
Choice of Program as a Predictor of Employability: A Comparative Study of BTLEd Graduates from the University of Rizal System

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Abstract — The transition from higher education to the workforce is influenced by various factors, among which initial program choice has emerged as a significant determinant of professional outcomes. This study investigated whether entering a degree program as a first or second preference serves as a significant predictor of employability for Bachelor in Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLEd) major in Home Economics graduates at the University of Rizal System, Morong Campus. Utilizing a descriptive research design with total enumeration, the study tracked 135 graduates from the 2022, 2023, and 2024 cohorts. Data were collected through an adapted Graduate Tracer Survey. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the relationship between program choice, employment status, and career alignment. The findings revealed a predominant female majority and a significant "First Choice" advantage. Graduates who prioritized BTLEd as their first choice demonstrated a higher employment rate compared to second-choice graduates. Statistically, a highly significant relationship was found between program choice and both employability and career alignment. Specifically, 85.29% of first-choice graduates successfully entered the teaching profession, whereas 65.63% of second-choice graduates transitioned into diverse, non-teaching roles. The study finds that a student's initial commitment to the program strongly predicts their future career path. Although the BTLEd degree prepares graduates for many different jobs, it is most effective at producing teachers when the student is genuinely motivated and focused on an education career from the start.

Keywords: *Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education, Home Economics, Program Choice, Employability, Career Alignment, Graduate Tracer Study, University of Rizal System.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The employability of higher education graduates has become a central measure of academic quality and program relevance, particularly within the field of teacher education. As labor market demands evolve in response to technological, economic, and societal forces, universities are compelled to look beyond traditional indicators of learning and examine the broader factors that shape graduates' career outcomes. One emerging area of interest is the influence of program choice specifically whether students enter a degree program as their first or second preference on their professional readiness and eventual success in the job market. This seemingly simple decision at the point of admission reflects deeper aspects of student motivation, interest alignment, and career intention. Consequently, program choice may carry significant implications for academic engagement, the development of professional identity, and the trajectory of graduates' employment pathways.

Within this context, the Bachelor in Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLEd) program of the University of Rizal System (URS) plays a vital role in producing competent educators equipped for the K-12 and Matatag Curriculum's Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) specialization. Students enter the program for varying reasons: some select BTLEd as their first-choice program, reflecting strong intrinsic motivation, early career clarity, or alignment with personal interests. Others enter the program as a second-choice option, often due to admission constraints, shifting preferences, or limited program vacancies. These differences may influence not only academic performance but also professional readiness, confidence, and marketability, factors closely linked to employability.

This research aimed to determine whether program choice serves as a significant predictor of employability and career alignment among BTLEd Home Economics graduates of the University of Rizal System from 2022 to 2024. To achieve the general objective, the study seeks to: identify the distribution of graduates based on their gender and whether BTLEd was their first or second choice of program upon enrollment, compare the current employment rates of graduates who selected the program as their first choice and those who selected it as a second choice. Evaluate the alignment between the graduates' current jobs and the BTLEd curriculum and analyze if there is a significant relationship between program choice, employability and career alignment

Literature Review

The idea that program choice predicts employability is supported in earlier literature. [1] Yorke states that motivation is linked to strong learner performance and job readiness. [2] Jackson explains that employability is shaped not only by technical skills but also by motivation, confidence, and commitment to a chosen career path. [3] Fernandez and San Jose highlight that students' motivations for choosing a course may inform academic direction. Further, institutions should consider enhancing career intervention programs that connect students' course motivations with practical and emotional preparedness. Introducing development-focused guidance early in the academic timeline may ensure that students not only choose their programs for meaningful reasons but also build the competencies necessary to pursue fulfilling careers. [4] Briones and Rubi emphasize that students' career success can be best attained if proper guidance is given in selecting the right course in college, suited to students' personality, ability, and intellect. Students at present consider the marketability of their chosen course, for as soon as they graduate, they are expected to support the family.

In the Philippines, various HEIs, especially state universities involved in teacher education, have been performing research to evaluate their alumni's employability. [5] Oboza's evaluation of 38 teacher education graduates of a state university found that 21% acquired a job within one to six months, and 42% acquired a job through referrals. Most respondents reported challenges in finding work, such as a lack of job openings and available positions. The results proved that skills in technical knowledge, research, communication, problem solving, leadership, and human relation are beneficial in the job. [6] In Pardo and Pichay's study, 80% on 320 graduates of batch 2016 of a college of teacher education are employed, entailing a high employment rate due to the increased demand for teachers in the Philippines because of the adoption of the K-12 program. [7] Edmond studies further show mixed results as regards the engagement of females and males in Extra-curricular Activities as well as in developing employability skills due to contextual and perceptual differences. Given the relevance of employability skills and ECAs in preparing employable graduates [8] James & Yun, it was imperative to explore the current status of male and female students concerning their skills and engagement in ECAs, as well as their intention to become either self-employed or seek paid employment. [9] Pentang et al. observed that teacher education graduates who entered their programs with a 'strong passion for the

teaching profession' demonstrated significantly higher rates of employability and licensure success. [10] Tuyor, Merbeta and Miraflor highlight that intrinsic motivation (personal interest and satisfaction) is a primary driver for successful educational and career outcomes. Their data suggests that students who are amotivated or choose a program due to misconceptions (extrinsic pressure) often face more significant challenges in the labor market. [11] A study by Amanonce and Maramag examined teacher education graduates in the Philippines and found that those who had a "high level of interest" and "personal choice" in their degree were significantly more likely to be employed in jobs directly related to their training. Their data showed that graduates who did not view teaching as their first choice often experienced "occupational mismatch," shifting to administrative or retail roles instead.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive research design, which identified the employment status, nature of work, curriculum relevance to your job. The design was appropriate because the study aimed to compare the employability outcomes of two groups of graduates. The statistical treatment appropriate for this study is frequency and percentage to describe the employability profile of BTLED graduates in terms of employment status, and curriculum relevance to their current job. The study utilized Total Enumeration to ensure comprehensive data representation. The respondents included the entire population of BTLED graduates major in Home Economics from the academic years 2022 to 2024. The study focused on BTLED graduates from the academic years 2022 to 2024. The 135 graduates were identified through total enumeration.

The researcher utilized questionnaire- survey adapted from the Commission on Higher Education Graduate Tracer Survey. Prior to data collection, approval to conduct the study was secured from the concerned university authorities. The researcher then contacted graduate respondents through official channels and online platforms. The questionnaire was distributed through an online survey platform, depending. The purpose of the study and instructions for answering the questionnaire were clearly explained. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the instrument, and follow-ups were conducted to increase the response rate. Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and

respondents were informed about the purpose of the research before answering the questionnaire. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and no personal identifying information was disclosed. Respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

The statistical treatment appropriate for this study includes both descriptive and inferential techniques to address the research objectives. Frequency and percentage will be used to describe the profile (program choice and sex) and employability of BTLEd graduates in terms of employment status, nature of work, To compare the employability outcomes of first choice and second-choice graduates, the Chi-square test of independence will be employed.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

The following tables show the profile of the respondents in terms of sex and program choice. Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of Program Choice. The first table shows that BTLEd Home Economics is a primary choice for most students, but it also serves as a significant secondary option for many. Out of 135 total graduates over the three-year period, 58.52% enrolled in the program as their First Choice. This suggests a strong, consistent interest in the Home Economics field among the student body. However, a substantial 41.48% entered the program as their Second Choice. While the program continues to draw students who are deeply committed to the field, it also serves as a valuable alternative for those who successfully pivot from their initial career preferences.

TABLE 1
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS IN TERMS OF PROGRAM CHOICE

BTLEd Major in Home Economics Batch Batch	First Choice		Second Choice	
	Number of Graduates	%	Number of Graduates	%
2022	20	62.50	12	37.50
2023	24	57.14	18	42.86
2024	35	57.38	26	42.62
Total	79	58.52	56	41.48

Table 2 presents the profile of respondents in terms of Gender.

TABLE 2
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS IN TERMS OF GENDER

BTLEd Major in Home Economics Batch	First Choice				Second Choice			
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%
2022	2	6.25	18	56.25	3	9.38	9	28.13
2023	5	11.90	19	45.24	7	16.67	11	26.19
2024	4	6.56	31	50.82	7	11.48	19	31.15
Total	11	8.12	68	50.37	17	12.59	39	28.89

It can be observed from the table, a significant gender disparity is evident among the graduates of the BTLEd major in Home Economics. The data reflects a predominant female majority, suggesting that the curriculum and its associated career paths align more closely with the professional interests and academic inclinations of female students. Furthermore, a distinct pattern emerges regarding program prioritization. While female graduates typically pursued the program as their primary field of interest, their male counterparts more frequently selected Home Economics as a second choice. This indicates that while the program is a destination of choice for females, it often serves as an alternative or secondary academic path for male students. Similar to the study of Edmond that further show mixed results as regards the engagement of females and males in extra-curricular activities as well as in developing employability skills due to contextual and perceptual differences. Moreso, James & Yun, emphasizes that it was imperative to explore the current status of male and female students concerning their skills and engagement in ECAs, as well as their intention to become either self-employed or seek paid employment.

Employment Data of the Respondents

The following tables shows the employment data of BTLEd major in HE graduates in terms employment status, nature of work and years in service.

Table 3 shows the employment data of the respondents in terms of employment status.

TABLE 3
EMPLOYMENT DATA OF THE RESPONDENTS IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS

BTLEd Major in Home Economics Batch	First Choice				Second Choice			
	Employed	%	Not Employed	%	Employed	%	Not Employed	%
2022	20	62.50	0	0	9	28.13	3	9.38
2023	22	52.38	2	4.76	12	28.57	6	14.29
2024	26	42.62	9	14.75	11	18.03	15	24.59
Total	69	51.11	11	8.15	32	23.70	23	17.04

The data on the table indicates a strong positive correlation between initial program preference and successful employment outcomes. Graduates who prioritized BTLEd as their first choice represent the most successful demographic, accounting for 51.11% of the total population currently employed. This group maintained a high level of career stability across the three-year period, with a minimal unemployment rate of only 8.15%. These results suggest that primary alignment with the curriculum fosters greater professional readiness and labor market integration.

In contrast, graduates who selected the program as a second choice experienced significantly higher rates of job seeking. While 23.7% of the total graduates in this category secured positions, nearly 17% remain unemployed. It can be implied that “first-choice advantage” can be considered a predictor of employability.

These findings align with a study by Oboza (2017), which evaluated 38 teacher education graduates from a state university. The study revealed that while 21% of graduates secured employment within six months, 42% found positions through professional referrals. Despite these successes, many respondents identified limited job openings as a primary barrier to employment.

Furthermore, the research emphasized that proficiency in technical knowledge, communication, leadership, and problem solving is essential for professional success.

Table 4 present the employment data of the respondents in terms of Nature of Work

TABLE 4
PRESENT THE EMPLOYMENT DATA OF THE RESPONDENTS IN TERMS OF
NATURE OF WORK

BTLED Major in Home Economics Batch	First Choice				Second Choice			
	TEACHING		NOT		TEACHING		NOT	
		%	TEACHING RELATED	%		%	TEACHING RELATED	%
2022	16	80.00	4	20.00	3	33.33	6	66.67
2023	19	86.36	3	13.64	3	25.00	9	75.00
2024	23	88.46	3	11.54	5	45.45	6	54.55
Total	58	85.29	10	14.71	11	34.38	21	65.63

The data shows a major gap in career outcomes based on whether a student chose the program by heart or as a backup. Graduates who picked BTLED as their First Choice show an incredible success rate in entering the classroom, with 85.29% now working as teachers. This suggests that for these students, the curriculum perfectly matched their career goals. However, for those who landed in the program as a Second Choice, the degree often serves as a general stepping stone to other jobs rather than a direct path to teaching. This suggests that passion for the subject is the biggest factor in whether a graduate actually uses their degree for its intended purpose.

In a related study, Pardo and Pichay (2019) reported that 80% of 320 graduates successfully entered the workforce. They attributed this success to the nationwide transition to the K-12 curriculum, which created an urgent need for additional teaching staff.

Significant Relationship Between Program Choice and Employability and Career Alignment

The following tables presents the significant relationship between program choice, employability and career alignment.

Table 5 present the significant relationship between program choice and employability.

TABLE 5
SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROGRAM CHOICE AND EMPLOYABILITY

BTLED Major in Home Economics Batch	Program Choice	Employment Status		Total	X ²	df	p-value
		Employed	Unemployed				
2022	First Choice	20	0	20	5.52	1	0.02
	Second Choice	9	3	12			
2023	First Choice	22	2	24	4.17	1	0.04
	Second Choice	12	6	18			
2024	First Choice	26	9	35	6.39	1	0.01
	Second Choice	11	15	21			
Total	First Choice	69	11	80	13.63	1	<.001
	Second Choice	32	23	55			

It is statistically found out that the results shows that a student's initial interest in the program is a very strong predictor of their employment success for BTLEd graduates. In each individual batch, the p-values remained below the 0.05 proving that the connection between a student's choice and their employment is statistically reliable. Whether a student picked the program as their first choice or their second choice made a real, measurable difference in how quickly they found a job.

It can be implied that across all batches, the data consistently shows that students who entered the program with a primary interest in Home Economics were better positioned for the workforce. This suggests that initial commitment serves as a vital foundation for career readiness, as these students likely maintained higher levels of persistence and professional focus throughout their academic journey.

Relative to a study of Petang et.al to which they have found that graduates who entered teacher education programs with a "strong passion for the teaching profession" showed higher rates of employability and licensure success. This aligns with your finding that "initial interest" acts as a vital foundation for career readiness.

Table 6 present the significant relationship between program choice and career alignment.

TABLE 6
SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROGRAM CHOICE AND
EMPLOYABILITY.

BTLEd Major in Home Economics Batch	Program Choice	Employment Status		Total	X ²	df	p-value
		Teaching	Not Teaching				
2022	First Choice	16	4	20	5.98	1	0.01
	Second Choice	3	6	9			
2023	First Choice	19	3	22	12.80	1	<.001
	Second Choice	3	9	12			
2024	First Choice	23	3	26	7.77	1	0.03
	Second Choice	5	6	11			
Total	First Choice	58	10	68	26.38	1	<.001
	Second Choice	11	21	32			

It is statistically found out that the results indicate a highly significant relationship between a graduate's initial program choice and the nature of their current work. Across all three batches, the p-values consistently fall below the 0.05 significance level. This confirms that the tendency for first-choice graduates to enter teaching roles is a reliable pattern.

The data reveals that initial intent is a primary driver of career trajectory. For students who entered the program as their first choice or with the clear goal of becoming Home Economics educators, the transition into the classroom is nearly seamless, with the vast majority fulfilling their professional aspirations. In contrast, those who selected the program as a secondary choice are significantly more likely to apply their degree toward diverse roles in other industries.

This suggests that while the curriculum provides a versatile foundation, its professional impact is most profound when it aligns with a student's personal career goals from the outset. Essentially, the "First Choice" advantage acts as a bridge between academic training and its intended professional application.

A study by Amanonce and Maramag examined teacher education graduates in the Philippines and found that those who had a "high level of interest" and "personal choice" in their degree were significantly more likely to be employed in jobs directly related to their training. Their data showed that graduates who did not view teaching as their first choice often experienced "occupational mismatch," shifting to administrative or retail roles instead.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, program choice is a strong predictor of success. Students who enter the BTLED program with the clear goal of becoming teachers are much more likely to find jobs and stay in the education field. While the curriculum is effective, its impact is strongest when matched with student passion. For those who enter the program as a "Second Choice" the degree still helps them get hired, but they are far more likely to leave the teaching profession for other types of work. This shows that initial commitment is just as important as classroom learning for long-term career success.

To improve the outcomes for future graduates, it is recommended that the University implement a more comprehensive Career Orientation and Pre Admission Counseling program. Since initial intent is a strong predictor of success, helping applicants understand the BTLED career path can bridge the gap between enrollment and professional commitment. For current "Second Choice" students, the department should provide targeted mentorship and early interventions to help them find value in the teaching profession and maintain motivation.

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