

International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research
Vol. 16, No. 11, pp. 67-76, November 2017
<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.16.11.4>

PUP Graduate School Services: A Critique Assessment by the MBA Students

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Abstract. This paper looks into the services of PUP graduate school from the point of the students. Some criteria/areas of accreditation were considered to be assessed by the MBA students such as security and safety, facilities, faculty members and the learner management system (LMS). Of the four areas in the PUP graduate school services, the LMS was rated to be high by the MBA student respondents which obtained an overall mean score of 4.09; it was followed by (from highest to lowest mean) safety and security, faculty members and facilities.

Keywords: PUP, Graduate School, Critique Assessment, MBA students.

Introduction

Generally the management of higher education in the Philippines is traditionally concerned with the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards and processes. The expansion, diversification and privatization of higher education systems worldwide have brought with them an increased concern with the quality of higher education, in both developed and developing countries (Martin & Estella, 2007). During the past two decades, there has been an occurrence of a worldwide call to propose or propagate a new model of teaching-learning processes for the twenty-first century, especially in graduate education.

In the Philippines, various institutions exist to provide graduate education. As defined by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), graduate education is at the apex of the educational system. It is expected to showcase the best of the academic and intellectual products and processes of the system. Specifically, graduate education shall be so structured as to enhance quality, efficiency and effectiveness of higher education; it shall be made more relevant and responsive to the development needs of the educational system as

well as to the regional and national development thrusts; and it shall take the lead role in enhancing the quality of Philippine higher education towards global competitiveness and world-class scholarship (CHED MORPHE, 2008).

The Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) Graduate School which was formerly known as the Faculty of Graduate Studies started in 1970 through the issuance of Republic Act 6089 (series of 1970) which gave rise to the former name of PUP, the Philippine College of Commerce (PCC) to increase the number of its course offerings (PUP, 2017). As a whole, the institution was conceived to be a government school of Commerce or Business when it was built hundred years back. Prior to its name PCC, it was initially called the Manila Business School which objective is to develop scholars fit for office work and business establishment. As the years passed by, the former PCC grew to what it is known today as the biggest University in the Philippines in terms of student population. Specifically, the PUP Master in Business Administration (MBA) program, which is the subject of this research, officially opened on July 20, 1971. The PUP-MBA program, of which current students are the subjects of this research, is designed to: *“develop capable, socially responsible and mature managers and leaders in today’s global marketplace.”* (PUP-MBA program, www.pup.edu.ph).

Currently, the MBA program of PUP has already acquired Level III accreditation from the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCU) Inc. Accreditation as defined by AACCU (2017) is a process by which an institution at the tertiary level evaluates its educational activities, in whole or in part, and seeks an independent judgment to confirm that it substantially achieves its objectives, and is generally equal in quality to comparable institutions. For University set-up the highest accreditation that can be granted to an institution which is categorized with a University status is Level IV. Accreditation in the Philippine setting forms part of the quality assurance mechanisms undertaken by higher education institutions. This is true to all public and private higher education colleges/universities. In accreditation process, a group of assessors or accreditors look into the quality of programs being assessed based on the ten (10) criteria such as: Mission, Vision, goals and objectives, Faculty Qualification, Curriculum and Instruction, Students, Research, Extension and Community Involvement, Library, Physical Facilities and Laboratories, Administration and Alumni.

According to FGSR (2013) the assessment of quality in graduate education is critical not only to the success of graduate students but also to the future of research and creative activity both inside and outside academia. The fundamental commitment of graduate programs is to achieve the best outcome or each individual student informs quality assessment. Through on-going and transparent quality assessment, stakeholders in graduate programs are able to monitor the progress on improving the quality of the graduate education being offered. Quality assessment is aimed at monitoring the degree of progress towards the goals of the graduate program that will lead to the delivery of the best possible graduate education. Quality assessment is envisioned as a regular

and on-going part of managing graduate programs, and the results of quality assessment should be used to inform strategic planning.

In this research, the students as respondents were the ones who assessed the PUP graduate school and not the group of accreditors, who, in the usual process of accreditation, are generally composed of academicians from different Universities in the country. Specifically, the students from Masters in Business Administration were considered as respondents of this research. Quota sampling was employed and a total of sixty respondents were considered in this research. The respondents were composed of more than 50% of the total student population enrolled during the Saturday MBA class, 2nd semester of School Year 2015-2016. Those who are enrolled in Sunday and week night classes are no longer included in this research. Those who were available during the class hours of 7am to 5am were included in this research. These classes were composed of three (3) MBA sections who were present during the conduct of the survey. The survey as a data gathering instrument was used in this research; it considered some criteria/areas of accreditation which are necessary in the school's operation and the point of view of the students were taken to assess physical facilities, faculty, library, and laboratories. To the researchers' view, the students' assessment or critique analysis is a more factual and reliable information that can be considered in any attempt to improve the services of the school/university as the students are the ultimate stakeholders and beneficiaries of all reforms and development of an institution, hence the conduct of this research.

The researcher made use of a descriptive research method approach. Descriptive research determines the existing condition and answers the question "what is". According to Calderon (1993), descriptive research is defined as the "purposive process of gathering, analyzing, classifying, and tabulating data about prevailing conditions, practices, beliefs, process, trends, cause and effect relationship, and then making adequate and accurate interpretation about such data with or without the aid of statistical treatment. Further, according to Franekel and Wallen (1993), descriptive studies described a given state of affairs as fully as carefully as possibly. The most common instrument and the data gathering techniques used in the descriptive method are the questionnaire, interview, observation, and documentary analysis.

Further, a focus group discussion was executed to gather some inputs from the students in the graduate education areas/services that needs to be assessed, hence, mixed method approach was used. Specifically, the students enrolled in the Master's in Public Administration (MPA) class were asked to consider areas for assessment with four specific areas for critique analysis. In the focus group discussion, the MPA students considered the importance of assessing the following: safety and security, graduate school faculty members, facilities in the graduate school Mabini Campus and the Learning Management Systems. In the process of determining these items through a focus group discussion, students were likewise asked to come up with specific items under each areas of critique analysis, resulting with the questionnaire used to gather

student data from an MBA class. After gathering inputs from the MPA students, the entries in the questionnaire were subjected to authority judgement and content validation by two subject experts in the graduate then all their inputs were considered in the final questionnaire. The final questionnaire were then constructed in positive statements. However, to be able to validate some entries in the questionnaire, some negative statements were incorporated in the final questionnaire. All the necessary protocol were followed before the questionnaires were floated. Given that qualitative and quantitative research were employed through the focus group discussion and survey questionnaire, the researcher employed Mixed Method research techniques.

Objective of the Study

This study aimed to gather an objective critique assessment of the PUP Graduate School Services, Mabini Campus through students in the MBA program. It specifically provided the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender, civil status and employment position. Also, it provided a critique assessment of the graduate school services of PUP in terms of safety and security, faculty members, facilities and learner management system.

The primary objective of quality assessment is the continuous improvement in the quality of educational experience being offered by the graduate programs. Hence, quality assessment should be informed by the fundamental commitment of graduate programs to achieve the best outcome for the individual student which will only become effective when faculty, in close consultation with students as the fundamental stakeholders, play the primary role in designing or refining assessment procedures. Further, regular review processes should be used to sustain and advance quality in graduate education using benchmarks derived from comparable programs at peer institutions. An additional key benefit of quality assessment is to inform internal and external stakeholders of the quality and the relevance of the educational experience. Sharing the goals and outcomes of assessment with all relevant stakeholders, including the public, helps ensure that assessment efforts are understood and valued, henceforth the publication of this research.

Focus Group Discussion

To be able to come up with a good questionnaire, twenty students from the Masters in Public Administration program were invited for a focus group discussion to get input concerning the things they think should be assessed as students enrolled in the PUP Graduate School, Mabini Campus. Those who formed part of the FGD composed of one class in the MPA program which is 20% of the total number of respondents. Those in the Sunday classes, week nights and off-campus MPA students as well as those enrolled in the PUP Open University were not considered in this research. Guide questions were formulated and were given to the students to assist them in their assessment. Focus group members were specifically given four (4) different types of services in the graduate school to be assessed, such as safety and security, faculty members, facilities and learner management systems; their inputs were then considered as part of the simple survey using Likert Scale technique with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. The extent of agreement and

disagreements to the statements were used as verbal interpretation in the survey questionnaire to be able to fully determine their perception of the respondents on how the services in the graduate school were felt, experienced or otherwise.

The Profile of the Respondents

The respondents of this research were generally Masters in Business Administration students enrolled during the first semester of School Year 2016-2017. Sixty students were randomly selected to respond to the simple survey. The profile of the respondents is as follows: female dominated which is about 60%, generally single or 70%, majority are in rank and file position which is about 60%.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the mean distribution of the respondents' assessment on PUP Graduate School's safety and security. As seen in the said table, *the sufficiency in the number of security guards who ensures the safety of the stakeholders* obtained the highest mean score of 4.22 which is verbally interpreted as "strongly agree". All the other items in the safety and security were rated by the respondents as "agree" which includes (from highest to lowest mean) *the presence of fire exit, fire extinguisher, etc. which are to be used in case of emergency purposes* with a mean score of 4.05; *the readiness of the university clinic and ambulance in case of emergency* with a mean score of 3.93; *visibility of CCTV cameras and surveillance cameras in the campus* with a mean score of 3.82 and *the observance of the security guards of proper protocol in inspecting the people that gets into the campus* with a mean score of 3.70.

Table 1. Mean Distribution of the Respondents' Assessment on PUP Graduate School's Safety and Security

Items in the Safety and Security	Mean	Verbal interpretation
1. There are enough of security guards to ensure the safety of the stakeholders	4.22	Strongly Agree
2. There are CCTV and surveillance cameras in the campus	3.82	Agree
3. The guards observe the proper protocol in inspecting the people that gets into the ingress and egress of the campus	3.70	Agree
4. There are fire exit, fire extinguisher, etc. to be used in case of emergency	4.05	Agree
5. The university clinic and ambulance are ready in case of emergency	3.93	Agree
OVERALL WEIGHTED MEAN	3.94	AGREE

Generally, the MBA student respondents "agree" on all the items indicated in the safety and security of PUP graduate school with an overall mean score of 3.94.

One quality indicator in graduate education is to have a relatively high student satisfaction with regards to security and access to school facilities. When students feel safe and secure in an educational facility, the learning process is enhanced.

Table 2. Mean Distribution of the Respondents' Assessment on PUP Graduate School's Faculty Members

Items in the Faculty Members	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Faculty members have the necessary qualifications	4.12	Agree
2. Faculty members do not adhere to the original schedule of classes	3.0	Neutral
3. Faculty member uses various teaching strategies	4.02	Agree
4. Faculty members are professional and ethical in their dealings to students and colleagues	4.22	Strongly Agree
5. Faculty members are abreast on recent development in their field of specialization	4.17	Agree
OVERALL WEIGHTED MEAN	3.91	AGREE

Table 2 shows the mean distribution of the respondents' assessment on PUP graduate school's faculty members. The *sense of professionalism and ethical standards exhibited by the faculty members to student and colleagues* obtained the highest mean score of 4.22 which is described as "strongly agree". The statement that the *faculty members do not adhere to the original schedule of classes* given to them in the PUP graduate school obtained the lowest mean score of 3.0 which is verbally interpreted as "neutral". The result implies that since classes in the graduate are done in a conventional and structured way there is no effective way of conducting classes but to do it traditionally using face to face technique following the usual schedule given to them. It is essential that faculty members conduct classes on a regular basis since it is only done on a once a week meeting. Also, the result could be attributed to the fact that some faculty members are also teaching in an Open University System of PUP, hence may somewhat mix the method to an open learning system or self-directed/self-paced methodology. This findings require immediate attention of administration of the graduate school so as not to short change the quality of teaching-learning processes.

The following were rated by the MBA students as "agree" (in the order of preference, highest to lowest mean) *faculty members are abreast with the recent development in their field of specialization* with an overall mean score of 4.17; *faculty members have the necessary qualification* with a mean score of 4.12; and *faculty members uses various teaching strategies* with a mean score of 4.02.

While there is one neutral result on faculty assessment, it garnered an overall mean score of 3.91 which is verbally described as "agree". Specifically the respondents expressed agreements on the following: *faculty members are qualified, employs several teaching strategies, they professional and ethical and abreast with recent development*. The findings is also supported by the report of the FGSR (2017) of the University of Alberta that one of the goals of graduate education is to provide high quality training environment for graduate students and this can only be attained if faculty members are of high quality. In addition, the Philippine commission on Higher Education in their policies, standards and guidelines (PSGS) about graduate education, an emphasis was made on high calibre faculty members for the graduate school.

The Rackham Graduate School, University Of Michigan (2015) recognized that *faculty members' play a crucial role in the success of graduate students at the*

graduate school. Faculty members should mentor their students as it supports the students' achievement in research activity, conference or paper presentation, publication, pedagogical skill, and grant writing. The knowledge that someone is committed to their progress, who can provide solid advice and be an advocate, can help to lower stress and build confidence.

A study by Chen, Lattuca, and Hamilton (2008) found that what faculty do in their programs and courses, both inside and outside of the classroom, might influence student engagement. And since student engagement is a function of faculty engagement, faculty members in general influences the quality of student learning. Hence, the commitment of faculty members in the graduate school to provide valuable, effective and responsive teaching-learning processes are necessary for the effective delivery of graduate education.

Table 3. Mean Distribution of the Respondents' Assessment on PUP Graduate School's Facilities

Items in the Facilities	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Classrooms are conducive for learning	4.02	Agree
2. Proper waste disposal are being observed in the campus	3.73	Agree
3. The university library, clinic and laboratory facilities are always available for the students	3.67	Agree
4. Classrooms are equipped with LCD projector, monitors/smart TV, among others	3.50	Agree
5. Other facilities are not enough to cover the number of students, e.g. case room, IT research room, etc.	3.05	Neutral
OVERALL WEIGHTED MEAN	3.59	AGREE

Table 3 exhibits the mean distribution of the respondents in terms of their assessment on PUP graduate school's facilities. As shown in Table 3, all the items included in the facilities were rated by the respondents as "agree" except for one. The respondents gave a "neutral" rating or assessments on "the other facilities are *not enough to cover the number of students, case room, IT research room, etc.*", implying that the MBA students are generally satisfied with the number of facilities in the PUP graduate school in relation to the number of students. The student respondents expressed agreement *on the statement classroom are conducive for learning* which obtained the highest mean score of 4.02. All the other items were rated by the respondents as "agree" such as proper waste disposal, availability of library, clinic and laboratory facilities. As a whole, the respondents rated the PUP graduate school facilities as "agree" with an overall mean score of 3.59, suggesting the MBA students are generally happy or satisfied with the facilities of the said university.

These findings find similarities in the study made in the University of Alberta. When more than 1800 graduate students were asked to rate the university resources based on the quality they have experienced, it was revealed that research laboratories, student counselling/resource centre and information technology services obtained a mean score of 3.66, 3.40 and 3.62, respectively which are among the highest mean obtained among the 19 items listed in their questionnaire (University of Alberta, 2013). Verily, assisting graduate students in gaining access to required school facilities and research materials ensures

graduate school completion and success, leading to a lower attrition rate and greater number of graduating students.

Table 4. Mean Distribution of the Respondents' Assessment on PUP Graduate School's Learner Management System (LMS)

Learner Management System	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Learner Management System (LMS) are accessible to the students anytime and anywhere for viewing of grades, requirements and other purposes	4.22	Strongly Agree
2. The LMS of the graduate school of PUP regularly encounters a system malfunction	4.03	Agree
3. The LMS of the University is user-friendly and hassle free	4.07	Agree
4. The learning packages (or modules) are also made accessible in the LMS	4.05	Agree
5. The LMS provides convenience to all the students transacting in the graduate school of PUP	4.10	Agree
OVERALL WEIGHTED MEAN	4.09	AGREE

Table 4 shows the mean distribution of the respondents in terms of their assessment in the learner management system (LMS) of PUP graduate school. Of the five items included in this part of the survey questionnaire *the accessibility of the LMS* obtained the highest mean score of 4.22 which is interpreted as 'strongly agree'. The convenience the LMS providing students user-friendly and hassle free availability of learning packages in the LMS were rated as "agreed" by the respondents. This means that the students are generally satisfied with the benefits and presence of LMS.

However, the result that the respondent expresses agreement on the "malfunctioning" of the LMS on a regular or frequent basis is alarming. This result should be given much attention by the administrators of PUP graduate school to be able to address this problem. The fact that the respondents expressed agreement to this statement requires immediate attention by the administrators.

Krogman (2014) identified the following aspects necessary to improve the quality of LMS: 1. Provide early guidance to graduate students to increase graduate success; 2. Increase accountability of supervisors and departments for good supervision; 3. Provide training and mentorship to supervisors and graduate coordinators to raise standards of supervision and mentorship; 4. Improve the culture of mentorship by continuing to provide, and provide more, forms of guidance to graduate students.

Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) identified evidence that suggest faculty attitudes and behaviours create a culture that emphasizes best practices in undergraduate education. Faculty practices (e.g., active learning, higher-order cognitive activities) create an environment that is connected to student engagement behaviours, student perceptions of the environment, and student self-reported gains.

Table 5. Summary of the MBA Students' Critique Assessment on PUP Graduate School's Services

Items in the PUP Graduate School's Services	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Safety and Security	3.94	Agree
2. Faculty Members	3.91	Agree
3. Facilities	3.59	Agree
4. Learner Management System (LMS)	4.09	Agree
OVERALL WEIGHTED MEAN	3.88	AGREE

Table 5 shows the summary of the MBA students' critique assessment on the services of PUP graduate school. In the order of preference by the respondents the following were rated "agree" (from highest to lowest) LMS with a mean score of 4.09; safety and security with a mean score of 3.94, faculty members with a mean score of 3.91 and finally, facilities with a mean score of 3.59. As a whole, the respondents agreed to all the services of the PUP graduate school which obtained an overall mean score of 3.88. This result indicates that the respondents are generally satisfied with the services of the PUP graduate school. While the result of the critique assessment is high, the graduate school should still strive to provide the best services to its ultimate beneficiaries and clientele – the students. There should be continuous improvement on the safety and security, faculty members, facilities and LMS especially in the items that were rated to be neutral.

Conclusion

Results of analysis revealed that the Level III accreditation, one of the highest accreditations any program in a University can attain, validates the high standards of quality that PUP graduate school exhibits. Whether the critique assessment would come from the AACUP assessors, accreditors, or the students, the result would reveal one result – PUP graduate school epitomizes efficiency and effectiveness in its systems and processes, as evidenced by the agreement of the MBA students in all the four services. Its responsiveness to the students' needs and its goal of aiding them in their learning processes realizes the goal of providing quality graduate education.

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