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Instructional Practices, Learning Environment, and Students' Employment Readiness

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the instructional practices, learning environment, and employment readiness of 185 fourth-year Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLEd) students enrolled in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in Panay Island, Philippines, during Academic Year 2024-2025. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used. The respondents were selected proportionally from a population of 345 students using Slovin's formula at a 0.05 margin of error. Data were gathered through a validated researcher-made questionnaire and students' teaching-internship ratings. The instrument yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .837 for instructional practices and .896 for the learning environment. Frequency, percentage, mean, t-test, one-way analysis of variance, and multiple regression were used for analysis. Instructional practices were Mostly Practiced (M = 1.9802), the learning environment was Very Conducive (M = 4.5881), and employment readiness was Superior (M = 1.32). No significant differences were found across age, sex, or SUC level. Program accreditation level significantly differentiated instructional practices (p = .037), learning environment (p = .0337), and employment readiness (p = .004), while school location significantly differentiated employment readiness (p < .001). Instructional practices and learning environment collectively predicted employment readiness, R = .198, R^2 = .039, F = 3.702, p = .027; however, only learning environment made a significant unique contribution (β = -.185, p = .012). The findings indicate that BTLEd students were generally prepared for employment and that supportive, safe, well-resourced, and hands-on learning environments are particularly important in sustaining graduate preparedness. Strengthening accreditation-linked quality assurance, laboratory resources, industry alignment, and authentic learning opportunities may further enhance employment readiness.

Keywords: *BTLEd, employment readiness, instructional practices, learning environment, program accreditation, State Universities and Colleges*

INTRODUCTION

Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education programs are expected to prepare graduates who can teach technical and livelihood subjects while demonstrating the practical competence, adaptability, communication skills, and professional dispositions required in contemporary workplaces. This expectation places instructional practices and the learning environment at the center of graduate preparation. International policy discussions emphasize that higher education must combine quality teaching, relevant skills development, and opportunities for applied learning so that graduates can respond to technological change and shifting labor-market expectations (OECD, 2023a, 2023b; UNESCO, 2024).

In technical and vocational teacher education, employment readiness cannot be developed through content exposure alone. Students require hands-on activities, authentic projects, technology-supported instruction, collaborative tasks, clear assessment, and safe access to functional laboratories and equipment. Research on

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vocational learning has shown that active, game-based, blended, and work-integrated approaches can strengthen engagement and support the development of technical and transferable competencies (Dahalan et al., 2024; Marijani et al., 2023; Öncü & Bichelmeyer, 2021). However, unequal institutional resources, variable program accreditation, and differences in access to industry-relevant facilities may affect the quality of these experiences.

Employment readiness is a multidimensional construct that involves the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal attributes needed to enter and function effectively in the workplace (Caballero & Walker, 2010; Orr et al., 2023). Although prior studies have examined teaching strategies, educational facilities, work-integrated learning, and employability separately, fewer studies have assessed the combined influence of instructional practices and learning environment on the readiness of BTLEd students across several public higher education institutions. The limited evidence from Panay Island makes it difficult to determine whether demographic and institutional factors create meaningful differences in students' preparation for employment.

Accordingly, this study examined the instructional practices, learning environment, and employment readiness of fourth-year BTLEd students in SUCs across Panay Island. It described the respondents' profile and the three major study variables, tested differences according to age, sex, SUC level, program accreditation level, and school location, and determined whether instructional practices and learning environment significantly influenced employment readiness. The results were intended to provide evidence for CHED, SUC administrators, faculty members, and curriculum planners seeking to improve program quality, strengthen educational environments, and enhance graduate employability.

Literature Review

Instructional Practices for Technical and Vocational Learning

Instructional practices refer to the methods, learning activities, assessment strategies, and forms of guidance used to facilitate student understanding and performance. Effective instruction is characterized by active participation, meaningful feedback, alignment between objectives and assessment, and opportunities to connect theory with application. The science of learning and development supports instruction that is responsive to learner diversity, emotionally supportive, and cognitively engaging (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In blended settings, the purposeful use of active learning and collaboration has also been associated with stronger learner engagement (Öncü & Bichelmeyer, 2021).

These principles are especially relevant in BTLEd because technical and livelihood competencies require demonstration, practice, experimentation, and the production of observable outputs. Game-based learning, simulations, projects, and hands-on activities can make vocational instruction more interactive and contextualized. A systematic review by Dahalan et al. (2024) identified digital platforms and simulation technologies as promising approaches in vocational education and training. Such strategies can complement direct instruction by allowing students to apply concepts, solve problems, collaborate, and receive performance-based feedback.

Instructional quality also depends on the regular use of formative assessment, rubrics, feedback, and real-world applications. These practices help students understand performance standards and recognize areas for improvement. From a social-cognitive perspective, structured guidance, opportunities for successful performance, and feedback can strengthen confidence and self-regulation (Schunk, 2020). Thus, a varied instructional repertoire is expected to contribute to the development of both technical competence and the broader professional skills associated with employment readiness.

Learning Environment and Applied Skill Development

The learning environment includes physical facilities, laboratory conditions, tools, technology, safety arrangements, classroom climate, and access to practical experiences. In technical and vocational programs, these conditions directly shape whether students can repeatedly practice procedures and work with resources similar to those encountered in professional settings. UNESCO (2022, 2024) and OECD (2023a) emphasize that equitable access to quality learning resources is necessary for meaningful participation and skills development. A conducive environment is therefore not merely a supportive backdrop but an essential component of competency formation.

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Digital and flexible learning spaces can also extend opportunities to develop communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and independent learning. Li and Ironsi (2024) found that micro-credential learning spaces supported the development of twenty-first-century skills linked to graduate work readiness. Similarly, Al-Rikabi and Montazer (2024) emphasized that institutional readiness for technology-supported learning depends on coordinated infrastructure, human capability, and organizational support. These findings suggest that the value of instructional practices may be constrained when learners lack reliable tools, functional equipment, or accessible spaces for application.

A supportive environment also includes safety, inclusion, and clear operating procedures. Laboratories must be sufficiently spacious, well-ventilated, properly equipped, and governed by explicit safety protocols. These conditions allow students to participate with confidence and focus on the mastery of practical competencies. When institutions maintain learning spaces that are engaging and aligned with course objectives, students gain more authentic opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and develop the habits expected in the workplace.

Employment Readiness and Work-Integrated Learning

Employment readiness concerns the extent to which graduates possess the attributes and attitudes required to transition successfully into work. Caballero and Walker (2010) described work readiness as a distinct graduate-selection construct, while Orr et al. (2023) later showed that it is commonly assessed as a multidimensional combination of discipline-specific and generic skills. For BTLEd students, readiness includes technical knowledge, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, professionalism, and the capacity to apply learning in authentic educational or industry settings.

Work-integrated and experiential learning are central to this preparation because they expose students to real responsibilities, constraints, and standards. Marijani et al. (2023) reported that work-integrated learning contributed to graduate preparedness by developing practical knowledge and workplace capabilities. Vu et al. (2022) likewise explained that authentic placements can strengthen employability, although the quality of preparation and institutional support affects how effectively students benefit from such experiences. These studies reinforce the importance of aligning laboratory tasks, teaching internships, and assessment with actual workplace expectations.

Employers increasingly value transferable competencies alongside technical expertise. Tushar and Sooraksa (2023) identified communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, and work experience among the skills repeatedly emphasized in the employability literature. OECD (2023b) and the World Economic Forum (2023) similarly highlight the growing importance of resilience, digital competence, analytical thinking, and collaboration. Consequently, employment readiness is likely to emerge from the combined influence of instruction, institutional conditions, applied experience, and student-level factors rather than from a single educational variable.

Institutional Quality, Accreditation, and Program Context

Program accreditation provides a formal mechanism for reviewing curriculum, faculty qualifications, facilities, student services, and evidence of continuous improvement. In Philippine higher education, quality assurance and flexible learning policies encourage institutions to align instruction, resources, and assessment with program outcomes and changing delivery conditions (Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2020). The deployment of pre-service teachers for field study and teaching internship further reflects the importance of supervised authentic experience in teacher preparation (CHED & Department of Education [DepEd], 2021).

Accreditation may influence instructional practice and learning environments because accredited programs are expected to document standards, maintain facilities, and institute improvement processes. At the same time, differences in provincial location and institutional capacity may create uneven access to resources, industry partners, and practical learning opportunities. OECD (2023a) notes that institutional and contextual inequalities can affect educational participation and outcomes even where national policies are shared. Examining accreditation and location alongside demographic variables can therefore clarify whether the quality of students' educational experiences is broadly consistent or institutionally differentiated.

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The reviewed literature supports an integrated model in which instructional practices and the learning environment jointly contribute to employment readiness, while profile and institutional variables are used to examine differences among groups. The present study applied this model to fourth-year BTLEd students in Panay Island, providing a localized assessment of how teaching, institutional conditions, accreditation, and context relate to their preparation for employment.

Conceptual Framework

The framework positioned instructional practices and learning environment as the principal predictors of students' employment readiness. Age, sex, SUC level, program accreditation level, and school location served as classification variables for determining group differences. The framework therefore reflected both the descriptive-comparative and predictive components of the study.

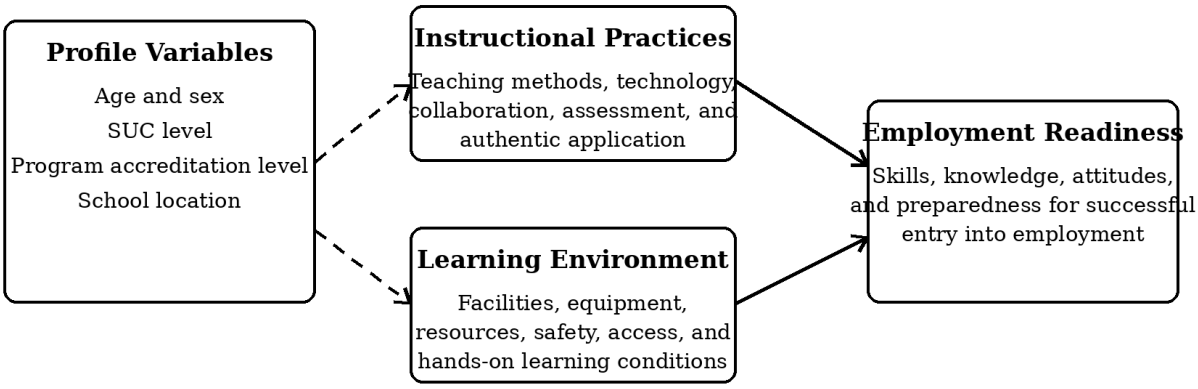

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to present the respondents' characteristics and summarize instructional practices, learning environment, and employment readiness. The comparative component tested differences across selected profile and institutional variables, while the correlational-predictive component examined the collective and unique contributions of instructional practices and learning environment to employment readiness. Variables were observed as they naturally occurred and were not manipulated.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in State Universities and Colleges offering the Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education program in Panay Island, Philippines. The participating institutions were located in Aklan, Antique, Capiz, and Iloilo. These locations represented SUCs with different institutional levels and program accreditation statuses, allowing the study to examine the variables across varied public higher education contexts during Academic Year 2024-2025.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The population consisted of 345 fourth-year BTLEd students. Using Slovin's formula with a 0.05 margin of error, a sample of 185 respondents was obtained. Proportional allocation yielded 32 respondents from Aklan, 17 from Antique, 38 from Capiz, and 98 from Iloilo. Participation was voluntary, and the sample distribution reflected the relative size of the student population in each location.

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Research Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire was used and consisted of four parts. Part I gathered profile information on age, sex, SUC level, program accreditation level, and school location. Part II contained 15 items on instructional practices rated using a three-point scale: Mostly Practiced (1.68-2.00), Practiced (1.34-1.67), and Not Practiced (1.00-1.33). Part III contained 15 items on the laboratory learning environment rated using a five-point scale ranging from Very Unconducive to Very Conducive. Part IV used the students' teaching-internship numerical grades as the indicator of employment readiness; grades from 1.10 to 1.50 were interpreted as Superior.

The questionnaire was reviewed by three subject-matter experts and a statistician using Good and Scates' validation criteria. Suggestions were incorporated into the final instrument. The validated questionnaire was pilot-tested with 30 fourth-year BTLEd students at Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology, Tiwi Campus. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .837 for instructional practices and .896 for the learning environment, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher obtained approval from the Dean of the Graduate School, SUC presidents, campus administrators, college deans, program heads, and faculty members before data collection. Questionnaires were administered through printed and online formats. Respondents were oriented regarding the purpose of the study and were given one week to complete the instrument. Completed responses were retrieved, checked, encoded, tabulated, and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences with the assistance of a statistician.

Data Analysis

Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the respondents' profile. Means were used to summarize instructional practices, learning environment, and employment readiness. Independent-samples t-tests examined differences according to age, sex, and SUC level, while one-way analysis of variance tested differences according to program accreditation level and school location. Multiple regression determined whether instructional practices and learning environment collectively and uniquely influenced employment readiness. All inferential tests used a 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, transparency, and academic integrity. Respondents were informed of the objectives and procedures and could decline or discontinue participation without penalty. Personal information was protected, responses were used only for research purposes, and findings were reported in aggregate form. Institutional permissions were secured before the administration of the instrument.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 shows that most respondents were 23 years old or younger (63.8%), female (65.4%), and enrolled in Level III SUCs (80.5%). The largest accreditation group was Level IV (42.7%), followed by Level III (37.8%) and Level I (19.5%). More than half of the respondents were from Iloilo (53.0%), while the remaining participants were from Capiz, Aklan, and Antique. The profile demonstrates that the findings primarily reflect younger female students in relatively developed public institutions, while still incorporating representation from four provinces and several accreditation levels.

Table 1. *Profile of the Respondents (N = 185)*

Variable	Category	f	%
Age	23 years old and below	118	63.8
	24 years old and above	67	36.2
Sex	Male	64	34.6

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	Female	121	65.4
SUC level	Level II	36	19.5
	Level III	149	80.5
Program accreditation	Level I	36	19.5
	Level III	70	37.8
	Level IV	79	42.7
School location	Aklan	32	17.3
	Antique	17	9.2
	Capiz	38	20.5
	Iloilo	98	53.0

Instructional Practices, Learning Environment, and Employment Readiness

Instructional practices obtained an overall mean of 1.9802 and were interpreted as Mostly Practiced. Technology integration, collaborative learning, and the use of rubrics received the maximum mean of 2.00. Direct instruction, hands-on activities, visual aids, projects, and real-world applications also received very high means of 1.99. Feedback and exit tickets obtained the lowest means at 1.95, but both remained within the Mostly Practiced category. The pattern indicates consistent use of varied, learner-centered, and assessment-supported strategies. This finding agrees with Öncü and Bichelmeyer (2021), who emphasized active learning and collaboration, and with Dahalan et al. (2024), who identified digital and simulation-based approaches as promising for vocational learning.

The learning environment was rated Very Conducive, with an overall mean of 4.5881. Strict enforcement of safety measures obtained the highest mean (4.69), while spacious laboratories and perceived safety during laboratory work each obtained 4.68. The comparatively lowest indicator concerned comfortable and well-maintained furniture (4.50), which was still rated Very Conducive. These results suggest that respondents generally had access to safe, functional, and engaging facilities that supported hands-on learning. The finding is consistent with the view that institutional resources and technology-enabled spaces strengthen applied learning and skill development (Al-Rikabi & Montazer, 2024; Li & Ironsi, 2024).

Employment readiness registered an overall mean grade of 1.32 (SD = 0.21795), interpreted as Superior. All demographic and institutional subgroups likewise fell within the Superior category. Because lower numerical internship grades indicate stronger performance, the mean suggests that respondents generally possessed the skills, knowledge, and professional attitudes expected for successful entry into employment. The result supports the multidimensional conception of work readiness described by Caballero and Walker (2010) and Orr et al. (2023), while also reflecting the contribution of authentic and work-integrated experiences to graduate preparation (Marijani et al., 2023; Vu et al., 2022).

Table 2. *Summary of the Major Study Variables*

Variable	Overall result	Interpretation	Highest indicators	Comparatively lowest indicators
Instructional practices	M = 1.9802	Mostly Practiced	Technology; collaborative learning; rubrics (2.00)	Feedback and exit tickets (1.95)
Learning environment	M = 4.5881	Very Conducive	Safety enforcement (4.69); spaciousness and laboratory safety (4.68)	Furniture condition and comfort (4.50)
Employment readiness	M = 1.32; SD = 0.21795	Superior	All profile groups remained Superior	Level IV and Iloilo groups had M = 1.38; still Superior

Differences According to Profile and Institutional Variables

Table 3 summarizes the inferential tests. Instructional practices did not significantly differ according to age (p = .8851), sex (p = .6365), SUC level (p = .088), or school location (p = .662). A significant difference was found according to program accreditation level (p = .037). The absence of demographic differences suggests that

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respondents experienced broadly consistent instructional approaches, while the accreditation result indicates that quality assurance structures may be associated with differences in how instructional practices are implemented.

The learning environment likewise showed no significant differences according to age ($p = .1796$), sex ($p = .8268$), SUC level ($p = .4631$), or school location ($p = .0677$). Program accreditation level produced a significant difference ($p = .0337$). Although all accreditation groups remained Very Conducive, Level III programs recorded the highest mean (4.71), while Level IV programs obtained 4.45. The result indicates that accreditation status was associated with variation in respondents' assessment of resources, facilities, and applied-learning conditions, but it does not establish that a higher accreditation level automatically produced a higher mean in this sample.

Employment readiness did not significantly differ according to age ($p = .610$), sex ($p = .337$), or SUC level ($p = .110$). Significant differences emerged according to program accreditation level ($p = .004$) and school location ($p < .001$). Since all groups were still interpreted as Superior, the findings indicate differences in degree rather than a shift to an inadequate level of readiness. The observed institutional and location effects support the argument that graduate preparedness develops within a broader ecosystem of program standards, learning opportunities, local partnerships, and access to relevant practical experiences (OECD, 2023a; Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023).

Table 3. *Differences in the Major Variables According to Respondent Characteristics*

Characteristic	Instructional practices	Learning environment	Employment readiness
Age	p = .8851; Not significant	p = .1796; Not significant	p = .610; Not significant
Sex	p = .6365; Not significant	p = .8268; Not significant	p = .337; Not significant
SUC level	p = .088; Not significant	p = .4631; Not significant	p = .110; Not significant
Program accreditation level	p = .037; Significant	p = .0337; Significant	p = .004; Significant
School location	p = .662; Not significant	p = .0677; Not significant	p < .001; Significant

Influence of Instructional Practices and Learning Environment on Employment Readiness

The regression model was statistically significant, $R = .198$, $R^2 = .039$, $F = 3.702$, $p = .027$. Instructional practices and learning environment collectively explained 3.9% of the variance in employment-readiness grades. This is a statistically meaningful but small proportion, indicating that other factors not included in the model - such as prior competence, teaching-internship quality, motivation, career self-efficacy, industry exposure, social support, and labor-market context - likely account for much of the remaining variation.

Table 4. *Multiple Regression Model Summary*

Multiple R	R^2	R^2 change	F	p	Interpretation
.198	.039	.039	3.702	.027	Model significant

At the predictor level, instructional practices did not make a significant unique contribution ($\beta = -.056$, $t = -.768$, $p = .443$), whereas learning environment was significant ($\beta = -.185$, $t = -2.539$, $p = .012$). The negative coefficient should be interpreted in relation to the grading system: lower internship grades represent stronger employment readiness. Thus, more favorable learning-environment scores were associated with better, numerically lower readiness grades after controlling for instructional practices. The result emphasizes that well-equipped, safe, engaging, and hands-on settings provide conditions in which students can repeatedly practice competencies and develop professional confidence. It also reinforces the literature on work-integrated and applied learning, which identifies authentic educational contexts as important to the transition from study to employment (Marijani et al., 2023; Orr et al., 2023; Vu et al., 2022).

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Table 5. *Regression Coefficients for Employment Readiness*

Predictor	SE B	β	t	p	Decision
Instructional practices	.246	-.056	-.768	.443	Not significant
Learning environment	.025	-.185	-2.539	.012	Significant

The findings do not diminish the educational value of varied instructional practices. The near-ceiling instructional-practice ratings may have reduced score variability and limited their statistical capacity to distinguish readiness outcomes. In contrast, variations in facilities, equipment, safety, and opportunities for hands-on learning may have been more directly reflected in internship performance. The model therefore suggests that instructional quality should be sustained while institutional improvement gives particular attention to the environments in which BTLEd students practice and demonstrate competencies.

CONCLUSION

Fourth-year BTLEd students in the participating SUCs generally experienced instructional practices that were Mostly Practiced, learning environments that were Very Conducive, and a Superior level of employment readiness. Technology integration, collaboration, rubrics, hands-on activities, real-world applications, safe laboratories, and adequate learning spaces characterized their educational experience. These results indicate that the participating programs were generally successful in developing students who possessed the knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes required for employment.

Age, sex, and SUC level did not significantly differentiate the major variables. Program accreditation level, however, was associated with differences in instructional practices, learning environment, and employment readiness, while school location differentiated employment readiness. Instructional practices and learning environment jointly predicted readiness, but only the learning environment contributed significantly when both predictors were considered simultaneously. The study therefore highlights the practical importance of safe, adequately equipped, engaging, and authentic learning settings while recognizing that employment readiness is also shaped by additional personal, institutional, and contextual factors beyond the model.

Recommendation

CHED and SUC leaders should strengthen accreditation-linked quality assurance by regularly reviewing BTLEd curriculum alignment, laboratory standards, safety systems, equipment adequacy, and evidence of graduate outcomes. Funding and resource allocation should prioritize campuses with limited access to current tools, digital technologies, and practice-oriented learning spaces.

Campus administrators and faculty should sustain the instructional practices already rated highly while improving the comparatively less frequent use of formative feedback and exit-ticket assessment. Programs should expand project-based, laboratory, teaching-internship, and industry-linked experiences that allow students to apply knowledge, document competencies, and receive timely performance feedback.

BTLEd students should be encouraged to participate actively in practicum, laboratory, community, and internship activities and to develop professional portfolios demonstrating technical skills, teaching competence, communication, teamwork, digital literacy, and reflective practice. Career preparation activities may also include mentoring, mock interviews, credential development, and links with potential employers.

Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-method designs to follow graduates into employment and explain why accreditation level and school location produced significant differences. Additional predictors such as internship quality, career self-efficacy, industry exposure, socioeconomic conditions, motivation, digital competence, and employer assessment should be examined to improve the explanatory power of employment-readiness models.

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