

## The career path of Master of Arts in Education graduates: Relevance to Department of Education thrusts

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**Abstract:** Graduate education plays a crucial role in fostering research skills that enhance educational theory, elevate socioeconomic conditions, and ensure high employability. This study investigated the career path of Master of Arts in Education graduates and its relevance to DepEd thrusts. It included the profile of the respondents in terms of: General Profile Information, Educational Background, Trainings Attended after Master's Degree and Employment Data. It also included the career path of the MAED graduates relative to DepEd thrusts in terms of: Promotion in rank, Research productivity, Community involvement, Specific expertise, Teaching innovations, Instructional Material Development and based from the findings a proposed enhancement of the MAED program relative to DepEd thrusts was recommended. Results disclosed the graduates profile, with a majority of the married female participants from the Caraga Region. Participants primarily pursued higher education for promotion and professional development, indicating a strategic approach to career advancement. Most respondents are in stable employment, with a small percentage in temporary positions, suggesting limited opportunities in certain sectors. The education sector has the highest number of participants, indicating the study's relevance to professionals in this field. Salaries and benefits are key factors in job retention, highlighting the importance of competitive compensation packages. Most respondents' current job roles are related to their MAEd degree, indicating effective application of their knowledge and skills. Most graduates are employed locally, a small percentage work abroad, indicating the program's potential for international job markets. However, a significant percentage of graduates are not employed, raising questions about job market competitiveness.

Keywords: Tracer Study, Career Path, Graduate Education

Date Submitted: May 14, 2025

Date Accepted: May 26, 2025

Date Published: June 2, 2025

## INTRODUCTION

Graduate education is critical for creating research capabilities that improve educational theory and practice, uplifting socioeconomic conditions to become productive members of society, and assuring graduates' high employability in the workplace (Bueno, 2017; Daguplo et al., 2019). It also enhances career and promotion, builds professional networks and connections, fulfills purpose-driven personal and professional life, and encourages theory to work-based practice (Sumande et al., 2022). Furthermore, this can be one avenue for teachers to improve their professional competence, as competent teachers are critical for long-term nation-building.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines are responsible for ensuring that their graduates are competent and employable in both the local and global marketplaces (Aclan et al., 2018; Cuadra et al., 2019). This accountability extends beyond the transmission of

academic information to the development of practical skills applicable in a variety of labor markets.

Graduate education is seen as critical by academics in the Philippines. One of the Department of Education's (DepED) priority areas is quality education through teacher upskilling and reskilling through a professional development program. Meanwhile, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has adopted revised Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSG) for graduate programs in order to help improve the quality of graduate education in the Philippines and meet the expectations of the twenty-first century. The new PSG for graduate studies emphasizes the importance of improving education professionals' skills and capacities in order to continuously expand teaching and learning, provide student services, and administer educational programs. These abilities include, but are not limited to, knowledge and technical skills, communication, leadership, research, and information and communication technology. Graduate students learn these skills and gain confidence in making decisions in a complex work setting. They learn to assess, communicate, and develop more efficient ways to fulfill their jobs and responsibilities as they acquire these skills (CHED, 2019).

Graduate tracer studies are important sources of information regarding academic program graduates at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Dela Cruz, 2020). It provides significant information for evaluating higher education outcomes, which can be used as a resource for educational institutions' continuous development and quality assurance (Tutor et al., 2021). These studies are also important tools for assessing and improving the outcomes of graduate education programs, as well as their marketability and sustainability (Woya, 2019). The increased emphasis on graduate employability and career advancement in the global market mandates ongoing improvement of graduate program delivery to be responsive to global market demands. HEIs play a critical role in building a workforce that can effectively contribute to local and global economies by assuring graduates' employability and competency.

Moreover, the Department of Education recently released DepEd Memorandum No. 7 series of 2023. This memorandum stipulates the recruitment of teaching force and promotion of personnel for head teacher items in this country. Among the standard qualifications to be hired and promoted in the department is on the educational qualifications. Having a master's degree is an advantage which every graduate students who finished a degree particularly on Master of Arts in Educational Management should traverse. The fast-changing landscape of this country's promotion process entails every educator to have goal directions of their respective careers. Thus, the researcher of this study is motivated to conduct this research endeavor as it wanted to investigate the career path among the graduates of Agusan Colleges Incorporated if they follow the directions and thrusts of the institution which is to produce graduates who are globally competent to lead institutions. Moreover, this research aims at having a quantifiable information which will serve as basis in policy and decision making processes among the administrators of the institution regarding graduate education program.

### *Problem Statement*

This study will investigate the Career Path of Master of Arts in Education Graduates: Relevance to DepEd Thrusts. Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the profile of the respondents?
2. What is the career path of the MAED graduates relative to DepEd thrusts?

### *Theoretical framework*

This study is anchored to Super Development Self Concept. The process of building and applying a self-concept is referred to as vocational development. Vocational choice and conduct improve as the self-concept becomes more realistic and steady. People choose jobs that allow them to express their self-concepts. Vocational development is the process of creating and applying a self-concept. As the self-concept gets more realistic and stable, so does vocational choice and conduct. People choose careers that allow them to express their self-concepts.

This theory is essential as it determine your career growth stage and create goals for mastery of the duties that are particular to that level. Assist an individual in clarifying their self-concept because each task that improves self-knowledge increases vocational maturity. Then assist them in connecting their self-awareness to vocational information. Because employment opportunities diminish over time, expose pupils to a broader range of vocations and consider the lifestyle consequences as well as the vocational and avocational significance of educational curriculum. Supers' developmental perspective on career growth in the context of the self allows for adjustments over time. This is highly suitable in the workplace of the twenty-first century.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research design*

A descriptive - correlation design will be used in this research. Descriptive Correlation Design is also known as the observation approach since it examines two variables to determine whether or not a link exists (De Belen, 2015). A correlational study, according to Almeida et al., (2016), is one that looks for a link between two variables. Correlational study is used to determine what effect one has on the other and how that affects the relationship. The goal is to use two or more variables to better understand the condition of previous events and to anticipate future conditions and events. In this regard, the correlational study is appropriate to be use in this research as it aims to establish significant relationship between the respondent's profile and their career paths. The independent variable is the profile of the respondents while the dependent variable is their career path. This research would like to correlate if the profile of the respondents has a relationship to the career path they choose after finishing their master's degree.

### *Locale of Study*

This study shall be conducted among the graduates of Agusan Colleges Inc. for the last five (5) years. This research is a tracer study which will trace the graduates of said institution wherever they are employed or resided. Agusan Colleges, Inc. (ACI) is an independent educational institution located in Butuan City, Agusan Del Norte. The institution, formerly known as Agusan College (AC), was established in 1951 by retired public school officials. It initially provided primary and secondary education as well as technical-vocational programs. In the year 1955, the institution commenced the provision of undergraduate programs leading to the attainment of a four-year bachelor's degree in the field of Commerce. The closure of Agusan College occurred in 1957, following which it was subsequently listed for sale. However, the institution was later acquired and assumed by new management a few years thereafter. This transition facilitated the introduction of novel technical-vocational programs aimed at enhancing student enrolment. Subsequently, the institution expanded its academic offerings to include undergraduate and graduate courses.

The Agusan College Institution (ACI) is officially acknowledged by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and maintains its provision of educational programs spanning from the Basic Education level to the Tertiary level. The undergraduate courses available encompass the disciplines of Education, Business, and Information Technology. In addition, there are technical-vocational courses in Computer Hardware Servicing and Office Administration that have received accreditation from TESDA.

At present it offers K to 12 programs, baccalaureate degrees and master's degree for graduate students.

### *Respondents of the study*

The respondents of this study will be the graduates of the Master of Arts in Educational Management of Agusan Colleges Inc. for the last five (5) years. These include the graduates who graduated regardless of the modality they took whether face to face or online classes. It includes specifically those respondents who are teachers, school heads, supervisors etc. who took the abovementioned course.

### *Selection and Description of Respondents*

The systematic random sampling technique will be used in this study. Systematic sampling or interval random sampling, according to Almeida et al., (2016), follows the direction of systematic interval. In this technique, the first element for the sample is chosen at random, and then following items are chosen using a fixed or systematic interval until the desired sample size is reached. Systematic sampling is a probability sampling strategy in which researchers select members of the population at regular intervals, such as every 15th individual on a population list. If the population is arranged in a random order, the benefits of simple random sampling can be imitated (www.scribbr.com). In this regard, the manner of selection of the sample starts from choosing the batch of graduates for the last five years. After selecting the batches of graduates (2022, 2021, 2020, 2019 & 2018), the respondents specifically choose those who graduates the degree of Master of Arts in Educational Management. From the sets of graduates per academic year, the researcher will identify the respondents in every 5<sup>th</sup> from the list of graduates until such time that the desired number of samples will be completed.

### *Data Gathering Instruments*

This study will utilize a survey questionnaire. The said survey questionnaire shall be divided into four parts. The first part is on profile of the respondents which composed of the aspects of individual's characteristics such as permanent address, e-mail address, contact number(s), civil status, sex, birthday, region of origin, province and location of residence. Moreover, survey questions on their educational background, trainings/advance studies attended after master's degree will also be included as well as respondent's employment data. Lastly, the said survey questionnaire will include their present career path and challenges encountered after graduating master's degree.

The said questionnaire was adopted and modified from the tracer study format developed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for undergraduates. Other parts of the survey questionnaire were modified and shall be subjected for validation by expert validators prior to its administration to the research respondents.

### *Data Gathering Procedure*

Following the validation of the survey questionnaire and the incorporation of the suggested improvement from the survey questionnaires validators or evaluators, it will be distributed to the identified respondents. Before administering the instrument to respondents, a letter of intent must be drafted and addressed to the respondents vis-à-vis the head of office of the respondents where they are presently assigned. After the approval, the researcher shall administer the survey questionnaire to stated target research participants. All the participants shall be given an ample time to answer the pre assessment questionnaire and a focus group discussion shall be conducted as necessary to validate answers and clarify questions and answers stated by the respondents.

In case that the respondents will not be available in face-to-face basis due to location of residents or school assignment. An online survey instrument shall be crafted by the researcher and will be sent through his/her messenger or email address to suffice the needed data of this research. Moreover, a telephone interview or video call sessions shall be conducted in case the researcher will need a clarification on the data provided by the respondents.

### *Data Analysis Procedure*

After the data has been collected, it will be carefully tabulated and consolidated according to the specific sections of the survey questionnaire. The mean or average result, expressed as the Mean Percentage Score (MPS) for each indicator, will be computed to pinpoint the most frequently observed results across all parts of the questionnaire. These summarized outcomes will serve as the foundational basis for developing an enhancement program tailored specifically for the master's degree program, addressing the needs and gaps identified through the survey findings.

For the statistical treatment, the study will employ several tools to effectively analyze and interpret the collected data. The frequency count and percentage method will be used to quantify the number of respondents falling under particular categories or reflecting certain characteristics. This will include both absolute counts (actual numbers) and relative percentages, providing a clear picture of how often specific variables appear. This tool is particularly useful in examining aspects such as the respondents' profile, their educational background, the training or advanced studies they pursued after completing their master's degree, and their employment data.

Additionally, the weighted mean will be applied to assess the average responses provided by the participants, where each response is multiplied by a specific weight determined by the importance or relevance of the factor it represents. This method will be essential in evaluating the mean scores related to the respondents' career paths and the challenges they have encountered. Together, these statistical tools will ensure that the study generates precise, meaningful insights that can guide the design of an effective enhancement program.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### *General information of the respondents*

The demographic profile of the participants in this study reveals that a significant portion are married (65.6%), with single individuals making up 29.7% and single parents accounting for 4.7%. A notable gender imbalance is evident, with females representing 67.2% of the sample, while males comprise 32.8%. Geographically, the majority of respondents come from the Caraga

Region (96.9%), with only a small fraction (3.1%) from Region 10. Regarding residence, slightly more participants live in urban areas (54.7%) compared to those in rural settings (45.3%). These demographic insights highlight the diversity of the sample and emphasize the importance of analyzing the data in a way that accounts for these varied characteristics.

The predominance of married individuals among master's degree holders suggests that advanced academic pursuits often unfold alongside family responsibilities. This has important programmatic implications: initiatives designed for this group should incorporate flexible scheduling, online learning options, and family-supportive services to help balance academic, professional, and personal demands. Additionally, the high proportion of female participants underscores the need to address gender-specific challenges, particularly in terms of workplace advancement, leadership opportunities, and the removal of structural barriers that may limit female graduates' career progression.

These observations align with the findings of Othman et al. (2018), who identified seven key factors influencing graduate employability—among them age, faculty, field of study, co-curricular involvement, marital status, industrial internship, and English proficiency. Notably, marital status emerged as a factor that shapes employability, influencing availability, mobility, and perceptions of stability and responsibility. Employers may view married individuals differently compared to single counterparts, potentially affecting hiring and promotion decisions.

The strong regional concentration of respondents from Caraga points to the value of designing localized interventions, such as regional career development programs, professional networking events, and industry-academia collaborations, which can harness the potential of master's degree graduates for regional economic and social advancement. Furthermore, the urban-rural participant distribution draws attention to the broader role of higher education in promoting rural development. Retention programs that encourage graduates to remain in or return to rural areas could help address regional disparities and contribute to more balanced national growth.

In summary, the demographic findings suggest the need for carefully tailored strategies that consider marital status, gender, regional concentration, and urban-rural dynamics. These strategies can help create effective support systems for master's degree graduates, enhancing their career prospects, supporting regional development, and ensuring that the benefits of advanced education are broadly shared.

#### *Profile of the respondents in terms of year graduated in MAEd program*

The number of Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) graduates per year reveals noticeable fluctuations, with the highest number of graduates recorded in 2019 at 13 (20.3% of the total) and the lowest in 2021 at 7 (10.9%). These shifting trends carry meaningful implications for both program management and educational policy. Institutions can use this data to better plan resource allocation, ensuring adequate faculty, facilities, and support services during years of peak enrollment while preventing resource underuse in years of lower enrollment. Additionally, the variability in graduation rates signals the need to review the MAEd program closely to understand the factors affecting student enrollment, retention, and completion. Such a review could lead to improvements in curriculum design, academic advising, or student support services, ultimately aiming to increase program effectiveness and student success.

These enrollment patterns may also reflect changing market demands for MAEd graduates, signaling shifts in the education sector's workforce needs. Educational institutions and policymakers can use these trends to anticipate demand and ensure that graduate programs

remain responsive and aligned with labor market expectations. Furthermore, the data highlight the importance of implementing strong retention strategies, particularly during periods of lower enrollment, to ensure that students complete their studies and that the institution maintains a consistent output of qualified graduates.

These findings align with the study of Zulieta et al. (2020), which reported a decline in master's level enrollment over six academic years (2013–2014 to 2018–2019), even as doctoral-level enrollment remained stable. This suggests that while many teachers pursue graduate studies to continuously improve their skills and knowledge, as also indicated by Naco (2015, as cited by Bagapuro & Delos Santos, 2021), only a small proportion ultimately complete a master's degree. Moreover, Risqiani et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of tracer studies to monitor alumni activities post-graduation, focusing on their transition from higher education to employment, skill utilization, and career progression. Such studies reinforce the value of examining graduate output trends—not only to improve academic programs but also to ensure that graduates are effectively integrated into the workforce and contributing meaningfully to their fields. Overall, these insights underscore the need for responsive, data-driven approaches to managing MAEd programs, enhancing both educational quality and societal impact.

#### *Reasons for taking graduate studies*

Findings reveal that the majority of respondents (50.0%) pursued graduate studies primarily to enhance their chances of promotion, underscoring the perceived connection between advanced degrees and career advancement. This reflects a strategic approach to professional growth, where higher educational attainment is seen as a key to unlocking better job positions and career progression. Additionally, 39.1% of respondents identified professional development as their main motivation, demonstrating a strong commitment to continuous learning, skill enhancement, and staying competitive in their respective fields. A smaller proportion, 10.9%, pursued graduate studies for other personal or professional reasons, reflecting the varied and nuanced motivations that shape individual educational decisions.

These results carry several important implications. First, the high percentage of individuals aiming for promotion points to the need for institutions to recognize and support the role of advanced education in career trajectories, perhaps by designing programs aligned with industry standards and advancement pathways. Second, the notable commitment to lifelong learning highlights the importance of offering flexible, relevant, and accessible graduate programs that allow professionals to balance study with work and personal commitments. Third, the perception of graduate education as a means to strengthen expertise suggests that employers stand to benefit by supporting employees' educational pursuits, ultimately cultivating a more skilled and competitive workforce.

These insights are reinforced by the findings of Dela Cruz (2022), who showed that many students are already employed when they begin graduate studies, using the opportunity to enhance their competencies and improve their job prospects, particularly in private schools or when applying for positions within the Department of Education, where additional qualifications are rewarded with extra points. Similarly, Woya (2019) emphasized that the value of higher education lies in its capacity to improve job-related skills and elevate the quality of workforce outcomes.

Moreover, Cornillez Jr. (2021) found in a tracer study of teacher education graduates from Eastern Visayas State University that high employability was linked not only to educational qualifications but also to factors like parental influence and prior academic performance. Most

graduates secured permanent jobs within a short period, valuing salary and benefits highly in their career decisions. Interestingly, while communication and human relations skills were deemed most useful in the workplace, entrepreneurial skills were seen as less relevant. This suggests that graduate programs should incorporate both technical and soft skills development while listening carefully to student feedback, as it plays a crucial role in improving educational quality and aligning curricula with workplace realities.

Overall, the findings underscore the complex interplay between aspirations for career advancement, dedication to professional development, and personal motivations. This complexity highlights the need for educational institutions and employers to implement tailored educational strategies and career support mechanisms, ensuring that graduate programs remain relevant, responsive, and impactful for diverse learner populations.

### *Professional advancement after graduate studies*

The findings show the distribution of individuals based on the number of professional advancements they pursued after completing their master's degree, highlighting the frequency and percentage of participants in each category. The largest group consisted of those who pursued one professional advancement, with 14 individuals (21.9% of the total), indicating that many graduates tend to focus on a single, targeted area of career development. On the other hand, only four participants (6.3%) reported engaging in seven professional advancements, suggesting that fewer individuals pursue a wide range of career development opportunities, likely influenced by personal preferences, career goals, or the availability of relevant advancement pathways. These patterns reflect the diverse post-master's trajectories individuals take, with some favoring depth in one area and others exploring broader advancement opportunities.

These findings have important implications for institutions and organizations, underscoring the need to tailor career development programs to accommodate varying aspirations and professional needs. Providing both specialized and multi-faceted career advancement options can help create a more effective and supportive environment for professional growth, ensuring that graduates can pursue pathways aligned with their individual goals.

The results align with the study by Bagapuro and Delos Santos (2021), which emphasized that in the Philippines, obtaining a postgraduate degree is often essential for career advancement and income enhancement, particularly in the teaching profession. Advancement from positions like Teacher I to Master Teacher or Head Teacher typically requires at least a master's degree. This is further reinforced by DepEd Order No. 7, series of 2023, which outlines recruitment, selection, and appointment guidelines within the Department of Education. The order emphasizes equal opportunity and points-based ranking, awarding higher points to applicants holding a master's degree, particularly for those applying for administrative roles such as head teachers and principals.

Additionally, MEC Order No. 10, s. 1979, and DECS Order No. 57, s. 1997, which govern the ranking and appointment of Master Teachers, stipulate that while a master's degree is not strictly required, candidates must have completed the academic requirements (CAR) for the degree to qualify for ranking and promotion. Further supporting this framework, DepEd Order No. 66, series of 2007, revises guidelines to strengthen the principles of merit, fitness, objectivity, and uniformity in evaluating and promoting teaching and non-teaching staff.

The insights from Lopena et al. (2023) further strengthen the argument that graduate program quality and graduate satisfaction play crucial roles in developing competencies,

unlocking knowledge, and enhancing the social and economic standing of graduates. These findings suggest that focusing on both the content and delivery of graduate programs leads to broader societal benefits by producing highly competent, motivated, and upwardly mobile individuals.

Overall, the study's findings emphasize the importance of understanding the diverse post-master's degree advancement patterns and ensuring that educational policies, institutional programs, and legal frameworks are designed to support graduates' varied paths toward professional growth, satisfaction, and socioeconomic improvement.

#### *Employment status of the respondents*

Findings reveal that a substantial majority of respondents—93.8%—are employed in regular or permanent positions, reflecting a high level of job stability within the surveyed group. In contrast, only a small minority (3.1% each) hold temporary or casual employment, indicating that such work arrangements are relatively scarce among these individuals. This employment pattern carries several implications. First, the dominance of regular or permanent employment suggests that most respondents enjoy secure, long-term job prospects, which can positively influence their financial stability, career development, and overall well-being. However, the minimal presence of temporary or casual employment signals potential barriers or limited opportunities for those seeking flexible or short-term work arrangements within the studied industry or region.

These patterns suggest that policymakers and organizational leaders should be attentive to the needs of both permanent and non-permanent workers. Workforce management policies should continue to strengthen and sustain job stability while also exploring ways to improve conditions and opportunities for those in temporary or casual roles. Further research could help uncover the underlying reasons for these employment distributions and assess their broader implications for workers' livelihoods, job satisfaction, and career trajectories.

Interestingly, these findings contrast with the study of King and King (2018), which examined the role of master's degrees in enhancing employability among workers in Mbeya and Makete districts, Tanzania. Their research revealed that only 2% of respondents believed a master's degree facilitated self-employment, and just 12% saw it as creating government sector employment. Overall, 73.4% of respondents doubted the direct employability benefits of a master's degree, prompting the authors to recommend revising university curricula to better equip graduates with skills that address societal needs and foster both self-employment and formal sector opportunities.

Conversely, the study by Alvarez (2020) on the employment trends of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) Marketing Management graduates paints a more optimistic picture. Alvarez found that graduates had a high employability rate, with many working within their chosen profession, suggesting strong prospects for future promotions, salary increases, and additional job-related benefits. While government licensure exams were not a primary focus for all industries, they were recognized as advantageous for enhancing employability, advancement, and job retention in certain fields.

Overall, these synthesized findings highlight the centrality of regular employment in ensuring worker stability, while also pointing to the importance of designing educational programs and workforce policies that not only secure job placements but also expand the range of employment opportunities—be it in permanent, temporary, self-employed, or government roles—to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of graduates.

### *Line of business employment of MAEd graduates*

Findings reveal a striking imbalance in the distribution of participants by line of business, with the majority (56 out of 64 participants) coming from the education sector, while only one participant each represents the mining and quarrying and public administration sectors. This uneven representation suggests that the study's topic holds particular relevance and resonance for professionals in education, where the findings are likely to have the greatest impact on practices, career advancement, and institutional policies. Educational institutions and policymakers should prioritize effectively communicating and applying these results to maximize their potential benefits within the education sector.

In contrast, the minimal participation from mining, quarrying, and public administration points to either a perceived lack of relevance or a lower level of engagement with the study's focus. To address this gap, future research efforts might need to design targeted outreach and tailored communication strategies to encourage greater participation from these underrepresented sectors, ensuring that their unique professional contexts and challenges are also reflected in future findings and recommendations.

The disparity in participant numbers further underscores the importance of generating sector-specific insights. While the education sector clearly demonstrates the value of a master's degree in supporting career advancement and professional development, sectors with low representation might benefit from customized recommendations on how master's degree holders can apply their expertise innovatively or explore alternative career pathways. For educational institutions, these findings also suggest a strong demand for graduate programs specifically aligned with the needs of education professionals, reinforcing the need to continuously adapt curricula and support services to meet this demand.

These results align with the findings of Tutor et al. (2021) in the 4th Philippine Graduate Tracer Study, which examined higher education as a pathway to employment, citizenship, and life satisfaction. That study revealed significant job-education mismatches among graduates across various disciplines. While education graduates often secure teaching positions, they sometimes work at levels below their qualifications, mirroring challenges faced by accountancy graduates performing clerical rather than accounting roles. Interestingly, BS Nursing graduates face an even more pronounced mismatch, with about a quarter working in occupations entirely outside the human health and social work sectors, and only a small percentage employed as healthcare assistants or nursing associates.

Together, these synthesized findings emphasize the critical need for institutions, employers, and policymakers to address sector-specific employment dynamics, ensure the relevance of graduate programs, and develop tailored strategies that align educational qualifications with meaningful employment opportunities across industries. By doing so, they can help maximize the impact of advanced degrees not just within education but across the broader labor market.

### *Place of work of MAEd graduates*

Findings reveal that a striking 93.8% of master's degree graduates are employed locally, while only 6.3% have pursued employment abroad. This strong local employment focus suggests that graduates primarily seek opportunities within their home region or country, underscoring the importance of aligning master's degree curricula with the specific needs and demands of the local job market. Graduate programs must ensure that their offerings—whether in terms of skills,

knowledge, or industry partnerships—are closely attuned to the expectations of local employers, thereby enhancing graduates' employability and relevance.

However, the presence of a small but notable percentage of graduates working abroad signals an opportunity for institutions to broaden their perspective. By integrating international exposure, cross-cultural training, and global networking opportunities into their programs, universities can better prepare students to access and succeed in international job markets. This dual focus—addressing local workforce needs while equipping students for global careers—could significantly strengthen the versatility and appeal of master's programs.

The fact that most graduates remain employed locally also places pressure on local industries to retain this talent pool effectively. Offering competitive salaries, robust professional development opportunities, and clear pathways for career advancement will be crucial in preventing talent drain and ensuring long-term retention. Importantly, the distribution of graduates across both local and international roles emphasizes the need for curricula to be versatile, blending locally grounded skills with globally relevant competencies.

These observations align with the findings of Cornillez Jr. (2021) in his tracer study of teacher education graduates from Eastern Visayas State University-Tanauan Campus, where most graduates were found working locally or regionally in professional, technical, or supervisory roles. The study further noted a positive trend in career advancement, with graduates moving into higher positions compared to their initial job placements. Together, these insights highlight the growing importance of designing master's programs that not only respond to immediate local employment trends but also provide graduates with the tools and confidence to navigate an increasingly interconnected global labor market, ultimately fostering both individual career growth and broader economic development.

#### *Current job after MAEd graduation*

The data reveals that a substantial proportion of Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) graduates are employed after completing their degree, with 71.9% of surveyed individuals indicating employment. This finding suggests that the MAEd program equips graduates with skills and qualifications that are valued in the job market, enabling them to secure employment opportunities.

However, it is also noteworthy that 28.1% of MAEd graduates surveyed are not employed after graduation. This raises questions about the factors contributing to their unemployment, such as the competitiveness of the job market, the relevance of their qualifications to available positions, or the effectiveness of career guidance and placement services offered by educational institutions. These findings have several implications for MAEd programs and educational institutions. Firstly, there is a need to ensure that MAEd curricula are aligned with the demands of the job market, equipping graduates with the skills and knowledge that are sought after by employers. Additionally, institutions may need to enhance their career services to better support graduates in securing employment opportunities. Finally, further research could be conducted to explore the specific factors influencing the employment outcomes of MAEd graduates, allowing for more targeted interventions to improve their employability.

#### *Reasons for staying on Job*

The data presented highlights the key factors influencing employee retention. It is evident that the majority of respondents, constituting 89.1% of the total, prioritize "Salaries and benefits" as their primary reason for staying in their current jobs. This underscores the significant weight

placed on financial considerations in their decision-making process. Conversely, only a negligible percentage of respondents, at 1.6% each, cited "Career challenge" and "Others" as their reasons for remaining in their roles. This suggests that while non-monetary factors play a role, they are not as influential in this context. To improve employee retention, organizations should focus on offering competitive compensation packages while also providing avenues for career advancement and recognizing and leveraging employees' unique skills. Understanding and addressing these factors can help create a more fulfilling work environment, ultimately leading to higher levels of employee satisfaction and retention.

Moreover, the study conducted by Ali & Ali (2020) on a Tracer Study of 2012-2019 Graduates from Bachelor of Science in Business Administration at Cotabato City State Polytechnic College, Philippines revealed that the majority of respondents (87.7%) are employed, while 12.3% of graduates have never been employed after graduation. It was found out that respondents answered that in terms of their current job is their first after graduation, citing reasons such as salary and benefits, career challenges, and relevance to their studies or skills. The most common source of job opportunities is recommendations from acquaintances.

#### *Job relatedness to MAED*

The data reveals a strong correlation between respondents' current job roles and their Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) degree, with 95.3% of participants indicating that their job is related to their MAEd qualification. This suggests that the majority of individuals are effectively applying the knowledge and skills acquired during their MAEd studies in their professional roles. This alignment is likely contributing to higher job satisfaction and performance among these individuals, as they are able to utilize their education in a meaningful way in their careers.

Conversely, a small percentage of respondents (4.7%) do not perceive their job as related to their MAEd degree. While this group is in the minority, their perspective is still significant as it indicates a potential mismatch between their educational background and their current job roles. Addressing this mismatch is important, as it could lead to increased job satisfaction and retention if these individuals are able to better align their skills and knowledge with their job responsibilities.

Organizations can leverage these findings by providing professional development opportunities that align with employees' MAEd qualifications, thus further enhancing their skills and job satisfaction. Additionally, understanding the importance of job relatedness to academic qualifications can inform recruitment and hiring practices, allowing organizations to attract candidates whose educational backgrounds align with the job requirements. Overall, the strong correlation between job relatedness and MAEd degree underscores the value of education in the workplace and its potential impact on job satisfaction, performance, and organizational success. In the study conducted by Kalaw (2019) on Tracer Study of Bachelor of Science in Mathematics. The research aimed to assess the employability of graduates from a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics (BSM) program at a Philippine Higher Educational Institution. It adapted the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Graduate Tracer Survey Questionnaire and used the data to review and revise the program. The results could be used to update the curriculum to better meet the needs of 21st-century learners, preparing them for both employment and future innovation. The study surveyed 50 BSM graduates on their employment characteristics, transition to employment, and satisfaction with the program. Graduates reported that their training helped them acquire 21st-century skills and competencies, suggesting improvements

such as soft training on computer software, partnerships with software developers, and courses merging machine learning and data science.

## CONCLUSION

The study's demographic profile reveals a diverse sample, with a majority of participants being married and female, primarily from the Caraga Region. This diversity emphasizes the importance of considering various demographic characteristics in analyses and program development. Enrollment trends in the Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) program show fluctuating figures, suggesting the need for institutions to allocate resources effectively and evaluate the program's efficacy.

Participants pursued higher education primarily to enhance their chances of promotion and for professional development, indicating a strategic approach to career advancement. This underscores the need for flexible scheduling and gender-specific considerations in career advancement programs. In terms of professional advancement, the majority of respondents focused on singular career paths, suggesting a preference for focused career development.

Most respondents are in regular or permanent employment, indicating job stability within the surveyed population. However, a small percentage are in temporary or casual employment, suggesting limited opportunities in these sectors. The education sector has the highest number of participants, indicating strong relevance of the study topic to professionals in this field. Efforts should be made to effectively communicate and implement study findings within this sector.

While most graduates are employed locally, a small percentage are employed abroad, highlighting the program's potential to prepare graduates for international job markets. The majority of graduates are employed after completing their degree, but a significant percentage are not employed, raising questions about factors affecting job market competitiveness and career guidance effectiveness.

Salaries and benefits are the main reasons for staying in current jobs, indicating the importance of financial factors. To improve retention, organizations should focus on competitive compensation packages and opportunities for career advancement. Most respondents' current job roles are related to their MAEd degree, indicating effective application of their knowledge and skills. However, a small percentage feel their job is unrelated to their degree, suggesting a need to address this mismatch to improve job satisfaction and retention.

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