

# Tracer Study and Program Assessment of NEUST Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration Graduates (2020–2025): A Comprehensive Analysis

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**Abstract.** This study presents the tracer results and program assessment of the Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration (PhD–PA) program offered by the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST). A total of 35 graduates from 2020 to 2025 were surveyed to evaluate demographics, employment profiles, motivations for pursuing advanced studies, competencies acquired, and program relevance. Findings indicate that graduates are largely employed in professional and government sectors, with the program contributing significantly to their professional growth, research capability, and leadership skills. Results further highlight areas for curriculum enhancement, including emerging topics in governance, technological fluency, and internationalization. This tracer study provides critical feedback for sustaining academic excellence and alignment with national development priorities.

**Keywords:** *Tracer Study, Program Assessment, Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration, NEUST*

## 1. Introduction

The evolving landscape of public administration necessitates continuous evaluation and enhancement of advanced academic programs to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of graduates in addressing contemporary governance challenges. Doctoral programs, such as the Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration (PhD PA), play a pivotal role in developing high-level competencies among public administration professionals, equipping them with advanced knowledge and skills essential for leadership, policy analysis, and public service innovation (Newman, 2020). To gauge the impact of such programs, tracer studies serve as vital tools that track the career progression, employment status, and professional development of graduates, providing empirical evidence on program outcomes and areas for improvement (Smith & Lee, 2021).

Tracer studies are widely recognized as a vital tool in assessing the effectiveness and relevance of higher education programs (Schomburg, 2016). By documenting the career trajectories, competencies, and perceptions of graduates, universities gain evidence-based insights for curriculum enhancement and institutional planning (Cuya, et al., 2020). In the context of Philippine higher education, tracer studies are mandated to ensure that graduate programs remain responsive to national development goals, governance challenges, and global competitiveness (CHED, 2019).

### Tracer Studies in Public Administration Education

Tracer studies are widely recognized as effective tools for evaluating graduate outcomes, curriculum relevance, and the overall performance of academic programs, particularly in fields such as public administration. These studies trace the career trajectories, employability, and professional experiences of graduates to provide empirical evidence for curriculum improvement and institutional accountability (López-Vargas, Contreras-Medina, & Muñoz-Carrillo, 2023).

Foreign research demonstrates the utility of tracer studies in aligning academic offerings to labor market demands. For instance, Chiche and Llorin (2019) conducted a tracer study on master's and doctoral graduates across Southeast Asia, finding that graduate survey data are crucial for curriculum development, skill matching, and institutional accreditation.

Salazar-Clemeña and Recla (2021) reviewed trends and challenges in Southeast Asian public administration education, highlighting the necessity of regular graduate tracking to ensure program effectiveness, especially in the context of evolving governance and administrative demands. In Turkey, Emin, Özdemir, and Gültekin (2022) found that tracer studies not only measure employability but also lifelong learning competencies and professional adaptability among graduates of public administration and related fields.

Locally, Almendras and de Guzman (2020) performed a tracer study on Philippine state university public administration graduates and revealed high employability rates in government and related sectors, as well as strong satisfaction with curriculum relevance and acquired professional skills. Similarly, Magsino (2020) identified curriculum gaps and proposed enhancements for Philippine public administration programs, emphasizing the direct link between graduate feedback and curriculum reform.

### Curriculum Relevance and Graduate Employability

Recent international studies assert that curriculum alignment with practical and contemporary public sector needs is paramount in graduate education. Brock and Atreya (2021) emphasized the importance of integrating theory and practice, noting that

curricula blending technical knowledge with experiential learning produce more competent and employable public administrators.

Palma and Dela Cruz (2019), in a comparative Philippine study, demonstrated that curriculum relevance significantly predicts employability, with graduates whose training matched sectoral requirements reporting better job outcomes and greater professional satisfaction. Their research advocates for continuous curriculum mapping in partnership with employers and public sector stakeholders.

### **Skills Development and Lifelong Learning**

Global scholarship highlights the significance of advanced skills and lifelong learning for public administration graduates. Su and Bui (2024) found that skills such as leadership, critical thinking, ethical governance, and adaptability are not only demanded by contemporary public service but are actively developed by graduate programs with responsive, updated curricula.

Locally, Magsino (2020) and Almendras and de Guzman (2020) surveyed Philippine graduates and reported that attributes such as interpersonal communication, public sector ethics, research skills, and leadership have a substantial impact on employability and career advancement—findings echoed throughout ASEAN contexts.

### **Program Assessment, Quality Assurance, and Continuous Improvement**

Foreign literature supports the integration of tracer study data into institutional quality assurance systems. Waluyo and Tanuwijaya (2022) assert that systematic program reviews, including feedback from tracer studies, help universities maintain curriculum relevance and improve graduate outcomes. López-Vargas et al. (2023) further recommend that universities conduct regular tracer studies as part of continuous improvement and accreditation processes.

In the Philippines, continuous curriculum improvement informed by graduate and employer feedback is emphasized by Magsino (2020) and supported by policy directives from regulatory bodies such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

The Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration (PhD-PA) of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) seeks to cultivate leaders, researchers, and policymakers who embody the principles of good governance, ethical leadership, and evidence-based decision-making. As the flagship graduate program in public administration in Central Luzon, NEUST's PhD-PA is expected to produce graduates capable of responding to local and international governance challenges.

This study presents a tracer investigation and program assessment of the PhD PA graduates of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) covering the years 2020 to 2025. It explores demographic profiles, motivations for pursuing

advanced studies, employment outcomes, curriculum relevance, and skill development. The research aims to assess the program's contribution to graduates' career advancement and its alignment with the demands of public administration practice. Findings are intended to inform curriculum enhancement, instructional strategies, and policy formulation to better serve the needs of future public administration practitioners in the Philippines. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) describe the demographic and employment profile of graduates; (2) determine the primary reasons and motivations of pursuing the PhD-PA program; (3) assess the relevance of the PhD-PA curriculum to their professional lives; (4) determine competencies gained; (5) evaluate the graduates' perceptions of the program's contribution to their professional growth and the attainment of program outcomes; and (6) identify areas for curriculum improvement.

The study intends to provide data-driven insights to improve the curriculum, instructional strategies, and support services of the program to better align with the needs of public administration professionals and the evolving demands of public service.

### Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in Human Capital Theory as articulated by Becker (1993), which posits that investments in education enhance an individual's productivity and employability by developing skills and knowledge that improve work performance and career advancement. In this study, the PhD PA program is viewed as an investment in human capital that equips graduates with advanced competencies essential for leadership, governance, and public service.

Additionally, the study draws on the Curriculum-Outcome Alignment Model (Spady, 1994), emphasizing that academic programs must align their curriculum with intended competencies and real-world professional requirements to produce graduates capable of meeting workplace demands. Evaluation of curriculum relevance, acquired skills, and employment outcomes serves as a measure of this alignment.

Finally, the Lifelong Learning Theory (Candy, 1991) underpins the recognition that ongoing education and professional development are critical for adaptability and sustained career success, especially in dynamic fields like public administration. Graduates' motivation for further studies and their perception of continuous learning contribute to this theoretical perspective.

### Research Paradigm

The research paradigm for this study is illustrated as follows: Input contains the demographic characteristics of graduates, reasons for enrolling in the PhD PA program, and pre-existing competencies; the Process has the PhD PA educational experience,

including curriculum delivery, exposure to academic and practical knowledge, and skills development; while the Output has the employment status, job relevance, professional competencies acquired, career advancement, and graduates' assessment of the program's effectiveness; and Feedback includes graduates' recommendations and suggestions for curriculum and program improvements to enhance future graduates' educational and professional outcomes.

**Figure 1**

### ***Research Paradigm***



This paradigm frames the tracer study as a dynamic evaluation of how educational inputs and processes translate into professional outputs and informs continuous program refinement.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive research design utilizing quantitative methods to conduct the tracer study and program assessment of the NEUST PhD Public Administration graduates from 2020 to 2025. The target population comprised all graduates within this period, with a total sample size of 35 respondents who provided complete data relevant to the study objectives.

Data collection was carried out through a structured questionnaire, developed based on validated tracer study frameworks from the Commission on Higher Education and

tailored to capture demographic information, reasons for undertaking the PhD program, employment status and history, job relevance, skill acquisition, and program relevance and assessment. The questionnaire was distributed online and included both closed and multiple-response items to comprehensively document graduate experiences.

Collected data were subjected to statistical analysis using frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations to present distribution patterns and central tendencies across key variables such as civil status, age, sex, employment type, and skill competence ratings. Multiple-response analysis was employed for items measuring motivations and skills development. Data presentation adhered to standard tabular formats for clarity and ease of interpretation. Quantitative results were supplemented with qualitative responses to enrich interpretation. The ethical considerations of confidentiality and voluntary participation were observed throughout the study.

## 2. Results and Discussion

The results of this tracer study highlight several important aspects concerning the demographic characteristics, motivations, employment outcomes, curriculum relevance and competencies and skills development, attainment of program outcomes, and recommendations for the enhancement of the NEUST PhD Public Administration program.

### Demographic Characteristics and Graduate Profile

The graduating cohort is predominantly married (74.3%), followed by singles (20.0%), with a small proportion separated or married but not living with a spouse, reflecting a mature and generally stable population. This suggests many pursued doctoral studies while managing family responsibilities. In terms of sex, female respondents comprise a significant majority (62.9%), while males account for 37.1% reflecting the increasing participation of women in public administration leadership and research. The distribution by age group indicates most graduates fall within the “40–49” and “50–59” age brackets (40.0% and 37.1% respectively), illustrating a largely mid-to-late career student profile while there are 14.3% graduates who are within “30–39” age group and 5.7% that belongs to “60 years old and above”. This suggest that the program is taken by young and senior age groups who believe that the program is relevant to their field of expertise. In general, the program attracts experienced professionals.

Geographically, the majority of graduates hail from Nueva Ecija (65.7%), with 17.1% from Aurora and 14.3% from Pangasinan, affirming the university’s strong regional influence, while a balanced distribution between city (42.9%) and municipality (54.3%) residences indicates diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Graduating years are fairly distributed

from 2020 to 2025, peaking in 2025 (25.7%) (Table 1). Further, approximately half of respondents (51.4%) received academic honors, 20% were cited as Best in Dissertation, and 2.9% received the Loyalty Award.

The predominance of married and middle-aged graduates, along with a higher proportion of female participants, reflects trends observed globally in public administration higher education where mature professionals, often balancing family responsibilities, pursue advanced degrees to enhance their career (Brown & Varghese, 2019). The local concentration in Nueva Ecija, with a balanced representation from urban and rural settings, suggests the program's strong regional relevance and accessibility, aligning with the goals of state universities to serve local communities (Almendras & de Guzman, 2020).

**Table 1**

Distribution by Year Graduated

Year Graduated	Frequency	Percent
2020	3	8.6
2022	7	20.0
2023	8	22.9
2024	8	22.9
2025	9	25.7
Total	35	100.0

### Motivation for Pursuing the PhD Program

The leading motivations for pursuing the PhD PA program are professional development (80.0%), career advancement/promotion (71.4%), and a strong passion for the public administration profession (62.9%) (Table 2). Additional influences such as role models, peer pressure, and compensation prospects were also significant. Other reasons include building confidence, interdisciplinary collaboration, policy impact, and personal growth. The combination suggests the program effectively addresses both career-driven and personal enrichment needs, critical for fostering engaged and competent public administration leaders.



**Table 2**

**Major Reasons for Enrolling in the Program (Multiple Response) (N=35)**

Reason	Frequency	Percent
For professional development	28	80.0
Prospect of career advancement/promotion	25	71.4
Strong passion for the profession	22	62.9
Inspired by a role model	12	34.3
Peer influence	6	17.1
Status or prestige of the profession	6	17.1
Prospect of attractive compensation	5	14.3
Multiple other responses		

When asked of the reasons they pursued advanced studies, 60.0% cited professional development and 37.1% both promotion and development. Other stated motivations included boosting confidence, collaboration, interdisciplinary learning, policy impact, personal growth, and public service commitment.

These motivations reflect intrinsic and extrinsic factors impacting adult learners within public service sectors, consistent with Knowles' Adult Learning Theory emphasizing relevance and immediate application (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). These intrinsic and extrinsic drives parallel findings by Salazar-Clemeña and Recla (2021) who report that motivation in public administration education often combines career pragmatism with a vocational commitment to governance and societal betterment.

### **Employment Outcomes and Professional Profile**

All graduates are working when they took the PhD PA program. Currently, nearly all graduates (88.6%) reported being employed and a large share found regular or permanent positions (88.6%) (Table 3) while 5.7% are contractual and 5.7% are already retired of service. The largest employment sector for graduates is higher education (State University and National Government Agencies, both at 28.6%), followed by professionals in various fields (45.7%), and government executives/managers (25.7%) (Tables 4 and 5). This underscores the degree's relevance and value in public sector career paths. Graduates commonly occupy professional and managerial roles (approximately 71.4%), confirming successful career advancement aligned with their educational attainment (Table 5)



**Table 3**

Present Job Status (N=35)

Employment Status	Frequency	Percent
Regular or Permanent	31	88.6
Contractual	2	5.7
Not Employed	2	5.7

**Table 4**

Type of Agency/Office Employed (N=35)

Agency/Office	Frequency	Percent
State University	10	28.6
National Government Agency	10	28.6
Department of Education	3	8.6
Local Government Unit	4	11.4
Uniformed Personnel	3	8.6
GOCC	2	5.7
Public Hospital	1	2.9
Private Sector	2	5.7

**Table 5**

Present Occupation (N=35)

Occupation Title	Frequency	Percent
Officials/Government, Managers, Supervisors	10	25.7
Professionals	20	45.7
Technicians	1	2.9
Special Occupation	2	5.7
Not Employed	2	5.7

Most respondents found their current jobs either through recommendations (51.4%) or as walk-in applicants (14.3%) (Table 6), highlighting the importance of social networks and proactive job-seeking strategies in this sector. The average time to employment is relatively short according to the graduates who sought their job after taking the program, supporting the program's role in enhancing employability. Further, job positions post-PhD indicate a small shift from managerial/executive roles (from 20.0%

to 14.3%) because the graduates already retire from service. However, there is an increase in professional/technical roles (from 62.9% to 65.7%) (Tables 7 and 8) reflecting the promotion experienced by the graduates after taking the PhD PA program. More than half (54.3%) reported job positions after graduation were promotions or changes, not the same as before their PhD PA.

**Table 6**

How Respondents Found Their Current Job (N=35)

Method	Frequency	Percent
Recommended by someone	18	51.4
Walk-in applicant	5	14.3
Information from friends	4	11.4
Response to ad	2	5.7
Seminar/Training	1	2.9
Not applicable	4	11.4

**Table 7**

Job Level Position Before PhDPA (N=35)

Level	Frequency	Percent
Managerial or Executive	7	20.0
Professional/Technical/Supervisory	22	62.9
Rank/Clerical	6	17.1

**Table 8**

Job Level Position After PhDPA (N=35)

Level	Frequency	Percent
Managerial or Executive	5	14.3
Professional/Technical/Supervisory	23	65.7
Self-employed	2	5.7
Same position	5	14.3

Most of the graduates (82.9%) chose to stay on their jobs due to salaries and benefits, followed by career challenge (54.3%), related to the course or program of study (51.4%), and proximity to residence (42.9%) (Table 9). Approximately 62.9% have been in their job within 6 to 30 years. This reflects the very competitive salaries and benefits of public offices compared to private, that increased motivations of government employees for job satisfaction.

**Table 9**

Reasons for Staying on the Job (Multiple Response) (N=35)

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Salaries and benefits	29	82.9
Career challenge	19	54.3
Related to course or program of study	18	51.4
Proximity to residence	15	42.9
Related to special skill	13	37.1
Family influence	5	14.3
Peer influence	2	5.7
Flexibility of working hours	1	2.9

Employment data of the graduates demonstrate robust placement rates, with a large majority securing regular or permanent positions primarily within government sectors, including local and national agencies and state universities. This finding corroborates the effectiveness of the NEUST program in equipping graduates with credentials and skills highly valued in the public sector labor market (Palma & Dela Cruz, 2019). The reliance on recommendations and networking for job acquisition further illustrates the importance of social capital in public administration employment pathways (Brock & Atreya, 2021).

### Curriculum Relevance and Skills Development

All respondents (100%) affirmed the PhD PA curriculum relevance to their current positions (Table 10), indicating strong alignment between educational content and professional demands. Skill development ratings emphasize human relations (91.4%), critical thinking (88.6%), managerial/administrative skills (85.7%), and communication (82.9%) as top competencies nurtured by the program (Table 11). Such competencies are essential for effective governance and leadership in public administration (Osborne, 2020).

**Table 10**

Curriculum Relevance to Current Job (N=35)

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	35	100.0

**Table 11**

Key Competencies Developed through the Program (Multiple Response)

Skill	Frequency	Percent
Human Relations/People skills	32	91.4
<b>Table 11 (continued)</b>	31	88.6
Critical Thinking skills		
Managerial/Administration	30	85.7
Communication	29	82.9
Problem-solving/Research	28	80.0
Entrepreneurial skills	7	20.0
Information Technology	8	22.9

Notably, mean scores for learning efficiency ( $M=3.80$ ), personality development ( $M=3.80$ ), and academic profession ( $M=3.74$ ) indicate “Very High Contribution” per verbal description scales, with critical thinking and communication skills close behind (see Table 12). The mean ratings on the program’s contribution reaffirm very high contributions to academic profession, research capability, learning efficiency, personality development, and problem-solving skills, corroborating the program’s comprehensive educational impact. Lesser contributions in IT skills and international exposure point to targeted areas for enhancement.

Universal affirmation of curriculum relevance underscores a strong alignment between program content and professional requirements. Notably, the development of human relations, critical thinking, managerial, and communication skills resonates with competencies essential for contemporary public administration, including leadership, policy analysis, and stakeholder engagement (Osborne, 2020). However, the relatively lower emphasis on information technology skills and international exposure suggests areas requiring curricular strengthening to meet global public sector trends (Emin, Özdemir, & Gültekin, 2022).

**Table 12**

**Mean Ratings of Contribution of PhD PA Program to Skills and Outcomes (N=35)**

Competency	Mean	SD	Description
Academic Profession	3.74	0.44	Very High Contribution
Learning Efficiency	3.80	0.41	Very High Contribution
Personality Development	3.80	0.47	Very High Contribution
Communication Skills	3.74	0.51	Very High Contribution
Critical Thinking	3.74	0.44	Very High Contribution
Problem Solving and Analytical Skills	3.71	0.46	Very High Contribution
Research Capability	3.66	0.48	Very High Contribution
Technical (e.g., IT) Skills	2.89	0.68	High Contribution
Exposure to International Community within the Field of Specialization	2.86	0.77	High Contribution

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 – Very High Contribution, 2.51 – 3.25 – High Contribution, 1.76 – 2.50 – Fair Contribution, 1.00 – 1.75 Poor Contribution

### Program Outcome Achievements

There is strong consensus (Grand Mean =3.9, “Strongly Agree”) that the program develops ethical, skilled leaders committed to good governance, lifelong learning, and innovative evidence-based solutions (Table 13). These findings illustrate the program’s effective fulfilment of its mission to prepare culturally sensitive and competent public administration leaders.

High ratings in ethical leadership, good governance commitment, lifelong learning, and innovative problem-solving signify the program’s success in fostering holistic public administration professionals capable of responding to complex societal challenges. This aligns with the principles of Human Capital Theory, wherein investment in advanced education translates into greater productivity and leadership capacity (Becker, 1993).

**Table 13**

**Mean Ratings for Perceived Achievement of Program Outcomes (N=35)**

Outcome	Mean	SD	Description
1. Ethical leadership skills	3.91	0.28	Strongly Agree
2. Commitment to good governance	3.91	0.28	Strongly Agree
3. Lifelong learning and policy application	3.89	0.32	Strongly Agree
4. Evidence-based solutions, innovation	3.89	0.32	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	3.90	0.27	Strongly Agree

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree, 2.51 – 3.25 – Agree, 1.76 – 2.50 – Moderately Agree, 1.00 – 1.75 Strongly Disagree

Further, the respondents “Strongly Agree” (Grand Mean~3.90) that the program achieves its educational objectives (Table 14). The highest is on providing Further insights on ethics, values and accountability in public service (M=3.91) while the rest of the

objectives received a Mean of 3.89 (“Strongly Agree”). This suggests that, the program is effective in attaining its objectives, particularly in strengthening the capabilities of students in leadership and governance, enhancing the graduates’ competencies through holistic development programs and projects in local, regional, national and international levels. Lastly, the program intensifies researches in public administration that will contribute to development/management, fiscal and public policy and program development and administration.

**Table 14**

Mean Ratings for Perceived Achievement of Program Educational Objectives (N=35)

Program Educational Objectives	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Description
			Strongly Agree
1. Strengthen the capabilities of students in leadership and governance	3.89	0.32	
<b>Table 14 (continued)</b>			
2. Enhance competencies in the conceptualization and administration of holistic development programs and projects in local, regional, national and internalization levels.	3.89	0.32	Strongly Agree
3. Deepen understanding of pertinent governmental policies, systems and procedures.	3.89	0.32	Strongly Agree
4. Provide Further insights on ethics, values and accountability in public service	3.91	0.28	Strongly Agree
5. Intensify researches in public administration that will contribute to development/management, fiscal and public policy and program development and administration.	3.89	0.32	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	3.89	0.26	Strongly Agree

Note: 3.26 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree, 2.51 – 3.25 – Agree, 1.76 – 2.50 – Moderately Agree, 1.00 – 1.75 Strongly Disagree

## Recommendations for the Enhancement of the NEUST PhD PA Program Curriculum

Using Thematic Analysis, graduates’ recommendations converge on several thematic areas crucial for evolving the PhD PA program:

### 1. Curriculum Modernization and Expansion

Graduates call for integrating contemporary and specialized courses addressing emerging public administration issues including e-governance, climate change policy, public sector innovation, AI fluency, diplomacy, and international relations. This reflects the need for a curriculum that adapts to evolving global and local governance challenges (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

## 2. Flexible and Accessible Learning Modalities

Proposals emphasize enhancing accessibility through open university systems and flexible, blended teaching/learning approaches, catering to adult learners and working professionals. Such modalities facilitate lifelong learning and widen program reach (Berge & Huang, 2004).

**Table 15**

Graduates Recommendation to Enhance PhDPA Program Curriculum (N=35)

1. Enhances accessibility and flexibility for adult learners and public servants.
2. Add specialized courses on emerging issues such as e-governance, climate change policy, and public sector innovation.
3. Continue the best practices in teaching better public service delivery and upholding the mantra of public service accountability among government workers.
4. Encourage dual-degree pathways or certified add-ons, incorporate international public service immersion, and partner with COA and CSC for field modules on transparency and accountability.
5. Enhance current curriculum. Exposure of students to the best practices of LGUs, GOCCs and NGAs

**Table 15 (continued)**

6. Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, International Politics and Humanitarian Diplomacy, Economics and Foreign Trade
7. Immediate feedback from dissertation adviser.
8. Immersion, tour, learning exposure with government agencies, Senate, Congress etc,
9. Integrate local governance challenges and best practices, especially from LGUs in Central Luzon, to contextualize theories and strategies.
10. International relations and diplomacy, humanities and diplomatic affairs
11. Merge subjects
12. More on AI Fluency
13. NEUST may also outsource professors (part time or full time) from other state universities, institutions, private organization and government agencies to maintain interdisciplinary leadership.
14. Nothing more just sustain and more research for improvement
15. Secure the services of reputable instructors that could help elevate the image and quality of instruction of the program/course and inspire other student professionals from enrolling in the different programs the university offers
16. The curriculum should be updated and reviewed frequently to guarantee relevance and impact.
17. Update
18. Upgrade to fully implement an Open University system that will cater to both local and international students
19. Use various teaching/learning strategies and tools that are freely available

## 3. Enhanced Practical Exposure and Partnerships

Recommendations include immersive experiences such as tours, internships, exposure to government institutions (e.g., Senate, Congress), and partnerships with agencies like Commission on Audit (COA) and Civil Service Commission (CSC). This experiential



learning enriches practical skills and professional networks, critical for career development (Kolb, 2014).

#### **4. Faculty Development and Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

Graduates suggest engaging reputable and diverse faculty from various institutions to sustain interdisciplinary leadership education, enriching knowledge exchange and instructional quality (Guthrie et al., 2018).

#### **5. Curriculum Review and Continuous Improvement**

Frequent curriculum updates and responsive feedback loops with graduates ensure academic offerings remain relevant and impactful. This aligns with quality assurance and program accreditation standards emphasizing stakeholder engagement (Harvey, 2004).

Overall, the tracer study results confirm the effectiveness of the PhD PA program in enhancing leadership, governance, and research skills. Graduates occupy professional, managerial, and executive positions across academic, government, and corporate sectors. Program contributions were rated 'very high' in areas such as critical thinking, communication, and personality development, though lower in IT and international exposure. These findings underscore the program's success in local governance capacity-building while signaling opportunities for global integration and digital skill enhancement.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The NEUST PhD-PA program remains relevant, impactful, and highly regarded by its graduates. The graduates' strong motivation for pursuing the PhD program centers on professional development, career advancement, and a deep passion for public service, underscoring the program's alignment with their career goals. Employment outcomes are favorable, with the vast majority employed in regular or permanent positions closely related to their field of study, confirming the relevance and effectiveness of the PhD curriculum. Graduates report significant enhancements in critical skills including human relations, critical thinking, managerial capabilities, and communication, all of which contribute significantly to their professional competence and leadership readiness.

The program's outcomes strongly meet the expectations for ethical leadership, governance, and lifelong learning, as evidenced by high satisfaction ratings and graduates' perceptions of curriculum relevance. Suggestions for curricular enhancement emphasize the importance of integrating emerging public administration issues, international perspectives, technological fluency, and practical immersion opportunities.

Overall, the program contributes meaningfully to producing capable public administration leaders who are well-equipped to serve local and global communities with integrity and expertise.

Continuous program development is necessary to maintain alignment with national and global governance demands. The following are recommended: (1) Curriculum Enhancement: Regularly update and review the curriculum to incorporate emerging themes such as specialized courses on e-governance, climate change, emerging technologies and innovation, and international diplomacy to maintain relevance and responsiveness to dynamic governance environments; (2) Practical Exposure and Collaboration: strengthen collaborations with local government units, national and international agencies for applied learning; (3) Expanded Learning Modalities: foster international linkages for research and student mobility; (4) Faculty Development and Interdisciplinary Expertise: Strengthen faculty qualifications by engaging reputable instructors and encouraging interdisciplinary leadership through collaboration with other academic institutions and organizations; (5) Enhanced Support Services: Provide timely and constructive dissertation guidance and expand career support services, including job placement assistance and professional development workshops; and (6) Continuous Feedback Loop: Establish a formal mechanism for continuous feedback from graduates, employers, and stakeholders to inform ongoing program development and ensure alignment with industry needs and standards.

Adopting these recommendations will fortify the PhD PA program's capacity to develop competent, ethical, and innovative public administration leaders committed to effective governance and public service excellence.

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