

Career Pathways and Professional Outcomes of BEED Graduates: A Tracer Study at Negros Oriental State University – Siaton Campus

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Date received: July 15, 2025

Date revised: August 1, 2025

Date accepted: August 20, 2025

Originality: 99%

Grammarly Score: 99%

Similarity: 1%

Recommended citation:

Caluscusin, M.M., Caluscusin, A.M., Alido, R.A., Enojo, M.D., Gadingan, N.C., Gadingan, G., Raip, J., Kirit, K.J., Caluscusin, D.E. (2025). Career pathways and professional outcomes of BEED graduates: A tracer study at Negros Oriental State University – Siaton Campus. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(9), 413-422.
<https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.570>

Abstract. This comprehensive tracer study investigates the professional trajectories and outcomes of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) graduates of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) Siaton Campus, focusing on employment, educational adequacy, skill relevance, and broader personal and professional impacts. Utilizing a convenience sampling technique, the study surveyed 685 graduates through online platforms and social media to assess their employment status, educational contributions to personal and professional growth, and further education pursuits. Data were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis. The findings indicate that over half of both female and male graduates are married, with nearly half being single. A significant majority of graduates hold bachelor's degrees, with 88.3% not pursuing further studies. Employment data revealed diverse organizational affiliations, with 68% of graduates working in jobs related to their college courses, and nearly half in their first job post-graduation. Moreover, most graduates work in the Philippines, earning between 10,000 and 40,000 pesos monthly. Graduates rated the contribution of their education highly, noting significant personal and professional growth, although some pointed out areas for improvement, like library and laboratory resources. The study stressed NORSU's programs in preparing graduates for the 21st-century workforce, emphasizing positive employment outcomes and professional recognition.

Keywords: Tracer study; Graduate outcomes; Employment status; Educational adequacy; Professional development.

1.0 Introduction

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and evolving global landscapes, the pursuit of higher education has become increasingly pivotal in shaping career trajectories and societal contributions (Kayyali, 2024). Colleges and universities serve as critical institutions that equip individuals with knowledge, skills, and competencies essential for professional success and personal growth (Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2019). However, the effectiveness of higher education institutions in preparing graduates for the demands of the contemporary workforce remains a subject of significant interest and scrutiny (Riu et al., 2020).

Tracer studies offer a valuable methodological approach to assessing the outcomes and impacts of college education on graduates. By tracking the experiences and career paths of alumni, these studies provide insights into how well educational institutions fulfill their objectives and meet the expectations of stakeholders, including students, employers, and policymakers (Cuadra, 2019). Understanding the trajectories of college graduates enables institutions to evaluate the relevance of their programs, identify areas for improvement, and enhance their curricula to better align with current industry needs (Abir et al., 2024).

This research aims to conduct a comprehensive tracer study focusing on the graduates of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) Siaton Campus. By examining the professional journeys, achievements, and challenges encountered by alumni, this study sought to shed light on the following key areas: the employment outcomes of graduates, the perceived adequacy of their educational preparation, the relevance of their acquired skills in the workplace, and the broader impacts of their education on personal and professional development (Garcia, 2022).

Through the findings of this study, stakeholders within the academic community, as well as employers and policymakers, can gain valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement of the educational programs offered by NORSU. Ultimately, this research endeavors to contribute to ongoing discussions on educational quality, institutional effectiveness, and the role of higher education in fostering a skilled and adaptable workforce in the 21st century (Fomba et al., 2022).

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This tracer study utilized the descriptive survey design to describe and analyze the status of BEED graduates in terms of employment, perceived contribution of their college program to their personal and professional growth, further education pursuits, etc.

2.2 Research Locale

NORSU Siaton campus served as the research locale. It is one of the external campuses of Negros Oriental State University, a public higher education institution in Central Visayas, Philippines, operating under the mandate of Republic Act No. 9299. Located in the municipality of Siaton, the campus was established to decentralize access to quality tertiary education and promote inclusive development in geographically disadvantaged and rural areas. It offers academic programs responsive to local needs, with the BEED program as one of its core offerings under the College of Education. This program aims to prepare pre-service teachers who are competent, ethical, and equipped to teach in diverse elementary learning environments.

2.3 Research Participants

A total of 685 BEED graduates took part in this study. The researchers chose to survey graduates who are readily accessible through contact numbers, social media groups, or professional networks associated with the institution. The graduates were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate.

2.4 Research Instrument

This investigation used a structured questionnaire to gather data from the participants. It also used online platforms and social media channels to conduct the surveys, allowing the researchers to reach a broad audience of graduates quickly and inexpensively.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

To gather data, the researchers first compiled a list of BEED graduates using the institution's alumni records. Graduates were then contacted via phone, email, and social media platforms. The structured questionnaire was distributed through online survey forms to ensure wider reach and accessibility. The respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, and follow-ups were made to maximize the response rate.

2.6 Data Analysis

The study employed descriptive statistical analysis as the principal method for analyzing the quantitative data gathered from the respondents. Descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize the demographic characteristics, employment profiles, educational attainment, and perceived relevance of academic training among the BEED graduates. Frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency (e.g., mean) were computed to determine trends and distributions within the dataset. This statistical approach enabled the researchers to identify prevailing

patterns in graduate outcomes, such as employment alignment with the degree program, monthly income brackets, and further study pursuits.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

In the conduct of this study, the researchers adhered strictly to ethical standards governing research involving human participants. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. The respondents were informed of the study’s purpose, their right to decline or withdraw at any time without penalty, and the measures taken to ensure the confidentiality of their responses. To protect the privacy and anonymity of the respondents, no identifying personal information was collected or disclosed in the analysis and reporting of findings. Data were gathered using secure online survey platforms and social media outreach, with all digital responses stored in password-protected files accessible only to the research team.

Moreover, the researchers secured ethical clearance from the school’s Research Committee before the commencement of data gathering. The researchers also remained guided by the core principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice throughout the study process. Every effort was made to ensure that the study posed no risk or harm to the participants and that the findings would be used solely for academic and programmatic improvement purposes.

3.0 Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discussions derived from data collected from the 658 BEED graduates of NORSU-Siaton. This study aimed to track various facets of the graduates’ career paths, from initial employment to professional growth and development. The section begins with an overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Sex and Civil Status

Table 1 reveals the distribution of graduates by sex and civil status, indicating a notable gender imbalance in favor of female graduates. Of the 685 respondents, 576 (84.1%) are female, while only 109 (15.9%) are male. Among female graduates, the majority are married (n = 338) or single (n = 227), while male graduates also predominantly reported being either married (n = 63) or single (n = 45). The minimal representation of separated and widowed graduates reflects the relatively young demographic of the cohort.

Table 1. Respondents’ Sex and Civil Status

Sex	Status				Total
	Married	Separated	Single	Widowed	
Female	338	8	227	3	576
Male	63	0	45	1	109
Total	401	8	272	4	685

The predominance of female graduates is consistent with global patterns in the education sector. According to UNESCO (2019), women continue to outnumber men in higher education enrollments, particularly in fields aligned with nurturing roles such as teaching. Zhou (2025) explained that societal expectations and gender norms often associate caregiving and communication-based professions with femininity, which may influence both enrollment and career decisions. Furthermore, Nzasi (2023) posited that women often find personal fulfillment in educational roles due to the opportunity to make a meaningful impact on others’ lives.

In terms of civil status, Lambert et al. (2020) argued that marriage rates among graduates may reflect not only life stage but also the influence of stability and emotional support on educational attainment. Elliot (2022) observed that married students might benefit from a supportive partner who contributes to their academic persistence. These patterns reinforce the idea that demographic characteristics are not only descriptive but also predictive of academic and career trajectories, especially in fields like education, where relational dynamics play a key role.

Educational Background

As presented in Table 2, the overwhelming majority of graduates (n = 605, 88.3%) completed only a bachelor's

degree, with relatively few pursuing further education. Master's degree holders accounted for 6.6% (n = 45), those with Master's units or certificates comprised 3.9% (n = 27), and only 1% had either earned or pursued doctoral degrees. These figures suggest that although graduate education is increasingly emphasized, the path toward it remains limited among provincial graduates.

Table 2. *Respondents' Educational Background*

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelors	605	88.30
Master's (Units/CAR)	27	3.90
Masters	45	6.60
Doctorate (Units)	4	0.60
Doctorate	3	0.40
Total	685	100.00

Economic considerations are likely a primary deterrent. As Xue (2024) noted, graduate education often requires substantial financial investment, which may not be feasible for many fresh graduates who prioritize income generation over continued study. Miller et al. (2020) supported this view, stating that work experience is often seen as more immediately rewarding than additional academic credentials. Additionally, geographic limitations—such as a lack of access to graduate schools or urban centers offering advanced programs—can further constrain opportunities (Zhou, 2025).

Beyond financial and logistical factors, some graduates may perceive that a bachelor's degree sufficiently equips them for their professional goals. Byrne (2020) argued that not all professions require graduate-level specialization and that for many, success is defined more by practical skills, dedication, and experience than by academic attainment. Nonetheless, the data suggest room for improvement in graduate education advocacy and support, including scholarship opportunities, flexible learning modalities, and institutional encouragement for lifelong learning.

Organizational Affiliation

Table 3 examines the types of organizations where graduates are currently employed. The Department of Education (DepEd) accounts for the highest number of placements, employing 390 out of 685 graduates (56.9%). An additional 62 graduates (9.1%) are connected to local or national government units, while 100 (14.6%) are employed in private institutions. A significant number (n = 133, 19.4%) did not provide their organizational affiliation, which may be due to confidentiality preferences or current unemployment.

Table 3. *Name and Type of Organization Where the Graduates Are Connected*

Name of the Organization	Type of Organization					Total
	Public	Private	Non-Profit	NGO	*Missing	
DepEd	390	0	0	0	0	390
LGU/NGU	62	0	0	0	0	62
Private	0	99	0	1	0	100
*Missing	21	15	18	0	79	133
Total	473	114	18	1	79	685

The dominance of DepEd as an employer signifies the public sector's central role in absorbing education graduates. This aligns with Baluyos et al.'s (2019) observation that teaching is considered a stable and secure career path, particularly in the government sector. David et al. (2019) also emphasized the high demand for public school teachers in the Philippines, driven by increasing student populations and government initiatives to improve educational access.

Miller et al. (2020) pointed out that graduates often gravitate toward institutions that offer clear pathways to tenure and professional growth. The benefits associated with government employment, such as permanent status, healthcare, and retirement plans, are key motivators. At the same time, some graduates pursue careers in private or non-government organizations, either due to personal preferences, lack of available teaching positions, or opportunities for higher pay and professional development. These trends indicate that while the public sector remains the preferred destination, there is a need for diversified employment preparation among education graduates. Enhancing collaboration between universities and both public and private sectors may lead to better alignment between graduate competencies and workforce demands.

Relevance of Current Job to Undergraduate Course

Table 4 shows the relationship between the graduates' current employment and their undergraduate course. A considerable majority (n = 466, 68.0%) indicated that their present jobs are aligned with their BEED degree, while 176 (25.7%) reported working in unrelated fields. Only 6.3% opted not to respond. This result reflects a generally positive alignment between academic preparation and job placement, especially in the education sector.

Table 4. *Relevance of Current Employment to College Degree*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	466	68.00
No	176	25.70
No answer	43	6.30
Total	685	100.00

Graduates working in jobs related to their degree suggest that the BEED program provided relevant and applicable training for employment, particularly within teaching roles. According to Toquero and Ulanday (2021), alignment between academic background and employment enhances job satisfaction and performance, mainly when supported by licensure and professional development. However, the 25.7% of graduates who reported employment in unrelated fields reflects the realities of the labor market. Krajňáková et al. (2020) suggested that economic factors and employment accessibility often lead graduates to accept jobs outside their fields, prioritizing income and location over alignment. Abir et al. (2024) added that some unrelated jobs can serve as stepping stones for skill acquisition and career flexibility. These findings indicate a need for stronger career planning support, internship programs, and curriculum-to-career alignment initiatives within teacher education programs.

Current Job Tenure

Table 5 presents the duration of graduates' employment in their current roles and whether these were their first jobs post-graduation. Results show a diverse distribution across tenure brackets. Notably, 143 graduates (20.9%) have been with the same employer for 6–10 years, and 96 (14.0%) have stayed for 11–15 years. Meanwhile, 55 graduates (8.0%) have been employed for less than a year, and 45 (6.6%) reported working at the same organization for over 20 years. Interestingly, 333 graduates (48.6%) stated their current job was their first job.

Table 5. *Years of Experience in Current Work*

Years in the Company	Is this your first job after finishing your college degree?			Total
	Yes	No	No answer	
Less than a year	20	31	4	55
1-5 years	64	85	4	153
6-10 years	86	53	4	143
11-15 years	64	28	4	96
16-20 years	30	10	0	40
Above 20 years	33	0	2	45
No answer	36	56	61	153
Total	333	273	79	685

These data suggest a relatively high retention rate among graduates in their first employment, which may indicate job satisfaction, especially in roles within the DepEd. According to Badaruddin et al. (2024), factors such as professional stability, work-life balance, and supportive leadership contribute to long-term job retention. Hare and Versluis (2019) argued that first-job retention is more common in fields with clear professional paths, such as education. Additionally, those who stay longer may benefit from promotion opportunities and enhanced benefits. This stresses the importance of developing engaging and sustainable work environments that support career longevity.

Location of Current Workplace

Table 6 reveals that the vast majority of graduates (n = 605, 88.2%) are working locally in the Philippines, while only 19 (2.8%) are employed abroad. A total of 62 (9.1%) did not provide information. These findings imply that BEED graduates tend to remain in domestic roles, likely within their home provinces or local school divisions. Several factors drive local employment trends. As noted by Cichocka (2021), proximity to family, language familiarity, and cultural comfort significantly influence decisions to work locally. In addition, the strong presence of public sector teaching opportunities in the Philippines creates a reliable employment pathway (Baluyos et al., 2019).

Table 6. Work Location

Place of Work	Frequency	Percentage
Local	605	88.20
Abroad	19	2.80
No answer	62	9.10
Total	685	100.00

However, the low number of graduates working abroad indicates potential limitations in global competitiveness or mobility. Cassidy and Dacass (2021) emphasized that barriers such as licensure recognition, immigration policies, and lack of international exposure during college may hinder graduates from seeking employment overseas. Thus, universities could enhance global readiness by embedding a foreign language training, cultural immersion programs, or international partnerships into their curriculum.

Monthly Income and Job Status

Table 7 provides a breakdown of the graduates' monthly income and employment status. The majority of respondents ($n = 377$, 55.0%) earn between PHP 21,000 and PHP 40,000, while a smaller percentage (11.1%) earn below PHP 10,000. Notably, most graduates reported having permanent employment ($n = 434$), which suggests a level of job security and stability.

Table 7. Monthly Salary and Work Status

Monthly Income	Job Status				Total
	Permanent	Contractual	Casual	No answer	
Below 10,000	12	44	16	4	76
10,000 – 20,000	38	32	7	11	88
21,000 – 30,000	174	21	2	9	206
31,000 – 40,000	166	0	1	4	171
41,000 – 50,000	24	1	0	0	25
51,000 – 60,000	7	1	1	1	10
61,000 – 70,000	1	0	0	0	1
71,000 – 80,000	0	0	0	0	0
Above 80,000	2	4	0	1	7
No answer	10	5	1	85	101
Total	434	108	28	115	685

These income levels reflect standard pay scales in public sector employment, particularly in teaching. According to Kraft and Lyon (2024), many government-employed educators receive stable, though modest, salaries aligned with standardized pay grades. While these salaries may be sufficient in rural areas, they may fall short in urban environments where the cost of living is higher. Badaruddin et al. (2024) noted that salary concerns are often mitigated by non-monetary benefits such as job stability, leave credits, and retirement packages. The presence of contractual and casual workers ($n = 136$) points to the reality of employment stratification, where not all graduates immediately obtain permanent status. As Zarei et al. (2019) pointed out, temporary employment may serve as a probationary period before regularization, but can also contribute to financial uncertainty and reduced motivation. Institutions should advocate for improved transition mechanisms toward permanent roles, particularly for qualified graduates.

Studying while Working

Table 8 illustrates whether graduates were employed while pursuing their college degrees. A large majority ($n = 514$, 75.0%) were full-time students without work responsibilities, while 124 (18.1%) balanced both school and work. This pattern reflects the socioeconomic diversity among students. Students who focused solely on academics may have benefited from financial support systems such as scholarships or family assistance, allowing them to concentrate on their studies. As Kim (2023) observed, academic immersion is associated with stronger learning outcomes and timely graduation. However, working students often gain early exposure to work ethics, financial independence, and time management skills (Abid, 2024).

Table 8. Full-time vs. Part-time Students

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	124	18.10
No	514	75.00
No answer	47	6.90
Total	685	100.0

Himmi et al. (2024) also asserted that while dual responsibilities can be demanding, they often contribute to personal resilience and a sense of purpose. Institutions could better support working students through flexible class schedules, hybrid learning options, and on-campus employment programs that align with students' academic paths.

Time Spent Finding Work

Table 9 presents the duration it took for graduates to secure employment after earning their BEED degree. A total of 141 (20.6%) secured employment in less than a year, while 163 (23.8%) found work within their first year. Others reported delays, with some taking more than five years to find a job.

Table 9. *How Long It Took for Graduates to Find a Job*

Year	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a year	141	20.60
1	163	23.80
2	85	12.40
3	51	7.40
4	32	4.70
5	33	4.80
6	16	2.30
7	9	1.30
8	6	0.90
9	2	0.30
10	8	1.20
11	8	1.20
12	3	0.40
13	1	0.10
15	2	0.30
Total	685	100.00

These figures signify that while many graduates transition quickly into the workforce, others encounter delays due to various barriers. According to Zarei et al. (2019), delays in employment can result from bureaucratic hiring processes, lack of credentials, or a mismatch between qualifications and job openings. In the public education sector, formal requirements such as PRC licensure exams and eligibility screenings can extend the waiting period (Kraft & Lyon, 2024). Moreover, some may hold out for preferred roles, contributing to extended job searches. Institutions may need to enhance job readiness programs, such as review sessions for licensure exams, mock interviews, and partnerships with employers to streamline hiring pipelines for new graduates.

3.2 BEED Programs' Contribution to Graduates' Personal and Professional Development

Table 10 shows the extent to which graduates perceive the BEED program contributed to their growth across 15 dimensions. Most indicators were rated 'Very Highly,' particularly in values formation ($M = 3.62$), learning efficiency ($M = 3.56$), and academic profession ($M = 3.55$). These high scores reflect strong curricular foundations in both pedagogical and character development. However, particular areas, such as international exposure ($M = 3.23$), opportunities abroad ($M = 3.21$), and IT skills ($M = 3.27$), were rated lower. As noted by Zhou (2025), international readiness and digital competency are increasingly critical in the 21st-century education landscape. The limited emphasis in these areas suggests a potential gap in the program's responsiveness to global and technological trends. To address this, curriculum planners should consider integrating international collaboration projects, digital literacy modules, and global education themes. Doing so would prepare graduates for both local excellence and global relevance.

Table 10. *The Extent of Contribution of the BEED Program to the Personal and Professional Growth*

Indicators	Very Highly (4)	Highly (3)	Fairly (2)	Poorly (1)	Mean	Verbal Description
a. Academic Profession	411 (60.0%)	244 (35.6%)	27 (3.9%)	3 (0.4%)	3.55	Very Highly
b. Research Capability	310 (45.3%)	319 (46.6%)	54 (7.9%)	2 (0.3%)	3.37	Very Highly
c. Learning Efficiency	414 (60.4%)	240 (35.0%)	30 (4.4%)	1 (0.1%)	3.56	Very Highly
d. Communication Skills	379 (55.3%)	277 (40.4%)	28 (4.1%)	1 (0.1%)	3.51	Very Highly
e. People Skills	375 (54.7%)	272 (39.7%)	37 (5.4%)	1 (0.1%)	3.49	Very Highly

f.	Problem-Solving Skills	338 (49.3%)	296 (43.2%)	48 (7.0%)	3 (0.4%)	3.41	Very Highly
g.	Information Technology Skills	296 (43.2%)	283 (41.3%)	98 (14.3%)	8 (1.2%)	3.27	Very Highly
h.	Meeting Present and Future Professional Needs	356 (52.0%)	281 (41.0)	46 (6.7%)	2 (0.3%)	3.45	Very Highly
i.	Exposure to Local Community within Field of Specialization	401 (58.5%)	244 (35.6%)	38 (5.5%)	2 (0.3%)	3.52	Very Highly
j.	Exposure to International Community within Field of Specialization	291 (42.5%)	279 (40.7%)	97 (14.2%)	18 (2.6%)	3.23	Highly
k.	Critical Thinking Skills	362 (52.8%)	276 (40.3%)	44 (6.4%)	3 (0.4%)	3.46	Very Highly
l.	Salary Improvement and Promotion	297 (43.4%)	299 (43.6%)	81 (11.8%)	8 (1.2%)	3.29	Very Highly
l.	Opportunities Abroad	277 (40.4%)	292 (42.6%)	100 (14.6%)	16 (2.3%)	3.21	Highly
m.	Personality Development	395 (57.7%)	257 (37.5%)	31 (4.5%)	2 (0.3%)	3.53	Very Highly
n.	NORSU Values Formation	446 (65.1%)	217 (31.7%)	20 (2.9%)	2 (0.3%)	3.62	Very Highly

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Poorly); 1.76-2.50 (Fairly); 2.51-3.25 (Highly); 3.26-4.00 (Very Highly)

3.3 Graduates' Perception of the BEED Program

Table 11 outlines how graduates rated the BEED program across 13 aspects, with most receiving 'Very Highly' ratings. Areas such as relevance to the profession (M = 3.57), quality of instruction (M = 3.53), and professor expertise (M = 3.53) demonstrate the perceived strength of the faculty and curricular alignment.

Table 11. *The Extent of the Perceived Ratings of the Degree Program*

Indicators	Very Highly (4)	Highly (3)	Fairly (2)	Poorly (1)	Mean	Verbal Description
a. Range of Courses	358 (52.3%)	288 (42.0%)	35 (5.1%)	4 (0.6%)	3.46	Very Highly
b. Relevance to your profession	421 (61.5%)	233 (34.0%)	30 (4.4%)	1 (0.1%)	3.57	Very Highly
c. Extracurricular activities	347 (50.7%)	273 (39.9%)	60 (8.8%)	5 (0.7%)	3.40	Very Highly
d. Premium given to research	302 (44.1%)	300 (43.8%)	79 (11.5%)	4 (0.6%)	3.31	Very Highly
e. Interdisciplinary learning	369 (53.9%)	278 (40.6%)	37 (5.4%)	1 (0.1%)	3.48	Very Highly
f. Teaching and learning environment	407 (59.4%)	239 (34.9%)	37 (5.4%)	2 (0.3%)	3.53	Very Highly
g. Quality of Instruction	406 (59.3%)	242 (35.3%)	34 (5.0%)	3 (0.4%)	3.53	Very Highly
h. Teacher-student relationships	390 (56.9%)	256 (37.4%)	36 (5.3%)	3 (0.4%)	3.51	Very Highly
i. Library resources	278 (40.6%)	301 (43.9%)	98 (14.3%)	8 (1.2%)	3.24	Highly
j. Laboratory resources	232 (33.9%)	286 (41.8%)	136 (19.9%)	31 (4.5%)	3.05	Highly
k. Class size	295 (43.1%)	290 (42.3)	92 (13.4%)	8 (1.2%)	3.27	Very Highly
l. Professor's pedagogical expertise	400 (58.4%)	249 (36.4%)	34 (5.0%)	2 (0.3%)	3.53	Very Highly
m. Professor's knowledge of subject matter	414 (60.4%)	242 (35.3%)	28 (4.1%)	1 (0.1%)	3.56	Very Highly

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Poorly); 1.76-2.50 (Fairly); 2.51-3.25 (Highly); 3.26-4.00 (Very Highly)

Nonetheless, library resources (M = 3.24), laboratory resources (M = 3.05), and class size (M = 3.27) received relatively lower ratings. This echoes Ahmed's (2025) findings that state universities often face resource allocation challenges due to budget limitations. As Abid (2024) argued, adequate facilities and manageable class sizes are essential to supporting interactive and effective teaching. Improving these areas requires institutional investment, donor engagement, and stronger government support. The overall positive feedback from graduates indicates that while the core program is strong, addressing structural gaps could further elevate its impact and responsiveness to student needs.

4.0 Conclusion

The results of this tracer study on NORSU graduates reveal critical indicators of how higher education must evolve in response to changing economic realities, workforce demands, and global mobility. Beyond employment outcomes, the data emphasize the urgent need for universities to strengthen the relevance and responsiveness of their academic programs. Institutions like NORSU must actively recalibrate their curricula by integrating global competencies, digital literacy, and practical, real-world learning opportunities that prepare students for both local and international labor markets. The identified gaps—particularly in areas such as technological fluency and international exposure—call for strategic innovations in course design, industry linkages, and mobility programs. Graduates' pursuit of further studies and professional recognition signals the value of lifelong learning and the importance of embedding career agility and critical thinking within the higher education experience. Meanwhile, employers are challenged to create inclusive, growth-oriented workplaces that support continuing education, reward initiative, and foster leadership development. Ultimately, these findings point to the necessity of a more future-ready, student-centered educational framework—one that equips graduates not only with academic knowledge but with the adaptability, resilience, and vision needed to navigate an increasingly complex and competitive global workforce.

5.0 Contribution of Authors

Both authors played significant roles in developing the study's conception, design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The first author led the writing of the manuscript and coordinated fieldwork, while the second author focused mainly on statistical analysis and incorporating related literature and studies. Both authors thoroughly reviewed and approved the final version of the article and shared equal accountability for its content.

6.0 Funding

There is no funding agency involved in this research.

7.0 Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

8.0 Acknowledgment

The authors express their most profound appreciation to all who aided them in achieving this academic goal, especially the administrators of NORSU-Siaton Campus and faculty members of the College of Teacher Education, for their guidance and encouragement throughout this study. Special thanks are also due to their alumni, colleagues, and fellow educators, and the amazing NORSU-SC BSED-English, BSED-Social Studies, BSED-Mathematics, and BEED Batch of 2025, who offered their valuable time and efforts during data collection and insights during the research process. Lastly, immense gratitude is directed to the BEED graduates of NORSU-Siaton campus who took part in the study and kindly contributed their time and perspectives.

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