

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF THE
GRADUATE TRACER STUDIES
1996 and 2008**

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Main Findings

- Some changes were noted in the socio-economic background of UoM Degree graduates between the 2 studies. Respondents' parents in the 2008 Study were found to be more educated than their counterparts from the 1996 Study, but surprisingly less well off with regard to their employment status. Thus, 61.3% and 55% of fathers and mothers respectively possessed at least secondary education in 2008 Study compared with 47% and 30% respectively in 1996. Some 56.2% of fathers in the 1996 Study, on the other hand, were occupying white collar position, 25.3% blue-collar jobs and 18.5% were self-employed/entrepreneurs as opposed to 43.4%, 36.4% and 20.1% respectively in 2008.
- Degree graduates tended to acquire more than one academic qualification over time. Thus, 48.9% of respondents in 2008 had completed or were undertaking further studies, after graduation, compared with 28.6% in 1996. Increasingly, graduates preferred to study on a part-time basis and through the distance learning mode (71% in 2008 compared with 61% in 1996), instead of full-time.
- More graduates were able to find work in 2008 than 1996, with full-time employment rising from 83.1% to 87.9% over the period, while the unemployment rate dropped concurrently from 5.3% to 1.9%.
- In both studies teaching constituted the biggest source of employment for UoM Degree graduate respondents, with nearly 2 in 5 being in that profession (1996- 39.7%; 2008- 37.3%). Administration/Management had maintained their employment share over time, accounting for about 10% of jobs (1996- 11.5%; 2008- 10.3%) for the graduates. A significant employment growth was noted, in parallel, in the IT sector, which employed 8.8% of respondents in 2008 as opposed to 1.8% in 1996, thereby affirming itself as an important pillar of the Mauritian economy. In contrast, the share of graduates working as Engineers, declined from 17.9% to 10% over the same period.
- The private sector had overtaken the public sector in 2008 as the biggest employer of UoM Degree graduates, increasing their share of total employment from 46% to 58.6% over the period.
- The level of underemployment amongst UoM Degree graduates, as reflected in the percentage of jobs requiring less than a Degree, increased from 8.7% in 1996 to 20.9% in 2008.
- The average salary of UoM Degree graduates worked out at around Rs 16,736 in 2008 as opposed to Rs 9,800 in 1996, representing an increase of 71% in current terms over the 12 year period. However, taking into account a cumulative

inflation rate of 111% over the same period, the average salary of a graduate in 2008 had decreased in real term by 19%, compared with 1996.

- The disparity in pay by gender has worsened over time, with the salary ratio of male to female, rising from 1.042 in 1996 to 1.197 in 2008. Overall, Law & Management graduates were amongst the best paid, according to both studies.
- Degree graduates were found to be more mobile in the labour market, with two-thirds of respondents in the 2008 Study having occupied more than one job within the last five years, compared with 57% in 1996.
- The overall degree of satisfaction expressed by Degree graduate respondents in respect of their university had not changed much over the period covered by the 2 studies, with some 64.7% of respondents being favourable to the UoM in 2008, compared with 62.8% in 1996. Both studies revealed that Engineering, Science and Agriculture graduates were less satisfied than Social Studies & Humanities and Management graduates.

Background

The two tracer studies were undertaken by the TEC within a space of 12 years, with a commonality being full-time Degree graduates of the University of Mauritius. Indeed, while the 1996 Study targeted the whole population of Diploma and Degree graduates of the UoM, both full-time and part-time, the 2008 Study was directed at only full-time Degree graduates but extended to cover those of the UTM, as well.

Both studies which had more or less similar objectives were aimed at investigating the whereabouts of the graduates since they completed their university studies, to gauge the extent of employment, unemployment and underemployment as well as further studies. They also sought information about the occupations of those graduates, including their sector of activity and the nature of their employers, besides gauging their perception on the courses they had followed, both pertaining to quality and their relevance to the world of work. However, it is worth noting that compared with the 1996 Study, the 2008 Tracer questionnaire was less detailed, though some new additional information was sought such as the time taken by graduates to get employment, which was lacking from the earlier survey.

The analysis below tries to compare the findings of the 2 tracer studies, laying emphasis, as far as possible, on full-time Degree graduates from the UoM .

(i) Graduates' Characteristics

Some differences were noted in the composition and characteristics of UoM Degree graduate respondents to the 2 surveys. In the 1996 Study, 27.5% of the participants emanated from the faculty of Engineering, 27.2% from Social Studies & Humanities, 21.2% from Law & Management, 12.7% from Agriculture and 11.4% from Science. The corresponding figures for the 2008 Study were 34.2%, 24.6%, 19.3%, 7.1% and 14.8% respectively.

The share of Degree graduate respondents living in rural areas had increased from 34% in 1996 to 51% in the present study. In parallel, the district of Plaines Wilhems which comprised 56 % of Degree graduate respondents in 1996 had seen its share falling to 38% in 2008, although it still accounted for the greatest number of participants by geographical area.

The mean age of Degree graduate respondents in the 1996 Study stood at 28 years compared with 27.2 years for the 2008 study. In 1996, 38.4% of Degree graduate respondents were between 21-25 years, 40.8% between 26-30 years, 7.1% between 31-35 years and 13.7% above 36 years. The corresponding figures for 2008 worked out as follows: 27.2%, 62.7%, 9.9% and 0.2% respectively.

An analysis of the socio-economic profile of Degree graduate respondents showed an improvement in the education of parents over time. Thus, 61.3% and 55% of fathers and mothers respectively possessed at least secondary education in the 2008 Study compared with 47% and 30% respectively in the previous study. Similarly, 7.6% of fathers and 16% of mothers were found to have no education in the 1996 Study, as opposed to 4.2% and 5.5% in 2008.

However, with regard to the occupation of fathers, another indicator that was used for assessing the socio-economic status of participants, the findings showed that 56.2% of fathers in the 1996 Study were occupying white collar position, 25.3% blue-collar jobs and 18.5% were self-employed/entrepreneurs as opposed to 43.4%, 36.4% and 20.1% respectively in 2008. The changing socio-economic background of respondents tends to confirm the increasing importance attached to tertiary education as well as its greater accessibility to the wider population over time.

(ii) Graduates' Further Studies

With stiffer competition prevailing in the graduate labour market, the trend is for graduates, in general, to acquire more than one academic qualification. This could be discerned from the studies which showed that the percentage of Degree graduate

respondents who had completed or were undertaking further studies, after graduation, rising from 28.6% in 1996 to 48.9% in 2008. Similarly, those studying on a full-time basis have been declining from 39% to 29% over the same period, indicating a growing preference for graduates to study part-time and through the distance learning mode.

A growing number of Degree graduate respondents concerned with further studies were enrolled with a local institution. This figure which constituted 51% of the total in 1996 rose to 60% in 2008. In contrast, fewer graduates (28% compared with 42%) were pursuing their further studies with an institution based in Europe, more particularly the United Kingdom.

81% of the respondents financed their further studies by themselves in 2008 compared with 75% in 1996. In parallel, a smaller percentage received sponsorship from their employers to pursue further studies, or some 7% compared with 11%, indicating a weakening interest from employers in training and development of their graduate manpower.

(iii) Graduates' Career Preference

The studies showed a growing tendency for UoM Degree graduates to embrace a career in teaching, with 32.9% contemplating to join this profession in 2008 as opposed to 27.6% in 1996. Engineering was the second most favoured career choice of Degree graduate respondents, though it was selected by only 14.2% in 2008, compared with 23.8% in the previous study. Other careers that had gained more popularity amongst graduates over time were Administration/ Management (9.1% compared with 6.7%) and IT (8.5% compared with 2.3%).

(iv) Graduates' Employment

The employment level amongst UoM Degree graduate respondents registered a 5.5 percentage point increase over the span of the 2 studies, increasing from 88.6% in 1996 to 94.1% in 2008. Full-time employment rose from 83.1% to 87.9%, while the unemployment rate dropped concurrently from 5.3% to 1.9% over the same period. In

the 2008 Study, a remarkable 14.7% of respondents were able to find employment within one month of graduation and 85.1% within one year, reflecting the readiness of the labour market to absorb local graduates.

In both studies teaching was found to be a major source of employment for UoM Degree graduate respondents, with nearly 2 in 5 being in that profession (1996- 39.7%; 2008- 37.3%). Administration/Management had maintained their employment share over time, accounting for about 10% of jobs (1996- 11.5%; 2008- 10.3%) for the graduates. A significant employment growth was noted, in parallel, in the IT sector, which employed 8.8% of respondents in 2008 as opposed to 1.8% in 1996, thereby affirming itself as an important pillar of the Mauritian economy. In contrast, the share of graduates working as Engineers, declined from 17.9% to 10% over the same period.

The public sector was overtaken by the private sector as the biggest employer of UoM Degree graduates, as it witnessed its share declining from 52.1% in 1996 to 40.2% in 2008, while that of private sector increased theirs from 46% to 58.6% respectively.

(v) Graduates' Underemployment Level and Skills Utilisation

The level of underemployment amongst UoM Degree graduates, as reflected in the percentage of jobs requiring less than a Degree, increased from 8.7% in 1996 to 20.9% in 2008. While 1.8% of respondents were employed in clerical or related position in 1996, this figure had risen to 6% in 2008. Law and Management as well as Social Studies & Humanities graduates were amongst the most affected by underemployment in the 1996 Study, while in the present study Agriculture and Hindi Language graduates were the most affected.

(vi) Graduates' Salary

The average salary of a UoM Degree graduate respondent worked out at around Rs 16,736 in 2008 as opposed to Rs 9,800 in 1996, representing an increase of 71% in current terms over the 12 year period. However, taking into account a cumulative

inflation rate of 111% over the same period, the average salary of a graduate in 2008 had decreased in real term by 19% compared with 1996.

The findings of both studies revealed that male graduates were, on the whole, earning more than their female counterpart. The disparity in pay by gender has worsened over time. Thus, the mean salary of a Degree graduate which stood at Rs 10,000 for male and Rs 9600 for female in 1996 went up to Rs 18,600 and 15,534 respectively, in 2008, raising the salary ratio of male to female, from 1.042 to 1.197 over the period.

Some perceptible changes were noted in the fortune of graduates in the labour market, in terms of the salaries they were able to command. Law & Management graduates turned out to be amongst the best paid, according to both studies. Agricultural graduates, on the other hand, who came second in terms of the most well-paid in 1996 had been relegated to the last or fifth place in 2008. Engineering graduates, for their part, had gained two places, to move up to the second position over that period, while Science graduates also improved from fifth to fourth place. As regard, Social Studies and Humanities graduates they remained in the third position.

(vii) Graduates' Mobility

Degree graduates were found to be more mobile in the labour market over time, with two-thirds of respondents in the 2008 Study having occupied more than one job within the last five years, compared with 57% in 1996. In 1996, the mobility rate was highest amongst Law and Management graduates (73.7%), followed by Engineering (68.7%) and Agriculture graduates (68.2%). By contrast, in the 2008 Study, Agriculture graduates experienced greater mobility (77.3%), followed by Social Studies & Humanities (69.6%) and Law & Management (69.6%) graduates.

(viii) Graduates' Perception of their Programme of Study

The overall degree of satisfaction expressed by Degree graduate respondents in respect of their university has not changed much over the period covered by the 2 studies, with some 64.7% of respondents being favourable to the UoM in 2008, compared with 62.8%

in 1996. In general, Engineering, Science and Agriculture graduates were less satisfied than Social Studies & Humanities and Management graduates.

A remarkable improvement was noted over time in the way Degree graduate respondents perceived the course content, with 75% expressing satisfaction in 2008 compared with 40% in 1996. Similarly, 54% of respondents in 2008 were happy with the extent of interdisciplinary learning taking place, as opposed to 44% in 1996. Respondents also rated the quality of delivery in terms of the skills and qualification of lecturers, more favourably in 2008 (54%) than in 1996 (45%). The teaching and learning environment, however, was found to be less satisfactory in 2008 than in 1996 (60% as against 79% satisfaction).

UoM courses were also perceived as being more relevant to the world of work over time, with 62% of Degree graduate respondents finding their courses to be in line with employers' needs in 2008 compared with 47% in 1996. But, this contrasts with the lower satisfaction expressed with regard to the contribution of UoM courses to improving problem-solving skills (decreasing from 78% in 1996 to 67% in 2008) and enhancing team spirit (from 70% to 63%).

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of the Main Findings of the Graduate Tracer Study,1996 and 2008

Main Indicators	Tracer study	
	1996	2008
4) Graduates' Employment		
(a) Employment Level	88.6%	94.1%
(b) Full-time Employment	83.1%	87.9%
(c) Unemployment Rate	5.3%	1.9%
(d) Employment of Graduates by Field:Teaching	39.7%	37.3%
Administration & Management	11.5%	10.3%
IT	1.8%	8.8%
Engineering	17.9%	10%
(e) Employment of Graduates by Sector: Public Sector	52.1%	40.2%
Private Sector	46%	58.6%
5) Graduates' Underemployment Level and Skills' Utilisation		
(a) Rate of Underemployment	8.7%	20.9%
(b) Respondent Employed in Clerical or Related Position	1.8%	6%
(c) Fields of Study mostly Affected by Underemployment	Law & Management and Social Studies & Humanities	Agriculture and Hindi Language Graduates
6) Graduates' Salary		
(a) Average Salary in Nominal Terms	Rs 9,800	Rs 16,736
(b) Disparity in Pay: Male	Rs 10,000	Rs 18,600
Female	Rs 9,600	Rs 15,534
7) Graduates' Mobility		
(a) Graduates having occupied more than 1 Job in Last Five Years	57.0%	66.6%
(b) Highest Mobility among Graduates by Faculty:	Law & Management,73.7%	Agriculture,77.3%
	Engineering, 68.7%	Social & Humanities, 69.6%
	Agriculture, 68.2%	La w & Management, 69.6%
8) Graduates' Perception of their Programme of Study		
(a) Overall Degree of Satisfaction with respect to UoM Programme of Study	62.8%	64.7%
(b) Level of Satisfaction Related to: Course Content	40%	75%
Interdisciplinary Learning Taking Place	44%	54%
Quality of Delivery	45%	54%
Teaching and Learning Environment	79%	60%
(c) Relevancy of Course Content to : The World of Work	47%	62%
Improving Problem Solving Skills	78%	67%
Enhancing Team Spirit	70%	38%