

Perception, Employability, and Challenges of Master of Arts in Education-Major in Home Economics Graduates

Carren May M. Juanzo

ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to determine the Master of Arts in Education Major In Home Economics graduates' perception, employability, and challenges. This study used the quantitative methodology research design. It was conducted in Romblon State University, Main Campus, Odiongan, Romblon during the second semester of the SY 2021-2022. The profile of the respondents reveals a critical fact that a very limited number of students took interest in pursuing the program for the last 10 years. The respondents rated the indicator of learning efficiency as the topmost highly contributive to their personal and professional growth. They considered the teacher-students relationship as the topmost for being highly contributive to the program majority of the respondents have considered time or time management as the key challenge in the pursuit of this program.

Keywords: *MAEd Home Economics, employability, master's degree*

INTRODUCTION

In an ever-evolving landscape of human resource competencies, young individuals are increasingly prioritizing advanced education and training, such as pursuing postgraduate degrees (master's and doctoral degrees), to enhance their readiness for the labor market. This not only enables them to contribute effectively to the success of the organizations they join but also fosters their own professional and personal growth.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics of the United States Department of Education (2019), the landscape of master's degree programs has witnessed significant shifts over the past decade. In the academic year 2015–16 alone, approximately 785,000 master's degrees were conferred, indicating a rate of about two master's degrees awarded for every five bachelor's degrees. Some journalists have even dubbed the master's degree as “the new bachelor's degree,” particularly for young professionals seeking to

distinguish themselves in a competitive job market.

The demand for educators with master's degrees is notably significant in the field of education due to the numerous benefits these advanced qualifications provide. Graduates with a master's degree gain enhanced credibility and a competitive edge in the job market. This advanced level of education allows for in-depth specialization, career advancement, and valuable networking opportunities with industry leaders.

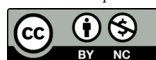
Studies have highlighted that teachers with master's degrees are in high demand for their specialized knowledge and skills, which contribute to improved educational outcomes and enhanced leadership capabilities. Institutions like the Harvard Graduate School of Education emphasize that master's programs in education offer specialized tracks, such as educational leadership, policy analysis, and teaching innovation, which prepare graduates for advanced roles and career progression (Harvard Graduate School of Education, n.d.).

Moreover, online master's programs have become increasingly accessible, providing flexible options for working professionals. These programs often offer financial assistance through scholarships, grants, and federal loans, making them more attainable for educators looking to advance their qualifications (Gaines, 2023).

✉ : carrenmayjuanzo@gmail.com

Romblon State University, Odiongan, Philippines

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Furthermore, pursuing a master's degree in education not only opens doors to higher salaries and leadership positions but also equips educators with the tools to impact policy and practice effectively within the education sector (AACN) (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2024).

This trend is reflected in the Philippines' educational landscape, where numerous higher education institutions offer a diverse range of postgraduate programs across various disciplines. For instance, Romblon State University, as the sole higher education institution in Romblon, offers ten postgraduate programs through its Graduate Education and Professional Studies (GEPS) department. Among these programs is the Master of Arts in Education, majoring in Home Economics, which has garnered significant enrollment due to the increasing demand for K-12 educators in both junior and senior high schools, as well as tertiary institutions that require master's degrees for entry-level positions.

While there is an evident increasing demand for K-12 educators and tertiary institution faculty with master's degrees in the Philippines, specifically for programs like the Master of Arts in Education majoring in Home Economics offered by Romblon State University, there is limited research on the specific factors driving this demand and the corresponding impact on enrollment trends.

Furthermore, little is known about the subsequent career trajectories and challenges of graduates from such programs. Additionally, there is a need for comparative studies between graduates from Romblon State University and those from other higher education institutions in different regions of the Philippines to understand the broader implications of the increasing demand for postgraduate education in Home Economics. This study may provide valuable data which can be used for the comparative studies of the future researchers. Addressing these gaps could provide insights into the effectiveness of postgraduate programs in meeting the demands of the education sector and help identify areas for improvement in curriculum and support services.

Literature Synthesis

Today's challenging economic situation means that it is no longer sufficient for a new graduate to have knowledge of an academic subject; increasingly it is necessary for students to gain skills which will enhance their prospects of employment. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Shulsinger, 2017), jobs requiring a master's degree are projected to increase by 18 percent from 2012 to 2022. In today's increasingly competitive job market, the benefits of a master's degree helps differentiate oneself and remain a valuable employee.

Historically, academic institutions have traditionally served as centers for moral and intellectual development, as well as centers of civilization. With rapid economic development, they are now more utilitarian with emphasis on professional training. Their prime task is to ensure that education and training are market driven and responsive to the changing needs of the various sectors of an economy. In connection with this, Mercado (2009) mentioned the initiative of the Commission on Higher Education in the Philippines to spearhead the conduct of GTS among selected Higher Education Institutions in order to obtain data that would show if HEI's are offering courses or programs that produce graduates to meet the needs of industry and society. Likewise, through the GTS, HEIs would be able to align their efforts with the manpower needs of industry (CHED CMO #s 38, s. 2006, #11, s. 1999).

Meanwhile, towards the end of the 20th Century, European Universities embraced the use of tracer studies for a plethora of reasons; especially to accredit their study programs; to explain the link between study programs and the job market; to show uniqueness and positioning of individual universities; and also to enable universities and institutions managing higher education in their respective countries make informed and evidence based decisions about improvements and quality education and services in higher education (Schomburg et al., 2011).

Upon the rise of the challenges encountered, on solution among the HEIs would be to reevaluate the curriculum, hire more qualified teachers, improve the facilities or simply by conducting extension activities. Extension and community involvement is the key result area which makes the community feels the presence of the institution. There is an increasing appreciation of the impact of higher education extension in the teaching and learning process as students apply their disciplinary knowledge to help address real-world problems. This work may be of interest to higher education institutions (HEIs) which are designing community extension programs with optimized societal outcome (Llenares & Deocaris 2018). It serves as the link between the institution and the community. It is the avenue where higher educational institution extends its expertise in line with its programs. It shares the transfer of technology and other extension programs which would assist to alleviate the economic status of its beneficiaries. This extension and linkages is not only intended for the community outside the campus, but it is done also within the campus of the institution itself.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is grounded in Human Capital Theory, originally proposed by Gary Becker in 1962. Human Capital Theory posits that formal education

significantly enhances the productive capacity of a population. It suggests that investing in education is one of the most effective strategies for resource advancement. According to this theory, the more individuals pursue education, the more competent they become in their career fields, leading to increased productivity. Additionally, the theory postulates that the most efficient path to national development lies in the improvement of its human capital (Becker, 1993; Fagerlind & Saha, 1989 as cited in Tan, E., & Ho, C. M. 2020).

Objectives of the Study

The figure below shows the general objectives of the study. This study sought to trace the employment characteristics and transition to the employment of the graduates of MAED-H.E. during the SY 2009-2020.

This study sought to investigate the relevance of the curriculum of MAED Home Economics programs through the graduates of selected campuses of Romblon State University from the batch 2009-2020.

Specifically, it attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of :
 - 1.1 age;
 - 1.2 gender;
 - 1.3. civil status; and
 - 1.4. educational background?
2. What is the employment information of the respondents in terms of:
 - 2.1. name of organization/employer;
 - 2.2. type of organization;
 - 2.3. employment type; and
 - 2.4. occupational classification?
3. What are the challenges (if any) experienced by graduate students in the pursuit of their degrees?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used the quantitative research design. This involves the process of collecting and analyzing numerical data which can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalize results to wider populations.

Research Method

The quantitative-descriptive research method was used in the study as it attempts to collect quantifiable information for statistical analysis of the population sample. The questionnaire was used for gathering data which is most suited for the quantitative design investigation. This design was appropriate since the objective was to gather valuable data coming from the

very limited number of graduates of the program - Masters in Education-Major in Home Economics from the Graduate Education Professional Studies (GEPS) during the SY. 2009-2020. Messenger application or other means of social media platform were employed.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher started by requesting the University Registrar the list of all graduates during the Academic Year 2009-2020. Incorporating demographic data from the last ten years is crucial. Demographic data helps in analyzing employment trends and outcomes for graduates. By examining the employment data across different demographic groups, institutions can better understand the effectiveness of their programs in preparing students for the job market (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022); Schomburg, H., 2016). Meanwhile, for Teichler, U. (2023) and Coates, H., & Edwards, D. (2023), detailed demographic insights allow institutions to tailor the programs of the university to better meet the needs of diverse student populations. It can highlight areas where additional support or resources may be necessary, leading to improved curriculum design and better student support services. Monitoring demographic changes over time helps ensure diversity and inclusion within educational programs. Understanding enrollment patterns among different demographic groups can identify disparities and prompt institutions to address these issues, creating a more inclusive environment for all students. Brennan, J., Kogan, M., & Teichler, U. (2023). Coates, H., & Edwards, D. (2023). Finally, long-term demographic data enables longitudinal analysis, revealing trends that may not be immediately apparent in short-term data. This includes shifts in labor market demands and the long-term career trajectories of graduates, providing a deeper understanding of the program's impact over time (Teichler, U. 2023) & Schomburg, H. 2023).

From the list of all graduates during the Academic Year 2009-2020, the total number of graduates was determined. The researcher collected all the information of the participants and sent a data invitation email to the graduates who work locally or abroad and also contacted the graduates who are working in different fields. Upon approval of the respondents, an informed consent was requested for signature. Then, the questionnaires were distributed. For those participants who were abroad, questionnaires were sent through email and were followed up by the researcher. The retrieval of questionnaires followed. Tabulation of the data was followed by analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

Demographic	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Age				
30	1	10.0	20.0	20.0
51	1	10.0	20.0	40.0
52	1	10.0	20.0	60.0
62	1	10.0	20.0	80.0
65	1	10.0	20.0	100.0
No Answer	5	50.0		
Total	10	100.0		
Gender				
F	10	100.0	100.0	100.0
M	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	
Civil Status				
Married	9	90.0	90.0	90.0
Widowed	1	10.0	10.0	10.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	
Educational Background				
MAEd-HE (2009)-RSU	2	20.0	20.0	20.0
MAEd-HE (2010)-RSU	3	30.0	30.0	50.0
MAEd-HE (2014)-RSU	1	10.0	10.0	60.0
MAEd-HE (2019)-RSU	3	30.0	30.0	90.0
MAEd-HE (2020)-RSU	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	10			

Table 2. Employment Information of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Name of organization/employer				
Department of Education	1	10.0	10.0	10.0
Romblon State University	9	90.0	90.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	
Type of Organization				
Public	10	100.0	100.0	100.0
Employment Type				
Working Fulltime	10	100.0	100.0	100.0
Occupational Classification				
Secondary Education Teachers	1	10.0	10.0	10.0
University And Higher Education Teachers	9	90.0	90.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

Statistical tools were utilized to interpret the collected data in the study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was also used.

Frequency, Percentage, and Ranking. To determine the most frequent response in each question that comprises the demographic profile of the responses. Each response was counted and then its equivalent percentage was computed. Ranking was used to provide a more comprehensible result on which response/s stood out from the rest.

Mean. To determine the respondent's rating on the contribution of the program of the study at the RSU

Graduate School to their personal and professional growth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This portion presents the results and discussion on the gathered data of the study.

Results

As to the profile of the respondents, it shows in table 1 that in terms of age, each age range is represented by at least one respondent. Half of the respondents did not disclose their age. In terms of

Table 3. Respondents' rate on the contribution of the program of the program to their personal and professional growth

Personal and Professional Growth Indicators				Verbal Interpretation
	N	Std. Deviation	Mean	
1. Academic Profession	10	.738	4.10	Highly Contributive
2. Research Capability	10	.632	3.80	Highly Contributive
3. Learning Efficiency	10	.632	4.20	Highly Contributive
4. Communication skills	9	.601	4.11	Highly Contributive
5. People Skills	10	.738	4.10	Highly Contributive
6. Problem Solving Skills	10	.949	3.70	Highly Contributive
7. Information Technology Skills	9	.866	3.67	Highly Contributive
8. Meeting Present and Future Professional Needs	10	.789	3.80	Highly Contributive
9. Exposure to Local Community within Field of Specialization	10	1.135	3.80	Highly Contributive
10. Exposure to International Community within Field of Specialization	10	1.197	3.10	Moderately Contributive
11. Critical Thinking Skills	10	.823	3.70	Highly Contributive
12. Salary improvement and Promotion	10	.876	4.10	Highly Contributive
13. Opportunities Abroad	9	1.093	3.22	Moderately Contributive
14. Personality Development	9	.866	4.00	Highly Contributive
15. RSU Values Formation	9	.928	3.89	Highly Contributive
Overall		3.819333	0.857533	Highly Contributive

Legend: 1:00 – 1:80 Not contributive; 1.81 – 2.60 Less Contributive; 2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Contributive; 3.41 – 4.20 Highly Contributive; 4.21 – 5.00 Very Highly Contributive

gender, table 1 reveals that all of the participants were females. In terms of civil status, table 1 reveals that nine (9) participants were married, while there was only one (1) who was already widowed. The presence of one widowed participant emphasizes the necessity to consider this group's unique difficulties and requirements in the context of home economics employability. Marital status often correlates with life stage and responsibilities. For instance, married individuals may have different priorities and challenges compared to single individuals. Understanding how marital status influences decisions regarding educational pursuits and career paths provides a nuanced view of student motivations and barriers. It can also indicate the availability of support systems for students. Married individuals may have additional family responsibilities and support networks, which could impact their ability to dedicate time and resources to their studies. This insight is crucial for designing support services that accommodate diverse student needs (Musick, K., Meier, A., & Flood, S. 2016). In terms of the educational background, table 4 reveals that three (3) students graduated in 2010. Similarly, there were also three (3) graduates in 2019.

Meanwhile, there were two (2) graduates in 2009 while in 2014 and 2020, their was only one (1) graduate. This result is evident that only few students graduate from the MAED-Home Economics program every school year.

As to the employment information of the respondents in terms of the name of the organization/employer, table 2 reveals that the majority of nine (9) of the respondents are employed at RSU while one (1) of the respondents is employed at DepEd. This means that all the respondents from the Master of Arts in Education majoring in Home Economics (MAEd H.E.) program are employed in public institutions as reflected in Table 2. This indicates high employability of graduates in the public sector, suggesting that the MAEd H.E. program equips students with valuable skills and knowledge sought after by public organizations. For potential students considering enrolling in the program, this serves as a positive indicator, indicating that completing the degree enhances their chances of securing employment within the public sector. The fact that all the respondents in the MAEd H.E. program are employed in public institutions reinforces the notion that there is

Table 4. Respondents' rate on the degree program at the RSU graduate school

Degree program Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Verbal Interpretation
1. Range of Courses	3.60	.843	3	Highly Contributive
2. Relevance to your Profession	4.20	.632	11	Highly Contributive
3. Extracurricular Activities	3.70	.949	4	Highly Contributive
4. Premium given to Research	3.80	.789	5	Highly Contributive
5. Interdisciplinary Learning	3.90	.738	6	Highly Contributive
6. Teaching and Learning Environment	4.10	.568	8	Highly Contributive
7. Quality of Instruction	4.20	.632	11	Highly Contributive
8. Teacher- Student Relationships	4.50	.707	13	Very Highly Contributive
9. Library Resources	3.20	.789	1.5	Moderately Contributive
10. Laboratory Resources	3.20	.789	1.5	Moderately Contributive
11. Class Size	4.10	.738	8	Highly Contributive
12. Teacher's Pedagogical Expertise	4.20	.632	11	Highly Contributive
13. Teacher's Knowledge of Subject Matter	4.10	.568	8	Highly Contributive
Overall	3.9077	0.7211		Highly Contributive

Legend: 1:00 – 1:80 Not contributive; 1.81 – 2.60 Less Contributive; 2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Contributive; 3.41 – 4.20 Highly Contributive; 4.21 – 5.00 Very Highly Contributive

a demand for professionals with expertise in Home Economics within these organizations. This recognition by public institutions signifies the value they place on Home Economics education and its potential contributions to various aspects of their operations.

Furthermore, table 2 reveals that all respondents in the MAEd H.E. program are working full-time, which suggests a departure from the traditional single-breadwinner model in family dynamics. Nowadays, both men and women are actively engaged in the workforce, indicating a shift in gender roles. Women are increasingly returning to work after giving birth, while men are more willing to pause their jobs to take care of children or older family members. This shift challenges traditional gender stereotypes and promotes a more egalitarian approach to family responsibilities (OECD, 2017). The fact that both men and women in

the program are working full-time indicates that the MAEd H.E. curriculum equips graduates with valuable skills that are highly sought after in the workforce, irrespective of gender. This aligns with the goal of promoting gender equality in the workplace. The program's emphasis on preparing both men and women for successful full-time employment reflects the changing dynamics of modern families and their need for dual-income households. The MAEd H.E. program's role in equipping graduates with valuable skills that contribute to their successful full-time employment aligns to break down traditional gender stereotypes and promoting equality in the workplace.

Table 2 also reveals that the majority of the respondents from the MAEd H.E. program are teachers at universities and higher education institutions, comprising nine (9) individuals. Additionally, one (1)

Table 5. Challenges (if any) experienced by the graduate students in the pursuit of their degrees

Comments	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Answer	3	30.0	30.0	30.0
Difficulty in handling stress caused by the duties that have to fulfil with school, work and taking care of children	1	10.0	10.0	40.0
Financial and Schedule	1	10.0	10.0	50.0
None	1	10.0	10.0	60.0
Some of the teachers are not IT experts and references are obsolete	1	10.0	10.0	70.0
The availability of reading materials/lack of laboratory resources	1	10.0	10.0	80.0
Time and other school activities	1	10.0	10.0	90.0
Time/ Duration to finish my degree	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

respondent works as a secondary education teacher. This occupational classification of the respondents highlights the program's focus on preparing graduates for careers in academia and higher-level educational settings. The significant presence of teachers in universities and higher education institutions suggests that the MAEd H.E. program is effective in equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue careers in these specific areas. The program's alignment with the needs of the education sector is evident, as it caters to the professional development of educators who aspire to work in higher-level academic environments. Furthermore, the presence of respondents working in universities and higher education institutions also indicates potential opportunities for career advancement within the education sector. Graduates of the MAEd H.E. program may have access to higher-level teaching positions, administrative roles, or opportunities for specialization and research within the academic environment. This provides a promising pathway for career growth and professional development for program graduates.

As to the rate of the contribution of the program of study at the RSU Graduate School to the respondents' personal and professional growth, table 3 reveals that the indicator learning efficiency was the topmost highly contributive to their personal and

professional growth having a mean of 4.20. Communication skills with a mean of 4.11, were rated as the second most highly contributive, and lastly, the academic profession, people skills, and salary for improvement were the third indicators which all received a mean of 4.10. Meanwhile, the indicator exposure to the international community within the field of specialization was rated the lowest gaining a mean of 3.10 or moderately contributive. Overall, it shows that the respondents have rated the program to be highly contributive to their personal and professional growth.

As to the rate of the degree program finished by the respondents at the RSU Graduate School, table 4 reveals that in terms of the range of courses, the respondents rated the teacher-student relationships as the number 1 highly contributive to the program with a mean of 4.50 While, the indicators such as relevance to the profession, quality of instruction, teacher's pedagogical expertise were rated as 2nd for being highly contributive to the program with a mean of 4.20. Meanwhile, the indicators such as library resources and laboratory resources received the lowest rating with a mean of 3.20.

For the challenges faced by the respondents in the pursuit of their degree, table 5 reveals that three (3) respondents have not responded. Furthermore, the following were found to be the challenges experienced

by the respondents which obtained a frequency of one (1): difficulty in handling stress caused by the duties that have to be fulfilled with school, work, and taking care of children, financial and schedule, some of the teachers are not it experts and references are obsolete, the availability of reading materials/lack of laboratory resources, time and other school activities, time/duration to finish my degree. To conclude, the majority of the respondents have considered time or time management as the key challenge in the pursuit of this program. This implies that though the majority are motivated to pursue their graduate studies, however, their personal life influences have impacted their decision to attend graduate school. On the other hand, even though the respondents rated the laboratories and library resources the lowest, well-equipped Home Economics laboratories and up-to-date textbooks in the library will go a long way in enhancing the teaching and learning of the subject. This will also motivate more students to enroll to study Home Economics at the University.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were hereby drawn: a) the profile of the respondents reveals a critical fact that a very limited number of students took an interest in pursuing the program for the last 10 years with 30 years old as the youngest while the rest are nearly on their retirement; only females have graduated for the degree and all of them were already married; as to educational background, only a few students graduate to the MAED-Home Economics program every school year. Thus it can be concluded that the program might be attracting only female students, possibly due to societal norms, career interests, or perceptions about the field of Home Economics being more suitable or relevant for women. Meanwhile, the fact that all female graduates were married suggests that marital status did not prevent them from completing their degree. This might indicate a supportive environment for married women within this program, or it could reflect a societal expectation that women marry by a certain age, including those pursuing higher education; b) The university has employed many of its own graduates, indicating a practice known as "faculty in-breeding." This means that the institution prefers to hire its alumni for faculty positions. While this practice can ensure continuity and maintain the institution's culture, it can also limit diversity of thought and innovation that might come from hiring individuals from different educational backgrounds; c) the respondents have rated

the MAED Home Economics program to be highly contributive to their personal and professional growth. This suggests that graduates feel the program has significantly enhanced their skills, knowledge, and overall development, both in their personal lives and in their careers; d) the respondents' rate on the degree program at the RSU graduate school on the different indicators is highly contributive. They considered teacher-student relationship as the topmost for being highly contributive to the program while library and laboratory resources received the lowest rating or only moderately contributive to the program. This highlights the importance of mentorship and support from faculty. On the other hand, the library and laboratory resources of the university proves as one of the weaknesses in the program that might need improvement; e) majority of the respondents have considered time or time management as the key challenge in the pursuit of this program. This implies that though the majority are motivated to pursue their graduate studies, however, their personal life influences have impacted their decision to attend graduate school. This suggests that balancing academic requirements with personal and possibly professional responsibilities is a significant issue for students in this program. This could point to the need for better time management resources, flexible scheduling, or additional support for students to help them manage their time effectively.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The author conducted all aspects of this research independently, from conceptualization to data collection. The author designed the study, developed the research methodology, and implemented the procedures. Additionally, the author wrote the manuscript, including drafting, revising, and finalizing the content for publication. Overall, the author take full

responsibility for the intellectual content and integrity of this research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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