

**BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE: PERCEIVED
ATTAINMENT OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES OF THE
MASTER'S IN AGRIBUSINESS MANAGEMENT
PROGRAM IN CENTRAL MINDANAO UNIVERSITY**

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Abstract

This study assessed the perceived attainment of program objectives of the Master's in Agribusiness Management (MAM) program at Central Mindanao University (CMU). Using a descriptive research design, the study surveyed nine graduates (45% response rate) from 2004 to 2021 through an online questionnaire validated by experts. Results revealed that graduates perceived that the program objectives were very satisfactorily attained across four major outcomes. They reported significant advancement in knowledge and skills in planning, organizing, leading, and controlling agribusiness operations, including the ability to analyze the agribusiness environment and prepare operational plans. Graduates also demonstrated strong research competencies, from problem identification to presenting findings in professional fora, reflecting the program's success in strengthening independent research capacity. Moreover, the study highlighted the graduates' commitment to lifelong learning through participation in seminars, training, and collaboration with multidisciplinary teams. Finally, respondents reported effective application of theoretical knowledge to solve agribusiness problems, provide consultancy services, and craft innovative solutions with high ethical standards. These findings confirm that the MAM program equips graduates with the competencies required to contribute meaningfully to agribusiness development and suggest the need for continuous curriculum updating to address emerging industry trends.

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INTRODUCTION

Agribusiness covers all related activities along the food supply chain, which includes production, processing, transportation, marketing, and distribution of agricultural commodities and products. It involves farmers, processors, distributors, and consumers. This leads to a large contribution to the industrial development of the Philippine economy (Department of Trade and Industry, 2015). The advent of new technology and the expansion of agricultural food and consumption in the international market significantly drive the Philippine agribusiness (Depositario, 2024). This pushed the Department of Agriculture to set its directions towards prioritizing the enhancement of agricultural productivity, profitability, and competitiveness of Filipino farmers (DA Press Office, 2022).

Despite its importance, agribusiness is underrepresented in the educational curricula (Mangarin & Almazor, 2024). The increasing relevance of agribusiness urges the academe to offer undergraduate and graduate agribusiness-related courses. The agribusiness curriculum of universities needs to integrate modernized approaches that will equip its graduates with the necessary skills to thrive in a globally competitive business environment (Agrawal & Jaggi, 2024). These programs should shape agribusiness enthusiasts to become leaders and innovators in the field of agribusiness to maximize agricultural development (Mangarin & Almazor, 2024). Despite the efforts, it is still deemed that agricultural universities have an outdated curriculum. It lacks competencies for marketing, supply chain management, communication, leadership, and technical skills. (Agribusiness Education and Research International, 2020).

Central Mindanao University is one of the state universities in the Philippines that offers a graduate program in agribusiness. The CMU's Master's in Agribusiness Management (MAM) program has been offered for more than 10 years. Thus, it is timely and relevant to assess the attainment of its program objectives. This will serve as a basis for the improvement, upgrading, and updating of the program curriculum to ensure that the program caters to the needs of the industry.

Objectives

This study aimed to assess the perceived extent to which the program objectives are attained, or the skills or competencies gained by MAM graduates. These program objectives include the following:

- a. Advanced knowledge and skills in a specialized, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary field of study for professional practice.
- b. Conduct self-directed basic or applied research in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship.
- c. Lifelong learning with a highly substantial degree of independence that involves individual work or teams of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary experts.
- d. Application of knowledge and skills to solve complex problems in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship through innovative ways embodying moral and ethical standards.

Scope and Limitation

This study used only online platforms in searching and reaching its respondents. This covers MAM graduates from 2004 to 2021 for a total population of 20 graduates. However, only 9 participated in the study. The response of the respondents on the perceived attainment of MAM program objectives is based on their own assessment and perception.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive research design. The participants of the study were the Master's in Agribusiness Management graduates of Central Mindanao University from 2004 up to 2021, a total of 20 respondents. This study used total enumeration. However, the study got a response rate of 45%. The study developed a research questionnaire, which was validated by experts. The respondents were reached out to via online, and informed consent was sought from them. An online method of data gathering was used through Google Forms. The respondents filled out the questions online. In data analysis, descriptive numerical measures was used specifically, the mean.

RESULTS

The Master's in Agribusiness Management program aims to help agribusiness practitioners advance their careers through graduate education. Specifically, the program aims to attain the following outcomes- (1) Advanced knowledge and skills in a specialized, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary field of study for professional practice; (2) Conduct self-directed basic or applied research in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship; (3) Lifelong learning with a highly substantial degree of independence that involves individual work or teams of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary experts; and (4) Application of knowledge and skills to solve complex problems in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship through innovative ways embodying moral and ethical standards. These target program outcomes were measured based on the perception of the MAM graduates.

Advanced knowledge and skills in a specialized, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary field of study for professional practice.

Table 1 shows the perceived attainment of the program objective, which is to advance knowledge and skills in a specialized, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary field of study for professional practice among MAM graduates.

Table 1. Perceived attainment of the program objective- Advanced knowledge and skills in a specialized, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary field of study for professional practice among MAM graduates

INDICATORS	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
After taking the Master's in Agribusiness Management, I was able to..		
1. Master the concepts of statistics and appreciate its relevance to my work.	4.22	Very Satisfactorily Attained

2.	Mastering the art of crafting a business plan for an agribusiness enterprise.	4.11	Very Satisfactorily Attained
3.	Advance my knowledge and skills in planning, organizing, leading, and controlling.	4.56	Excellent Attained
4.	Select the proper decision-making tools to critically, analytically, and creatively solve agribusiness problems and drive results	4.56	Excellent Attained
5.	Express oneself clearly and communicate effectively with stakeholders both in oral and written forms.	4.44	Very Satisfactorily Attained
6.	Widen my understanding in functional areas of agribusiness (marketing, finance, human resources, management, production and operations management, information technology, and strategic management).	4.67	Excellent Attained
7.	Plan and implement agribusiness-related activities.	4.44	Very Satisfactorily Attained
8.	Exercise high personal moral and ethical standards.	4.44	Very Satisfactorily Attained
9.	Prepare an agribusiness operational plan.	4.67	Excellent Attained
10.	Analyze the agribusiness environment for strategic direction	4.56	Excellent Attained
Overall Mean		4.47	Very Satisfactorily Attained

Legend:

- 4.51- 5.00 - Excellent Attained
- 3.51- 4.50 - Very Satisfactorily Attained
- 2.51- 3.50 - Satisfactorily Attained
- 1.51- 2.50 - Slightly Attained
- 1.00- 1.50 - Not Attained

Results show that MAM graduates perceived that the MAM program objective of advancing knowledge and skills in a specialized, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary field of study for professional practice was very satisfactorily attained. They consider their selves to be equipped with sufficient knowledge on the field of agribusiness and on the concepts that it encompasses. Particularly, they perceived that the MAM program was able to widen their understanding in functional areas of agribusiness (marketing, finance,

human resources, management, production and operations management, information technology, and strategic management). It also advanced their knowledge and skills in planning, organizing, leading, and controlling, especially in the preparation of an operational plan. In addition, MAM graduates were now more equipped with the knowledge and skills to analyze the agribusiness environment for strategic direction. It was also perceived that the MAM program helped them to select proper decision-making tools to solve agribusiness problems and drive results critically, analytically, and creatively. They can also now better implement agribusiness-related activities while exercising high personal moral and ethical standards. Through the classroom activities like class or topical reporting, they were able to express themselves clearly and communicate effectively with stakeholders both in oral and written forms.

Conduct self-directed basic or applied research in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship

Table 2 shows the perceived attainment of the program objective, which is to conduct self-directed basic or applied research in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship.

Table 2. Perceived attainment of the program objective- conduct self-directed basic or applied research in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship among MAM graduates

INDICATORS	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
After taking the Master's in Agribusiness Management, I was able to..		
1. Apply the scientific method in the conduct of agribusiness research activities.	4.33	Very Satisfactorily Attained
2. Developed the skill of analyzing a certain situation and identifying a research problem.	4.56	Excellent Attained
3. Simplify and translate the management problem into research questions.	4.44	Very Satisfactorily Attained
4. Prepare a comprehensive and relevant literature review.	4.56	Excellent Attained
5. Identify and apply an appropriate research design to a particular research study.	4.44	Very Satisfactorily Attained
6. Analyze and interpret quantitative and qualitative data.	4.44	Very Satisfactorily Attained
7. Draw conclusions and formulate policy recommendations from the data analyzed and interpreted.	4.56	Excellent Attained

8.	Conduct research studies in my organization and in the community in the field of agribusiness and management.	4.56	Excellent Attained
9.	Conduct research studies in my organization and in the community in the field of entrepreneurship.	4.56	Excellent Attained
10.	Present the result of my research (aside from my master's thesis) in local/national/international research fora.	4.56	Excellent Attained
Overall Mean		4.5	Very Satisfactorily Attained

Legend:

- 4.51- 5.00 - Excellent Attained
- 3.51- 4.50 - Very Satisfactorily Attained
- 2.51- 3.50 - Satisfactorily Attained
- 1.51- 2.50 - Slightly Attained
- 1.00- 1.50 - Not Attained

Results show that MAM graduates perceived that the MAM program objective of allowing them to conduct self-directed basic or applied research in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship was very satisfactorily attained. MAM graduates consider their selves to be imbued with skills in conducting research. Aside from their classroom training on research, MAM graduates were able to enhance their research skills upon conducting their master's thesis. They are now very familiar and well-versed with the whole research process. They can see their selves that they were able to develop their skill of analyzing a certain situation and identifying a research problem. They also know how to transform a research problem into a research question. They are also skilled in writing a comprehensive literature review together with the preparation of an appropriate research design, analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and formulating policy recommendations from the data analyzed and interpreted. As they go along with their career after graduation, graduates can conduct research studies in their organization and in the community in the field of agribusiness and management. They were also able to conduct research studies in their organization and in the community in the field of entrepreneurship. They also experienced presenting the results of their research output in local/national/international research fora. Therefore, the MAM program contributed to the development and improvement of their research capabilities.

Lifelong learning with a highly substantial degree of independence that involves individual work or teams of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary experts.

Table 3 shows the perceived attainment of the program objective, which is to have lifelong learning with a highly substantial degree of independence that involves individual work or teams of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary experts.

Table 3. Perceived attainment of the program objective- Lifelong learning with a highly substantial degree of independence that involves individual work or teams of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary experts.

INDICATORS	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
After taking the Master's in Agribusiness Management, I was able to..		
1. Continuously participate in webinars, seminars, and trainings to update myself with the latest trends in the field of agribusiness and entrepreneurship.	4.33	Very Satisfactorily Attained
2. Update myself with the latest technologies and innovations that are relevant to my career through reading and research.	4.56	Excellent Attained
3. Collaborate with other experts in various fields in conducting agribusiness projects.	4.56	Excellent Attained
4. Take short courses related to agribusiness that enhance my skills and competencies.	4.33	Very Satisfactorily Attained
5. Serve as a resource person for various trainings and seminars.	4.11	Very Satisfactorily Attained
6. Serve as an evaluator in a research study or an agribusiness project.	4.33	Very Satisfactorily Attained
7. Attend research forums and gain new insights, access new knowledge, and make new discoveries.	4.33	Very Satisfactorily Attained
8. Take short courses related to agribusiness that enhance my skills and competencies.	4.33	Very Satisfactorily Attained
9. Improve my management skills and apply them in my work.	4.0	Very Satisfactorily Attained
10. Learn new things through experiential learning and self-discovery in my organization.	4.56	Excellent Attained

Overall Mean	4.34	Very Satisfactorily Attained
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Legend:

- 4.51- 5.00 - Excellently Attained
- 3.51- 4.50 - Very Satisfactorily Attained
- 2.51- 3.50 - Satisfactorily Attained
- 1.51- 2.50 - Slightly Attained
- 1.00- 1.50 - Not Attained

Results show that MAM graduates perceived that the MAM program objective of having lifelong learning with a highly substantial degree of independence that involves individual work or teams of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary experts was very satisfactorily attained. MAM graduates consider their selves to engage in a career that embraces continuing learning among themselves through various platforms. At times, they learn new things through experiential learning and self-discovery in their organization. In addition, they continuously participate in webinars, seminars, and trainings to update their selves with the latest trends in the field of agribusiness and entrepreneurship. Also, they were able to foster a career with the ability to work independently or to work effectively with a team. They update their selves with the latest technologies and innovations that are relevant to agribusiness through reading and research. They were also able to collaborate with other experts in various fields in conducting agribusiness projects. Thus, they take any opportunity in various form to continuously grow professionally.

Application of knowledge and skills to solve complex problems in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship through innovative ways, embodying moral and ethical standards

Table 4 shows the perceived attainment of the program objective, which is to apply knowledge and skills to solve complex problems in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship through innovative ways embodying moral and ethical standards.

Table 4. Perceived attainment of the program objective- Application of knowledge and skills to solve complex problems in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship through innovative ways embodying moral and ethical standards

INDICATORS	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
After taking the Master's in Agribusiness Management, I was able to..		
1. Provide consultancy services to students, farmers, agribusiness enterprises, and other stakeholders.	4.67	Excellently Attained

2.	Apply the basic concepts that underlie each of the functional areas of agribusiness (marketing, finance, human resources, management, production and operations management, information technology, and strategic management) and employ these concepts in various agribusiness situations	4.11	Very Satisfactorily Attained
3.	Manage strategic business unit for economic sustainability.	4.44	Very Satisfactorily Attained
4.	Conduct technology packages dissemination in the community through extension projects and community outreach.	4.22	Very Satisfactorily Attained
5.	Propose innovative ideas to our organization for more effective and efficient operations.	4.22	Very Satisfactorily Attained
6.	Craft community project proposal for an improved farm and business operations.	4.5	Very Satisfactorily Attained
7.	Suggest management and entrepreneurial techniques to our organization to cut costs and increase profit and attain our organizational goals.	4.33	Very Satisfactorily Attained
8.	Set myself as an example to my workmates as an outstanding member of the organization with high moral and ethical standards to reduce unethical acts in the institution and encourage maximum work performance.	4.11	Very Satisfactorily Attained
9.	Use quantitative and qualitative techniques to guide me in making decisions.	4.56	Excellent Attained
10.	Apply management accounting and financial management techniques as a basis for making financial-related decisions.	4.33	Very Satisfactorily Attained
Overall Mean		4.35	Very Satisfactorily Attained

Legend:

- 4.51- 5.00 - Excellently Attained
- 3.51- 4.50 - Very Satisfactorily Attained
- 2.51- 3.50 - Satisfactorily Attained
- 1.51- 2.50 - Slightly Attained
- 1.00- 1.50 - Not Attained

Results show that MAM graduates perceived that the MAM program objective of application of knowledge and skills to solve complex problems in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship through innovative ways embodying moral and ethical standards was very satisfactorily attained. This shows that MAM graduates were able to apply their theoretical and conceptual knowledge from the program to practical application in the workplace. In some instances, they were able to provide consultancy services to students, farmers, agribusiness enterprises, and other stakeholders. They also took the initiative of proposing innovative ideas to our organization for more effective and efficient operations. Community project proposals were also crafted for an improved farm and business operations. They were also able to apply quantitative and qualitative techniques in making decisions for the improvement of their organization. Thus, MAM graduates were able to utilize their learnings to make relevant contributions to their organization and in the community.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this tracer study revealed that the Master of Agribusiness Management (MAM) program of Central Mindanao University has been successful in meeting its program objectives and equipping its graduates with the necessary competencies to excel in agribusiness practice, research, and leadership.

Graduates perceived that the program significantly advanced their knowledge and skills in planning, organizing, leading, and controlling agribusiness operations. They developed strong competencies in preparing operational plans, analyzing the agribusiness environment, and selecting appropriate decision-making tools. This indicates that the program effectively provided a solid foundation in agribusiness concepts and their practical application.

The MAM program successfully equipped graduates with the ability to conduct research independently. They are capable of identifying problems, formulating research questions, developing research designs, analyzing data, and presenting findings in professional settings. This highlights the program's success in nurturing research competence that contributes to organizational and community development.

Graduates demonstrated commitment to continuous learning through participation in seminars, trainings, and professional development activities. They can work independently or collaboratively with multidisciplinary teams and embrace innovation and new technologies relevant to their careers. This reflects the program's contribution to developing professionals who value lifelong learning and professional growth.

The program enabled graduates to translate theoretical concepts into practical solutions. They have been

able to provide consultancy services, propose innovative ideas, craft community project proposals, and apply quantitative and qualitative techniques in decision-making. This shows that the program enhanced their problem-solving ability while promoting ethical and responsible practice in the workplace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Master's in Agribusiness Management can further improve its curriculum by integrating competencies that are needed by the industry in the present times. The curriculum can be enhanced by adding topics on digital agribusiness, data analytics, sustainability, and global market trends to align with industry innovations. In addition, increasing the number of published research papers in reputable journals and presenting at international conferences can be achieved through enhanced and extended mentoring. Enhancement of the academe-industry partnership can also be done to allow graduate students to have exposure and learn practical skills in the industry. Tracer studies should be regularly conducted at least every 5 years to gather insights that will serve as valuable inputs in curriculum development.

Conflicts of Interest

The author has disclosed no conflicts of interest.

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