

Students' Perceptions of Research Integration in Graduate Education

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Abstract

The shape of education changed with time as the world opened to borderless, distance, and virtual learning. The confinement of students in the four-cornered classrooms transformed to globalized educational milieu. Side by side with the structural and instructional transformations of education emerged new pedagogical principles and paradigms at all levels in the hierarchy of academic institutions. One shift included the culture of research among students, especially in higher educational institutions. The contradictory perceptions of students on research integration provided a relevant springboard on the determination of the students' perceptions in a certain locale, particularly at the Graduate School of La Consolacion University Philippines. It was interesting to identify the perceptions of a particular community of students on research integration: optimism on the relevance of research in the current educational trends of globalization and internationalization or pessimism posed by the fear on the hurdles and difficulty of the conduct of research.

Keywords: graduate education, research integration, students perception

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Introduction

The shape of education changed with time as the world opened to borderless, distance, and virtual learning. The confinement of students in four-cornered classrooms transformed to globalized educational milieu. Side by side with the structural and instructional transformations of education emerged new pedagogical principles and paradigms at all levels of the hierarchy of academic institutions. One shift included the culture of research among students, especially in higher educational institutions.

Mincu (2015) observed how research contributed to the school improvement process on a wider scale. The academic community witnessed the burgeoning culture of research which affected the educational pursuit among students. Students from high school, college, and graduate levels participated in the development of research studies with manifested enthusiasm. Thus, Gulli (2009) reported that the big universities in Canada located in Montreal, Toronto, Alberta, British Columbia, and McGill joined the bandwagon on research efforts focusing on world-class graduate education. Graduate education restructured its curriculum and methods emphasizing the relevance of research (Piotrowski and Guyette, 2013) and the primary source of innovative research (Heggelund, 2008).

With the new thrusts in higher education, academicians scrutinized the necessity of research. Freedman (2011), as cited in Leann (2017), believed in the importance of research, especially among ICT teachers, to find answers on issues that were once unknown and questions that had not been asked before. In the Research Report authored by Mary Louise Kearney, Director of the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research, and Knowledge, she mentioned that “investment in research is increasing in emerging economies, such as Brazil, China, Singapore, and South Africa, and many more nations are prioritizing and committing more resources to higher education, research and innovation.” She cited the Singaporean experience which observed an increase in the number of research scientists and engineers from 4,329 in 1990 to 11,596 in 2004 and challenged researchers to ‘think global’ and ‘act local.’

On the other hand, Manathunga & Mellick (2009) observed that students opposed the inclusion of research in education which accordingly was already a frenetic experience for a lot of students. There were a number of reasons why students complained about the integration of research in graduate education. One was the inability of students to see its relevance in their personal and professional life (Braguglia & Jackson, 2012; Briggs, Brown, Gardner & Davidson, 2009; Deem & Lucas, 2006; Dorfman & Lipscomb, 2005; Edwards & Thatcher, 2004; Emery & Kalscheur, 2000; Fabelo-Alcover, 2002; Hardcastle & Bisman, 2003; Moulding & Hadley, 2010; Murtonen, Olkinura, Tynjala, & Lehtinen, 2008; Papanastasiou & Zembylas, 2008; Rodriguez & Toews, 2005; Spronken-Smith, 2005; Vandiver & Walsh, 2010 as cited in Early, 2013). Second in consideration was the low motivation and interest in the research activity (Aguado, 2009; Ball & Pelco, 2006; Birbill, 2006; Barraket, 2005; Braguglia & Jackson, 2012; Briggs, Brown, Gardner, & Davidson, 2009; Burkley & Burkley, 2009; Campisi & Finn, 2011; Fabelo-Alcover, 2002; Lehti & Lehtinen, 2005; Lie & Cano, 2001; Pietersen, 2002; Rash, 2005; VittengL, et al, 2004 as cited in Early, 2013). The negative attitudes of the students on research, also,

marked as a hurdle in the students' perceptions of the research integration in graduate education (Hardcastle & Bisman, 2003; Lei, 2008, 2010; Onwuegbuzie, Slate, & Schwartz, 2001; Ozturk, 2011; Papanastasiou, 2005; Schulze, 2009; Sizemore & Lewandowski, 2009 as cited in Early, 2013). Lastly, the students believed that research would be difficult since it would involve time and work (Early, 2013).

Due to the globalization and internationalization of education, the higher educational institutions necessitated to adopt their curriculum and instruction to include research. Graduate students at La Consolacion University Philippines (LCUP) were oriented in the culture of research through their student outputs as they worked independently, as a group, or partnered with their professors. Since August 2017, LCUP had compiled the researches of graduate students into two-volumes of research outputs. Due to contradictory perceptions and beliefs of students on the research integration in the graduate education, this research was aimed at assessing the graduate students' perceptions, beliefs, and participation on the integration of research in their academic courses. The Slovin's Formula was accessed to come out with a valid number of respondents of the study which was 321 students of LCUP Graduate School randomly selected from the Master of Arts in Education programs during the Academic Year 2017-2018.

Conclusion

The following conclusions and recommendations were arrived at after analyzing the results and findings presented by the gathered data.

1. The Master's students of the Graduate School at LCUP are familiar with how researches are produced paying attention on the research methodology and the ways research was conducted and carried out. The familiarity and encouragement of their teachers allowed the assimilation of knowledge about their research findings.
2. The Graduate School Department of the La Consolacion University Philippines provided opportunities to talk and interact socially with the researchers within the University which stimulated the students' learning process. The teachers explained the subject matter effectively and allowed sufficient time to carry out instruction adequately which was supportive of the learning process.
3. The Master's students believed in the value of research in their learning and understanding of the concepts in the field resulting to an academic disposition linked to current research practices. This allowed the students to develop an accurate picture of what was expected of them as students with critical thinking.
4. Inspiration to learn more, enthusiasm and stimulation to critically assess the literature in the field, stimulation on education grounded in research, and encouragement of the teacher's interest and motivate the students on research integration.
5. The students participated actively in the creation of the research culture at LCUP being involved in their own independent research and being involved with their teachers' research believing, among other things, that their research was important.

6. The students at the Graduate School Department of LCUP were encouraged and accepted the integration of research as part of their curriculum and courses with enthusiasm, interest, and without hesitation.

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