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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Tracking Down Education and Employment: Career Outcomes of MBA and MAED Graduates

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#### Abstract

This tracer study assessed the employability, career progression, and competency relevance of graduates from the Master in Business Administration (MBA) and Master of Arts in Education (MAED) programs of Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc. from School Year 2022–2023 to 2024–2025. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 110 graduates through a structured questionnaire. Findings revealed that the majority of graduates are employed locally, with significant promotion and career advancement after completing their graduate degrees. MAED graduates primarily pursued advanced studies for promotion in the education sector, while MBA graduates aimed for professional development and leadership growth. Results also showed upward mobility from entry-level to supervisory and managerial positions. Graduates identified critical thinking, human relations, and communication skills as the most essential competencies for workplace success. The findings indicate that the graduate programs effectively contribute to employability and align with Sustainable Development Goals on Quality Education and Decent Work. Continuous curriculum enhancement focusing on higher-order thinking and interpersonal skills is recommended to maintain program relevance and responsiveness to industry demands.

**Keywords:** career advancement, critical thinking skills, curriculum relevance, employability, graduate education tracer study

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## INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a crucial role not only in knowledge transmission but also in preparing graduates for employment, leadership, and societal contribution. In today's competitive global environment, employability has become one of the most important indicators of institutional effectiveness. Graduate tracer studies serve as an essential feedback mechanism to assess whether academic programs remain relevant to labor market demands.

This study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4: Quality Education, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, which emphasizes productive employment and decent work for all. By examining graduate employability, promotion patterns, and competency relevance, this tracer study supports institutional quality assurance and continuous improvement consistent with global development goals.

Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc. (MPCI) Graduate School offers the Master in Business Administration (MBA) and Master of Arts in Education (MAED) programs aimed at producing competent professionals and leaders. However, with evolving industry requirements, it is necessary to determine whether graduates experience job alignment, promotion, and skills applicability after completing their degrees.

Thus, this tracer study was conducted to assess the employment status, career progression, and competency relevance of MBA and MAED graduates from SY 2022–2023 to SY 2024–2025.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to trace the graduates of the MBA and MAED programs of Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc.

Specifically, it sought to:

1. Determine the profile of respondents.
2. Identify the reasons for pursuing advanced studies.
3. Determine the employment status of graduates after completing their degree.
4. Compare job positions before and after earning the graduate degree.
5. Identify reasons for job change.
6. Determine recommended skills and competencies to improve curricular relevance.

## METHODOLOGY

This chapter discussed the research method used, research locale, research instrument, selection and description of respondents, research procedures and statistical treatment of the data gathered.

### Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive research design, appropriate for determining the current employment conditions and career outcomes of graduates. Descriptive design allows systematic collection and interpretation of data to describe trends and relationships.

### Respondents of the Study

The study was conducted at Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc., Casili, Mallig, Isabela.

The total population consisted of 138 graduates (98 MAED and 40 MBA). A total of 110 graduates (79.71%) responded to the survey.

The table below showed the distribution of respondents.

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Year Graduated**

Year of Graduation	MAED		MBA	
	Total	Graduates who Responded	Total	Graduates who Responded
AY 2022-2023	37	30	15	15
AY 2023-2024	37	24	5	4
AY 2024-2025	24	18	10	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>

**Data Gathering Instrument**

A structured tracer study questionnaire developed by the Graduate School Office was used. The instrument included sections on: Personal profile, Employment status, Job position before and after graduation, Reasons for pursuing graduate studies, Reasons for job change, and Recommended skills and competencies.

The questionnaire was validated by faculty experts before distribution.

**Data Gathering Procedure**

The list of graduates was obtained from the Graduate School Office. Graduates were contacted through: Official records, Referrals, Social media platforms, and Email and messaging services.

Survey questionnaires were distributed electronically and manually. Responses were consolidated and encoded for analysis.

**Statistical Treatment Data**

The following statistical tools were used:

1. Frequency
2. Percentage
3. Ranking

These tools were used to describe employment status, promotion movement, and skill recommendations.

**RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

This chapter presents analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the questionnaire and from the informal interview conducted observing the order of the statement of the problem.

**Table 2. Distribution of Respondents as to Gender**

Indicators	MAED		MBA	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Male	16	22.22	25	65.79
Female	56	77.77	13	34.21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Most MAED respondents are female, while MBA respondents have more males compared to MAED. Education programs (MAED) are female-dominated, while MBA has more gender balance but still with male presence. This reflects common trends in education and business fields.

**Table 3. Distribution of Respondents as to Civil Status**

Indicators	MAED		MBA	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Single	21	29.17	13	34.21
Married	51	70.83	25	65.79
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Most respondents in both MAED and MBA are married. Many graduate students pursue advanced studies after marriage, possibly to improve career stability and income for their families.

**Table 4. Distribution of Respondents as to Reasons for Pursuing Advance Studies**

Indicators	MAED		MBA	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Promotion	72	100.00	27	71.05
Professional Development	72	100.00	38	100.00

MAED graduates mainly pursued studies for promotion. MBA graduates mostly pursued studies for professional development. MAED students aim for career advancement in the education sector, while MBA students focus on improving skills and professional growth.

**Table 5. Distribution of Respondents as to Place of Employment**

Indicators	MAED		MBA	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Local	70	97.22	38	100.00
Abroad	2	2.78	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Almost all graduates are employed locally. Only a very small number of MAED graduates work abroad, and none from MBA. Graduates of MPC Graduate School mainly serve the local community and local industries.

**Table 6. Distribution of Respondents as to Present Employment Status**

Indicators	MAED		MBA	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	71	98.61	35	92.11
Self-Employed	1	1.39	3	7.89
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Almost all graduates are employed. A few MBA graduates are self-employed. The graduate programs are effective in helping students secure employment. MBA also supports entrepreneurial paths.

**Table 7. Distribution of Respondents as to Job Before and After Taking Advance Studies (MAED)**

Indicators	MAED		
	BEFORE	Moved to Next Level	AFTER
Instructor (Private School)	10	(10-1)	9
Teacher 1	19	(19 + 1) - 8	12
Teacher 2	22	(22+ 8) - 11	19
Teacher 3	11	(11 + 11) - 7	15
Master Teacher 1	6	(6 + 7) - 5	8
Master Teacher 2			

Master Teacher 3			
Principal 1	4	(4+5)	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>		<b>72</b>

Many MAED graduates moved to higher teaching positions after finishing their degree (Teacher I to Teacher II or III, Principal I). The MAED program helps graduates receive promotions and career advancement in the education sector.

**Table 8. Distribution of Respondents as to Job Before and After Taking Advance Studies (MBA)**

Indicators	MBA		
	BEFORE	Moved to Next Level	AFTER
Clerk/Clerical/Assistant	10	(8 - 6)	2
Collector	11	(11 - 5)	6
Cashier/Teller	8	(6 + 4) - 2	8
Bookkeeper	3	(3 + 2)	5
Project Engineer	3	(3 + 6)	9
Supervisor/Manager	3	(3 + 5)	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>		<b>38</b>

MBA graduates moved from clerical or assistant positions to higher roles such as supervisor, manager, and project engineer. The MBA program helps graduates obtain better positions and leadership roles in business and industry.

**Table 9. Distribution of Respondents as to Reasons for Changing Job**

Indicators	MAED	MBA
Salaries and Benefits	72	38
Career Challenge	72	38
Related to Special Skills	72	38

Graduates changed jobs because of better salary and benefits, career challenges, and jobs related to their special skills. Graduates seek career growth, better income, and jobs aligned with their expertise after earning their master’s degree.

**Table 10. Distribution of Employed Graduates on the Recommendation of Skills and Competencies for Curricular Offerings to be More Relevant to Current Job**

Indicators	Frequency	Rank
Critical Thinking Skills	110	1
Human Relations Skills	93	2
Communication Skills	89	3
Entrepreneurial Skills	38	4

The most recommended skill is Critical Thinking, followed by Human Relations Skills, Communication Skills, and Entrepreneurial Skills. The curriculum should focus more on developing critical thinking and interpersonal skills to better prepare students for their jobs.

### Discussion

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from both the questionnaire and informal interviews, following the sequence of the stated research problems. The findings provide meaningful insights into the demographic profile, motivations, employment outcomes, and competency needs of graduate students in the MAED (Master of Arts in Education) and MBA (Master of Business Administration) programs, revealing patterns that reflect both individual aspirations and broader professional trends.

In terms of gender distribution, the data show that the MAED program is predominantly female (77.77%), whereas the MBA program has a higher proportion of male respondents (65.79%). This pattern reflects long-established professional trends where education is often female-dominated, while business-related fields tend to attract more male participants, although the MBA results also indicate a move toward gender diversity. This distribution suggests that graduate programs are influenced by the gendered nature of their respective professions, which may have implications for curriculum design, support systems, and leadership development initiatives within each field.

With respect to civil status, the majority of respondents in both programs are married (70.83% in MAED and 65.79% in MBA). This finding indicates that many individuals pursue graduate education not immediately after undergraduate studies but during a more stable phase of life, often motivated by family responsibilities and long-term career goals. The pursuit of advanced studies among married individuals may reflect a desire to improve economic security, achieve career progression, and provide better opportunities for their families. It also suggests that graduate programs must remain flexible and supportive to accommodate working professionals with familial obligations.

The reasons for pursuing advanced studies further highlight distinct motivations between the two groups. All MAED respondents identified promotion as a primary reason, alongside professional development, indicating a strong alignment between the degree and career advancement within the education sector. In contrast, while all MBA respondents cited professional development, a slightly lower percentage (71.05%) indicated promotion as a motivation. This suggests that MBA students are more focused on enhancing competencies, expanding professional networks, and gaining broader career opportunities rather than solely seeking upward mobility within a single organizational structure. These differences underscore the varying roles that graduate education plays across disciplines.

Employment data reveal that nearly all graduates from both programs are employed locally, with 97.22% of MAED and 100% of MBA respondents working within the country. This indicates that the graduate school significantly contributes to local workforce development and community service, rather than facilitating international migration. Furthermore, employment status data show that the vast majority of graduates are employed (98.61% for MAED and 92.11% for MBA), with a small proportion of MBA graduates engaged in self-employment. This highlights the effectiveness of both programs in ensuring employability while also demonstrating that the MBA program, in particular, supports entrepreneurial pathways and business ventures.

A more detailed examination of career progression before and after completing advanced studies reveals significant upward mobility among graduates. MAED graduates experienced clear promotions within the education sector, moving from lower teaching positions (e.g., Teacher I) to higher ranks (e.g., Teacher II, Teacher III, and Principal I). This progression confirms that the MAED program effectively equips educators with the qualifications and competencies required for professional advancement in the public and private school systems. Similarly, MBA graduates transitioned from entry-level or clerical roles to more advanced positions such as supervisors,

managers, and project engineers. This demonstrates that the MBA program enhances leadership capacity, managerial skills, and professional credibility, enabling graduates to assume more strategic roles in business and industry.

The reasons for job changes among graduates further reinforce the role of graduate education in career mobility. Respondents from both programs identified better salaries and benefits, the pursuit of career challenges, and alignment with specialized skills as key motivations for changing jobs. These factors indicate that graduates are not only seeking financial improvement but also meaningful and fulfilling work that matches their expertise. This aligns with the broader goal of graduate education to produce highly competent professionals who can adapt to evolving labor market demands.

Finally, the analysis of recommended skills and competencies for curricular enhancement highlights critical thinking as the most essential skill, followed by human relations, communication, and entrepreneurial skills. This finding emphasizes the increasing demand for higher-order thinking abilities and interpersonal competencies in the workplace. It suggests that while technical knowledge remains important, success in professional environments increasingly depends on the ability to analyze complex problems, collaborate effectively, communicate clearly, and innovate. Therefore, graduate programs must continuously revisit and enhance their curricula to integrate these competencies, ensuring that graduates remain competitive and responsive to the needs of modern industries.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the MAED and MBA programs are effective in promoting employability, career advancement, and professional growth. However, they also point to the need for continuous curriculum improvement, particularly in embedding critical thinking and soft skills development, to sustain the relevance and impact of graduate education in a rapidly changing professional landscape.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of the study lead to the conclusion that the graduate programs, particularly MAED and MBA, are effective in enhancing the professional and career outcomes of their graduates. The demographic profile reveals that participation in these programs reflects existing professional trends, with MAED being female-dominated and MBA showing stronger male representation, while most students in both programs are married, indicating that graduate education is often pursued for long-term career stability and advancement. The primary motivations for enrolling in advanced studies differ slightly across programs, with MAED students focusing more on promotion within the education sector and MBA students emphasizing professional development and skill enhancement.

Moreover, the results demonstrate that both programs significantly contribute to employability, as the majority of graduates are gainfully employed, primarily within the local context. Career progression data confirm that graduates experience upward mobility after completing their degrees, with MAED graduates advancing in teaching and administrative positions and MBA graduates moving into managerial and leadership roles. This indicates that the programs effectively equip students with the competencies required for higher-level responsibilities and improved career opportunities.

The study also concludes that graduates are motivated to seek better salaries, career challenges, and jobs aligned with their specialized skills, reflecting the role of graduate education in facilitating both economic and professional growth. Furthermore, the identified need for critical thinking, human relations, communication, and entrepreneurial skills underscores the importance of aligning curricular offerings with the evolving demands of the workplace. Overall, the findings affirm that while the programs are successful in achieving their core objectives, continuous curriculum enhancement is necessary to strengthen higher-order thinking skills and interpersonal competencies, ensuring that graduates remain competitive, adaptable, and responsive to the dynamic needs of their respective fields.

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