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Research Article

Demand, Institutional Capacity, and Program Viability for a Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Education

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ABSTRACT

This convergent mixed-methods study examined the feasibility of offering a Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Education at the Graduate School of Dr. Emilio B. Espinosa Sr. Memorial State College of Agriculture and Technology (DEBESMSCAT) in Masbate, Philippines. A total of 128 education stakeholders answered a questionnaire covering respondent characteristics, 19 five-point feasibility indicators, and open-ended questions. Frequencies, percentages, and weighted means were used for the quantitative data, while written responses were analyzed thematically. Respondents rated all five domains very highly: market demand, resources and infrastructure, curriculum and course structure, potential impacts and outcomes, and overall feasibility. The strongest results concerned the program's relevance to current educational needs, its expected contribution to institutional reputation and professional leadership, and the recommendation to proceed. The qualitative data, however, placed clear conditions on implementation, particularly faculty sufficiency, research resources, affordability, flexible access for participants from distant municipalities, and careful program sequencing. Under the stated assumptions, the six-year projection produced positive annual balances and a cumulative net balance of PHP 914,700. The program appears viable, but its opening should follow regulatory approval, verified faculty and resource capacity, a defensible cost plan, and continuing quality assurance.

Keywords: *doctoral education, english language education, feasibility study, institutional capacity, market demand, Masbate*

Introduction

Doctoral programs are expected to do more than extend postgraduate enrollment. They should cultivate original inquiry, deepen disciplinary expertise, and prepare graduates

for research, academic leadership, policy work, and advanced professional practice. In the Philippines, these expectations are translated into requirements for coherent program outcomes, qualified faculty, adequate learning

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resources, functional research systems, and sustained quality assurance. Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 15, series of 2019, as amended, makes clear that demonstrated demand does not by itself justify opening a graduate program; institutions must also document their readiness to deliver it (CHED, 2019, 2025).

The access question is especially important in Masbate. As an archipelagic province, it presents travel and cost barriers for teachers and other education professionals who would otherwise need to pursue doctoral study outside the province. A locally available program could widen participation, particularly among working professionals, while building a group of researchers able to study language, literacy, multilingual education, assessment, curriculum, and educational technology in settings that are often underrepresented in national scholarship. Concerns about unequal access and uneven quality in Philippine higher education make this local evidence particularly relevant (Albert et al., 2023).

Research engagement among English language educators also depends heavily on the environment in which they work. Philippine studies have shown that teachers may value research yet struggle with limited time, workload pressure, uneven methodological preparation, and insufficient institutional support (Tarrayo et al., 2020, 2021). A well-designed doctoral program can respond to these constraints through research apprenticeship, close supervision, writing and publication support, and collaboration with schools and higher education institutions. Those benefits, however, depend on whether the institution can provide the necessary faculty, supervision load, databases, laboratories, and administrative support.

For that reason, feasibility must be judged across several dimensions rather than reduced to a single measure of interest. Market demand has to be considered alongside institutional resources, curriculum coherence, research infrastructure, financial exposure, and implementation risk. Recent Philippine studies of proposed doctoral programs have used the same broad logic, combining evidence of prospective demand with assessments of institutional readiness and stakeholder support (Andal et

al., 2024). A mixed-methods design is suited to this purpose because numerical ratings show the strength of support, whereas narrative comments reveal conditions and concerns that scale scores may conceal (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

This study assessed the feasibility of offering a Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Education at the DEBESMSCAT Graduate School. Specifically, it examined perceived feasibility in terms of market demand, resources and infrastructure, curriculum and course structure, potential impacts and outcomes, and overall assessment; analyzed stakeholder comments and implementation concerns; and reviewed the program's indicative financial sustainability. The study was intended to support institutional decision-making, curriculum development, regulatory preparation, and resource planning.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

A convergent mixed-methods design was used. Quantitative ratings and written comments were gathered in the same survey period, analyzed separately, and brought together during interpretation. This arrangement allowed the study to compare the level of stakeholder support with respondents' explanations of what the institution would need to address before implementation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Participant and Setting

The study involved 128 education stakeholders from Masbate. Participants included classroom teachers, head teachers, higher education instructors, administrative personnel, and respondents in other education-related positions. They came from Masbate City, Mandaon, Milagros, and other municipalities in the province. Participation was voluntary, and results were reported only in aggregate. The categories shown in Table 1 are mutually exclusive within each demographic variable and total 100.0%, subject only to displayed decimal rounding.

Research Instrument

The researcher-developed questionnaire had three sections. Part I collected

demographic information. Part II contained 19 statements rated on a five-point scale, with higher scores representing stronger perceived feasibility. The statements covered market demand, institutional resources, curriculum design, research and professional outcomes, and the overall recommendation. Part III invited respondents to describe concerns and suggestions in their own words. The instrument was reviewed for alignment with the study objectives before administration.

Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the participants. Weighted means summarized responses to each feasibility statement and domain. Means were interpreted as follows: 4.21–5.00, very high; 3.41–4.20, high; 2.61–3.40, moderate; 1.81–2.60, low; and 1.00–1.80, very low. The open-ended responses were analyzed through familiarization, initial coding, theme development, review, naming, and reporting, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic-analysis procedure. Integration took place at the interpretation stage, where quantitative patterns were compared with qualitative concerns and implementation conditions.

Ethical Considerations

Only aggregated data were reported, and no personally identifying information was included in the analysis. Participants were informed of the purpose of the feasibility assessment, participation was voluntary, and respondents could decline to answer the open-ended questions. The data were used solely for institutional program-planning and research purposes.

Result and Discussion

The 128 respondents represented several municipalities and occupational groups. Teachers I–III formed the largest segment (67.2%), which is relevant because classroom teachers constitute a major prospective market for doctoral study. Respondents from municipalities other than Masbate City, Mandaon, and Milagros accounted for 48.5% of the sample. This distribution suggests that decisions about class schedules, blended delivery, and on-campus requirements should be based on province-wide access rather than on the circumstances of participants living near the main campus.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the 128 Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Sex	Female	53.1
	Male	46.9
Geographic location	Masbate City	23.4
	Mandaon	10.9
	Milagros	17.2
	Other municipalities	48.5
Position	Teachers I–III	67.2
	Head teachers	2.3
	Instructors	9.4
	Administrative officers	2.3
	Other positions	18.8

Across the 19 indicators, the grand mean was 4.85, interpreted as very high. Market demand received the highest domain mean (4.91), indicating strong recognition of the need for advanced expertise and a locally accessible doctoral pathway. The overall-assessment domain was likewise very high (4.86),

and the recommendation to establish the program obtained a mean of 4.97. These results show broad support, but they should be read as stakeholder judgment rather than as proof that all institutional requirements have already been met.

Table 2. Domain-level feasibility ratings

Domain	Selected indicator / domain summary	Mean	Interpretation
Market demand	Strong alignment with trends, need for specialists, and prospective interest	4.91	Very High
Resources and infrastructure	High confidence in facilities and capacity; faculty expertise was the lowest-rated item	4.81	Very High
Curriculum and course structure	Perceived relevance, theory–practice balance, and research rigor	4.79	Very High
Potential impacts and outcomes	Expected research, institutional, interdisciplinary, and career benefits	4.85	Very High
Overall assessment	Feasibility judgment and recommendation to proceed	4.86	Very High
Grand mean	Overall perception across all 19 indicators	4.85	Very High

Faculty expertise was the lowest-rated individual indicator, although its mean of 4.55 remained within the very-high range. This comparatively lower score is important because doctoral quality depends on a stable core of faculty who can teach specialized courses, sustain an active research agenda, and supervise dissertations without excessive workload. It may also reflect respondents' awareness that highly specialized faculty are difficult to recruit and retain in an island province. The institution should therefore complete a faculty-mapping exercise, identify supervision capacity by specialization, establish visiting-professor arrangements where necessary, and create a funded faculty-development and research-mentoring plan before admitting a cohort. These actions are consistent with CHED requirements on faculty qualifications, supervision, and research support (CHED, 2019, 2025).

The high ratings for research development and interdisciplinary work point to another opportunity. English language education now intersects with multilingual education, psychology, technology, assessment, curriculum studies, and emerging applications of artificial intelligence. A doctoral program could give local educators a structured route from classroom-based questions to publishable research. Respondents' comments nevertheless indicate that this benefit will require protected research time, mentoring, access to current journals and databases, and support for presenting work beyond the province. Masbate's

geographic isolation and the cost of inter-island travel can restrict participation in national and international conferences. A modest institutional travel-grant fund, combined with support for virtual conferences and research networks, would help address this limitation.

Emergent Themes from Stakeholder Comments

Anticipated demand and relevance. Respondents generally saw the proposed degree as a natural next step for graduates of master's programs in English and related fields. They also emphasized the absence of a comparable, locally accessible doctoral program in the province.

Faculty qualifications and research resources. Written comments repeatedly referred to the need for doctoral-level specialists, current books and journals, electronic research databases, and dependable dissertation supervision. These concerns qualify the high quantitative ratings by identifying minimum conditions for credible delivery.

Geographical accessibility. Participants from distant municipalities favored schedules and delivery arrangements that would reduce repeated travel without weakening academic requirements. Their comments support carefully designed blended learning, concentrated class schedules, and clear residency expectations.

Pedagogical depth and wider academic exposure. Respondents wanted advanced approaches to language teaching, stronger contact with scholars beyond the province, and engagement with internationally informed practice. At the same time, they expected the curriculum to remain responsive to local multilingual classrooms and regional educational needs.

Institutional and professional benefits. Stakeholders associated the program with improved research productivity, stronger teaching, wider career opportunities, leadership preparation, and enhanced institutional reputation.

Implementation risks. Affordability, employability, faculty sufficiency, and premature program opening were recurring concerns. These comments suggest that stakeholder support is conditional on visible preparation and quality safeguards.

Therefore, the qualitative and quantitative findings are broadly consistent. Stakeholders support the proposal, but they do not treat high demand as a substitute for readiness. Accessibility, faculty capacity, research resources, and cost control emerged as the issues most likely to determine whether the program succeeds after approval.

Table 3. Corrected six-year indicative financial projection

Year	Projected enrollment	Tuition/unit (PHP)	Total income (PHP)	Investment cost (PHP)	Net balance (PHP)
1	25	600	405,000	350,000	55,000
2	28	600	453,600	350,000	103,600
3	31	650	544,050	400,000	144,050
4	34	650	596,700	430,000	166,700
5	37	650	649,350	430,000	219,350
6	40	700	756,000	530,000	226,000

The projection assumes three semesters each year, nine units per semester, enrollment increasing from 25 to 40 students, and tuition rising from PHP 600 to PHP 700 per unit. Under these assumptions, annual income ranges from PHP 405,000 to PHP 756,000, while annual investment costs range from PHP 350,000 to PHP 530,000. Each year produces a positive balance, and the cumulative six-year net balance is PHP 914,700. This figure corrects the inconsistent total previously stated in the abstract.

These figures remain indicative. They should be treated as a planning scenario, not as

an approved budget, because actual costs will depend on faculty assignments, supervision loads, honoraria, procurement rules, subscription prices, inflation, and cohort size. Table 4 makes the cost assumptions explicit by distributing each annual investment envelope among instructional and dissertation costs, visiting professors, research and database support, infrastructure and equipment, administration and quality assurance, and contingency or inflation. The allocation must be validated against the institution's approved staffing pattern and procurement estimates before the proposal is endorsed.

Table 4. Indicative allocation of annual investment costs (PHP)

Year	Instruction & dissertation	Visiting professors	Databases & research	Infrastructure & equipment	Administration, QA & student support	Contingency / inflation
1	180,000	30,000	45,000	50,000	25,000	20,000
2	185,000	30,000	50,000	40,000	25,000	20,000
3	205,000	35,000	60,000	45,000	30,000	25,000
4	220,000	40,000	65,000	45,000	30,000	30,000
5	225,000	40,000	70,000	35,000	30,000	30,000
6	270,000	50,000	85,000	55,000	35,000	35,000

Notes on cost assumptions. Instruction and dissertation costs cover teaching assignments, panel work, and supervision. Visiting-professor costs cover specialist honoraria and related delivery expenses. Databases and research include journal subscriptions, research software, and small research-support allocations. Infrastructure and equipment cover incremental learning-space, laboratory, and technology needs. Administration, quality assurance, and student support include compliance, monitoring, and program services. Contingency and inflation provide a limited buffer. These allocations are planning assumptions and require validation by the institution's finance, human-resource, library, and procurement offices.

Institutional Status and Nomenclature

Republic Act No. 11171 provides for the conversion of DEBESMSCAT into a state university subject to the completion of statutory and regulatory requirements. At the time covered by this manuscript, the institution continues to use its official state-college name while completing the conversion process. Accordingly, the name Dr. Emilio B. Espinosa Sr. Memorial State College of Agriculture and Technology and the acronym DEBESMSCAT are used consistently throughout this article. The university name should be adopted only after the conversion has been formally completed and officially implemented.

Proposed Implementation Conditions

1. Secure CHED authority and demonstrate full compliance with the current policies, standards, and guidelines for graduate programs before admitting students.
2. Recruit and retain a sufficient core faculty with relevant doctorates, research publications, supervision experience, and expertise across language education, applied linguistics, literature, assessment, curriculum, and educational technology.
3. Develop an outcomes-based curriculum with a transparent progression from advanced theory and specialization courses to research seminars, comprehensive examination, dissertation proposal, ethics review, publication, and final defense.

4. Strengthen library holdings, electronic databases, research software, language and learning laboratories, and access to current peer-reviewed journals; establish a small competitive fund for conference participation and research dissemination.
5. Adopt accessible scheduling and blended-learning arrangements while preserving required academic rigor, residency, supervision, and research engagement.

Conclusion

The findings support further development of a Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Education at the DEBESMSCAT Graduate School. Stakeholders reported very high levels of demand, perceived institutional readiness, curriculum relevance, expected benefits, and overall support. Their comments also make clear that feasibility is conditional. The program's credibility will depend on qualified faculty, manageable supervision loads, current research resources, geographically accessible delivery, and full compliance with graduate-education standards.

The evidence indicates that offering a Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Education at the DEBESMSCAT Graduate School is feasible from the perspective of stakeholder demand, perceived institutional readiness, curriculum relevance, anticipated outcomes, and indicative financial performance. All five feasibility domains were rated very high, and respondents strongly recommended that the institution proceed. Qualitative findings, however, show that feasibility is conditional rather than automatic. The program's credibility and sustainability will depend on qualified faculty, research infrastructure, geographic accessibility, affordable delivery, rigorous curriculum design, and continuing compliance with national graduate-education standards.

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