

Course By Default: Lived Experiences of Beed Students

Tandy D. Gler-Villena, LPT, Dr. Maedel Joy V. Escote

Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences, and Technology, Monkayo, Davao de Oro, Philippines

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100600365>

Received: 31 May 2026; Accepted: 05 June 2026; Published: 24 June 2026

ABSTRACT

The goal of this research was to describe the lived experiences of BEEd students who enrolled in the program by default. Employing a qualitative, phenomenological approach, the study involved 8 purposively selected participants who graduated at Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences, and Technology and shared their experiences through in-depth interviews guided by the four fundamental research questions. Findings revealed that students' enrollment in the BEEd program was influenced by peer pressure, financial constraints, parental influence, program availability, and uncertainty in career choice. Participants initially experienced emotional and motivational struggles such as low motivation, self-doubt, insecurity, and emotional exhaustion, alongside academic challenges in lesson planning, instructional material development, time management, research tasks, public speaking, and subject-related difficulties. Despite these challenges, students developed coping strategies such as seeking support from peers and family, using online resources, setting goals, accepting their situation, and maintaining positive thinking.

Over time, their experiences evolved from uncertainty and reluctance to engagement, resilience, and appreciation of the teaching profession, leading to the development of resilience, patience, adaptability, teaching competence, and professional identity. The study concludes that although many BEEd students initially enter the program by circumstance, their experiences within the program can transform their perceptions and strengthen their commitment to becoming future educators.

Keywords: *elementary education, BEEd students, lived experiences, coping mechanisms, academic challenges, motivation, phenomenological study*

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem and Its Background

Some Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) students enter the program by default rather than choice. This phenomenon is affirmed in the discussion of Abiquibel (2019) teacher education students in the Philippines do not enroll in their program out of a strong initial passion for teaching, but rather because it is a fallback option when other preferred courses are not available. Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2025) highlights a concerning trend in teacher education: many students pursue education degrees not out of genuine passion but as a fallback or last option. This situation raises important questions about the alignment between students' motivations and their chosen profession, as well as how teacher education institutions can nurture interest, commitment, and professional identity among those who entered the program by default.

Globally, studies on elementary education preservice teachers have identified similar patterns. Tadesse (2019) reported that in Ethiopia, many students entered primary education programs by default often due to placement policies and academic requirements resulting in low initial motivation. Over time, however, positive classroom experiences, mentoring, and exposure to real teaching scenarios helped strengthen their professional commitment and self-efficacy. Which led to increased confidence and improved teaching performance.

In the Philippine context, Pediongco and Calaguas (2022), in the field of teacher education, examined the lived experiences of freshman pre-service teachers who were placed in non-preferred programs, including BEEd. Their findings revealed that BEEd students who entered the program by default experienced emotional and

academic difficulties, such as uncertainty about their future and struggles adjusting to coursework, they had not originally intended to pursue. Over time, however, many BEEd students gradually developed acceptance and motivation through peer support, positive classroom experiences, and early exposure to teaching tasks, which helped them build a sense of purpose in the field.

Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences, and Technology (MonCAST) indicate that some BEEd students also enroll in the program for pragmatic reasons such as affordability, accessibility of the college, or the perceived job stability of the teaching profession, rather than because it was their first choice. Insights gathered initially viewed the program as a temporary option or a practical decision influenced by financial and family considerations. However, as they progressed in their studies, many began to recognize the value of teaching and gradually developed a deeper appreciation for the profession. This shift in perspective highlights how meaningful academic experiences and supportive learning environments can transform initial uncertainty into genuine passion and professional commitment

Although several studies have explored the experiences of students who entered teacher education programs by default, there remains a lack of research focusing on how this phenomenon unfolds within the context of BEEd students in local institutions such as MonCAST. To address this gap, the present study investigates the lived experiences, academic journeys, challenges, coping mechanisms, and reflections of BEEd students who enrolled in the program by default, particularly in relation to the development of their professional identity over time. Through this exploration, the study aims to generate localized insights that can guide teacher education institutions in formulating strategies to strengthen students' motivation, professional identity, and academic engagement, thereby contributing to the preparation of more dedicated and effective future educators.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of eight beed graduates from moncast who entered the program not by choice but by default. Guided by a qualitative research design, specifically phenomenology, the study focused on understanding how graduates navigated their academic journey, the challenges they encountered, the coping mechanisms they undergone, and the ways in which their motivations and professional identities developed over time. The primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews.

1.3 Literature Review

This section presented topics and literature related to the present concept under study. The findings of different studies were presented to provide a better understanding and a clearer view of what was emphasized in this qualitative research. Several related studies were reviewed and were found relevant to this investigation, focusing on students' academic journey, challenges, milestones, and reflections on their transformative professional identity over time as they navigated a course they initially did not choose but gradually learned to value. These were gathered from various sources such as manuals, journals, websites, and other reading materials.

Students Who Enrolled in the Course by Default.

Many students who pursued teacher education programs, particularly BEEd, did not initially choose the course out of passion but rather considered it a default option due to limited choices, external influences, or entrance requirements. This phenomenon was not isolated to the Philippines but was also reflected globally across pre-service teacher education contexts (Abiquibel, 2019).

Challenges of the Students Who Chose the Course by Default.

Teacher education programs, particularly the BEEd, required students to navigate multifaceted academic, pedagogical, socio-emotional, and practical challenges. While some students enrolled due to a genuine passion for teaching, others entered the program due to extrinsic factors, such as course availability, parental expectations, financial constraints, or proximity to school a phenomenon often referred to as default enrollment (Álvarez-Sánchez, 2021).

Coping Mechanisms of the Students Who Chose the Course by Default.

According to Loughran (2019), students who entered teacher education programs due to external factors such as limited course options, parental influence, or financial constraints relied on a range of coping mechanisms as they navigated their academic, personal, and professional development. The initial stage often involved academic coping strategies, where students adjusted to the transition from high school to tertiary education by managing demanding coursework, adapting to unfamiliar learning environments, and developing skills in time management, help-seeking, and self-regulation.

Reflection of the Students Who Chose the Course by Default.

Reflection was a critical component in teacher education, enabling students to analyze their experiences, identify strengths and weaknesses, and develop professional competencies (Loughran, 2019). For students who enrolled in the BEEd program by default, often due to pragmatic, extrinsic, or situational reasons, reflection served as a catalyst for motivation, self-awareness, and professional identity formation (Nguyen, 2020). While these students began their academic journey with lower intrinsic motivation, structured reflective practices helped them recognize personal growth, consolidate pedagogical skills, and build confidence in their teaching abilities (Huang & Tsai, 2021).

METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed qualitative phenomenological research approach. The study uses qualitative research design because it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of BEED graduates who entered the program by default. Qualitative research is appropriate as it focused on meaning and interpretation rather than numerical data. As Creswell (2014) noted, qualitative research explores the meaning individuals ascribe to human problems.

A phenomenological approach was employed since the study seeks to capture and describe the essence of students' lived experiences. Phenomenology is suited to examining how individuals interpret significant events in their lives. As Moustakas (1994) explained, phenomenology centers on the description and interpretation of informants lived experiences, making it relevant to this study.

This design would be helpful as it enabled participants to share their authentic narratives through in-depth interviews, producing rich and meaningful data. The approach uncovered not only the challenges faced by BEED graduates but also how they reflect, adapt, and form their professional identity, thereby providing valuable insights for educational support and policy development.

2.2 Results and Discussion

Theme 1: Ways to Describe the Journey of BEED Students

This theme highlights the circumstances that influenced BEED students to begin their academic journey, particularly those who enrolled in the program by default rather than personal preference. It focuses on the initial decisions shaped by external factors such as peer influence and limited choices, which played a key role in their course selection.

One informant shared:

“It started because I became curious about MonCAST, and BEED really was not my original plan. When I arrived at MonCAST, I was told that the slots for Secondary Education were already full.”

This theme shows that some BEED students started their journey not out of personal choice but due to external influences, such as lack of availability in the program. Despite this, their experiences reflect how initial decisions can shape and gradually influence their perspective toward the program

Theme 2: Ways to Describe Overall Experience as Progressed through the Different Years of the BEEd Program

This theme explores how the participants described their overall experiences as they progressed through the different years of the BEEd program. It highlights the changes, challenges, achievements, and learning experiences they encountered throughout their academic journey, providing insights into their personal and professional growth as future educators.

One informant said:

“At first, during my 1st year, I really could not adjust well because BEEd was not really in my heart. But as time passed and I learned to accept it and continued studying.”

Overall, this theme reveals that the participants' experiences evolved throughout their years in the BEEd program. Despite facing various challenges and adjustments, they gained valuable knowledge, skills, and experiences that contributed to their development as aspiring teachers. Their journey reflects growth, resilience, and a deeper appreciation for the teaching profession.

Theme 3: Ways That Perception of the BEED Course or Teaching Profession Changed Since Started in Studies

This theme explores how the informants' views of the BEEd course and the teaching profession changed throughout their studies.

One informant said:

“Back then, I saw BEEd as simply standing in front, teaching, and talking in front of the class. But I later realized that it really requires preparation, dedication, and a lot of patience for the students.”

The informant developed a deeper understanding and greater appreciation of the BEEd course and the teaching profession as they progressed in their studies.

Theme 4: Academic Challenges Encountered while Adjusting to the Demands of the BEED Program

This theme highlights the academic challenges encountered by the participants as they adjusted to the demands of the BEEd program.

One informant expressed:

“The first challenge that really changed me in BEEd, was the lesson plan. I really struggled with it, especially adjusting and understanding how to make it properly.”

The informants faced various academic challenges, but these experiences helped them develop resilience, adaptability, and effective learning strategies throughout their studies.

Theme 5: Ways to Describe Any Emotional or Motivational Struggles Faced Because the Course was not a First Choice

This theme explores the emotional and motivational struggles experienced by participants due to enrolling in the BEEd program as a course that was not their first choice.

One informant shared:

“There were times when I felt unmotivated to wake up and attend classes. During my first two semesters, I really had no motivation to study, and there were moments when I wanted to stop because I did not enjoy it.”

The informants experienced different emotional and motivational difficulties; however, these challenges helped

them grow personally and adapt better to the program.

Theme 6: Ways of Challenges Affects Learning, Motivation, or Sense of Belonging in the Program

This theme examines how the challenges experienced by the participants affect their learning, motivation, and sense of belonging in the BEEd

One informant said:

“At that time, my confidence really went down. I was not absent in class, but I had no motivation. I started questioning myself, Is this really for me?”

Overall, the challenges encountered by the participants influenced their learning, motivation, and sense of belonging, but they also contributed to their gradual adjustment and development within the program.

Theme 7: Strategies or Actions Used to Cope with the Initial Feeling about the Course

This theme explores the strategies and actions used by participants to cope with their initial feelings about the BEEd course.

One informant shared:

“I became more active in the program, being active helped me see the program beyond what we experience inside the classroom. I was able to meet and interact with more people, and I realized that BEEd is not just limited to studying and schoolwork”

Overall, the informants used various coping strategies to manage their initial feelings, which helped them adjust and continue their studies in the program.

Theme 8: Ways to Cope or Respond when Felt Unmotivated or Uncertain about Continuing the Course

This theme explores how participants coped or responded when they felt unmotivated or uncertain about continuing the BEEd course.

One informant expressed:

“There were really times when I felt unmotivated in the course and I would ask myself, Should I still continue this? But whenever I felt that way, I would go back to my purpose. I would remind myself that this is not just for me, but also for my family.”

Overall, the informants managed their feelings of doubt and low motivation through different coping strategies, which helped them stay engaged and continue their studies.

Theme 9: Ways of Coping Strategies Change or Developed Over Time as Becoming More Involved in the Program

This theme explores how participants' coping strategies changed and developed as they became more involved in the BEEd program.

One informant said:

“As time passed, I became more open to new learnings and experiences. I was gradually drawn into the activities, and I did not feel bored anymore.”

The informants' coping strategies evolved over time, becoming more effective as they gained experience and deeper engagement in the program.

Theme 10: Ways of Making Sense of the Decision to Take the BEED Course

This theme explores how participants made sense of their decision to take the BEED course.

One informant marked:

“Looking back at my journey, especially now that I have passed the LET on my first take. I realized that I was really meant for this path. Because if not, I probably would not have finished the course, and I might not have been able to endure the very difficult LET review.”

The informants gradually developed understanding and acceptance of their decision to pursue the BEED program through their experiences in the course.

Theme 11: Personal Realizations or Lessons Gained about Oneself and Chosen Profession

This theme explores the personal realizations and lessons participants gained about themselves and their chosen profession as future teachers.

One informant explained:

“The main lesson I gained is to be patient. Being a teacher is not something that happens overnight it is a process. I needed to go through all those struggles so that I could become better, not just for myself but for my students. I also learned how to be patient and how to manage my time efficiently.”

Overall, the informants gained meaningful insights about themselves and the teaching profession, which helped shape their personal growth and professional identity.

Theme 12: Ways to Describe the Kind of Teacher that Oneself Aspire to Become Based on the Experiences in the Program

This theme describes the kind of teacher the participants aspire to become based on their experiences in the BEED program.

One informant stated:

“A teacher should also be understanding, just like in my own experience, I did not really like this course at first, but my instructors understood me. They were patient and understanding, and they even gave me advice on how to survive and continue this program.”

The informants developed clear aspirations of becoming effective and dedicated teachers shaped by their experiences in the program.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study highlight the lived experiences of BEED students who enrolled in the program not as their first choice. Initially, many respondents experienced uncertainty, low motivation, emotional struggles, and difficulty in adjusting to academic demands. However, through various coping strategies such as seeking support, setting goals, accepting their situation, and gradually engaging in program-related activities, they were able to persist and adapt.

Over time, the students transitioned from passive and reluctant learners into more engaged, motivated, and developing future educators. Their experiences demonstrate that initial preference does not solely determine success in teacher education; rather, continuous exposure, support systems, and personal resilience play a crucial role in shaping their growth and professional identity.

Teachers, peers, families, and institutions significantly contributed to this transformation by providing guidance,

encouragement, and learning opportunities. As supported in educational research, understanding students' lived experiences is essential in strengthening academic support and fostering meaningful learning development.

BEEd program serves as a transformative journey that builds not only teaching competence but also resilience, adaptability, and professional commitment. Strengthening institutional support and reflective practices will further enhance student success and readiness for the teaching profession.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the successful completion of this study. My sincere appreciation goes to dr. Maedel joy v. Escote for her invaluable guidance and support. I am also thankful to the eight informants for their cooperation and participation, and to my classmates and colleagues for their assistance throughout this journey. Special thanks to my husband, mr. Rodney ruel c. Villena, and my child, zync rhyzan shien g. Villena, for their unwavering love, support, and inspiration. Above all, i give my deepest thanks to almighty god for his guidance, strength, blessings, and endless grace. All glory and honor belong to him.

REFERENCES

1. Abiquibel, M. (2019). Factors influencing students' choice of teacher education programs in selected state universities in the Philippines [Undergraduate thesis, Name of University].
2. Abotsi, A. K., Ankomah, Y. A., & Deku, P. (2020). Pre-service teachers' motivation for choosing teaching as a career: Evidence from Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 11(2), 45–53. <https://doi.org/10.xxxxxx>
3. Gomez, M. T., & Trinidad, R. C. (2021). Teaching practicum experiences and classroom management difficulties of pre-service teachers. *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 12(3), 78–92
4. Nguyen, T. T. (2020). Motivation and engagement of students who choose programs for extrinsic reasons. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 48(2), 123–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2019.1692417>
5. Tinto, V. (2017). *Through the eyes of students: Revisiting the causes and cures of student attrition*. University of Chicago Press.
6. Torralba, R. L., & Reyes, M. S. (2021). Social and academic integration of pre-service teachers in Philippine universities. *Asian Education and Development Studies*, 10(4), 532–548
7. Varol, Y. Z., Weiher, G. M., Wenzel, S. F. C., & Horz, H. (2023). Practicum in teacher education: The role of psychological detachment and supervisors' feedback and reflection in student teachers' well-being. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(5), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2023.2201874>