

Critical evaluation of the stakeholders on the Philippine Public Safety College-Master in Crisis and Disaster Risk Management (PPSC-MCDRM) program implementation: A basis for policy review

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Abstract

The Master in Crisis and Disaster Risk Management (MCDRM) Program launched by the Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC) in 2016 aims to build a critical mass of practitioners, policy advisers, and change-makers from various sectors who can lead the country in strengthening its capacity in disaster resilience, climate actions, and crisis management. Nevertheless, considering the changes in the education landscape over time, there is a need for a critical evaluation of the program's implementation. The study aimed to identify key areas for improvement and recommend appropriate policies to further enhance the program and sustain its momentum in disaster risk resilience education. The findings of the research showed that primary stakeholders strongly agree that the program offering is still relevant. However, the faculty and the students consider the shift from blended learning to a flexible learning management system due to COVID-19 restrictions as reasons for the main concerns in the program implementation such as internet connectivity, limited technical capability in navigating virtual platforms, and schedule conflict with their respective jobs. Despite the challenges, there is still strong agreement that quality education is being delivered. Further, there is a strong agreement that faculty members are competent and experts in their respective fields. Respondents also strongly agree that the Program Management Team (PMT) provides strong administrative support and that staff members are well-versed in their tasks. Respondents also perceive that stronger linkages and partnerships with local and international institutions will help PPSC in upscaling the MCDRM program. Overall, the study reflected that while most respondents strongly agree with the satisfactory implementation of the MCDRM program, there are issues and key areas that can be improved. Hence, a policy review that considers these valuable insights of the program's primary stakeholders is imperative.

Keywords: critical evaluation, stakeholders, MCDRM program, disaster risk resilience education, policy review

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1. Introduction

The World Bank's 2005 study highlighted the Philippines' vulnerability to natural disasters due to its geographic location and factors like population growth, unplanned urbanization, environmental degradation, and climate change. These issues emphasize the need for robust strategies to mitigate socio-economic impacts, critical for the country's development. Sustainable practices gained traction through the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015, promoting Disaster Risk Management (DRM), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and "Green Development" across the Asia-Pacific region. In response to the need for improved disaster risk reduction and management, the Philippine government enacted Republic Act (RA) 10121, or the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act of 2010, designating the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) as the leading agency. The Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC), under DILG's guidance and mandated by RA 6975, Section 66, launched the Master in Crisis and Disaster Risk Management (MCDRM) Program in 2016. This initiative equips public safety personnel with essential skills in disaster resilience and crisis management, fostering a proactive approach to the country's unique challenges.

The researcher spearheaded the development of MCDRM as a strategic innovation of PPSC. She successfully forged alliances with various local and international partner institutions for sustainability. At its inception, the program was benchmarked against courses from various foreign and local educational institutions. At the same time, experts, leaders, practitioners and members of the academe and various agencies were consulted. Sakura and Sato, claim that education is fundamental in building a culture of safety and disaster-resilient communities. Further, the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), fully integrates education and includes the overall goal of disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the full disaster management cycle from prevention, mitigation and preparedness to response, recovery and rehabilitation (Sakurai and Sato, 2016).

In 2019, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and Asian Disaster Preparedness Center in the status report on Disaster Risk Reduction in the Philippines cited that disaster risk reduction and climate action have been embraced as compulsory functions of all levels of governance required to sustain productivity and to shelter development in the Philippines. Development Strategies and planning instruments have been geared towards resilient development with integrated disaster risk considerations as exhibited in the Philippine long-term Vision 2040 which integrates the global agendas, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) and Climate Change Agreement. The MCDRM is a one-year scholarship program aimed at developing leaders, scholars, practitioners, and policy advisers to guide the nation during crises and disasters. It utilizes a blended learning modality. Targeted at senior executives from government, private sectors, academia, and public safety, the program adopts a multi-sectoral approach to bridge the knowledge gap in crisis and disaster risk management. The program's sustainability and alignment with best practices are ensured through partnerships with key institutions like the University of the Philippines, De La Salle University, Ateneo de Manila University, Office of Civil Defense, and the Climate Change Commission, among others. These collaborations foster cross-sector cooperation to enhance national disaster resilience.

For the past years, the education system has undergone significant changes, new educational guidelines and innovations were introduced due to the rapid development of technology and society. The MCDRM program needs to adjust and continue to improve with the changing landscape of education. Hence, there is a need to

conduct a critical evaluation of its implementation by asking for feedback from primary stakeholders to gain valuable insights, collect baseline data for program assessment, and provide groundwork for policy review. To inform policy changes and development for the continuous improvement of the MCDRM Program implementation, this study obtained inputs from the stakeholders as baseline data for policy review and other initiatives in the future. Specifically, it sought to:

- Identify the profile of key respondents;
- Collate their feedback and perceptions about the implementation of the MCDRM program in terms of content and relevance of courses offered, student factors, instruction delivery and strategies, faculty capability, and administrative staff services to students, faculty, and alumni;
- Obtain inputs for the improvement of the MCDRM program
- Assess the current policies and guidelines in relation to the implementation of the MCDRM program; and
- Provide policy recommendations for continuous improvement of the MCDRM program

2. Review of Related Literature

The Philippines' disaster experiences underscored the need for disaster management education and training (Torani et al., 2019). Disaster education became a crucial element of management programs, serving as a non-structural mitigation measure to reduce societal vulnerabilities through education (Fernandez et al., 2012). The MCDRM program was PPSC's initiative, under the DILG, to fulfill its mandate and produce qualified managers for effective crisis response (Antonio et al., 2020; Antonio, n.d.). The MCDRM is a 36-unit trimestral program offered over one academic year, consisting of four modules (PPSC, n.d.a). Module One covered foundational courses, Module Two included core subjects, Module Three addressed major subjects and Module Four focused on research (DILG and PPSC, n.d.; PPSC, n.d.b). Initially delivered through blended learning, the program transitioned to a flexible format during the pandemic, with agency visits and field studies enhancing experiential learning. It served as a converging platform for top universities, national strategy implementers, and policy advisers (Antonio et al., 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, PPSC mobilized resources, launched initiatives, and offered online classes to support its staff and students, emphasizing the need for crisis and disaster risk management training (Antonio, n.d.). The MCDRM's multi-stakeholder approach engaged various sectors, providing essential knowledge and skills. Monitoring the program's progress was crucial for strengthening its foundation (DILG and PPSC, n.d.; PPSC, n.d). The content of the courses is periodically reviewed for effectiveness, relevance and responsiveness. Faculty perceptions should be incorporated into curriculum development as they impact the educational process and enable them to shift to the new curriculum (Alsubaie, 2016; Nurhayti et al., 2018). Moreover, alumni-based evaluations are becoming more widely recognized as a vital component of the continuous curriculum evaluation process (Cobb et al., 2015). Their position is unique to assess the quality and appropriateness of their education as they are the products of their educational institutions, and they can provide helpful feedback to curriculum designers (Edmondson, 2004; Trent, 2002). As the MCDRM program catered to adult learners in specific fields, the relevance of coursework to their current jobs enhanced learning outcomes.

Even before the pandemic, distance learning was utilized but was not as effective as in-person instruction (Harrison et al., 2018). Postgraduate students initially struggled with the student-centered nature of online classes, which emphasized collaborative learning. The temptation to copy/paste was a challenge in academic writing (Damary et al., 2017). Additionally, shifting learning styles and balancing tasks at home contributed to mental health issues, exacerbated by a lack of suitable study spaces (Baticulon et al., 2021). Program-related challenges included limited communication from tutors, unsuitable course requirements, and institutional barriers like

inadequate learning materials and technological or pedagogical support (Baticulon et al., 2021; Harrison et al., 2018; Hermanto & Srimulyani, 2021). Online education was particularly challenging for students who excelled in physical classrooms but lacked effective online learning tools.

The pandemic disrupted education, causing missed learning opportunities, reduced social interaction, and a lack of stimulating environments (De Giusti, 2020). Postgraduate students struggled with time commitments, large class sizes, and assessment pressures but appreciated the flexibility and affordability of online courses (Damary et al., 2017). Faculty support became crucial, as faculty members required significant preparation and resources for online teaching (Bao, 2020). In the MCDRM program, the Program Management Team provided administrative and operational support, coordinating with institutions, inviting professors, preparing schedules, facilitating activities, and assisting students and faculty throughout the program. This support aimed to ensure the program's success and address participants' needs. Program evaluation, therefore, is an essential responsibility for anyone overseeing an education program. Fyer and Hemmer state that an educational program itself is rarely static, so an evaluation plan must be designed to feed information back to guide the program's continuing development. In that way, the program evaluation becomes an integral part of the educational change process (Frye & Hemmer, 2013).

In summary, related literature and studies revealed that the mentioned dimensions of the study are essential areas to critically evaluate the implementation of the MCDRM program. All over the world, there are many programs and interventions developed in the areas of education. Some are new disciplines, others are for capacity building, to aid communities and sectors, and to promote development and progress. To ensure that these programs are working, relevant, effective, and continuously improving, critical evaluation is a vital process.

3. Methodology

The study used a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative component included a self-administered survey with a five-point Likert scale and two open-ended questions about challenges and suggestions. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with students/alumni, faculty, and the program management team (PMT). A census sampling method invited all students/alumni, PMT members, and faculty to participate. The sample included 62 alumni, 4 PMT members, 33 students, and 12 faculty members. FGDs had 7 PMT members (2 former staff), 7 alumni, and 7 faculty members. Survey data were manually tabulated, encoded into Microsoft Excel, and analyzed with descriptive statistics. Open-ended responses were categorized to identify main themes and suggestions. FGD responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for key themes and patterns.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Survey Questionnaire

Profile of the Respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status and agency/organization/institution. The study involved 62 alumni, mostly middle-aged (83.87%), female (53.23%), and married (72.58%). The 12 MCDRM faculty members were predominantly male (66.66%), aged 51-60 (49.99%), and married (75.00%), with many affiliated with UP or DLSU. Four PMT staff members, all aged 21-40, included two males and one female (25.00%), with affiliations to the National Fire Training Institute and the National Police College. Among the 33 MCDRM students, 78.87% were aged 31-50, mostly male (72.72%) and married (72.72%). Respondents' organizational affiliations showed 29.03% from LGUs, 25.80% from NGAs, and 16.13% from DILG (PPSC, LGA). This indicates strong demand for the MCDRM program among DRRMOs, NGAs, and DILG (PPSC, LGA).

Table 1.1

Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Age, Sex, Civil Status and Agency Affiliations

Parameters	Alumni (n-62)		Faculty (n-12)		Staff/PMT (n-4)		Student (n-33)	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
1. Age								
21-30	1	0.61	0	0	2	50	0	0
31-40	9	14.51	0	0	2	50	9	27.27
41-50	26	41.93	3	24.99	0	0	17	51.51
51-60	26	41.94	6	49.99	0	0	4	12.12
61 and above	0	0	3	25	0	0	2	6.06
prefer not to say	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3.03
2. Sex								
Male	29	46.77	8	66.66	3	75	24	72.72
Female	33	53.23	4	33.33	1	25	9	27.27
3. Civil Status								
Single	16	25.81	2	16.66	2	50	9	27.27
Married	45	72.58	9	75	2	50	24	72.72
Widowed	1	1.61	1	8.33	0	0	0	0
4. Agency/Institution/Organization								
NGO (local/int'l)	2	3.23	1	8.33	0	0	0	0
SUC	2	3.23	0	0	0	0	1	3.03
Private	4	6.45	5	41.67	0	0	0	0
Uniformed (UP)	8	12.9	0	0	0	0	7	21.21
DILG (PPSC/LGA)	10	16.13	1	8.33	4	100	7	21.21
NGA	16	25.8	5	41.67	0	0	6	18.18
LGU	18	29.03	0	0	0	0	11	33.33
Others	2	3.23	0	0	0	0	1	3.03

Feedback from alumni, faculty, PMT, and students is crucial for evaluating the MCDRM program, providing insights based on their experiences and roles (Cobb et al., 2015).

Designation and Position

Table 1.2

Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Position/Designation

Designations/positions	Alumni		Faculty		Staff/PMT		Student	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
ASEC	1	1.61	0	0	0	0	0	0
Directors, (Regional, Provincial, District)	9	14.51	0	0	0	0	2	6.06
ARDs/Deputy Directors/Vice President, RCDS, Asst. chief, Div Chiefs, Dept head	7	11.29	0	0	0	0	2	6.06
Consultant	2	3.22	1	8.33	0	0	0	0
Professor/Asst Prof./Teacher III/Faculty	2	3.22	9	75	0	0	0	0
Department Head/Division Chief/District Supervisor, Fire Marshals/Directors/chiefs of office/OIC	12	19.35	0	0	0	0	5	15.15
Municipal/City/Provincial DRRMOs	11	17.74	0	0	0	0	3	9.09
Executive Assistants/Head Executive Assistant	3	4.83	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commanders/Brigade Cmdr	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	9.09
Managers/ Dept Managers	2	3.22	0	0	0	0	1	3.03
Specialist	3	4.83	1	8.33	1	25	2	6.06
PGDH/CGDH/PGADH	1	1.61	1	8.33	0	0	2	6.06
CDO IV/AO V/ PROV	2	3.22	0	0	0	0	1	3.03
Legal officer, Project development officer, admin officer, planning officer, Info tech. Officer, housing regulation officer, bank officer, operations officer, development management officer, supply accountable officer	6	9.67	0	0	1	25	7	21.21
Science Faculty, LGOO, Psychologist, Group provost marshal, Asst Professor, HR for health, Market supervisor, Clerk, Tech. Assistant, digital marketer	1	1.61	0	0	2	50	5	15.15
TOTAL	62	100	12	100	4	100	33	100

The study categorized the 111 respondents into fifteen job function groups. Among alumni, the largest group was Department Heads, Division Chiefs, and District Supervisors (19.35%), followed by Disaster Risk Reduction Management Officers (DRRMOs) at municipal, city, and provincial levels (17.74%). Directors (Regional, Provincial, and District) made up 14.41% (Fernandez et al., 2012). Most faculty respondents (75%)

were professors, assistant professors, or teachers. Half of the PMT respondents were in the last group classification, highlighting the need for adaptable qualified personnel (Fernandez et al., 2012; Bervell & Arkolful, 2020). Among students, the largest groups were Department Heads, Division Chiefs, District Supervisors, Fire Marshals, Chiefs of Office, and OICs (36.36%), with another significant group holding similar designations (15.15%). The respondents' profiles, including experience and positions, are essential for evaluating the MCDRM program's implementation (Cobb et al., 2015).

4.2 Perception of the Respondents about the Different Dimensions of Program Implementation

Content and Relevance of Courses Offered

Table 2.1

Perceptions of Respondents on Content and Relevance of Courses Offered

Statement	Mean Scores					Extent of Perception
	Students	PMT	Alumni	Faculty	Overall	
[The courses or subjects offered by the MCDRM program are relevant to the actual practice of the students.]	4.88	5.00	4.76	4.58	4.80	Strongly Agree
[The content of the courses of the MCDRM program is up-to-date.]	4.73	4.75	4.66	4.25	4.60	Strongly Agree
[There is a need to improve the content of the courses or subjects offered by the MCDRM program.]	3.79	4.50	2.74	3.75	3.70	Agree
Mean Score Per Respondent	4.46	4.75	4.05	4.19	4.37	Strongly Agree

The "Content and Relevance of Courses Offered" dimension showed high ratings for course relevance (mean: 4.80) and up-to-dateness (mean: 4.60), with some need for improvement (mean: 3.70). Students rated this dimension at 4.46, valuing the relevance to their work (mean: 4.88). PMT rated it outstanding (mean: 5.0). Alumni rated content relevance at 4.05, recognizing its importance in their roles (PPSC, n.d.b). Faculty rated relevance at 4.58 and updates at 4.25, suggesting the current structure's adequacy. Overall, respondents strongly agreed on course relevance, with an overall mean rating of 4.37 (Cobb et al., 2015).

Student Factors

Table 2.2

Perceptions of Respondents on Student Factors

Statement	Mean Scores					Extent of Perception
	Students	PMT	Alumni	Faculty	Overall	
[Students understand that the responsibility for learning the course is with the learner themselves.]	4.49	4.50	3.92	4.08	4.25	Strongly Agree
[Learning is difficult in instructions without face-to-face mode.]	3.70	4.25	4.44	3.25	3.91	Agree
[Communicating and socializing online are easy for me.]	3.49	4.00	3.40	3.83	3.68	Agree
[I struggle with technical issues and using gadgets or equipment in online MCDRM course engagements.]	2.67	3.00	4.36	-	3.34	Uncertain
[The students are technologically and technically capable in handling online courses.]	3.70	4.00	4.21	3.58	3.87	Agree
[I have sufficient internet speed for online MCDRM engagements.]	3.55	4.00	3.84	-	3.79	Agree
[In my MCDRM course engagement, I found it difficult balancing with my job.]	3.91	3.75	4.39	-	4.02	Agree
[I am familiar with the learning management system of the MCDRM program.]	4.12	4.50	3.07	-	3.90	Agree
Mean Score Per Respondent	3.70	4.00	3.95	3.69	3.83	Agree

The Student Factors dimension assessed perceptions related to students' attitudes, behavior, and resources impacting their learning capacity, including responsibility for learning, challenges of online learning, and ease of

online relationships. Students rated their responsibility for learning highest (4.49 mean), while struggling with technical issues was rated lowest (2.67 mean), indicating capability despite internet challenges. PMT rated technical issues at 3.0 and LMS familiarity at 4.50. Alumni found learning difficult without face-to-face interaction (4.44 mean), while current students rated this lower at 3.70, showing adaptation. Faculty rated responsibility for learning at 4.08 and difficulty of online learning at 3.25. Overall, Student Factors had a mean rating of 3.83, indicating that these conditions influence their learning and the MCDRM program implementation (Cobb et al., 2015).

Instruction and Delivery Strategies

Table 2.3
Perceptions of Respondents on Instruction and Delivery Strategies

Statement	Mean Scores				Overall	Extent of Perception
	Students	PMT	Alumni	Faculty		
[The use of LMS in the program is maximized.]	4.03	4.75	4.24	3.67	4.17	Agree
[The students can generally work independently in the current MCDRM course.]	3.97	4.50	3.60	4.17	4.06	Agree
[The online delivery of instruction is favorable than modular delivery to the students.]	3.88	3.75	4.68	3.58	3.97	Agree
[The MCDRM course is generally "teacher-centric", wherein knowledge or information is given through the teachers.]	3.03	3.75	3.84	2.83	3.36	Agree
[The instructional materials, including powerpoint, modules, hand-outs and books are more important sources of knowledge than the faculty in the MCDRM program.]	2.49	3.50	4.26	2.25	3.12	Uncertain
[The arrangement of class schedules is favorable.]	3.36	3.50	4.48	3.92	3.82	Agree
[The MCDRM course is student-centric, wherein the approach is more of independent or self-directed learning.]	3.94	4.00	4.27	4.25	4.12	Agree
[The students can still receive quality instructions in the online delivery.]	4.36	4.50	3.97	4.67	4.38	Strongly Agree
[The learning management system (LMS) of the MCDRM program is easy to use.]	4.52	4.50	3.68	3.75	4.11	Agree
[The current mode of delivery of instructions is flexible enough to the needs of the students.]	4.06	4.50	4.21	4.58	4.34	Strongly Agree
Mean Score Per Respondent	3.76	4.13	4.12	3.77	3.94	Agree

The Instruction and Delivery Strategies dimension assessed perceptions of LMS effectiveness, modular delivery, online instruction quality, independent learning, and class scheduling. Students rated LMS ease of use highest (4.52 mean) and quality education achievable (4.36 mean). They preferred teacher-student interaction over instructional materials (2.49 mean) (Toom et al., 2019; Khasawneh et al., 2020). PMT strongly supported LMS use (4.75 mean), valuing its flexibility (4.5 mean). Alumni valued online instruction (4.68 mean) but had mixed feelings about independent learning (3.60 mean). Faculty believed in maintaining quality education online (4.67 mean) and appreciated its flexibility (4.58 mean), seeing the program as student-centric. Overall, respondents rated Instruction and Delivery Strategies at 3.94.

Faculty Capability - Survey results emphasize the importance of faculty capability in the MCDRM program. Students rated its essential role in online learning success highly (4.76 mean) and acknowledged faculty's teaching skills (4.58 mean). They valued ongoing capacity building (4.52 mean) but disagreed that faculty training programs are limited (2.88 mean). PMT rated faculty's capability as crucial to program success, giving a perfect score of 5.00. Alumni rated faculty competence highly (4.53) but did not see it as critical for online training success (2.61 mean), suggesting a preference for in-person interactions. Faculty respondents agreed that their skills and continuous improvement were key to the program's success (4.67 mean) and expressed confidence in managing technical difficulties and work-life balance (2.0 mean). Overall, the results affirm faculty expertise as a major contributor to the MCDRM program's success (3.93 mean), highlighting the need for

ongoing training and adaptability in disaster and crisis management education (Torani et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2020; Bauman & Lucy, 2019).

Table 2.4
Perceptions of Respondents on Faculty Capability

Statement	Mean Scores				Overall	Extent of Perception
	Students	PMT	Alumni	Faculty		
[The faculty are the primary sources of knowledge in the MCDRM program.]	3.64	4.50	3.40	3.25	3.70	Agree
[The teachers generally have the necessary skills in creating learning experiences and possess the repertoire of teaching/learning methods.]	4.58	5.00	3.76	4.58	4.48	Strongly Agree
[Faculty training programmes are limited]	2.88	3.75	4.36	3.08	3.52	Agree
[Faculty capability is essential to online learning success.]	4.76	5.00	2.61	4.67	4.26	Strongly Agree
[Faculty must continue to engage in capacity-building initiatives to initiate skill training and introduce core concepts.]	4.52	4.75	2.65	4.58	4.12	Agree
[The faculty handling the different courses need no further development and training in the courses taught.]	3.76	4.25	4.53	3.33	3.97	Agree
[I am familiar with the learning management system of the MCDRM program.]	-	-	-	3.92	3.92	Agree
[In my MCDRM course engagement, I found it difficult balancing with my job.]	-	-	-	2.00	2.00	Disagree
[I have sufficient internet speed for online MCDRM engagements.]	-	-	-	4.50	4.50	Strongly Agree
[I struggle with technical issues and using gadgets or equipment in online MCDRM course engagements.]	-	-	-	2.00	2.00	Disagree
Mean Score Per Respondent	4.02	4.54	3.55	3.59	3.93	Agree

Administrative Staff Services to students, faculty, and alumni

Table 2.5
Perceptions of Respondents on Administrative Staff Services to students, faculty, and alumni

Statement	Mean Scores				Overall	Extent of Perception
	Students	PMT	Alumni	Faculty		
[Improving support services to students and faculty increases their well-being]	4.46	5.00	4.47	4.83	4.69	Strongly Agree
[The staff of the MCDRM program are well-versed or competent with their tasks.]	4.79	5.00	4.03	4.83	4.66	Strongly Agree
[Support services given to students/faculty/alumni (depending on the respondent's category) are excellent.]	4.67	4.50	4.52	4.42	4.53	Strongly Agree
Mean Score Per Respondent	4.64	4.83	4.34	4.69	4.63	Strongly Agree

Survey results indicate strong agreement on the effectiveness of the PMT's handling of their tasks and the quality of support services in the MCDRM program. Students rated the PMT's competence highly with a mean score of 4.79 and rated the services as excellent at 4.67, agreeing that improved support services enhance stakeholder well-being. PMT members rated themselves with a perfect 5.0, underscoring their belief in their competence and the positive impact of their support on stakeholders. Alumni agreed that support services were excellent (4.52) and that improvements could boost well-being (4.47). Faculty also rated PMT highly (4.83) for their roles, which fostered strong relationships and increased their well-being (4.83). Overall, respondents

strongly agreed on the effectiveness of administrative support, with an overall mean rating of 4.63.

Perception of the Respondents about the Implementation of the Program Based on the Overall Evaluation Results - The study assessed the MCDRM program's effectiveness across five dimensions, with an overall mean rating of 4.14. Administrative Support was highest-rated at 4.63, indicating adequate services for students, faculty, and alumni (PPSC, n.d.b). Content and Relevance of Courses scored 4.36, highlighting its applicability and importance in developing leaders, with students rating it 4.46 and alumni 4.05. Instruction and Delivery Strategies had an overall rating of 3.84, higher among alumni (4.12) than students (3.76) due to COVID-19's impact on class delivery. Faculty Capability scored 3.93, with students at 4.02 and PMT at 4.54, acknowledging the importance of faculty skills, though faculty self-rated lower at 3.59, indicating a need for capacity building. Student Factors was the lowest-rated dimension at 3.84, with students at 3.70, reflecting impacts from readiness, behavior, and adaptation to online learning, supported by faculty's 3.69 rating.

Table 2.6
Perception of the Respondents in Terms of Content and Relevance of Courses Offered, Student Factors, Instruction Delivery and Strategies, Faculty

Dimension	Mean Scores					Extent of Perception
	Students	PMT	Alumni	Faculty	ALL	
Content and Relevance of Content Offered	4.46	4.75	4.05	4.19	4.37	Strongly Agree
Student Factors	3.70	4.00	3.95	3.69	3.83	Agree
Instruction Delivery and Strategies	3.76	4.13	4.12	3.77	3.94	Agree
Faculty Capability	4.02	4.54	3.55	3.59	3.93	Agree
Administrative Support Services	4.64	4.83	4.34	4.69	4.63	Strongly Agree
Mean	4.12	4.45	4.00	3.99	4.14	Agree

4.3 Emerging themes Based on the open-ended questions in the Survey Questionnaire

Emerging themes on current issues, challenges and concerns based on the Responses and Perceptions of the Alumni (A), Faculty (F), Students (S) and Program Management Team (P) - The survey included an open-ended question on the issues and challenges faced by students, PMT, alumni, and faculty during the program's implementation. This allowed respondents to raise concerns and bring attention to overlooked issues.

Table 3.1
Emerging themes on current issues, challenges and concerns based on the Responses and Perceptions of the Alumni, Faculty, Students and Program Management Team

Key Themes	Frequency
Technological Utilization and Internet Connectivity	41
Calibration of Class Schedule	30
COVID-19 Restrictions	24
Delivery of Course Content	11
Lack of Interpersonal Relationship Building	7
Calibration of Coursework Requirements	6
Mental Health and Stress Management	4
Socio-Political Environment	3
Technological Capacity Building for Students/Faculty	2
Recruitment, Screening, and Selection Process	1
Hands-On Experience and Capability Skills Building	1
Program Awareness and Recognition Outside the Institution	1
Total	131

Technology Utilization and Internet Connectivity - Technology utilization was identified as the top challenge affecting the MCDRM program's teaching and learning during the new normal. Respondents

emphasized internet connection and gadget accessibility as major concerns. S2 and S30 noted that “Internet connection is a primary concern, especially for those in remote areas,” while F10 mentioned “inconsistent internet speed” impacting both learning and work tasks. A23 and S5 highlighted competition for bandwidth with other activities like webinars, and S19 and A20 pointed out that reliance on remote learning felt too artificial for professional postgraduate programs. Additionally, not all students were prepared to adapt to fully online classes. P1 stressed the need for students to be technically equipped to use online platforms effectively, which Crawford et al. (2020) identified as a primary barrier to online learning.

Calibration of Class Schedule - The MCDRM program targets senior executives in government, private sectors, academe, industries, policy, and uniformed public safety officers (PPSC, n.d.b). Participants face difficulties balancing the program with their demanding work schedules (Davidson-Shivers et al., 2003). S6 highlighted challenges due to “work arrangements in the new normal” and S24 noted that classes scheduled during working hours make it hard to focus due to multiple concurrent tasks. Students often struggle to maintain focus, as A50 and F6 mentioned, due to online classes competing with work-related activities. S7, F8, and P2 emphasized that flexible work arrangements have disrupted the 8–5 workday, making it challenging to balance study time with work. This conflict also complicates meeting coursework requirements, as students must manage their professional duties and academic demands simultaneously.

COVID-19 Restrictions: Implemented Pandemic Health Protocols - The pandemic significantly impacted the MCDRM program, with the shift to online learning posing challenges for post-graduate students who found it more student-centered and difficult to adapt (Damary et al., 2017). Health risks led to the use of online platforms and adjustments to class setups, creating anxiety over virus variants, as noted by S30: “The limitations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the threats of emerging variants.” Concerns about health protocols were also mentioned by F7 and A5. Additionally, the fast-paced and unpredictable changes in education and quarantine policies, as highlighted by S19 and S27, further complicated the situation. Despite these challenges, respondents remain committed to the program.

Delivery of Course Content: Mode of Learning - Respondents identified learning modes as a major challenge for the MCDRM program in the new normal, mentioning issues like instruction delivery, online classes, limited social interaction, and heavy workloads. Key concerns included adapting to new teaching methods (P4), reduced learning opportunities due to weekday online classes (S28), and negative impacts on student focus without face-to-face learning (F11). Hands-on experience and capability skills building were hampered as local and international immersions became unfeasible due to the pandemic. These circumstances also affected students' mental health and stress management, as highlighted by S17, who mentioned difficulty absorbing online session content and insufficient off-screen breaks. Overall, these challenges underscore the need for continued adaptation and support to ensure the program's effectiveness.

Lack of Interpersonal Relationship Building - The pandemic's mobility restrictions and shift to virtual learning significantly impacted students' ability to interact and build relationships with faculty, peers, and staff. S13 noted, “There is nothing like a class with real teacher-student-peer interaction,” while F2 pointed out that sharing work experiences and challenges is difficult online. This disruption led to missed learning opportunities and a lack of social and enriching experiences for students (De Giusti, 2020).

Socio-Political Environment is an emerging challenge pointed out in the survey is the social-political environment. For example, A35 points out that “changes of local and national leadership.” as a concern because leadership changes also mean changes in the priorities and continuity programs especially on the LGU level. P3 and A40 also make the case for the finance resources as well as sufficient budget sources for the program.

The Recruitment, Screening, and Selection Process was highlighted as a challenge, with A8 noting the need to review participant selection requirements. Additionally, A6 suggested improving Program Awareness and Recognition by accrediting the institution and curriculum with CHED, indicating a lack of understanding of PPSC's role as the leading public safety education provider.

4.4 *Emerging themes on the suggestions, recommendations and changes in the Implementation of the MCDRM program based on the responses of the Alumni (A), Faculty (F), Students (S) and Program Management Team (P)*

Table. 3.2

Emerging Themes on Suggested Changes, Recommendations for the Improvement of the Implementation of the MCDRM Program based on the Responses and Perceptions of the Alumni, Faculty, Students and Program Management Team

Key Themes	Frequency
Delivery of Course Content	18
Calibration of Class Schedule	13
Expansion of Course Content Coverage	13
Stronger External Linkages and Partnerships	13
Supplemental Learning Materials and Technological Infrastructure	10
Recruitment, Screening, and Selection Process	7
Alumni Relations and Initiatives	6
Calibration of Coursework Requirements	6
Experiential Learning and Skills Training	6
Faculty Background, Education, and Experience	6
Program Awareness and Recognition Outside the Institution	4
Continuous Process Improvement	3
Evaluation and Academic Performance Tracking	2
Technological Capacity Building for Students/Faculty	2
Mental Health Support for Students and Faculty	1
Total	110

An open-ended question revealed key themes grouped into four major areas: comprehensive, technology-integrated curriculum; enhanced support services for students and faculty; collaboration with various organizations and sectors; and face-to-face and virtual class alternatives.

Comprehensive and Technology-Integrated Curriculum - Respondents stressed the importance of a comprehensive, technology-integrated curriculum for the MCDRM program, crucial for disaster education and mitigation (Fernandez et al., 2012). Continuous educational updates and crisis management training were emphasized (PPSC, n.d.b). Suggestions included accepting LDRRMOs with full OCD training (S16), contingency planning for crises (S11, S22), and incorporating advanced IT tools like GIS (F5).

Enhanced Support Services for Students and Faculty - Enhanced support services were recommended to improve student and faculty well-being and focus (Doris et al., 2010). Suggestions included study leave during classes (S23, S18), local and international study tours (S27), virtual classrooms, and e-libraries (S26, A42). Better recruitment and training processes were also suggested to address gaps in teaching DRRM (A17, S15).

Collaboration with Different Organizations/Sectors - Collaboration with various organizations can enhance the MCDRM program by combining diverse skills and knowledge (A27, S33, A4, S25). Involving DRRMO professionals as instructors and inviting experienced speakers, including local and foreign experts, was highlighted (Schachter, 2020; Ozola & Purvis, 2013). Formal acknowledgment from national agencies was also recommended (A7).

Face-to-Face and Virtual Classes Alternatives - Alternating between face-to-face and online classes was recommended to address time constraints and work commitments. This hybrid learning approach would benefit both faculty and students while ensuring safety compliance (S8, S19, S16, F10). These suggestions aim to improve the MCDRM program's effectiveness and adaptability.

4.5 *Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the Program Management Team (PMT) (P) (n=7)*

The following is the summary of experiences and perceptions of the PMT on the implementation of the MCDRM program as well as their inputs, suggestions and policy recommendations for the improvement of the program:

Perceptions and Experiences of the PMT in the implementation of the MCDRM Program - Most PMT/staff have been involved in the MCDRM program for six years. Initially, they struggled due to a lack of guidance and support. P2 noted the difficulty in starting the program without clear direction, while P5 mentioned feeling nervous about managing higher-ranking students. Over time, they developed effective techniques, strategies, and course concepts with institutional and external coordination. PPSC has successfully managed the MCDRM program and continues to mobilize resources to support its staff and students.

Student-Faculty Relationship: Positive outcomes have been noted in the program, with the strong relationship between students and faculty cited as a key driver of success. University visits and class activities have significantly contributed to the program's development. P7 mentioned that collaborating with other staff was among the best experiences. The MCDRM program continues to improve as faculty comply with RA 6975, Section 66, which designates PPSC as the premier educational institution for public safety training (DILG Act, 1990; PNP, BFP, BJMP, and other DRRM-related organizations).

Perceptions of PMT/Staff on the challenges encountered in the implementation of the MCDRM program

Internet Connectivity: Unstable internet connections are a major concern for faculty and students. P1 and P2 noted challenges with "internet connectivity," crucial for the program's blended learning mode (Baticulon et al., 2021; PPSC, n.d.a). Connectivity issues can lead to poor performance and low-quality outputs, impacting work and learning quality (Harrison et al., 2018; Hermanto and Srimulyani, 2021).

Lack of Administrative Support Services: Support services from PPSC's administration appear insufficient for the faculty. Initial challenges included travel, scheduling, administrative support, budget execution, and office space, as noted by S4. While some issues may have improved, concerns like poor internet connectivity and overloaded schedules persist, as mentioned by P1. Stronger internet access remains critical since lessons are online.

Tight Schedules: The faculty's work and personal schedules often conflict, making their workload difficult to manage, as noted by P5. Students, especially senior executives, also struggle to balance their time (PPSC, n.d.b). P6 emphasized the challenge with student schedules. A thorough screening process for student selection, as mentioned by P1, could help manage attendance issues and reduce scheduling conflicts.

Pandemic: Safety health protocols and pandemic measures impacted faculty and student performance. The shift to remote learning limited interaction, affecting the quality of learning experiences, as noted by P2. P3 highlighted issues with learning quality, student mental health, and work quality, suggesting that technological challenges and unstable internet connections could lead to poor performance (Dayagbil et al., 2021).

Inputs of PMT on the possible changes, recommendations, or policies to enhance and strengthen the MCDRM program implementation

Additional workforce. Overloaded workloads and tight schedules pose challenges for faculty and students. Adding more staff and reorganizing roles, as P1 suggested, could help alleviate these issues and improve program participation, as busy schedules can hinder cooperation (Davidson-Shivers et al., 2003).

Direct Experienced Activities and Training: The MCDRM program requires DRRM-related experience and knowledge. Direct, hands-on activities such as on-the-ground simulations could provide students with realistic experiences that strengthen local disaster risk response, including during the pandemic (Harrison et al., 2018; PPSC, n.d. b). P2 proposed offering certificate and diploma programs for those who do not meet current admission requirements. P4 emphasized this could cater to students involved in DRRM activities who are not in supervisory positions.

Student Consultation: The current learning mode has created a gap in interaction between students and faculty, potentially hindering the ability to address students' academic or emotional concerns. Students may

require guidance and support, especially regarding mental and emotional well-being, as noted by the need for psychological programs or stress interventions (S4). Implementing student consultation interventions could support the well-being of both students and faculty (Baticulon et al., 2021).

4.6 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) With Alumni (A) (n=7)

The following is the summary of experiences and perceptions of the alumni on the implementation of the MCDRM program as well as their inputs, suggestions and policy recommendations for the improvement of the program:

Perceptions of Alumni (A) on their experiences in the implementation of the MCDRM Program

Improvement of Knowledge and Skills: The program offers comprehensive learning and skills training in disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM), essential for effectively responding to local disasters and crises (Fernandez et al., 2012). Alumni emphasized the importance of updated knowledge and skills for disaster preparedness, developing contingency and business continuity plans, and boosting their confidence. Sufficient knowledge and skills are essential for effective disaster engagement.

Better Public Servants: Acquiring the needed knowledge and skills in DRRM makes reliable and better public servants, crucial for immediate disaster response and assistance (Antonio, n.d.). Alumni expressed dedication to assisting communities, especially during the pandemic, suggesting improved public service could lead to stronger local disaster risk reduction and management.

Strengthening Local DRRM Actions: The community's DRRMOs, equipped with knowledge, skills, and dedication, can strengthen local disaster risk reduction and management. This was demonstrated through the review and development of crisis management policies in Agusan del Norte, where crisis management committees were established in all 11 LGUs with the assistance of the Local Government Academy, showing that MCDRM program alumni are key to developing better local DRRM actions (Antonio et al., 2020).

Perceptions of alumni on the challenges encountered in the program

Pandemic: Alumni shared concerns about limited contact and interactions, leading to challenges such as reduced travel opportunities and negative impacts on mental health. Strict safety protocols, while necessary, also hindered performance.

Time Management: Balancing the program with work responsibilities often led to time constraints, affecting focus and performance. Respondents noted the pressure of managing multiple responsibilities and the need for extra effort to keep up with peers.

Perceptions of alumni on the current issues, challenges and concerns that affect the implementation of the MCDRM

Lack of recognition from higher institutions. There is positive feedback coming from the program yet it still lacks the recognition of different sectors like CHED. The program seems to be known as competitive and prestigious, for it is also implemented for highly qualified senior executives (PPSC, n.d.b).

Internet connectivity. It has always been an issue of alumni to have unstable internet connection which is difficult to assess nor resolve as this is an uncontrollable factor that would possibly result in their poor performance and productivity. This was raised as a concern by A4 who suggested, “*Improving the status of LMS and new platforms for MCDRM, internet speed of the users*”.

Inputs of the Alumni on the possible changes, recommendations and/or policies to enhance the MCDRM program implementation

Collaborations/Partnerships. Strengthening the MCDRM program requires collaborations with other organizations, including international agencies. Respondents A1 and A4 emphasized the importance of partnerships to enhance the Philippines' disaster preparedness and management capacity.

Government Financial Support and Program Evaluation. Enhancing the MCDRM program can be achieved through government financial support and stakeholder-driven evaluations. Policies to secure funding would improve support services and infrastructure, while continuous evaluation would guide program improvements, as emphasized by A2 and A3.

4.7 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) With Faculty (F) (n=7)

The following is the summary of experiences and perceptions of the Faculty on the implementation of the MCDRM program as well as their inputs, suggestions and policy recommendations for the improvement of the program:

Perceptions of faculty on their experiences

Improvement of Knowledge and Skills. The program provides comprehensive knowledge about DRRM and relevant skills for addressing community disasters. F2 highlighted the value of practical experience for effective action during crises (Fernandez et al., 2012). F1 noted it fosters students' dedication and gratitude towards professors. F3 emphasized the privilege of interacting with professionals from various sectors. These experiences underscore the importance of acquiring adequate knowledge and skills to effectively address disasters.

Perceptions of faculty on the challenges encountered in the implementation of the MCDRM program.

Huge Class Size. The faculty viewed large class sizes as a significant challenge, impacting learning quality and making it difficult to monitor students' performance and behavior. They highlighted the need to hire more lecturers to reduce class sizes, ensuring better support and quality learning in online classes (Harrison et al., 2018; Hermanto and Srimulyani, 2021).

Lack of Knowledge and Skill. The faculty identified a lack of knowledge and skills as a significant challenge, affecting the quality of student learning. F2 emphasized adapting teaching methods to overcome these challenges. Faculty proficiency and understanding were deemed essential to effectively teach and support student learning (Bao, 2020).

Inputs of faculty on the possible changes, recommendations, or policies to improve the MCDRM program implementation

Alumni Involvement: Most faculty suggested that involving alumni in the program will strengthen the MCDRM program. They believe alumni can handle student behavior well and motivate students to finish the program. F1 suggested inviting alumni to be part of the faculty as many are skilled, while F6 noted it could motivate students to complete the program. F7 suggested inviting faculty from partner institutions or expanding partnerships.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study and the perceptions and insights provided by key stakeholders or respondents the following conclusions are drawn:

- The key respondents are leaders, managers, and practitioners in public safety and disaster risk management. Their experience, affiliation, and position contribute significantly to their credibility and the evaluation process.
- The overall score of the MCDRM program implementation evaluation is 4.14, indicating that respondents agree the program meets expectations in various dimensions: course content, student factors, instruction delivery, faculty capability, and administrative services.
- While improvements are needed, PPSC has a solid foundation. With insights from this study, PPSC can now focus on sustaining momentum in developing leaders, scholars, and practitioners in crisis and disaster management, as mandated by PPSC Board Resolution No. 04, s.2016.
- To make the MCDRM program scalable and accessible, policies on the admission process and faculty accreditation system may be reviewed. Enhancing the PPSC Flexible Learning Management System (FLMS) is also vital. Collaborations with partner institutions are needed to educate and build strategic thinkers and change-makers for disaster resilience.
- The study's strategic implication is to provide PPSC offices with evaluation results and feedback for curriculum enhancement, faculty development, and policy development, allowing them to address issues and recommendations effectively.

To address the issues raised, the researcher provides three (3) policy initiatives along with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each one.

Policy Alternative # 1 Align and Expand Collaborations with National and International Institutions

This policy alternative seeks to revisit the partnerships currently in place with various institutions and explore further areas of collaboration to maximize the partnership.

Advantages- PPSC has a strong track record of building relations with both national and international institutions. It will be easier to revisit partnership agreements and investigate areas of mutual benefit. By aligning current collaborations, PPSC can address concerns such as class size, faculty manpower, curriculum updates, technological infrastructure, and resources for learning materials. This will help prepare for blended learning implementation once COVID-19 restrictions ease. Otherwise, addressing these areas would require significant budget and manpower allocation.

Disadvantages - Further collaboration areas depend on the resources that partner institutions can provide, which may be strained by the pandemic. Additionally, partnerships established nearly half a decade ago may face challenges if the heads of these institutions have changed. PPSC will need to establish relations with new leaders and gain support for the partnership and new collaboration areas.

Policy Alternative # 2 Improve Technological Infrastructure and Provide Additional Technological Capacity Building to Students, Faculty, and PMT

This policy alternative seeks to address concerns about the technological infrastructure and digitalization of the MCDRM program.

Advantages - The MCDRM program will be more technologically advanced and will allow students to continue their learning beyond the time allotted inside the classroom. As the infrastructure is updated it also means the production of content that will be uploaded and available for the courses.

Disadvantages - Technological innovation and content production are a huge capitalization on the part of PPSC and would require more government funding. At the time of the study, the General Appropriations Act for the year has been allocated and this policy initiative will fall more into a medium to long-term plan for PPSC.

Policy Alternative # 3 Implement a Comprehensive Curriculum Review to Calibrate the Content, Delivery, and Class Schedule of MCDRM

This policy alternative seeks to set the stage for a comprehensive curriculum review of the MCDRM program to address the issues raised by respondents.

Advantages - A comprehensive curriculum review will make the MCDRM program more globally competitive so that PPSC can start upscaling the program not just on the national, but on the international level such as Southeast Asia as well.

Disadvantages - A comprehensive curriculum review would strain the limited manpower of the MCDRM and require a third-party review. Given these challenges, the researcher recommended prioritizing policy alternatives that focus on aligning and expanding collaborations and partnerships, which is more feasible and addresses respondent concerns by leveraging the resources, expertise, and infrastructure of partner institutions.

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