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Graduate's Personal and Professional Impact Assessment: A Degree Program Sustainability Criteria

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Abstract. A degree program's sustainability could be based on the impact of a completed degree on a graduate's personal and professional development. The study aimed to determine the sustainability of the Master of Arts in Applied Statistics MAAS Program of Benguet State University regarding how the degree responds to the graduates' personal and professional developmental needs. The areas considered were knowledge-based development, skills development, attitude change, and task performance. All thirty-two-degree program graduates from 2001 to 2019 were the respondents of the study and a questionnaire was the main instrument used to gather data needed. Results showed that the extent of acquisition and utilization along the graduates' knowledge development, skills development, attitude change, and task performance ranged from much acquired or utilized to very much acquired or used, with improved quality of output as the topmost competency acquired and utilized while "improved communication skills" as the least. The extent of contribution along the graduates' knowledge development, skills development, attitude change, and task performance were considered many contributions, with improved quality of output as the topmost competency while improved communication skills as the lowest. The MAAS graduates considered earning the degree beneficial to their personal and professional development hence an important basis for the program's sustainability. Teaching methods and strategies should be focused on giving more opportunities for MAAS students to express themselves orally and in writing.

Keywords: Sustainability; Graduate tracer; Development; Graduate competency.

1.0 Introduction

Graduate employability is a key measure of the effectiveness of higher education programs. In today's competitive job market, universities must ensure that graduates possess technical knowledge and the skills and attributes necessary for career success. Employability is defined as a combination of skills, knowledge, and personal qualities that increase an individual's likelihood of securing and excelling in a profession (Moreland, 2006). Tracer studies have become an essential tool for educational institutions to assess the relevance of academic programs and their impact on graduates.

Tracer studies evaluate graduates' employment outcomes, career trajectories, and the relevance of their education to their professions. In the Philippines, universities conduct these studies to improve curricula, enhance student

support services, and align programs with labor market demands. Previous studies have explored graduate employability in various fields, including teacher education (Aquino et al., 2015; Gines, 2014), engineering (Dotong et al., 2016), and nursing (Sanchez & Diamante, 2017). However, most of these studies have focused on undergraduate programs, leaving a gap in research on graduate-level programs, particularly in applied statistics.

The Master of Arts in Applied Statistics (MAAS) program at Benguet State University-La Trinidad Campus has been offered for over two decades. Despite its long history, no formal tracer study has been conducted to assess the program's impact on its graduates' personal and professional development. Evaluating how the program has influenced graduates' knowledge acquisition, skills development, and career progression is crucial for maintaining high academic standards and ensuring program sustainability.

This study aims to assess how much the MAAS program has contributed to graduates' competencies in knowledge-based development, skills enhancement, attitude change, and task performance. The findings will provide valuable insights for curriculum development and accreditation processes by identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Furthermore, the results will serve as a basis for refining program offerings, ultimately benefiting future MAAS students by enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of their education.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized the descriptive quantitative comparative research design. A descriptive quantitative design was used since the study measured the level of acquisition, utilization, and contribution of the MA Applied Statistics Program of the Mathematics-Physics-Statistics Department to the graduates' personal and professional developmental needs, particularly, along the areas of knowledge-based development, skills development, attitude change, and tasks performance. The comparison was likewise done on the level of acquisition, utilization, and contribution of the MA Applied Statistics Program of the Mathematics-Physics-Statistics Department to the graduates' personal and professional developmental needs, particularly, along the areas of knowledge-based development, skills development, attitude change, and tasks performance compared to the average level.

2.2 Research Participants

The respondents in the study were graduates of the course Masters of Arts in Applied Statistics at Benguet State University. Total enumeration was done, and all thirty-two (32) graduates, from the first MAAS graduate of 2001 to the 2019 graduates, were respondents to the study. Of the 32 graduates (excluding one deceased graduate, there were 16 male and 16 female MAAS graduates. Table 1 shows that MAAS graduates come in trickles from their first one and only graduated in 2001 to the more recent year in 2018 and 2019, when five graduates each year were recorded. The number of graduates in the recorded fifteen years ranged from 1 to 5 MAAS graduates.

Table 1. *Distribution of MAAS Graduates According to their Graduation Year*

Graduation Year	Number of Graduates	Graduation Year	Number of Graduates
2001	1	2012	2
2002	2	2014	2
2003	1	2015	2
2004	1	2016	2
2005	2	2017	2
2006	2	2018	5
2009	2	2019	5
2011	1		

The distribution of MAAS graduates according to some employment details is presented in Table 2. For the kind of current employment, twenty-six out of the thirty-two graduates (81%) are working in public or government institutions, five graduates (16%) are employed in private institutions and only one graduate (3%) is self-employed. Based on job classifications, nineteen graduates (59%) are in the academe as Statistics teachers, seven graduates or 22% are in statistics-related assignments, four graduates work as non-teaching personnel in government agencies, and two graduates (6%) are in business. Of the thirty-two graduates, thirty-one or 97% are employed full-time while only one (3%) worked part-time.

Table 2. *Distribution of MAAS Graduates According to Employment Details*

Variables	Frequency (Percentage)
Kind of Current Employment	
Public/Government	26 (81%)
Private	5 (16%)
Self-employed	1 (3%)
Job Classification	
Academe (teaching Stats)	19 (59%)
Statistics-related	7 (22%)
Government (non-teaching)	4 (13%)
Business	1 (6%)
Employment Type	
Full time	31 (97%)
Part-timer	1 (3%)
Number of Years Employed	
31 – 35	2 (6%)
26 – 30	0 (0%)
21 – 25	4 (13%)
16 – 20	4 (13%)
11 – 55	4 (13%)
6 – 10	7 (22%)
1 – 5	11 (34%)

For the number of years employed, most of the graduates, eleven of them (32%) have been employed for one to five years, while only two graduates (6%) have been employed for 31 to 35 years. Using the raw data, the average years of employment is 11.7 years with a standard deviation of 8.9 years. This indicates a high variability, with a seventy-six percent (76%) coefficient of variability. The years employed range from one year to thirty-three years, with a median of 8.5 years and four years as the most common number of years. The distribution of the graduates' number of years employed is negatively skewed, which indicates that most of them have been working for a few numbers of years. This is understandable since most of those new in the workforce need a master's degree to obtain a permanent position or be promoted, primarily if they work in government/public academic institutions.

2.3 Research Instrument

A pre-tested questionnaire was used as the main instrument to obtain the data needed. Validity and reliability tests were conducted before the questionnaire was floated. The instrument consisted of four parts. The first part consisted of the profiles and some employment details of the graduates; the second part consisted of the graduates' extent of acquisition, utilization, and contribution of competencies provided by the program; and the third part consisted of the graduates' extent of benefits acquired from completing the degree.

2.4 Data Analysis

The frequency and percent were used to describe the respondents' profiles, such as the graduates' employment profiles and the year they graduated from the degree program. The weighted mean was used to measure the extent of acquisition, contribution, and utilization of various competencies in the graduates' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and task performance. The t-test for a single mean was used to compare the extent of acquisition, contribution, and utilization of various competencies in the graduates' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and task performance from the average level. All tests were measured at a 0.05 level of significance.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The researchers followed ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all research respondents, and permission was solicited from the university heads before the study was conducted.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Acquisition, Contribution, and Utilization of Various Competencies

Tables 3, 4, and 5 present the extent to which the graduates acquired, contributed to and utilized various competencies in their knowledge, skills, attitude, and task performance that could be attributed to completing and earning their MAAS degree. As seen in Table 3, the extent of acquisition along the graduates' knowledge development ranged from much acquired with an average of 4.34 to very much acquired with an average of 4.50. All five items under Knowledge had high positive significant differences from moderate acquisition, which established that the graduates' extent of acquisition along knowledge development is from much acquired to very

much acquired. Notably, the graduates had acquired enhanced knowledge about the relevance and importance of the course to their respective works. They acquired a more remarkable ability to acquire more knowledge on the subjects offered than before taking the course. However, concerned curriculum planners may look into the item on enhanced understanding of the concept application since this obtained the lowest average rating of 4.34. This, though, still indicated much-acquired competency by MAAS graduates.

Table 3. *The extent of acquisition of competency in the graduates' knowledge, skills, attitude, and task performance*

Competency	Mean	Interpretation	Sig.
A. Knowledge			
Enhanced knowledge about the relevance and importance of the course to their respective works	4.50	Very Much Acquired	8.93 **
Greater ability to acquire more knowledge on the subjects being offered than before taking the course	4.50	Very Much Acquired	11.91**
Enhanced knowledge of facts and principles	4.41	Much Acquired	9.09 **
Enhanced understanding of the application of concepts	4.34	Much Acquired	9.19 **
Improved learning efficiency	4.44	Much Acquired	9.27 **
B. Skills			
Improved problem-solving skills	4.56	Very Much Acquired	12.35**
Improved research skills	4.56	Very Much Acquired	10.52**
Been more able to accommodate variations and adaptations when performing tasks	4.47	Much Acquired	10.91**
Improved information technology skills	4.34	Much Acquired	10.20**
Been more able to introduce innovations and adaptations when undertaking tasks	4.31	Much Acquired	7.97 **
Improved communication skills	4.13	Much Acquired	6.76 **
C. Attitude			
Greater confidence to perform tasks	4.59	Very Much Acquired	13.55**
Greater confidence and motivation to maintain high-performance standards	4.47	Much Acquired	14.65**
Greater motivation to undertake tasks	4.44	Much Acquired	9.68 **
Enhanced team spirit	4.31	Much Acquired	7.97 *
D. Task Performance			
Improved quality of output	4.63	Very Much Acquired	16.61**
Increased quantity of output	4.47	Much Acquired	10.35**
Greater ability to share knowledge with colleagues	4.44	Much Acquired	11.36**
Greater ability to contribute to the team's efforts	4.41	Much Acquired	10.52**

As to the extent of acquisition along the skills developed, the extent ranged from much acquired with an average rating of 4.13, to very much acquired with an average of 4.56. All the six items under Skills had high positive significant differences from moderate acquisition, which established that the graduates' extent of acquisition along skills development is from much acquired to very much acquired. It is noteworthy that graduates have very much acquired problem-solving skills and improved research skills in the MAAS Program. However, the graduates only acquired a lot of communication skills.

As to the extent of acquisition along attitude change, the extent ranged from much acquired with an average of 4.31 to very much acquired with an average of 4.56. All four items under Attitude had high positive significant differences from moderate acquisition, which established that the graduates' extent of acquisition along attitude change is from much acquired to very much acquired. It is noteworthy that the graduates have very much acquired greater confidence to perform tasks in the MAAS Program, with an average rating of 4.59. However, the graduates acquired a lot of enhanced team spirit with an average of 4.31, since most often the MAAS students do their tasks individually and independently.

As to the extent of acquisition along task performance, the extent ranged from much acquired with an average of 4.41 to very much acquired with an average of 4.63. All four items under tasks had high positive significant differences from moderate acquisition, which established that the graduates' extent of acquisition along task performance is from much acquired to very much acquired. It is noteworthy that the graduates have very much acquired an improved quality of output in the MAAS Program, with an average rating of 4.63. However, graduates only acquired much of "the great amount of the ability to contribute to teams' efforts" with an average of 4.41. MAAS students usually have independent assignments and less chance to interact since they only meet with their classmates during their Saturday classes. De La Cruz (2022) study likewise showed a high graduate assessment of the graduate program completed in the tertiary. Gopez (2024) and Lubrica (2019) further confirmed that skills such as dependability, teamwork, and critical thinking were developed in their degree program.

Table 4 shows that the extent of contribution along the graduates' knowledge development ranged from an average of 4.09 to 4.28, indicating much contribution of the five items under Knowledge. All five items under Knowledge had high positive significant differences from moderate contribution, which established that the graduates considered the MAAS Program much contribution to knowledge development. It is noteworthy that the graduates considered the MAAS Program had contributed much to enhanced knowledge about the relevance and importance of the course to their respective works, with an average of 4.28, the highest average in this area. However, the lowest average is 4.09, on the MAAS Program's contribution to the graduates' ability to acquire more knowledge on the subjects offered than before taking the course though this was still considered as giving much contribution.

Table 4. *The extent of contribution to competency in the graduates' knowledge, skills, attitude, and task performance*

Competency	Mean	Interpretation	Sig.
A. Knowledge			
Enhanced knowledge about the relevance and importance of the course to their respective works	4.28	Much Contributed	7.84 **
Improved learning efficiency	4.22	Much Contributed	7.07 **
Enhanced knowledge of the application of concepts	4.22	Much Contributed	7.61 **
Enhanced knowledge of facts and principles	4.19	Much Contributed	7.22 **
Greater ability to acquire more knowledge on the subjects being offered than before taking the course	4.09	Much Contributed	6.93 **
B. Skills			
Improved problem-solving skills	4.44	Much Contributed	10.16**
Improved research skills	4.44	Much Contributed	9.27 **
Been more able to accommodate variations and adaptations when performing tasks	4.16	Much Contributed	7.73 **
Improved information technology skills	4.09	Much Contributed	8.98 **
Been more able to introduce innovations and adaptations when undertaking tasks	4.00	Much Contributed	6.43 **
Improved communication skills	3.94	Much Contributed	5.40 **
C. Attitude			
Greater confidence to perform tasks	4.38	Much Contributed	11.79**
Greater motivation to undertake tasks	4.31	Much Contributed	8.29 **
Greater confidence and motivation to maintain high-performance standards	4.31	Much Contributed	10.72**
Enhanced team spirit	4.16	Much Contributed	7.11 *
D. Task Performance			
Improved quality of output	4.47	Much Contributed	13.37**
Increased quantity of output	4.28	Much Contributed	9.39**
Greater ability to contribute to team's efforts	4.28	Much Contributed	8.92 **
Greater ability to share knowledge with colleagues	4.28	Much Contributed	8.92 **

As to the extent of contribution along the skills developed, the average ranged from 3.94 to 4.44 which indicated that the MAAS Program had contributed much to the graduates' skills development. All the six items under Skills had high positive significant differences from moderate contribution, which established that the graduates' extent of contribution along skills development is much. It is noteworthy that the graduates considered the MAAS Program had much contributed to their improved problem-solving skills and research skills with an average rating of 4.44. However, the graduates rated lowest the extent of contribution of the MAAS Program to improved communication skills with an average of 3.94, though the extent of contribution of the MAAS Program was still much.

As to the extent of contribution along attitude change, the extent ranged from an average of 4.16 to 4.38 which indicated that the MAAS Program had contributed much to the graduates' attitude change. All four items under attitude have high positive significant differences from moderate contribution, which established that graduates had many contributions along attitude change. It is noteworthy that the MAAS Program contributed much to the graduates' confidence to perform tasks in the MAAS Program, with an average rating of 4.38. However, the average of 4.16 for enhanced team spirit was the lowest, though the contribution of the MAAS Program to this item was still much.

As to the extent of contribution along task performance, the average ranged from 4.28 to 4.47 which indicated that the MAAS Program had contributed much to the graduates' task performance. All four items under tasks had high positive significant differences from moderate acquisition, which established that the graduates' extent of contribution along tasks performance is much. It is noteworthy to mention that the graduates rated highest in terms of average rating the statement on improved quality of output in the MAAS Program, with an average

rating of 4.47. The result of the study is similar to De La Cruz (2022) and Gomez and Eniego (2024), showing that the degree program completed greatly contributed to their professional and personal growth.

As seen in Table 5, the extent of utilization along the graduates' knowledge development ranged from much utilized, with an average of 4.25, to very much utilized, with an average of 4.50. All five items under Knowledge had high positive significant differences from moderate utilization, which established that the graduates' extent of utilization along knowledge development varied from much to very much utilized. It is noteworthy to mention that the graduates rated highest in the average rating item enhanced knowledge about the relevance and importance of the course to their respective works which was 4.50.

Table 5. *The extent of utilization of competency in the graduates' knowledge, skills, attitude, and task performance*

Competency	Mean	Interpretation	Sig.
A. Knowledge			
Enhanced knowledge about the relevance and importance of the course to their respective works	4.50	Very Much Utilized	9.64 **
Improved learning efficiency	4.41	Much Utilized	9.09 **
Enhanced knowledge of the application of concepts	4.38	Much Utilized	8.58 **
Enhanced understanding of facts and principles	4.31	Much Utilized	8.29 **
Greater ability to acquire more knowledge on the subjects being offered than before taking the course	4.25	Much Utilized	9.28 **
B. Skills			
Improved research skills	4.41	Much Utilized	8.13 **
Enhanced problem-solving skills	4.34	Much Utilized	8.78 **
Been more able to accommodate variations and adaptations when performing tasks	4.28	Much Utilized	8.92 **
Been more able to introduce innovations and adaptations when undertaking tasks	4.19	Much Utilized	7.50 **
Improved information technology skills	4.16	Much Utilized	8.10 **
Improved communication skills	4.09	Much Utilized	7.23 **
C. Attitude			
Greater confidence to perform tasks	4.47	Much Utilized	9.87 **
Greater motivation to undertake tasks	4.41	Much Utilized	8.73 **
Greater confidence and motivation to maintain high performance standards	4.34	Much Utilized	8.43 **
Enhanced team spirit	4.19	Much Utilized	6.73 **
D. Task Performance			
Improved quality of output	4.56	Very Much Utilized	12.35**
Greater ability to share knowledge with colleagues	4.47	Much Utilized	10.91**
Increased quantity of output	4.38	Much Utilized	8.93 **
Greater ability to contribute to team's efforts	4.31	Much Utilized	8.64 **

As to the extent of utilization in skills developed, the average ranged from 4.09 to 4.41 which indicated that the MAAS graduates utilized much of the skills developed in the MAAS Program. All the six items under Skills had high positive significant differences from moderate contribution, which established that the graduates' extent utilization along skills development is much. It is noteworthy to mention that the graduates considered improved research skills as much utilized.

As to the extent of utilization along attitude change, the extent ranged from an average of 4.19 to an average of 4.47 which indicated that the graduates utilized much of the items under attitude change. All four items under Attitude had high positive significant differences from moderate contribution, which established that the graduates' extent of utilization along attitude change is much. It is noteworthy that the graduates' greater confidence to perform tasks was the attitude change much utilized with an average of 4.47.

As to the extent of utilization along task performance, the extent ranged from much to very much utilized, with averages of 4.31 and 4.56, respectively. All four items under tasks had high positive significant differences from moderate utilization, which established that the graduates' extent of utilization along tasks performance is from much to very much utilized.

3.2 The Extent of Benefit Gained from Completing the Course

Table 6 shows that MAAS graduates considered earning the degree beneficial, with average ratings ranging from 3.71 to 4.44. All four items identified as benefits were significantly higher than moderate, establishing that the MAAS graduates considered the benefits they gained from earning the degree were much. Improved self-esteem garnered the highest average rating, which was followed closely by more opportunities for expert services. Completing the degree also, was much beneficial in the graduate's promotion to a higher position and change of

their employment status. This is supported by Sito, et al. (2008) where sixty-seven percent of the respondents were employed after passing the Licensure Examination and almost twenty-five percent were immediately hired after graduation.

Table 6. *Graduates' extent of benefits gained from completing the degree*

Benefits	Average	Descriptive Equiv.	t-value (sig.)
Improved self-esteem	4.44	Much Beneficial	8.58 **
More opportunities for expert services	4.41	Much Beneficial	7.86 **
Promotion to higher position	4.19	Much Beneficial	5.84 **
Change of employment status	3.71	Much Beneficial	2.58 *

4.0 Conclusions

Based on the findings, this study concludes that MAAS graduates acquired, contributed, and utilized their knowledge, skills, attitude, and task performance at high levels, ranging from "much" to "very much." Among the competencies assessed, improved output quality was the most acquired, contributory, and utilized, while communication skills ranked the lowest. Despite this, graduates recognized the significant benefits of earning their degree, particularly in enhancing self-esteem, expanding opportunities for expert services, achieving promotions, and changing employment status. These findings highlight the need to strengthen communication skills among MAAS students to ensure a more well-rounded competency development. Given the degree's impact on career advancement, educational institutions should provide more structured opportunities for students to practice oral and written communication. Future research may explore targeted strategies for improving communication skills and other competencies essential for professional success.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The following are the specific contribution of each author:

Bretel B. Dolipas	conception, design, analysis, draft write-up, or revision of the manuscript
Maria Azucena B. Lubrica	conception, design, analysis, write-up, or revision of the manuscript
Serano L. Oryan	conception, write-up of the manuscript
Freda Kate D. Samuel	design, analysis, writ- up of the manuscript
Precious M. Valentin	design, analysis, write-up of the manuscript
Joel V. Lubrica	conception, editing of the manuscript
Julie A. Buasen	analysis, write-up, or revision of the manuscript
Phil S. Ocampo	Write-up, or revision of the manuscript

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7.0 Conflicts of Interest

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

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