

Equipped to Educate: Exploring Work Readiness of Graduating Teacher Education Students

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Date received: June 11, 2025
Date revised: August 18, 2025
Date accepted: September 5, 2025

Originality: 93%
Grammarly Score: 99%
Similarity: 7%

Recommended citation:

Robinos, J. R., Roxas, M. J., Villalona, C., Alipasa, C. D., & Reyes, K. N. (2025). Equipped to educate: Exploring work readiness of graduating teacher education students. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(10), 145-155. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.504>

Abstract. This study explored the work readiness of graduating Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) and Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) major in English students for the School Year 2024–2025 at a private university in Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines. Specifically, it aimed to identify the learning competencies gained based on Program Outcomes (POs), determine the Core Values realized, identify challenges, and explore the students' perceived work readiness. A descriptive-qualitative design guided the study. The researchers conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with all five BEED and nine BSED-English graduating students, using total enumeration. The FGD protocols, validated by experts, were developed by CMO Nos. 74 and 75, s. 2017. The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, with intercoder reliability and validation sessions ensuring the study's rigor and credibility. The researchers strictly followed ethical standards. An orientation was conducted for participants, the Data Privacy Act was implemented, and pseudonyms were used to protect identities. Findings revealed strong alignment between the competencies students gained and the key POs. Students demonstrated proficiency in integrating educational trends, collaborating effectively, applying diverse teaching strategies, and using ICT tools in teaching and learning. They also consistently reflected core values such as love of God, patriotism, Filipino Christian leadership, and adherence to Catholic doctrine, as shown through their active participation in community extension and Filipino Christian Living subjects. One major challenge identified was limited exposure to public school settings. Despite this, students affirmed their strong preparedness for the teaching professions. They attributed this readiness to their extensive training, research involvement, CES engagement, and other enrichment activities. The study recommends enhancing public school exposure, sustaining professional development initiatives, and conducting further research involving practicum hosts and alumni-employers to gain a more comprehensive assessment of graduates' work readiness.

Keywords: Education students; Private university; Program outcomes; Work readiness.

1.0 Introduction

Education is a continuous and lifelong process that enables individuals to reach their full potential both in life and in the workforce. At its core, education aims to instill fundamental values and prepare learners for responsible and productive citizenship (Lansdown, Covell, & Vaghri, 2022). It plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with skills needed to succeed professionally and economically in an increasingly competitive global environment (Bouchrika, 2025). Robiños et al. (2024c) emphasize that educational institutions must not only impart knowledge

but also cultivate thoughtful citizens and confident, work-ready graduates who are committed to lifelong learning. In this context, quality education becomes the cornerstone of a prosperous future (Siddique et al., 2022; Robiños et al., 2024a).

Building on this foundational role, education must now respond to rapid shifts in the world of work driven by technological change, multiliteracies, and global citizenship. The evolving global job market has created an urgent demand for graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also skilled and job-ready (Siddique et al., 2022). The pandemic has further accelerated workplace transformations, prompting organizations to adapt their hiring practices and redefine what it means to be employable (Ancillo et al., 2020). This has placed even more pressure on educational institutions to ensure their graduates possess the competencies and resilience needed in uncertain times. As noted by Steurer et al. (2023), universities are now expected to produce graduates who exceed minimum expectations and demonstrate readiness for increasingly complex and dynamic roles. In line with this, employability is no longer measured solely by academic credentials. Employers today prioritize a blend of general and soft skills, including decision-making, critical thinking, communication, media and digital literacy, as well as personal attributes like commitment, productivity, and teamwork (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023; Robiños et al., 2023a). These competencies are essential for navigating modern work environments and meeting the demands of the knowledge economy.

However, despite the recognition of education's vital role, a significant concern persists regarding graduate work readiness. One of the most pressing issues is the mismatch between educational preparation and labor market needs. While formal education equips students with foundational knowledge, it does not always translate to immediate employability. Studies show that nearly 30% of graduates are considered unfit for the workforce, highlighting a growing gap between graduate capabilities and employer expectations (Siddique et al., 2022; Robiños et al., 2023b). Employers have increasingly expressed frustration with under-skilled graduates, citing inadequate work attitudes, weak time management, and a lack of teamwork skills as key areas of dissatisfaction (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023).

This disconnect is further exacerbated by global disruptions, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, which has transformed educational delivery and reduced access to skills development opportunities. The shift to remote learning, limited physical engagement, and reduced practicum experiences has compromised the holistic preparation of future graduates (International Labor Organization, 2021). These challenges raise critical questions: Does current education truly prepare students for the world of work? And how can institutions better ensure that learning outcomes align with industry needs?

Anchored to Dewey's theory of the association between education and experience, the researchers believe that to be work-ready, learning experiences obtained from formal or informal training must be assessed (Robiños et al., 2024b). The association between education and learning experience emphasizes that experience can indicate growth and learning. Dewey's effort to define education as the continuous reconstruction of experience highlights the idea that learners' commitment to applying what they have learned is based on the education and experience that they have undertaken (Kong, 2021). The highest level of educational attainment is when learners are ready to apply and pursue their experiences within a given framework (Cloke, 2023). Relative to the study, it is best to investigate the learning competencies and core values that learners obtained from the school. Moreover, challenges and opportunities would improve education delivery and meaningful learning experiences. Furthermore, CMOs 74 and 75, in the 2017 series, were utilized to identify realized program educational objectives and program outcomes set for students taking a Bachelor of Elementary Education and a Bachelor of Secondary Education, respectively.

In the case of the BEED and BSED graduates in the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA – Molino campus, having its continuous effort in delivering quality services and recalibrating its different program delivery, there is a pressing need to explore the work readiness of graduating students towards creating strategies that can be implemented to prepare graduates in the field of work better, and towards the realization of quality school culture. Recently, the predictor examination resulted in alarming implications that even board performance may be affected if work readiness is fair among graduating students (Robiños et al., 2023b).

This study determined the work readiness of the graduating Bachelor of Elementary and Secondary Education students majoring in English for the SY. 2024-2025 at the University of Perpetual Help System - DALTA Molino Campus. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Identify the learning competencies gained by the graduating students based on the Program Outcomes;
2. Determine the Perpetualite Core Values realized by the graduating students;
3. Identify the challenges and areas for improvement in the curriculum and support programs that affect the work readiness of graduating students; and
4. Explore the perceived work-readiness of the graduating education students.

These growing concerns about graduates' lack of adequate skills and talents in the workplace, based on the results of the predictor examination, are driving this investigation. This study will undoubtedly contribute to the university's education program, aligning with its educational objectives to provide high-quality education and services, and to the goal of preparing the next generation of professionals to enter the workforce with self-assurance and preparedness. The researchers could develop an enrichment program plan together with the Young Educators Achievers Council that will help prepare graduates for the workforce.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The descriptive-qualitative design was utilized to explore the word readiness of graduating students taking the Bachelor of Elementary Education and the Bachelor of Secondary Education majoring in English. The qualitative design was used to generate value-added understanding (Robiños, Palao, & Cantilero, 2022). The researchers used and followed the reflective thematic analysis procedures based on transcripts of in-depth focus group discussions. The general data analysis procedures will be transcribing the captured narrative data, coding the narrative analysis, and then validating (Delve & Limpaecher, 2020).

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA—Molino Campus, a private, deregulated university in Bacoor, Cavite. It offers about twenty-five programs, including Basic Education, Baccalaureate, Juris Doctor, and TESDA programs. The BEED and BSED were provided in 1995 and are now celebrating their 30th founding anniversary. Both programs have been PACUCOA level 3 Accredited since 2023.

2.3 Research Participants

The participants included five (5) BEED and nine (9) BSED-English graduating students, selected using total enumeration. This purposive sampling strategy involves examining the entire population when it is small and well-defined, ensuring comprehensive representation and eliminating selection bias (Robiños, Dasig & Mendoza, 2020).

2.4 Research Instrument

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) protocol was developed in alignment with the study's objectives—to identify learning competencies gained, core values realized, challenges experienced, and perceived work readiness. The instrument included newly developed questions, guided by CMO Nos. 74 and 75, s. 2017, which outlines the Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) for the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) and Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) programs. The protocol underwent expert validation to ensure its content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the competencies and core values prescribed by the PSGs.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

After the validation and finalization of the FGD discussion protocol, the researchers sought approval from the Research and Development Center and the School Director to conduct the study. Data were gathered through focus group discussions lasting approximately one to two hours. Separate FGDs were conducted for BEED and BSED students within the educational laboratory. Reflexive Thematic Analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke as cited by Byrne (2021), was employed to analyze the data. This approach involves six recursive steps: becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This method allowed for the systematic and flexible identification of meaningful patterns within the data. To ensure accuracy and trustworthiness, the study adhered to the four established criteria of methodological rigor: transferability, confirmability, dependability,

and credibility (Ahmed, 2024). Transferability was demonstrated through the depth and richness of participant narratives, which were distilled into well-defined themes and sub-themes grounded in their lived experiences. The reflexive nature of the analysis supported the confirmability of the results. Dependability was upheld through intercoder reliability in identifying themes and sub-themes from the FGD transcripts—finally, a follow-up FGD was conducted to verify the emergent themes and sub-themes to enhance credibility.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study observed strict ethical standards throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, their rights, and the voluntary nature of their participation. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 (DPA, 2012) was upheld to ensure confidentiality and data protection. Informed consent was integrated into the online process and confirmed before the actual focus group discussions. The use of pseudonyms further protected the identities of the participants.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Five ABLEs as Most Gained Learning Competencies based on the Program Outcomes

The program outcomes most emphasized in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) responses were PO-A, PO-C, PO-G, PO-I, and PO-L, reflecting the core competencies that most graduating students reported having acquired from the College of Education.

Program Outcome A

Program Outcome A (PO-A), which emphasizes being able to articulate and discuss the latest developments in one's specific field of practice, was demonstrated by the students. A BEED 4 student claimed that he learned the importance of staying updated with the latest trends and developments in the teaching profession, particularly with integrating emerging technologies. He noted:

"It was emphasized to me since I've been taking this (BEED) program for about six years, that I should never become obsolete. From time to time, I must stay informed about current innovations and developments in education, particularly the use of modern technologies and artificial intelligence."

Staying updated with current trends and innovations in education is necessary because it equips future educators with relevant tools and approaches that enhance teaching effectiveness and learner engagement (Gumennykova et al., 2022). Similarly, students from BEED 5 and BSED 1, 3, and 9 also expressed the need to be innovative and not be left behind in terms of instructional and assessment developments. They were able to apply this program outcome during their final demonstration teaching, where they integrated recent trends and innovations. A BSED 3 student shared:

"I applied current trends like gamification during my final demo teaching, which I had read about in the news. It helped increase engagement among my students."

These reflections underscore the students' growing awareness of the latest innovations and developments in the education industry and are relevant to their future roles as educators.

Program Outcome C

It is also worth noting that most of the participants demonstrated learning aligned with Program Outcome C (PO-C), which focuses on being able to work effectively and collaboratively, with a substantial degree of independence, in multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural teams. The shift toward independent and collaborative learning reflects a broader educational paradigm—one that recognizes the need to equip students not only with academic knowledge but also with essential interpersonal and self-management skills to thrive in a globalized and rapidly evolving society (Singh et al., 2024). A BEED 1 student shared:

"Taking the education program, what I've learned the most is the value of working with others—through group tasks, collaborating with our critique and coordinating teachers, and especially when the YEAC (Youth Educators' Achievers Council) implements projects. I also learned how to thrive independently when needed. I can now differentiate when to work collaboratively and when to work on my own."

Similarly, a BEED 5 student stated:

"I gained mastery in collaboration and teamwork. In our profession, it's essential to work with others—whether on performance tasks, organizational initiatives, or community engagement. But I also learned to manage individual tasks like reviewing and completing assignments independently."

PO-C was also evident in the response of a BSED 2 student, who reflected on his personal growth:

"I know I'm an introvert, but with this program, I learned to work with others. Although there are still times when I work better alone, I've learned to adjust and collaborate when necessary."

Furthermore, students from BSED 3, 4, 5, and 6—who served as officers in the YEAC—emphasized the relevance of PO-C in both academic and leadership experiences. BSED 3, the council president, shared:

"As President, I truly mastered how to collaborate not only with fellow education students but also with students from other colleges, administrators, and institutional support personnel. During my practice teaching, it was easy for me to coordinate with the learning coordinator, critique teacher, and co-teachers. However, when it comes to major exams, I prefer to study independently."

These reflections strongly support that Program Outcome C was effectively realized among graduating Education students, highlighting their readiness to function in both collaborative and independent roles in diverse educational and professional settings.

Program Outcomes G, I, and L

The focus Group Discussion (FGD) responses also revealed that the graduating students acquired Program Outcomes G, I, and L to a great extent. PO-G refers to being able to facilitate learning using a wide range of teaching methodologies and delivery modes appropriate to specific learners and their environments; PO-I focuses on being able to applying skills in the development and utilization of ICT to promote quality, relevant, and sustainable educational practices; and PO-L emphasizes the ability to pursuit of lifelong learning for personal and professional growth through varied experiential and field-based opportunities.

A BSED 4 student (who also served as the President of the YEAC)—a leadership gold medallion awardee—emphatically stated:

"What I've mostly acquired are the varying strategies in teaching and assessing students, including traditional methods that are still effective and relevant. I also learned how to integrate ICT through our Educational Technology 1 and 2 courses, which involved hands-on activities. I now see how essential it is to be creative and innovative in delivering lessons. Moreover, what I truly gained from this institution is the mindset that learning is a lifelong process. Our professors constantly reminded us of this. I participated in many enrichment activities—seminars, workshops, and even local, national, and international conferences. After graduation and passing the LET (Licensure Examination for Teachers), I plan to pursue a master's degree."

Multiple BEED and BSED students reinforced this response by expressing their appreciation for the college's enrichment initiatives, community extension services (CES) projects, research initiatives, and review classes. They emphasized how these opportunities enabled them to become skilled in implementing a variety of inclusive teaching and learning strategies aligned with **PO-G**. Moreover, they developed proficiency in using modern teaching equipment and creating innovative instructional materials, aligning with **PO-I**.

A BEED 2 student added:

"I feel ready because I learned a lot from the department—especially in confidently teaching using a wide range of teaching strategies and delivery modes, and integrating ICT into instruction like the use of CANVA for presentation, AI for assessment, research, and engagement, excel for grading students' performance, and many more. I also learned to look forward to advanced pursuits that will help me become a better and more qualified teacher. I'm thankful for all the department's initiatives that shaped us to become lifelong learners who reflect, grow, and improve every day. We're constantly encouraged to attend seminars and workshops, to love research, and to pursue graduate studies."

These testimonies provide strong evidence that the College of Education has effectively instilled Program Outcomes G, I, and L in its students—outcomes that emphasize the integration of technology, commitment to lifelong learning, and professional growth. This aligns with the findings of Robiños et al. (2024b; 2024c), who reported high levels of teacher engagement in professional development and the growing use of modern technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, in educational settings. The students' ability to apply varied instructional methodologies, incorporate ICT tools into teaching, and demonstrate a mindset oriented toward continuous improvement reflects the institution's commitment to producing future-ready educators who are both competent and adaptable in a rapidly evolving educational landscape (Bhatia & Kaur, 2024).

3.2 Six Vs as the Most Realized Perpetualite Core Values

The Perpetualite Core Values that were most highlighted in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) responses were V-1, V-2, V-3, V-6, V-7, and V-8. These values emphasize the attitudes and foundational principles that the majority of graduating students reported having internalized throughout their stay in the College of Education.

Core Values V-1, V-2, V-6, and V-7

The core values V-1 (Love of God, Love of Self, Family, and Neighbor), V-2 (Love of Country and Good Governance), V-6 (Filipino Christian Leadership), and V-7 (Value of Catholic Doctrine) were notably emphasized in the context of students' active involvement in community extension programs and their sustained engagement in Filipino Christian Living (FCL) related subjects from first year to fourth year. A BEED 3 student shared that she was able to imbibe and practice these core values in her daily life, stating:

"I always join the different CES projects of our department, such as Project HOME (Honing One's Mind through Education) and the ALTAS Project (Alternative Learning through Accessible Services). Having FCL for four years (every semester), I now wish to initiate my own outreach project that can help other people. These experiences strengthened my faith and deepened my desire to share my blessings. I've become more passionate about making informed choices during elections because I know it will affect our future and our country. In all my decisions, I now always consider what is right, just, ethical, and morally sound. Every day, I am grounded by the Catholic doctrine."

Supporting this reflection, a BSED 6 student emphasized the importance and applicability of these core values, particularly V-1, V-2, V-6, and V-7, which she developed through her involvement in CES initiatives and as a member of the Youth Educators' Advisory Council (YEAC). She shared:

"The teaching immersion I joined in Mindoro Mission School through Project HOME and teaching ALS learners through the ALTAS project for two years helped me appreciate my abilities and allowed me to serve both the Mangyan and ALS learners. Guided by Catholic doctrine and competencies from FCL, I became more aware of what it means to be an agile and transformative leader – mindful, truthful, and righteous in every decision I make."

These responses imply that the College of Education instills academic knowledge and nurtures a strong moral and ethical foundation rooted in faith, servant leadership, and civic responsibility in alignment with the Perpetualite identity. Value-based leaders, rooted in faith, servant leadership, and civic responsibility, uphold core values as guiding principles that shape ethical behavior and sound decision-making, especially in challenging situations (Vikaraman et al., 2021). This reflects how the College of Education nurtures academic excellence and moral integrity in line with the Perpetualite identity.

Core Values V-3 and V-8

The graduating students strongly affirmed the core values V-3 (Academic and Professional Excellence) and V-8 (UPHSD and the Perpetualite-Institutional Loyalty Program). Specifically, 3 out of 5 BEED students and 7 out of 9 BSED students cited these as most evident in their academic journey. A BSED 2 student explained:

"We're constantly reminded that our main goal is to graduate with mastery, competence, and confidence to teach. We are being prepared to be globally competitive and critical thinkers. As a graduate of Grade School and Senior High School here, I was able to sharpen my skills and prepare myself for professional life. Through the 'Towards Academic Excellence' program,

where we had to maintain a high Professional Weighted Average (PWA) and the Project READY (Review and Education Assistance to Deliver Yield), we were trained to be LET-ready. All these programs have helped me confidently say – I am ready. Moreover, through Brigada Pagpapatala (Marketing Strategy of the department), I was able to confidently promote our program. This was my way of expressing how thankful I am to the institution."

This was supported by a BEED 5 student, a co-curricular gold awardee, who expressed that she continuously balances her passion for extracurricular activities with the pursuit of academic excellence. She shared:

"I always remind myself that despite my love for non-curricular activities, I must stay focused on my academic goals to ensure that I am fully prepared to become a professional teacher – starting with passing the LET. Academic excellence must never be compromised. My consistent engagement in Project READY is my way of preparing myself. During my practice teaching, I made sure to listen to my critique teacher and co-teachers because I knew it would bring out the best in me." She added: "I'm happy to promote our program through Brigada Pagpapatala – and when I say "I'm Happy" – it means I don't have any reservations because I know what the university has provided us – quality education."

These responses from the majority of the BEED and BSED graduating students reveal more than just satisfaction with academic preparation—they reflect a strong sense of institutional identity and pride, shaped by the College of Education of UPHSD-Molino Campus. The students' consistent articulation of faith-based values, moral responsibility, social commitment, and global competitiveness illustrates how the institution integrates character formation with professional training—hallmarks of the Perpetualite identity.

This goes beyond surface-level brand loyalty. The participants' positive regard for their alma mater suggests that the institution has successfully cultivated deep-rooted affective and ethical dimensions of teacher identity, which play a critical role in sustaining motivation, resilience, and professional integrity in the field. Their ability to advocate for the institution and speak with confidence about their competencies further points to the perceived quality and relevance of their education. These findings reaffirm the conclusions of Robiños and Alcazaren (2023), who noted that academic excellence combined with institutional loyalty serves as a strong indicator of holistic formation in teacher education. In this context, institutional pride becomes more than an emotional attachment—it is a marker of institutional effectiveness in producing ethically grounded, academically competent, and professionally confident graduates. Overall, this theme underscores the importance of cultivating not just academic knowledge and teaching skills, but also a deep moral compass and institutional rootedness, which are essential for educators expected to lead, inspire, and serve in diverse learning communities.

3.3 One and Only Encountered Challenge by the graduating Education students

Among the responses gathered from graduating education students, one prominent challenge emerged: *limited exposure to public school settings*. Although many students actively participated in Project HOME activities in Mindoro Mission School, a rural educational setting, some perceived this exposure as insufficient to fully prepare them for the realities of teaching in mainstream public schools. Interestingly, this was not framed directly as a "challenge" but rather as a fear of encountering greater difficulties upon entering the teaching profession.

Despite this concern, the apprehension is alleviated by the guidance and training provided by faculty members who are Principals in public elementary and secondary schools. Their insights and mentorship help bridge the gap between theory and real-world teaching contexts in the public setting. As a BEED 3 student shared:

"I fear that I'm not ready to work in the public school despite participating in the recent Project HOME visits (December 2024 and May 2025), ALTAS Project, and the sharing and training of Dr. Maria and Dr. Leonora (Public School Heads - not their real names) in our classes. Our field study and practice teaching in the Basic Education Department of the institution helped me, though I know it's kind of different in the public school setting. I think it will be a challenge to practice desirable patience in the public school."

A BSED 9 student echoed this concern and emphasized the academic language gap:

"I totally agree. One of the challenges right now for all of us is to ready ourselves for the setup in public schools. Though frankly speaking, our Senior High School students here in the institution are good at using English. But how about in the public school? How can we teach our students to become competitive users of the language? These are some of my fears."

Luckily, regarding the multigrade setup, I had the opportunity to experience handling students in Mindoro Mission School through Project HOME."

This result implies that while community-based teaching immersions such as Project HOME provide meaningful insights into alternative and often under-resourced educational contexts, they may not fully simulate the complexity, demands, and structural diversity found in regular public school settings. The participants' reflections underscore a more profound concern about adaptability, particularly in navigating the unique challenges of public school environments—such as larger class sizes, limited resources, and administrative constraints. This concern may be rooted in institutional limitations, specifically the lack of robust partnerships and practicum arrangements with public schools that would allow for more authentic field exposure.

Moreover, this theme supports the findings of Robiños et al. (2023a), who observed that the transition from private to public school teaching—especially among career shifters from industry—revealed significant differences in workload, student needs, and contextual challenges. Similarly, Khan (2020) and Yu (2023) highlighted that the application of innovative teaching strategies and the required emotional quotient vary considerably between public and private school educators. These studies affirm that the institutional context plays a critical role in shaping teaching styles, influencing classroom management approaches, and determining the overall effectiveness of student engagement. Thus, the current findings suggest that teacher education programs must intentionally expand public school exposure, not only to enhance teaching adaptability but also to prepare future educators for the realities of the public education system, which continues to serve the majority of Filipino learners.

3.4 "I AM READY!", A strong perceived work-readiness of the graduating education students

All five (5) BEED and nine (9) BSED-English participants strongly affirmed their Strong Professional Preparedness based on the results of the data gathering and the validation sessions during the 3rd and 4th Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Both groups consistently cited the department's varied training, workshops, professional growth initiatives, community extension service (CES) programs, research engagements, and other enrichment activities, such as attending national and international conferences, as significant contributors to their preparedness to enter the teaching profession. As BEED 1 shared:

"I am ready to teach. I thank CASSED, especially the Office of the Dean, for allowing us to experience and participate in national and international seminars and three community extension initiatives of the department: Project ALTAS (Alternative Learning System), Project HOME (Inclusive Education for Mangyan learners), and Project READY (Free review classes for LET takers). I'm ready because of my learning experiences with my teachers, who are all master's or Doctorate holders. They are experts who ensure that the necessary learning outcomes are demonstrated through our outputs and teaching demonstrations."

BEED 2 added a related insight, emphasizing the integration of research in building instructional competence:

"After graduation, I already have a school where I will teach. I'm excited because of all the opportunities the college has given us. More importantly, research writing became a core part of my college experience – it taught me to become evidence-based and scientific in introducing educational innovations and making changes for my future students."

This implies that exposure to professional development activities, research, and CES contributes significantly to the student's self-perception of being ready for the demands of the teaching profession. Students highlighted their preparedness regarding skills and competencies and their emotional and ethical readiness for the profession. Echoing this, BSED 3 stated:

"Thank you, Dean. I must say that the department honed us holistically – Mind, Hands, and Heart (Citing the Hymn of the University) for the teaching profession. I know I'm ready for the battlefield. It won't be easy, but real learning comes from practicing the profession. Emotionally, the department prepared me well. Project READY and other enrichment programs, combined with the mastery of our professors in English, helped us become proficient and realize the importance of 21st-century skills, particularly effective communication and collaboration."

The President of the Young Educators' Association Council of CASSED (YEAC) and BSED 4 further emphasized leadership development as part of work-readiness:

"As YEAC president, I was honored to serve the department. That wouldn't have been possible without the guidance of the college – especially our adviser, Ms. Corazon, and Dean John (not their real names). The leadership training we received and implemented helped me grow as a young leader and a work-ready teacher. The professional development programs, seminars, workshops, research, and CES engagements truly shaped my readiness."

Supporting this, BSED 8 concluded:

"I agree with Grace (BSED 4). I'm ready to teach because of the many seminars and professional trainings we attended. The substantial content and competencies taught to us and our participation in CES projects equipped us well for the teaching profession. From the first to the fourth year, our Filipino Christian Living subjects inspired me to teach with compassion and heart."

These responses suggest that the integration of professional development programs, community extension service (CES) engagement, faculty mentorship, and values education contributes to a holistic model of work readiness. This model goes beyond technical competence to include character formation, effective communication, and community integration—critical elements in preparing future educators to thrive in diverse and evolving professional contexts. The participants' insights reflect a growing understanding that work readiness is not a product of academic achievement alone, but also the outcome of intentional exposure to real-world challenges and supportive institutional ecosystems. This reinforces the idea that schools play a central role in shaping not just employable graduates, but adaptable and purpose-driven professionals.

Supporting literature strengthens this interpretation. Oblinada et al. (2023) emphasize the significance of institutional factors—particularly those encountered during the practice teaching phase—such as faculty guidance, school culture, and administrative support, in developing job readiness. Similarly, Magallanes (2022), Robiños et al. (2023a), and Brigoli et al. (2025) highlight the role of continuing professional development, CES initiatives, leadership training, and internship experiences in cultivating life skills and essential soft skills, such as adaptability, collaboration, and initiative. These findings suggest that a comprehensive work readiness framework must include not only curriculum-based competencies, but also extracurricular and experiential learning opportunities that build emotional intelligence, resilience, and social responsibility. In this light, the participants' experiences affirm the value of a well-rounded education—one that prepares them not only to enter the workforce but also to lead with integrity and serve with impact.

A summary table is presented to clearly and concisely illustrate the major findings of the study.

Table 1. Summary Table

Key themes	Sub-themes	Supporting Participants' Quotes
Five (5) ABLEs as Most Gained Learning Competencies		<i>"I applied current trends like gamification during my final demo teaching, which I had read about in the news. It helped increase engagement among my students."</i>
	1. Able to discuss the latest developments in teaching profession;	<i>"I gained mastery in collaboration and teamwork. In our profession, it's essential to work with others – whether on performance tasks, organizational initiatives, or community engagement. But I also learned to manage individual tasks like reviewing and completing assignments independently."</i>
	2. Able to working effectively and collaboratively, with a substantial degree of independence;	
	3. Able to facilitate learning using a wide range of teaching methodologies	
	4. Able to utilize ICT to promote quality and relevant education.	
	5. Able to pursue and observe lifelong learning	
Six (6) Vs as Most Realized		<i>"I always join the different CES projects of our department, such as Project HOME (Honing One's Mind through Education) and the ALTAS Project (Alternative Learning through Accessible Services). Having FCL for four</i>

Perpetualite Core Values	1.	Love of God, Love of Self, Family, and Neighbor (V1), Love of Country and Good Governance (V2), Filipino Christian Leadership (V6), and Value of Catholic Doctrine (V7)	<i>years (every semester), I now wish to initiate my own outreach project that can help other people. These experiences strengthened my faith and deepened my desire to share my blessings. I've become more passionate about making informed choices during elections because I know it will affect our future and our country. In all my decisions, I now always consider what is right, just, ethical, and morally sound. Every day, I am grounded by the Catholic doctrine."</i>
	2.	Academic and Professional Excellence (V3) and UPHSD and the Perpetualite-Institutional Loyalty Program (V8)	<i>"We're constantly reminded that our main goal is to graduate with mastery, competence, and confidence to teach. We are being prepared to be globally competitive and critical thinkers. As a graduate of Grade School and Senior High School here, I was able to sharpen my skills and prepare myself for professional life. Through the 'Towards Academic Excellence' program, where we had to maintain a high Professional Weighted Average (PWA) and the Project READY (Review and Education Assistance to Deliver Yield), we were trained to be LET-ready. All these programs have helped me confidently say – I am ready. Moreover, through Brigada Pagpapatala (Marketing Strategy of the department), I was able to confidently promote our program. This was my way of expressing how thankful I am to the institution."</i>
One (1) and ONLY Encountered Challenge	1.	Limited exposure to public school setting	<i>"I fear that I'm not ready to work in the public school despite participating in the recent Project HOME visits (December 2024 and May 2025), ALTAS Project, and the sharing and training of Dr. Maria and Dr. Leonora (Public School Heads - not their real names) in our classes. Our field study and practice teaching in the Basic Education Department of the institution helped me, though I know it's kind of different in the public school setting. I think it will be a challenge to practice desirable patience in the public school."</i>
I'm READY!	1.	Strong Professional Preparedness	<i>"I am ready to teach. I thank CASED, especially the Office of the Dean, for allowing us to experience and participate in national and international seminars and three community extension initiatives of the department: Project ALTAS (Alternative Learning System), Project HOME (Inclusive Education for Mangyan learners), and Project READY (Free review classes for LET takers). I'm ready because of my learning experiences with my teachers, who are all master's or Doctorate holders. They are experts who ensure that the necessary learning outcomes are demonstrated through our outputs and teaching demonstrations."</i>
			<i>"Thank you, Dean. I must say that the department honed us holistically – Mind, Hands, and Heart (Citing the Hymn of the University) for the teaching profession. I know I'm ready for the battlefield. It won't be easy, but real learning comes from practicing the profession. Emotionally, the department prepared me well. Project READY and other enrichment programs, combined with the mastery of our professors in English, helped us become proficient and realize the importance of 21st-century skills, particularly effective communication and collaboration."</i>

4.0 Conclusion

The findings from the Focus Group Discussions offer meaningful insights into how teacher preparation programs can be strengthened to better align with the evolving demands of the teaching profession. While students demonstrated emerging competencies in collaborative work, technology integration, and diverse instructional strategies, the results signal a need for intentional curriculum enhancement that bridges theory and practice more effectively – particularly within the context of public school education. The strong alignment with the College's core values and program outcomes affirms the institution's success in fostering ethically grounded and socially committed educators. However, the expressed concerns regarding limited exposure to public school environments underscore a critical gap in experiential learning. This calls for expanding field-based practicums and partnerships with public schools to ensure that teacher candidates are not only academically prepared but also contextually adaptable.

Moreover, the integration of community extension programs, values education, faculty mentorship, and professional development initiatives proves to be a vital contributor to holistic work readiness. These elements should be sustained and further embedded into the curriculum as strategic components for developing resilience, leadership, and civic engagement among future educators. Ultimately, the study highlights the importance of a responsive and dynamic teacher education program – one that embraces innovation, reinforces foundational values, and prepares graduates to thrive in complex and diverse teaching environments.

It is recommended that the College of Education, through the Department Chair and Faculty Development Committee, sustain and expand its training programs, pedagogical workshops, research initiatives, CES activities, and academic conference participation by embedding at least two major initiatives per semester into the academic calendar, with post-activity evaluations and end-of-semester reflection sessions to assess effectiveness. To address concerns about real-world teaching readiness, the Practicum Coordinator and Office of External Affairs should pilot extended public school immersion programs by AY 2025–2026, with full implementation targeted for 2026–2027, supported by pre- and post-immersion reflection tools and feedback from supervising teachers. Additionally, starting in 2026, the Quality Assurance Office, in coordination with the Practicum and Alumni Coordinators, should conduct annual follow-up studies involving practicum host schools and employers using a standardized Work Readiness and Program Outcome Alignment Survey, the results of which will inform the year-end curriculum review and enhancement process.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The corresponding authors shared greater writing responsibilities. All the co-authors contributed equally to writing, data gathering, analyzing the study results, and finalizing the article.

6.0 Funding

The research, specifically the publication fee, was funded by the office of the Research and Development Center of the University to which the researchers are affiliated.

7.0 Conflict of Interests

No potential conflict of interest.

8.0 Acknowledgment

The researchers wish to acknowledge all the respondents from BEED and BSED majors in English as validators of the FGD protocol. Likewise, we are grateful to the Office of the School Director and the Office of the RDC.

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