is No. 1: Knowledge in managing early childhood education at a low level ( $C = 0.03$ ).

### The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

In the analysis of the graduates' satisfaction with their work, the results are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10** The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

Evaluation Items	N = 68		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. To what extent are you satisfied with your responsible task/position?	4.35	0.48	High
2. To what extent are you proud of your current responsible task?	4.24	0.57	High
3. To what extent are you motivated to complete your assigned work?	4.47	0.53	High
4. To what extent are you satisfied with your engagement in additional assigned activities aside from your main responsibility?	4.32	0.58	High
5. To what extent are you satisfied with your salary/remuneration?	4.39	0.73	High
Summary	4.26	0.43	High

From Table 10, it is found that the graduates' satisfaction level with their work is at a high level ( $\mu = 4.26$ ,  $\sigma = 0.43$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it is found that item No. 3: To what extent are you motivated to complete your assigned work?, has the highest average rating at a high level ( $\mu = 4.47$ ,  $\sigma = 0.53$ ). On the other hand, the item with the lowest average rating is No. 2: To what extent are you proud of your current responsible task?, at a high level ( $\mu = 4.24$ ,  $\sigma = 0.57$ ).

### Part 3: Evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies

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

Based on the analysis of the employers' satisfaction with the skills and competencies of the graduates, the results are presented in Table 11.

**Table 11** The employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies

Evaluation Items	N = 59		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.25	0.57	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	4.32	0.60	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.	4.27	0.69	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.	4.41	0.61	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.97	0.71	High
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.51	0.53	Highest
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and tradition.	4.47	0.53	High
Summary	4.31	0.49	High

From table 11, it found that employers' satisfaction towards graduates' skills and effective performance is at high level ( $\mu = 4.31$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ ). The ethics in teacher profession and friendliness to children is at highest level ( $\mu = 4.51$ ,  $\sigma = 0.53$ ), it is the highest level if compared with other items. The knowledge and capacity in developing knowledge by doing research is at high level ( $\mu = 3.97$ ,  $\sigma = 0.71$ ).

## 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 ( $\mu = 4.17$ ,  $\sigma = 0.41$ ). 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 ( $\mu = 4.56$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ ), while the lowest average rating level is item No 5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research at a much level ( $\mu = 3.81$ ,  $\sigma = 0.67$ ). 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 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 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 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 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 due to the graduates' ability to apply their knowledge and experiences to complete their assigned tasks as required by the institution and community. Because of the programme is the vehicle that contains the good (contents), the teacher is the driver who delivers the goods (Contents) to the consumers of the goods learners. Therefore the teacher is at the centre of activities in curriculum implementation. Alebiosu (2005) is of the opinion that the programme is the instrument that dictates the affairs of every educational system.

2. The relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers correlates at a quite low level ( $C = 0.20$ ). When considering the evaluation items, it is found that the item with the strongest correlation is No. 3: The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a



creative manner at a quite low level ( $C = 0.31$ ); and the item with the weakest correlation is No. 1: Knowledge in managing early childhood education at a low level ( $C = 0.03$ ). This is because the graduates studied from the programme that was developed for them but the employers might need more skills and competencies from the programme. Hence Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College should study the employers' need was the first step of curriculum development (Taba, 1962)

3. Evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction towards graduates' skill and effective performance is at much level shown by  $\mu = 4.31$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ . The ethics in teacher profession and friendliness to children is at very much level shown by  $\mu = 4.51$ ,  $\sigma = 0.53$ , it is the highest level if compared with other items. The knowledge and capacity in developing knowledge by doing research is at much level shown by  $\mu = 3.97$ ,  $\sigma = 0.71$ , however, it is the lowest level if compared with other items. 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. Tracer study not only excel in measuring output/outcome but can also help in explaining it, and therefore allow for outcome-oriented assessments of study achievements (Schomburg, 2003).

## Recommendations

1. Recommendations towards improving the quality of the B.Ed. in ECE programme based on the study results are as follows:

- 1) The duration for teaching practicum at the nursery level should be increased.
- 2) The curriculum should focus more on enhancing the ICT competencies of the graduates.
- 3) Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College should conduct action research to strengthen learners' development.

2. Recommendations on future research studies

1) Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College should conduct tracer studies of the graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE programme after their graduation for a longer period, e.g. three or five years.

2) The future graduate tracer studies should include additional target participants, e.g. teachers, students' parents, and communities.

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## A Tracer Study on the Graduates of Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education Programme in Lao PDR at Salavan Teacher Training College, Academic Year 2019-2020\*

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study were: 1) to assess the graduates' acquired and developed skills and competencies obtained from the programme at Salavan Teacher Training College (Salavan TTC); 2) to explore the employment situation of the graduates from the programme at Salavan TTC; and 3) to evaluate employers' satisfaction regarding the graduates' skills and competencies obtained from the programme at Salavan TTC. The target population in this study was eighty-eight graduates of B.Ed.in ECE programme at the Salavan TTC in the 2019-2020 academic year, and seventeen employers. The tools used to collect the data were two online questionnaires survey. Data analysis such as frequency, percentages, mean, standard deviations and correlation. The study found that the overall results of the skills and competencies that the graduates acquired during their study were assessed to be at the high level. The relationship between the curriculum and the employment, the survey found that the correlation between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the required skills and competencies at work, was at the moderate level ( $\rho = 0.46$ ). The graduates' satisfaction level with their work was rated at the high level ( $\mu = 4.13$ ,  $\sigma = 0.57$ ), and the employers rated their satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies also at the high level ( $\mu = 4.16$ ,  $\sigma = 0.42$ ).

**Keywords:** Tracer study, Early childhood Education Programme

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## Introduction

The Government of Lao PDR intends to increase the quality of pre-school education services to meet their responsibility for the preparation of pre-school teachers at Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) under the direction of the Department of General Education, Ministry of Education and Sports. Prior to 2012, the Teacher Colleges provided only undergraduate or advanced degree programmes in early childhood education. The development of the first four-year undergraduate child education programme was completed in 2012 with funding support from UNESCO Bangkok. The Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (B.Ed. in ECE) programme was first opened at Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College in the academic year 2013-2014. Luangnamtha TTC and Salavan TTC offered it in 2014-2015. Ban Keun TTC, Savannakhet TTC, Pakse TTC and Luang Prabang TTC first offered it in the 2016-2017 academic year.

When implementing the B.Ed. in ECE programme for the first time, the Ministry of Education provides training for teachers at the Teachers Training College to help them understand the curriculum and how to apply it, such as creating teaching-learning arrangements and assessments, as well as how to create an environment conducive to the use of the curriculum. Salavan TTC is one of the eight teacher training colleges in Lao PDR, with the training of early childhood education teachers at the undergraduate level and the opening of the first undergraduate programme in the 2014-2015 academic year, with a total of thirty students. In 2015-2016, there were twenty-two undergraduate students in one class. By 2016, the curriculum was improved and opened with three classrooms and a total of 104 students. These students graduated in 2020.

The B.Ed.in ECE programme aims to provide better quality education so that graduates from Salavan Teacher Training College will have the skills, knowledge, and ability to apply that knowledge effectively and respond to the needs of society in accordance with the education plan of the Department of Teacher Education and the five-year development plan of Salavan Teacher Training College from 2020-2024. To identify the direction, duties and projections to improve the quality and consistency of teacher training curricula in accordance with the policy of the Department of Teacher Education, Ministry of Education and Sports. And Expect Students who graduate from Salavan Teacher Training College must have a certain professional knowledge, be qualified, be good developers and be able to respond to the needs of society to become a reality. In order to improve the quality and efficiency of teaching

and learning, and in order to gradually increase the ability of student teachers to develop their teaching careers, it is necessary to evaluate the graduates of B.Ed.in ECE programme. This follow-up assessment of graduates is a way to obtain information that demonstrates the effectiveness of the curriculum and its relevance to its application. For this reason, Salavan TTC is studying this issue in order to apply the results to the curriculum and further improve the implementation of the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum.

### Objectives

The overall objective is to assess the adequacy, quality and relevance of the B.Ed. in ECE programme offered at Salavan 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 Salavan TTC;
- 2) To explore the employment situation of the graduates from the programme at Salavan TTC; and
- 3) To evaluate employers' satisfaction regarding the graduates' skills and competencies obtained from the programme at Salavan TTC.

### Research Framework

This study utilized quantitative approach employing the descriptive survey research design through questionnaires. The survey research was conducted in respond to the objective of the study, which was to trace graduates' associated employment characteristics and evaluate the significance of the graduates' acquired ability and competence, as well as employers' views of graduates.

### Research Methodology

#### Research participants

There were two target population of the participants: 1) graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE program at the Salavan TTC and 2) employers of the graduates. The first target group was comprised of eighty-eight graduates from the academic year 2019-2020 which were

purposely selected. The second target group was comprised of seventeen previously indicated employers of graduates.

### Research Instrument and Data Analysis

Two questionnaires utilized in this study were adapted from a theme proposed by Schomburg (2003), with certain items modified to correspond with the study's objectives and the B.Ed. in ECE curriculum. Two target groups of respondents were considered when developing the questionnaires: graduates and employers. Each questionnaire had both closed- and open-ended questions. A five-point Likert scale was utilized to assess the degree of opinion, consistency, satisfaction, adequacy, and requirement.

The graduate questionnaire consisted of the following sections: Part I concerned with the profile of the graduates; Part II focused on the graduates' acquired skills and competencies, which included the skills and competencies acquired from the program, the relevance of the acquired competencies with the job requirements, the graduates' satisfaction with the learning experience, facilities, curriculum, and TTC's support; Part III involved the graduates' employability status; and Part IV emphasized the graduates' job application and work.

The questionnaire for graduate employers consisted of three sections: Part I concerned with the profile of the employers; Part II emphasized on the employers' satisfaction with graduates; and Part III concerned with the employers' satisfaction with graduates' skills and competencies.

The questionnaires were transferred to Google Forms for ease of use and delivered online to both sets of participants. 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 analyze the data; frequency, percentages, mean ( $\mu$ ), standard deviations ( $\sigma$ ) 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 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

## Research Results

The results of the data analysis are presented in four parts: 1) Demographic information; 2) Graduates' acquired skills and competencies of the program; 3) Graduates' employability and working status; 4) Employers' perception towards the graduates' skills and competencies

### Part 1 Demographic information

The demographic information of the respondents is presented in two sub-headings, namely the demographic information of the graduates, and the demographic information of the employers, with the following details:

#### 1.1 Demographic information of graduates

**Table 1:** Demographic information of the graduates

Graduates Profile		Frequency (N = 88)	Percentage
Gender	Male	-	-
	Female	88	100.00
Marital status	Single	62	70.45
	Married	26	29.55
	Divorced	-	-
	Widowed	-	-

Table 1 shows that a total of eighty-eight graduates responded to the survey, and that all of them are female. In terms of marital status, 70.45 percent of respondents are single. In addition, according to the statistics about the ages of the respondents, the average age of the graduates who responded to the survey is less than thirty years old.

## 1.2 Demographic information of employers

**Table 2:** Demographic information of the employers

Information of Employers		Frequency (N=17)	Percentage
Gender	Male	10	58.82
	Female	7	41.18
Age	Below 30 years-old	3	17.56
	30 - 40 years-old	8	47.06
	41 - 50 years-old	1	5.88
	Over 50 years-old	5	29.41
Educational level	Doctorate degree	-	-
	Master's degree or equivalent	5	29.41
	Bachelor's degree or equivalent	4	23.53
	Diploma level	5	29.41
	Lower than diploma level	3	17.65
Working experience	5 years and below	3	17.65
	6 - 10 years	7	41.18
	11 - 15 years	2	11.76
	16 - 20 years	-	-
	Over 20 years	5	29.41
Type of institution	Public school	8	47.06
	Private school	9	52.94
	Others	-	-

Table 2 shows that seventeen employers responded to the questionnaire. This includes ten male (58.82 percent) and seven female respondents (41.14 percent). Most of them are in the age range of thirty to forty years-old which accounts for 47.06 percent. The educational level of the majority is a Master's degree or equivalent and Diploma level (29.41 percent). In addition, most of them (41.18 percent) have 6-10 years of work experience. Regarding the type of institutions of the employers, eight are working in public schools (47.06 percent); and nine are working in private schools (52.94 percent).



## Part 2 Graduates' Acquired Skills and Competencies of the program

The data regarding the graduates's competencies and skills acquired from the program was skills and competencies acquired from the program and the relevance of the acquired competencies with the job requirements.

**Table 3:** Graduates' acquired skills and competencies of the program

Items	Acquired skills and competencies		Relevance of the acquired skills with the job requirements		Skills and competencies required by the employers	
	n = 88		n = 26		n = 17	
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	$\mu$	$\sigma$	$\mu$	$\sigma$
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.02	0.62	4.08	0.56	4.35	0.70
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	4.07	0.65	4.19	0.56	4.35	0.60
3. The ability to manage plays and learning-teaching activities in nurseries, kindergartens, multi-grade classrooms and pre-primary classrooms in a creative manner	3.98	0.67	4.00	0.49	4.18	0.52
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	0.80	4.23	0.51	4.18	0.52
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.58	0.67	3.81	0.56	3.88	0.33
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.50	0.66	4.65	0.48	4.59	0.61
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.40	0.68	4.46	0.50	4.41	0.50
Summary	4.07	0.47	4.20	0.38	4.28	0.35

Table 3 shows that the skills and competencies that the graduates acquired during their study, in general, are at the high level ( $\mu = 4.07$ ,  $\sigma = 0.46$ ). Twenty-six graduates who are currently employed rated the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirement, in general, at the highest level ( $\mu = 4.20$ ,  $\sigma = 0.38$ ). Overall, the graduates' skills and competencies which are required by the employers, are at the highest level ( $\mu = 4.28$ ,  $\sigma = 0.35$ ).

### Part 3 The graduates' employment situation and working status

The data analysis of the graduates' employment and working status is divided into three sub-topics. 1) the graduates' employment situation and employment status, 2) the graduates' study and employment relationships, and 3) the graduates' job satisfaction. The following are the findings of the data analysis:

#### 3.1) The graduates' employment situation and working status

**Table 4:** Current employment status and types of work and employment of the graduates

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Current employment status (n=88)	Employed	26	29.55
	Unemployed	62	70.45
Type of work (n=26)	Teacher civil servant	1	3.85
	Private school teacher	9	34.62
	Volunteer teacher	12	46.15
	Others	4	15.38
Type of employment (n=26)	Full-time	25	96.15
	Part-time/casual	-	-
	Freelance	1	3.85
	Others	-	-
Duration of job search (n=26)	Less than 3 months	11	42.31
	3 - 6 months	11	42.31
	7 - 11 months	3	11.54
	1 - 2 years	1	3.85
	More than 2 years	-	-

Table 4 shows that a total of eighty-eight graduates responded to the survey. Most of them are unemployed (70.45 percent), while 29.55 percent are employed. The twenty-six employed graduates, most of them are volunteer teachers (46.2 percent). From the analysis of the graduates' positions, the survey found that most of them are employed for a full-time position (96.15 percent). Most graduates (42.31 percent) who are currently employed spent either less than three months or three to six months looking for a job.

### 3.2) the graduates' study and employment relationships

**Table 5:** The relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers

Items	Relationship	
	Size of correlation	Level of correlation
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	0.35	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	0.19	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	0.16	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	0.25	Quite low
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	0.35	Quite low
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	0.22	Quite low
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	0.23	Quite low
Summary	0.46	Moderate

Table 5 shows the results of the analysis of the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers correlates at the moderate level.

### 3.3) The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

**Table 6:** The satisfaction of the graduates with their work

Items	N = 26		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. The responsible task	4.27	0.60	High
2. Pride of the current responsible task	4.27	0.72	High
3. Motivation to complete the assigned work	4.35	0.56	High
4. Participation in other assigned activities in addition to the primary responsibility	4.15	0.61	High
5. The salary/ remuneration	3.62	1.02	High
Summary	4.13	0.57	High

Table 6 shows that the graduates' satisfaction level with their work is at the high level ( $\mu = 4.13$ ,  $\sigma = 0.57$ ).

### Part 4: Evaluation results of the employers' satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies.

**Table 7:** The employers' perception and satisfaction of the graduates' knowledge and capacities

Items	N = 33		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
1. Knowledge in managing early childhood education	4.12	0.60	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	4.35	0.49	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	0.61	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	3.94	0.65	High
5. Knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research	3.88	0.60	High

Items	N = 33		Level
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
6. Code of professional ethics for teachers; and love towards the teaching profession and children	4.41	0.50	High
7. The ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions	4.41	0.50	High
Summary	4.16	0.42	High

Table 7 shows that the employers' overall satisfaction with the graduates' skills and competencies is at the high level ( $\mu = 4.16$ ,  $\sigma = 0.42$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item Nos. 6 and 7 have the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.41$ ,  $\sigma = 0.50$ ). The lowest average rating level is item No. 5, also at the high level ( $\mu = 3.88$ ,  $\sigma = 0.60$ ).

## Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions and discussions are drawn:

1) The graduates acquired adequate skills and competences provided by Salavan TTC. The course they took equipped them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for their development as early childhood education teachers. They can apply the skills and knowledge acquired throughout the program to their current positions. The result of this study could be implied that graduates are able to manage learning-teaching according to the 3 characteristics and 5 core principles of education, in accordance with the National Kindergarten Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Sports; code of professional ethics for teachers; and love for the teaching profession and children; the ability to work with others and preserve the Lao culture and traditions; and the ability to manage playtime and learning-teaching.

2) The graduates about 29.55% are currently working as teachers in schools and 84.62 percent can find a job within six months. This can be interpreted that the quality of the graduates matches the qualifications required by the school and that the graduates are competitive in the workforce. Furthermore, their current employment matches their program-acquired skills. However, the TTC should explore assisting unemployed individuals to enter the workforce;

3) Employers were highly satisfied with the graduates' abilities and competencies. This may result from the graduates' knowledge and skills in managing early childhood education and teaching and learning, they are able to perform the institution's and community's required tasks. The graduate can collaborate effectively with both employers and coworkers. However, the suggestions made by employers should be properly considered so that future graduates are more knowledgeable and competent in the aforementioned areas and therefore can meet the requirements of the institution and society.

## **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 applying the study results**

1. TTCs should focus on teaching students to practice with children in order to build the capacity of student teachers in knowledge and skills, such as play management, teaching in kindergarten, kindergarten, pre-school and elementary school.
2. The content of the courses should be improved and included in the curriculum, such as more English lessons, and increasing computer practice and music lessons for children.
3. TTCs should pay attention to the development of knowledge and skills in the research process for student teachers.
4. TTCs should organize activities/development projects to develop skills and promote teamwork among students.

### **Recommendations for further research**

1. There should be periodic follow-up assessments for graduates of the B.Ed. in ECE programme to guide the improvement of the curriculum.
2. There should be follow-up assessments for graduates from B.Ed. in ECE programme at the diploma level, with full-time and part-time programme tracks to follow up on those who use the programme.
3. There should be a follow-up assessment of the quality of users of the B.Ed. in ECE programme curriculum in all systems, especially the teachers who teach specialized courses.

4. The graduate tracer study reports of the Salavan TTCs should be published on the website for the information of those who are interested in other relevant research.

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

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## 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 Savahnakheth 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 was 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 ( $\mu = 4.10$ ,  $\sigma = 0.41$ ). The employed graduates rated the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements were at the high level ( $\mu = 4.10$ ,  $\sigma = 0.62$ ), especially in their 'knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research' ( $\mu = 4.40$ ,  $\sigma = 0.59$ ) and in 'the use of their knowledge and experience in solving problems at work' ( $\mu = 4.00$ ,  $\sigma = 0.56$ ) were also at the high level.

**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 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 Savahnakheth 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)

Savahnakheth 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, Savahnakheth 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 Savahnakhet 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 Savahnakhet 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)

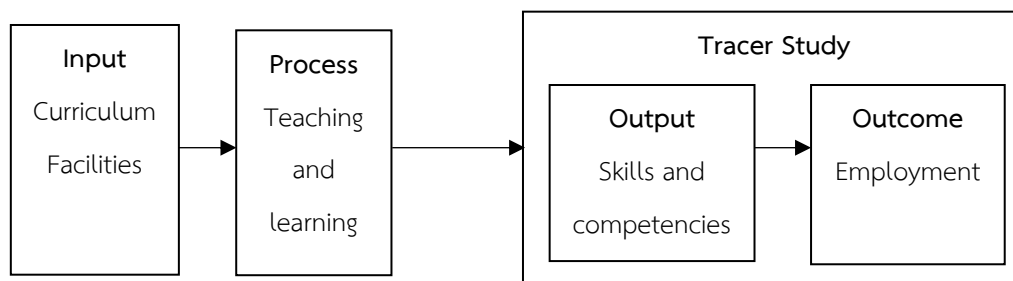


Figure 1 Research Framework

## 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 Savahnakhet 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 Savahnakhet 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 Savahnakhet 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 ( $\mu$ ), standard deviations ( $\sigma$ ) 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 ( $\rho$ , 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

$\rho$ , C value (+) : Positive, has the same direction /positive correlation

$\rho$ , C value (-) : Negative, relative to the opposite /negative direction

$\rho$ , 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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 ( $\mu = 4.10$ ,  $\sigma = 0.41$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.6 has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.45$ ,  $\sigma = 0.57$ ), while the lowest average rating level is for item No.5 also at the high level ( $\mu = 3.90$ ,  $\sigma = 0.57$ ).

### 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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 ( $\mu = 4.10$ ,  $\sigma = 0.62$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.5 has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.40$ ,  $\sigma = 0.59$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No.6, also at the high level ( $\mu = 3.90$ ,  $\sigma = 0.57$ ).

### 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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 ( $\mu = 4.50$ ,  $\sigma = 0.61$ ). 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 ( $\mu = 4.70$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No.5, but also at the high level ( $\mu = 4.20$ ,  $\sigma = 0.77$ ).

### 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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 ( $\mu = 4.10$ ,  $\sigma = 0.63$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.6 has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.30$ ,  $\sigma = 0.62$ ). The lowest average rating item is No.2, also at the high level ( $\mu = 4.00$ ,  $\sigma = 0.60$ ).

### 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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 ( $\mu = 3.70$ ,  $\sigma = 0.73$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.1 has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 3.90$ ,  $\sigma = 0.81$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No.2, also at the high level ( $\mu = 3.60$ ,  $\sigma = 0.76$ ).

### 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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 ( $\mu = 4.00$ ,  $\sigma = 0.67$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.2 has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.00$ ,  $\sigma = 0.64$ ). The item with the lowest average rating is No.3, also at a high level ( $\mu = 3.90$ ,  $\sigma = 0.67$ ).

## 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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 ( $\mu = 4.10$ ,  $\sigma = 0.63$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.2 has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.20$ ,  $\sigma = 0.64$ ). The lowest average rating item is No.4, also at the high level ( $\mu = 4.00$ ,  $\sigma = 0.58$ ).

### 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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 ( $\mu = 4.20$ ,  $\sigma = 0.67$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No.5 has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.40$ ,  $\sigma = 0.74$ ). The lowest average rating item is No.3, also at the high level ( $\mu = 4.00$ ,  $\sigma = 0.70$ ).

## 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: $\rho$ (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 2<sup>nd</sup> column, shows that is at the medium level ( $\rho = 0.47$ ), 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 3<sup>rd</sup> column, correlates at the quite high level ( $\rho = 0.61$ ), and the relationship between the graduates' acquired skills and competencies from the Programme and the skills and competencies required by the employers, in the 4<sup>th</sup> 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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 ( $\mu = 4.26$ ,  $\sigma = 0.58$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No. 1 has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.40$ ,  $\sigma = 0.54$ ). On the other hand, the item with the lowest average rating is No. 5, also at the high level ( $\mu = 3.90$ ,  $\sigma = 0.75$ ).

## 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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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
	$\mu$	$\sigma$	
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 ( $\mu = 4.21$ ,  $\sigma = 0.61$ ). When considering the list of evaluation items, it shows that item No. 6 has the highest average rating at the high level ( $\mu = 4.47$ ,  $\sigma = 0.64$ ). The lowest average rating level is for item No. 5, also at the high level ( $\mu = 3.80$ ,  $\sigma = 0.86$ ).

## 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 ( $\mu = 4.10$ ,  $\sigma = 0.41$ ). The employed graduates rated the relevance of their acquired skills and competencies with their job requirements, in general, at the high level ( $\mu = 4.10$ ,  $\sigma = 0.62$ ), especially in their 'knowledge and capacities to create knowledge through action research' ( $\mu = 4.40$ ,  $\sigma = 0.59$ ) and in 'the use of their knowledge and experience in solving problems at work' ( $\mu = 4.00$ ,  $\sigma = 0.56$ ) both of which are also at the high level.

2. Employers' rated the level of graduates' required skills and competencies at the high level ( $\mu = 4.50$ ,  $\sigma = 0.61$ ). 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 ( $\mu = 4.70$ ,  $\sigma = 0.49$ ). Arguably, this resulted in the graduates' satisfaction rating at the high level with learning experiences, learning facilities and curriculum at Savahnakhiet TTC ( $\mu = 4.10$ ,  $\sigma = 0.63$ ), especially with 'teacher educators being a good role model for behaviors and practices' ( $\mu = 4.30$ ,  $\sigma = 0.62$ ).

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 ( $\mu = 4.20$ ,  $\sigma = 0.67$ ). Further, they reported that 'the graduates are essential to their institutions' at the high level ( $\mu = 4.40$ ,  $\sigma = 0.74$ ). 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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