


## **Towards a Future-ready Workforce: An Evaluation of Alumni Outcomes and Curriculum of a doctoral program in Bicol University**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This tracer study examined the employment outcomes, skills gaps, and industry demands relevant to graduates of the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Foundations (PhDEF) program from 2015 to 2022. It also assessed the program's alignment with the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 15, series of 2019, which sets the standards for graduate education in the Philippines. A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative data. Online surveys were administered to alumni through Google Forms, while interviews with selected alumni and employers provided deeper insights into employment experiences and industry expectations. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyze the data. Findings indicate that PhDEF graduates are performing well in academic and administrative roles, occupying positions with strong career potential, with all respondents currently employed. However, results reveal a disparity in the utilization of research competencies. Graduates employed in basic education institutions have limited opportunities to apply research skills, as research is not a primary component of their roles, while those in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) demonstrate greater engagement in research activities. These findings suggest that while the program effectively supports graduate employability, enhancing its research orientation and clarifying a niche specialization are necessary to strengthen its quality, relevance, and alignment with diverse professional contexts. Based on these findings, the study recommends the identification of a clear field of specialization to enhance program focus and distinctiveness, as well as the strengthening of vertical articulation to ensure coherence across offerings and responsiveness to evolving academic and industry demands.

### **RESUMO**

Este estudo de acompanhamento teve como objetivo investigar os resultados de empregabilidade, lacunas de competências dos graduados e as tendências e demandas do mercado de trabalho relevantes para o programa de Doutorado em Fundamentos da Educação (PhDEF). A pesquisa analisou a conformidade do programa com o Quadro de Qualificações das Filipinas (PQF) e a Ordem Memorando nº 15 da CHED, série de 2019, que estabelece os padrões para a educação de pós-graduação no país. O estudo utilizou uma abordagem de métodos mistos, empregando técnicas de coleta de dados qualitativas e quantitativas. Questionários online foram aplicados aos ex-alunos por meio do Google Forms, complementados por entrevistas com os próprios ex-alunos e empregadores para coleta de dados adicionais. Estatísticas descritivas e análise temática foram aplicadas para quantificar e interpretar as respostas. Os resultados mostraram que os graduados do PhDEF estão atualmente atuando com bom desempenho em funções acadêmicas e administrativas, ocupando posições promissoras em suas áreas. Destacou-se que todos os graduados estão empregados em cargos com alto potencial de carreira. No entanto, observou-se que os graduados que atuam em instituições de educação básica não conseguem aplicar plenamente suas habilidades de pesquisa, uma vez que esta não é uma responsabilidade essencial de seus cargos. Em contraste, aqueles empregados em Universidades e Faculdades Estaduais (SUCs) têm mais oportunidades de realizar pesquisas como parte de suas funções acadêmicas. Com base nos dados, a identificação de um nicho ou campo de especialização para o programa surgiu como uma recomendação para ampliar seu foco e relevância, fortalecendo a articulação vertical e aprimorando sua identidade institucional.

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## Introduction

The pursuit of excellence is a core principle of Bicol University's mission. The University continuously strives to enhance quality through initiatives such as ISO recertification and adaptation to evolving academic environments. Its vision of becoming "A University for Humanity Characterized by Productive Scholarship, Transformative Leadership, Collaborative Service, and Distinctive Character for Sustainable Societies" is anchored on its commitment to delivering relevant and market-responsive academic programs.

In accordance with Section 3 of Republic Act No. 5521, Bicol University is mandated to provide professional and technical training, as well as advanced and specialized education in the fields of philosophy, science, literature, and the arts. As a State University, it plays a crucial role in developing the human capital necessary for regional and national development. In this context, tracer studies are essential tools for assessing whether graduates' competencies align with labor market demands and for ensuring the production of highly skilled, globally competitive, and employable graduates.

To remain responsive to stakeholder needs and a rapidly changing environment, the University must foster continuous innovation supported by institutional research. Developing a comprehensive database on graduate outcomes and institutional performance enables evidence-based policy formulation, strategic planning, and informed decision-making. This aligns with Theme 5: Inclusive Education and Lifelong Learning of the BU Research, Development, and Extension (RDE) Agenda 2023–2028, particularly its focus on the effectiveness of education across levels.

Moreover, the University must strengthen its alignment with broader educational and economic frameworks, including the K–12 curriculum, ASEAN integration, Industry 4.0, and NEDA's AmBisyon 2040. Academic programs are governed by Board of Regents resolutions and CHED Policies, Standards, and Guidelines. Undergraduate programs are implemented at the college level, while graduate programs are administered under the BU Graduate School, ensuring coordinated and quality program delivery.

Graduate employability is a key performance indicator for State Universities and Colleges, as outlined in DBM–CHED Joint Circular No. 1, series of 2016. It is measured by the proportion of graduates employed within two years after graduation, across various forms of employment.

This research proposal directly supports institutional priorities by generating empirical data on graduate outcomes. The findings will inform curriculum review, contribute to accreditation requirements, and provide evidence for SUC leveling evaluations, thereby ensuring that academic programs remain responsive to industry needs and national development goals.

Thus, the research looked into the effectiveness of the PhDEF program learning outcomes in relation to the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) and CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 15, series of 2019, which specify the expected competencies for doctoral graduates. Furthermore, the study identified areas for curriculum improvement. Specifically, it answered the following objectives: 1. Document and analyze the employment outcomes of Bicol University graduates through the tracer study from 2015 to 2022, focusing on factors in terms of: 1.1 Employment profile; 1.2 Industry of employment; and 1.3 Employment transition; 2. Identify skill gaps perceived by employers and graduates; 3. Establish industry trends and employment demands relevant to the field of educational foundations to inform program updates; and 4. Formulate actionable recommendations for program improvement to address identified skill gaps, and enhance graduate competencies for increased competitiveness in the job market.

## **Materials and Methods**

This research employed the mixed methods approach making use both the qualitative and quantitative data, and following the explanatory sequential methods. Considering the nature of the study and the committed objectives, validated survey questionnaire using the google form and the instrument embedded in the Alumni Relations Information Management Systems (ARIMS) have been used to collect data from the respondents. The survey instrument was designed to meet the data requirements of the SUC levelling from DBM, CHED tracer study instrument, and similar studies conducted by other SUCs and institutions. For validation, the instrument underwent content validation by experts in graduate education and research to ensure alignment with the Program Learning Outcomes, the Philippine Qualifications Framework, and CHED standards. Prior to full implementation, pre-testing was conducted with identified study leaders and past graduates to ensure clarity and effectiveness, and minor revisions were incorporated based on feedback. Reliability was supported through the consistency of responses observed during pilot testing and alignment with established tracer study instruments. Primarily, the instrument was administered online through Google Forms.

To be able to easily connect with the respondents, the researcher made use of social media platforms such as Facebook Messenger to reach out to the respondents and requested their responses to the survey. For substantiation of the quantitative data and to validate the responses, interviews with the employers and the alumni were conducted in either online platform or face-to-face modality. Interview participants were purposively selected to ensure representation across employment sectors (e.g., basic education and State Universities and Colleges) and varying years of professional experience. Employers were selected based on their direct supervision of PhDEF graduates and their capacity to assess workplace performance.

Quantitative data from graduate and employer surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics, like frequency counts, mean, and percentages. Qualitative data were employed through interviews with select graduates for deeper insights. Thematic analysis was conducted through a systematic coding process, beginning with open coding of interview transcripts to identify significant responses, followed by grouping codes into categories and themes. To ensure trustworthiness, an iterative review and constant comparison of data were applied, and selected responses were revisited to verify consistency of interpretation. Triangulation with survey findings was also undertaken to support the validity of the results.

A list of alumni was sought from the Office of the Bicol University Graduate School Registrar to trace the names of the PhDEF Alumni Graduates from years 2015 to 2022. Per records, there are exactly 40 respondents to be traced. These respondents (Alumni) have been provided with the instrument and were requested to answer the survey.

This tracer study has met 67.5% (27 alumni) of the minimum total target of respondents which is set to 30%, as part of securing the reliability and validity measure of the data. Following this, the employers as part of the respondents of the study, have been requested to answer the survey with particular focus on the performance of the PhDEF graduates in the workplace. They were requested to assess the performance of their employee who are alumni of the said program based on the Program Learning Outcomes of the program as approved by the Board of Regents (BOR), including the expected Learning Outcomes of doctoral students based on the Philippine Qualifications Frameworks, which is one of the bases of standards of the CMO No. 15, series of 2019, specifying Standards and Guidelines for Graduate Education in the Philippine context.

## **Results and Discussions**

Guided by the objectives of this study, the following parts present the results and discussions based on data gathered in adherence to ethical research standards and procedures. Specifically, this study aimed to document and analyze the employment outcomes of Bicol University PhD in Educational Foundations graduates through a tracer study from 2015 to 2022, which focus on factors such as: employment profile, industry of employment, and employment transition. Furthermore, it identified skill gaps perceived by both employers and graduates, which were bases to establish industry trends and employment demands relevant to the field of educational foundations to inform program updates, and formulate actionable recommendations for program improvement. As an offshoot of this study, recommendations were forwarded to address identified skill gaps and enhance graduate competencies of the said program.

### ***1. The Employment Outcomes of Bicol University PhD in Educational Foundations Alumni***

### **1.1 Employment Profile.**

This objective aimed to look into the employment profile of PhD in Educational Foundations graduates from the school years 2015 to 2022, as defined in the scope of the study. The profile included employment status, waiting period for first employment, nature of work (part-time or full-time), appointment status, duration of stay in the first job, reasons for accepting the job, type of employment (government or private), and workplace geographical location, contributory to assessing the relevance of the said graduate program to graduates' transition into the workforce and the application of PhD in Educational Foundations competencies in their respective workplaces.

The data resulted a high employment rate (96.2%), with no respondents reported unemployed and 3.8% engaged in self-employment. This result presents a significant indicator for job market of PhD in Educational Foundations graduates, thus aligning with employment trends in developing economies (ILO, 2020). The absence of unemployment among respondents is particularly notable, given that global youth unemployment rates typically range between 10-20% in many regions (World Bank, 2021). With the self-employment rating of 3.8%, it reflects entrepreneurial inclinations of the PhD EF graduates aside from teaching career. This may be driven by factors such as limited formal employment opportunities or a preference for professional independence (Gindling & Newhouse, 2014). This highlights the relevance of the program, particularly in the field of educational foundations, as it equips graduates with the knowledge and leadership skills needed to stay abreast with emerging trends, theories, concepts, and philosophies in education.

On the other hand, the majority (69.2%) secured employment within six months, while 15.4% waited between six to twelve months, indicating a relatively quick workforce absorption influenced by the competencies and skills of the graduates. However, 11.5% of respondents waited over a year, brought about by barriers to labor market entry in the teaching profession, such as limited job vacancies or the unavailability of plantilla positions.

A significant proportion of respondents (88.5%) were engaged in part-time work, with only 11.5% in full-time positions while a majority (65.4%) secured regular/permanent employment, while the rest were in temporary (11.5%) or contractual (23.1%) positions. Furthermore, 57.7% of respondents left their first job within four months, with only 23.1% staying up to a year. The absence of individuals staying beyond a year suggests high turnover rates, likely driven by dissatisfaction, career mobility, or lack of job fit (Moblely, 1977). High turnover can have negative implications for both employees and employers. Employees face unstable career progression, while organizations incur costs in hiring and training replacements (Hom et al., 2017). To address this, organizations could implement mentorship programs and competitive retention strategies (Allen, 2008).

**Table 1.**  
Employment Profile of PhD in Educational Foundations (PhDEF) Graduates

<b>Areas</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	
<b>A. Employment Status</b>	Employed	96.2%
	Unemployed	0%
	Self-Employed	3.8%
<b>B. Waiting period for first employment</b>	Less than 6 months	69.2%
	6-12 months	15.4%
	13-18 months	0%
	19-24 months	7.7%
	More than 24 months	3.8%
<b>C. Nature of Work</b>	Part-time	88.5%
	Full-time	11.5%
<b>D. Appointment Status</b>	Regular/Permanent	65.4%
	Temporary/Casual	11.5%
	Contractual/Job Order	23.1%
<b>E. Duration of stay in the first job</b>	Less than 4 months	57.7%
	5-8 months	19.2%
	9-12 months	23.1%
	More than a year	0%
<b>F. Reasons for accepting the job</b>	Salaries and benefits	46.2%
	Related to special skills	26.9%
	Proximity to residence	23.1%
	Career challenge	38.5%
	Related to the degree	38.5%
	Peer influence	0%
	Others	11.5%
<b>G. Type of Employment</b>	Government	69.2%
	Private	30.8%
<b>H. Work place</b>	Local	92.3%
	National	7.7%
	Overseas	0%

Furthermore, the data yielded that the primary reasons for job selection included salaries and benefits (46.2%), career challenge (38.5%), and degree relevance (38.5%). It can be associated that financial incentives remain a leading factor, consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, where financial stability ranks high among employment priorities (Maslow, 1943). The emphasis on career challenge and degree relevance suggests a workforce seeking both financial security and professional fulfillment. However, only 23.1% prioritized job location, indicating willingness to commute or relocate for better opportunities. Interestingly, peer influence (0%) suggests independent job decision-making, possibly due to individual career aspirations.

A percentage of 69.2% of respondents work in government, compared to 30.8% in private employment, reflecting a preference for public sector jobs, likely due to job stability, benefits, and security (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). Governments typically offer better retirement benefits, structured promotions, and security, which may explain the strong inclination toward public-sector roles (Lewis & Frank, 2002). In addition, a rating of preferred geographical location revealed that 92.3% of them work locally, specifically with the Bicol region, with only 7.7% employed at the national level and 0% overseas.

### **1.2 Industry of employment.**

The industry of employment refers to the workplace that supports and benefits the performance of graduates from the PhD in Educational Foundations program. In this context, it includes schools, whether in basic education or higher education institutions.

**Table 2.**

Industry of Employment of PhDEF Graduates

<b>Industry of Employment</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Department of Education (DepEd)	55.56%
State Universities and Colleges (SUC)	11.11%
Private School	11.11%
Commission on Higher Education	3.70%
Self-Employed	11.11%
Health Sector	3.70%

The data revealed that the majority of respondents (55.56%) are employed in the Department of Education (DepEd), followed by those working in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) (11.11%), private schools (11.11%), and self-employment (11.11%). Meanwhile, 3.70% are in the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and another 3.70% in the health sector.

### **1.3 Relevance of the program to the industry**

The relevance of the program is derived from industry and employer feedback on the performance of PhD EF graduates employed in their respective institutions. It can also be assessed based on its alignment with the standards set by the Commission on Higher Education and regulatory frameworks such as the Philippine Qualifications Framework. In this case, it considered both feedback and observations from the graduate themselves and the employers (table 3 and 4) to arrive at a balance and objective appreciation of data, taking into account also the standards provided by the regulatory bodies.

The data presents a generally positive outcome of the PhDEF program learning outcomes, with a majority of respondents expressing agreement or strong agreement regarding their competencies and skills. Across all categories, most participants strongly agree (ranging from 51.9% to 63%) that they have acquired the necessary knowledge, problem-solving

abilities, and leadership skills in their field. Additionally, a smaller percentage (22.2% to 37%) agree with the statements, further reinforcing the overall satisfaction with the program. However, neutrality can be noted from the result (0% to 11.1%) and slight disagreement (11.1% in most categories), indicating areas where improvements may be necessary.

**Table 3.**

Alumni Self-Evaluation on the Relevance of the PhDEF Outcomes

Program Learning Outcomes	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I am able to design educational programs and systems to improve educational practice	11.1%	0%	7.4%	25.9%	55.6%
2. I exhibit the ability to make informed judgments on complex issues in specific field of specialization, and to approach and solve problems in innovative ways	11.1%	0%	3.7%	22.2%	63%
3. I manifest social consciousness, concern for aesthetic and cultural heritage, and deep resolve to promote sustainable development through research-based policy actions and advocacy	11.1%	0%	11.1%	14.8%	63%
4. I demonstrate highly advanced systematic knowledge and skills in highly specialization and/or complex interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary field of learning	14.8%	0%	0%	25.9%	59.3%
5. I utilize complex research/creative work and/or professional practice and/or the advancement of learning with full independence in individual work and/or in teams of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary setting	11.1%	0%	0%	29.6%	59.3%
6. I apply more complex setting that demands leadership in research and creative work with strategic value added	11.1%	0%	0%	37%	51.9%
7. I apply significant level of expertise-based autonomy and accountability to professional leadership for innovation, research and/or development management in highly specialized or interdisciplinary field	11.1%	0%	3.7%	33.3%	51.9%
8. I am able to extend knowledge or generate new knowledge through research	11.1%	0%	7.4%	22.2%	59.3%
9. I demonstrate a comprehensive in-depth understanding of a complex and coherent body of knowledge (e.g. theories, principles and concepts) and skills (e.g. problem solving and communication skills) that are in the forefront of the foundations of education	11.1%	0%	3.7%	22.2%	63%

*Legend: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Neutral (N); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)*

One of the key strengths reflected in the data is the respondents' confidence in their specialized knowledge and research capabilities. The highest percentage of "Strongly Agree" responses were observed in statements related to making informed judgments in their field (63%), demonstrating an in-depth understanding of educational theories and principles (63%), and manifesting social consciousness and sustainability (63%). This means that the program effectively prepares graduate students with a strong theoretical foundation and the ability to engage in critical analysis and research.

Furthermore, the data highlights a strong result in the ability to work independently or in interdisciplinary teams, with 59.3% of respondents strongly agreeing that they can engage in complex research and professional practice. A similar percentage also expressed confidence in their ability to demonstrate advanced systematic knowledge in their specialization. These findings are consistent with Schwandt (2015), who argues that graduate education enhances independent thinking and leadership in research and practice. Likewise, 55.6% strongly agreed that they can design educational programs and systems to improve practice, demonstrating an ability to apply their knowledge to real-world contexts.

Despite the positive responses, some areas for improvement were identified. A consistent 11.1% of respondents expressed disagreement across multiple indicators, while neutrality ranged from 3.7% to 11.1%. One notable area is the research-based leadership training. While 51.9% strongly agreed that they can apply expertise-based autonomy and accountability in leadership roles, 33.3% only agreed, and 3.7% remained neutral. This implies that while many students feel confident in their research abilities, some may require further mentoring or hands-on experience in research leadership. Research has shown that mentorship and applied training are crucial for graduate students to transition effectively into leadership roles (Austin & McDaniels, 2006).

Another area of concern is the confidence in innovative problem-solving and decision-making. A total of 11.1% of respondents either disagreed or remained neutral regarding their ability to make informed judgments and solve complex issues in innovative ways. This may indicate a need for more experiential learning opportunities, real-world decision-making scenarios, or collaboration with industry experts to enhance problem-solving confidence. Kolb (2014) suggests that experiential learning, where students engage in active problem-solving and hands-on projects, can help bridge this gap.

Furthermore, while 51.9% strongly agreed that they could apply leadership in complex research and creative work, 37% only agreed, and 11.1% disagreed. This highlights the need for more practical leadership training, real-world engagement, and opportunities for hands-on project management. The findings imply that students might benefit from action research projects with leadership components, simulation-based training for decision-making in educational settings, or peer mentorship programs to strengthen leadership confidence.

The implications of these findings suggest that the PhD EF program should incorporate more experiential and applied learning approaches. Because of neutral and slightly disagreeing responses, this indicates that students may require more exposure to internships, case-based learning, and collaborative projects with educational institutions and policymakers.

In general, the findings suggest that graduates of PhD EF perceive themselves as highly competent in their specialization, research skills, and leadership abilities, with the majority

strongly agreeing that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes. However, some areas require enhancement, particularly in research leadership training, innovative problem-solving, and applied leadership skills.

The evaluation results showed a generally strong performance across various competencies required for the PhDEF program, with most indicators receiving high ratings in the "Strongly Agree" (30%-70%) and "Agree" (20%-60%) areas. With this data, it implies that the employees, who are graduates of the said program, demonstrate expertise in different areas, particularly in research, leadership, and innovative problem-solving. However, there are still some areas that need to be considered for enhancement of the program, particularly in technology integration and adjustment to leadership responsibilities.

This result was clearly observed in the narratives of the employers. Employer A directly stated "The employee demonstrates a strong understanding of the subjects she teaches. She regularly integrates the latest educational trends and methodologies into her lessons, enhancing student engagement and comprehension. While her content knowledge is solid, there is room for growth in terms of incorporating more advanced technologies in lesson delivery. She consistently produces accurate, thorough, and high-quality work, paying attention to detail".

Moreover, the strength observed in the evaluation is the employee's ability to make informed judgments and solve complex problems innovatively. With 60% of respondents strongly agreeing and 30% agreeing with this statement, it is evident that the employee is adept at critical thinking and decision-making within their specialization. Additionally, the ability to generate new knowledge through research (50% strongly agree, 40% agree) reinforces the importance of research-driven education.

Another key strength highlighted in the evaluation is leadership potential and research autonomy. The employees received strong ratings in areas requiring professional leadership, expertise-based autonomy, and accountability (60% strongly agree, 40% agree). Employer B commends the employee that states "He has the potential of being a compassionate, well informed and innovative practitioner of PhD EF. Given the right opportunity and support systems, he has the potential of being an educational leader". Furthermore, their ability to design educational programs and systems was well recognized (40% strongly agree, 50% agree), demonstrating their capacity for curriculum and institutional development. It is supported by the observation of employer C that said "Employs innovative strategies & materials in the delivery of the competencies being developed among the students"

**Table 4.**  
Employers' Evaluation on the Relevance of the PhDEF Outcomes

<b>Program Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
1. The employee is able to design educational programs and systems to improve educational practice	40%	50%	0%	10%	0%
2. The employee exhibits the ability to make informed judgments on complex issues in specific field of specialization, and to approach and solve problems in innovative ways	60%	30%	0%	10%	0%
3. The employee manifests social consciousness, concern for aesthetic and cultural heritage, and deep resolve to promote sustainable development through research-based policy actions and advocacy	60%	30%	0%	10%	0%
4. The employee demonstrates highly advanced systematic knowledge and skills in highly specialization and/or complex interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary field of learning	60%	30%	0%	10%	0%
5. She/He is able to utilize complex research/creative work and/or professional practice and/or the advancement of learning with full independence in individual work and/or in teams of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary setting	50%	40%	0%	10%	0%
6. The employee applies more complex setting that demands leadership in research and creative work with strategic value added	30%	60%	0%	10%	0%
7. The employee applies significant level of expertise-based autonomy and accountability to professional leadership for innovation, research and/or development management in highly specialized or interdisciplinary field	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
8. The employee is able to extend knowledge or generate new knowledge through research	50%	40%	0%	10%	0%
9. The employee demonstrates a comprehensive in-depth understanding of a complex and coherent body of knowledge (e.g. theories, principles and concepts) and skills (e.g. problem solving and communication skills) that are in the forefront of the foundations of education.	70%	20%	10%	0%	0%

Legend: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Neutral (N); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)

These findings suggest that, with continued mentorship and institutional support, the employee has the potential to take on more significant leadership roles in research and education. According to Fullan (2014), effective educational leadership is essential in fostering school-wide innovation and development, and these results indicate that the employee is on a promising trajectory toward such a role.

The ability to work independently and in teams of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary settings received strong ratings (50% strongly agree, 40% agree), emphasizing the employee's collaborative skills. However, the leadership aspect of research and creative work was slightly lower, with only 30% strongly agreeing and 60% agreeing. This shows that while the employee is competent in leading research, there may still be opportunities to further develop leadership

strategies that add strategic value. With this, encouraging participation in interdisciplinary research collaborations and leadership workshops could enhance this competency.

## **2. Skill Gaps perceived by Employers and Graduates that affect Employability, Work Performance and the Competencies based on the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF)**

Based on the data provided, several skill gaps surface that may affect employability, work performance, and the alignment of competencies with the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF). This framework is one of the bases by the Commission on Higher Education in determining the expected outcomes of doctoral programs being offered by the institutions across the country. Generally, taking off from the findings in the previous objectives, it is clearly observed that graduates of the PhD EF program exhibit a strong foundation in various competencies, while certain areas need further enhancement to meet employer expectations. The following analysis identifies gaps in skills as perceived by both graduates and employers:

### ***a) Leadership and Strategic Decision-Making***

Although 51.9% of graduates strongly agree and 37% agree that they can apply leadership in research and creative work with strategic value-added, employer ratings indicate that only 30% strongly agree, while 60% agree. This suggests that graduates feel confident in their leadership potential; however, employers perceive a gap in their ability to lead effectively in complex settings. As a result, graduates may need additional experience in high-stakes decision-making and organizational leadership.

This gap may stem from the fact that leadership component is not the primary focus of the PhDEF program, which primarily emphasizes advanced theoretical and practical knowledge in educational foundations. However, to address this concern, students may be encouraged to take cognate courses in educational leadership and management to enhance their leadership and decision-making skills.

### ***b) Research and Innovation Skills***

The data shows that 59.3% of graduates strongly agree that they can extend knowledge or generate new knowledge through research. In contrast, only 50% of employers strongly agree, while 40% agree. This highlights the need for graduates to further enhance their research competencies, particularly in developing innovative solutions, conducting high-quality research, and translating research into practical applications. Moreover, employers

may expect graduates to have more experience in advanced research methodologies, data analysis, and scholarly publication. Although the program's curriculum is designed to equip students with research expertise, alumni often struggle to apply and refine these competencies due to workplace limitations. For instance, many employees in the Department of Education (DepEd) have limited opportunities to conduct research due to various ancillary tasks and work designations. Additionally, research is not a mandated responsibility and function for teachers and leaders in DepEd, unlike in State Universities and Colleges, where research output is an institutional mandate and commitment.

### ***c) Advanced Systematic Knowledge and Interdisciplinary Skills***

Alumni believe they demonstrate highly advanced systematic knowledge in their specialization (59.3% strongly agree, 25.9% agree), yet employer responses indicate a lower level of confidence, with only 60% strongly agreeing and 30% agreeing. The presence of a 10% disagreement among employers suggests that some graduates may not fully meet industry expectations for deep expertise in interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary fields. This could be due to a lack of exposure to applied learning experiences or industry collaborations during their studies.

### ***d) Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking***

Graduates rate themselves highly in their ability to make informed judgments and solve problems in innovative ways (63% strongly agree, 22.2% agree), yet employer ratings show 60% strongly agree and 30% agree. The 10% disagreement among employers suggests that some graduates may struggle with complex decision-making in practical workplace scenarios. Employers may expect a higher level of adaptability, analytical reasoning, and real-world application of theoretical knowledge.

## **3. Industry Trends and Employment Demands of the PhD in Educational Foundations (PhDEF) Program**

The employment trends of PhD in Educational Foundations (PhDEF) graduates present a clear demand for advanced academic and leadership roles within the education sector, particularly in public institutions. The employment distribution of the PhDEF alumni show a strong trend in teaching roles, with classroom teachers (22.2%) and master teachers (18.5%). In addition, faculty in higher education institutions (Assistant Professors and Instructors) obtained a result of 18.5%, while school administrators (Principals and Education Supervisors) factored in 18.5%. A smaller percentage (11.1%) of graduates hold positions

outside teaching and administrative roles, while others (11.2%) such as self-employment or fund campaign work or due to retirement and personal choice are also taken into account.

**Table 5.**

Industry trends and employment demands of the PhD in Educational Foundations (PhDEF) Program

<b>Roles/Trends</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Classroom Teachers	22.2%
Master Teachers	18.5%
Assistant Professors and Instructors	18.5%
School Administrators (Principals and Education Supervisors)	18.5%
Outside Teaching and Administrative Roles	11.1%
Self-Employed and Retired	11.2%

The employment trends of PhD EF graduates emphasize teaching and leadership demand in both higher education institutions and K to 12 basic education institutions. The increasing need for academic faculty, school leaders, and supervisors reflects broader trends in Philippine education, where doctoral qualifications are increasingly valued for research, instruction, and administrative roles. With this, to align with industry demands, the program should continue to emphasize research, curriculum innovation, and leadership development. To sustain the relevance of the program, the PhDEF program must align with national and international education standards, particularly the requirement of the Commission on Higher Education for doctorate level, as underscored also in the Philippine Qualifications Framework. Strengthening competence in research, policy-making, and leadership aspect will enhance the ability of the graduates to meet industry needs and employment demands.

**4. Actionable Recommendations for program Enhancement to address identified Skill Gaps, and Enhance Graduate Competencies for increased competitiveness in the job market.**

In consideration of the findings that stem from the objectives of this study, the following recommendations are forwarded for consideration of the program PhD in Educational Foundations to be able to address gaps, and enhance the competencies of its graduates necessary to maintaining the relevance of the program to the market, which is basically the field of education.

- a. It is recommended that the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Foundations (PhDEF) program be revised to comply with Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 15, series of 2019, and align with Level 8 of the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF). In addition, vertical articulation of the program is suggested to strengthen its niche and specialization.
- b. To enhance program outcomes and align with industry demands, faculty members teaching in the program should be actively engaged in research and extension activities, conferences, seminars, and training programs, particularly on content necessary for the furtherance of the specialization. By engaging them in these initiatives, they will be able to enrich their expertise and enable them to integrate current theories, concepts, and best practices into their teaching.
- c. Students should be immersed in the cultural and professional realities of the teaching field. It is also recommended that they participate in research collaborations, partnerships, paper presentations, and academic publications to develop their scholarly competencies and professional networks. This may be integrated in the course works of the students while completing the required academic subjects.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results, discussion, analysis of the data, the following conclusions are derived:

The PhDEF program has a high employment percentage of 96.2%, where most graduates have secured positions in education, either teaching or administrative roles, particularly in government institutions such as the Department of Education (DepEd), State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), and Commission on Higher Education (CHED), indicating high relevance of the program to the current job market, aligned with the target industry;

The graduates or alumni of the PhD EF program possess observable competencies in teaching and research; however, both alumni and employers noted skill gaps in leadership, decision-making, and research innovation, which are needed by the industry;

The majority of graduates work as educators/teachers, administrators, and researchers. There is a demand for more specialization and leadership roles, particularly in higher education and policy-making; and

The PhDEF program aligns with national standards but requires refinements to further enhance research, leadership, and interdisciplinary skills.

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