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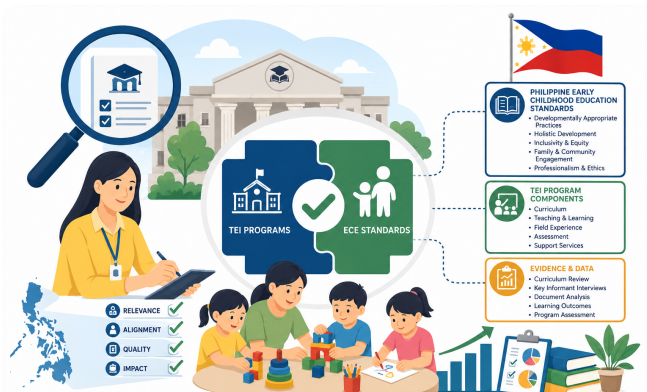
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## From Cradle to Classroom:

A Four-part Policy Brief Series on Strengthening Responsive Early Childhood Teacher Education in the Philippines

### Measuring the Match — How Well Do TEI Programs Align with Philippine Early Childhood Education Standards?

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(Source: AI-generated image created using ChatGPT (OpenAI), June 2026 )

This policy brief interrogates the alignment between Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (BECed) programs in Philippine Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) and the four national frameworks governing early childhood education: CHED CMO No. 76, s. 2017; DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016; the K to 3 Basic Education Curriculum; and the ECCD National Early Learning Framework (NELF). Drawing on curriculum mapping data from seven sampled TEIs and qualitative interview data, the brief finds that alignment is strongest at the level of prescribed course offerings and weakest in three critical areas: the integration of NELF-aligned developmental assessment tools into practicum requirements; the preparation of graduates for culturally distinct contexts, including indigenous peoples and Madrasah communities; and the historical structural distortion created by a Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) calibrated to elementary rather than early childhood competencies. This is a misalignment that the 2025 PRC-CHED reforms have since begun to address through a specialization-specific licensure pathway for Early Childhood Education graduates. This brief treats that reform as a significant development requiring implementation monitoring rather than as an outstanding problem.. The brief proposes targeted reforms to address these fractures and strengthen coherence across the full depth of the alignment spectrum.

*Note: Data collection preceded the 2025 PRC-CHED licensure reforms discussed in this brief; the licensure findings below are presented as historical context that motivated those reforms, not as an unresolved problem.*

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## Introduction

Curriculum alignment is a deceptively simple concept. At its most basic, it asks, "Does what TEIs teach match what national standards say future teachers need to know and be able to do?" But in practice, alignment operates on multiple levels: between course offerings and prescribed subjects, between instructional strategies and pedagogical frameworks, between field experiences and the real-world settings graduates will enter, and between licensure requirements and the specialized competencies of the early childhood profession. Alignment can be strong at one level and weak at another, creating a system that looks coherent from a distance but shows significant fractures up close.

This policy brief addresses the study's second research question: how existing ECE policies, programs, and practices of TEIs align with the four governing national frameworks by drawing on curriculum mapping and interview data described in the methodology note below.

## Methodology

This brief draws on a larger two-phase descriptive qualitative study. Phase 2 involved focus group discussions and key informant interviews with 97 participants who are pre-service teachers, faculty, administrators, and cooperating teachers, across 10 TEIs purposively sampled from the roughly 200 Philippine institutions offering the BECEd program, selected for geographic spread across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao and variation in institutional type. Curriculum mapping, which is the basis for the alignment findings in this brief, was conducted for 7 of these 10 TEIs, cross-referencing official course syllabi and prospectuses against the four national frameworks using a course-to-standard correspondence protocol, and triangulated with the interview data. Limitations include reliance on documented curricula rather than observed classroom instruction, and a sample not statistically representative of all Philippine TEIs offering BECEd.

## Key Issues

**1. Alignment is multidimensional, and different dimensions tell different stories.** Mapping course titles against a prescribed course list—the most common form of curriculum alignment audit—captures only the surface of alignment. Deeper alignment requires that the content within courses reflects the developmental philosophy of the relevant frameworks, that assessment practices match the tools and approaches prescribed by those frameworks, and that field experiences provide the practical contexts in which theoretical knowledge becomes

professional competence. This study examined alignment at all of these levels, and the findings differ significantly depending on which level is examined.

**2. The four national frameworks do not speak with one voice. CHED CMO No. 76, the NELE, DepEd Order No. 47, and the K to 3 curriculum were developed at different times, by different agencies, with different primary audiences.**

While they are broadly consistent in their developmental philosophy, they differ in scope, terminology, age range emphasis, and operational specificity. TEIs navigating alignment with all four simultaneously must make interpretive judgments about how to reconcile these differences, like judgments that are currently made institutionally and idiosyncratically rather than through any national guidance mechanism.

**3. The Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) created a misaligned incentive structure during the period studied.**

At the time of data collection, BECEd graduates seeking professional licensure had to sit for the LET at the Elementary Level, an examination covering competencies for Grades 1 to 6, far beyond the 0 to 8 age range BECEd is designed to address. This created structural pressure on TEI programs to prepare students for an examination that did not reflect the specialized knowledge base of early childhood education. This finding is documented here as historical context: the 2025 PRC-CHED reforms subsequently introduced a specialization-specific licensure pathway for Early Childhood Education graduates, directly responding to this misalignment.

## Key Findings and Policy Recommendations

### A. Key Findings

**1. Alignment with CMO No. 76 is strongest and most consistent across institutions.** The mapping of course offerings against the 25 specialization courses prescribed by CMO No. 76 reveals that six of seven sampled TEIs offer at least 22 of these courses, as shown in Table 1. Nine courses appear universally, including Foundations of Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Family, School, and Community Partnership, and Research in Early Childhood Education. This convergence reflects the organizing influence of CMO No. 76 on BECEd program design and suggests that CHED's regulatory framework is functioning as intended at the level of course provision.

However, the degree of alignment is not uniform across all prescribed courses. Specialized offerings such as Teaching Emergent Literacy in Nursery/Pre-Kindergarten Schools (with Sign Language in the Early Years) and Teaching of Beginning Reading appear in only one or two TEIs respectively. These are



not peripheral courses as they address competencies directly relevant to the foundational literacy development mandates of the Kindergarten policy. Their inconsistent presence across institutions points to variability in how TEIs interpret and operationalize the full scope of CMO No. 76.

**Table 1**

*Summary of Curriculum Alignment Findings*

| Metric                                                                                   | Result                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TEIs offering $\geq 22$ of 25 CMO No. 76 prescribed specialization courses               | 6 of 7                                                                               |
| Courses appearing in all sampled TEIs                                                    | 9 (e.g., Foundations of ECE, Child Development, Family-School-Community Partnership) |
| TEIs with 38+ course-to-subject correspondences (against K–3 basic education curriculum) | Most sampled TEIs                                                                    |
| TEIs offering IPed-specific preparation                                                  | 0 of 7                                                                               |
| TEIs offering Madrasah-specific preparation                                              | 1 of 7 (from BARM)                                                                   |

**2. Alignment with the NELF is embedded in program philosophy but uneven in assessment practice.** The NELF's six developmental domains—Physical Health and Motor Development, Social-Emotional Development, Character and Values Development, Cognitive Development, Language Development, and Creative and Aesthetic Development—are visibly reflected in BECED course structures. Courses such as Child Development, Play and Developmentally Appropriate Practices, and Inclusive Education in Early Childhood Settings operationalize these domains for preservice teachers. The NELF's emphasis on the child as an active learner, on family and community as partners in development, and on cultural responsiveness is present in the pedagogical orientation of most sampled programs.

What is less consistent is the alignment between BECED assessment practices and the assessment tools prescribed by the NELF and operationalized in the ECCD system. The Philippine Early Childhood Development (ECD) Checklist is the primary developmental assessment tool in the ECCD system, but its integration into BECED assessment training varies. Pre-service teachers may know that the ECD Checklist exists without having developed genuine fluency in using it. This shows a gap that becomes consequential when they enter the workforce.

**3. Alignment with the Kindergarten policy is strong in content but partial in scope.** DepEd Order No. 47 governs a Kindergarten program that is play-based, thematically organized, delivered primarily in the mother tongue, and

assessed through qualitative, development-focused tools rather than summative examinations. The BECED courses that most directly prepare teachers for Kindergarten—Content and Pedagogy in the Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education, Play and Developmentally Appropriate Practices, Children's Literature, and Assessment of Children's Development and Learning—are offered consistently across sampled TEIs. The philosophical alignment between BECED preparation and the Kindergarten policy is genuine.

However, the Kindergarten policy's emphasis on diversity-responsive practice, including specific provisions for Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) and Madrasah education, is not systematically reflected in BECED programs. Only one TEI, in BARM, provides specific preparation for educators working with Muslim communities. The preparation of BECED graduates to teach effectively in IPed contexts is essentially absent across the sample. This is a meaningful alignment gap in a country with 110 recognized indigenous peoples groups and a national policy commitment to indigenous education.

**4. Alignment with the K to 3 curriculum is comprehensive at the course level but constrained by practicum scope.** The curriculum mapping of BECED courses against the learning areas of Grades 1 to 3 reveals strong coverage across Filipino, English, Mother Tongue, Mathematics, Science, MAPEH, Araling Panlipunan, and Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao. Most TEIs demonstrate a total of 38 or more aligned course-to-subject correspondences across the Kindergarten-to-grade-3 continuum with a high degree of structural alignment. Yet this course-level coherence is not matched by practicum experiences. Pre-service teachers are rarely deployed to Grade 1 to 3 settings, meaning that their preparation for the early primary years is predominantly theoretical rather than experiential.

**5. The licensure examination distorted program priorities prior to the 2025 reforms.** Multiple participants from faculty, administrators, and pre-service teachers, referenced the LET as an organizing force in BECED preparation at the time of data collection. The LET at the Elementary Level covered content for Grades 1 to 6, creating implicit pressure on TEIs to include relevant content and test preparation even in a program designed for ages 0 to 8, pulling BECED programs toward generalization across elementary education rather than early-years specialization. The 2025 PRC-CHED reforms, which introduced a specialization-specific licensure pathway for ECE graduates, directly address this finding; their effects on TEI curricular priorities had not yet been observed as of data collection and warrant follow-up study.



## B. Key Policy Recommendations

**1. Mandate the integration of the ECD Checklist and NELF-aligned assessment tools into BECED practicum assessment requirements.** CHED should amend the practicum guidelines for BECED programs to require that pre-service teachers demonstrate competency in using the Philippine ECD Checklist and other NELF-aligned developmental assessment tools as part of their field practice assessment. This would close the gap between the assessment frameworks that BECED programs teach about and the assessment practices that graduates are expected to use in the field.

**2. Require BECED programs to include content on IPed and Madrasah early childhood contexts.**

**2a. Require BECED programs to include content on Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) contexts.** CHED should require all BECED programs to include at minimum a dedicated unit, and ideally a full course, on culturally responsive early childhood education for Indigenous communities, developed in partnership with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). TEIs in regions with significant Indigenous populations should be required to offer more extensive preparation. *Lead: CHED, with NCIP. Timeline: incorporate into curriculum guidelines within two academic years.*

**2b. Require BECED programs to include content on Madrasah early childhood contexts.** CHED should require comparable dedicated content for culturally and linguistically responsive early childhood education in Muslim communities, developed in partnership with the DepEd's Bureau of Learning Delivery - Student Inclusion Division (BLD-SID), which oversees the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) through its Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE), reflecting considerations distinct from IPed contexts. TEIs in BARMM and other regions with significant Muslim populations should be required to offer more extensive preparation. *Lead: CHED, with the BARMM counterparts. Timeline: incorporate into curriculum guidelines within two academic years.*

**3. Monitor the implementation of the 2025 specialization-specific licensure pathway for Early Childhood Education graduates.** Rather than creating a new pathway, since the 2025 PRC-CHED reforms have already done so, CHED and PRC should establish a joint monitoring mechanism to track uptake, pass rates, and TEI curricular adjustments under the new pathway across its first three testing cycles, and publish findings publicly to guide further refinement. *Lead: CHED and PRC, jointly. Timeline: first monitoring report within 18 months of the pathway's first testing cycle.*

**4. Create a multi-framework alignment guide for BECED program leaders.** TEI faculty and administrators currently

navigate alignment with four separate national frameworks without coordinated guidance. CHED and the ECCD Council should jointly develop a practical alignment guide, which is regularly updated, that maps the four frameworks against each other, identifies areas of convergence and divergence, and provides concrete examples of how BECED syllabi, assessment tools, and practicum structures can simultaneously honor the requirements of CMO No. 76, the NELF, DepEd Order No. 47, and the K to 3 curriculum. This guide would reduce the interpretive burden currently carried by individual faculty and departments.

**5. Include practicum scope in BECED accreditation criteria.** Current accreditation processes assess curriculum alignment primarily through documentation of course offerings. CHED and relevant accrediting bodies, including the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP), Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU), and other CHED-recognized accreditors, should expand accreditation criteria to assess the breadth of practicum deployment specifically, whether pre-service teachers have been deployed to settings serving children in the full 0 to 8 age range, including early primary classrooms and community-based ECCD centers. This would shift accreditation from document compliance toward outcome-oriented program quality assurance.

## Conclusion

The alignment of BECED programs with national ECE standards in the Philippines is real and substantive, built through deliberate institutional effort and faculty commitment. But alignment is not binary, as it operates simultaneously across course offerings, assessment practices, practicum scope, licensure pathways, and cultural responsiveness, and this brief has shown that the picture differs sharply depending on which level is examined.

The recommendations above target the specific points where alignment currently frays: developmental assessment fluency, preparation for Indigenous and Muslim community contexts, monitoring of the new licensure pathway, and the scope of practicum experience. Addressing these gaps is the next step in building a coherent system for early childhood teacher education.

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## Declaration

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