



## **TRACKING THE EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GRADUATES OF THE MASTER IN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: A TRACER STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed at identifying and determining the professional development of the graduates of the Master in Management Program of the College of Liberal Arts, Technological University of the Philippines for the period 2011 and 2012. It identified the personal profile of the graduate-respondents and their current employment status; likewise, determined the graduates' perception towards the College in accordance with previous school-based experiences in terms of personal and professional skills enhancement. It applied the descriptive research method and used structured questionnaire. The statistical tools used were the percentile and frequency methods. Results of the study showed that hundred percent of the respondents are employed at the time of the study and believed that the Master in Management degree was relevant in their current jobs/positions. Twenty one percent were promoted after graduation. The top three sectors where the respondents worked at the time of the study were in the academe, financing and retail sectors. Most of the respondents believed that the top five core competencies that the MM program contributed in their professional development are: communication skills, problem-solving, critical thinking, human relations and entrepreneurship. Majority believed that their school-based experiences while undergoing their program of study enhanced both their personal and professional skills.

**Key Words:** tracer study, employment characteristics, core competencies, Master in Management

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

As stipulated in Section 2 of P.D. No. 1518, the Technological University of the Philippines mission states that: "The University shall provide higher and advanced vocational, technical, industrial, technological and professional education and training in industries and technology, and in practical arts leading to certificates, diplomas, and degrees. It shall provide progressive leadership in applied research, developmental studies in technical, industrial, and technological fields and production using indigenous materials; effect technology transfer in the countryside; and assist in the development of small-and-medium scale industries in identified growth centers."

The College of Liberal Arts, (CLA) which operates the offering of the Master in Management Program, on its part, aims to provide basic quality education and turns out highly competent managers and entrepreneurs who will provide leadership and job opportunities in a rapidly changing environment and ensure its continued relevance and responsiveness to the challenges of globalization.

The Master in Management (MM) program is an advanced general management program which caters to the stakeholders' desire to finish a terminal course in management. It is designed for aspiring and practicing managers, entrepreneurs and other professionals both from the public agencies and private industries. The MM program seeks to include the employment of updated instructional methodologies and the provision of varied opportunities for the learners to acquire wide range of advanced managerial knowledge, skills and attitude. These concerns are necessary for the enhancement of organizational productivity, professional, and personal stability. Networking and linkages with progressive organizations both in the local and foreign setting are used to the maximum to meet with the emerging trends in the global community. Specifically, it aims to: develop management professionals and entrepreneurs with global outlook; develop managers and supervisors with dynamic management principles drawn from a broad range of the theoretical and applied perspectives; and develop management professionals who can apply theoretical and practical knowledge and analytical/critical methods in solving organizational problems.

Cognizant of the University mission, the College goals and the program objectives of the Master in Management program, this writer deemed it a need to track the professional development of the graduates of the MM Program, hence this study.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Study**

The study is considered as a contribution to the growth of knowledge of the linkage between education and employment and professional characteristics of the Master in Management Program offering of the College. It could be hoped that by and at large, this study may:

- Identify the current profile of the respondents;
- Identify the characteristics of the current employment of the graduates;
- Access the graduates' perception towards the College in accordance with previous experiences in terms of: a) personal skills enhancement; b) and professional skills enhancement; and
- Enable the College in identifying areas for improvement and upgrading of the program.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problems**

The study aims to seek answers to the following problem statements:

1. What is the profile of the respondents according to:
  - a) Sex
  - b) Year of Birth
  - c) Civil Status
  - d) Educational Attainment
  - e) Occupation
  - f) Location/Residence

2. What are the current employment characteristics of respondents?
3. What are the respondents' perception about their school-based experiences that lead them to enhance personal skills?
4. What are the respondents' perception about their school-based experiences that lead them to enhance professional skills?
5. Which areas/aspects in the MM Program that may need improvement as inputted by the graduate-respondents.

### **1.3 Limitations of the Study**

The study does not cover to investigate the perception of the supervisors or the companies who are the end users of the graduates of the Master in Management program. The respondents of the study include only those who graduated in March 2011 and March 2012.

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 Meaning of Graduate Tracer Studies**

In his *Manual on Tracer Studies*, Ralf Lange (2001, p.1) defines tracer studies as a simple tool, designed to measure the relevance of a training or a program. They provide information for programmatic changes and review of training curricula. The *ILO Thesaurus* (Mellington, p.2) defines tracer study as an impact assessment tool where the “impact on target groups is traced back to specific elements of a project or programme so that effective and ineffective project components may be identified.” In educational research the tracer study is sometimes referred to as a graduate or alumni survey since its target groups are former students.

On his part, Harald Schomburg (2003) notes that graduate surveys are popular for “analysis of the relationship between higher education and work.” He posited that they provide quantitative-structural data on employment and career, the character of work and related competencies, and information on the professional orientation and experiences of the graduates. In this study, this writer tried to determine the graduate-respondents' perception about their school-based experiences within the duration of their study program in the College, specifically on the aspect of both personal and professional enhancement.

### **2.2 Relevance of Conducting Tracer Studies**

In sum, Schomburg (2016, 17-18) identified four general objectives of graduate tracer studies. First, tracer studies get valuable information for the development of the university or college. Second, it evaluates the relevance of higher education. Third, it contributes to the accreditation process. Fourth, it informs students, parents, lecturers and administrators on matters pertaining changes in the curricula. He further postulates that a tracer study or graduate survey is a standardized survey (in written or oral form) of graduates from education institutions, which takes place some time after graduation or the end of the training. The subjects of a tracer study can be manifold, but common topics include questions on study progress, the transition to work, work entrance, job career, use of learned competencies, current occupation and bonds to the education institution (school, centre, university).

On a quality assurance context, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) conduct graduate tracer studies to ensure that degree programs and employment characteristics make fitting links and ensures that the HEI's program offerings are what the industry or employers actually need.

Colleges and Universities all over the world conduct tracer studies on their graduates to track down the impacts/effects of the programs and instruction and establish employment-based competencies that would sooner or later improve HEI curricula.

The Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines (AACCCUP) specifically requires State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) to conduct graduate tracer studies as provided in their Master Survey Instrument, specifically in the areas of Curriculum and Instruction (Area 3) and Administration (Area 10) for similar purpose as those mentioned by Schomburg and Lange, among others. It is simply a matter of determining that the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mandated programs offered by the SUCs do meet the competencies and work characteristics of their graduates. This would reflect the positive impact of the programs, being able to meet the country's need to increase employment rate and global competitiveness.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study is a descriptive research, which aims to describe the current employment characteristics of the graduates of the Master in Management program of the College of Liberal Arts, Technological University of the Philippines. It is integrated with tablet presentations in support of the quantitative information of the research results. The quantitative information this study yielded helped to quantify data and generalize results from a sample to the population of interest. According to Snap Surveys, Ltd., a quantitative research measures the incidence of various views and opinions in a chosen sample.

#### **3.2 Research Locale and Population Samples**

The research locale is the setting where the participants of the study will be taken. Using a purposive sampling technique, the study targeted at least 50% of the total number of graduates of the MM program for the year 2011 and 2012. For this study, 19 or (52%) out of the 36 total number of graduates represented the number of graduate-respondents for the given period. The study was conducted from July to December 2013.

#### **3.3 Research Instrument and Research Procedure**

The study used structured questionnaire. The questionnaires were sent through the email addresses of the thirty six (36) graduates of the MM program for the given period. The email addresses of the graduates were based from the names of graduates provided in the Commencement Exercises Program given to graduating students during the University's Graduation Ceremonies in March 2011 and March 2012.

#### **3.4 Statistical Tools**

The results gathered from the questionnaires were tallied, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted. Statistical measures such as simple frequencies, percentages; average means were used.

### **4. Findings and Discussions**

This part of the paper contained the discussion of the results of the study. The writer tried to follow the sequence of questions as stated in the Statement of Problems.

#### 4.1 Profile of Respondents

The study yields the following information regarding the respondents' profile as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Profile of Respondents**

Respondents' Profile	N	(f)	%	Total %
a) Sex				100%
g) Female	19	15	78.95	
h) Male	19	4	21.05	
b) Year of Birth				100%
i) 2000s/up	19	0	0	
j) 1990's	19	0	0	
k) 1980s	19	7	36.84	
l) 1970s	19	7	36.84	
m) 1960s	19	4	21.06	
n) 1950s	19	1	5.26	
c) Civil Status				100%
o) Married	19	11	57.89	
p) Single	19	8	42.11	
d) Education Level				100%
q) Doctoral	19	0	0	
r) Masters	19	18	94.74	
s) Earned Doctorate units	19	1	5.26	
e) Residence				100%
t) Metro Manila	19	7	37.00	
u) Cavite	19	5	26.00	
v) Bulacan	19	4	21.00	
w) Quezon	19	2	11.00	
x) Thailand	19	1	5.00	

Table indicates the following information:

- a) *Sex*. Out of 19 respondents, 15 or 79% were female; 4 or 21% were male.
- b) *Year of Birth*. Respondents who were born in the 70's and 80's with seven (7) or 37% each, which covered the highest percent; while those born in the 60's and 50's got four (4) or 21%, and one (1) or 5% respectively.
- c) *Civil Status*. Majority among respondents were married with 11 or 58%, while eight (8) or 42 % were single.
- d) *Highest Degree*. Hundred percent (19 or 100%) of respondents graduated with the degree, Master in Management, with 1 or 5% with units earned in a post graduate program.
- e) *Residence*. There are more respondents from Metro Manila with seven (7) or 38%, province of Cavite, Quezon and Bulacan had 5 or 26% and 4 or 21% respectively, while Quezon has 2 or 11%; and one (1) respondent or 5% came from Thailand. For this item,

respondents were given open-ended questions regarding their specific place of residence in Metro Manila and/or nearby provinces,

#### **4.2 Employment Characteristics of the Master in Management Graduates**

Regarding employment characteristics, the following information are responses to the questions that were stated in the questionnaire and are being presented accordingly:

- a) Hundred percent (100%) or all of the 19 respondents are currently employed at the time of the survey period.
- b) Hundred percent (100%) or all the 19 respondents believed that the Master in Management program was relevant in their current jobs/positions.
- c) Thirteen (13) or 68% among respondents said that their current positions/work were not their first job; while 6 or 32 % said otherwise.
- d) Among the 19 respondents, 11 or 58% are enjoying regular status; 7 or 37% are self-employed and 1 or 5% was on temporary status.
- e) Twelve (12) or 63% among respondents are on rank and file status; 9 or 47% were having supervisory/managerial levels which include those who identified themselves as self-employed.
- f) Four (4) or 21% among respondents said that they got promoted after finishing the MM Program; while 15 or 79% said otherwise. However, 7 or 47% among those who were not promoted said that they were promised/expecting/waiting for their promotion in the next 6-10 months.
- g) The nature of businesses where the respondents are employed at the time of the survey period were ranked as follows: Academe – 8 or 42%; Financing – 4 or 21%; Retail – 3 or 16%; Services – 2 or 11%; Manufacturing – 1 or 5% and Oil Industry – 1 or 5%. It appeared then that majority among respondents who worked in the academic sector are faculty/instructors.
- h) When asked about the core competencies acquired from the program that they can use in their jobs, the respondents gave highest percentage on Communication Skills with 15 or 79%; followed by Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking skills with 14 or 74% each; Human Relations skills – 13 or 68%; Entrepreneurship – 5 or 26%; and Other skills such as Leadership and time Management Skills which they gave a total of 4 or 21% each.

#### **4.3 What are the respondents' perception about school-based experiences that enhanced personal skills?**

The respondents were asked about the school-based experiences leading to their personal enhancement while undergoing the MM program. The following conditions were observed as perceived experiences of respondents shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Perceived School-Based Experiences in MM Program Leading to Personal Enhancement*

<b>Personal Skills Enhancement</b>	<b>Mean Rating</b>
1. I have participated in class discussions	4.84

2. Most faculty members at TUP are friendly and helpful	4.36
3. I have met with a faculty member during their consultation hour to talk about questions/concerns over my class work	4.32
4. I have become involved in activities on campus	4.10
5. Other students at TUP are friendly and helpful	4.11
6. I become involved in student organization	4.16
7. I have developed close personal relationships with other students at TUP	4.36
8. It has been easy for me to get to now other students	4.36
9. Most of the students at TUP have values similar to my own	4.36
10. Most of the subjects at TUP are friendly and helpful	4.63
11. Most offices and staff at TUP are friendly and helpful	4.36
12. I have participated in study groups	4.74
<b>Ave. Mean</b>	<b>4.39</b>
<b>Descriptive Rating</b>	<b>Agree</b>

#### 4.4 What are the respondents' perception about their school-based experiences that enhanced professional skills?

In Table 3, results show that majority among respondents perceived that they were able to develop knowledge and skills applicable to their career. Among all the choices provided to the respondents, it is observed that the respondents highly acknowledged that said provisions had significantly contributed to their skills and knowledge development that may be able to enhance professional effectiveness.

Specifically, when asked about the core competencies that they acquired from the program which they can use or apply in their jobs, the respondents gave highest percentage on Communication Skills – 79%; followed by Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking skills with 74% each; Human Relations skills – 68%; Entrepreneurship – 26%; and Other skills such as Leadership and time Management Skills which they gave a total of 21%.



**Table 3. Responses on Professional Skills Enhancement Experience**

<b>Professional Skills Enhancement</b>	<b>Mean Rating</b>
1. Developed knowledge and skills applicable to a career	4.84
2. Developed my ability to work as a team	4.84
3. Motivate me to do my best work	4.84
4. Provide me with a broad overview of my course/major	4.80
5. Sharpen my analytical skills	4.73
6. Develop my confidence to investigate new ideas	4.80
7. Develop my problem-solving skills	5.00
8. Stimulate my enthusiasm for further learning	4.68
9. Improve my skills in written communication	4.80
10. Help to develop my ability to plan my own work	4.84
11. Make informed judgment	4.68
12. Use computer	4.68
13. Speak effectively	4.95
<b>Ave. Mean</b>	<b>4.81</b>
<b>Descriptive Rating</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

**4.5 Which areas/aspects in the MM Program that may need improvement as inputted by the graduate respondents**

When asked to suggest three activities on how to enhance competitiveness of the Master in Management Program, the respondents recommended the following actions according to rank as shown in Table 4. It appears that majority among respondents suggested to continuously employ competent faculty members and train them to update and improve teaching competencies with 79%. Followed with, *upgrade the facilities* (74%), then *review and update the curriculum and syllabi* (63%), covering the top three ranks: 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

**Table 4. Inputs of Respondents In order to Improve the MM Program**

<i>What can you suggest to enhance the competitive edge of the Master in Management Program,</i>	<b>(n/N)</b>	<b>%tage</b>	<b>Rank</b>



<i>of TUP. Please check 3 choices according to importance.</i>			
1. Review and update the curriculum and syllabi	12	63%	3
2. Upgrade the facilities	14	74%	2
3. Continuously employ competent faculty members and train them to update and improve teaching competences	15	79%	1
4. Add more Subjects	3	16%	4
5. Others, (Specify) Include Thesis Writing	3	16%	4

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study tried to achieve the following objectives: assess the personal profile of the respondents; current employment status; study conditions; and study provisions. The study used structured questionnaire. The study used descriptive research method and used statistical tools such as percentile and frequency methods.

Results of the study showed that majority among respondents were female; married; mostly lived in Metro Manila; and whose age ranged mostly from 35 to 45 years old. The highest educational attainment was Master's Degree. Hundred percent of respondents believed that the Master in Management degree was relevant in their current jobs/positions, likewise, all respondents (100%) were employed at the time of the survey. Twenty one percent were promoted after graduation. The top three sectors where the respondents worked at the time of the study were as follows: academe, financing and retail sectors. Most of the respondents believed that communication skills, problem-solving, critical thinking, human relations and entrepreneurship comprised the top five core competencies that the MM program contributed in their professional development. Likewise, majority responded positively both on the school-based experiences that enhanced both their personal and profession skills.

Considering the results of the survey, it is recommended that annual tracking of graduates shall be observed or conducted so that the College shall be able to gather information relevant to the continuous improvement of the Master in Management Curriculum.

It is imperative to note that all the graduates' suggestions, specifically, those considered as Rank 1, 2 and 3 must be acted upon, in order to enhance the MM Program's effectiveness both in the aspect of management and administration of the program, and the employment-related inputs shall be effected accordingly. By doing so, a more relevant and end-user-effective graduate curricular program shall be in place, and, that the College shall be able to provide to its stakeholders quality and competitive graduate education.

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## Author Profile

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