

Effectiveness of Laddered Preschool Education Program in Preparing Preschool Teachers

Rebecca Rosario O. Bercasio

Bicol University Center for Teaching Excellence, Legazpi City
Correspondence: rrobercasio@bicol-u.edu.ph

Abstract

The delivery of the teacher education program needs to be given utmost importance by the university because what happens in the teacher preparation may influence what they would do in the classrooms as teachers. This descriptive-evaluative study identified the effectiveness of the Laddered Preschool Education offered by Bicol University for academic year 2013-2017. Data were gathered from licensure examination for teachers (LET)-like Exit Examination results of the students and preschool teachers, class observations, focus group discussions and interviews with faculty and students, and licensure examination results. The students had very satisfactory performance in the Exit Examination, and encountered challenges along academic, immersions and non-academic concerns. The students' proficiency level in the core competencies has been found to be significantly better than the practicing preschool teachers or their cooperating teachers. Similarly, the overall performance in the licensure examinations was found to be higher than the target set by the university at 70% passing rate and 26.33% national passing rate. Lastly, the employers' and prospective employers' feedback indicate the competence of the program's graduates, as well as their strengths as prospective preschool teachers. The continuing offering of the program is highly recommended. Considering the implementation of the new Teacher Education curriculum in the country, the measures to address the challenges such as those related to capacity-building activities and instructional resources be sustained.

Keywords: *preschool education, pre-service training, responsive curriculum, teacher education program*

Introduction

The Philippines has taken major steps toward the attainment of Education for All (EFA) goals with the implementation of the Kindergarten Education Act (RA 10157) and the Enhanced Basic Education Program (RA 10533). Amid these education reforms, innovation in the Teacher Education Program is essential. A Teacher Education program in preschool education which is aligned with K to 12 is exigent *to* adequately prepare early childhood education teachers. Literature show that specialized trainings, bachelor's degree or higher levels of education in early childhood education and development may better prepare teachers to provide high-quality classroom environments, promote academic achievement, and help improve teachers' interaction with children in ways that positively affect learning (Barnett, 2004; Barnett *et al.*, 2005; Bowman *et al.*, 2000).

The Kindergarten Education Act (RA 10157) succinctly states that importance of early childhood education as shown in these lines:

Kindergarten education is vital to the academic and technical development of the Filipino child for it is the period when the young mind's absorptive capacity for learning is at its sharpest. It is also the policy of the State to make education learner-oriented and responsive to the needs, cognitive and cultural capacity, the circumstances and diversity of learners, schools and communities through the appropriate languages of teaching and learning.

Relatedly, the skills and knowledge that the child develops in preschool have a great impact on the aptitude and attitude of the child later in life (Kaushik & Marhawa, 2014). And the effectiveness of teaching and learning in preschool depends on the implementation which involves teachers who really understand, appreciate, and are able to carry out the teaching and learning as intended (Yong *et al.*, 2015). Given the importance of early childhood education, it is imperative for the nation to invest in the teacher preparation of preschool teachers who will be responsible for the facilitation of the early years learning. As posited by Tremblay and colleagues

(2011), optimizing the early years of children's lives is the best investment society can make in ensuring their future success.

The enriched laddered Teacher Education in Preschool Education which was found to have full fidelity with the Teacher Education Program since it is compliant with the minimum requirements of Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order No. 30, s. 2004 (Llenaresas *et al.*, 2015), was designed to be responsive to the changes and challenges brought about by K to 12 and Universal Kindergarten Education. An evaluation of the program will yield grounded insights and experiences which can significantly help ensure quality early childhood education in the Bicol region, if not in the country, since the early childhood education workforce plays a pivotal role in expanding and improving early childhood care and education (Sun *et al.*, 2015). In particular, the academic program will help in properly and adequately training the prospective preschool teachers and therefore provide the region and the country with competent and committed preschool teachers who will compose an effective workforce in the kindergarten.

Overall, the review of related literature and studies is anchored on the idea that the foundation for educational reforms can be found within the realm of a comprehensive model for teacher training and development built around developing teaching competence in both content and pedagogy. The focus is on the necessity and effectiveness of preschool teachers' preparation, capacity building and professionalization of the Kindergarten workforce to children's learning and program quality.

Currently, widely recognized is that qualified teachers are an essential component of preschool programs that result in improved outcomes for young children (Barnett, 2004; Whitebook, 2003). Children who are educated by teachers with both a bachelor's degree and specialized training in child development and early education have been found to be more sociable, exhibit a more developed use of language, and perform at a higher level on cognitive tasks than children who are cared for by less-qualified adults (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Howes, 2008). These research bases, along with the evidence attesting to the long-term impacts of high-quality preschool programs on children's social and academic success (Barnett, 1998; Campbell *et al.*, 2001), have contributed to an increased demand for qualified preschool teachers.

Recent studies verified that professional

qualifications of teachers, both before they enter the classroom and once there, are closely related to the overall quality of early learning programs. Researches indicate that specialized trainings, bachelor's degree or higher levels of education in early childhood education and development may better prepare teachers to provide high-quality classroom environments, promote academic achievement and help improve teachers' interaction with children in ways that positively affect learning (Barnett, 2004; Barnett *et al.*, 2005; Bowman *et al.*, 2000). Additionally, teacher's academic preparation, such as having Child Development Associate Certificate, bachelor's degree in early childhood education or overall educational qualifications of the teacher, is noted as a factor for children's improvement in their ability to rhyme and name letters, numbers and colors (National Center for Early Development and Learning, 2006), promotion of language acquisition and students' engagement in more creative activities and complex plays (Howes & Brown, 2008), and in general, children's learning and development (Barret, 2004). The skilled professionals can more effectively promote and support young children's cognitive, social, and emotional growth when they know how to capitalize on the period of critical early brain development (Bueno *et al.*, 2010).

The ability of the early childhood field to successfully meet higher pre-K teacher-qualification requirements will largely depend on the capacity of the higher education community (Bueno *et al.*, 2010). In the Philippines' case, building the preservice teachers' capacities is at the heart of the programs and learning opportunities provided by teacher education institutions (TEIs). Providing the necessary support for teachers to be effective is a crucial step in closing the persistent achievement gap and setting children on a path toward success. (Kamprath & Ullrich, 2016). Considering the importance of providing quality preservice training to produce effective teachers, it is necessary for these institutions to have an effective academic program that is student-centered, responsive, relevant, and research-based.

Clearly, early childhood education is a worthy investment and the teacher's role in it is important. Premised on the belief that developing the prospective preschool teachers' competence through an enriched laddered academic program will help improve the quality of early childhood education in the region and the country, it is necessary to determine the program's effectiveness to inform its delivery in the succeeding years and to institutionalize policies and measures to improve, if not sustain, its effective delivery.

This study explored the effectiveness of the laddered preschool education program offered by Bicol University in preparing preschool teachers guided by the following research objectives:

1. Identify the students' level of proficiency along the following competencies:
 - a. Planning learning experiences, classroom teaching and assessment;
 - b. Preparing instructional materials;
 - c. Managing routine classroom activities;
 - d. Preparing activity proposals for community linkages; and
 - e. Demonstration of love for children;
2. Identify difficulties encountered by the prospective preschool teachers in terms of academics, fieldwork/immersion, and non-academic concerns;
3. Identify measures adopted by the college to address their difficulties; and
4. Identify the program's effectiveness in preparing the preschool teachers as revealed by performance in the licensure examination, proficiency level in core competencies as compared to selected preschool teachers, and evaluation of prospective employers.

Theoretical Framework

An academic program's effectiveness is crucial to ensuring that graduates attain the program learning outcomes and the institutional learning outcomes thus making them qualified and competent professionals capable of addressing the demands of the profession or industry. Essentially, the effectiveness of an academic program is an issue on its responsiveness, responsiveness to the state standards through a licensure examination, to the target performance set by the university, as well as to the demands of the education sector through the prospective employer or employers.

According to Bird and colleagues (2012), a "responsive curriculum" consists of two components: (1) the ability to identify that a change is needed; and (2) the ability to make that change in an appropriate time scale in the context of "responsiveness" as the ability to recognize change drivers, and to make changes in a timely manner. Bird *et al.* (2012) assert further that in developing a

responsive curriculum, there is an interaction of three components of the model: the drivers (things that bring about the need for change); the course elements (things that can be changed); and the course team (the agents that mediate change). Figure 1 shows Bird and colleagues' paradigm of defining a responsive curriculum adopted by this study.

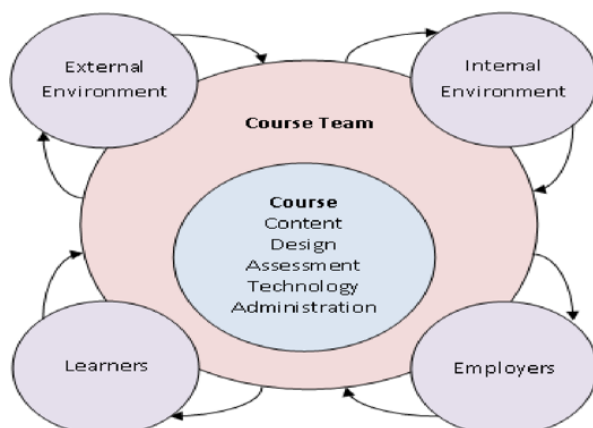


Figure 1. Defining a 'responsive curriculum'(Bird, Forsyth & Whitton, 2012)

Based on Bird and colleagues' model, the change drivers include the external environment, including economic factors and changes in regulation and government policy; the internal environment, including changes in policy and systems, and other university departments, for example quality assurance; the learners; and employers and regulatory bodies. The change agents also called as the course team is at the core of this model. They are the people responsible for designing, delivering and supporting the course (including academic, support, technical, and administrative staff), who are responsible both for identifying the need for change through interaction with the drivers, and effecting change through interaction with the course. Lastly, the course elements contain five areas that can be subject to change: (1) the course content (what is being taught?); (2) the course design, including elements such as pedagogic design, delivery and support (how is the course taught?); (3) assessment; (4) technology, and (5) administration, including systems and procedures.

In this study, the external environment considered includes the implementation of the educational laws and policies in the Philippines such as Republic Act 10533, also known as the K to 12 Program, and Republic Act 10157, referred to as the Universal Kindergarten

Education Act. The internal environment includes the university's institutional quality policy which provides that "the university continually strives for excellence in instruction..." which sets a minimum of 70% passing rate in all of its academic programs with licensure examinations. The learners involved in this research are preservice teachers taking Bachelor in Elementary Education in the Bicol University Main Campus. The prospective employers and employers include cooperating teachers and officials of the cooperating schools under the Department of Education, and the school officials of selected private schools which hire teachers prior to the results of the licensure examination. The change agents involved in this study are the concerned officials of the university and the college. The course elements considered for the Enriched BEED major in Preschool Education, also known as the Laddered Preschool Education Program, include all the five areas; namely, the course content, the course design, assessment, technology to be utilized, and administration, including systems and procedures observed both in the development, implementation, and evaluation phase of the enriched academic program.

Materials and Methods

Descriptive-evaluative method of research using both quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques was used to generally determine the Laddered Preschool Education program's effectiveness in preparing preschool teachers. Specifically, it used the descriptive method of research to identify the level of proficiency of the students enrolled in the Enriched BEED major in Preschool Education, and the challenges encountered in terms of academics, fieldwork, and non-academic concerns. It also used the developmental-evaluative method of research in developing and evaluating measures adopted to address the challenges encountered by the students, as well as to determine the program's effectiveness in terms of performance in the licensure examination, comparison of students' proficiency level to preschool teachers, and feedback of prospective employers.

Data were gathered using tests, focus group discussions, interview, class observations, workshops, and authentic assessments. The validated LET-like test called the Exit Examination was used to determine the proficiency level in the core competencies of both the students and preschool teachers consisting of their respective cooperating teachers. Focus group discussions

consisting of the faculty handling the courses, and randomly selected students as key informants were conducted to elicit the data on the challenges encountered by the students as well as feedback about the delivery of the academic program. Class observations from January to February 2017 were conducted to determine proficiency level of students as prospective preschool teachers. Interview was used to seek employers' and prospective employers' feedback about the students' performance and competence. Lastly, workshops were conducted to design and develop measures that address the challenges encountered by the students, and the outputs in the form of instructional materials were submitted to experts for validation, and in the form of capacity building were implemented and evaluated by the participants.

The respondents of the study were the 29 fourth year students taking Enriched Bachelor in Elementary Education major in Preschool (Laddered Program) during the first and second semester of school year 2016-2017 and their corresponding cooperating teachers consisting of 16 preschool teachers. Key informants of the study were all the teachers handling the courses in the academic program, 10 randomly selected students, and the cooperating teachers of the 22 students.

Validated researcher-made tools used are as follows: 1) A 60-item LET-like test called the Exit Examination administered to the students at the end of the semester after the practice/preservice teaching, and to their cooperating teachers; 2) Rubric for assessing instructional materials as measures implemented to address the challenges encountered by the students; and 3) interview guide on the feedback of employers, of prospective employers, and cooperating teachers of the students.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, average, and weighted mean were used to interpret the test results. Microsoft Excel 2013 was used for the statistical computations. Qualitative analysis of the observation, comments, suggestions and feedback of the key informants was also done to further support the statistical interpretation of the quantitative data.

Results and Discussion

Level of proficiency of the BEED Preschool Education students per competency

The level of proficiency of the students is determined through a validated LET-like Exit Examination (Ladder

3) in the six core competencies, such as (1) Plan learning experiences and teach; (2) Prepare, use, evaluate, and package instructional materials; (3) Manage routines and facilitate learning engagement in a child-friendly environment; (4) Conduct student assessment, interpret results, and use the results for the improvement of the teaching-learning process; (5) Link with the parents and community for support for educational activities and initiatives; and (6) Demonstrate love for children through appropriate support system.

At the end of the 8th semester, the students were found to have very satisfactory proficiency levels in all the six core competencies as shown in Table 1. This implies that the students performed well on different areas with an overall result of 44.24 out of 60 items. The very satisfactory proficiency level of the students may be attributed to students' active engagement in the different learning activities and positive attitude. Based on the focus group discussion, students revealed that they helped each other in preparing for examinations and in preparing reports and projects. Further, they reported that they use social media to share the topics discussed in class, references, and PowerPoint presentations. They also reported that though they did not find relevant references in the library, their teachers provided them with handouts and website sources which were proven to be helpful in their studies. Overall, these results indicate that the Laddered Teacher Education program was effective.

Difficulties encountered by the prospective preschool teachers

The difficulties encountered by the students are determined through the students and teachers. The students were interviewed throughout their eight semesters in the university. In the series of focus group

discussions and interviews conducted, difficulties in three areas, namely, academic, fieldwork or immersion, and non-academic concerns have been noted.

Academic Concerns

In terms of academic concerns, the students reported there were topics which were unnecessarily repeated, thus a waste of their time and energy. A student specifically noted that “it seems the faculty in the department do not discuss the courses and the topics covered as a whole” which explains that teachers, as the courses progress, do not fully know the overlapping of topics. This, in fact, may be explained by the absence of a curriculum map for the program which will show at a glance the coverage of the courses, or of a curriculum catalogue that contains all of the syllabi of the courses for easy reference of both the teachers and the students. This was affirmed by some of the teachers who confirmed there were no meetings conducted to prepare curriculum map or catalogue or to examine the syllabi to ensure there were no overlapping of coverage.

Another difficulty reported by the students pertained to hectic schedule or “loaded units.” The schedule of classes did not allow them to work as student assistants as previously explained to them. Originally, students who successfully complete a ladder (Ladder 1- Teacher Aide and Ladder 2- Daycare Teacher) will be given priority in the university to work as student assistant, such that the scheduling of classes is done in a manner that gives them adequate free time.

Furthermore, two related difficulties mentioned were having more requirements and financial problems. One student was quoted saying: “*Sobrang dami talaga ng requirements at hindi naman tinuro sa class kung paano gawin.*” This means that students, as they claimed,

Table 1. Level of proficiency of the students per competency (n=29)

Core Competencies	Number of Items	Mean Score	Mean Percentage Score	Interpretation
Planning learning experiences and teaching	15	10.00	66.67	Very Satisfactory
Preparing instructional materials	10	7.14	71.40	Very Satisfactory
Classroom management	10	7.59	75.90	Very Satisfactory
Assessment	15	12.00	80.00	Very Satisfactory
Parental involvement	5	3.62	72.40	Very Satisfactory
Support for learners	5	3.90	78.00	Very Satisfactory
Overall	60	44.24	73.73	Very Satisfactory

Table 2. Difficulties encountered by the prospective preschool teachers

Area	Difficulties
Academic Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated subjects • Due to hectic schedules, the students only have limited time to prepare the requirements in the course • Loaded units • There were a lot of requirements in the course • Financial problems • The students are having difficulty on student-teacher relationship • Lack of reference materials like books • Does not tackle important topics like blocks of time • Some teachers are not meeting their classes regularly
Fieldwork or Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some parents that don't understand the purpose in going to or doing some immersion • Travel finances and safety of the students • Lack of time and transportation • The students experienced difficulty going throat the field because some of the locations were very far
Non-academic Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial problems

need to spend more for the different requirements. Requirements are necessary for the completion of the course. However, the students were surprised because many of these requirements were not properly discussed during the opening of the classes. To cope with the requirements, some students reported that they used recyclable materials, or shared materials so that they need not spend much for a project.

The students also reported student-teacher relationship as a difficulty encountered. A student explained that they experienced being scolded by a teacher for no apparent reason. As a result, they did not have enough time to discuss the lessons. Another student narrated that one of their teachers seldom reported to class which they think deprived them of adequate opportunities to learn more.

Books and references are noted to be scarce by the students. All the students reported they seldom went to the library because they could not find relevant references. Instead, they used the internet to search for references. For instance, one student mentioned that in the college library, there is only one copy of the book *Children's Literature*. This was also noted by the teachers who explained that they also resort to internet sources as references.

Aside from the overlapping of topics which was

emphasized by the students, the absence of important topics such as "blocks of time" in any of the courses that they have taken was reported. This may be explained by the fact that among teachers who handled the courses, no one was a preschool teacher or completed a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. The teachers have baccalaureate degrees in elementary education and secondary education with training on early childhood education. At the time of the program's offering, none of these teachers underwent training covering the topic "blocks of time".

Lastly, the students reported that some of their teachers do not meet their classes. The concerned teachers' absenteeism can be explained by some official businesses or official travels, and by other personal concerns. Some of the teachers explained that there were instances when notices to official businesses were given too late so they had no opportunity to inform their classes.

The difficulties related to academic concerns affirm the findings that among the program's weaknesses were minimal collaboration in the development of the curriculum; absence of a comprehensive curriculum catalogue as integral part of the approved curriculum; absence of an institutionalized instructional materials development undertaking of the college since the teachers handling the preschool courses were the ones

who prepared and spent for the instructional materials; inadequate relevant instructional materials or books in the library (Bercasio *et al.*, 2015). All these difficulties related to academic concerns may be considered as minor in the sense that either at the department or college level, appropriate actions may be taken. In addition, the action needed will not require action of the Board of Regents which approved the academic program.

Fieldwork or Immersion

The students reported that some of them had difficulty explaining to their parents the purpose of fieldwork or immersion. Some mentioned that they experienced a hard time convincing their parents to sign the parent's permit. Aside from this, parents also complained about additional expenses which may be incurred by fieldwork or immersion. Although fieldwork is not done frequently, additional expenses become an additional concern of students especially because they have many requirements to comply with. During fieldwork, they claimed they missed their other classes, so they would need to have makeup classes, thus giving them time constraints for their other activities. Other students also reported the difficulty of going to the fieldwork site or school due to its distant location. The difficulties in terms of fieldwork or immersion were noted as common difficulties even among students taking up other specializations. In fact, some of the teachers agreed that these challenges were encountered, however, they mentioned that there were more benefits than disadvantages in conducting fieldwork. Relatedly, it was found that the college has yet to formulate a policy or protocol for the immersion of students prior to student teaching (Bercasio *et al.*, 2015) which may include among others the use of the official vehicle to minimize the expenses of the students.

Non-academic Concerns

The students reported that they had some personal problems and sometimes family issues but they were able to handle them without going to the Guidance Center. Their friends, classmates, and family helped them cope with their non-academic concerns which were not severe or critical. Rather, the students reported financial problems not due to academic requirements as a non-academic difficulty. Students reported that sometimes they did not have enough allowance, or that their allowance arrived late hence they resorted to borrowing. The money was used generally for subsistence such as food, fare and payments for boarding houses, and rarely on certain school contributions. The non-academic

difficulty of the students especially pertaining to financial problems may be explained by the socioeconomic status of students in the college. Previously, students enrolled in the College of Education experienced marginalization due to financial difficulties (Bercasio & Cabrillas, 2013).

Measures adopted by the college to address the students' difficulties

The students and the concerned teachers reported measures adopted by the college to address the difficulties as shown in Table 3. With a major concern related to finance, students reported that the college offered scholarships and loans for students although students did not avail of the offer due to the weekly payment scheme. Findings showed that seminars on lesson planning and classroom management were conducted in order to keep the students abreast with recent developments in early childhood education. Also, the students claimed that the dean conferred with the concerned faculty about the students' concerns and complaints. In addition, the teachers reported faculty-related and administrative actions taken by the college. These included opening of an item for a preschool teacher, retooling of faculty through relevant training, and acting on the students' concerns. The measures adopted by the college, though inadequate, have addressed the difficulties of the students, and even of teachers. Although other options were available to improve the program delivery, these measures have been helpful to both the students and teachers. These measures were among the recommendations in the previous study on the assessment of the initial implementation of the Laddered Preschool Education in Bicol University (Bercasio *et al.*, 2015).

Effectiveness of the Academic Program

In this study, the academic program's effectiveness pertains to its responsiveness to the country's standards through the licensure examination and the target passing rate set by the university. It also considers its responsiveness to the demands of the profession as shown by the comparison of the proficiency level in LET-like examination of the students and their cooperating teachers. Lastly, it also considers the employers' or prospective employers' feedback.

Performance in the Licensure Examination

The program's graduates took the September 2017 Licensure Examination for Teachers. Out of the 26 students who took the examination, 22 passed the LET as first takers, or 84.62%. This result is 14.62% more than

Table 3. Measures adopted by the Bicol University College of Education to address the difficulties of the prospective preschool teachers

Area	Measures Adopted by the College (Students' Perspective)	Measures Adopted by the College (Faculty's Perspective)
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college offered scholarships to the students who are not financially stable • The college assisted the students with some of their concerns by looking into their records • Seminars about lesson planning, classroom management were conducted by the BUCE. • The dean talked to the person liable for students' concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college will review the existing curriculum even though there is a new incoming curriculum in 2018 • Suffice the new teacher education curriculum • Admin opened an item lateral entry and retooling of faculty • The administration acted on the students' complain that they were not being met in the classroom by talking to the liable teacher
Fieldwork or Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college offered loans to the students. However, payment is weekly or monthly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college offered loans to the students. However, payment is weekly or monthly

the target of the university of 70%. Considering that the results exceeded the target, it can be stated that the program Laddered Preschool Education is responsive to the standards set by the university, and therefore can be described as effective. It is also important to note that in 2017, the national passing rate for LET for elementary level was 26.33% (or 21,198 passers out of 80,509 with 19,581 as first takers) (PRC, 2017). The passing rate for the program exceeded the national passing rate by 58.29%. Based on the results, the program can be described as responsive to the standards set by the country, and by the university, therefore an effective program in preparing prospective preschool teachers. The offering of the program to the pioneer batch was found to be effective despite the difficulties reported by both the students and teachers.

Comparison of the Proficiency Level in the Six Core Competencies of Students and Preschool Teachers

The students undergo a practicum though preservice teaching under the mentorship of their cooperating teachers who are licensed preschool teachers and have five years teaching experience or more. It is supposed that if the students' proficiency level in the LET-like exit examination, covering the core competencies of the Laddered Preschool Education program, is similar to or at par with that of their cooperating teachers, then the program can be described as effective in preparing them to be prospective preschool teachers.

The t-test of the mean scores in the exit examination of the students and their cooperating teachers were

found to be significant in three core competencies; namely, planning (1.845256), instructional materials preparation (2.521763), and classroom management (3.625406). These findings mean that the students performed significantly better than their cooperating teachers. Cunningham and colleagues (2009) reported that preschool teachers tend to overestimate what they know, creating a potential obstacle for seeking additional knowledge. This may partly explain why the preservice teachers performed better than their cooperating teachers. In the three other core competencies; namely, assessment (1.565801), parental involvement (0.265463) and support for learners (0.960192), the t-test results were found to be not significant. These findings mean that the students performed just as well as their cooperating teachers. In both instances, the findings imply that the laddered preschool education curriculum adequately prepared the students to be at par with, if not better than, their cooperating teachers in terms of the six areas that represent the core competencies.

Overall, the t-test of the mean scores in the exit examination of the students and their cooperating teachers (2.561001) reveal that the students have a significantly higher proficiency level in the core competencies than their cooperating teachers who are practicing preschool teachers. This means that the program adequately and effectively prepared the students for the teaching profession in the preschool level. In general, this means that the program was effective in preparing prospective teachers. This is particularly important, and can be considered as an important investment (Tremblay *et*

Table 4. Comparison of the Proficiency Level in Preschool Education Core Competencies of Students and Preschool Teachers

Core Competencies	Student Teachers		Cooperating Teachers		t-test	t-critical	P-Value	Interpretation
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Planning learning experiences and teaching	10 VS	1.83	8.67 S	2.47	1.845256	1.717144	0.039252	Significant
Preparing Instructional Materials	7.14 VS	1.09	6.2 S	1.21	2.521763	1.705618	0.00907	Significant
Classroom Management	7.58 VS	1.02	5.87 S	1.68	3.625406	1.729133	0.000901	Significant
Assessment	12 VS	2.05	10.53 VS	3.31	1.565801	1.724718	0.066541	Not Significant
Parental Involvement	3.62 VS	1.12	3.53 VS	0.91	0.265463	1.693889	0.396178	Not Significant
Support for Learners	3.90 VS	0.77	3.53 VS	1.36	0.960192	1.729133	0.17451	Not Significant
Overall	44.24 VS	3.49	38.33 VS	8.57	2.561001	1.745884	0.010466	Significant

Legend: P-value is less than .05 –Significant; Results of Exit Examination: 60 to 49 – Outstanding, 48 to 37 – Very Satisfactory, 36 to 25 – Satisfactory, 24 to 13 – Fair, and 12 to 0 – Poor; 15 to 13 – Outstanding, 12 to 10 – Very Satisfactory, 9 to 7 – Satisfactory, 6 to 4 – Fair, and 3 to 0 – Poor; 10 to 9 – Outstanding, 8 to 7 – Very Satisfactory, 6 to 5 – Satisfactory, 4 to 3 – Fair, and 2 to 0 –Poor; 5 – Outstanding, 4 – Very Satisfactory, 3 – Satisfactory, 2 – Fair, and 1 – Poor.

al., 2011) because quality preservice teacher training means improving the quality or effectiveness of teachers which will promote achievement of students (Wright *et al.*,1997; Rockoff, 2004) and improve outcomes for your children (Barret, 2003; Whitebook, 2003)

Feedback of Employers and Prospective Employers

The feedback of prospective employers and employers serve as significant views on the effectiveness of the academic program and its delivery. These are taken as inputs in curricular review and other related activities which aim to address gaps or areas for improvement. It is important to note that the feedback was based on the prospective employers’ and employers’ observation of the preservice teachers. Classroom-based observation is the most widely used type of tool to measure teacher effectiveness (Little *et al.*, 2009) although observation scores are subject to bias and can be sensitive to a variety of contextual factors (Garrett & Steinberg, 2015; Steinberg & Garrett, 2016).

Concerned cooperating teachers and officials from

the public schools serving as cooperating schools all reported significant contributions of the prospective preschool teachers especially in preparing audiovisual materials, structuring bulletin boards and the classroom, facilitating different school programs or activities, and managing pupils. In other words, the practicum served not only as an opportunity to learn but also to serve in the cooperating schools. All of the key informants from the selected cooperating schools emphasized the strengths of the students especially along interaction with pupils and parents; positive attitudes as shown in preparing for the lessons and activities, being open to suggestions and criticisms, proper time management; and teacher’s good qualities such as creativity, resourcefulness, punctuality, willingness to extend services, kindness and obedience. In fact, some cooperating teachers reported that they learned new things from the student-teachers such as new techniques and strategies in teaching. A few suggestions pertain to enhancement of confidence, classroom management techniques and in speaking in the mother tongue. On the whole, the cooperating teachers provided positive feedback regarding the performance

Table 5. Employers' and Prospective Employers' Feedback on Students Performance

Schools as Prospective Employers or Employers	Student's Contribution to the School as Reported by Cooperating Teachers/ Immediate Supervisors	Feedback of Cooperating Teachers/Prospective Employers/Employers
Cooperating School No.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student-teachers helped the school in terms of: Classroom Structuring Management of the children Preparation of materials Structuring of bulletin boards Feeding children every day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students were a great help to the school In terms of interaction with the parents, the students were okay The student-teacher was always prepared, they managed time very well
Cooperating School No. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students helped the school by preparing audiovisual aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students were experienced and well-trained Their attitude was very good They can adjust to any kind of children Obedient and regular in class
Cooperating School No. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student teachers helped the school in terms of: assisting the students, managing classrooms, structuring bulletin boards, disciplining the students, and structuring other activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The critic teachers learned new things from the student-teachers, like new techniques and strategies in teaching
Cooperating School No. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisted in various activities like early registrations, kinder festival and tree planting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students were well-trained Very creative Punctual and willing to go beyond the time Always on time in submitting requirements Very obedient Their performance is better than the previous batch Parent-students relationship is very good
Cooperating School No. 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student-teachers were creative and resourceful (using props in teaching) Always punctual/ahead of time Parents' interaction were good, they ask for feedback Some need to improve classroom management, and have confidence Having difficulty in speaking the mother tongue
Cooperating Private School No.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated school activities and programs Performed the assigned tasks Attended meetings and other school activities regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has good communication skills Can prepare creative instructional materials Possess fondness of children Is actively engaged with the different school activities Can write the lesson plan well
Cooperating Private School No. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared appropriate and creative instructional materials Created a literacy rich classroom Trained pupils well for the programs or school activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has rapport with the children Showed creativity in teaching Accepted suggestions Prepared good instructional materials Worked well with co-teachers

Table 5 (continuation). Employers’ and Prospective Employers’ Feedback on Students Performance

Schools as Prospective Employers or Employers	Student’s Contribution to the School as Reported by Cooperating Teachers/ Immediate Supervisors	Feedback of Cooperating Teachers/Prospective Employers/Employers
Cooperating Private School No.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared appropriate and creative instructional materials • Structured the classroom well • Dedicated in helping the pupils learn • Have good relationship with parents and pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily adjusted to the workplace • Liked by the pupils and parents • Used appropriate strategies in teaching

of the students during the practicum or preservice teaching. These findings imply that the program attained its intended learning outcomes, and that the training of the students in the previous seven semesters have been responsive to the calling of teaching in the preschool level. These, in fact, support the results of the licensure examinations and the exit examination and its relative comparison to the performance of the cooperating teachers that the laddered Preschool Education program is effective.

Among the three private schools that hired the program’s graduates during the summer, the feedback also indicated that the program is effective. In fact, the action of hiring the graduate prior to the passing of the licensure examination can be taken in itself as a feedback about the program’s effectiveness. In addition, feedback pertained to competence in lesson planning, good communication skills, love for children, skills in preparing instructional materials especially those using ICT, discipline, openness to suggestions, creativity and enthusiasm. Although the employers stated the need for further professional development as expected, the feedback provided for concerned graduates showed that the teacher training in the university is effective enough for the graduates to be hired immediately.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Teacher training process plays an important role in the whole context of education reform brought about by the K to 12 Program and the Universal Kindergarten Education. As argued by McLachlan and colleagues (2013), professional learning is important to interpreting the curriculum when the students become pre-school teachers. The delivery of the teacher education program

needs to be given utmost importance by the university because what happens in the teacher preparation may influence what they would do in the classrooms as teachers (Newton *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the preschool teachers should be given adequate training before they undertake the responsibility of nurturing and guiding students (Yong *et al.*, 2015). In particular, ensuring the academic program’s responsiveness and effectiveness is in order since high-quality preschool education has long term impacts on children’s social and academic success (Barret, 1998; Campbell *et al.*, 2001), and early childhood education workforce has pivotal role in expanding and improving early childhood care and education (Sun *et al.*, 2015), and children’s learning and development depends on the educational qualifications of the teacher (Barrett, 2004).

The effectiveness of the delivery of the Enriched BEED major in Preschool Education (Laddered Program) in Bicol University is gauged on the licensure examinations results, the comparison of their proficiency level in the core competencies to the practicing preschool teachers, and the evaluation of employers or prospective employers. The students has very satisfactory performance in the Exit Examination and encountered challenges in terms of academic, immersions and non-academic concerns. The students’ proficiency level in the core competencies has been found to be significantly better than the practicing preschool teachers or their cooperating teachers. The over-all performance in the licensure examinations was found to be higher than the target set by the University. Lastly, the feedback of the prospective employers and employers indicate the competence of the graduates of the program as well as their strengths as prospective preschool teachers.

Having formally established the effectiveness

of the Laddered Preschool Education, its continuing offering is highly recommended. In the context of the implementation of the new Teacher Education curriculum, the proposed and implemented measures to address the challenges encountered by the students which helped in ensuring the effectiveness of the program in terms of capacity-building activities and validated instructional resources be sustained.

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