

Implementation and Challenges of Graduate School Programs: Insights from the Cagayan State University-Aparri Campus

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ABSTRACT

Graduate education is critical to preparing highly competent professionals, educators, researchers, and leaders. Disparities in institutional resources, program implementation, and support services, however, continue to impact the quality of graduate education across higher education institutions. However, there are few studies on the implementation of graduate school programs in state universities despite the availability of policies and quality assurance procedures and the obstacles faced by stakeholders. The study investigated the state, level of implementation, and problems encountered in the Graduate School Programs of Cagayan State University-Aparri Campus and if there are significant discrepancies in the execution of the different graduate degree programs. The study

used descriptive-correlational design. The respondents of the study were 42 and they were graduate students and administrators. The respondents were picked by stratified random sampling method. Data were collected by researcher-made questionnaire and analyzed with frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that the Graduate School Programs are Board of Regents approved, CHED regulations compatible, Level II AACCUP accredited with highly qualified faculty members and appropriate fiscal support. However, the lack of CHED notation, the decline in enrollment in various masteral programs, and the deficiencies in physical facilities, ICT infrastructure, and digital research resources are still causes of concern. The implementation of the Graduate School Programs in terms of curriculum and instruction, faculty competence, learning resources and facilities, student support services, and research and professional development services was rated as Highly Implemented. Administrators reported more operational and resource issues than faculty and graduate students, who only sometimes reported issues with implementation. Also, the ANOVA findings indicated that there was no statistically significant variation in the level of implementation across the Graduate School programs. The study concluded that Cagayan State University-Aparri Campus can deliver Graduate School Programs through competent faculty, quality instruction, and responsive support services. However, for quality graduate education to be sustained and the strength of the university's competitiveness to be improved, continuous improvements in infrastructure, research support, digital resources, and institutional funding are needed.

Keywords: *graduate school programs, implementation, challenges encountered, higher education, quality assurance*

INTRODUCTION

Graduate education is crucial for developing the professional skills and research abilities of individuals aiming for leadership and expertise in their chosen disciplines. In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED, 2019) highlights that graduate programs must enhance advanced knowledge and research while also cultivating leaders who aid in regional and national development. This prompted professionals to pursue graduate studies- to widen their understanding on their chosen field. However, the odyssey in graduate study is not always easy. It is rarely straightforward. One of the factors that makes graduate study a challenge is a balance of academic endeavor, work-related errands and personal responsibilities. These demands often lead graduate students to stress, difficulty in managing their time that leads to a great dilemma in sustaining good academic performance (Stubb & Lonka, 2016). This challenge becomes more evident when graduate students are tasked to do research writing and publication where assistance is often inadequate.

Research indicates that, in the local context, problems including high demands from the workplace, poor institutional support, roles that need to be performed in the family and inadequate resource access persist and has been the clamor of the Graduate students despite the expansion of graduate programs (Reyes, 2020). Such challenges are more noticeable for regional state colleges because of socio-economic and geographic variables that affect the school and its students.

Examining the structure of the Academic Program of the Cagayan State University- Aparri Campus, this study aimed to explore the implementation of existing curricula of the graduate studies vis-a-vis the reinforcement and support activities it offers to students that help them overcome the hindrances they face in fulfilling their graduate studies. Moreso, it assessed the alignment of these support activities to the academic standard of the institution. Furthermore, this study sought to understand and to give enlightenment to the administration of the state university on the academic, work-related, and personal dilemmas that are being experienced by graduate students, providing insights into how institutional support can better align with student needs

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

Tinto's Integration Theory points out that students' perseverance and triumph are determined upon their ability to participate in the institution both academically and socially. Academic integration is characterized by a student's ability to handle and fit the intellectual views of a program. This includes the ability to grasp the challenges of coursework, research, and the scholarly expectations of the program. On the contrary, social integration entails a student's belongingness and relationship with peers, faculty, and the wider academic community.

Within the scope of this study, the Graduate School of Cagayan State University - Aparri Campus' support programs are pathways that facilitate students' integration into the academic ecosystem of the institution. The support programs are typified by academic activities and research writing and publication programs. Academic activities, such as seminars, workshops, and mentoring, empower students to become more competent and confident in the completion of their academic tasks related to the program. Hence, support programs strengthen students' academic integration. On the other hand, research writing and publication programs assist students on research and provide them opportunities to collaborate and interact with the more scholarly and research active community, thereby promoting their academic inclusion.

Additionally, support programs are designed to help students who struggle with managing the pressure of graduate-level work, employment, and other responsibilities. Students who actively participate in the support programs tend to collaboratively reduce the impact of the challenges they face and are able to identify the resources and strategies needed to decrease the impact of challenges in their lives. Because support programs are designed to be collaborative, lack of access to or participation in them will only reinforce the challenges the students are struggling with.

Therefore, using Tinto's model as a basis, it can be assumed that the availability and quality of support programs in graduate schools can impact the level of participation and success of the programs, as well as the ways in which students manage and cope with their challenges.

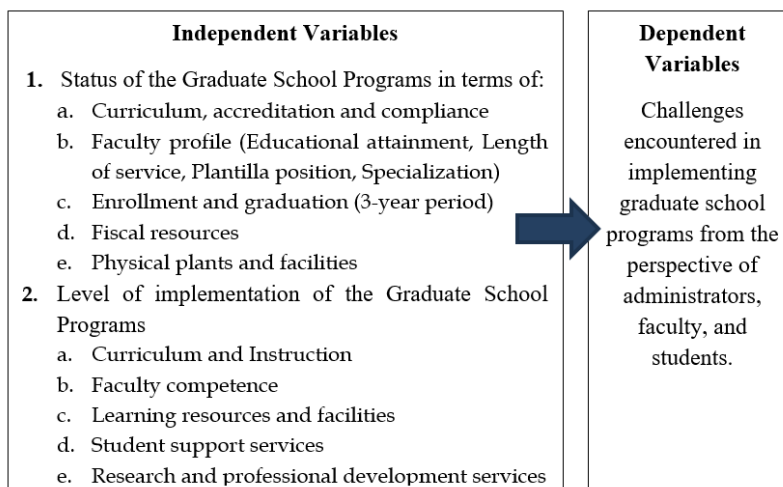


Figure 1. *Paradigm showing the relationship between independent and dependent variables.*

The schematic diagram demonstrates the conceptual framework of the study, with the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are the status of the Graduate School Programs in curriculum, accreditation and compliance; faculty profile (educational attainment, length of service, plantilla position and specialization); enrollment and graduation for the last three years; fiscal resources; physical plants and facilities; and the level of implementation of the Graduate School Programs. These variables are thought to be elements that may influence the implementation of graduate education. The dependent variable is the problems faced by administrators, teachers and graduate students in the implementation of the graduate school programs. The arrow in the picture indicates the expected effect of the independent variables to the dependent variable. This means the study will try to determine the relationship between the status and implementation of the Graduate School Programs and the problems encountered. The results of the study are expected to give basis for the recommendations for the future improvement of the quality and effectiveness of the Graduate School Programs of Cagayan State University-Aparri Campus.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the capacity of the Cagayan State University-Aparri Campus in their implementation of existing activities in Research and Academic support system in their Graduate School Program vis-à-vis the challenges encountered by the Graduate School Students in balancing academic demands with work-related endeavors and personal concerns.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the status of the Graduate School in terms of the following aspects?
 - 1.1. Curriculum, accreditation and compliance
 - 1.2. Faculty profile (Educational attainment, Length of service, Plantilla position, Specialization)
 - 1.3. Enrollment and graduation (3-year period)
 - 1.4. Fiscal resources
 - 1.5. Physical plants and facilities

2. What is the level of implementation of the Graduate School programs along the following dimensions?
 - 2.1 Curriculum and instruction
 - 2.2 Faculty competence
 - 2.3 Learning resources and facilities
 - 2.4 Student support services
 - 2.5 Research and professional development services
3. What challenges are encountered in implementing graduate school programs from the perspective of administrators, faculty, and students?
4. Is there a significant difference in the level of implementation of the different Graduate School programs (MAEd-EM, MAEd-English, MST Mathematics, PhD-EM)?

Literature Review

Curriculum in the Graduate School

Dela Cruz (2022) in the tracer study pointed out that the quality of curriculum is one of the elements that greatly affect the satisfaction and employability of the graduates. Graduate students indicated that the skills they developed during graduate study were critical to their professional development, leadership skills, research skills, and career development. The program was seen as relevant to the needs of the workplace since it improved their critical thinking, problem solving and specialized knowledge that could be used in their chosen professions.

But the graduates also said it's important to keep improving the program. They advised periodic assessments of curricula to keep pace with the growing standards within the sector, government policy and labor market demands. Moreover, respondents recommended the expansion of graduate offerings by the addition of terminal degree programs, especially PhD programs, and by the addition of flexible learning modalities, such as distance education. These ideas suggest that graduate programs need to be dynamic, responsive, and learner centric to remain institutionally relevant and competitive.

Faculty Profile

The quality of the faculty is an important aspect of the effectiveness of graduate education. Graduates offered good marks to their teachers, noting their competence, professionalism and contribution to the development of students' competencies. Faculty were seen as crucial to the development of academic achievement and the preparation of students for their professional obligations.

While these positive comments were noted, respondents advocated ongoing programs to develop faculty capacity. Professional development initiatives, advanced academic training, research engagement and exposure to current industry practices are part of maintaining instructional quality. The report consequently recommends that graduate schools invest in faculty development to guarantee that instructors stay competent, inventive and sensitive to the changing demands of higher education and professional practice. Dela Cruz, 2022.

Curriculum and Instruction

Iringan, Et.Al. (2019) and Abasolo, Et.Al. (2018) in their studies stated that graduate school programs have high implementation levels in curriculum and instruction, especially in assuring that educational experiences are connected with required graduate capabilities. The implementation study of the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) found that the graduate students consistently rated the execution of instructional design, learning activities and assessment procedures as extremely high. The curriculum was purposefully designed by merging institutional objectives, program objectives, course objectives and anticipated learning outcomes thus ensuring consistency between what students are expected to learn and

how learning is assessed. Learning activities were characterized as meaningful, learner-centered, and relevant to the professional tasks of graduate students.

The tracer study also revealed the importance of the graduate program to the professional lives of the graduate. Graduates indicated that the program increased their research skills, critical thinking abilities, leadership skills, and problem-solving skills, which were directly tied to their professional obligations. But respondents said graduate schools need to continually review and adapt their curriculum to keep pace with technology advances, industry needs and new educational legislation. This means that if there are excellent curriculum practices of implementation now available, there is a continuing need for growth towards academic relevance.

Faculty Competence

Faculty competence is a very good indicator of successful execution of graduate program. Iringan and Bansig (2019) found out that the faculty members were knowledgeable with the Outcomes-Based Education and were able to adapt the OBE principles into classroom instructions. The successful implementation of graduate programs was greatly impacted by their dedication, knowledge, and readiness to adopt learner-centered teaching approaches. Ongoing faculty development, mentoring, and administrative oversight enhanced teaching quality and uniformity across graduate programs.

The tracer study further showed that the graduates expressed great regard for the competency and professionalism of their lecturers. The faculty members were commended not just for the quality of teaching but also for the mentorship on research, thesis writing and professional growth. Graduates highlighted the value of competent faculty members to their academic success and job growth. However, both the studies suggest continuing professional development through research participation, higher studies, seminars, and industry exposure to keep the faculty members sensitive to changing educational and professional needs.

Challenges Encountered by the Graduate School Students

Several impacts are experienced by graduates on their academic performance and emotional, psychological and personal well-being. Graduate studies are more independent, more cognitively difficult, and more research and intellectually interesting than undergraduate studies. Graduate School students have a dual focus in different aspect. They wear many hats as employees, parents, professionals, and community members. All these while they juggle with their academic pursuit. These will place demands on motivation and persistence that will decide their success in completing their graduate courses.

Gardner Susan K. (2009) identified time management and academic stress conflicting with work and family as most common in graduate study. Graduate students are required to participate in classroom activities and to write their theses, all while balancing the competing demands of rigorous academic work (readings and research), work, and family. The influence of competing obligations and demands leads to major negative consequences for effectiveness, leading students to drop out of studies or remain significantly behind in studies.

This view is supported by Kirsi Pyhältö et al. (2012) who stated that most graduate students, particularly in higher research degrees, are no exception to suffering research strain in their studies, especially in connection to his/her psychological welfare. At the graduate level, every step of the research process, such as his/her predecessor studies, requires a lot of dedication in terms of enthusiasm and time.

Academics can be stressful, lead to self-doubt and frustration. This can have detrimental impact on the emotional health and personal and academic performance of the Graduate School students. The difficulties in finding a distinctive research problem, in selecting the method, in analyzing and interpreting the acquired data and in meeting the requirements of personal and school tasks might even make the individual question his/her capacity to finish the research work. If a student feels that the institution is not providing the required help and support, the tension might become overpowering and can have a detrimental influence on work.

"Similarly, Jukka Stubb and colleagues argue, the motivation of graduate students is quite volatile. There is a sense of accomplishment and inventiveness when students reach a milestone, complete a major piece of work or make a theoretical breakthrough. But if you're stressed, always revising, working hard and not resting, you might soon become fatigued and eventually burn out. Research, therefore, supports the requirement for Graduate School students to have a robust support system. The absence of support and coping mechanisms could adversely impact the mental health of Graduate School students, leading to unstable well-being.

There may also be a more psychological aspect to the matter in hand. Graduate students should be motivated and have a purpose in obtaining an advanced degree. Laguador (2013) says that persistence of students in a graduate program is not only dependent on the academic system and resources of the school but also on class disposition and self-discipline. It is the students with self-discipline and motivation that overcome hurdles and persist that their beliefs and self-discipline are vital and necessary for their success. In contrast, pupils who are unmotivated or lack academic direction may have a hard time remaining engaged. It also implies that there may be some relationship between these external support systems and the internal features of individuals and the determination of graduate student performance.

This was more evident to the grad students after the COVID pandemic. Colleges and universities moved to online or flexible learning modalities, requiring students born in the last 15 years to navigate a constant flood of new technology thrown at them as they rushed to be independent learners. Graduate students reporting issues with technological access, technological knowledge, and selfregulation and motivation in online learning environments (Salubayba 2021).

Academic Support Programs in Graduate Education

The degree of supportive framework provided to graduate students in a program is a major factor in their persistence, in engaging others in the department or university community, and in whether they ultimately complete their degree. In an environment of high demands for and standards on academic achievement, research output and professional and personal experiences, graduate students are confronted with a complicated mix of duties. Graduate students benefit from institutional support systems to deal with the complexities of a graduate education. Academic support and services including academic advising, mentoring, research assistance, workshops and seminars, help students build confidence and encourage them to do their best.

Carol M. Bair and Jennifer G. Haworth (2020) state that good graduate programs include well-organized mentorships, dedicated instructors, learning and collaboration opportunities, and meaningful research activities. The program's components are designed to support students in their academic and career goals, and students are mentored along the way. Research seminars and academic forums are essential intellectual activities that assist learners in cultivating their critical faculties and research abilities and prepare students for graduate education and study. Support systems are vital for graduate students to persist and be active participants in all elements of their studies.

Similarly, Aqeel Ali and Frederick Kohun (2006) indicate that lack of belongingness, isolation and poor connection with teachers and peers affect the persistence of graduate students. Graduate students face emotional and intellectual stress resulting from their hectic work schedules, independent research and limited social activities. These create frustrations and pupils lose interest and opt out of school especially with minimum help from the institution. This is why the school system should endeavor to build the structure that promotes belongingness, teamwork and a supportive academic community. Peer assistance, faculty consultations, mentorship, and support services are some of the initiatives that might assist students in socially and academically integrating into the graduate school community.

In the Philippines, various policies of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) further indicate the support given to graduate students. It should have research-based and systemic graduate programs with qualified graduate education professors and adequately well-organize educational infrastructure and support system. These rules guarantee that the graduate programs form professionals,

researchers and educators capable of favorably influencing the social, intellectual and professional fields of the country and the world. Graduate schools are supposed to maintain and enhance levels of academic quality and critical and creative thinking through chances for additional and continuing intellectual development. The principles provide a good framework, but the implementation of the rules varied widely from one institution to another because of resources, staff, and administrative and institutional constraints, just to name a few.

Relationship of Institutional Support and Student Challenges

The connection between college support and student achievement is an issue in higher education. Colleges do more than teach; they create environments that help students engage, stay in school and do well. College support is extremely vital for students, who endure rigorous classes, loads of research and many personal and professional commitments. Mentoring, academic advising, research aid, faculty and student development programs help grad students cope with problems and stay motivated.

“Student success is based on the degree to which they are involved in their academic and social environments,” Astin adds. Students who are learning are interacting with professors and peers. Use college resources are less likely to drop out and more likely to succeed. Colleges need to provide engagement opportunities. For students this can involve doing research, attending conferences, seminars and collaborative learning and having mentoring ties, with instructors. Grad students feel more engaged and ready to deal with obstacles when they get help from their universities.

Vincent Tinto’s Theory of Student Integration 1993 also supports the premise that children achieve better when they have a sense of belonging to their school. “Students are less likely to drop out if they are satisfied with their academic work and their social life at school,” says Vincent Tinto When students have learning experiences and their teachers are helpful they feel attached to their school work. Social integration is different: it’s when pupils feel they belong at school, have friends and people who care about them. In graduate school when students often work alone on their research and do not spend time in class it is highly vital that they feel connected to their school. Students who are lonely or feel excluded may not want to study much and may even drop out of school. Therefore schools need to ensure that children can communicate, collaborate and experience community.

Recent studies in the Philippines also demonstrate that schools need to encourage their students. Agatep and Villalobos observed in 2020 that graduate students become better researchers when their colleges give them mentoring and technical support. Research is a component of graduate school, but a lot of students have a hard time with it. They struggle to design their research, acquire data and write about it. Schools can offer students mentors and teachers to guide them, and give them access to research materials. This enhances the students’ confidence and ability to complete their research job. Schools can also provide students with training, library aid and tools to improve their research. This assists students to achieve the standards of their school and complete their research successfully.

According to Reyes et. al. (2020), graduate programs must comply with educational standards, but also must take into account what is happening in their specific sector. When colleges wish to generate graduates that can compete with people from countries they have to continually improving their classes and research. They also have to ensure sure their teachers are qualified and their students get the help they need. But universities have to consider the fact that they don't have a lot of money and that their students have needs. They also have to consider what is going on in their local education system. By improving rules and processes, universities can address challenges in their system and improve graduate education.

If universities do not assist their graduate students, it can be very harmful for the universities. According to Aqeel Ali and Frederick Kohun (2006) when graduate students do not have assistance they can feel quite alone and this can make them feel dissatisfied and desire to quit. Graduate students who do not have mentors or friends to talk to may find it difficult to cope with the pressure of school and demands of research. Feeling alone can sometimes make students feel horrible about themselves and feel that they do not belong at the institution. This underscores the significance of colleges ensuring their students feel

supported and part of the graduate student community. Graduate students need to feel like they are part of the graduate school community and that there are individuals who care about them. Graduate education is really significant. Universities must ensure that they are doing all they can to help their graduate students succeed.

METHODS

Research Design

A descriptive-correlational was employed in the study to determine the implementation and level of challenges of the Graduate School Program of the Cagayan State University- Aparri Campus. Descriptive was used to determine and explain then level of implementation of the Graduate School Programs of the said institution. On the other hand, correlational research design was used to determine the significance of the level of challenges of the different Graduate School programs vis-à-vis its implementation.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at Cagayan State University – Aparri Campus, particularly among the students and faculty members of the Graduate School Program. The university is located at Maura, Aparri, Cagayan, a municipality situated in the northern part of the province of Cagayan in the Philippines. Cagayan State University – Aparri Campus offers different undergraduate courses and graduate school programs which aim at promoting academic excellence, research, and community development. The campus serves students from Aparri and its neighboring municipalities, giving accessible and quality higher education in the region.

The faculty members of the Graduate School Program of the university have diverse academic specializations and professional experiences. They play a significant role in the delivery of quality education, research mentoring, and professional development initiatives of the institution. Their expertise and commitment in graduate school education make them appropriate respondents for this study. The researchers selected the locale due to its accessibility, relevance to the study, and the availability of qualified respondents who can provide reliable and substantial information necessary for the attainment of the research objectives.

Respondents and Sampling Technique

The respondents of the study were the students enrolled in the Graduate School Programs of the Cagayan State University- Aparri Campus and its administrators. Stratified random sampling was utilized to determine the number of respondents in every program. Overall, there were 17 Master of Arts in Educational Management students, 5 Master of Arts in English students, 10 Master of Science in Informational Technology students, 8 Doctor of Philosophy students, and 2 Administrators, making it 42 total number of respondents.

Research Instruments

The main instrument that was used in gathering data is the questionnaire method which was used to determine the implementation level as well as the challenges encountered by the students in the Graduate School Programs.

Part I of the questionnaire gauged the status of the Graduate School Programs of the Cagayan State University- Aparri Campus. This was answered by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Part II of the instrument focused on the level of implementation of the Graduate School Programs particularly on its Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty Qualifications, Learning Resources and Facilities, Student Support Services, and Research and Professional Development Services. These part was consist of 25 questions on a 4-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (Not Implemented) to 4 (Highly Implemented).

The Part III of the was designed to gauge the level of challenges encountered. A 4-point Likert-scale was used ranging from 1 (Never a Challenge) to 4 (Always a Challenged) with 30 questions. This part

of the instrument was crafted to gauge the level of challenges on the School Administration, Faculty and Students.

Data Gathering Procedure

When the research topic was approved by the research committee, the researchers identified the number of participants for every graduate school program as respondents of the study. The total sample of respondents for every program was composed of 17 Master of Arts in Educational Management students, 5 Master of Arts in English students, 10 Master of Science in Informational Technology students, 8 Doctor of Philosophy students, and 2 Administrators, making it 42 total number of respondents. The researchers formulated a set of structured questionnaires, which consisted of three parts: the status of the Graduate School Program, the Level of Implementation and the Level of Challenges encountered in graduate school programs. Thereafter, the researchers prepared and issued a letter of approval for the data-gathering process with the administrator of Cagayan State University- Aparri Campus, to float a self-structured set of questionnaires to the various programs of the graduate school in CSU Aparri. Upon the approval of the request letter, the researchers floated the questionnaire, both printed and online to the chosen respondents. Google Form was also employed, enabling all respondents to easily access and provide information for convenience and without restrictions and to ensure that all gathered data was treated with the strictest confidentiality. For noncontacts, the researchers scheduled 3 consecutive days to reach the target respondents through in-person home visits.

Data Analysis

The data gathered were analyzed and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools aligned with the objectives of the study. Frequency and Percentage Distribution were used to describe the status of the Graduate School Programs in terms of Curriculum, Accreditation and Compliance, Faculty profile, Enrollment and Graduation statistics, Fiscal resources, Physical plants and facilities.

Moreover, weighted mean was utilized to determine the Level of Implementation of the Graduate School support programs, and it was also used to determine the extent of challenges encountered by graduate school students. One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine whether there were significant differences in the level of implementation of Graduate School programs when grouped according to the responses of administrators, faculty, and students. The level of significance for statistical tests was set at 0.05 alpha level.

In determining the level of implementation, the following descriptive rating was utilized.

1.0-1.74	-	Not Implemented
1.75-2.49	-	Partially Implemented
2.50-3.24	-	Implemented
3.25-4.00	-	Highly Implemented

In determining the challenges, the following descriptive rating was utilized.

1.0-1.74	-	Never a Challenge
1.75-2.49	-	Sometimes a Challenge
2.50-3.24	-	Often a Challenge
3.25-4.00	-	Always a Challenge

Ethical Consideration

The study was carried out following the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) (ethical approval code: 21/2022). Before the study was conducted, a formal letter was sent to the proper authorities of Cagayan State University–Aparri Campus to seek permission to distribute the questionnaire.

Participation in the study was optional and all respondents were supplied with enough information regarding the aim, objectives and procedures of the research before making the decision to participate. Each respondent provided informed consent and was promised that they could refuse to participate, or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or adverse consequence.

The researchers also made sure that the respondents' confidentiality and anonymity were preserved by not include names or any personal information in the questionnaires and in the research report. All the responses were treated with the highest level of secrecy and were used for academic and research purposes only. All data obtained was kept in a secure place and only the researchers had access to it during the study. Moreover, the researchers maintained the integrity, transparency and respect for participants throughout the research process by presenting the findings honestly and objectively without fabrication, falsification or misrepresentation of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Status of the Graduate School Programs

Curriculum and Accreditation

It can be gleaned on Table 1 the status and trends of the different Graduate School Programs of the Cagayan State University. The responses showed that the institution has achieved full validation as approved by the Board of Regents of the institution. However, the lack of Commission on Higher Education notation suggests a lack of National recognition of the graduate school programs of the institution. Despite of this, the university is still compliant with the CHED Memorandum 15 s. 2019 which sets the standards, policies and guidelines for the graduate school education in the Philippines. With this commitment, the university maintains a Level II accreditation of the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACUP). This only proves that the university meets the standards set by the accrediting body.

Table 1. *Status of the Graduate School Programs in terms of Curriculum and Accreditation*

Area	Indicator	Data/Result	Interpretation
Curriculum	BOR Approval (All Programs)	Yes	Implemented
	CHED Noted	No	Not CHED Noted
Accreditation	AACCUP Level	Level II	Accredited

Faculty Profile

Table 2 reveals the faculty competency and their academic rigor. It can be seen on the table that 100% or 18 out 18 Graduate School Instructors have finished their doctorate degrees classifying them as "Highly Qualified" to impart knowledge and wisdom to Graduate School students. Meanwhile, the table also showed the teaching sting of the teachers. 12 out of 18 or 67% of the total number of instructors have been employed in the university for 3-10 years. Whereas 6 or 33% of the instructors are employed in the academe for more than 10 years. When it comes to Plantilla position, two or 11.11% of total number of graduate school teachers hold the Entry-level position which is the Instructor position; five or 27.78% are Junior Faculty or the Assistant Professors; six or 33.33% are considered as the Mid-level Faculty or the

Associate Professors; and five or 27.78% have a Plantilla position of Professor or the Senior Faculty. This supports now the study of Bair & Haworth (2020) wherein they pointed out that the effectiveness of the graduate school program is a reflection of engaged and competent faculty that facilitates learning through the conduct of research-based and meaningful discussions.

Table 2. *Status of the Graduate School Programs in terms of Faculty Profile*

Area	Indicator	Data/Result	Percentage
Educational Attainment	MA Units	0	-
	MA Graduate	0	-
	PhD Units	0	-
	PhD Graduate	18	100%
Years of Service	3-10 years	12	66.66%
	>10 years	6	33.33%
Plantilla Position	Instructor	2	11.11%
	Assistant Professor	5	27.78%
	Associate Professor	6	33.33%
	Professor	5	27.78%

Enrollment and Graduation Trend

Table 3 reveals the enrollment of the university in the Graduate School Program in the past 3 years. There is a fluctuating enrollment trend recorded in the Doctor of Philosophy major in Educational Management. A slight decrease in number of enrollees of the Master of Arts in Education major in English was also recorded. Meanwhile, decreasing patterns on the enrollment trend in Master of Arts in Education major in Educational Management, Master of Science in Teaching Mathematics and Master of Science in Information Technology are recorded.

Though the declining enrollment may pose a long-term sustainability risk for these programs, the number of students who successfully finished their graduate studies generally increases in all programs, especially in PhD and MSIT Programs. This reflects the effectiveness and positive indication of the different programs that the institution is offering. This further suggests that those who enroll in the graduate study program and finish it are more dedicated and motivated and capable of juggling the demands of the program they have chosen.

Table 3. *Status of the Graduate School Programs in terms of Enrollment and Graduation*

Area	Indicator	Data/Result	Interpretation
Enrollment			
Doctor of Philosophy	2023	52	Fluctuating
	2024	67	
	2025	49	
MA Educational Management	2023	52	Decreasing
	2024	73	
	2025	34	
MA English	2023	40	Slightly Decreasing
	2024	41	
	2025	37	
MS Mathematics	2023	39	Decreasing
	2024	42	
	2025	29	
MSIT	2023	41	Deacreasing

	2024	35	
	2025	32	
Graduation			
Doctor of Philosophy	2023	4	Increasing
	2024	21	
	2025	32	
MA Educational Management	2023	6	Increasing
	2024	6	
	2025	9	
MA English	2023	6	Fluctuating
	2024	2	
	2025	15	
MS Mathematics	2023	1	Increasing
	2024	6	
	2025	5	
MSIT	2023	4	Increasing
	2024	7	
	2025	12	

Fiscal Resources, and Physical Plant and Facilities

Table 4 shows a contradiction between financial availability and physical reality. It can be gleaned on the table that fiscal resources in all areas are marked available, giving an indication of adequate support. However, the physical plan table revealed that classrooms, and ICT, Research and Digital resources are deemed “Inadequate” which can be flagged as resources that need more improvement. With this result, it can be perceived that the institution has adequate financial resources, but it fails to translate the resources in improving and modernizing physical learning environment. There are great deficiencies of the institution when it comes to graduate school facilities, most especially the classrooms.

On the positive note, the table indicates positive response on the area of Library Management, Learning Management System, Records and Safety. The presence of Learning Management System is an asset of the institution as it becomes an advantage of those students enrolled who came from even outside the province to cope with the demands of graduate studies by attending the online and hybrid classes. Moreso, having adequate safety and records management simply shows how the institution values the trust of their client. This gives solution now to the problem being highlighted by Gardner (2019) on her study citing that aside from the academic pressure, time management also holds a great factor in the completion of their graduate studies. With the existence of hybrid programs, time is already greatly managed by the students.

Table 4. Status of the Graduate School Programs in terms of Fiscal Resources, and Physical Plant and Facilities

Area	Indicator	Data/Result
Fiscal Resources	All areas	Available
Physical Plant and Facilities	Classrooms	Available but inadequate
	Library, LMS, Records and Safety	Adequate

ICT, Research, Digital Resources	Inadequate
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Level of Implementation of Graduate School programs

Curriculum and Instruction

Table 5 shows the Level of Implementation of Graduate School programs in the field of Curriculum and Instruction. It is evident on the table Comprehensive assessments that measure higher-order thinking skills and research competencies (3.92) along with instructional delivery that uses advanced pedagogical approaches such as blended learning and research-based instruction (3.92) are highly implemented. Moreso, the program offerings undergo regular review and revision based on stakeholders feedback and emerging trends (3.89). This simply shows the institution's commitment to better quality of learning. This is evident on how the institution integrates ethical, cultural, and global perspectives appropriate to graduate-level education (3.86). As a manifestation of improving the institution's Graduate school programs, the respondents pointed out that Graduate school curricula are outcomes-based (3.85) which leads to understanding its alignment to the CHED and institutional mission-vision.

The institution has a score of 3.88 which means it is Highly Implemented. This shows that the institution is really committed to making Curriculum and Instruction for graduate school students. The institution has programs and activities that help graduate school students. The graduate school always tries to make sure the curriculum is relevant and useful for the students.

The institution knows that it is important to provide instruction and learning experiences for graduate students. This helps the students learn and grow intellectually and professionally. The institution is always trying to improve the courses it offers and the way it teaches. It also provides activities that help students learn through research. Graduate schools need to have curricula that help students think critically and become professionals. The institution has seminars and workshops that help students learn. It also has research activities and faculty mentoring that help students. The institution is really dedicated to creating an academic environment for graduate students.

The faculty members and administrators work together to implement instructional practices. They use approaches that focus on the students and help them learn. They also use ways of teaching and updated materials. The institution uses assessment strategies that help students understand and apply what they learn. All these initiatives help graduate students get the skills and knowledge they need in their fields. The Curriculum and Instruction, at the institution is really good. It helps graduate students a lot.

In this regard, the findings are consistent with the mandate of the Commission on Higher Education (2020), in particular, with the emphasis of research-oriented instruction, high-quality delivery of curricula, and efficient support systems in the graduate education programs in the Philippines. The high level of implementation that was revealed during the study indicates the efforts made by the educational institution to align its practices and instructional initiatives according to the established standards and policies of CHED. In terms of providing relevant academic activities, research-based learning opportunities, and instructional support measures, the institution shows its willingness to foster quality graduate education.

At the same time, the policies and frameworks discussed above serve as the foundations for higher education institutions, helping them to ensure that the graduate programs are relevant to advanced learning and professional development. Such policies motivate the institutions to improve their instructional strategies, increase the level of competence of instructors, and offer necessary academic support to graduates.

Table 5. *Level of Implementation of Graduate School Programs in terms of Curriculum and Instruction*

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Graduate curricula are outcomes-based, aligned with CHED PSGs and institutional mission-vision.	3.85	Highly Implemented
2. Program offerings undergo regular review and revision based on stakeholder feedback and emerging trends.	3.89	Highly Implemented
3. Instructional delivery uses advanced pedagogical approaches (e.g., blended learning, research-based instruction).	3.92	Highly Implemented
4. Courses integrate ethical, cultural, and global perspectives appropriate to graduate-level education.	3.86	Highly Implemented
5. Comprehensive assessments (comps, capstone, and thesis/dissertation) measure higher-order thinking skills and research competencies.	3.92	Highly Implemented
Category mean	3.88	Highly implemented

Faculty Competence and Qualifications

Table 6 shows the extent of implementation of graduate school programs in terms of Faculty Competence and Qualification with an overall category mean of 3.95 is orally interpreted as Highly Implemented . This signifies that the Graduate School of Cagayan State University-Aparri Campus has a very competent and qualified staff who can provide quality graduate education and help the students in their academic and research advancement. One of the factors “Faculty engage in continuing professional education (training, conferences and workshops)” achieved the highest mean of 3.97 interpreted as Highly Implemented. This implies that faculty members are involved in professional development activities to improve their pedagogic knowledge, research skills and disciplinary competence. This ongoing learning enables them to stay current with the latest trends in education and enhances the quality of training they offer to graduate students. Meanwhile, the lowest mean, 3.93, was obtained for “Faculty demonstrate research productivity (publications, presentations, and creative works) aligned with program goals” and “Teaching performance is regularly evaluated and feedback is used for professional growth” which is still interpreted as Highly Implemented. The results showed that faculty members are engaged in research and evaluation of performance but research output has to be further improved and feedback systems for continuous professional growth need to be further refined. These findings are in line with the study of Tight (2023) who noted that ongoing professional development, active engagement in research, and systematic evaluation of performance increase faculty competency in graduate education. All of these result in better teaching, higher research productivity, and more institutional effectiveness.

Table 6. *Level of Implementation of Graduate School Programs in terms of Faculty Competence and Qualifications*

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Faculty members possess graduate-level credentials (master’s/doctorate) relevant to their teaching assignments.	3.96	Highly Implemented
2. Faculty demonstrate research productivity (publications, presentations, and creative works) aligned with program goals.	3.93	Highly Implemented
3. Faculty engage in continuing professional education (training, conferences, and workshops).	3.97	Highly Implemented
4. Teaching performance is regularly evaluated and feedback is used for professional growth.	3.93	Highly Implemented
5. Faculty workload and advisory functions are compliant with CHED standards for graduate programs.	3.96	Highly Implemented

Category mean	3.95	Highly implemented
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Learning Resources and Facilities

The level of implementation of graduate school programs in terms of Learning Resources and Facilities is presented in Table 7 with an overall category mean of 3.70 interpreted as Highly Implemented. This means that the Graduate School of Cagayan State University–Aparri Campus has enough learning resources, technical support and facilities that contribute to excellent graduate level instruction and student learning experiences. Among the indicators, “ICT infrastructure supports online and blended learning modalities (LMS, internet, software)” got the highest mean of 3.80 which is interpreted as Highly Implemented. This shows that the institution has provided technological resources that enable flexible learning, online interaction, and access to the academic materials needed for graduate studies. In contrast, “Library collections include updated and peer-reviewed references, digital resources and access to e-journals/databases” got the lowest mean of 3.50 but still interpreted as Highly Implemented meaning that though library services are available and functional, continuous improvement in the expansion of updated academic collections and digital research resources may further strengthen the research capabilities of graduate students. These results are supported by Mishra et al. (2020) who emphasized that access to quality learning resources and digital infrastructure are a critical factor in improving the delivery of higher education, especially in assisting online and blended learning, where students rely on technological resources and academic databases to learn and engage in research effectively.

Table 7. Level of Implementation of Graduate School Programs in terms of Learning Resources and Facilities

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Library collections include updated and peer-reviewed references, digital resources, and access to e-journals/databases.	3.50	Highly Implemented
2. Learning spaces are conducive, accessible, and technology-enabled to support graduate study.	3.76	Highly Implemented
3. ICT infrastructure supports online and blended learning modalities (LMS, internet, software).	3.80	Highly Implemented
4. Laboratories and other facilities are available, functional, and aligned with program requirements.	3.64	Highly Implemented
5. Administrative and support offices are efficient and responsive to graduate students’ needs.	3.78	Highly Implemented
Category mean	3.88	Highly implemented

Student Support Services

Table 8 shows the level of implementation of graduate school programs in terms of Student Support Services with an overall category mean of 3.80 defined as Highly Implemented. It means that the Graduate School of Cagayan State University–Aparri Campus offers many support mechanisms that aid graduate students in their academic journey, personal development, and professional advancement. Among the indicators, the highest mean was “Activities promoting well-being, networking, and professional growth are regularly organized” with a mean of 3.86 interpreted as Highly Implemented. This demonstrates that the institution values the creation of opportunities to strengthen students’ engagement, sense of belonging and professional growth beyond classroom learning. In contrast, the statement “Financial assistance, scholarships, and research funding are made available when possible” received the lowest mean of 3.66 which was still interpreted as Highly Implemented. This implies that financial support mechanisms are in place but there is a need to further expand funding opportunities to better assist the graduate students in meeting academic and research-related expenses. Bunce et al. (2021) verified the findings by highlighting that high quality student support services such as academic support, personal support and institutional

resources play a significant role in student engagement, persistence and success in higher education through aiding learners to overcome academic and personal challenges.

Table 8. Level of Implementation of Graduate School Programs in terms of Student Support Services

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Clear admissions, orientation, and advising services are provided to incoming graduate students.	3.85	Highly Implemented
2. Counseling, guidance, and career development services are accessible to all students.	3.84	Highly Implemented
3. Financial assistance, scholarships, and research funding are made available when possible.	3.66	Highly Implemented
4. Student grievances and concerns are addressed through a transparent redress mechanism.	3.78	Highly Implemented
5. Activities promoting well-being, networking, and professional growth are regularly organized.	3.86	Highly Implemented
Category mean	3.80	Highly implemented

Research and Professional Development Services

Table 9 Level of Implementation of Graduate School Programs in terms of Research and Professional Development Services Category Mean Verbal Interpretation Overall 3.89 Highly Implemented This shows that the Graduate School of Cagayan State University-Aparri Campus has good implementation of research undertakings and professional development activities that enhance the academic development of graduate students and faculty members. “Research agenda is well-defined and aligned with institutional and national priorities” and “Graduate students are encouraged to publish or present research outputs in reputable platforms” had the highest mean of 3.93 and were regarded as Highly Implemented. The results are indicative of an institution’s effectiveness in enhancing research productivity by giving direction for scholarly activities and encouraging graduate students to participate to knowledge development through distribution of research products. In contrast, “Students are provided mentoring and technical assistance in conducting research,” “Linkages with industry, academe, and research institutions are established for collaboration,” and “Professional development opportunities (seminars, training, international exposures) are regularly offered” got the lowest mean of 3.86 but interpreted as Highly Implemented. This means that while these services are being put in place, further strengthening of research mentoring, external collaborations, and enhanced professional development opportunities may enrich the research culture of the Graduate School. The results are consistent with the findings of Sá and Serpa (2020), who stated that research-oriented higher education institutions should boost research support systems, mentorship methods, and collaboration opportunities to build students’ research competencies and improve academic output.

Table 9. Level of Implementation of Graduate School Programs in terms of Research and Professional Development Services

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Research agenda is well-defined and aligned with institutional and national priorities.	3.93	Highly Implemented
2. Students are provided mentoring and technical assistance in conducting research.	3.86	Highly Implemented
3. Graduate students are encouraged to publish or present research outputs in reputable platforms.	3.93	Highly Implemented
4. Linkages with industry, academe, and research institutions are established for collaboration.	3.86	Highly Implemented
5. Professional development opportunities (seminars, training, international exposures) are regularly offered.	3.86	Highly Implemented

Category mean	3.89	Highly implemented
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Summary of Level of Implementation of Graduate School Programs

Table 10 shows the level of implementation of the Graduate School Programs. The overall descriptive interpretation is “Highly Implemented” and there is a consistent, robust performance across all assessed parameters. The program boasts a highly competent and intellectually equipped roster of professors as shown by the highest weighted mean of 3.95 in the assessment of Faculty Competence and Qualification. Close following are Curriculum and Instruction and Resources and Facilities, both with a weighted mean of 3.88, which means that academic programs are in line with institutional standards and supported by adequate learning resources. The least mean on the rated factors was Student Support Services, which was at 3.80. Though still suggestive of a well implemented status, this area is a strong candidate for administrative optimization to meet the excellent criteria put forth by the faculty. When the missing data for Research and Professional Development Services are included, this profile will be complete and will either highlight a new area of excellence or point to a key area for strategic development.

Table 10. Summary table in the Level of Implementation of Graduate School Programs

Variables	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Curriculum and Instruction	3.88	Highly Implemented
2. Faculty Competence and Qualification	3.95	Highly Implemented
3. Resources and Facilities	3.88	Highly Implemented
4. Student Support Services	3.80	Highly Implemented
5. Research and Professional Development Services		

Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of Graduate School Programs

Administrator

Table 11 shows the obstacles encountered by the administrators in the implementation of graduate school programs. The results indicate that the majority of the criteria mentioned were “Often a Challenge” while some were “Always a Challenge”. Thus, administrators have ongoing challenges in sustaining and developing graduate education programs. The factors with the highest mean of 3.50 which means Always a Challenge were “Lack of ICT infrastructure for online/blended learning” and “Limited opportunities for scholarships, assistantships and research grants”. This means that the provision of flexible learning, student support and research activities could be affected by the lack of technology resources and inadequate financial support systems. In contrast, “Limited time and budget for regular curriculum review and updates,” “Difficulty in aligning course outcomes with CHED PSGs and industry expectations,” “Shortage of faculty with doctoral degrees or specialized expertise,” “Limited incentives or funding for faculty professional development,” “Limited budget allocation for equipment, technology and library resources,” “Lack of comprehensive orientation and advising services for graduate students,” “Limited institutional research funds for faculty and students,” and “Weak linkages with industry and research partners for collaboration” got the lowest mean of 3.00 interpreted as Often a Challenge. These are not viewed as permanent impediments, but do identify areas that require ongoing attention and preparation on the part of the institution. The results are in line with Reyes et al. (2020) who observed that graduate education institutions in the Philippines still encounter challenges relating to inadequate resources, limited research funding, faculty development needs, and insufficient institutional support systems, which may affect the effective implementation and sustainability of graduate programs.

Table 11. *Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of Graduate School Programs in terms of its Administrator*

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Limited time and budget for regular curriculum review and updates.	3.00	Often a Challenge
2. Difficulty aligning course outcomes with CHED PSGs and industry expectations.	3.00	Often a Challenge
3. Shortage of faculty with doctoral degrees or specialized expertise.	3.00	Often a Challenge
4. Limited incentives or funding for faculty professional development.	3.00	Often a Challenge
5. Limited budget allocation for equipment, technology, and library resources.	3.00	Often a Challenge
6. Inadequate ICT infrastructure for online/blended learning.	3.50	Always a Challenge
7. Lack of comprehensive orientation and advising services for graduate students.	3.00	Often a Challenge
8. Few opportunities for scholarships, assistantships, and research grants.	3.50	Always a Challenge
9. Limited institutional research funds for faculty and students.	3.00	Often a Challenge
10. Weak linkages with industry and research partners for collaboration.	3.00	Often a Challenge
Category mean	3.10	Often a Challenge

Faculty

Table 12 describes the difficulties that faculty members confront when implementing graduate school programs. The findings indicate that faculty members typically experience manageable but recurring challenges in their teaching, research, and mentoring responsibilities, with most of the indicators assessed as “Sometimes a Challenge” and one indicator rated as “Often a Challenge.” “Limited opportunities or incentives for continuing professional education” scored the highest mean of 2.71 which is interpreted as Often a Challenge. This shows that faculty members find it difficult to avail of trainings, seminars and other professional development activities that may improve their instructional practices and research competencies. “Lack of standardized tools for evaluating thesis/dissertation quality and rigor” received the lowest mean score of 1.86, characterized as Sometimes a Challenge, indicating that concerns about assessment standards exist but are not as frequently experienced as other faculty-related challenges. The findings also showed that factors such as lack of access to research databases, poor ICT resources, severe workload, lack of research mentoring and limited publication possibilities still hinder faculty engagement in research and professional activities. The findings are further reinforced by Brew et al. (2021) who observed that faculty development, research support and institutional mechanisms for professional advancement are key in increasing academic staff ability and boosting quality of higher education delivery. The continued investment in faculty development and in research support systems allows educators to effectively fulfill their teaching, mentoring and scholarly obligations.

Table 12. *Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of Graduate School Programs in terms of its Faculty*

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Inconsistent application of outcomes-based education (OBE) in teaching and assessment.	2.00	Sometimes a Challenge
2. Lack of standardized tools for evaluating thesis/dissertation quality and rigor.	1.86	Sometimes a Challenge

3. Heavy teaching and advisory workload affecting time for research and mentoring.	2.00	Sometimes a Challenge
4. Limited opportunities or incentives for continuing professional education.	2.71	Often a Challenge
5. Limited access to updated references, journals, and research databases.	2.36	Sometimes a Challenge
6. Inadequate ICT infrastructure for preparing and delivering innovative instruction.	2.36	Sometimes a Challenge
7. Insufficient coordination for student advising and research supervision.	1.93	Sometimes a Challenge
8. Limited opportunities to publish or present research outputs.	2.43	Sometimes a Challenge
9. Lack of institutional mentoring support for research and data analysis.	2.21	Sometimes a Challenge
10. Few professional development activities that focus on advanced research skills.	2.21	Sometimes a Challenge
Category mean	2.21	Sometimes a Challenge

Students

Table 13 shows the problems experienced by students in the implementation of graduate school programs. The results showed that all the detected indications were evaluated as “Sometimes a Challenge”. This means that graduate students do face some obstacles in their academic path but these challenges do not exist at a constant level of severity. Among the indicators, "Limited opportunities for scholarships, assistantships and research grants" got the highest mean of 2.26 interpreted as Sometimes a Challenge which means that financial constraints remain one of the concerns that affect the students’ ability to fully engage in graduate studies especially in conducting research and completing academic requirements. Alternatively, “Inconsistent application of OBE and advanced teaching methods” and “Lack of clear guidelines and rubrics for thesis/dissertation requirements” both received the lowest mean of 1.83 which was interpreted as Sometimes a Challenge, indicating that students are generally provided with adequate instructional guidance and research direction, although improvements in instructional consistency and clarity of research expectations may further improve their learning experiences. Other concerns, such as limited availability of faculty mentoring, delayed feedback, poor ICT facilities and limited research possibilities, point to the need for stronger academic support structures for graduate students. These findings are supported by Gardner (2020), who pointed out that graduate students frequently encounter difficulties with research completion, academic expectations, financial burdens, and access to institutional support, thus stressing the significance of effective mentoring, clear academic structures, and sufficient resources in fostering graduate student persistence and achievement.

Table 13. Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of Graduate School Programs in terms of its students

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Inconsistent application of OBE and advanced teaching methods.	1.83	Sometimes a Challenge
2. Lack of clear guidelines and rubrics for thesis/dissertation requirements.	1.83	Sometimes a Challenge
3. Limited availability of faculty mentors or advisers.	1.86	Sometimes a Challenge
4. Faculty workload resulting in delayed feedback on outputs.	1.92	Sometimes a Challenge
5. Inadequate ICT facilities for research and online classes.	1.86	Sometimes a Challenge
6. Limited opportunities for scholarships, assistantships, and research grants.	2.26	Sometimes a Challenge

7. Lack of student engagement activities for networking and professional growth.	1.95	Sometimes a Challenge
8. Limited opportunities to publish or present research outputs.	1.95	Sometimes a Challenge
9. Limited mentoring support for proposal writing and statistical analysis.	1.93	Sometimes a Challenge
Category mean	1.93	Sometimes a Challenge

Table 14. *Summary table in the Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of Graduate School Programs*

Variables	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Administrator	3.10	Often a Challenge
2. Faculty	2.21	Sometimes a Challenge
3. Students	1.93	Sometimes a Challenge

Relationship between the Level of Implementation of the Different Graduate School Programs

Table 15 presents the correlation between the execution level of the different graduate school programs. The results show that all aspects of program execution have a p-value greater than 0.05, hence the decision is not to reject the null hypothesis (H_0). This implies that the level of implementation of the various Graduate School programs in terms of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty Competence/Qualification, Learning Resources and Facilities, Student Support Services and Research and Professional Development Services are not significantly different. Research and Professional Development Services had the highest computed value (Fvalue= 1.143, p-value= 0.347) among the indicators. So there can be variation in programs but it is not statistically significant. In Student Support Services, the most comparable among graduate programs was found to be the implementation of student-related support mechanisms with lowest computed value (F-value = 0.402) with p-value of 0.846. The data reveal that the graduate programs have fairly similar practices and standards across different areas of implementation. This implies that institutional policies, resources and administrative assistance are executed consistently across programs. These results are consistent with findings of Tight (2020) that institutional quality assurance systems and standardized academic practices help to facilitate the promotion of consistency in the delivery and implementation of higher education programs to ensure that different academic units operate within common institutional frameworks.

Table 15. *Relationship between the Level of Implementation of the Different Graduate School Programs*

Variable	F-value	p-value (Sig.)	Interpretation
Curriculum and Instruction	0.520	0.760	Not Significant
Faculty Competence/Qualification	0.438	0.821	
Learning Resources and Facilities	0.855	0.516	
Student Support Services	0.402	0.846	
Research and Professional Development Services	1.143	0.347	

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if p-value ≤ 0.05 ; otherwise, fail to reject H_0 .

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the Graduate School Programs of Cagayan State University-Aparri Campus are generally effective in the delivery of the quality graduate education as evidenced by the high level of implementation in curriculum and instruction, faculty competence, learning resources and facilities, student support services and research and professional development services. The institution has shown good compliance to quality assurance standards as evidenced by its Board of Regent's approval, AACUP Level II accreditation and highly qualified faculty members; however, the lack of

CHED notation, decline in enrollment in some master's programs, and deficiencies in physical facilities, ICT infrastructure, library resources and research support are critical aspects that need to be addressed. Although administrators, faculty members and graduate students faced different challenges in program implementation, these concerns had no significant effect on the overall implementation of the graduate school programs as shown by the absence of a statistically significant difference among the degree programs. The study thus confirms that the Graduate School has a standardized and effective program implementation system but underscores the need for continuous institutional improvement in infrastructure, research capability, student support and resource management to sustain excellence and ensure the long-term quality and competitiveness of its graduate education programs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study conducted, the following are hereby recommended:

1. Faculty Members should pursue professional development activities on a regular basis and improve the methods for mentoring, consulting and providing feedback to graduate students in research.
2. The Research and Extension Office should conduct frequent capacity development programs, research mentoring and collaborative opportunities to boost the research output of faculty members and graduate students.
3. Enhancing academic assistance, counseling, career advising and student engagement initiatives through the Student Affairs and Services Office to foster graduate student achievement and well-being.
4. The Scholarship and Financial aid Office should develop and increase scholarship, research grant and financial aid possibilities for graduate students to complete their academic degrees.
5. Future researchers should conduct similar studies with other higher education institutions and include other factors and qualitative methodologies to further validate and expand the findings of the present study.

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