

A THESIS CONDUCTING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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Abstract

The author contrived a thesis conducting development process to which students must adhere during the conduct of their thesis. The six step process consists of: making a contract, complying with thesis performance requirements, selecting a topic, following a pre-determined series of self-help activities prior to defending the thesis proposal, taking a thesis oral examination, and making necessary corrections to the thesis after taking the oral examination. This thesis conducting development process has produced excellent results. The students have expressed their satisfaction and commented that all of the activities in the process have been beneficial to their success in producing a high quality thesis. Upon completion of their program of study, students can further apply this concept in the workplace.

Keywords: Thesis; dissertation; graduate student.

Introduction and background

Theses are the study works of students, generally in the form of research, to be regarded as an important part of an intense study program at the graduate study level. The conduct of a thesis may help produce a body of new knowledge, solve problems, lead to innovations and originate advancements in all areas of study. To conduct a high quality thesis, it is necessary to have a system and a process that helps a student gain

mastery over the subject and, at the same time, produce a meaningful report. Additionally, the process is an exercise that develops important student qualities, such as patience, carefulness, systematic performance of tasks, creative thought and the capability of completing his/her study in a timely manner. Building on these beliefs, the author contrived a thesis conducting development process to which students must adhere during the

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conduct of their thesis. The purpose of this study is to develop a thesis conducting process model for facilitating graduate students' success.

Methodology

There were two stages of the study. The first stage was to develop the process by investigating principles and activities which students must hold and perform which can help them gain mastery of the process of conducting their thesis, and at the same time produce a meaningful report. Additionally, the process is an exercise that develops the student qualities of patience, carefulness, systematic performance of tasks, creative thought, and the capability of completing his/her study in a timely manner. The second stage was to implement the process with 30 Master's degree students at Mahasarakham University, Thailand. After the completion of their Master's degree theses, those students and their advisors were asked to evaluate and give their feedback on the usefulness of the process.

The thesis conducting development process contrived by the researcher consisted of the following six steps:

Step 1: Making a contract: The student and his/her supervisor draw up a contract which commits the student to an agreed upon time period for completion of the thesis. It also commits the student to the principles of integrity while conducting the thesis, adhering to the researcher's code of ethics, and developing a positive and wholesome attitude during the study process.

Step 2: Complying with thesis performance requirements: The student conducting his/her thesis should hold to the following principles, and perform within the program as follows:

- Conduct every stage of the thesis by himself/herself. He/she may ask for cooperation or assistance from others during the stages of data collection and data analysis.

- Hold to the principle that the student conducting the thesis is the one who is most cognizant of the topic under study. The author must be able to explain his/her thesis so that other people will clearly understand what he/she is studying. The author must also be able to answer questions or respond to doubts intelligibly and fluently to demonstrate his/her complete mastery.

- Devote every effort to study in accordance with the research process, and aspire to achieve a very high quality thesis that the student can regard as a proud academic masterpiece.

- Hold on to the principle of NOT believing anything easily. DO NOT believe anything casually, but believe it when you have considered it thoroughly with intelligence, supplemented by sufficient evidence, until you are sure of its correctness.

- Put into practice the 9 items of the National Research Council of Thailand's code of ethics (Researcher Ethic Code of The National Research Council of Thailand. 1998: 24-25). These items are: being honest, having academic and managerial morality, holding to agreements made with the agency which supports the research and the agency under which the research is conducted, being responsible for what is researched, having no bias, respecting other people's academic

opinions, and being responsible to society at all levels.

Step 3: Selecting a significant topic for the thesis: The student conducting his/her thesis must select a topic that is significant to the field of study. The topic must be capable of providing meaningful and informative data. The student must have a clear set of guidelines to accomplish the study, and select high quality instruments and materials, as required by the thesis.

Step 4: Following a pre-determined series of self-help activities: The student is required to perform the following activities prior to defending his/her thesis proposal: produce an action plan for conducting the thesis, check the correctness of references and correct any flaws, map out the purposes of the research, hypotheses, show statistics to be used for analyzing data and related literature, model the presentation of research results, and check his/her readiness to defend the thesis proposal .

- *Making a thesis action plan:* The action plan is defined as thinking to determine in advance what activity to perform and during which period of time to perform it. The plan serves as a guideline and defines a time line for conducting the thesis. It will also help the student work efficiently and maintain his/her agreed upon schedule. The evolving plan may be made weekly or every fortnight. Examples of activities available in a plan are: writing a thesis proposal, improving and correcting, constructing instruments for collecting data, collecting data, and analyzing the data. The main principles for making a thesis action plan are: 1) put forth great effort

to plan early; 2) organize activities in a sequence of stages of action; 3) remain optimistic and confident; and 4) prevent errors.

- *Checking the correctness of references and correcting flaws:* Check all references carefully to see whether or not the essences are referred to correctly and in accordance with the original text. If it is referred to incorrectly, it must be corrected. Check to be certain that all reference sources appear in the bibliography. If any of the sources are not found there, they must be added in their complete form. If the reference sources are found in the bibliography, make sure they are written correctly in terms of last names, first names, titles, dates and sources of publication, etc.

- *Mapping out the purposes of the research, hypotheses, statistics used, and related literature:* The four components of the research project which complement each other are purposes, hypotheses, statistics used, and related literature. Table 1 outlines an example showing traits of mapping research purposes, hypotheses, statistics used for analyzing data and reporting research results that confirm or do not confirm the hypotheses.

Table 1: An example showing traits of mapping research purposes, hypotheses, statistics used for analyzing data and research results that do and do not confirm the hypotheses

Purpose	Hypothesis	Statistics Used	Research Result	
			Confirm the Hypotheses	Do not confirm the Hypotheses
1. To examine the relationship between components of multiple intelligence and achievement and attitudes toward English of Matthayomsuksa 3 (grade9) students	Each of components of multiple intelligences is positively related to achievement and attitude toward English.	Simple correlation	Wichai / Nipa / Sombat.	
2.		
3.		

The student identifies the first research purpose, considering whether or not there is a hypothesis for the purpose. If there is, it must be written in the table. The student must consider which statistical tests are to be used for analyzing data in replying to the purpose. The student must identify the author of any references submitted and state whether his/her research findings confirm the hypothesis. This can be accomplished by writing only the author(s) name in the research results columns. The same procedure can be followed for each research purpose.

- *Determining how to present the results of the research:* The presentation of the research results must be planned well in advance. The student must consider the overall look of the report, the sequence of content and the layout of any figures and tables.

- *Checking readiness for defense of the thesis proposal:* The thesis advisor or supervisor should check the student's readiness for defending the thesis proposal by having the student evaluate the writing of the proposal, using a checklist, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Checklist to be used prior to defense of the thesis proposal

Aspect to Consider	Level of Confidence		Remark
	High	Low	
<i>Title</i>			
1. Clearly and correctly covers all problems.			
<i>Introduction</i>			
2. Clearly writes background to understand research problems.			
3. Background helps the reader realize the significance and need to conduct the research.			
4. Research purposes clearly cover all the problems.			
5. Hypotheses are clear, correct, and appropriate.			
6. Shows the relationship among the purposes, hypotheses, and statistics used.			
<i>Related Literature</i>			
7. Properly systematizes the writing in sequence.			
8. There are adequate underlying conceptual theories.			
9. There are domestic and foreign related literature.			
10. There are conclusions and connections with the research conducted.			
<i>Conclusion</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Able to be submitted	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to be submitted	
<i>Procedure</i>			
11. Clearly identify the population and sample.			
12. The sampling techniques is appropriate and explained clearly.			
<i>Instrument for Collecting Data</i>			
13. The constructing process is explained clearly.			
14. Discriminating powers are explained correctly and clearly.			
15. The method of finding reliability is correct and clear.			
16. The method of finding validity is correct and clear.			
<i>Data Analysis</i>			

The supervisor will help the student shown that he/she has a high level of confidence in every item, the supervisor will allow the thesis proposal to be submitted.

Step 5. The thesis oral examination: With respect to the thesis oral examination, the student must follow the recommendations listed below:

Prior to sitting for the oral examination, the student must write a detailed, one page summary of the thesis. The summary may be designed in any form that will help the student explain the overall research work during the oral examination, and later be used to help the student recall information without having to open or reread his/her theses.

The student should have prepared an appropriate, detailed, clear and concise thesis proposal used to help the student recall information without having to open or reread his/her thesis. This proposal, which defines the student's knowledge of the topic, will assist the student to present a convincing defense of his/her proposal and contribute to the quality of the thesis.

The student must prepare for the oral examination by organizing his/her presentation of the study in a concise, easy to understand, interesting, proficient, correct, and accurate manner. In addition, the student must be prepared to respond to different questions, which will indicate his/her mastery of the topic. The student should write down about 20 questions which he/she expects to be asked during the oral examination and prepare detailed answers in advance.

The thesis oral examination may be divided into the following 3 stages:

Stage 1: the student must explain the scope of his/her study focusing only on significant issues. Significant issues may include the reasons for selecting the topic, procedures followed while conducting the

research, research results, discussion, and recommendations and conclusions.

Stage 2: the examination committee members ask questions to check the cognition of the student. In the interest of correctness, the committee may object to or argue about different issues which they consider to be flawed or in need of further clarification.

Stage 3: the examination committee members evaluate the student's performance in the oral examination

The thesis oral examination committee members consider together the grade level of the examination result, based upon the quality of the written report, mastery, and competency in conducting the research.

The student should carefully prepare all documents which may be checked. These documents include: a showing of any instruments used in the collection of data and any computer printouts related to the research.

Step 6: Making necessary corrections to the thesis after the oral examination

Upon completion of the thesis oral examination, the student has to check his/her thesis report in detail. This can be done by having the student assume he/she is checking the flaws in someone else's thesis. The student should correct all flaws without waiting to be instructed to do so. During the correction process, the student should realize that the flaws identified or objected to by the committee may represent only one occurrence of the flaw, and that others may be located throughout the report. The student should be prepared to locate and correct all flaws. Before submitting the corrected copy to his/her supervisor or advisor and the examination

committee for consideration, the student has to check one final time to be certain that all flaws have been corrected.

Results and Discussion

This thesis conducting development process has produced excellent results, based on the feedback from the graduate students who have implemented the process. The author had implemented the process with his advisees and found that it worked successfully. The students had expressed their satisfaction and commented that all of the activities in the process had been beneficial to facilitate their success and performance. Upon completion of their program of study, students can further apply this concept and process in the workplace.

Based on the feedback from 30 Master's degree students and their supervisors who had implemented the six step process of thesis conducting, the process worked very well and both parties were satisfied with their work. This was because the steps were proactive and easy to use as self-help activities. It was helpful for the students to plan, implement, check, and continually improve their theses by complying with the thesis performance requirements step by step. This was to prevent any problems that might occur and mistakes that had been frequently made by many thesis advisees in the past (Srisa-ard, 1989 : 12). Students were confident prior to defending the proposal, taking the oral examination, and making necessary corrections to the thesis after the oral examination when they followed the six-step process. Thus, the thesis conducting development process could be applied and implemented by graduate students as self-help

activities in conducting a quality thesis, or by supervisors in supervising research theses. An important element in the success of the process is the quality of the interaction between students and supervisors, as well as supervisors encouraging students to perform the tasks on their own in order to carry out their thesis research and writing.

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