

A Tracer Study of Public Administration and Governance and Development Management Graduate Programs of the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos



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ABSTRACT. The global demand for high-skilled professionals emphasized the role of higher education in career advancement. This descriptive tracer study of the Master in Public Administration and Governance (MPAG) and the Doctor of Philosophy in Development Management (PhD-DvM) programs aimed to establish a database on the profile of the graduates; the extent of practice of graduate attributes and the level of satisfaction with program delivery and implementation. Likewise, it investigated the challenges encountered by the graduates and their reasons for enrolment. Results revealed that majority were promoted to higher management positions; that the practice of graduate attributes in the workplace is to a very great extent; and graduates were very highly satisfied with the program delivery and implementation. Research rank highest, followed by faculty. While physical facilities and student services were rated high only. Among the challenges encountered by graduates are: thesis/dissertation writing, social relationships and work responsibilities, among others. Quality of graduate education, professors' competence, Catholic values, facilities, and research training were reasons for enrolling.

1.0. Introduction

The growing emphasis on the role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in employment and career advancement in the global market revealed the need for graduate education (Burke et al., 2017; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). An increase in the demand for high-skilled professionals due to global technologies and innovation revealed the importance of higher education and the growth of the role of universities. Hence, HEIs have to reinforce their capacities, including the processes of initiating, upholding, and demonstrating changes focused on sustainable development (Sulkowski et al., 2020).

For countries in Southeast Asia, changes in the higher education policy increased over the last decade due to liberalization in their socio-economic activities and closer linkage at regional and global levels. The region's growth in higher education is characterized by massive diversification, promotion, and global demands (Ratanawijitrasin, 2015). Global and transnational demand in the academic setting is curriculum-related or mobility-related (Qureshi et al., 2014; Atherton et al., 2018).

The Philippines is facing increasing changes brought by globalization. Employment has created opportunities, questions, and complexities that affect education. This means that graduates of institutions of higher learning will harmonize education with the labor market requirements. Thus, there is a need for data and information as the basis of policies on instruction, research, and extension, as well as monitoring of progress in higher education (Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2015). Therefore, all educational institutions inculcate the tenets provided for compliance with the objectives of tertiary education; the graduate program shall provide leadership and advanced knowledge through research work and relate this new knowledge for the improvement of the quality of human life and address changing demands and circumstances (Solon-Villaneza, 2015).

Hence, the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos (UNO-R) declared its philosophy, vision and mission statements, goals, and objectives as an Augustinian Recollect Center of Learning, which makes knowledge (Scientia) a structure of wisdom that leads one to the exercise of love (Caritas). It



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envisioned itself as a “Catholic University committed to the integral formation of the human person with a passion for excellence and service to the Church and society” (Recoletos de Bacolod Graduate School Student Manual, 2018, p. 8) Specifically, the Recoletos de Bacolod Graduate School envisioned itself as a “leading graduate education institution preferred by clients because of its quality graduate programs relevant and responsive to the contemporary global needs of the academe, industry, the Church, and the society.” The mission of the graduate school is “to help students achieve professional growth and develop their technical competence, character, and faith in God through quality graduate education programs in the spirit of Caritas et Scientia.”

Tracer studies on the development of an alumni database were conducted by Etcuban and Durano (2015), Quitevis et al. (2019), Malahay and Saing (2018), and Rojas and Rojas (2016). Madrigal (2015) focused on graduate attributes, while Genovate and Madrigal (2021) assessed the satisfaction with program delivery and implementation of undergraduate students. Further, Cervantes (2019) and Antiojo (2018) studied the employability of graduates. Of the rigorous research conducted, limited studies on alumni of graduate programs focused on the extent of practice of graduate attributes and level of satisfaction on program delivery and implementation; no tracer study was conducted on the alumni of MPAG and PhD-DvM programs of a university in Negros Occidental, hence, a gap in the literature.

2.0. Framework of the Study

The study theorized that consistent practice of graduate attributes and satisfaction of graduates with programs and services is indicative of the career advancement and the sustainability of graduate programs. The practice of graduate attributes is essential in any field of endeavor revealing the need for graduate programs.

The study is primarily anchored on the Knowledge-Skills-Attitudes/Abilities (KSA) theories of Jorde-Bloom (1986) and Dreyfus (1980), founded on the understanding of graduate attributes as KSAs, a tripartite categorization that encompasses the many forms of graduate attributes. It is based on the idea that graduate attributes need to be interpreted as praxis-oriented, which allows for operationalization. The assessment emanates from the VMGO of the institution, based on specific competencies that guide the learning outcomes and involve strategic stakeholders in the assessment process.

The theory is appropriate to the study as it assessed the practice of graduate attributes in the workplace of the alumni; their satisfaction with the philosophy and objectives of the university starting from the VMGO, faculty, curriculum and instruction, student services, research skills, extension programs, physical facilities, including the administration, which generated insights that revealed the practice of graduate attributes.

The study also anchors on the Human Capital Theory by Schultz (1961), which espoused that education is an investment and a tool to address social problems. As such, it increases personal capital and establishes the connection between education and employment, which leads to high wages resulting from human capital accumulation. It is the mechanism where graduates participate in the labor market, which means that graduates with more educational skills training deliver higher productivity, hence can avail of higher employment probability and wages (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2019; Hung & Ramsden, 2021; Holden & Biddle, 2017).

This theory is appropriate because the study unearthed the employment characteristics of the alumni in terms of their employment status and present position. It will also compile the skills acquired and applied in their jobs and the relevance of the graduate attributes, as evidenced by the increase in the salaries availed by the alumni.

Likewise, the study is anchored on the Excellence in Higher Education (EHE) Model developed by Ruben (2007) in assessing the quality and effectiveness of higher education institutions by integrating judgment, recognition, organization, and development efforts in institutions of higher education to determine institutional quality through accreditation standards.

The EHE model reveals the satisfaction of the graduates in the delivery and execution of programs and services in the areas of vision, mission, goals, and objectives of the university and the graduate school in terms of the competencies of the faculty, relevance of the curriculum and instruction, student services, the effectiveness of research studies, extension programs, availability of physical facilities, and contributions of the administration to the graduates' career advancement. Likewise, the EHE reveals the challenges encountered by the MPAG and PhD-DvM graduates to finish

their degrees. This study likewise addresses the CHED’s mandate as indicated in the Philippines Qualifications Framework (QPF).

3.0. Methodology

This study is descriptive, utilizing the survey questionnaire as a primary source of information. The descriptive method is appropriate considering it describes a situation or a phenomenon and seeks answers to questions of what, when, where, and how or observes and measures the interaction of variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The descriptive design was used to determine the extent of the practice of graduate attributes and the level of satisfaction of the graduates with the programs and services of the university. It was also used to determine the challenges encountered by the graduates to finish their degrees and the reasons for their enrolment in the programs.

The population of the graduates is 121, considering there are years with no graduates; total enumeration was used, and data gathering lasted for four months considering the pandemic. Both online and face-to-face using enumerators were utilized for the data gathering.

The study utilized an adapted questionnaire on the practice of graduate attributes from the study of Madrigal (2015). For the level of satisfaction, the study also used an adapted questionnaire from Genovate and Madrigal (2021). Meanwhile, some parts of the researcher-made instrument were subjected to validity and reliability tests. For content validation, it was presented to ten (10) research experts from other university programs. The content validity ratio (CVR) of Lawshe (1975) was used, and suggestions of the members of the jury were considered in finalizing the survey instruments. The content validity score was 0.90, meaning questions were valid and were generated for the researcher-made survey questionnaire. Likewise, the reliability score of 0.945, interpreted as highly reliable, was generated from a pilot test on 30 graduates of other courses who were not respondents in the study.

4.0. Results and Discussion

Profile of the MPAG and PhD-DvM graduates

Using percentages, results of profiling of the graduates from the MPAG and PhD-DvM programs showed that most of the graduates are females; more MPAG than PhD-DvM graduated, and more married employees are interested in graduate programs and were able to finish their degrees. Records also showed that rank and file employees are interested in joining the graduate program for career advancement. More than 70% were promoted to supervisory and higher management positions. Thus, the graduates advanced in their careers and could participate in the processes of local and national importance. Undeniably, employees gain important skills while in graduate school, many of which are needed and practiced in the profession.

Government offices were forerunners in the career advancement of the graduates. The findings revealed that more women are interested in graduate programs and working in government institutions. The profile revealed that graduates of the MPAG and PhD-DvM programs are already instrumental in formulating policies, providing leadership, engaging in planning and all other management functions, and responding to the issues in government and the private sector where they work. Findings revealed that the promotion and involvement in the workplace

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Variable	F	%
Sex		
Male	52	43.0
Female	69	57.0
Graduate Degree		
MPAG	72	59.5
PhD DVM	49	40.5
Date Graduated		
2016 and below (2016b)	72	59.5
2017 and up (2017b)	49	40.5
Civil Status		
Single	28	23.1
Married	93	76.9
Entry Position		
Rank and File (RF)	75	62.0
Supervisor (Sup)	14	11.6
Higher Management (HM)	10	8.3
No Answer	22	18.2
Promotion Earned		
Rank and File (RF)	28	23.1
Supervisor (Sup)	41	33.9
Higher Management (HM)	48	39.7
No Answer	4	3.3
Total	121	100.0

were attributed to their degree from graduate school.

The findings of this study affirmed Thirunavukarasu et al. (2020), Meñez (2014), and Tutor et al. (2021), whom all found that graduate education contributed to the professional advancement of the graduates. The finding also reinforced the study of Bagolong (2015) that in terms of job placement, all graduates are employed permanently, and their promotion and involvement in the community were attributed to their degree from graduate school.

Skills acquired by the graduates

The skills acquired by the graduates in the MPAG and PhD DvM programs revealed that the highest-rated skill is human relations, followed by communications and administrative skills. Other skills inherent from graduate education that were acquired by the graduates are critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, and managerial skills. Technical skills, problem-solving skills, and entrepreneurial skills were also acquired, which are necessary for advancement in the workplace.

The data indicated that the graduates have developed the desirable skills before their exit from the university and that MPAG and PhD DvM programs have developed the graduates' ability to work with others, solve complex problems, and have the confidence to learn independently. Communication skills greatly help graduates develop their potential, which enhances their chances for promotions. Findings also suggest that graduate students' acquisition of the skills is instrumental in their career, which was part of the learnings from the graduate program. This was obvious since the graduate program consisted of students from different walks of life, from government executives to medical practitioners, academicians, social workers, businessmen, and government employees. This finding demonstrates that graduate school is a fertile ground for establishing effective human relations. Although leadership skills are rated the lowest, as well as research writing, it is implied that these skills were acquired from the graduate programs only.

Studies support the finding by Rowe and Zegwaard (2017) and Rook and Sloan (2021), who both claimed that graduate education has broadened a range of skills, attributes, and other measures, such as network and professional identity.

Table 2. Skills acquired by the graduates

Skills	f	%
Human Relations skills	76	62.80
Communication skills	67	55.38
Administrative skills	67	55.38
Critical thinking skills	64	52.89
Interpersonal skills	63	52.06
Interpersonal skills	60	49.58
Technical skills	53	43.80
Problem solving skills	47	38.84
Entrepreneurial skills	28	23.14
Research writing skills	1	0.08
Leadership skills	1	0.08

Extent of the practice of graduate attributes as demonstrated in the workplace

Generally, there is a very great extent of the practice of graduate attributes demonstrated by the graduates in the workplace, which means that the graduate attributes are practiced all the time. Among the variables, being spiritually sound was rated the highest, while being scholarly leaders of science was rated with a slightly lower mean. However, both were interpreted to a very great extent.

The finding indicates that the graduate school has provided the tenets of tertiary education and has developed graduate education that provides leadership for the nation, inculcates new knowledge for improving the quality of human life, and has responded to the changing needs and conditions in the labor market. From the foregoing, feedback from the alumni on their experiences, especially promotions earned on the job, reflects the quality of educational services from the graduate school. The finding that all graduate attributes were rated to a very great extent suggests that MPAG and PhD DvM programs are relevant and successful in providing the graduates with the necessary quality of education.

The study of Madrigal (2015) has confirmed that the extent of the practice of the graduate attributes, when taken as a whole, is high, which means that graduates practiced the attributes frequently, making them proficient with good judgment of well-being. The findings aligned with studies of Rook and Sloan (2021), Woya (2019), and Abas and Imam (2016), whom all affirmed that higher educational institutions (HEIs) should be reinforced and should contextualize graduate attributes to contribute to the goal of career advancement.

Table 3A. Extent of the Practice of Graduate Attributes As Demonstrated in the Workplace of the Graduate School after the Completion of the Graduate Degrees

Variable	Spiritually Sound			Intellectually-inspired			Morally-healthy			Physically-healthy			Culturally-conscious		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Graduate Degree															
MPAG	4.61	0.28	VG	4.58	0.40	VG	4.59	0.36	VG	4.60	0.42	VG	4.43	0.40	VG
Phd DVM	4.60	0.30	VG	4.45	0.45	VG	4.46	0.46	VG	4.52	0.49	VG	4.35	0.44	VG
Graduate Degree															
MPAG	4.61	0.28	VG	4.57	0.40	VG	4.59	0.36	VG	4.61	0.42	VG	4.43	0.40	VG
Phd DVM	4.60	0.29	VG	4.46	0.45	VG	4.46	0.46	VG	4.51	0.49	VG	4.35	0.44	VG
Date Graduated															
2016 and below	4.60	0.28	VG	4.53	0.41	VG	4.55	0.39	VG	4.64	0.39	VG	4.43	0.38	VG
2017 and up	4.61	0.30	VG	4.51	0.45	VG	4.52	0.44	VG	4.47	0.51	VG	4.34	0.47	VG
Civil Status															
Single	4.69	0.29	VG	4.70	0.35	VG	4.61	0.33	VG	4.59	0.37	VG	4.48	0.32	VG
Married	4.58	0.28	VG	4.47	0.43	VG	4.52	0.43	VG	4.56	0.48	VG	4.37	0.44	VG
Entry Position															
Rank and File	4.62	0.29	VG	4.53	0.42	VG	4.55	0.39	VG	4.60	0.45	VG	4.38	0.41	VG
Supervisor	4.44	0.31	VG	4.36	0.46	VG	4.34	0.55	VG	4.29	0.53	VG	4.27	0.55	VG
Higher Mgmt	4.72	0.25	VG	4.86	0.25	VG	4.76	0.34	VG	4.72	0.23	VG	4.62	0.32	VG
Promotion															
Earned															
Rank and File	4.54	0.27	VG	4.45	0.42	VG	4.47	0.43	VG	4.61	0.44	VG	4.31	0.41	VG
Supervisor	4.55	0.31	VG	4.48	0.44	VG	4.51	0.38	VG	4.49	0.51	VG	4.34	0.45	VG
Higher Mgmt	4.67	0.27	VG	4.58	0.42	VG	4.57	0.42	VG	4.61	0.41	VG	4.47	0.39	VG
Whole	4.60	0.29	VG	4.51	0.43	VG	4.53	0.41	VG	4.57	0.45	VG	4.39	0.42	VG

Mean Range: 1.00-1.80=Very Low Extent (VLE), 1.81-2.60=Low Extent (LE), 2.61-3.40=Moderate Extent (ME), 3.41-4.20=Great Extent (GE), 4.21-5.00=Very Great Extent (VG)

Table 3B. Extent of the Practice of Graduate Attributes As Demonstrated in the Workplace of the Graduate School after the Completion of the Graduate Degrees

Variable	Socially-concerned			Technically-proficient			Scholarly Leaders of Science			Attribute		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Graduate Degree												
MPAG	4.62	0.43	VG	4.51	0.40	VG	4.40	0.52	VG	4.54	0.32	VG
Phd DVM	4.45	0.52	VG	4.42	0.42	VG	4.29	0.60	VG	4.44	0.39	VG
Graduate Degree												
MPAG	4.63	0.43	VG	4.52	0.40	VG	4.40	0.52	VG	4.54	0.32	VG
Phd DVM	4.45	0.52	VG	4.41	0.42	VG	4.29	0.60	VG	4.44	0.39	VG
Date Graduated												
2016 and below	4.61	0.40	VG	4.49	0.40	VG	4.38	0.50	VG	4.53	0.31	VG
2017 and up	4.48	0.56	VG	4.44	0.42	VG	4.31	0.64	VG	4.46	0.41	VG
Civil Status												
Single	4.67	0.33	VG	4.54	0.43	VG	4.55	0.41	VG	4.60	0.28	VG
Married	4.52	0.51	VG	4.45	0.40	VG	4.29	0.58	VG	4.47	0.37	VG
Entry Position												
Rank and File	4.59	0.48	VG	4.48	0.40	VG	4.37	0.57	VG	4.51	0.35	VG
Supervisor	4.24	0.60	VG	4.36	0.42	VG	4.11	0.69	GE	4.30	0.46	VG
Higher Mgmt	4.74	0.28	VG	4.78	0.33	VG	4.72	0.29	VG	4.74	0.19	VG
Promotion Earned												
Rank and File	4.56	0.45	VG	4.43	0.41	VG	4.24	0.53	VG	4.45	0.35	VG
Supervisor	4.51	0.55	VG	4.44	0.40	VG	4.28	0.59	VG	4.45	0.37	VG
Higher Mgmt	4.57	0.44	VG	4.51	0.42	VG	4.44	0.53	VG	4.55	0.34	VG
Whole	4.55	0.48	VG	4.47	0.41	VG	4.34	0.55	VG	4.49	0.35	VG

Mean Range: 1.00-1.80=Very Low Extent (VLE), 1.81-2.60=Low Extent (LE), 2.61-3.40=Moderate Extent (ME), 3.41-4.20=Great Extent (GE), 4.21-5.00=Very Great Extent (VG)

Furthermore, the findings corroborate Segismundo and Zacarias (2016) and Alhassan et al. (2018) that the program of study in the master's and PhD degrees and all aspects of the program are very good. They greatly contribute to the graduates' personal and professional growth, particularly in the Augustinian values formation and the academic profession. The outcome of the tracer study of graduate satisfaction and experience with higher education will enrich the services provided and improve the quality of the programs to meet the expectations of the students.

Level of satisfaction with program delivery and implementation

Overall, graduates are very highly satisfied with program delivery and implementation. Research studies rated the highest, followed by faculty, vision, mission, goals, objectives, and curriculum and instruction. The variables rated highly satisfied were physical facilities and student services only.

The finding implies that the graduate school is an exceptional provider and pioneering in delivering and implementing the programs and services, exceeding expectations. It demonstrates that the graduate school offers good quality graduate education, exemplified by independent study. Revealed as the highest is research, which implies that graduate education is engaged in the endeavor to develop the leading edge of knowledge. It has qualified and competent professors and has lived up to its vision of integral formation of the human person with a passion for excellence and service to the Church and society. Furthermore, the rating of very highly satisfied with curriculum and instruction indicates that the programs (MPAG and PhD-DvM) incorporate career advancement within the academic curriculum.

Findings of very highly satisfied graduates are supported by studies by Kahsay (2012), Ambepitiya (2016), and Rufai and Rashid (2015) that quality service is important for attracting and retaining students that serve as a basic ingredient in achieving excellence. Higher education must have a proper combination of academic knowledge and practical skills development because of the adoption of strategies and work-based learning parallel with the curriculum through immersion of the students to the community in their outreach programs and research on community development and organization.

As to research and faculty, very highly satisfied results are emphasized in the study of Gonzales et al. (2019) and are affirmed by Cagasan et al. (2017) that graduates were generally satisfied with curricular offerings, quality of program delivery, and teaching and learning environment, among others. Furthermore, the findings strengthened the study of Genovate and Madrigal (2021) that the graduate school offers good quality graduate education, has qualified and competent professors, and implements effective policies and procedures that exceed expectations. The findings of Alhassan

Table 4A. Level of Satisfaction of the Graduate School Alumni of the Graduate Program Delivery and Implementation

Variable	Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives			Faculty			Curriculum and Instruction			Student Services			Research Studies		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Sex															
Male	4.77	0.23	VH	4.77	0.26	VH	4.59	0.39	VH	4.17	0.44	Hi	4.80	0.31	VH
Female	4.69	0.27	VH	4.71	0.30	VH	4.43	0.58	VH	4.14	0.44	Hi	4.78	0.40	VH
Graduate Degree															
MPAG	4.74	0.25	VH	4.73	0.29	VH	4.50	0.56	VH	4.16	0.45	Hi	4.81	0.35	VH
Phd DVM	4.70	0.27	VH	4.75	0.28	VH	4.49	0.44	VH	4.14	0.43	Hi	4.75	0.39	VH
Date Graduated															
2016 and below	4.75	0.24	VH	4.78	0.28	VH	4.54	0.47	VH	4.14	0.45	Hi	4.82	0.33	VH
2017 and up	4.69	0.27	VH	4.67	0.29	VH	4.43	0.57	VH	4.18	0.44	Hi	4.73	0.40	VH
Civil Status															
Single	4.75	0.28	VH	4.76	0.28	VH	4.48	0.55	VH	4.24	0.41	VH	4.87	0.30	VH
Married	4.72	0.25	VH	4.73	0.29	VH	4.50	0.50	VH	4.13	0.45	Hi	4.76	0.38	VH
Entry Position															
Rank and File	4.73	0.25	VH	4.73	0.29	VH	4.45	0.56	VH	4.13	0.44	Hi	4.78	0.36	VH
Supervisor	4.61	0.31	VH	4.57	0.37	VH	4.33	0.58	VH	4.20	0.38	Hi	4.57	0.55	VH
Higher Mgmt	4.86	0.21	VH	4.90	0.17	VH	4.68	0.34	VH	4.18	0.51	Hi	5.00	0.00	VH
Promotion Earned															
Rank and File	4.74	0.25	VH	4.72	0.29	VH	4.37	0.60	VH	4.05	0.45	Hi	4.81	0.35	VH
Supervisor	4.69	0.26	VH	4.69	0.30	VH	4.44	0.55	VH	4.13	0.40	Hi	4.74	0.42	VH
Higher Mgmt	4.75	0.25	VH	4.79	0.27	VH	4.60	0.42	VH	4.21	0.46	VH	4.79	0.34	VH
Whole	4.73	0.25	VH	4.74	0.29	VH	4.49	0.52	VH	4.15	0.44	Hi	4.78	0.37	VH

Mean Range: 1.00-1.80=Very Low Level (VL), 1.81-2.60=Low Level (Lo), 2.61-3.40=Moderate Level (Mo), 3.41-4.20=High Level (Hi), 4.21-5.00=Very High Level (VH)

Table 4B. Level of Satisfaction of the Graduate School Alumni of the Graduate Program Delivery and Implementation

Variable	Extension Programs			Physical Facilities			Administration			Satisfaction		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Sex												
Male	4.51	0.39	VH	3.85	0.67	Hi	4.29	0.64	VH	4.48	0.29	VH
Female	4.41	0.44	VH	3.83	0.72	Hi	4.34	0.61	VH	4.42	0.35	VH
Graduate Degree												
MPAG	4.43	0.41	VH	3.91	0.70	Hi	4.37	0.61	VH	4.47	0.33	VH
Phd DVM	4.48	0.44	VH	3.73	0.68	Hi	4.25	0.64	VH	4.42	0.33	VH
Date Graduated												
2016 and below	4.50	0.41	VH	3.88	0.66	Hi	4.36	0.59	VH	4.48	0.31	VH
2017 and up	4.38	0.43	VH	3.77	0.74	Hi	4.27	0.67	VH	4.40	0.35	VH
Civil Status												
Single	4.49	0.41	VH	3.71	0.73	Hi	4.21	0.79	Hi	4.44	0.31	VH
Married	4.44	0.42	VH	3.87	0.68	Hi	4.35	0.56	VH	4.45	0.33	VH
Entry Position												
Rank and File	4.41	0.42	VH	3.85	0.70	Hi	4.33	0.59	VH	4.43	0.33	VH
Supervisor	4.27	0.46	VH	3.51	0.72	Hi	4.08	0.82	Hi	4.27	0.39	VH
Higher Mgmt	4.66	0.38	VH	4.06	0.69	Hi	4.55	0.37	VH	4.62	0.26	VH
Promotion Earned												
Rank and File	4.34	0.39	VH	3.71	0.66	Hi	4.23	0.78	VH	4.37	0.30	VH
Supervisor	4.37	0.42	VH	3.77	0.72	Hi	4.25	0.70	VH	4.39	0.33	VH
Higher Mgmt	4.56	0.42	VH	3.94	0.66	Hi	4.42	0.41	VH	4.52	0.32	VH
Whole	4.44	0.42	VH	3.82	0.68	Hi	4.32	0.62	VH	4.44	0.32	VH

Mean Range: 1.00-1.80=Very Low Level (VL), 1.81-2.60=Low Level (Lo), 2.61-3.40=Moderate Level (Mo), 3.41-4.20=High Level (Hi), 4.21-5.00=Very High Level (VH)

et al. (2018) and Celik & Storme (2018) are recognized that graduates were generally satisfied with the programs of study and other co-curricular activities but quite dissatisfied with inadequate student services and physical facilities, with ratings of only high similar to the findings of this study.

Challenges encountered by graduates in finishing their degree

The major challenge encountered by graduate students is that thesis/dissertation time is not enough. This is followed by social relationships and work responsibilities. Other challenges are personal concerns and those in connection with the activities related to thesis/dissertation writing.

The findings demonstrate opportunities for continuous improvements in graduate education. Research challenges, such as insufficient time, difficulty accessing advisers, and the interplay of work

Table 5. Challenges Encountered by MPAG and PhD DvM Graduates

Items	f	%
Thesis/dissertation time is not enough	87	71.9
Social relationships and work responsibilities	65	53.7
Counseling/advising should be more effective	42	34.7
Time commitment for the family	42	34.7
Multiple roles as working parent	37	30.6
Financial problem	36	29.8
Difficulty in benefiting the library	33	27.3
The time for enrolment/registration should be long enough	22	18.2
Attending school facilities sometimes conflict with family affairs	22	18.2
Lack of motivation	14	11.6
Difficulties in communication with the adviser	12	9.9
The number of programs is insufficient	12	9.9
Compulsory attendance to classes	10	8.3
Insufficient information for students	10	8.3
The contents of the courses are not appropriate	8	6.6

relationships and family, are inherent in combining work with graduate education. This suggests that students who finished their degrees are the cream of the crop and worthy of their advancement in their careers. There is also more focus on closing the skills gap and providing better support services. Findings also demonstrate that the graduate school should heavily invest in research to develop innovative ways to answer the needs of the times.

Findings on challenges encountered by graduates are strongly supported by several studies that all concede that graduate education is a transformation characterized by diversity. Hence, there are competitive pressures (Sverdlik et al., 2018; Buluc & Gelisli, 2014; Dickerson et al., 2014; de Brey et al., 2019; Ginder et al., 2019; Dong & Yu, 2020; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]; 2013; Bernadas & Minchella, 2016; Benson, 2019; Center for the Study of Education Policy, 2020; Rojas & Rojas, 2016).

Reasons for enrolling in the MPAG and PhD-DvM programs

Out of the 121 respondents, 62.0% (72) expressed that it is because of the quality of the graduate school education. The next highest reason is professors’ competence, where 57.9% (70) and 55.4% (67) pointed out that the reason is the Catholic values carried out by the graduate school. The other reasons are the facilities of the university, research training, and friends’ recommendations.

The findings imply that graduates positively impact the world, spread knowledge, and commit to continual improvement. MPAG and PhD DvM graduates are provided the skills necessary to see, learn, and experience new things, positively influencing learning outcomes. Findings demonstrate that because of competent and experienced industry professionals teaching in the programs, students enhance their leadership and management capabilities and build a network of peers with a wide range of experience. With networks from government officials to academicians health experts to legal luminaries, government workers to specialized private practitioners, students become experts in public sector topics and become more flexible in the job market. Findings also indicate that students choose the program because it is value-laden with Catholic faith and love of neighbor. Very rich studies focused on various subjects, such as climate change, environment and sustainable development, disaster, poverty analysis and poverty reduction, and national and global issues, among others, significantly contributing to the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

These findings are strongly supported by the studies of Genovate and Madrigal (2021), Zhang and Harris (2019), and Renbarger and Beaujean (2020). These studies found that the quality of graduate education, competence of the faculty, and Catholic values are very important, that there must be flexibility for students to fulfill program requirements, and that participation in research contributes positively to students’ decisions and is heavily influenced by good teaching practices, teaching style, and integration of ideas, information and experiences.

Table 6. Reasons for Enrolling in MPAG and/or PhD DvM Programs

Items	f	%
Quality of graduate school education	75	62.0
Professors’ competence	70	57.9
Catholic values	67	55.4
Facilities of the university	39	32.2
Research training	38	31.4
Friends’ recommendation	17	14.0

Development Management (PhD-DvM) programs showed very impressive results, specifically on the employment characteristics from an entry position to promotions earned, validating the adoption of the Human Capital theory. The findings likewise established the link between education and employment, that education is an investment that develops the ability of the graduates to participate in the labor market. It also implies that both programs can achieve the objectives, and the objectives of the graduate school, vision, mission, and goals of the university.

A very great extent of the practice of graduate attributes implies that graduates exhibit the institutional graduate attributes in their workplaces all the time. This validates the theory of the researcher that consistent practice of graduate attributes is indicative of career advancement and sustainability of the graduate programs.

In terms of the variables, being spiritually sound was rated the highest, which means that graduates are CHRIST-centered and MARIAN-inspired, attributes considered very necessary for practitioners of public administration and governance. Meanwhile, the attribute of being scholarly leaders of science, although rated with the slightly lower mean but interpreted very great extent, implies that the graduates portray themselves as extensions of the frontlines of knowledge through participation in decision-making and management, showing an in-depth understanding of the problems and issues profoundly using the blend of logic, philosophy, existence, and conviction. The use of the KSA theories is well-placed as the practice of the graduate attributes was generated and interpreted based on specific competencies that guide the learning outcomes of the graduate programs.

Meanwhile, the level of satisfaction of the graduate school alumni of the program delivery and implementation was generally very highly satisfied. It implies that the graduate school is an excellent provider and innovative in the delivery and implementation of the programs and services, exceeding expectations.

In terms of the areas, research studies rated highest, followed by faculty, then vision, mission, goals, and objectives, which were all interpreted as very highly satisfied. These imply that graduate education is characterized by reliance on research in the pursuit of academic excellence, thus validating the adoption of the excellence in education (EHE) model that revealed the satisfaction of the graduates in the delivery and implementation of programs and services. All areas were rated very highly satisfied except student services and physical facilities, which were rated highly satisfied.

Challenges encountered by the graduates reflect the trends in higher education driving shifts in learning classified as social, technological, and financial. Finishing their degrees is an achievement worthy of emulation, validating the theory of the researcher that graduate education is the road to career advancement.

Several reasons were advanced by the graduates for enrolling in the programs; foremost is quality of the graduate school education, professors' competence, and Catholic values. These reasons are indicative of the quality of graduate education offered by the MPAG and PhD DvM programs, revealing sustainability.

5.0. Conclusion

MPAG and PhD DvM programs instilled the desirable skills in their graduates, leading to a very great extent of demonstration of graduate attributes in the workplace. Graduates have given value to their degrees which is apparent in the promotions they have earned. The university has provided the identity, quality graduate education, competent professors, continuous enhancement of the curriculum, and prestige in research that play major roles in the career advancement of the graduates and revealed in the very highly satisfied graduates in the implementation of programs and delivery of services that exceeded expectations.

Among the limitations of the study include limited by the online responses and data gathered by enumerators on the challenges and reasons for enrolling, and no probing was conducted by the researcher because the data gathering was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and no interview nor focus group discussion was done.

Graduate tracer studies should be conducted regularly, covering wider scope to establish more robust data that reflect the career advancement of graduates. Other variables may be explored, like the number of times the graduate changed jobs, job satisfaction, and congruence between curriculum and skills that the industry expects from graduates in the program.

6.0 Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The authors have also agreed on the contents of the manuscript. There is likewise no financial interest to report. They also certify that the submission is original work and is not under review at any other publication.

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