

## Experiences of Graduate Students in Thesis Writing: Its Implications to ASEAN Integration

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### *Abstract*

Graduate students often face problems of finishing their degrees based on the observation, experiences and interviews with students and advisers. These problems are mainly due to the rigorous process of writing a scholarly thesis. Many graduate students are constrained by time and resources. Students do not have adequate research writing skills necessary for papers that reflect creativity, originality, and mastery of one's specialization. In this study, qualitative methods were used with an open-ended survey questionnaire as the basis for the discourses employed in the narrative analysis. Five respondents represented each degree program. These graduate students were asked to describe their experiences of a training designed to take them through the different sections of writing their thesis papers. The responses were then categorized using Gagne's five categories of learning outcomes. Results indicate that the students found the training/seminar-workshop informative and relevant. Based on the learning outcomes, the training improved their intellectual skills, verbal information, cognitive strategies, and attitudes. This training also impacts on the ASEAN integration in that students are confident they would be able to meet academic and professional requirements because of the learning they have undergone through the thesis writing training. Investing in training can help prepare students to meet the challenges of writing scholarly papers which are comparable to those written by other ASEAN member states.

Keywords: Training-workshop, thesis writing, scholarly thesis, rigorous writing process

### *Introduction*

A thesis is the final requirement of a graduate student to obtain a master's degree in the Philippines. The thesis writing stage is a scholarly paper of a student's graduate education aimed at advancing knowledge by finding new truths about a discipline which, in turn, might nurture the culture of research in the student. This stage involves a rigorous process of reading extensively and writing in a scholarly and scientific style which many

graduate students are not equipped to do. Hence a course called Seminar in Thesis Writing has been added to address the gap in the curricula of the different degree programs in the Graduate School of Bukidnon State University. In this course, seminar-workshops/training related to thesis writing have been conducted. Notable speakers who are prominent researchers and practitioners are invited to speak and train the participants.

In the graduate school, a master's thesis is expected to demonstrate a student's capacity for research and originality of thought. In other disciplines, notably those awarding the Master of Arts in Education in various majors like English Language Teaching, Educational Administration, Guidance and Counseling, Mathematics Education/Teaching, General Science, Business Management, and Public Administration, the thesis represents creativity, originality, and mastery of one's art at a professional level. Thus, a seminar on thesis writing serves as an avenue for graduate school students to understand better the purpose of research (Cone & Foster, 2006) and research writing. It also provides them with various techniques on how one could come up with a comprehensive and substantial research output. Moreover, it enhances the researchers' knowledge, skills and attitude (KSA) in research through learning the ethical standards of thesis writing.

Based on a survey of the records from the Graduate School of Bukidnon State University during the school year 2012 to 2013, it showed that less than 50% of the graduates finished the program. Of this figure, around 33 percent completed the degree which ranged from 2 to 3 years (Graduate School Narrative Report, 2013). This observation is evident in the students who were not in the Department of Education-Bukidnon State University scholarship program. These scholars need to follow a contract of one year and two summers. For students who are non-scholars, they can finish their masters program within a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 3 years. Even then, this length of time of the nonDepEd-BukSU scholars is not the ideal because most graduate students can finish their studies in two years.

To address this gap, training graduate students in the methods, techniques, instrumentation, data analysis and systematic management of research has become an important part of the prevailing culture of research in the Graduate School. Hence, central to the multifaceted concerns in graduate education today is the provision for systematic

research experiences whereby graduate students may be assisted to craft, implement and defend their research paper in their thesis, with integrity and professionalism.

However, despite the lectures and interventions on thesis writing, still the Graduate School students of Bukidnon State University found it difficult to start writing their thesis. Some of them do not have enough facility of the English language while others do not have enough exposure of the steps and procedures in developing the parts of the thesis. Furthermore, students do not have adequate skills of researching and reading other research outputs to provide concepts and ideas for benchmarking and modeling. As a result, some students fail to graduate within the time frame and, this number has continued to increase every year because of the prevailing issues that students have experienced.

To link this present study with the need for training in thesis writing in advanced education, Robins and Kanowski (2008), and Larcombe, McCosker, and O'Loughlin (2007) contextualized current thesis writing training. There is a need to inform both post- and graduate students regarding university requirements, supervisors' attitudes, the research subject matter, intellectual property, capacity and working style, and issues of co-authorship. It is important for students to develop the writing skills to a level sufficient to meet the demands of preparing a research thesis. Hence, these trainings can help students of research in higher degree education to build confidence as apprentice academic writers. As observed by the present researchers, most universities in the ASEAN region require their students to publish in refereed journals before they obtain their degrees. The publication of these papers becomes possible only if they are scholarly and have undergone the process of peer review. It means that the articles passed the exacting standards of discipline-specific research journals.

The significance of this study would make educators of other graduate schools in the region aware of how the graduate school

students describe their learning experiences on thesis writing. With this, they would have an idea on how to improve and develop good thesis writing practices. Thus, this would encourage them to evaluate themselves as to how they view their practices and styles during the thesis writing. By doing so, they could initiate changes and provide students with better means to alleviate problems in thesis writing.

The students would realize how far their level of understanding of research writing is so that they would be motivated to do more research and conduct extensive readings to be successful in their thesis writing. This study would serve as a reference for the researchers who are conducting studies on learning experiences on thesis writing. Also, it can be used as the basis for the inclusion of a seminar as a course on thesis writing in the revision of syllabus for graduate schools.

This research was conducted to explore the learning experiences of the graduate school students in thesis writing training/seminar-workshop. The present study focused on the questions:

- (1) What are the categorizations of the descriptions of the experience of the Graduate School students' experiences on thesis writing?
- (2) What are the learning experiences of Graduate School students on the thesis writing seminar workshops and trainings?

### *Framework of the Study*

Learning theories are as applicable to advanced education as they are in higher and basic education. These ideas guide educators to create optimal learning experiences for students because they leverage teaching and learning.

The first concept of this study explains the theory of learning experiences. Gagné's work (1985) focuses on intentional or purposeful learning, which is the type of learning that occurs in school or specific training programs. He believed that events in the environment influence the learning process. His theory

identifies the general types of human capabilities that people learn. These capabilities are the behavioral changes (learning outcomes) in a learner that a learning theory must explain. Once the learning outcomes are identified, an analysis of the conditions that govern learning, remembering and describing can occur (Gagné, 1985, p. 15; Kolb, 1984).

While Bloom (1956) developed his taxonomy of cognitive outcomes based on increasingly complex levels, Gagné (1985) developed his five categories of learning outcomes based on the characteristics of the content that a learner must learn. His outcomes do not consist of any particular order or complexity of levels, other than the sub-categories within the Intellectual Skills category. Gagné separated Bloom's knowledge class into a category he named verbal information, and he added another category of learning outcomes (Kolb, 1984) which he called cognitive strategies. He believed cognitive strategies were learning strategies that learners adopted and applied in the process of learning, and that they are not subject specific (Wager, n.d.).

One of the themes of Gagné's theory is distinguishing the types of outcomes that learning has: the categories of learned capabilities-- observed as human performances - that have characteristics. Gagné describes five categories of human performance established by learning: Intellectual skills ("knowing how" or having procedural knowledge); Verbal information (being able to state ideas, "knowing that", or having declarative knowledge); Cognitive strategies (having certain techniques of thinking, ways of analyzing problems, and having approaches to solving problems); Motor skills (executing movements in a number of organized motor acts such as playing sports or driving a car (Kolb, 1984)) and Attitudes (mental states that influence the choices of personal actions (p. 243).

The five categories of learning outcomes provide the foundation for describing how the conditions of learning apply to each category. Gagné (1985) postulates that when there is a rational and systematic manner of

combination between the five categories of learning outcomes and the ways of analyzing learning requirements, then it will be possible to describe a set of ideas that make up a theory of instruction (p. 243). He adds that a theory of instruction should attempt to relate the external events of instruction to the outcomes of learning by showing how these events lead to appropriate support or enhancement of internal learning processes (Kolb, 1984).

Intellectual skills involve the use of symbols such as numbers and language to interact with the environment. They include knowing how to do something rather than knowing about something (Kolb, 1984). Intellectual skills require an ability to carry out actions. Often they need the interactions with the environment through symbols such as letters, numbers, words, or diagrams. When a learner has learned an intellectual skill, he or she will be able to demonstrate its application to at least one particular instance of the subject matter learned.

Another category of learning outcomes is verbal information. Verbal information or declarative knowledge refers to the organized bodies of knowledge that we acquire classified as names, facts, principles, and generalizations. (Kolb, 1984). The performance or learning outcome achieved through verbal information is the ability to state in a meaningful sentence what was learned. An example of acquired verbal information is the skill to define Piaget's stages of cognitive development.

Cognitive strategies refer to the process where learners guide their learning, remembering, and thinking. Whereas intellectual skills deal with numbers, words, and symbols that are external, cognitive strategies govern our processes of dealing with the environment by influencing internal processes. A learner uses cognitive strategies to think about the learning and in solving problems. They are the ways a student manages the processes of learning, remembering, and thinking.

Motor skills are the precise, smooth, and accurately timed execution of movements

involving the use of muscles. They are a distinct type of learning outcome and necessary to the understanding of the range of possible human performances. Learning situations that involve motor skills are learning to write, playing a musical instrument, playing sports, and driving a car. The timing and smoothness of executing motor skills (Kolb, 1984) indicate that these performances have a high degree of internal organization.

Another distinct category of learning outcomes is attitudes, the internal state that influences the choices of personal actions made by an individual towards some class of things, persons, or events. Choices of action (behaviors) made by individuals are influenced significantly by attitudes.

Another theory is the social learning theory which is an integrated behavioral and cognitive theory of learning which provides a comprehensive model that could account for the wide range of learning experiences that occur in the real world. As initially outlined by Bandura and Walters in 1963 and further detailed in 1977, important tenets of social learning theory are as follows: learning is not purely behavioral; rather, it is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context. Learning can occur by observing a behavior and by observing the consequences of the behavior (vicarious reinforcement); learning involves observation, extraction of information from those observations, and making decisions about the performance of the behavior (observational learning or modeling) (Terego, 2016). Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory helps us to understand how people learn in social contexts and informs us how we could construct a live learning community.

Bruner (1966) posits learning as an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current/past knowledge. The learner selects and transforms information, constructs hypotheses, and makes decisions, relying on a cognitive structure to do so. Cognitive structure (i.e., schema, mental models) provides meaning and organization to experiences and allows the individual to "go

beyond the information given" (p.72).

In this study, the researchers used Gagné's (1985) five categories of learning outcomes in the analysis of the participants' responses. Social learning theory of Bandura and Vygotsky has also influenced the interpretation of this study. Finally, Bruner's outcome of cognitive development is applied to the thinking of the graduate students as they write their thesis papers.

The training/seminar-workshop at Bukidnon State University (BukSU) Graduate School specifically targets the thesis writing skills of students. The content outline includes the sections of Chapter I containing the sections on the introduction, theoretical and/or conceptual framework, research problem, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 is the review of literature. Chapter 3 contains the section on methodology. Chapter 4 includes the presentation, and analysis and interpretation of data. Chapter 5 contains the sections on summary, findings, conclusions, recommendations, and references and appendices.

### *Methodology*

The study used the qualitative method of research specifically the narrative analysis in exploring the experiences of the participants in thesis writing. To collect the data, the researchers used open-ended survey questionnaires. The research locale was at BukSU, a state university located in the capital town of Malaybalay City. BukSU is strategically positioned to serve Region 10, Caraga region and other outlying cities and provinces of Mindanao. It is one of the leading educational institutions serving the people of Mindanao.

The participants of this study were the graduate students who had a one-unit subject in the Graduate School called Seminar in Thesis Writing. There were five respondents from each of the degree programs, namely, Master of Arts in Education with majors in the different fields of English Language Teaching, Educational

Administration, Science Teaching, Math Education, Guidance and Counseling, Public Administration, and Business Management. The students attended a maximum of three (3) seminars within a semester. In one of the three seminars conducted, there were many participants who attended because it was opened to all graduate students. The other two seminars had fewer participants because these two activities were only for those who enrolled in Thesis Writing. They answered an open-ended survey questionnaire where they wrote their experiences. The researchers followed ethical considerations like they were reassured that answering the questionnaire was voluntary in nature and they can discontinue anytime if they were not comfortable, and that writing their names will be optional to ensure the confidentiality of the information that they would share.

The researchers analyzed the descriptive words which were tallied based on the frequency of occurrence. They categorized the commonly used descriptive words which were the evidence for each category. Actual discourses were taken from the answers of the participants and placed under broader categories using the Gagne's five categories of learning outcomes, namely, intellectual skills, verbal information, cognitive strategies, motor skills, and attitudes.

Interviews and focus group discussion with the participants as well as the Graduate School professors were done to substantiate and validate their answers in the open-ended questions. These interviews were conducted after the conduct of each training and after they answered the questionnaires. The researchers' observations were likewise considered since both of them have been teaching in the Graduate School for many years. In addition, they were also speakers during the seminar/training workshops.

### *Results and Discussion*

This section discusses the learning experiences of the Graduate School students in thesis writing. The answers of the participants in

the open-ended survey questionnaire provide the data of the study. From here discourses were extracted and analyzed.

### Participants' Descriptions of Experience in Thesis Writing

Table 1 illustrates the results of the commonly used adjectives by the graduate students in describing the experiences in the thesis writing. The researchers arranged the descriptors according to the number of occurrences.

Table 1. Descriptive Features of the Seminar-Workshops/Trainings on Thesis Writing

Descriptive Words	Frequency	Percentage
Informative	20	25.00
Relevance	17	21.25
Interesting	15	18.75
Timeliness	14	17.50
Efficiency & Effectiveness	14	17.50
Total	80	100.00

A greater percentage of the participants said that the seminar/training workshops were informative due to inputs delivered by notable researchers as speakers. They found the training workshops relevant to their field of specialization. Because many of them attended the training workshops voluntarily, they found it interesting, timely, efficient and effective. Both interviews and FGD revealed that the knowledge the participants gained could greatly help them in finishing their degree.

After the training workshops, many students told their friends about their experience and even invited them to attend the subsequent workshops to refresh their writing skills as these were the students who had already stopped writing their thesis for some time. Some students came to see the organizers and expressed their gratitude for conducting an informative, relevant, interesting, timely, and effective thesis writing enhancement activity.

This observation implies that these training workshops in thesis writing enhance the graduate students' research skills and facilitate in finishing their degrees.

Cone and Foster (2006) affirmed that thesis writing serves as an avenue for graduate school students to understand better the purpose of research and research writing. It implies that this seminar on thesis writing provides the participants with various techniques on how they could come up with substantial research outputs. Moreover, it enhances their knowledge, skills and attitude (KSA) in research through learning the ethical standards of thesis writing.

The following excerpts and discussion provide the evidence to the identified descriptors. For the purpose of clarity, the boxes below show the responses taken from the 30 student-respondents to these training workshops grouped according to the commonly used adjectives which were categorized.

#### Excerpt 1. Informative

S1-it gives a lot of learning that are applicable to thesis writing  
 S2-gave additional insights about thesis writing  
 S3-the seminar is very informative in the sense that it gives us updated information on the correct format of referencing  
 S4-it provides the needed information that can be of great help in fine tuning the thesis output  
 S5-being able to give additional insights about thesis writing

Excerpt 1 shows the answers of the participants describing that the seminar/training workshops on thesis writing is informative. The information that they got from the speakers and the workshops that followed were skills they needed in their thesis writing, like referencing using the American Psychological Association conventions because it gives them information on the correct format of referencing.

The implication is that a seminar-workshop/training in thesis writing must be practical where real-life examples and re-write exercises are provided making it fun for the students to do. Harris, Graham and Mason (2006) observed that writers' workshop can improve the writing, knowledge, and motivation of struggling writers with or without peer support. They can immediately apply their learning with the help of not only the speaker but also their peers who critique their work. As observed, this can also be a useful way for those who can work effectively by themselves as long as they get input from the writing experts.

Excerpt 2 represents the relevance of the training workshops to them as graduate students. They were enlightened by the speakers especially that many have already forgotten what they had learned from their previous courses. They needed an update of the trends in writing a thesis. They further explained that the information shared by the speakers is very relevant and appropriate in thesis writing especially in the literature search since this is needed when they write the theoretical and conceptual framework.

#### Excerpt 2. Relevance

S1-use and apply in thesis writing. It is really necessary in making/writing a thesis.

S2-its content are in line with our needs.

S3-the facts shared by the speakers are very relevant in thesis writing and appropriate especially in the search for the anchorage of the study.

S4-connected with what is happening or being discussed.

S5-it is relevant to the needs of the participants.

The participants found the training workshops very relevant because they were able to participate actively using their work as points for discussion. Using their thesis titles during the writing activities opened up a very lively interaction since participants can relate to

their writing experience. Many participants can share their experiences and even their coping mechanisms to minimize the existing problems they are encountering in thesis writing. Their interest and enthusiasm in writing their thesis provided stimulus for the discussion. Hence, there was an active discussion among the participants during the open forum.

Baram-Tsaburi and Lewenstein (2012) developed a tool for measuring scientists' written skills of public communication of science which include content, knowledge organization, aside from clarity and language that help produce relevance in writing. These are also taken up during these training workshops. These areas include write shops in methods, techniques, instrumentation, data analysis, in-text citation, referencing, and much more.

As revealed in Excerpt 3, graduate students found the thesis writing seminar/training workshop interesting. They are interested to know more about how to improve their work. They also believed that it is interesting since it heightens and sustains them to work on their own and even willing to share with the other students their experiences in thesis writing.

#### Excerpt 3. Interesting

S1-topics given were very much related to the needs of the participants.

S2-it heightens my interest to work on my thesis writing.

S3-it gives us the interest to know more to improve our work.

S4-the topics are relevant to our subject.

Overmeyer (2005) writes that writing workshops must meet the needs of the individual participants. As writing workshops go there are those who cannot find the right words, struggle with organization or simply do not want to write. The implication is that the trainers must be very experienced where they think deeply to solve these writing problems. To hurdle these difficulties, write shops must have exercises that are interesting to do.

Excerpt 4 illustrates the seminar on thesis writing as timely and appropriate. They expressed that the said training workshop is very timely since they are exactly in the writing stage where they are most confused: how to treat the data qualitatively and/or quantitatively. Issues and concerns on the distinction between qualitative and quantitative data analysis were clarified.

#### Excerpt 4. Timeliness

S1-it is just right when I needed it most.  
 S2-very timely since the participants are now on thesis writing.  
 S3-the information given and the learning could be used during the thesis writing.  
 S4-the seminar happened at the appropriate time for me since I am already on my chapter 4  
 S5-it suits the situation where confusion on how the data should be treated especially in a qualitative study is quite unclear

Stelzner (2007) emphasized that writing must be “fact-driven, contain useful information, have expert opinions and with ironclad logic” (p. 2). So that a paper is timely, all information must contain these qualities. Hence, speakers in this training workshop for thesis writing are chosen not only for their expertise in their disciplines but also for their experience as research writers.

Excerpt 5 shows the extracted discourses of the participants describing that the training workshop is efficient and effective. Here the participants manifested that the thesis writing training produced the desired result without wasting materials, time and energy. Others noted that the giving of suggestions, best teaching and guidelines in the writing process were timely.

#### Excerpt 5. Efficiency and Effectiveness

S1-as its meaning expresses that it is capable of producing the desired result without wasting materials, time and energy.

S2-effective suggestion on writing process.  
 S3-they are also very efficient that they gave us the best teaching.  
 S4-the learning we acquired were fulfilling and effective.

Waddoups, Hatch, and Butterworth (2003) cited that effectiveness helps in the overall student satisfaction and learning. They suggested improving trainings so that more time is spent interacting with the students. This implies that effectiveness and efficiency are achievable if the students in the training are satisfied with the way the trainers or speakers help them in the writing of the different sections. This also means that there is an appropriate time for interaction between the speaker and themselves where they can bring up their writing difficulties, and they could interact freely with the other students who have similar concerns.

#### Learning Experiences of Graduate School Students Based on Categories

The following sample excerpts are the extracted discourses of the participants which the researchers placed under the broader categories postulated by Gagne’s categories of learning.

Excerpt 6 provides examples of discourses by the participants under intellectual skills. Students learned how to write and enhance every chapter of the thesis. Also, they were able to learn the proper way of writing and citing authorities in thesis writing.

#### Excerpt 6. Intellectual skills

S1- I learned how to write or enhance my chapters 1, 2, & 3...  
 S2-I learned the proper way of writing the thesis. The means to retrieve and cite authorities and their works...

Intellectual skills involve the use of symbols such as numbers and language to interact with the environment. They include knowing how to do something rather than knowing about something. Intellectual skills require an ability to carry out actions. Often they require the interactions with the environment through symbols such as letters, numbers, words, or diagrams. When a learner has learned an intellectual skill, he or she will be able to demonstrate its application to at least one particular instance of the subject matter learned (Gagne, 1985; Kolb, 1984)

The researchers observed that verbal information occurred through the giving of relevant answers to the questions raised by the trainers. The participants were highly pleased that they were able to correctly answer the questions. The trainers too were satisfied by the answers of the participants. They even commented that participants were able to expound on their learning and added relevant information related to their experiences.

#### Excerpt 7. Verbal Information

S1. The trainers called the attention of the participants to answer relevant questions related to the training by giving explanations on the statistical techniques used in thesis writing. It provides an avenue for the participants to be clarified on their doubts about statistical techniques.

In fact in the study of Swan (2002), she found that there are factors necessary in effective learning and two of these are contact and feedback from course instructors. In these trainings the resource speakers were oriented to do short workshops to apply the skills which they had taught and to provide the feedback sessions. So the graduate students can thresh out any writing practices that they have problems with into the feedback sessions. This way they can get strategies to bring home with them and apply as they begin or continue to write their theses.

Excerpt 8 displays the discourses of students on their learning experiences under cognitive strategies. They claimed that they learned the techniques in writing clear and accurate thesis proposals during these trainings. Gagne claims that cognitive learning strategies is the process where learners are guided in their learning, remembering, and thinking. This is exactly what is manifested in the excerpt of a student that follows.

#### Excerpt 8. Cognitive Strategies

S1-The speaker provided the students with techniques in writing a clear accurate thesis proposal. Writing a thesis is a very rigorous process; because of this, the preparation in thesis writing is emphasized in the seminar.

Villamil and de Guerero (1996) found that social-cognitive activities the students use in dealing with trouble-sources in composing, copying, and discussing task procedures facilitate learning in writing classes. They found that there were different mediating strategies used to facilitate the writing process like employing symbols and external resources, using the first language, providing scaffolding, resorting to interlanguage knowledge, and vocalizing private speech. All these moves are present in these trainings, and these helped the graduate students so much. The easy atmosphere of the training sessions is ideal that they do not fear to be embarrassed with their writing samples when they present these for critiquing.

Excerpt 9 displays the attitude of students towards the trainings on thesis writing. The frame shows that the participants were inspired since they were interested in writing their manuscripts even though they have experienced difficulties in formulating their research problem.

## Excerpt 9. Attitudes

S1- This seminar in thesis is very necessary to encourage other writers/researchers to give inspiration to us students so that we will be interested in making our own manuscripts even though it is difficult to formulate a research/paper. This will serve as our guide especially if we have the feeling of insecurity and anxiety in the completion of the paper. Their experiences will also serve as our path that tells us which way to go, because sometimes we are not confident of our own path.

S2-I believe that a research needs character. Thus it consists of three factors: the researcher, the act of research and the ultimate product which must be trustworthy enough, that a research study must never misrepresent nor be corrupted by doing academic dishonesty. Research adheres to the following:

1. Knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error
2. Mutual respect
3. Norms on accountability
4. Norms of public research

Also, one respondent believed that doing research entails character. Gagne's supports the findings shown in this excerpt. His attitudinal category of learning states that the internal state influences the choices of personal actions made by an individual towards some class of things, persons, or events. Choices of action made by individuals are influenced significantly by attitudes. From the researchers' observation, students get encouraged by the learning they have gotten from these trainings, and they are inspired to begin the writing of their theses.

Sachs (2002) wrote in his study of students' attitudes to writing a thesis that this kind of writing is like the ultimate self-regulated learning task. It is therefore a common source of great anxiety for most students of higher or even advanced education. Indeed, this is the same observation of the present researchers

who are research professors themselves. But based on the findings of this study, they found that if graduate students are given the guidelines in writing the different sections of each of the chapters of the whole thesis, there is a change of attitude, from fear to excitement. They are motivated to begin their writing immediately while learning is still fresh in their memory.

#### *Implications to AEC Integration*

With ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) integration, there will be a surge of academic partnerships in education and research among universities, especially for the Southeast Asian Member States. Because of the need for partnerships, there will be more research collaborations, student and faculty exchanges, scholarships and other linkages. These linkages imply that skills for students in these countries must be equal or beyond those who have joined the ASEAN University Network (AUN) so that they will not be left behind by their more academically or technologically prepared counterparts. Another implication concerning students' participation in the ASEAN International Mobility of Students (AIMS) Program is that if their skills are not proficient, then no higher education institution will take them in. So we need to build competitive programs or courses that help our students improve further their skills. Hence, Chairman Licuanan of the Commission of Higher Education in the Philippines reported that part of her agency's goals is to review graduate education and transnational programs (CHED Gears Up for ASEAN 2015, 2014). The present study is hinged on the above move of CHED because now more than ever our students need to be on par with the other ASEAN nations. Hence, there is a need for ongoing training in thesis writing. Students need to develop skills in research writing so that their papers are published in peer-reviewed and scholarly journals. There is a competitive milieu present in publications of the excellent variety.

Internationalization, according to Yemini and Giladi (2015), has become the goal of

every HEI, and institutions need to implement this move. The best way to successfully do this is to prepare students to meet the academic requirements. The goal is not just adequate preparation but to exceed the standards. How we are going to achieve this is through well-designed curricula that prepare future school administrators and faculty in various disciplines like language teaching, guidance, mathematics and science education, management and many more to become future leaders and academics. But most of all, be able to work in a different professional milieu within the ASEAN Member States and excel in that country.

### Conclusions

The descriptive features of the trainings on thesis writing was found to be informative, relevant, interesting, timely, and efficient and effective. Thus, it can respond to the needs of the students in guiding them through the different sections of the research paper.

In terms of the students' learning experiences, they are categorized into intellectual skills, verbal information, cognitive strategies, and attitudes. Hence, the training workshop provided the students with a platform for intellectual exchange, assisting them with their concerns in writing the different sections of their research paper, and providing them with the right attitude to finish their thesis.

Given the ideal experience, the participants can learn. Ideal learning background is the provision of training according to the needs of the participants. In this instance, they needed to have input on the mechanics (format), organization (guidelines or moves), and content (research methods), which were all provided during the seminar/training. The training encouraged them to begin writing for those who have just started their thesis writing or continue to write their thesis, in the case of those who have nearly surrendered because of frustration.

There is no difference between pedagogy and andragogy in the instance of giving the appropriate writing props. Whatever the ages

of the learners if they are given the information in writing the sections of the different chapters that compose the whole of the research paper, these learners would be able to write.

### Recommendations

In the conduct of trainings for thesis writing in the graduate school, it is recommended that each Higher Education Institution must package it according to its characteristics. For example, there are different practices in the writing of each chapter according to the guidelines set by each institution. Although there are general guidelines from references, there are also peculiarities found in each HEI, e.g., Conceptual Framework in one institution but Framework in another institution.

There are many experienced researcher-writers with refereed and indexed journal publications and they are the best trainers to these seminar-workshops/trainings. They can simplify their topics without adding confusion to the students. Sometimes the more experienced researchers can make the writing process easier to do.

Schedule of the trainings can be done during summer where many students can attend and thus would not be doing so many academic requirements. Students can have more time to absorb the information and are not too pressured. Thus, they can think more comfortably and apply the learning to their studies. Lastly, the schedule must not be packed into one day only. It must be well designed where there is adequate time for input and workshop.

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