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PROFILING THE GRADUATE STUDENTS OF PHILIPPINE STATE COLLEGE OF AERONAUTICS: BASIS FOR CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to profile the graduate students of the Philippine State College of Aeronautics (PhilSCA) to serve as a basis for curriculum enhancement. With the rapidly changing aviation industry and the growing demand for highly skilled professionals, it is essential to assess the alignment of the current graduate program with industry needs and students' academic and professional goals. The research explores various aspects of the graduate students, including their demographic and educational backgrounds, career aspirations, learning preferences, and perceived relevance of their studies to future career opportunities. Data were collected through surveys and interviews with a sample of graduate students enrolled in aviation-related programs.

Findings indicate that most graduate students are between 26 and 30 years old, with a strong background in aeronautical engineering and related fields. The majority of students expressed that the graduate program is highly relevant to their career goals, particularly in aviation management, flight operations, and safety. However, there were notable gaps in soft skills training, exposure to emerging aviation technologies, and the integration of modern industry practices. Students favored traditional lectures for theoretical courses but also preferred online modules and group work for certain subjects. Recommendations for curriculum enhancement include incorporating courses on drones, AI, and aviation business management, increasing hands-on practical experiences, and expanding career services.

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The findings of this study provide critical insights into how PhilSCA's graduate curriculum can be improved to better meet the evolving demands of the aviation industry and better support the professional development of students.

Keywords: *graduate students, curriculum enhancement, aviation industry*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine State College of Aeronautics came into existence as a result of an extreme necessity to solve a military problem plaguing the 5th Fighter Wing (the premier jet fighter unit of the Philippine Air Force) located in the terminal town of Floridablanca, Pampanga. The nearest town to the community offering the secondary and tertiary levels of education at that time was located in the town of Guagua, Pampanga which involved travel of seventeen (17) kilometers of rough roads from the Air Base. Travel is dangerous then because Basa Air Base is in the midst of Huklandia (NPA). The 5th Fighter Wing is the only unit of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) handling jet fighter aircraft, and its highly skilled personnel cannot be transferred to the other Bases of (PAF) where the government can use them without wasting heavy investment in their training abroad. Request for the transfer and application for discharge among the military personnel were frequent because they and their children were desirous of pursuing higher education, and had to go elsewhere because there was no secondary available education in the vicinity. After repeated requests to the DECS, the invitations to private sectors to establish a tertiary level education failed. The community pooled their resource to comply substantially with the initial requirements of the Bureau of Public Schools and established community schools. The base authorities repaired a dilapidated building into temporary classrooms and extended the use of other facilities including their training aids and apparatus.

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On 1977, President Marcos signed Presidential Decree No. 1078 converting Basa Air Base Community College to Philippine Air Force College of Aeronautics with its main campus in Villamor Air Base, Pasay City, Metro Manila. Although with state college status, its charter did not provide for government subsidy as it was considered a non-profit and non-stock educational institution. Aside from Villamor Air Base and Basa Air Base (Florida and Palmayo Campuses), additional campuses were also created in Sangley Air Base, but later closed, Fernando Air Base, and Mactan Air Base and Medellin, Cebu. During this period, it was envisioned by Philippine Air Force authorities to be the Philippine Air Force Academy to solve its problem in the procurement and training of its officer pilots through the merging of the Philippine Air Force Flying School and the Philippine Air Force Regular Officer Procurement Program. President Corazon C. Aquino approved Republic Act No. 7605 converting the Philippine Air Force College of Aeronautics to the Philippine State College of Aeronautics. In 1994, its Board of Trustees approved the creation of its own flight school that will train students for the private pilot and commercial pilot.

In 1997, it acquired its first trainer plane — a Tampico STB9-C aircraft (RP 2200) which the late Senator and Department of Education Secretary, Raul Roco donated from his country-wide development fund, and another Tampico STB9-C aircraft (RP 2204) was purchased for P10 Million from PhilSCA Development Fund on June 3, 1992.

Since aviation was introduced in the Philippines in the middle of the 19th century, most of the schools that are offering aviation and aeronautics education have all but focused only the training of aircraft mechanics, pilots and flight crews. There was no single institution of higher learning which offers post graduate education to develop our executives in the aviation sector. This opportunity to develop executives and professionals to handle our aviation industry was seen by PhilSCA as a great challenge.

Thus, in 2001, under the leadership of Dr. Henrietta B. Sumalbag as President, Dr. Bernard R. Ramirez as Vice President for Academic Affairs, and AP Rowena S. Navera, the Board of Trustees approved of the establishment of Institute of Graduate Studies which

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initially offers courses in Master in Public Administration (MPA) and Master of Education in Aeronautical Management (MEAM).

Master of Public Administration (MPA) Specializing in Governmental and Airport Administration

Essential conceptual skills and knowledge in public administration focusing on government and airport administration are required. The course exposes the students in various economic, political, socio-cultural and behavior factors affecting public administration not only in the Philippines but also in other countries. Different government policies and practices in the contemporary government and airport administration are avenues for the discussion and analysis using techniques in research and case analysis.

Subject along airport administration and aviation education are offered to afford those in the aeronautical and related courses additional advances studies related to their baccalaureate courses.

Master of Education in Aeronautical Management (MEAM)

This program will augment the basic knowledge of aviation and non-aviation professionals who are planning to work as mentors/instructors in the field of airline management and operation, government regulatory bodies in aviation, military aviation, and general aviation and MRO sectors.

Statement of the Problem

1. What is the demographic background of the graduate students at the Philippine State College of Aeronautics?
    1.1 Age
    1.2 Gender
    1.3 Socio-Economic Status
    1.4 Bachelor's Degree

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2. How do students perceive the relevance of their graduate studies to their future career opportunities?
3. What are the career aspirations and goals of graduate students in the Philippine State College of Aeronautics?
4. What learning methods do graduate students prefer?
    4.1 traditional lectures
    4.2 online modules
    4.3 group work
5. What recommendations do graduate students have for enhancing the curriculum to meet their academic and professional needs?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings from the research conducted on profiling the graduate students of the Philippine State College of Aeronautics (PhilSCA), focusing on demographic and educational backgrounds, career aspirations, learning preferences, and recommendations for curriculum enhancement. The data was gathered through surveys and interviews with graduate students.

1. Demographic and Educational Backgrounds of Graduate Students at PhilSCA

The following subsections provide a detailed analysis of the demographic and educational backgrounds of the graduate students at PhilSCA:

Table 1: Demographic Backgrounds of Graduate Students at PhilSCA in terms of AGE

Age	Percent
25-30 years old	25.0
31-35 years old	45.0
36-45 years old	20.0

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Age	Percent
46 years and above	10.0

The data on the age distribution of graduate students at the Philippine State College of Aeronautics (PhilSCA) reveals a diverse student body with varying educational and professional needs. A quarter (25%) of the students are between 25-30 years old, suggesting that many are recent graduates or those transitioning from undergraduate studies. For this group, the curriculum should emphasize foundational knowledge, focusing on essential skills and concepts necessary for advanced learning.

The largest group, comprising 45% of students, is in the 31-35 age range. These students likely have some professional experience, possibly in aviation or related fields. The curriculum for this group should incorporate more advanced topics, real-world applications, and industry-specific case studies to help bridge the gap between academic learning and professional practice. Providing opportunities for internships or practical learning experiences would further benefit these students.

Twenty percent of students are in the 36-45 age range, and these individuals may have significant professional experience, possibly in managerial or leadership roles. For this group, the curriculum could include specialized, high-level topics such as aviation management, safety, and advanced technical subjects. It would also be beneficial to integrate leadership and management skills training to support their career progression.

Finally, 10% of students are aged 46 and above. These students may be returning to school to upskill or transition into new roles. The curriculum should offer more flexible learning options, such as part-time or modular courses, to accommodate their professional and personal commitments. Additionally, offering courses focused on career development, mentorship, and the integration of technology into their fields of expertise would be valuable for this demographic.

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Overall, the diverse age range of students at PhilSCA calls for a curriculum that is adaptable and responsive to varying levels of experience. By balancing foundational learning for younger students with specialized knowledge and professional development for older, more experienced students, PhilSCA can better meet the needs of its graduate students.

Table 2: Demographic Backgrounds of Graduate Students at PhilSCA in terms of SEX

Gender	**Percent**
Male	70.0
Female	30.0
Total	**100.0**

The data in Table 2 indicates the gender distribution of graduate students at the Philippine State College of Aeronautics (PhilSCA). The majority of students, 70%, are male, while 30% are female. This suggests that PhilSCA's graduate programs are predominantly attended by male students, though a significant portion, 30%, is made up of female students.

This gender distribution may reflect trends in the aviation and aeronautics fields, where historically, male representation has been higher. However, with 30% female students, there is an opportunity for PhilSCA to further promote gender diversity and inclusivity within its programs.

The curriculum could be designed to be more inclusive and supportive, encouraging more female students to pursue careers in aviation and related fields. Additionally, tailored support systems such as mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and gender-sensitive initiatives could further enhance the academic experience for both male and female students at PhilSCA.

There is a higher representation of male students, which may reflect the broader sex or gender distribution typically seen in aviation-related fields.

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Table 3: Demographic Backgrounds of Graduate Students at PhilSCA in terms of INCOME LEVEL

Income Level	Percent
Low-income	25.0
Middle-income	50.0
High-income	25.0
Total	**100.0**

Table 3 provides insights into the demographic and educational backgrounds of graduate students at PhilSCA, specifically focusing on income levels. The data shows that 25% of students come from low-income households, 50% come from middle-income households, and 25% come from high-income households. The majority of students, therefore, are from middle-income families, highlighting the central role that financial resources play in shaping the student body.

This distribution suggests that while there is a diversity of income backgrounds, middle-income students represent the largest group, which could have several implications for the university's policies and practices. For example, the prevalence of middle-income students may indicate a greater need for financial aid programs, scholarships, and flexible payment structures to support students who are neither affluent enough to afford full tuition without assistance nor eligible for many low-income support programs.

Additionally, the presence of a significant portion of low-income students suggests that the institution might need to focus on making education more accessible to those with fewer financial resources. This could include offering subsidized fees for advanced courses, certifications, or supplementary academic resources.

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Furthermore, the fact that 25% of students come from high-income families might also provide valuable information, as this group may expect different kinds of resources or opportunities, such as specialized academic tracks, internships, or networking opportunities that align with their financial status and career expectations.

Overall, understanding the income distribution of students is crucial for tailoring both academic and financial support systems. It allows for more targeted initiatives that ensure all students, regardless of their income level, have equal access to educational opportunities and resources that will help them succeed.

Table 4: Demographic Backgrounds of Graduate Students at PhilSCA in terms of Bachelor's Degree

Academic Field	**Percent**
Aeronautical Engineering/Technology	60.0
Aviation Management	20.0
Other Engineering and Technology Fields	10.0
Business or Social Sciences	10.0
Total	**100.0**

Table 4 provides a detailed breakdown of the academic backgrounds of graduate students at PhilSCA, specifically categorizing them according to their undergraduate degrees. The data shows that 60% of students have a Bachelor's degree in Aeronautical Engineering or Technology, making this the most common academic field among the graduate student body. This is followed by 20% of students who have studied Aviation Management, and 10% each from other Engineering and Technology fields and Business or Social Sciences.

The overwhelming proportion of students with an Aeronautical Engineering or Technology background suggests that PhilSCA is a specialized institution with a strong focus

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on fields related to aviation, aerospace, and technical engineering. This could reflect both the institution's reputation and its ability to attract students who are already interested in, or have a strong foundation in, technical fields. The prominence of Aeronautical Engineering/Technology aligns with PhilSCA's likely emphasis on providing advanced education and research opportunities in these disciplines, which may be tailored to meet the demands of industries such as aviation, aerospace, and technology.

Aviation Management, comprising 20% of the student body, indicates a significant interest in the operational, managerial, and strategic aspects of the aviation industry. Students with this background might be looking to further their careers in areas like airport management, airline operations, and aviation logistics. This concentration in Aviation Management suggests that PSCA's graduate programs are not only attracting technically skilled individuals but also professionals seeking to enter or advance in leadership and management roles within the aviation sector.

The 10% of students coming from other Engineering and Technology fields reflects a broader interest in technical education beyond just aeronautics. These students likely bring valuable interdisciplinary perspectives to the graduate programs, contributing to a well-rounded academic environment that emphasizes engineering principles applicable across various sectors of technology.

Finally, the 10% of students who come from Business or Social Sciences backgrounds highlight a more diverse range of academic experiences within the graduate student body. While this group is smaller in number, it introduces an interesting dynamic to the learning environment. These students may be seeking to integrate their knowledge in business or social sciences with technical or aviation-focused fields, which could lead to innovative ideas and interdisciplinary approaches. For example, students from business backgrounds could contribute expertise in management, economics, or finance, while those from social sciences

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might offer insights into human behavior, organizational studies, or policy analysis related to aviation or technology.

Overall, this distribution of academic backgrounds underscores PhilSCA's role in attracting students from both technical and non-technical fields. The dominance of engineering, particularly in Aeronautical Engineering/Technology, reflects the institution's strong ties to aviation and engineering sectors, while the presence of students from business and social sciences enriches the graduate programs by offering diverse perspectives and skills. The blend of technical expertise with managerial and social science knowledge may foster an interdisciplinary learning environment that is well-equipped to address the complex, evolving challenges in the aviation and technology industries. This diversity in academic preparation helps create a dynamic and multifaceted academic community, preparing students to tackle problems from multiple angles and disciplines.

2. Students Perceive the Relevance of Their Graduate Studies to Their Future Career Opportunities

Table 5: Perceived Relevance of Their Graduate Studies to Their Future Career Opportunities

Theme	Description	Percentage of Students
Industry Alignment	A majority of students believe the program is highly relevant to their career goals, particularly in aviation safety, operations, and management.	70%
Career Advancement	Many students feel the program will help them secure leadership or higher-level positions within the aviation industry, with aspirations for managerial or technical roles.	60%

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Theme	Description	Percentage of Students
Skills Development	Students reported improved technical skills, but expressed a need for more focus on modern aviation technologies like drones and AI.	40%

The thematic analysis of student responses revealed varying perceptions about how their graduate studies at PhilSCA are relevant to their future career opportunities. Three key themes emerged from the interviews and surveys: Industry Alignment, Career Advancement, and Skills Development.

A majority of students (70%) felt that the graduate program is highly relevant to their career goals, particularly in providing specialized knowledge in aviation safety, operations, and management. This feedback suggests that the program is well-aligned with the current demands of the aviation industry. Students believe that the expertise gained in these areas will prepare them for roles directly related to aviation, such as positions in aviation safety, operations, and management. This alignment with industry needs highlights the program's strength in providing students with practical, sector-specific knowledge that is crucial for their career progression.

In terms of Career Advancement, 60% of students expressed confidence that the program would help them secure leadership or higher-level positions within the aviation industry. Many students shared aspirations to take on managerial or technical roles, indicating that they view the program as a stepping stone to advancing their careers. The program's focus on leadership development and technical expertise appears to give students the tools and credentials they need to pursue senior roles in aviation, suggesting that the program plays an important role in enhancing students' long-term career prospects.

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The theme of Skills Development also emerged, with 40% of students noting that the program has significantly enhanced their technical skills. However, many of these students expressed a desire for more focus on modern aviation technologies such as drones and artificial intelligence (AI). This feedback suggests that while the program does well in providing a strong foundation in traditional aviation competencies, there is a recognized need to incorporate emerging technologies that are rapidly shaping the industry. Students highlighted the growing importance of AI and drones in aviation and feel that the curriculum should evolve to better prepare them for these technological shifts.

This implies, the thematic analysis highlights the effectiveness of PhilSCA's graduate program in aligning with industry demands, supporting career advancement, and enhancing technical skills. However, it also points to areas for improvement, particularly in integrating modern aviation technologies like drones and AI into the curriculum. Addressing these gaps would ensure that the program remains relevant and helps students develop the skills necessary to meet the future challenges of the aviation industry.

3. Career Aspirations and Goals of Graduate Students at PhilSCA

The following checklist summarizes the career goals of the graduate students based on survey responses:

Table 6: The Career Aspirations and Goals of Graduate Students at PhilSCA

Aviation Field	Percent
Aviation Management	35.0
Pilot/Flight Instructor	20.0
Airline Operations	15.0
Aviation Safety Officer	10.0
Aeronautical Engineering	10.0

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Aviation Field	Percent
Other (e.g., Air Traffic Control, Aviation Consultant)	10.0
Total	**100.0**

Table 6 presents the career aspirations and goals of graduate students at PhilSCA, revealing a diverse range of interests within the aviation field. According to the data, 35% of students aspire to pursue careers in Aviation Management, making it the most popular field. This suggests that a significant portion of students is drawn to leadership roles that focus on overseeing and managing various aspects of the aviation industry, such as airlines, airports, and aviation-related organizations.

The second most common aspiration is to become a Pilot or Flight Instructor, with 20% of students aiming for these roles. This reflects the ongoing demand for skilled pilots and instructors to meet the needs of the growing aviation industry and highlights that many students are interested in directly engaging with aviation operations from a technical and practical standpoint.

Airline Operations follows closely, with 15% of students aspiring to work in this area. These students are likely interested in roles that focus on the logistics, planning, and operational aspects of airline services, contributing to the smooth and efficient running of airline companies.

10% of students expressed interest in becoming an Aviation Safety Officer, emphasizing the critical importance of safety and compliance in the aviation industry. These roles involve ensuring that safety standards are met and maintaining protocols to prevent accidents or mishaps, which is crucial to the integrity of aviation operations.

Another 10% of students are interested in Aeronautical Engineering, suggesting a desire to work on the technical and design aspects of aircraft and aviation technologies. These

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students are likely motivated to contribute to the development and innovation of aviation systems.

Finally, 10% of students listed other career aspirations, including roles like Air Traffic Control and Aviation Consultant. These positions are also vital to the aviation ecosystem, with air traffic controllers responsible for managing the safe and efficient movement of aircraft, while aviation consultants may provide expert advice on a range of aviation-related topics.

Overall, the data reflects a broad spectrum of career goals among graduate students at PhilSCA, with a strong emphasis on management and operational roles. The diversity of career aspirations suggests that the program appeals to a wide array of interests within the aviation industry, allowing students to pursue paths that align with their strengths, skills, and long-term professional goals.

4. Learning Methods Preferred by Graduate Students

Graduate students at PhilSCA expressed their preferences regarding learning methods. The breakdown is as follows:

4.1 Traditional Lectures

70% of students prefer traditional in-person lectures for theoretical subjects, especially those that involve complex concepts such as aviation law and aviation policy. Many students appreciate the structure and interaction that in-person lectures offer.

4.2 Online Modules

50% of students favor online modules for subjects that are more theory-based or require independent study. Online learning is particularly valued for its flexibility, allowing students to balance academic responsibilities with professional commitments.

4.3 Group Work

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60% of students enjoy group work, particularly in practical problem-solving scenarios and case studies. They find that group activities encourage collaboration, improve communication skills, and allow for different perspectives to be shared.

5. Recommendations for Enhancing the Curriculum to Meet Academic and Professional Needs

Graduate students provided several recommendations for improving the curriculum to better meet their academic and professional needs. The following is a summary of the research output based on student feedback:

Incorporation of Emerging Technologies. A significant number of students (70%) suggested the inclusion of more courses on emerging technologies such as drones, artificial intelligence (AI), and automation in aviation. Students emphasized that understanding these technologies is crucial for staying competitive in the aviation industry.

Increased Practical Exposure. 60% of students recommended increasing practical, hands-on learning opportunities. These could include more internships, partnerships with industry stakeholders, and on-campus aviation simulations that provide real-world experience.

Focus on Soft Skills. 55% of students felt that there should be more emphasis on developing soft skills such as leadership, communication, and teamwork. Many students recommended incorporating leadership modules, public speaking, and conflict resolution training into the curriculum.

Flexible Learning Options. 50% of students suggested offering a more flexible learning schedule, including evening or weekend classes to accommodate working professionals.

Career Services and Networking. 40% of students recommended enhancing the career services offered by PhilSCA, including providing more internships, career counseling, and opportunities to network with aviation industry professionals.

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Advanced Certification Programs. 30% of students expressed interest in additional certification programs that would be beneficial for their career advancement, such as certifications in aviation management, flight operations, or air traffic control.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

Demographics. The majority of graduate students were found to be male, with a significant proportion coming from different provinces within the Philippines. This highlights the wide geographical reach and the diverse student population attending the institution.

Academic Background. Most graduate students had a background in aeronautics, engineering, or related fields. The academic performance of students was generally satisfactory, but there were concerns about certain areas of foundational knowledge that needed strengthening to improve student readiness for advanced coursework.

Professional Experience. Many graduate students were already working in the aviation industry, with a notable number holding positions in airlines, maintenance organizations, and other aeronautical fields. Their professional experience provided valuable insights into how the curriculum could be better aligned with industry needs.

Curriculum Gaps and Areas for Enhancement. Based on the profiling, several areas for curriculum enhancement were identified. These include:

Practical Training and Industry Collaboration. There was a call for more hands-on, practical training and closer industry partnerships to ensure the curriculum is up-to-date with real-world demands.

Technology Integration. The importance of integrating the latest technological advancements in aviation and aeronautics into the curriculum was emphasized.

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Soft Skills Development. Enhancing communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills, which are crucial in the aviation industry, was suggested.

Research and Innovation. Encouraging more research opportunities and innovation in the curriculum was recommended to align with global trends in aviation education.

Conclusion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the graduate students of the Philippine State College of Aeronautics. The data highlights the need for a curriculum that integrates emerging aviation technologies, offers practical learning opportunities, and addresses the development of soft skills. Additionally, students expressed a strong desire for more flexibility in learning and enhanced career services. These results form a solid basis for recommending enhancements to the curriculum, ensuring it aligns with both the academic needs of the students and the evolving demands of the aviation industry.

In conclusion, the study found that the curriculum of the Philippine State College of Aeronautics could benefit from targeted enhancements, particularly in aligning more closely with industry demands, integrating modern technologies, and fostering both technical and soft skills.

Recommendations

The study recommended the following actions for curriculum enhancement:

1. Regular curriculum reviews to ensure that it meets both academic and industry standards.
2. Strengthening partnerships with aviation-related organizations for internships, field experiences, and real-world learning opportunities.

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3. Incorporating a more diverse set of electives and focusing on emerging areas of aviation technology.
4. Providing greater emphasis on developing both technical and non-technical skills necessary for career advancement.

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