A TRACER STUDY OF PHD IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION GRADUATES: RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE PROGRAM

Jupeth T. Pentang[1,*] , Ronalyn M. Bautista[2] , Mary Jane D. Gamozo[2]

[1] College of Education, Central Luzon State University, Nueva Ecija, Philippines
[2] College of Education, Western Philippines University, Palawan, Philippines
Corresponding author email: jupeth.pentang@clsu2.edu.ph

Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of a PhD in Educational Administration program at a State University in Western Philippines through a tracer study, offering insights into the graduates' demographic and academic profiles, career alignment, and recommendations for improvement. The study employed a descriptive research design, collecting data from 19 non-randomly selected graduates based on availability. Data were gathered using an instrument based on guidelines from the Philippine Commission on Higher Education, with additional elements drawn from previous tracer studies. Analytical tools such as frequency counts, percentages, and arithmetic means were used to describe the findings. Results highlight that the PhD in Educational Administration program effectively serves mid-career professionals, attracting individuals from diverse backgrounds and helping them meet evolving leadership demands in educational administration. Graduates reported that the program equipped them with the necessary skills to excel in their current roles. However, they suggested several areas for improvement, including enhancing the program's accessibility and inclusivity. These recommendations are crucial to ensuring the program remains relevant, especially in preparing leaders capable of addressing modern challenges in education. This research provides new insights into the strategic role of tracer studies in shaping the future of educational leadership programs. It aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by proposing a continuous curriculum review, which ensures the program evolves alongside educational leadership trends. The study also underscores the importance of equipping faculty with current insights to strengthen the program's ability to prepare leaders for a dynamic educational landscape.

Keywords: Educational Administration, Employability, Graduate Program, Tracer Study, Quality Education

INTRODUCTION

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration graduates play a pivotal role in the ongoing shift within today's educational landscape. The program emphasizes the significant impact

individuals with a doctoral degree in educational administration can have on education. These graduates, equipped with advanced knowledge and expertise in educational leadership and management, are poised to contribute substantially to the transformations occurring in the academic field. Ensuring the production of high-quality graduates poses a challenge for higher education institutions (HEIs) that offer graduate school programs as they strive to provide pertinent training to meet the evolving needs of society in challenging times (Coman et al., 2020). This can be explained using Becker's Human Capital theory, which supports the view that education increases an individual's productivity (Becker, 1964). When applied to doctoral programs, this theory puts the role of HEIs in preparing the graduates with all that HEIs need to bring value to the workforce and academic institutions. The responsibility lies with HEIs to yield graduates who are not only of high quality but also competitive in the field (Pamittan et al., 2022) and to secure their employment (Bansiong et al., 2020). The value of higher education is contingent on its ability to offer prospects for future employment and establish a robust professional trajectory for graduates (Rojas & Rojas, 2016; Ali & Jalal, 2018; Kusuma, 2020; Caingcoy et al., 2021; Apeadido et al., 2024; Baah, Konovalov, & Tenzin, 2024). This is rooted in the understanding that a successful career is attainable only through appropriate education and training (Pentang et al., 2022). Undoubtedly, graduates' characteristics are crucial in shaping the curriculum of any university graduate program, influencing both local and global labor markets and contributing to the nation's economic development (Kankaew et al., 2021). Consequently, it becomes imperative to monitor graduates to evaluate their employability and the relevance of the know-how acquired during their academic years.

The Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) serves to track graduates' backgrounds. According to Schomburg (2016), GTS is described as a standardized survey conducted among graduates of educational institutions, typically post-graduation or training completion. The survey encompasses inquiries about study progression, the transition to the workforce, job entry, career development, application of acquired competencies, current occupation, and connections to the educational institution. Its widespread use extends to documenting a graduate's profile (Gines, 2014; Odame et al., 2021) and employment status (Pentang et al., 2022). Additionally, it is instrumental in gathering and analyzing data about a graduate's college experience, acquired skills, instructional quality, and its impact on employability (Saong et al., 2023; Tutor et al., 2019). GTS plays a crucial role in educational institutions, enabling them to adapt to societal changes, particularly the expectations of current and potential employers (Cañizares, 2015). It provides a realistic mechanism for obtaining reliable and timely inputs, ensuring educational institutions' human capital remains relevant and well-prepared for the dynamic job market (Reusia et al., 2020; Suwarni, 2021; Yohanie et al., 2023; Fitriana & Waswa, 2024; Nugroho et al., 2024; Zakiyah, Boonma, & Collado, 2024). The realization of graduates attaining their professional goals is a critical metric in implementing quality and relevant education. Furthermore, GTS facilitates the institutionalization and mainstreaming of quality assurance in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) operations (Badiru & Wahome, 2016).

HEIs find GTS studies advantageous. In this context, GTS is valuable to monitor and evaluate their graduates and program offerings. While Bok (2017) underscores the urgent need for research to enhance the quality of education, Schomburg (2003) emphasizes the critical role of graduate and employer surveys in assessing higher education output and outcomes. GTS emerges as a fitting tool to furnish valuable information for evaluating the results of education and training within a specific institution of higher education. It is recognized as one of the best tools for gauging program effectiveness and providing workplace relevance feedback (Sarsale et al., 2024). Data collection on labor market outcomes through GTS and research on labor market skills are identified measures to boost employability (National Commission for Further & Higher Education, 2016). Assessing the impact of curricular programs on graduates remains a research priority. Some have traced graduates of a doctorate in education programs (Balbon et al., 2023; Buenvinida et al., 2023; Gentova et al., 2023) however, no articles were found in the research locale extending it to the region. Besides, the articles found did not cover the recommendations of the graduates to improve the program, which this study tried to address by developing a framework.

In the dynamic landscape of educational leadership, graduate programs must evolve and adapt. This research seeks to initiate a tracer study that delves into the intricate professional development and global career trajectories of graduates from the WPU PhD in Educational Administration program. The analysis aims to provide an in-depth, multifaceted understanding of the program's long-term impact, strengths, weaknesses, and areas for enhancement. The WPU PhD in Educational Administration program has consistently demonstrated excellence in preparing education professionals for leadership

roles. Given the accelerating pace of global educational transformation, this study explores how the program's alumni navigate their professional journeys internationally and contribute to the broader global academic landscape. This research contributes to the program's ongoing evaluation and enhancement and provides insights into its alignment with international educational leadership standards.

The competencies for human capital development stress the significance of high-quality education and graduate preparation (Kankaew et al., 2021). In line with its pursuit of sustainable development, the Western Philippines University has been producing quality graduates for local and international employment. Bok (2017) wrote that academic institutions must reposition course offerings to help prepare students for the noble profession. Thus, a tracer survey was administered to the graduates to identify their status and use this as a reference to offer quality graduate education to future educational administrators. Besides, results may unveil crucial information on the employment status of the graduates and other related data on which the program guidelines and policies will be based to meet the community's needs. Furthermore, it may be used as a reference point for other graduate surveys to be conducted in the future.

This research is driven by the broadening gap between academic preparation and the demands placed on educational leaders in a post-pandemic, technology-driven, and constantly changing world. As the education sector undergoes overwhelming shifts accelerated by digital learning, new policy prospects, and global competition-there is an immediate need for PhD programs to produce leaders who can effectively navigate these changes. Without current data on how sound PhD EdAd graduates meet these evolving challenges, institutions risk falling behind in preparing graduates for leadership roles. The lack of region-specific studies further exacerbates this issue, making it critical to assess the relevance of the WPU PhD EdAd program in real-time, ensuring it continues to produce graduates capable of leading in today's rapidly transforming educational landscape.

With the preceding, the study traced the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration graduates from Western Philippines University - Puerto Princesa Campus graduates from 2014 to 2023. This tracer study attempted to determine employment features and measure the degree of the program's contribution that helped the graduates advance in their profession. Specifically, it aimed to determine the following: 1) Profile of the graduates in terms of age, gender, residence, civil status, and professional examination passed; 2) academic profile of the graduates in terms of year graduated, awards/recognitions, educational journey, and reason for taking the program; 3) relevance of the program with the graduate's current employment after completing the program, the extent of academic preparation to obtain the present position, competencies gained in the program instrumental to current jobs, and relevance of specialization [educational administration] to current employment; 4) graduates' ability to perform their current job based on the knowledge acquired from the program; and graduates' recommendations to strengthen the program.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study used descriptive research design to determine the relevance of the curricular program in terms of the current employment of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration graduates from Western Philippines University - Puerto Princesa Campus. Aggarwal and Ranganathan (2019) state that descriptive research helps look into phenomena and identify patterns or trends. In particular to the current study, this design was employed to profile the PhD graduates and how they perceived the program's impact on their current role as educational administrators while documenting their suggestions to advance the program.

Graduates from 2014 to 2023 served as the study's participants. Initially, total population sampling was employed (N = 24). However, only 19 available samples (n) comprised the study. Availability sampling is a technique of participant selection where the participants are picked based on their accessibility and voluntariness. The rationale behind this sampling technique was the limited population size of only 24. Besides, other graduates cannot be contacted or located physically (through their office, phone call, and text messaging) or online (via email and social media). The primary criteria for selecting these graduates were their profile as graduates of the program being evaluated and their availability to spare time and share information with the researchers.

The researchers first sought and obtained written consent from both the institutions where the majority of the graduates are employed and the graduates themselves. Following this, participants were provided with a survey questionnaire upon consent. For graduates employed outside the Department of

Education (DepEd), an online version of the survey was distributed via Google Forms to ensure broader participation for a month. Throughout the research process, the primary ethical consideration was maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants. Strict protocols were followed to protect personal information, ensuring no identifiable data were disclosed in the study results. Also, the abovementioned participants were adequately informed of their right to withdraw their participation whenever desired.

The study used a questionnaire patterned from the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED), which was also based on related studies (Cagasan et al., 2017; Bansig & Iringan, 2020; Andari et al., 2021; Andrin et al., 2022; Dela Cruz, 2022; Esparrago, 2022; Pentang et al., 2022; Sumande et al., 2022; Gentova et al., 2023). The instrument enquires about the graduate's demographic and academic profile, the program's relevance with the graduate's current employment, the graduate's ability to perform their current job based on the knowledge acquired from the PhD Program, and the graduates' recommendations to strengthen the program. Data obtained were computed using frequency counts, percentages, and arithmetic mean.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were ensured to achieve accurate and consistent measures of the research variables and objectives. Face validity consisted of evaluating and comparing the instrument's content to guidelines set by the CHED. To this end, the questionnaire was subjected to opinions from the educational administration experts to ensure it was well and adequately addressed. A pilot test was also administered to a sample of graduates from the population to improve the items, especially regarding clarity and reliability. Internal consistency was checked to determine the reliability and ensure they all measured the same construct: the relevance of the doctoral program in their current employment ($\alpha = .96$) and job performance ($\alpha = .93$). These measures included reviews by three experts all of which are PhD Educational Administration graduates and have served for more than ten years in the academe (one educational administrator, one educational researcher and data analyst, and one curricularist and test instrument expert) to ensure that the instrument used for research had enough validity and reliability.

The researchers explained the study objectives, the methodology used, and the participant's rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any given time. We secured collected data whereby only authorized personnel could access the information with participants' identities removed during analysis and presentations. Since we applied availability sampling, participants were selected when they were available and willing to participate, thus adding to the participants' autonomy. Furthermore, to ensure that participants were not harmed, the researchers ensured that the survey was well-developed and did not contain some leading questions that could be considered sensitive. The participants were also respected and not forced in any way, and equal treatment was given to all sexes. To uphold ethical considerations, the study was approved by an institutional review board to justify the ethical soundness of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Graduate's Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the participants unveils valuable insights into the characteristics of individuals who have pursued advanced education in educational administration (Table 1). Age. Notably, most participants fall within the Millennial and Gen X age groups, representing a cohort of individuals in the prime of their professional development. This aligns with the expectation that candidates seeking a PhD in Educational Administration would likely be mid-career professionals aspiring to ascend into leadership roles within the education sector. Consistent Wang and Degol (2017), individuals in this age bracket are frequently at the peak of their professional growth, pursuing higher degrees to increase their leadership capacities. The data clarifies that participants in these age brackets are likely driven by a desire to improve their skills and career prospects in a more competitive and challenging educational environment. This finding emphasizes the role of doctoral programs in addressing the demands of mid-career professionals by offering them what they need to lead in the education sector.

Gender, the gender distribution within the sample is particularly noteworthy, with females constituting a substantial 73.7%. Like Buenvinida et al. (2023) and UNESCO (2022), this finding sheds light on a potential gender imbalance in the field or could indicate a trend of increasing female representation in educational leadership roles, which merits further investigation within the broader context of educational administration programs. Understanding the gender dynamics within the program

may contribute to discussions surrounding gender equity and leadership diversity in academic settings. Nevertheless, the data exhibits that women are empowered in the educational administration, where they are given opportunities for professional development and prospects to educational administrators.

Residence. Geographically, participants are dispersed across three congressional districts, with District 3 having the highest representation (42.1%). This distribution may affect the program's reach and influence within specific areas, suggesting potential variations in educational leadership needs and priorities across different districts. Nevertheless, it proves that the PhD program has reached different districts across the province. This evenly reduces the bias in selecting the participants, even if available samples were considered. Analyzing these patterns could inform program adjustments to better cater to the diverse demands of educational leadership within distinct geographic contexts (Tutor et al., 2019).

Civil Status. Civil status data reveals that a substantial proportion of participants are married (78.9%), suggesting that the program attracts individuals with familial responsibilities and potentially unique considerations in pursuing advanced degrees. Akin to Buenvinida et al. (2023), this insight further explores the program's flexibility, support systems, and accommodations for individuals managing professional and personal commitments. This emphasizes the need to develop inclusive academic frameworks allowing married individuals to excel in their PhD studies while maintaining family duties.

Professional Examination Passed. All 19 participants in the study have successfully passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers, underscoring a foundational alignment with the program's focus on educational administration. The fact that all participants have attained this licensure demonstrates a fundamental commitment to the teaching profession. It serves as an indicator of their eligibility and readiness for advanced studies in educational administration. In addition, the participation of two individuals who have also completed the Civil Service Examination introduces an additional layer of diversity within the sample. This subset of participants may bring unique perspectives, experiences, and skill sets to the educational leadership landscape, potentially influencing the dynamics of the PhD in Educational Administration program. Possessing a Civil Service Examination qualification suggests a broader governmental or administrative context to their professional background.

Notably, the participants attended advanced studies regardless of their demographic background. This shows that their organization supported them in pursuing professional growth and development. The participants who engaged in professional development initiatives were backed up by positive and strong support from their institution. This highlights the crucial role of the organization in advocating career opportunities for their staff members, irrespective of their diverse demographic backgrounds.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of the graduate's demographic profile.

Demographic Profile Variables	f (n = 19)	%
Age		
Millennials (27-42)	10	52.6
Gen X (43-58)	8	42.1
Boomers II (59-68)	1	5.3
Mean = 43, min = 29, max = 63		
Gender		
Male	5	26.3
Female	14	73.7
Residence (Congressional District)		
District 1	6	31.6
District 2	5	26.3
District 3	8	42.1
Civil Status		
Single	3	15.8
Married	15	78.9
Widow	1	5.3
Professional Examination Passed*		
Licensure Examination for Teachers	19	100.0
Civil Service Examination	2	10.6

Academic Profile

Exploring the participants' academic profiles reveals several noteworthy patterns, providing valuable insights into the study's contextual landscape (Table 2). Year they Graduated. The temporal distribution of participants' graduation years reveals a distinct shift influenced by the global pandemic. A majority of participants (63.2%) completed their doctoral studies during the pandemic period (2021-2023), reflecting the resilience and adaptability of individuals committed to advancing their education despite challenging circumstances. There could also be the occurrence of a "relaxation of graduation standards" (Harris et al., 2024), which resulted in a higher graduation rate even with the pandemic. This temporal distinction may prompt further investigation into the impact of external factors, such as the pandemic, on educational pursuits and the dynamics of doctoral programs.

Awards/Recognitions (while studying/upon graduation). Regarding awards and recognitions, most participants (94.7%) did not receive any during their PhD journey, indicating that their pursuit of doctoral education was primarily driven by personal and professional development rather than external accolades. However, the presence of one participant who received a Principal's Award underscores the potential recognition of exceptional achievements within the program, showcasing the capacity of the PhD in Educational Administration program to nurture and acknowledge outstanding contributions. This showcased how the program attained the graduate attributes. Per Senekal et al. (2022), "the doctoral graduate attribute domains include knowledge, research skills, communication skills, organizational skills, interpersonal skills, reputation, scholarship, higher order thinking skills, personal resourcefulness, and active citizenship" (p. 1). This further confirms the Human Capital theory of Becker (1964), affirming that one's education contributes to success and productivity.

Academic Journey. Within the educational journey of these participants, a diversity of completion timelines is evident. A notable proportion completed the program within four years (47.4%), reflecting a balanced and efficient trajectory. Additionally, a substantial number completed the program in three years (26.3%), showcasing a commendable dedication to accelerated scholarly pursuits. The variation in completion times suggests a flexibility in the program's structure, accommodating its participants' diverse needs and paces. This can be related to a recent study in Australia showing that only two-thirds finished their doctoral studies on time (McDowall & Ramos, 2024), which is attributed to their preparation in finishing the program.

Reason for Taking the PhD EdAd Program. The motivations behind participants' enrollment in the PhD program offer further insights. A substantial majority (63.2%) undertook the program for professional development, emphasizing a commitment to advancing their expertise in educational administration. Meanwhile, a noteworthy proportion pursued the PhD for personal growth (26.3%), recognizing the program's transformative potential beyond professional considerations. Additionally, a smaller subset enrolled with the explicit goal of promotion (10.6%), indicating a strategic approach to career advancement through doctoral-level education. This supports Balbon et al. (2023) and Ward et al. (2023), where career advancement and personal fulfillment drive individuals to enroll in doctorate programs, and Gentova et al. (2023), where enrolling in advanced studies provides self-fulfillment and satisfaction.

The academic profiles of the participants reveal patterns influenced by the pandemic, with most completing their PhDs during this time. While few received awards, the majority pursued the PhD for professional development or personal growth. Completion times varied, with some finishing in three or four years. These data cover graduates before and during the pandemic; another study would be beneficial to support the results in a post-pandemic context and with a larger sample.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of the graduate's academic profile.

Academic Profile Variables	f (n = 19)	%
Year Graduated		
Pre-pandemic (2014-2019)	7	36.8
Pandemic Period (2021-2023)	12	63.2
Note: No graduation was conducted for 2020.		
Awards/Recognitions (while studying/upon graduation)		
None	18	94.7
Principal's Awards	1	5.3
Academic Journey		
3 years	5	26.3
4 years	9	47.4
5 years	5	26.3
Reason for Taking the PhD EdAd Program		
For Professional Development	12	63.2
For Personal Growth	5	26.3
For Promotion	2	10.6

Relevance of PhD EdAd Program with the Graduate's Current Employment

The data about the relevance of the PhD in Educational Administration program to participants' current employment provides illuminating insights into the program's impact on career trajectories and the acquisition of essential skills (Table 3). Employment after Completing the PhD Program. The majority of participants (63.2%) remained in the same academic rank or position following the completion of the program, while a substantial portion (36.8%) were promoted or reclassified to a higher position or rank. Though less than 40 percent were promoted, the result corroborates the idea of Horta et al. (2024), where individuals pursue doctorate degrees for career advancement. This dynamic suggests a dual influence of the program: reinforcing the capabilities of those already established in their roles and propelling others toward higher positions, indicative of the program's adaptability to a diverse range of professional goals.

Extent of Academic Preparation to Obtain Present Position. The perceived helpfulness of academic preparation in obtaining the present position reflects positively on the program, with 78.9% of participants finding the specialization in Educational Administration very closely related or closely related to their current employment. Accordingly, Bueno's study (2023) reported that success in academic performance among graduate students is related to their satisfaction with the services provided. This alignment emphasizes the program's efficacy in equipping participants with the knowledge and skills directly applicable to their professional roles.

Competencies Gained in the Program Instrumental to Current Employment. The competencies gained in the program that participants consider instrumental to their current employment encompass a comprehensive set of skills. Notably, communication skills (68.4%), human relation skills (63.2%), and critical thinking skills (63.2%) emerge as particularly influential. These skills are necessary in today's evolving work and education landscape (Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023). These competencies align closely with the demands of leadership roles in educational administration, affirming the program's success in imparting essential and highly applicable skills to its graduates.

Relevance of Specialization [Educational Administration] to Current Employment. Most (78.9%) graduates indicate that their field of specialization is relevant to their current work assignment, which may impact their job satisfaction, performance, and overall career success. This experience makes the graduates less likely to leave their current and future assignments (Lufiana, Oliobi & Loleka, 2023). Graduates can potentially use their acquired knowledge of educational policy, leadership, and administration in positions such as superintendent, principal, or supervisor, among other roles. This result reaffirms Balbon et al. (2023) that alums of graduate teacher education programs acknowledge the program's relevance and have shown satisfaction with their academic experience.

The PhD in Educational Administration program efficiently prepared graduates with the skills needed for their jobs, resulting in career growth, work satisfaction, and the relevance of their specialization to their present position. Indeed, graduates are the best indication of a program's effectiveness regarding employment, career progression, and promotions, which also provide vital input

to ensure the program's relevancy in today's job market (Abelha et al., 2020). However, a follow-up study would be necessary to verify these results, considering other measures to determine the program's relevance. Additionally, an interview may be conducted to validate the graduates' responses.

Table 3. Frequency distribution of the relevance of PhD EdAd program with the graduate's current employment.

Relevance of the Program to Current Employment	f (n = 19)	%
Employment after Completing the PhD Program		
Remained in the Same Academic Rank/Position	12	63.2
Promoted/Reclassified	7	36.8
Extent of Academic Preparation to Obtain Present Position		
Very Much Helpful	12	63.2
Much Helpful	3	15.8
Somewhat Helpful	3	15.8
Not Helpful	1	5.3
Competencies Gained in the Program Instrumental to Current Employment*		
Communication Skills	13	68.4
Problem-Solving Skills	11	57.9
Human Relation Skills	12	63.2
Critical Thinking Skills	12	63.2
Entrepreneurial Skills	4	21.1
Technical Skills	12	63.2
Information Technology	6	31.6
Relevance of Specialization [Educational Administration] to Current Employment		
Closely Related	15	78.9
Related	3	15.8
Slightly Related	1	5.3

*multiple responses

Graduate's Ability to Perform Current Job based on the Knowledge Acquired from the PhD Program

The data regarding graduates' abilities to perform their current jobs, derived from the knowledge acquired during the PhD in Educational Administration program, presents a comprehensive overview of the program's impact on practical skills and professional competencies (Table 4). Graduates reported a generally satisfactory level of proficiency across various indicators (Mean = 3.47), signifying the program's success in equipping them with essential workplace skills, which agrees with Hoque et al. (2023) and Kwarteng and Mensah (2022). Beyond preparing them for the workplace, this may also provide better opportunities and success in their career (Parcasio et al., 2024) as doctorate graduates.

Notably, graduates expressed high confidence (Mean = 3.63) in performing tasks required by their positions, indicating a healthy sense of competence fostered by the program. The very satisfactory (Mean = 3.63) ratings for working in and leading a team underscore the program's effectiveness in enhancing graduates' leadership and interpersonal skills, which are crucial for collaborative efforts within the complex landscape of educational administration. The academic program allowed graduates to flourish as educational administrators, allowing them to face the problems and opportunities in this field firmly. Along with Hilton and Pellegrino (2012), this is a manifestation of a work and life-ready experience brought by the program. While graduates indicated satisfactory workplace adaptability (Mean = 3.47) and problem-solving and decision-making skills (Mean = 3.42), there may be opportunities for further refinement, emphasizing the importance of continuous improvement in these areas. The satisfactory rating for communication skills (Mean = 3.37), both verbal and nonverbal, suggests that the program has laid a foundation. However, there is potential for additional focus on honing these skills, which are paramount in educational leadership roles. Suarta et al. (2017) emphasized these skills as essential to the 21st-century workplace.

The positive self-assessment of graduates using ICT applications (Mean = 3.47) reflects the program's alignment with the contemporary demands of technology integration in educational administration. However, the satisfactory rating in research, innovation, and development (Mean =

3.32) indicates potential avenues for growth, highlighting an area where the program could enhance its emphasis on fostering research skills and innovative thinking. This reiterates the report of Pentang and Domingo (2024), where the faculty members handling PhD EdAd program have limited research and development backgrounds. Thus, they cannot impart research and innovation competency to the graduate students. Moreso, the satisfactory ratings in extension services and community partnerships (Mean = 3.42) signify graduates' perceived readiness to engage with external stakeholders and contribute to community development. The program is a vital asset for individuals looking to further their knowledge and abilities in educational administration. Nevertheless, the curriculum might be enhanced by developing research skills and innovative thinking. This prepares the graduates to support the research and innovation agenda of the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education.

Overall, these findings provide constructive insights into the program's strengths and areas for potential refinement. As the PhD in Educational Administration program continues to shape educational leaders, the results provide a solid foundation for curriculum evaluation and enhancement, ensuring its effectiveness in preparing graduates for the multifaceted challenges of academic leadership roles. However, the data in the table are the graduates' self-reported ratings. More research is required to confirm the findings and address the limited samples involved in the study. Their work behavior and perceptions towards their organization (Tan et al., 2021) may be considered if their academic experience influenced their current employment.

Table 4. Mean rating of the graduate's ability to perform current job based on the knowledge acquired from the PhD program.

Indicators	Mean	Qualitative Description
Workplace adaptability	3.47	Satisfactory
Problem-solving and decision-making skills	3.42	Satisfactory
Confidence to perform tasks required	3.63	Very Satisfactory
Working in and leading a team	3.63	Very Satisfactory
Verbal and nonverbal communication skills	3.37	Satisfactory
Use of ICT applications	3.47	Satisfactory
Research, innovation, and development	3.32	Satisfactory
Extension services and community partnerships	3.42	Satisfactory
Overall Mean	3.47	Satisfactory

Note: 3.51-4.00 = Very Satisfactory; 2.51-3.50 = Satisfactory; 1.51-2.50 = Unsatisfactory; 1.00-1.50 = Very Unsatisfactory

Recommendations to Strengthen the PhD EdAd Program

The recommendations for strengthening the PhD Educational Administration Program are multifaceted, aiming to enhance accessibility, align with educational trends, and ensure continuous improvement (Figure 1). To broaden accessibility, a focus on distance learning support is proposed, employing online platforms and virtual classrooms to accommodate students beyond Puerto Princesa. The introduction of blended learning options caters to diverse student needs while exploring the program's reoffering at the main campus, which aims to increase overall accessibility. Balbon et al. (2023) also mentioned having flexible learning modalities in graduate education programs, while AL-Momani et al. (2024) recommend integrating e-learning modules that can effectively facilitate instruction. Simultaneously, efforts to improve student recruitment and fortify faculty profiles are suggested, fostering a supportive academic environment. Aligning the program with current educational trends involves regular curriculum updates and technological integration.

Engaging in community outreach activities contributes to effective communication and societal impact. O'Meara (2008) and Parcasio et al. (2024) emphasized that graduate students need to engage with the community. Collectively, these recommendations form a comprehensive strategy for advancing the PhD Educational Administration Program, which better prepares educational administrators for their significant role in contributing to SDG 4 (Quality Education). This framework may be validated by soliciting feedback from graduate faculty members and current PhD EdAd students and subjecting it to evaluation against statutory and regulatory standards such as CHED Memorandum Order 15, series of 2019, AACCUP Accreditation, and Sustainable Development Goals, among other

standards. The institution may also consider benchmarking to improve this framework, where best practices from other Universities may be adapted, aside from establishing collaboration with them.
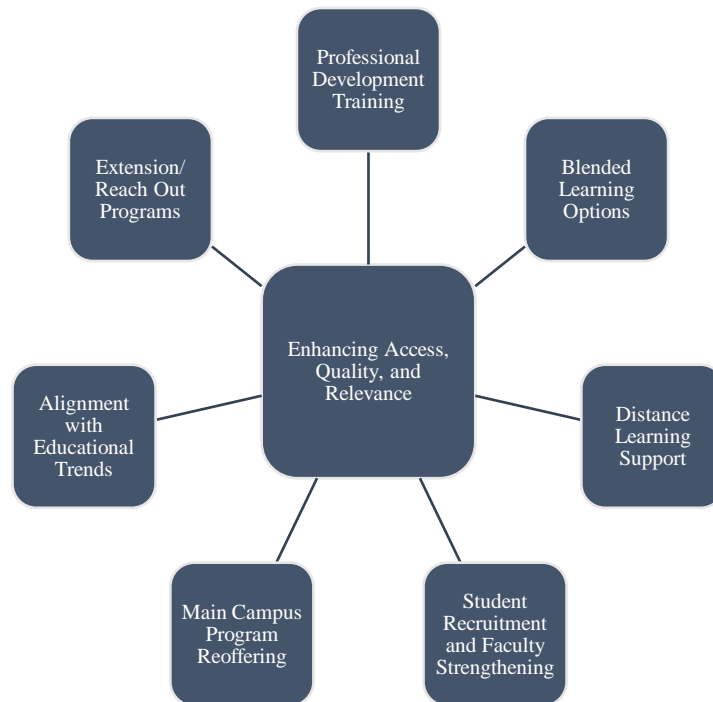

Figure 1. Recommendations to strengthen the PhD Educational Administration program.

CONCLUSION

The demographic characteristics, academic profile, relevance to current employment, and graduates' abilities collectively underscore the multifaceted success of the PhD in Educational Administration program. The program's appeal to mid-career professionals of diverse ages and genders resonates with the educational administration's evolving leadership aspirations and challenges. The adaptability and transformative potential of the program, evident in the varied completion timelines and intrinsic motivations of participants, showcase its ability to meet the dynamic needs of individuals in the field. Furthermore, the program's dual impact on reinforcing existing roles and facilitating career advancement, coupled with high perceived helpfulness in obtaining positions, highlights its tangible contributions to participants' professional trajectories. The acquisition of critical competencies closely aligned with the demands of leadership roles in educational administration reaffirms the program's efficacy in preparing graduates for the complexities of the field. This attests to the institution's commitment to strongly follow its mandate as regulated by CHED and accrediting bodies. Still, quality assurance must be taken to ensure the program's continual improvement and sustainability, along with its responsiveness to the demands of the local and global community.

Human Capital Theory emphasizes the role of education in productivity. This paper extends this theory by proposing that graduate education advances educational leaders' pursuit of quality education and relevant programs amid the challenges of changing times. While the program has demonstrated notable success, the data on workplace skills and areas for potential refinement provides valuable insights for continuous evaluation and improvement. Recognizing the importance of continual enhancement, recommendations to increase accessibility and align with educational trends present a strategic roadmap for further strengthening the program. These measures aim to uphold the program's relevance and inclusivity and foster ongoing excellence, ensuring that the PhD in Educational Administration plays a pivotal role in preparing adept and forward-thinking leaders for the ever-evolving landscape of educational leadership. An in-depth inquiry utilizing a mixed-method or qualitative research design may be conducted for future tracer studies to validate this study's findings and explore other areas to improve the program and its graduates.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

JTP: Conceptualization, Data Gathering and Analysis, Draft Preparation; RMB: Conceptualization, Data Analysis, Review and Editing; MJDG: Conceptualization, Review and Editing; VK: Review and Editing.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

Abelha, M., Fernandes, S., Mesquita, D., Seabra, F., & Ferreira-Oliveira, A. T. (2020). Graduate employability and competence development in higher education-A systematic literature review using PRISMA. *Sustainability*, *12*(15), 5900. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12155900.

Aggarwal, R., & Ranganathan, P. (2019). Study designs: Part 2 – Descriptive studies. *Perspectives in Clinical Research*, *10*(1), 34. https://doi.org/10.4103/picr.picr_154_18.

Ali, M., & Jalal, H. (2018). Higher education as a predictor of employment: The world of work perspective. *Bulletin of Education and Research, 40*(2), 79-90.

AL-Momani, M. O., AL-Momani, M. A. K., Hamadat, M. H., & Murtada, M. A. (2024). Distance e-learning and its impact on university education outcomes from the students' point of view. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Terapan Universitas Jambi*, *8*(1), 48-60. https://doi.org/10.22437/jiituj.v8i1.32116.

Andari, S., Setiawan, A. C., & Rifqi, A. (2021). Educational management graduates: A tracer study from Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia. *International Journal of Recent Educational Research, 2*(6), 671-681. https://doi.org/10.46245/ijorer.v2i6.169.

Andrin, G., Miñosa, K. & Salinas, J. (2022). Tracer study of St. Paul University graduate school and professional studies for 2015-2021. *European Scholar Journal, 3*(4), 2660-5562.

Apeadido, S., Opoku-Mensah, D., & Mensah, G. O. (2024). Enhancing science process skills and academic performance in biology: The impact of practical work. *Integrated Science Education Journal*, *5*(1), 34-41. https://doi.org/10.37251/isej.v5i1.854.

Baah, R., Konovalov, O., & Tenzin, S. (2024). Effectiveness of e-assessment in science learning: Improving the quality and efficiency of assessment in the digital era. *Integrated Science Education Journal*, *5*(2), 74-81. https://doi.org/10.37251/isej.v5i2.960.

Balbon, L., Beronio, D., Añavesa, J., & Hungo, M. O. (2023). Tracer study of the graduate teacher education programs. *Journal of Educational and Human Resource Development*, *11*, 37-57. https://doi.org/10.61569/qjatek77.

Bansig, I., & Iringan, E. M. (2020). A tracer study of the PhDEm graduates of Saint Paul University (SPUP). *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 10*(12), 101-108. https://doi:10.30845/ijhss.v10n12p13.

Bansiong, A. J., Cuevas, J. P., Alawas, D. E., Bokilis, A. B., Dolendo, R. B., & Parcasio, I. G. (2020). Motivation toward teaching and employment profile of the bachelor of secondary education graduates of Benguet State University. *Mountain Journal of Science and Interdisciplinary Research*, *80*(2), 72-90.

Becker, G. S. (1964). Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education. *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership Historical Research Reference in Entrepreneurship*.

Bok, D. (2017, September 21). Improving the quality of education. *Inside Higher Ed*.

Buenvinida, L. P., Manaig, K. A., Rodriguez, M. T. M., Salandanan, F. H., Buama, C. A. C., & Tamban, V. E. (2023). A tracer study of the doctor of education graduates in a state university in the Philippines. *Transactions on Engineering and Computing Sciences*, *11*(2), 82-89. https://doi.org/10.14738/tecs.112.14498

Bueno, D. C. (2023). Enhancing Graduate School Experience: A comprehensive evaluation of student satisfaction with services and facilities. *Institutional Multidisciplinary Research and Development Journal*, *4*, 1-22.

Cagasan, E., Dargantes, T., Florentino, N., & Lasquites, H. (2017). Tracer study of the graduate degree programs of the Visayas State University. *Science and Humanities Journal, 11*(1), 16-39. https://doi.org/10.47773/shj.1998.110.2.

Caingcoy, M., Ramirez, I. A., Gaylo, D., Adajar, M. I., Lacdag, E., & Blanco, G. A. (2021). Employment, employability, and competencies of the Bachelor of Secondary Education graduates. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, *7*(3), 872-884. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijres.2328.

Cañizares, M. (2015). Tracing University of San Carlos' science and mathematics education graduates: How well are we developing teacher professionals? *International Journal of Research Studies in Education, 4*(2), 69-86. https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2015.985.

Coman, C., Tiru, L., Mesesan-Schmitz, L., Stanciu, C., & Bularca, M. (2020). Online teaching and learning in higher education during the coronavirus pandemic: Students' perspective. *Sustainability, 12*(24), 10367. https://doi.org/10.3390/su122410367.

Dela Cruz, J. (2022). Tracer study of graduate school graduates of a state higher education institution in the Philippines from 2016 to 2020. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies, 10*(2), 149-154. http://dx.doi./org./10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.10n.2p.149.

Esparrago, M. (2022). Bicol College Ed. D. and Ph. D. graduates from 2012-2021: A tracer study. *JPAIR Institutional Research, 19*(1), 55-67. https://doi.org/10.7719/irj.v19i1.836.

Fitriana, H., & Waswa, A. N. (2024). The influence of a realistic mathematics education approach on students' mathematical problem solving ability. *Interval: Indonesian Journal of Mathematical Education*, *2*(1), 29-35. https://doi.org/10.37251/ijome.v2i1.979.

Gentova, C., Madrigal, D., & Bual, J. (2023). A tracer study of the graduates of education graduate programs 2018-2022 of the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos Graduate School. *Technium Social Sciences Journal, 47*, 77-101. https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v47i1.9512.

Gines, A. (2014). Tracer study of PNU graduates. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research, 4*(3), 81-98.

Harris, D. N., Chen, F., Martin, R. C., Bernhardt, A. F., Marsicano, C. R., & von Hippel, P. T. (2024). The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational attainment. *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences, 10*(1), 152-180. https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2024.10.1.07.

Hilton, M. L., & Pellegrino, J. W. (Eds.). (2012). *Education for life and work: Developing transferable knowledge and skills in the 21st century*. National Academies Press.

Hoque, N., Uddin, M., Ahmad, A., Mamun, A., Uddin, M. N., Chowdhury, R. A., & Md Noman Alam, A. H. (2023). The desired employability skills and work readiness of graduates: Evidence from the perspective of established and well-known employers of an emerging economy. *Industry and Higher Education*. https://doi.org/10.1177_09504222221149850.

Horta, H., Li, H., & Chan, S. J. (2024). Why do students pursue a doctorate in the era of the 'PhD crisis'? Evidence from Taiwan. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *78*(2), 505-522. https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12467.

Kankaew, K., Alanya-Beltran, J., Khamidullina, Z., Magulod, G. C., Jr, Capulso, L. B., Cabacang, G. S., Anh, V. T., Vela, L. A. P., & Pentang, J. (2021). Immediate program learning outcomes of information technology candidates and their introspections towards I.T. education relevance and global competence initiatives psychology and education. *Psychology and Education, 58*(2), 5417-5427. https://doi.org/10.17762/pae.v58i2.2953.

Kusuma, R. S. (2020). Improving students' basic asking skills by using the discovery learning model. *Tekno - Pedagogi : Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, *10*(2), 8-13. https://doi.org/10.22437/teknopedagogi.v10i2.32743.

Kwarteng, J. T., & Mensah, E. K. (2022). Employability of accounting graduates: Analysis of skills sets. *Heliyon*, *8*(7), e09937. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09937.

Lufiana, U., Oliobi, I., & Loleka, B. Y. (2023). The influence of entrepreneurship learning and career guidance on economic education students' entrepreneurial interest. *Journal of Social Knowledge Education (JSKE)*, *4*(4), 129-137. https://doi.org/10.37251/jske.v4i4.763.

McDowall, A., & Ramos, F. (2024). Preparation for doctoral research: A narrative review. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 51*(4), 1101-1119. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-023-00630-y.

Nugroho, N. E., Irianto, J., & Suryanto, S. (2024). A systematic review of Indonesian higher education students' and graduates' work readiness. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Terapan Universitas Jambi, 8*(1), 350-363. https://doi.org/10.22437/jiituj.v8i1.33073.

Odame, L., Osei-Hwedie, B., Nketsia, W., Opoku, M. P., & Nanor Arthur, B. (2021). University preparation and the work capabilities of visually impaired graduates in Ghana: a tracer study. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *25*(11), 1287-1304. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1609102.

O'Meara, K. (2008). Graduate education and community engagement. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 113, 27-42. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.306.

Pamittan, S. T., Caranguian, C. B., Andres, A. D., Saquing, J. B., Vecaldo, R. T., Tamayao, A. I., & Canay, P. C. (2022). Correlates of employability among the Bachelor of Technical Teacher Education graduates of a Philippine public university. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, *21*(4), 168-185. https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.21.4.10.

Parcasio, I. G., Dolendo, R. B., Langaoen, B. A., & Lubrica, P. A. (2024). Pathways to a successful career: Unveiling the postgraduate journey–A tracer study. *Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal, 5*(1), 129-143. http://doi.org/10.25273/she.v5i1.19223.

Pentang, J., Perez, D., Cuanan, K., Recla, M., Dacanay, R., Bober, R., Dela Cruz, C., Egger, S., Herrera, R., Illescas, C., Salmo, J., Bucad, Jr., M., Agasa, J., & Abaca, N. A. (2022). Tracer study of teacher education graduates of Western Philippines University - Puerto Princesa Campus: Basis for curriculum review and revision. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research, 3*(3), 419-432. https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.03.03.12.

Pentang, J. T., & Domingo, J. G. (2024). Research self-efficacy and productivity of select faculty members: Inferences for faculty development plan. *European Journal of Educational Research*, *13*(4), 1693-1709. https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.13.4.1693.

Rojas, T., & Rojas, R. (2016). College of Education graduate tracer study (GTS): Boon or bane? *European Scientific Journal, 12*(16), 63-78. https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n16p63.

Reusia, D., Rogayan, D. Jr., & Andres, K. (2020). Science education graduates of a state university from 2008-2018: A tracer study. *The Normal Lights, 14*(1), 56-79. https://doi.org/10.56278/tnl.v14i1.1496.

Saong, M., Bonifacio, J., & Gili, K. (2023). The role of higher education curriculum in the employability of health sciences graduates. *International Journal of Academe and Industry Research, 4*(3), 82-104. https://doi.org/10.53378/353009.

Sarsale, M., Garcia, C., & Uy, I. (2024). Dimensions of program relevance towards employment success: Evidence from a graduate tracer study using principal component analysis. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, *15*(1), 205-224. https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2024vol15no1art1895.

Schomburg, H. (2003). *Handbook for graduate tracer studies*. International Centre for Higher Education Research, University of Kassel, Germany.

Schomburg, H. (2016). *Carrying out tracer studies: Guide to anticipating and matching skills and jobs* (Vol. 6). European Training Foundation, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, and International Labour Office. https://doi.org/10.2816/938667.

Senekal, J. S., Munnik, E., & Frantz, J. M. (2022, October). A systematic review of doctoral graduate attributes: Domains and definitions. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 7, p. 1009106). Frontiers Media SA. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.1009106.

Suarta, I., Suwintana, I. K., Sudhana, I. F., & Hariyanti, N. K. (2017, September). Employability skills required by the 21st century workplace: A literature review of labor market demand. In *International Conference on Technology and Vocational Teachers (ICTVT 2017)* (pp. 337-342). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/ictvt-17.2017.58.

Sumande, C. T., Comuyog, M. L., Bactasa, M. F., Aribon, M. A., & Rural, J. D. (2022). A tracer study of graduate programs: Evidences of College of Education's commitment in transforming lives. *Journal of Positive School Psychology, 6*(4), 5074-5087.

Suwarni, R. (2021). Analysis the process of observing class iv students in thematic learning in primary schools. *Tekno - Pedagogi : Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, *11*(1), 26-32. https://doi.org/10.22437/teknopedagogi.v11i1.32717.

Tan, C. H., Kaur, H., Mary, A. A. S., Baluyot, M. B., Jimenez, M. D. D., Ventayen, R. J. M., & Pentang, J. T. (2021). How organizational climate mediates employee innovative work behavior among food manufacturing industries in COVID-19 pandemic: Implications to business economics and management. *Studies of Applied Economics, 39*(12). https://doi.org/10.25115/eea.v39i12.6031.

Thornhill-Miller, B., Camarda, A., Mercier, M., Burkhardt, J., Morisseau, T., Bourgeois-Bougrine, S., Vinchon, F., El Hayek, S., Augereau-Landais, M., Mourey, F., Feybesse, C., Sundquist, D., & Lubart, T. (2023). Creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration: assessment, certification, and promotion of 21st Century skills for the future of work and education. *Journal of Intelligence*, *11*(3), 54. https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence11030054.

Tutor, M., Orbeta, A., Jr, & Miraflor, J. (2019). *The 4th Philippine graduate tracer study: Examining higher education as the pathway to employment, citizenship, and life satisfaction from the learner's perspective.* Philippine Institute for Development Studies. https://www.pids.gov.ph/publication/research-paper-series/the-4th-philippine-graduate-tracer-study-examining-higher-education-as-a-pathway-to-employment-citizenship-and-life-satisfaction-from-the-learner-s-perspective

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2022). Global Education Monitoring Report 2022: Gender Report, Deepening the Debate on Those Still Left Behind. https://doi.org/10.54676/RCZB6329.

Wang, M., & Degol, J. (2017). Gender gap in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM): Current knowledge, implications for practice, policy, and future directions. *Educational Psychology Review*, *29*(1), 119-140. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9355-x.

Ward, A. M., Brennan, N. M., & Wylie, J. (2023, January). Enrolment motivation of accounting doctoral students: Professionally qualified and non-professionally qualified accountants. In *Accounting Forum* (Vol. 47, No. 1, pp. 99-122). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1080/01559982.2021.2001127.

Yohanie, D. D., Botchway, G. A., Nkhwalume, A. A., & Arrazaki, M. (2023). Thinking process of mathematics education students in problem solving proof. *Interval: Indonesian Journal of Mathematical Education*, *1*(1), 24-29. https://doi.org/10.37251/ijome.v1i1.611.

Zakiyah, Z., Boonma, K., & Collado, R. (2024). Physics learning innovation: Song and animation-based media as a learning solution for mirrors and lenses for junior high school students. *Journal of Educational Technology and Learning Creativity*, *2*(2), 54-62. https://doi.org/10.37251/jetlc.v2i2.1062.