

The Curriculum Evaluation on Master Degree of Rural Development Management (International Program), Graduate School, Khon Kaen University

Dr.Somsak Srisontisuk^{1*} Anusorn Mankong^{**}

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to 1. Evaluate the context, input, process, and output of the Master of Rural Development Management (MRDM) curriculum, 2. Analyze SWOT, and 3. Suggest the need for the Doctor curriculum (International Program), Graduate School, Khon Kaen University. The research method was mixed between quantitative and qualitative methods. Due to the first aim, the input was diverse foreign students had high experiences; the process was the systematic recruitment; the output was the achievement of quality standard graduates. The second aim showed that the curriculum's strength was learning from real settings and its multidisciplinary-based nature. The weakness was its short duration of the study. The opportunity was it is still being needed. The threat was decreasing of the supportive funding. Finally, the third aim showed that the administrators or lecturers agree to develop the curriculum to a doctoral degree, especially most of the alumni would like to study by self-funding at the doctoral degree.

Keywords: Evaluation, SWOT, MRDM

¹Corresponding author: somsri4@kku.ac.th

^{*}Associate Professor, Graduate School, Major of Master of Rural Development Management (MRDM), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University

^{**}Educator Graduate School, Graduate School, Major of Master of Rural Development Management (MRDM), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University

Introduction

Master of Rural Development Management (MRDM) curriculum started in 1991. It was the first international program of Khon Kaen University using English as a medium of teaching and learning. Program management and administration were based on multidisciplinary collaboration among the Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Public Health, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science, Faculty of Engineering, and Faculty of Education. MRDM is affiliated to Graduate School which takes the role in coordinating the joint faculties in teaching and learning management, curriculum administrative committee appointment, lecturer recruiting, thesis advisor appointment, and other academic aspects. The MRDM curriculum's main objectives are to produce a graduate who is able to understand principles and theories of rural development and to use their knowledge effectively in rural development management research, development plan establishment, and development project settlement based on the physical circumstances, society, economics, culture, technology, and environment of an individual locality. In addition, the curriculum aims to encourage graduates to possess a sense of morals and ethics both in academic and career aspects, as well as to initiate self-development, social responsibility, and interpersonal and leadership skills.

The Master of Rural Development Management curriculum has constant improvement. The latest curriculum reformation was conducted in 2017 which revealed the number of graduates from its first establishment as follows; there is no information on graduates from 1992 to 1999, but from 2000 to 2016 there were 160 graduates. In 2017, there were 6 graduates from 4 countries which include Myanmar, Cambodia, China, and Mozambique. The curriculum has strong administration; however, it lacks evaluation which helps to contribute to better efficiency and effectiveness in administration. Therefore, it is important to conduct institutional research to examine the operation, context, input, process, and output of the Master of Rural Development Management curriculum. Further, this research intended to analyze strength, weakness, opportunity, and threats (SWOT), including suggestions of the needs for the doctoral degree of the Master of Rural Development Management program.

Objectives of the study

1. To evaluate the context, input, process, and output of the Master of Rural Development Management curriculum, Graduate School, Khon Kaen University.
2. To analyze the strength, weakness, opportunity, and threats in the Master of Rural Development Management, Graduate School, Khon Kaen University relating curriculum development.
3. To study the needs for curriculum development of the Doctor of Rural Development Management.

Evaluation Conceptual Framework

The scope of this research was to evaluate the Master of Rural Development Management's curriculum, Graduate School, Khon Kaen University. CIPP Model was employed as an evaluation tool, and SWOT analysis was conducted as shown in the following research conceptual framework:

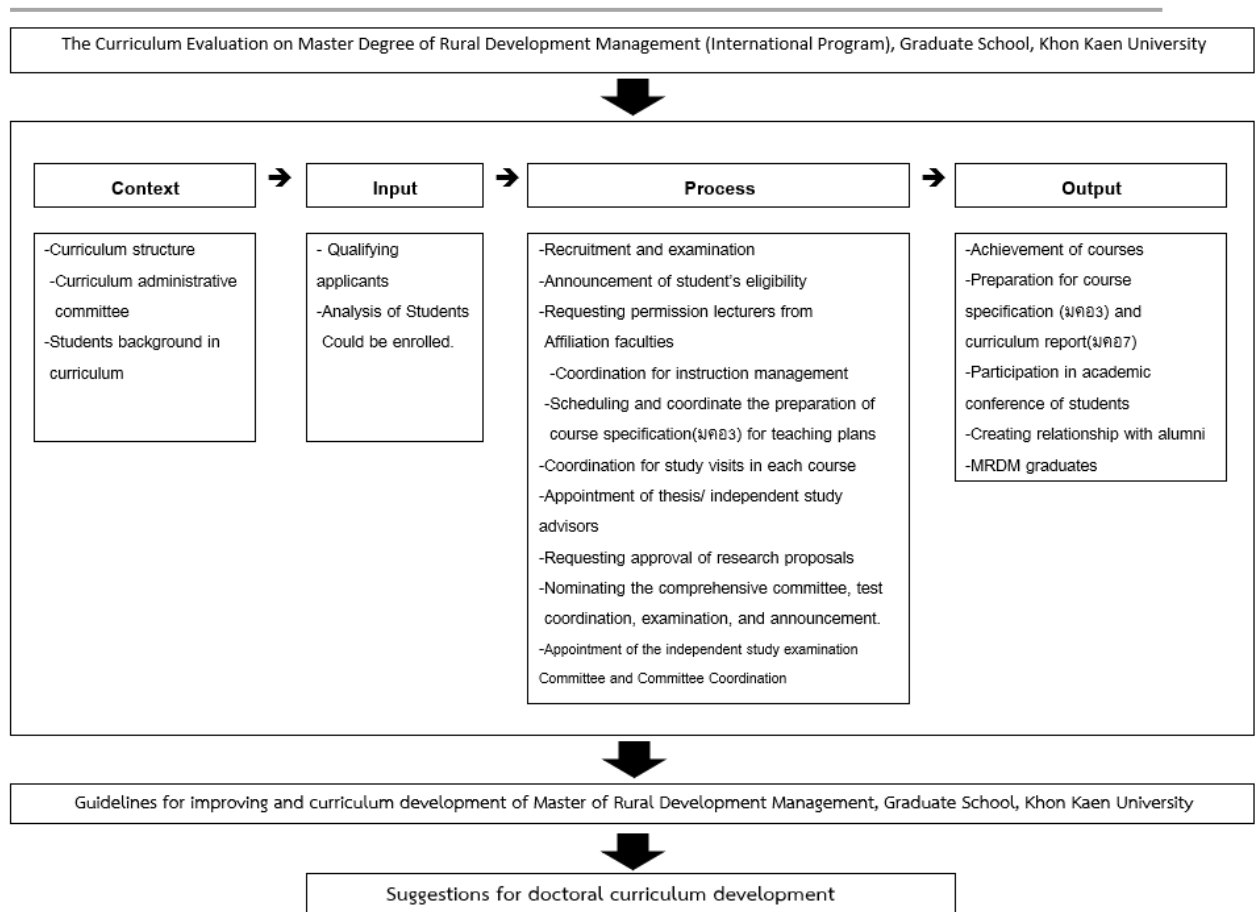


Figure 1 the conceptual framework of curriculum development on Master of Rural Development Management

Methodology

1. The target population of 106 persons comprised of; 1) 65 persons of MRDM alumni who graduated in 2013 – 2018; 2) 11 persons of program administrative committee; 3) 18 persons of lecturers and Independent Study advisors; 4) 10 persons of stakeholders, and 5) 5 persons of current students.

2. Data tools were questionnaire and interview guide in this research, and were reviewed by 3 qualified experts for Content Validity with 0.90 of IOC Also, the opinion survey of questionnaire was used with a 5 -point rating scale focusing on Context, Input, Process, and Output relating the Master of Rural Development Management. The questionnaire designated the rating scale as 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree. Also, the open-ended questions were in this questionnaire. In addition, the research included in-depth interview which was conducted on specific respondents. The tryout for the reliability test could not be applied due to there was no interdisciplinary international program like the uniqueness of the MRDM curriculum at KKU, and difficulty of communication to the small number of aboard alumni could contact only by e-mail. Therefore, this research would concentrate on the qualitative data.

3. The respondents from the purposive sample sending the questionnaire by three-round e-mail and in-depth interview during March-May 2019; were 44 persons of 41.51 % from the 106-target population, comprising of;

1) 20 persons of alumni; 2) 5 persons of program administrative committee; 3) 9 persons of lecturers and Independent Study advisors; 4) 5 persons of stakeholders, and 5) 5 persons of current students

4. Data analysis was the descriptive statistics for quantitative analysis, as well as content analysis was applied for the qualitative data from in-depth interviews.

Results

1. Curriculum Background and Structure

1.1 Background

The Master of Rural Development Management (MRDM) curriculum was founded in 1991 by Prof. Krasae Chanawongse, MD. who was Director of Research and Development Institute (RDI), Khon Kaen University. He initiated the rural development management program with a vision to encompass multi-disciplines knowledge from social science, economics, agriculture, management, education, and public health. The program pioneered the knowledge of rural development to solve the shortage of development professionals in neighboring countries. In 1992, the MRDM program officially provided teaching and learning at the Research and Development Institute (RDI). However, due to the organizational structure of the Research and Development Institute, the program had been considered to change its administration to be under Graduate School. Thus, it has been 27 years since the move in 1997 that the program has been affiliated under Graduate School.

In 2017, the Master of Rural Development Management (MRDM) curriculum was undergone the latest curriculum improvement. At that specific year, there were 6 students from 4 countries; 1 from Myanmar, 2 from Cambodia, 2 from China, and 1 from Mozambique. Significantly, it must be recognized that the curriculum reformation should be aligned with the strategic plan of the faculty, university, and country, as well as consistent with the needs of the labour market. This, therefore, requires the curriculum to be up to date. For the Master of Rural Development Management, the curriculum has strong administration, but the curriculum still lacks evaluation which - if it has evaluation - will benefit evidence-based planning in the future. So, to achieve efficient and effective administration, the Master of Rural Development Management should conduct the curriculum evaluation. The researcher used SWOT analysis to examine the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the curriculum. It was expected that the evaluation shall resonate with the operation in a decade, and it will serve as crucial information for curriculum improvement and reformation, or development for the higher degree

1.2 Program Structure

The Master of Rural Development Management (MRDM) curriculum has study plan and curriculum structure as follows; 1. Plan A Type A1, 2. Plan A Type A2, and Plan B. The course comprises 36 credits.

2. Evaluation outcomes of curriculum context, input, process and output,

2.1 Regarding the curriculum context (see Table 1), the study found that the curriculum policy and administration plan, budget management, students' admission plan, and teaching and learning management were determined at a high level. The lecturers showed themselves as fully qualified and experienced in teaching, research,

and management. Since they are from various disciplines and come from both inside and outside the university, the program, therefore, gains advantages from their participation as a curriculum administrative committee. In addition, the study on diversity and scale of curriculum administrative committee, as well as their participation in curriculum administration (e.g. conference, seminar) were determined at the highest level. This clearly reveals that the Master of Rural Development Management (MRDM) curriculum possesses academic diversity and vast knowledge. It does not limit to any particular area, but the lecturers from any related fields could join as curriculum administrative committees. As a consequence, this creates comprehensive curriculum planning, which contributes to a considerable rate of graduates. It signifies how students could benefit from the curriculum and be able to apply knowledge of rural development management to improve skills in the work process in their own countries.

2.2 Regarding the input of the curriculum (see Table 1), the suitability level obtained from the analysis of applicants' qualifications that they must possess a Bachelor Degree or equivalent in a related field, have at least 3 years of experience in rural development, and succeed English Proficiency Requirements of Khon Kaen University, including the basic knowledge and diversity of students from different countries, were revealed at a high level. The qualifications were designed by the curriculum in correspondent with the curriculum objectives aiming to recruit experienced applicants thus they could integrate new knowledge of rural development management to their career and local context. However, the opinion toward the number of admissions showed a difference between alumni and administrators/lecturers. The alumni pointed out that a suitable number was between 11 to 15 persons. The analysis showed that they thought these numbers would be advantageous for the learning atmosphere e.g. in field study and sharing environment. It allowed students to communicate and exchange individual experiences in person, which helped highlighting diversity and knowledge exchange from the real cases. On the other hand, the administrators and lecturers addressed that a suitable number of applicants was 5 to 10 because MRDM is considered an intensive course. With a short study period of 15 months, using English as a medium of teaching, and mainly studying in real settings, the administrators and lecturers thought the over-numbered students may impact learning environment management, or affect subject assignment and classroom accessibility, which practically cause disadvantage toward the quality of students.

2.3 Regarding the curriculum process (see Table 1), the study showed that the suitability of application channel and consideration were at a high level. The curriculum succeeded in recruiting qualified students who possess the potential to graduate. These outcomes clearly reflected the curriculum committee's good planning which included flexible application, diversity of application channels, and fast procedure. These effectively served the international context of the curriculum since it is difficult for international applicants to understand the coordination culture and miscellaneous criteria of the curriculum. Still, it is important that the curriculum should adhere to the regulations and announcement of Graduate School, Khon Kaen University. Additionally, the research also found that coordination for field study visits and student development activities had achieved the curriculum's target at a high level. The MRDM is a field study-based curriculum. It has provided 15 field study visits both in government and private organizations since its foundation. The field study will be arranged and designed by the lecturers of each course therefore it would meet the objectives of the course and curriculum philosophy which address that the

graduates should be able to understand principles and in-depth theories of rural development, to use their knowledge effectively in situational and problems analysis, conduct research, initiate self-development in career aspects, including to possess vision and a sense of moral and ethics for adaptive society, technology, and natural environment. The curriculum coordinator takes the role in coordinating the visiting organizations after received contacts and information from the course lecturers. This method leads to convenience and agility when a study in real situations, thus the students gain full benefit as planned. Moreover, the study also pointed that Independent Study (IS) advisor appointment, IS proposal submission, and IS defense committee appointment of the MRDM were evaluated at a high level as a result of effective teaching and learning plan which gradually developed research basis starting from Statistic, Research Methodology, Theories and Approaches in Rural Development, and Seminar in Rural Development in semester 1 to advanced research course in semester 2 to encourage students to create their own research in form of Independent Study. The students are required to take time for data collection and hand in IS proposal to external experts for recommendation and further research methodology. These activities are considered an outstanding learning process comparing to other programs in Khon Kaen University since they have significant impacts in fostering students to produce qualified research and become acceptable graduates in the academic sphere.

2.4 Regarding the curriculum output (see Table 1), the study pointed out that the students could graduate in time and they fully attended the academic conferences, thus the program output's suitability results at a high level. According to the analysis, the MRDM students of the academic year 2013 – 2017 achieved in-time graduation at 100 percent. This is the evidence that if the implementation is consistent with the curriculum plan, it influentially helps students to graduate in time.

Table 1 Summary of overall evaluation (n=32)

Subjects	Average	S.D.	Level
Context	4.08	0.47	High
Input	3.84	0.38	High
Process	4.27	0.92	High
Output	4.15	0.45	High
Total	4.08	0.45	High

3. Analysis of strength, weakness, opportunity, and treats (SWOT) in curriculum development of the Master of Rural Development Management, Graduate School, Khon Kaen University

The research showed that the strengths of the MRDM curriculum comprised of; 1) real setting study from a government organization, private sector, and enterprise which included in every teaching and learning courses of the MRDM; and 2) the multidisciplinary nature of the curriculum which integrates knowledge from diverse disciplines to fathom rural development management wisdom. However, the study also addressed curriculum weakness. The study duration of 15 months was indicated too short for data collection. It also caused a tight learning

schedule and a short time for semester break. In terms of the opportunity, the curriculum is a target of educational funding grantors to promote their personnel to study and apply rural development management knowledge. On the other side, the decreasing number of the grantor is the treats for the curriculum as explained in table 2.

Table 2 Analysis of strength, weakness, opportunity, and treats (SWOT) in curriculum development of the Master of Rural Development Management, Graduate School, Khon Kaen University between lecturers and alumni

	Strength	Weakness
Alumni	Study from real setting, diversity and internationality of students	Short study duration, short time for data collection, decreasing number of students
Lecturers	Multidisciplinary curriculum	Overloaded tasks from affiliated faculty, lack of young staffs to replace
	Opportunity	Treat
Alumni	To open doctoral curriculum, the program is still needed among scholarship grantors and oversea students	Decreasing number of lecturers, mere dependency on scholarship students, decreasing number of students
Lecturers	Development of academic to doctoral level, student's tendency to study doctoral degree, integration of co-learning process, opportunity to offer partial remote learning	Decreasing number of students, number of lecturers and lack of new staffs, decreasing number of government scholarship provided

4. Suggestions of the curriculum development's need for the Doctor of Rural Development Management

Toward the need for the doctoral degree of Rural Development Management, the alumni suggested that the MRDM curriculum offers both theoretical knowledge and real experience, thus the students could apply their knowledge to the current situation. For knowledge employment, the alumni further explained that what they had obtained helped them being promoted to take a greater role in counseling for local organizations as well as improve school curriculum in their countries to encompass rural development subjects. In terms of development to open the doctoral degree, the alumni expressed that the doctoral degree in rural development management must be an impressive program both for society and personnel who aim to achieve self-development and advance knowledge in rural development research. Moreover, the doctoral program shall strengthen the partnership between Khon Kaen University and rural development management institutions. The study on suggestions from the curriculum administrators and lecturers toward the doctoral degree in rural development management revealed that the

curriculum has the opportunity to develop to module course structure in the future because the students notably gain knowledge from the field study and actively embrace human resource development. Therefore, these advantages will contribute to short course training. In addition, the suggestions toward knowledge employment pointed out that rural development management is the first international curriculum of Khon Kaen University. Some rural development workers are graduated from this curriculum, and they gained a good attitude in rural development from the teaching and learning process which is rural development management concentration.

In terms of suggestions from the curriculum administrators and lecturers toward the core value of the MRDM, it found that skill, knowledge, and attitude of the learners must be consistent with the needs in individual countries. Being the integrated multidisciplinary program, it is essential that teaching and learning value should be adaptively incompatible to the changes of each country and region.

Regarding the interest to continue study at a doctoral degree, the majority of respondents showed that their interest to study in the doctor of rural development management at 84 percent, and there was 47.6 percent of the respondents were capable to find funding support.

Discussion and Conclusions

The curriculum evaluation on Master Degree of Rural Development Management, Graduate School, Khon Kaen University was discussed as to the following objectives;

1. To evaluate the curriculum of context, input, process and output of the Master of Rural Development Management, Graduate School, Khon Kaen University

1.1 Regarding the curriculum context, the study found that due to the structure of Graduate School that cannot appoint a full-time lecturer, the teaching and learning process of the MRDM must be allocated in form of a multidisciplinary curriculum. Consequently, academic collaboration and relationships among faculties are a crucial part for administration. Nevertheless, there remain problems with academic burdens of the lecturers. Whereas the Graduate School has launched an announcement on academic hours of the faculty staff who appointed to teach in the multidisciplinary curriculum in which it states that teaching adjuncts in the multidisciplinary curriculum could be counted toward their academic burdens at affiliated faculties, this is not a satisfied solution for the lecturers. Regarding this issue, the majority of lecturers in the MRDM curriculum are retired staffs who have approved contract extension at affiliated faculty. This brings advantages to the program as there are experienced lecturers and diversity in academic areas. Yet, in-depth analysis inclines to be a risk in curriculum administration regarding the lack of young staffs, so an increasing number of the MRDM lecturers are determined as a constant solution. With overloaded burdens from affiliated faculties plus teaching hours at the MRDM and a limited number of the lecturers, these impact the quality of the postgraduate study, particularly in the international curriculum where academic is intensively provided. These studies are consistent with the research of [1] on the Program Evaluation of Master of Education in Program and Supervision, Faculty of Education, Silpakorn University which revealed that the department should increase the number of program lecturers because of a large number of students. Additionally, they

are loaded with the burdens to supervise both Master and Doctoral degree students, which will result in less advisory time for Master students.

1.2 Regarding the input of the curriculum, it found that the diversity of students was an outstanding characteristic of the MRDM. Since the students enrolled in the curriculum are experienced in management, rural development, and work process relating the concept of rural community development, this helps to create knowledge exchange outside the classroom, for example, they employ the sampling cases from their countries to discuss and exchange with the classmates, resulting in a variety of learning processes, as consistent with the study of [2] on 21st Century Skills: Rethinking How Students Learn which stated that learning is a complex process. The true learning has to go beyond text to comprehension to achieve real situations application, or you have to learn every step from knowledge, then transcend to comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation consequently with real situations, hence we come to in-depth and connected learning result. This is called true knowledge.

1.3 Regarding the curriculum process, the study found that despite the application channel and consideration process was rated at a high level, the number of new students seems to be decreasing because the development trend in the globalization era makes technology become foundation of national education policies – instead of social science. Hence, to increase the number of students is determined as an important question for the curriculum to sustain its existence. This may require effective collaboration from the alumni, lecturers, the curriculum staff, and the university to promote and publicize the program to be known to the people who interest or to the related organizations. This study result is consistent with the research of [3] on “The participation in Public Relations of Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya” which revealed that the university should promote public relation awareness among personnel as well as offer opportunity to take part in advertising Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya. Since good public relations cannot happen with an individual person or a single organization, the person who possessed a good attitude and active participation shall work together to ensure effective and sustainable public relations development for the university.

1.4 Regarding the curriculum output, the study showed that participation in an academic conference resulted at a high level. According to the analysis, it found that the MRDM curriculum has a sustainable process to consider the graduate conference event which is appropriate to the study duration. However, this means the curriculum never has had students who choose journal publication as a part of the graduation requirement. Therefore, the MRDM curriculum should promote or support students to produce qualified research articles for journal publication. This will contribute to extensive benefit for the students, IS advisors, and the curriculum in the long term, which corresponds to the research of [4] studied on “Writing Research Articles for Publication...How to do it?” which commented that the process of writing a research article for publication is an indication of the researcher’s achievement in the development process, analysis and synthesis, ethics, and knowledge management in which he or she has to follow each conference’s presentation format and criteria. It is an accomplishment of the added value of research since it ensures that the researcher has passed the consideration process as designed and authorized for publication, which means he or she could apply for the works in a wide-scale and being accepted in the academic sphere, as presented in a table of overall conclusion.

2. To study curriculum administration development of the Master of Rural Development Management, Graduate School, Khon Kaen University

Regarding the analysis of strength, weakness, opportunity, and treats (SWOT) in curriculum development of the Master of Rural Development Management, Graduate School, Khon Kaen University, there are several interesting issues which have been listed and detailed as follows;

2.1 Strength: Both students and lecturers revealed consensual agreement that the Master of Rural Development Management is a multidisciplinary curriculum. There is diversity among students who come from different countries, which becomes a crucial partnership after graduation. The relationship among students is beneficial to the program such as in advertising the curriculum. Furthermore, as a multidisciplinary curriculum, it enhances students to receive knowledge in rural development management from diverse organizations. Knowledge exchange is not merely based on the samplings in Thailand, but they also come from other countries as presented and discussed among the international students. This corresponds to the study of [5] which examined how multidisciplinary research is pertinent to perspectives on political development. The research concluded that the multidisciplinary study helps promote collaborations among students after graduation. This can be inferred that the Master of Rural Development Management curriculum embraces knowledge from the lecturers and the international students, which allows the graduate student to become skillful in rural development and it could benefit their works or higher education in the future.

2.2 Weakness: The students agreed that the curriculum's study duration is too short and there were numerous assignments throughout the semester. Also, the time for data collection was not enough. Regarding this issue, the researcher found that the MRDM program has an aim to recruit a student who possesses experience in rural development, thus the curriculum has a strong tendency to respond to those who wish to increase theoretical knowledge about management, development, and the philosophy of sufficiency economy. For the complaint on the short duration for independent study, the curriculum solves this problem by providing close guidance, for example, there will be a course of "Seminar in Rural Development Management" in semester 2 which offers an opportunity for the students to submit IS proposal to the external expert. Thus, they will receive suggestions, criticism, and recommendations to improve for official approval. In semester 3, the program is particularly designed for research development. It allows approximately 2-3 months for data collection, and each student will go back to his or her country to complete this process. It has been well-planned by the curriculum to achieve appropriate schedule in every academic year. However, there is a possibility to adjust the research from IS to the thesis, which will be considered in the future.

2.3 Opportunity: The study found that the curriculum is still needed among the grantor's organization; especially in developing countries where scholarship mostly provided. The researcher also discovered that funding organizations of the students were satisfied with a short study duration of 15 months, which was consistent with student information of the academic year 2015 that had 20 students in total. Within these number, there were 6 persons received a scholarship from SEARCA (Philippine), 7 persons received a scholarship from Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 persons received Royal Scholarship under Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Education Project to the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1 person

received a scholarship from ASEAN and Mekhong GMS Scholarship, and 3 persons were self-funded. This information re-confirms the fact that the MRDM curriculum is engaged in the requirement of the funding organizations. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain the educational standard of the graduate studies by encouraging the students to graduate in time as well as to be academically qualified (in accordance with the report of curriculum implementation (SAR-TRF 7), [6].

2.4 Treat: The decreasing number of students was analyzed as the treat to the curriculum. The researcher found that the development trend in the globalization era makes technology becomes the foundation of national education policies, therefore, it is a challenging question of how to sustain the program. This result corresponds to the research of [7] which suggested guidelines for improving postgraduate program in Educational Technology Program (Continuing Curriculum) in terms of the context that the curriculum required improvement of philosophy, structure, courses, course description, and content of each course to be aligned with economic, social, and technological changes of the present.

3. Suggestions on the need for the Doctor of Rural Development Management Curriculum (International Program), Graduate School, Khon Kaen University

Toward the need for the Doctor of Rural Development Management, the research found that the suggestions from the alumni, administrators, and lecturers share consensual agreement that both theory and the concept gained from MRDM could be employed to real situations in each country; for example, if the graduate becomes a lecturer, they can help to expand knowledge in large scale. Also, for those who work in rural areas, they could apply the operation plan, evaluation system, and rural development management to their works.

Interestingly, the alumni also expressed willingness to study in the doctoral degree of rural development management as they had voiced their attitude toward teaching and learning direction that it should intensify both academics and practices. The majority of the alumni were capable to find funding support to study in the doctoral degree. Moreover, the administrators and lecturers showed their readiness to manage teaching and learning by emphasizing that the core value of the Doctor of Rural Development Management was the multidisciplinary-based curriculum. Management and rural development skills will be practiced in real settings. The learning process focused on rural community understanding and community development plan management. Thus, the students will possess skill, knowledge, and attitude which are consistent with the needs for development in each country, and they are a core that should be adjustable to the context of countries and regions.

Suggestions

1. Suggestions for future improvement and development

1.1 Regarding the curriculum context, the study found that the curriculum was affected by the policy concentrated on artificial intelligence technology which is being reinforced by the global community. Therefore, it is important to encourage organizations to see the importance of rural development - particularly in developing countries. In this matter, Khon Kaen University, together with the government, should launch the policy to promote

education as well as to publicize the value of this program regarding rural development management, especially in developing countries.

1.2 Regarding the input of the curriculum, because of the decreasing number of students, the curriculum should actively find the third party who can offer scholarships or funding and develop module courses or training courses to increase the number of students.

1.3 Regarding the curriculum process, the suitability of teaching and learning administration, as studied from the alumni, administrators, and lecturers, was revealed at a high level. However, to sustainably develop teaching and learning administrations, Graduate School is required to take a crucial part in supporting and finding the opportunity to strengthen the MRDM curriculum and to deal with rapid changes in the Age of Disruptive Technology which causes an impact on society in every dimension.

1.4 Regarding the output of the curriculum, the research showed that the students could graduate within 15 months according to the criteria, which addressed the success of good management. It is agreeable that the program should maintain the education standard in relevant to global changes.

2. The suggestions for future research.

2.1 There should be researched on how to apply knowledge from the curriculum to the student's own country.

2.2 There should be research on the impact of the MRDM curriculum on people's well-being in the alumni's local community.

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