Exploring the Professional Development Pathways of Graduates from the Master's Programs in Education: Inputs for Curricular Enhancement

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Abstract: Exploring the Professional Development Pathways of Graduates from the Master's Programs in Education: A Tracer Study in a Center of Excellence. Objectives: This tracer study aimed to trace the graduates of the master's programs in Teacher Education in a center of excellence in Central Visayas, Philippines. **Methods:** Using a validated tracer study tool, the researchers obtained data from 136 respondents and analyzed these data through descriptive statistical and thematic analyses. **Findings:** Findings revealed that they became better after receiving the master's degree, where the university master's attributes are evident among them. They attained crucial attributes, developed complex skills, and were promoted to a higher teaching rank. Though they improved, they still recommended that the center of excellence employ flexible and integrative learning, where certifications and current trends and issues are embedded. **Conclusion:** In conclusion, the education master's program has provided instruction and a learning environment where students become proficient teachers and workers in their respective teaching stations. Future researchers may venture into other aspects of the graduates to include in tracer studies.

Keywords: masters programs, center of excellence, teacher education, tracer study.

Abstrak: Mengeksplorasi Jalur Pengembangan Profesional Lulusan Program Magister Pendidikan: Tracer Study di Pusat Unggulan. Tujuan: Studi ini bertujuan untuk melacak lulusan program magister Pendidikan Guru di pusat keunggulan di Central Visayas, Filipina. Metode: Dengan menggunakan alat tracer study yang tervalidasi, peneliti memperoleh data dari 136 responden dan menganalisis data tersebut melalui analisis statistik deskriptif dan analisis tematik. Temuan: Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa mereka menjadi lebih baik setelah menerima gelar master, di mana atribut master universitas terlihat jelas di antara mereka. Mereka memperoleh atribut penting, mengembangkan keterampilan kompleks, dan dipromosikan ke peringkat pengajar yang lebih tinggi. Meskipun meningkat, mereka tetap merekomendasikan agar pusat keunggulan menggunakan pembelajaran yang fleksibel dan integratif, di mana sertifikasi dan tren serta masalah terkini disematkan. Kesimpulan: Sebagai kesimpulan, program magister pendidikan telah menyediakan instruksi dan lingkungan belajar di mana siswa menjadi guru dan pekerja yang mahir di stasiun pengajaran masing-masing. Peneliti masa depan dapat menjelajah ke aspek lain dari lulusan untuk dimasukkan dalam studi pelacakan.

Kata kunci: program master, pusat unggulan, pendidikan guru, tracer study.

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■ **INTRODUCTION**

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are expected to provide capable human resources vital for society's progress. A higher education institution then must track its graduates' performance in any program, whether at the undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate level. This endeavor critically analyzes the relationship between higher education and the industry (Gines, 2014). Hence, institutions must examine their graduates' employability or career advancement (Albina & Sumagaysay, 2020; De Vera, 2018). Employability is significant throughout an individual's career to obtain and retain work consistent with one's career needs (Ahmad et al., 2012; De Vos et al., 2021). Smith (2010) emphasized that many professions, including teaching, require their members' continuing professional development to sustain valuable credentials and eventually advance their field.

Considering the significance of upgrading one's credentials to become more employable or be considered for a promotion, many professionals are enrolling in graduate and postgraduate programs in notable universities. In teaching, earning a master's degree is regarded as the next practical career move. However, acquiring a master's degree is not just about obtaining an advantage for promotion but also about improving the craft in one's teaching career. As stipulated in Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order 15 s. 2019, programs under the master's level provide students with advanced academic and professional knowledge, skills, and competencies, leading to a second degree higher than the bachelor's degree where the level of outcome or competency is aligned with Level 7 of the Philippine Qualifications Framework.

Tracer studies in master's programs in education have gained significant attention in recent years, especially among HEIs, since they offer insightful information about the results and impact of these programs on graduates' employability and professional growth. Numerous studies published in international journals have explored various aspects of tracer studies in education (Cañizares, 2015; Cagasan et al., 2017; Guiamalon, 2021; Casanova & Paguia, 2022). These researches have explored factors such as employment rates, career advancement, and the perceived effectiveness of Master's Programs in Education in honing graduates for their roles as educators and administrators.

One important aspect of offering a master's degree in teaching is that graduate school students must be geared towards the relevant future needs of the education field. Hence, it needs to be delivered flexibly and with the vision of the future trends in the profession. This situation concerns the teacher training institutions offering such degrees and the entire educational system. It is time to examine if the graduates of master's degree programs in teacher education could attain the competencies useful in their current work and, at the same time, advance their careers. It is best to know if these graduates made a difference in their profession and eventually fostered an impact in the society where they practice their profession.

A recent study by Andrin et al. (2022) conducted a tracer study among private university graduates in graduate school programs. Their study noted that most graduates were from the education sector, aspiring for salary increases and workplace promotions. They suggested that other relevant skills in the specialization could be strengthened, like entrepreneurial skills and outreach programs. Another study by Belecina and Ocampo (2017) evaluated the graduate mathematics teacher education program of a premier teacher education university in Manila. They profiled their graduates according to biographical characteristics, employment attributes, and professional achievements. The graduates were generally satisfied with the said programs because of the relevant skills and competencies they can use. Notably, a study

published in an international journal by Cagasan et al. (2017) examined the employment characteristics and job experiences of the graduates of a particular state university graduate degree program and their feedback on their educational experiences. The study found that their graduates were generally satisfied with the university's graduate curricular offerings. Although, they gave some suggestions to improve the delivery of graduate degrees further. The study, however, did not delve into the specific teaching strategies and skills that these graduates attributed to their success, leaving a gap in understanding the instructional practices associated with positive outcomes. The study did not also examine the long-term impact of these educational experiences on the graduates' professional growth and the broader educational community, creating an opportunity for further investigation.

There is a notable gap in research regarding the long-term impact of master's programs in education on graduates' instructional practices and student learning outcomes. It is essential to look into how these programs contribute to improved teaching methodologies, student engagement, and academic achievement for program evaluation and its succeeding improvements. Moreover, other aspects, such as the influence of contextual factors like school culture and community dynamics on graduates' ability to implement innovative teaching strategies effectively, can be considered for further exploration. In addition to the gaps mentioned above, there is a need for research examining the various limitations of a graduate of a master's program, such as limited career advancement opportunities and inequality in job distribution. On the contrary, various opportunities aside from the employment advancement of a master's degree graduate can also be explored. Exploring how these programs can better equip graduates to promote inclusivity, cultural responsiveness, and equitable outcomes for all students is an area that also requires further investigation.

The novelty of this paper lies in addressing the gaps identified in the existing literature. This study aims to conduct a comprehensive tracer study of master's programs in education, looking at how the aspects such as instructional strategies, professional development, and long-term consequences on student learning outcomes are affected. Additionally, various aspects such as school culture and community dynamics, inclusivity, and equitable educational experiences shall be considered. By addressing these gaps, our study aims to provide valuable insights for program improvement and contribute to the broader field of education research.

The College of Teacher Education of a state university, as a center of excellence in teacher education in the Central Visayas, Philippines, recognized by CHEd, intended to conduct a tracer study for its master's degree graduates from 2017 to 2021. Specifically, it aimed to trace the graduates of its programs, namely Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) and Master in Special Education (MSpEd). Each program comprises various specializations, such as English Language Teaching, Mathematics Education, and Science Education, to name a few.

This tracer study is deemed an effective method to obtain accurate data that ensures that the College of Teacher Education produces the quality of master's degree graduates that respond to the current and future trends in the Philippine education system. Also, this tracer study is a way to confirm if the college contributes to the mission of the university, which is to develop high-performing professional educators imbued with attributes such as being a facilitator of learning, design thinker, protector of nature, and mission-driven worker which is stipulated in the state university's code. This study enables the acquisition of relevant data in identifying possible areas of opportunities that the institution can work

on, which can serve as bases for curricular improvement. This study also helps broaden the perspective of all the institution's stakeholders, resulting in a more flexible, innovative, and globalized way of delivering educational service.

■ **METHODS**

Participants

The graduates of the master's programs of a state university in Central Visayas, Philippines, participated in this tracer study. From the years 2017-2021, a total of 217 graduates finished their master's degree programs. Using Slovin's formula, the study's sample size is 141, the minimum number of graduates in the tracer study. Through simple random sampling, 159 graduates participated in the study, indicating that this number exceeds the minimum sample size of 141. This reasonable number makes the actual turnout appropriate for the study (Faber & Fonseca, 2014). The distribution of participants master's degree programs is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of study participants

Degree Program	Population	Sample	Percentage
MAEd- Cultural Education	3	1	0.63%
MAEd- Early Childhood Education	19	12	7.55%
MAEd- Educational Management	20	12	7.55%
MAEd- English Language Teaching	61	48	30.19%
MAEd- Filipino Language Teaching	12	10	6.29%
MAEd- Guidance and Counseling	2	2	1.26%
MAEd- Home Economics	3	3	1.89%
MAEd- Mathematics Education	22	21	13.21%
MAEd- Music Education	2	1	0.63%
MAEd- Physical Education	11	8	5.03%
MAEd- Science Education	25	15	9.43%
MAEd- Social Science	19	16	10.06%
MAEd- Special Education	8	4	2.52%
MSPEd	10	6	3.77%
Overall	217	159	100.00%

Based on Table 1, most graduates came from MAEd specializing in English Language Teaching, Science Education, and Mathematics Education, which were also evident in the bigger survey turnouts for these majors. Moreover, 26 of these graduates and their employers participated in the focus group discussions to determine their feedback regarding the master's programs.

Research Design and Procedures

The study employed a mixed method design to explore the professional development pathways of the master's programs of a center of excellence in teacher education in Central Visayas, Philippines. In this mixed design, the quantitative phase used a survey method to gather pertinent statistical data on personal and employment characteristics. At the same time, the qualitative phase utilized narrative inquiry to collect responses regarding the graduates' and their employer's feedback.

Before the study was conducted, the researchers submitted the manuscript to the University Research Ethics Committee to evaluate the ethical aspects of the study. Once

certification was given, the researchers asked permission from the college dean to conduct the study among the graduates of the college's master's programs. Once permitted, the participants were asked for their informed consent to voluntarily participate in the study.

The survey instrument was sent online via Google Forms when all research permissions were secured. The graduates answered the survey using their available gadgets, including mobile phones, computers, and tablets. After the administration of the survey, the FGDs were done through Google Meet or Zoom Meetings. In these discussions, the participants responded to questions in the opening, interview proper, and closing phases. While the responses were videotaped, the researchers also took down notes to gather insightful information from the FGDs.

After the online survey and FGDs, the collected data were stored in Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word, respectively. The files had a password to secure the data from breaching.

Instrument

Two instruments were used in the study: the tracer study questionnaire (TSQ) and the FGD guides. The tracer study questionnaire was primarily based on the graduate tracer study tool provided by CHEd, and some aspects were derived from the studies of Reusia et al. (2020) and Toledo et al. (2013). TSQ contains demographic profiles, personal characteristics, and employment attributes. Specifically, TSQ has items on reasons for pursuing the master's program and attained attributes by the graduates. Additionally, there were items on institutions connected with current positions, attained competencies, promotion or designation, and awards and distinctions.

The other instruments used in the study were the FGDs for the graduates and employers. For the guide for the graduates, the three main

questions focused on their challenges, opportunities, and recommendations to improve the curricular programs of MAEd degrees. For the guide for the employers, the three main questions focused on their reasons, observations, and assessment of the performances of the teacher graduates. For each significant question, probing questions were asked to deepen the interview results.

All instruments were content validated by three experts in tracer studies, instrumentations, and data analysis. These experts recommended using the TSQ in tracing the graduates' career pathways.

Data Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using appropriate analytical tools. The quantitative data were subjected to Jamovi version 2.3.25.0. Percentages described the different personal and employment attributes of the graduates. On the other hand, the qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Firstly, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data. Then, they generated the codes and themes. Moreover, they reviewed the themes to ensure coherence and meaning. After this review, the themes were defined and named. Lastly, the findings were written with vignettes as supporting data for these themes.

A SWOT analysis was also conducted to derive the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats from the tracer study results. After identifying these aspects, the researchers suggested curricular enhancements in the master's programs of the center of excellence in teacher education.

■ RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Personal Characteristics

The personal characteristics considered in this tracer study are their reason for pursuing their

master's program and the attributes they attained after pursuing such a program. Teachers can apply for a master's level program in education. Their reasons for applying and pursuing their master's program of choice are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Reasons for graduates pursuing the master's program

Reason	Percentage
Strong passion for my profession	81.6%
Promotion and career advancement	68.4%
Educational verticalization	44.7%
Status and prestige of the profession	34.2%
Availability of course offering	7.9%

Table 2 shows that graduates have pursued their master's degree because they have a strong passion for their profession (81.6%). They also took the program for promotion and career advancement (68.4%), educational verticalization (44.7%), and status and prestige (34.2%). One reason is the availability of the course offered at the university (7.9%). This result means they pursued the master's program because of personal and professional development. This finding is coherent with the study of Vural and Basaran (2021), as they enumerated self-improvement and professional development as reasons for pursuing a master's degree. They enrolled in master's degrees for personal and professional development, as evidenced by Table 1. Students with great enthusiasm for their careers are generally driven to pursue more education to expand their knowledge and skills in that field (Vural & Basaran, 2021). This finding is consistent with the notion that self-improvement and professional development are significant motivators for earning a master's degree. These characteristics indicate that the master's degree program instilled in the graduates a sense of autonomy and a commitment to high-quality work. The master's degree program helped students improve independent thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability. The master's degree program has prepared students to assess and make well-informed judgments under challenging situations critically.

Furthermore, obtaining a master's degree frequently relates to job advancement and promotion chances. A master's degree is a natural next step in their educational path, allowing students to delve deeper into their chosen profession. Students who engage in self-improvement and professional growth can acquire a strong professional reputation and establish themselves as experts in their subject, thus elevating their rank and competencies. Students increase their passion for work, seek career progression, pursue advanced higher education, and aim for status and reputation by investing in personal and professional improvement.

The graduates attained specific attributes after obtaining the master's degree. The attributes attained by the graduates are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Attained attributes by the graduates

Attribute	Percentage
Less-supervised worker	81.6%
Committed to excellence	73.7%
Risk-taker	65.8%
Researcher	65.8%

New knowledge generator	65.8%
Self-reliant and resilient	65.8%
Quick thinker	57.9%
Informed judge on complex issues	57.9%

Most master's graduates can work with less supervision (81.6%) and become committed to excellence (73.7%). They became risk-takers, researchers, new knowledge generators, and self-reliant and resilient individuals (65.8%). Aside from these attributes, they also became quick thinkers that can provide informed judgment to complex issues (57.9%). This set of results suggests that the graduates gained the attributes expected of a master's graduate at the university. It could be a result of the course offerings in the university that paved the way for an environment where they can manifest these attributes as they underwent their master's education. Yusof (2020) also found these attributes as benefits of having a master's degree, increased earning potential, and enhanced professional network. This convergence of findings supports the idea that pursuing a master's degree can lead to various beneficial outcomes and professional development. Pursuing a master's degree allows students to network with experts, professionals, and peers in their field of study. These networking possibilities can lead to partnerships, job referrals, mentorship, and access to a broader range of employment prospects, which can be necessary for career advancement.

Graduates with a master's degree typically have more earning potential than individuals with a bachelor's degree. This result is due to the enhanced knowledge, abilities, and specific expertise developed during the master's degree, which makes graduates more competitive in the labor market and qualified for higher-paying professions. The link between attributes gained through a master's degree, such as working with less supervision, commitment to excellence, adaptability, and critical thinking skills, and the benefits of increased earning potential and an expanded professional network, reinforces the importance of pursuing advanced higher education. Acquiring these characteristics through a master's degree program increases graduates' marketability and equips them for success in their chosen careers. These findings imply that the students effectively acquired the characteristics expected of a master's degree over their educational journey.

Employment Characteristics

Crucial to any tracer study is the employment characteristics of the graduates, as these characteristics inform of the impact of the master's program on their teaching function and other tasks. The institution where the graduates are connected now can describe the teachers. The type of institutions where they are connected is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Institutions of master's graduates

Institution	Percentage
Public basic education	52.6%
State university	28.9%
Private basic education	13.2%
Private higher education	2.6%
Department/ Ministry of Education	2.6%

Most master's graduates are employed in public basic education schools (52.6%). Others are connected with state universities (28.9%) and private basic education schools (13.2%). Only a few are from private higher education and the education ministry (2.6%). These results show that most master's graduates come from public schools in basic education. Basic education teachers are encouraged to pursue further professional education to update and enhance their knowledge, skills, and values concerning their specialization and inform them if they want to pursue being master teachers or school leaders. Lowery-Moore et al. (2016) unveiled that graduate programs help teachers gain confidence and professional identity as school leaders. Yusof (2020) and Vural and Basaran (2021) highlight these advantages of pursuing a master's education. This finding implies that basic education teachers are encouraged to engage in professional education, such as a master's degree,

to refresh their knowledge, abilities, and beliefs in their specialty and potentially pursue leadership responsibilities.

Teachers can gain the skills and knowledge to effectively fulfill leadership responsibilities within the school system by participating in advanced higher education. The distribution of master's graduates throughout various work sectors, with a significant presence in public elementary and secondary schools, suggests an awareness of the needed skills and specialization in the education sector. This result implies that institutions and policymakers emphasize the impact of higher education on the quality of teaching and leadership in the public education system.

Just like the institution where graduates work, the current teaching position can also inform about their employment description. The current positions of the graduates are posited in Table 5.

Table 5. Current positions of the master's graduates

Position	Percentage
College Faculty	27.0%
Teacher III	21.6%
Private School Faculty	13.5%
Master Teachers	13.5%
School Principal/ Head	8.1%
Teacher I	5.4%
Teacher II	5.4%
Others (HR, Consultant)	5.4%

As presented in Table 5, most of the teachers are college faculty (27.0%) and Teacher III (21.6%). Few are private school faculty (13.5%), master teachers (13.5%), and school principals (8.1%). Others are entrant teachers (I and II), HR, and consultants (5.4%). These results signify that teachers have higher ranks in basic education, such as Teacher III, master teachers, and even becoming school leaders. Others may have been promoted in the college and private school sectors. Teaching promotion and financial

stability are some benefits illustrated in this case (Yusof, 2020). Promotion in academic institutions is an essential benefit of having a master's degree. Advanced degrees are either required or preferred for professional progression in teaching in many educational systems. Teachers can meet the educational requirements for promotions to higher positions such as lead teacher, department head, curriculum coordinator, or even school management responsibilities by getting a master's degree. These advancements provide prospects

for greater accountability, leadership, and influence within the educational institution.

Another advantage of earning a master's degree is increased financial security. Individuals with advanced degrees make better salaries than those with a bachelor's degree or less schooling. Educators who get a master's degree may be eligible for better pay scales, additional allowances, or other financial incentives provided by educational institutions or government programs. This improved financial stability can provide teachers with greater financial security and the possibility of a higher standard of living.

There are also competencies that the master's graduates obtain that are essential and useful in their current work. The competencies are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Attained competencies useful in the current work

Competency	Percentage
Communication skills	92.1%
Human relation skills	92.1%
Research writing skills	81.6%
Critical thinking skills	78.9%
Problem-solving skills	65.8%
Intercultural and international communication	50.0%

A very high percentage of master's graduates have attained competencies they can use in their teaching work. They achieved communication and human relation (92.1%), research writing (81.6%), critical thinking (78.9%), problem-solving (65.8%), and intercultural and international communication (50.0%). The highest percentage suggests that most teachers acquire the characteristics of becoming a school leader, consistent with the previous findings of Lowery-Moore et al. (2016). Research-related skills are also attained due to the nature of the university's graduate learning environment, coherent with the results that graduate education motivated them to research and use their writing, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Ulla, 2018).

Promotion and opportunity for position designation are positive impacts of graduating with a master's degree. The extent to which promotion or designation was given to them is presented in Table 7.

Most of the master's graduates (63.2%) answered that they were not promoted or designated after obtaining their degree, while the

Table 7. Given promotion or designation of masters graduates after graduation

Status	Percentage
No	63.2%
Yes	36.8%

rest did experience promotion or designation (36.8%). This result may be attributed to specific requirements such as basic education years or higher education assessment cycles. However, promotion may have happened before or will happen after graduation, still making promotion and designation as benefits of acquiring a master's degree (Yusof, 2020; Vural & Basaran, 2021).

Specific awards and distinctions were given to the graduates during their master's education and even beyond graduation. The categories of awards are presented in Table 8.

According to Table 7, the master's graduates garnered awards from 2017-2021 during or after their degree attainment. First and foremost, 21.1% were honored to be outstanding teachers or demonstrators in their respective teaching environments, while 18.4% were given distinction in research. Other awards include

Table 8. Awards and distinctions of the master's graduates

Award	Percentage
Outstanding Teacher/ Demonstrator	21.1%
Outstanding Researcher/Presenter	18.4%
Outstanding Leader/ Principal	7.9%
Outstanding Coach	7.9%
Loyalty awards	5.3%

outstanding leader and coach (7.9%) and loyalty awards (5.3%). These awards reward finishing and finally getting their master's degree (Yusof, 2020; Vural & Basaran, 2021).

Employer Feedbacks

The employers gave feedback to the MAED and MSpEd graduates in their workplaces. These feedbacks were analyzed, and the following themes arose.

Theme 1: Very satisfactory performance: The employers expressed great satisfaction with the master's graduates. They are acknowledged as competent, performing well, and frequently exceeding expectations. They receive praise for their outstanding work and are regarded as dependable and devoted.

"The teacher has recognized his dedication and dependability, endorsing him for scholarships and incentives due to his consistent high-performance evaluations, effective and efficient work, and confidence in handling tasks with little guidance." (Employer 3)

Theme 2: Recommended for additional responsibilities: The employers have suggested teachers for or given more authority or leadership roles. Their recommendation for promotion shows their aptitude for leadership and confidence in their skills.

"The school has faith in Mrs. R's ability to lead, as evidenced by her recommendation to serve as a subject coordinator. This acknowledgment is a testament to her commitment and dependability in carrying out her duties." (Employer 7)

Theme 3: Research orientation: For the employers, the graduates are respected for their commitment to research and proficiency in both quantitative and qualitative research. They deserve praise for their contributions to their subject and their capacity to impart knowledge to others.

"My school has recognized Mr. M for his focus on research and asked him to lead research seminars to impart his expertise to other teachers. The other teachers realize Mr. M's importance to the school community and value his proficiency in research." (Employer 15)

The employers' feedback on the graduates highlights the latter's consistent dedication and exemplary work contributed to their success. The employer's recommendation for other responsibilities reflects the graduates' competence and reliability in handling more significant tasks (Calvo & García, 2021). To be recognized in the research field highlights the graduates' commitment to continuous learning and their potential to make valuable contributions in their fields (Bandaranaike, 2018; Ain et al., 2019). These feedbacks demonstrate the graduates' strong performance, evident in their soft skills like leadership potential and research-oriented mindset, positioning them as assets in their professional endeavors (Abas & Imam, 2016; Succi & Canovi, 2020; Casanova & Paguia, 2022).

Student Feedbacks

Masters graduates provided feedback regarding their master's education at the

university. These feedbacks were analyzed, and the following themes arose.

Theme 1: Flexible learning: The graduates stated that their program's professors looked very rigorous in their teaching methods. They stressed the need for greater flexibility in teaching, learning, and assessment, particularly in light of the challenges of taking advanced courses while still holding a full-time job. They believed that exposure to flexible learning modalities, such as incorporating Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), would significantly improve their learning experience and enable them to juggle their professional obligations successfully.

"We found it difficult to attend classes as full-time working professionals because of the rigid teaching methods used in our master's program. This scenario underlines the need for more adaptable instructional approaches that can consider our various work commitments." (Participant 5)

Theme 2: Integrative approach in teaching and assessment: Graduates of the master's programs in education argued for flexible learning and an integrated approach to instruction and evaluation. They emphasized the difficulty of balancing a full-time teaching job with continuing their education because professors frequently prescribed many weekend activities. The graduates humbly requested that some of these assignments be combined with other topics to lessen their workload. They assumed that an integrative strategy would enable a more seamless integration of their academic and professional obligations.

"As working teachers pursuing advanced studies, we believe that adopting an integrative approach in teaching and assessment would greatly benefit us by allowing us to see connections between different topics, reducing duplication of efforts, and maximizing our time and efforts to effectively fulfill our professional duties

while excelling in our academic pursuits." (Participant 28)

Theme 3: Certifications as one of the outcomes: The graduates of the master's programs in education suggested adding certificates to the list of course objectives, such as requiring students to take the IELTS or TOEFL after finishing a particular language course. They thought having professional qualifications would be an asset to their resumes and would attest to their knowledge of the teaching industry.

"Professional certifications would significantly improve our career prospects by validating our knowledge and skills in specialized fields of education, showcasing our dedication to professional growth and continuous learning, and improving the appeal of our resumes to potential employers. Professional certifications could be included as part of the outcomes of the Master's Program." (Participant 100)

Theme 4: Current trends and issues: Some people voiced concern over omitting recent matters and trends in their specific fields. They recommended that the curriculum include pertinent topics from their fields of study, the newest developments in education, and their particular areas of expertise. The graduates felt that by keeping up with current events and being informed of important topics, they would be better prepared to discuss them in the classroom and come up with workable answers.

"For our professional development, it is essential that the Master's Program consider current trends and issues in our fields of study. These trends will inform us about the newest instructional strategies, technological advancements in the classroom, and scientific discoveries." (Participant 115)

The graduates advocate for a flexible, learner-centered learning environment that incorporates alternative teaching strategies, such

as ICTs, and considers their current work (Müller et al., 2023). In addition to emphasizing the benefit of adding certificates to the program outcomes to authenticate their talents and improve their resumes, they emphasize the significance of integrating theory and practice through an integrated approach to teaching and assessment (Resch & Schrittesser, 2021). To stay current and relevant in their disciplines and enhance teaching methods, they also emphasize the importance of incorporating current trends and issues into the curriculum (Panigrahi & Naaz,

2021). By implementing these suggestions, the master's programs can offer a more meaningful and engaging educational experience.

Results of the SWOT Analysis

The tracer study results, including the personal and employment characteristics and the employer and student feedback, were subjected to SWOT analysis to derive the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These results are presented in Figure 1.
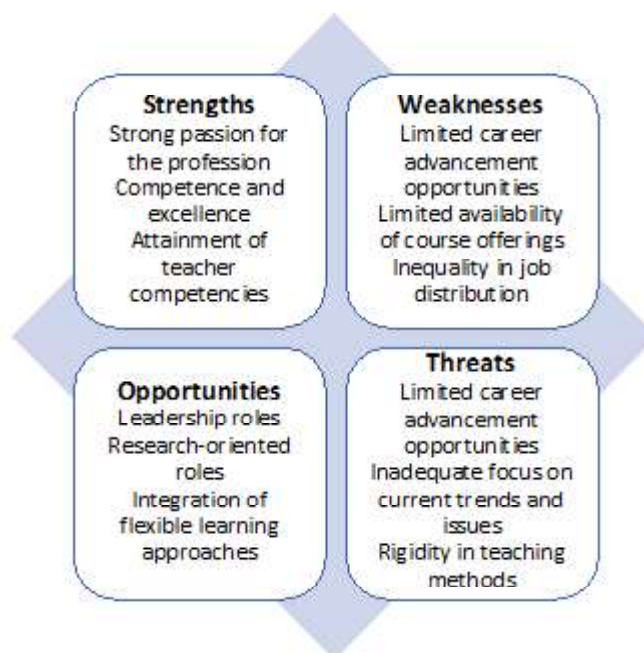
Figure 1. Results of the swot analysis

As presented in Figure 1, the strengths of the master's programs rest are demonstrated in their graduates' great passion for the profession, which motivates their commitment and dedication. They exhibit competence and quality by working independently, taking calculated risks, conducting research, and thinking quickly when faced with challenging situations. They have gained teaching competencies in subjects like communication, research writing, critical thinking, problem-solving, and intercultural and international

communication shows that they are prepared to use these abilities in their teaching jobs.

However, there were weaknesses in the master's programs. The master's programs offer few prospects for career growth because only a sizable percentage of graduates do not receive a promotion or distinction after receiving their degree. Additionally, there is a possible flaw in the restricted course selections, which may make pursuing specialized areas of interest challenging. Additionally, most graduates are employed in

public basic education institutions, which restricts prospects for professional diversity and progress.

Aside from strengths and weaknesses, the master's programs offer opportunities. Because employers see their potential and promote them for such jobs, the graduates can assume more responsibility and leadership roles. Additionally, the graduates' aptitude for research and dedication to it allows them to advance their disciplines and educate others. Additionally, there is a chance to incorporate flexible learning strategies, such as using ICTs and an integrated teaching and evaluation approach, which can improve the educational experience and help graduates successfully manage their professional responsibilities.

Lastly, the master's programs also have threats. Their professional development and motivation are threatened by the limited career advancement opportunities, with most graduates not receiving a promotion or designation. Additionally, graduates can need more contemporary knowledge and abilities, which would make them less competitive in their sector due to the curriculum's lack of emphasis on current trends and challenges. Additionally, graduates need help to successfully juggle their professional and academic duties due to the rigidity of the teaching techniques, which may negatively affect their learning process and overall success.

Recommendations for Curricular Improvement

As derived from the SWOT analysis, the following recommendations for curricular improvement of the master's programs are formulated:

Enhance the career advancement opportunities: The graduate curriculum program should include modules or courses that concentrate on professional development and offer pathways for graduates to succeed in their jobs to address the problem of the lack of career

progression chances. This scenario can include opportunities for leadership development, mentoring initiatives, and educational field-specific specialization. The curriculum can better address the needs and objectives of the graduates by providing clear avenues for career progression.

Expand the course offerings and specializations: The program should consider broadening its course offerings' scope and increasing possibilities for specialization to overcome the shortcoming of the program's constrained course availability. This recommendation can be made by working with other educational institutions, engaging guest lecturers or specialists in particular disciplines, and providing optional courses that address the graduates' varied interests and needs. The program can draw in a larger candidate pool and meet the demand for specialized knowledge and skills by offering a greater range of possibilities.

Integrate current trends and issues: The program should update its curriculum regularly to include current and developing subjects in the field of education to overcome the risk of an inadequate focus on current trends and challenges. This suggestion can be accomplished through continual study, teamwork with experts and practitioners, and participation in regional and international educational networks. The program can provide graduates with the knowledge and abilities necessary to face current difficulties and stay up to speed with the most recent advancements in education by keeping the curriculum current.

■ **CONCLUSIONS**

The tracer study was conducted to track the improvements of the graduates of Master of Arts in Education, Master in Special Education, and Master of Arts in Teaching in their teaching, including the content. The graduates manifest and utilize MAEd and MSPEd attributes and skills in their current teaching endeavors. Most of the

graduates are connected with basic education. Therefore, their acquired competencies help them become master teachers, school leaders, and better teachers. These graduates garnered awards, distinctions, and promotions due to the master's education they received. Overall, the Center of Excellence master's experience has provided the necessary environment and education to the master's graduates that lead them to become highly proficient teachers in their respective schools. To enhance the graduate school curricular programs, the university could find ways to enhance the graduates' career advancement opportunities, expand the course offerings and specialization, and integrate current trends and issues.

The study recommends that the university continue offering a graduate learning environment that fosters and develops school leaders and researchers. Promotion systems in their workplaces may be improved to push teachers to pursue further professional education. Future researchers may venture into other aspects of tracking graduates, such as satisfaction, skills applicability, and experiences during and after the master's program.

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