2007

From pen to paper: a study of the dissertation as a tool for communicating students' understanding and creative abilities in the maritime social science context

Nang Arm Seng

World Maritime University

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.wmu.se/all_dissertations

Part of the Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons

This Dissertation is brought to you courtesy of Maritime Commons. Open Access items may be downloaded for non-commercial, fair use academic purposes. No items may be hosted on another server or web site without express written permission from the World Maritime University. For more information, please contact library@wmu.se.
FROM PEN TO PAPER:
A study of the dissertation as a tool for communicating students’
understanding and creative abilities in the maritime social science
context

By

NANG ARM SENG
The Union of Myanmar

A dissertation submitted to the World Maritime University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

MARITIME AFFAIRS
(MARITIME EDUCATION AND TRAINING)

2007

© Copyright Nang Arm Seng, 2007
DECLARATION

I certify that all the material in this dissertation that is not my own work has been identified, and that no material is included for which a degree has previously been conferred on me.

The contents of this dissertation reflect my own personal views, and are not necessarily endorsed by the University.

Signature: 

Date: 27th August, 2007

Supervised by: Clive Cole
Assistant Professor
World Maritime University

Assessor: Jan Horck
Lecturer
World Maritime University

Co-assessor: Peter Muirhead
Adjunct Professor
World Maritime University
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge deeply the contributions of the following persons to the work presented in this dissertation:

- Mr Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation, and Ocean Policy Research Foundation for providing the scholarship enabling me to attend this M Sc course and the additional allowance for research facilities;
- Assistant Professor Clive Cole for his precious guidance and supervision;
- Professor Takeshi Nakazawa for his valuable support and advice;
- Professor Jan Horck for suggesting and introducing me to Kalmar Maritime Academy for data collection;
- Professor Peter Muirhead for his valuable advice;
- Richard Dennis, Ms Susan Wangeci-Eklöw and Ms Cecilia Denne at World Maritime University (WMU) library for their assistance with the documentation;
- Mr. Fredrik Hjorth, Andreas Åsenholm and John Ohlson instructors at Kalmar Maritime Academy (KMA), Sweden, for sharing their valuable time, knowledge, experience, and arranging the students for interviews;
- Mr. Pim Werner from Maritime Institute Willem Barentsz, Terschelling (MIWB) for arranging the instructors for interviews;
- All interviewees, instructors, students and colleagues from MIWB, KMA and WMU for sharing their valuable time, knowledge and experience; and
- My best friend Semir Tarek MAKSEN for his unconditional support.
Title of Dissertation: From pen to paper: A study of the dissertation as a tool for communicating students’ understanding and creative abilities in the maritime social science context

Degree: MSc

As research activities in Maritime Education and Training institutions, to a large extent, neither meet the basic standards of academic research in higher education nor enhance the curriculum of MET institutions, this dissertation aims to study and discover the most important elements and processes that research students need to recognize, the problems and experience that both maritime students and supervisors encounter, the opinions and suggestions they have, and how they solve these problems.

This research identifies the most important elements, processes and procedures to be involved in carrying out a dissertation within the context of students’ research in maritime fields. In addition, it examines the application of the management processes in writing a dissertation and finds that it is possible and helpful for students to comprehend dissertation writing through the understanding of management processes. Furthermore, the important elements and processes in producing a dissertation are created in the forms of diagrams and figures which are intended to explain and enhance the work of future dissertation candidates. Finally, the perspectives of research students and supervisors from KMA, MIWB, WMU and MAAP on producing a dissertation in the maritime field, collected through interviews, are presented and discussed; these reveal that the duration provided for students conducting a dissertation is often inadequate, and that the supervisors are frequently insufficient and sometimes inefficient, partly due to their lack of an academic background and limited dissertation supervision experience and guidance.

Keywords: dissertation writing, research, management, perspective, elements and processes
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.......................................................................................................................... i  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS............................................................................................................ ii 
ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................... iii  
TABLE OF CONTENTS.............................................................................................................. iv 
LIST OF FIGURES ..................................................................................................................... viii 
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS......................................................................................................... ix 
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 1  
CHAPTER 2 IDENTIFYING AND ANALYZING THE ELEMENTS OF A DISSERTATION IN THE PROCESS OF RESEARCH AND WRITING .............................................................................. 6  
  2.1 What is a Dissertation? ..................................................................................................... 6  
  2.2 The Purpose and Nature of Research ............................................................................. 8  
  2.3 Strategies for Writing a Dissertation: Contents and Processes ..................................... 9  
    2.3.1 Planning for Writing a Dissertation ......................................................................... 9  
    2.3.2 Choosing the Topic .................................................................................................. 10  
    2.3.3 Formulating a Research Question .......................................................................... 12  
    2.3.4 Formulating a Hypothesis ...................................................................................... 12  
    2.3.5 Aims and Objectives ............................................................................................. 13  
    2.3.6 Research Methodology ......................................................................................... 13  
      2.3.6.1 Qualitative Research ...................................................................................... 14  
      2.3.6.2 Quantitative Research ................................................................................... 15  
    2.3.7 Writing a Research Proposal .................................................................................... 16  
    2.3.8 Collecting the Data (information) .......................................................................... 16  
    2.3.9 Conducting a Literature Review ............................................................................. 18  
      2.3.9.1 Critical Thinking ............................................................................................ 19  
      2.3.9.2 Critical Reading ............................................................................................ 19  
      2.3.9.3 Critical Writing ............................................................................................. 20
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating an Appropriate Structure for the Dissertation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style of the Dissertation</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citations and Referencing</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Start Writing the First Draft of the Dissertation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for Writing the Introduction of a Dissertation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for Writing the Main Body of a Dissertation: Presenting Data and Information</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for Writing the Conclusion/Summary and Recommendation of a Dissertation</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for Writing the Acknowledgments, Abstract, Appendix, Notes, Glossary and Index</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary and Index</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the Final Dissertation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 SYNTHESIZING THE ELEMENTS OF A DISSERTATION: FORMATION OF APPLICABLE MODELS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Management Task and the Dissertation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Main basic Required Elements in the Management and Writing of a Dissertation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Processes Involved in the Management and Writing of a Dissertation</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Appraisal Related to the Management and Writing of a Dissertation</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements in the Contents of a Dissertation</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Inter-relationship between Critical Thinking, Reading, Writing and Data Collecting</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4 DESCRIBING AND ANALYZING THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MAIN ENTITIES INVOLVED IN DISSERTATION WRITING. 53

4.1 The Perspectives of the Students who are still conducting their Research Work ........................................................................................................... 54
  4.1.1 MIWB Research Students .................................................................. 54
  4.1.2 WMU Research Students .................................................................. 55

4.2 Analysis of the Perspectives of the Students who are still conducting their Research Work ................................................................. 57

4.3 The Perspectives of the Students who have just completed their Research Paper ............................................................................................ 59

4.4 Analysis of the Perspectives of the Students who have just completed their Research Paper ......................................................................................... 61

4.5 The Perspectives of the Students who have completed their Dissertation and are now Pursuing further Studies .......................................................... 62

4.6 Analysis of the Perspectives of the Students who have just completed their Research Paper ............................................................................................ 68

4.7 The Perspectives of Supervisors from KMA and MIWB ............................ 68

4.8 The Perspectives of Supervisors from MAAP ............................................ 71

4.9 Analysis of the Perspectives of the Supervisors of the Students writing Dissertations ........................................................................................................ 72

4.10 Summary ..................................................................................................... 73

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .......................... 75

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................... 82

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 Sample Proposal Format ................................................................. 91
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDIX</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Qualitative Data Collection Types, Options, Advantages, and Limitations</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Periodicals List</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Common Used Words in Dissertation Writings</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Some Tips on Research Writing</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Evaluation of Qualitative Research Papers</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Questions asked of the Students who are still conducting their Research Work</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Questions asked of the Students who have just completed their Research Paper</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Questions asked of the Students who have completed their Dissertation and are now pursuing further Studies in WMU....</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Questions asked of the Supervisors from KMA and MIWB</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Questionnaire asked of MAAP</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Poor style ............................................................................................... 23
Figure 2: Main basic required elements in management................................. 37
Figure 3: Main basic required elements in writing a dissertation .................... 37
Figure 4: The main processes in management and the management cycle........... 39
Figure 5: Main processes of writing a dissertation........................................... 40
Figure 6: Environmental influences on the organization ................................. 43
Figure 7: Environmental influences on writing a dissertation ......................... 43
Figure 8: The example process of conducting a research/pilot study related to the main dissertation process ............................................................... 44
Figure 9: Factors determining the practicalities of designing and carrying out research ........................................................................................................ 45
Figure 10: Elements of the contents of a dissertation....................................... 47
Figure 11: The inter-relationship between critical thinking reading, writing and data collecting ......................................................................................... 50
Figure 12: The feed forward process control based on procedures with intermittent additions for writing a dissertation ................................................ 51
Figure 13: The feed forward process control flow chart ................................. 52
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAMU</td>
<td>International Association of Maritime Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMO</td>
<td>International Maritime Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMUPF</td>
<td>International Maritime University Presidents Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMA</td>
<td>Kalmar Maritime Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAAP</td>
<td>Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MET</td>
<td>Maritime Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIWB</td>
<td>Maritime Institute Willem Barentsz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Master of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMU</td>
<td>World Maritime University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“The only way to learn to write is to write.”

- Peggy Teeters -

The academic dissertation\(^1\) was scholarly initiated in European universities in the twelfth centuries to present new opinions, and to outline arguments in Latin. In 1816 to 1824 the three most important dissertations on the progress of philosophy, mathematics, and the physical sciences have been included in the fourth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Since the 1920s, the academic dissertation\(^2\) has been recognized as the central feature of postgraduate education in science and the humanities worldwide (Hannaway, 1976).

Stromberg and Ramanathan (1996, p.161) stated that “The use of writing as a tool for communicating one’s understanding and creative abilities has long been thought of as a domain of the humanities.” However, in the recent rapid development of the shipping industry and its environment, where shipping people must communicate within their related clusters, it has become important for Maritime

---

\(^1\) In the United Kingdom and France, the academic dissertation is usually known as a “thesis”- an Aristotelian term signifying an intellectual position maintained in verbal debate or in writing. Medieval philosophers in the Latin West used the term dissertare, “to debate”. Later the sense extended to printed books, as seen in Johannes Kepler’s opinion of Galileo’s telescopic observations, Dissertatio cum nuncio sidereo (1610), (Hannaway, 1976).

\(^2\) The dissertation involves a written thesis based upon original research that is submitted to a university as a requirement for a higher degree, (Hannaway, 1976).
Education and Training (MET) institutions to enhance the communications skills of their students (and staff) at all levels of education.

Nowadays, therefore, writing a dissertation\(^3\) has become a part of the curriculum in the academic courses of most MET institutions. However, the dissertation writing culture is not as well systematically developed as most people might consider. This is obvious in the words of Dr. K. Laubstein\(^4\) at the First International Maritime University Presidents Forum (IMUPF) 2003 (p.12), where he states that:

Most academic staff of MET institutions has been drawn from industry and government on the basis of their professional experience rather than their academic credentials and experience in teaching and research. Consequently, there is no real “research culture” or “publish-or-perish” philosophy in the MET milieu. Of course, academics in MET institutions do engage in various kinds of research and research-related activities. To a large extent, however, these activities neither meet the basic standards of academic research in higher education nor enhance the curriculum of MET institutions.

These situations are encountered not only at World Maritime University (WMU), Malmö, Sweden but also in those MET institutions such as, Kalmar Maritime Academy (KMA), Sweden and Maritime Institute Willem Barentsz (MIWB), Terschelling, The Netherlands\(^5\) according to the findings presented here. Therefore, it is clear that research is required to discover how MET institutions are dealing and proceeding with the research work presented in the form of a dissertation, to determine the problems encountered and the strategies and ideas applied by the entities involved and to discover the solutions that could enhance the existing situation of both students and institutions.

---

3. Depending on the level and scope, nature, individual and institutional preferences, the academic community designates research papers by a number of different names, for example, dissertation or thesis for postgraduate degrees, report or term paper or research paper in undergraduate courses.

4. Dr. K Laubstein is the President of World Maritime University.

5. The MET institutions from where the researcher has collected the data.
In addition, Professor Pourzanjani and Dr. Lewey (2002) have also suggested that a Research Strategy, which involves the normal process of looking inwards to assess the capability and identify the areas requiring enhancement, as well as looking externally to identify what else is happening which may have an impact on research, is in need of development.

Furthermore, the follow-up activities to the Thematic Network on the subject of Maritime Education and Training and Mobility of Seafarers (METNET), have worked on developing a positive attitude to, and encouraging the exploitation of its products with the result that it recommended the development of a European Master of Science (MSc) degree programme for ex-seafarers and a Bachelor of Science (BSc) or equivalent degree (Schröder et al., 2004). Moreover, one of the objectives of the Bologna Declaration (19 June 1999) promotes “the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.” which suggests that more research activity opportunities need to be provided to degree level students.

Eventually, a scientific research activity, in terms of a research paper or a thesis/dissertation, is essential for the discovery of unknown facts for applied maritime technology to cope with the globalization of the economy, the internationalization of education, and the profound evolution of science and technology, (Zhaolin, 2003).

To reflect on the situation, this research was planned and completed to discover, the most important elements and processes that research students should recognize; the problems and experience that both the students and supervisors encounter; the opinions and suggestions they have and how best to solve the

---

6 Professor Malek Pourzanjani was a former professor in charge of the MET course in WMU and is now the President of the Australian Maritime Academy. (Pourzanjani & Lewey, (2002).
7 Schröder et al. - Schröder, J.U., the Professor of WMU, Kaps, H., the Lecturer of WMU. And Pourzanjani, M., (mentioned above) and Zade, G. (2004).
8 Professor Wu Zhaolin is the President of Dalian Maritime University (DMU). (Zhaolin, 2003).
problems that they usually encounter. This research was limited and based only on Qualitative Social-Science research methodology and the terms dissertation, thesis, and research paper or report are used interchangeably. Based on the qualitative approach\(^9\), the data was collected from mainly two sources: using document sources such as, academic books, journal articles, organizational documents, newspapers articles, articles and texts from internet websites, online libraries; and by asking questions using two methods: the interview (open-ended and semi constructed questions) and the questionnaire (open and close questions).

The interview participants spanned across different levels and different functionalities of MET institutions, including (i) the students who are, at the moment, conducting their dissertation at Maritime Institute Willem Barentsz, Terschelling (MIWB), The Netherlands and at World Maritime University (WMU), Malmö, Sweden; (ii) those who have just finished their dissertations for the BSc degree in Kalmar Maritime Academy, Sweden; (iii) the students who have already completed their dissertation for the MSc degree in countries such as, Sweden, Nigeria, China, Vietnam and Myanmar and are now pursuing further studies at WMU, and (iv) the instructors who have supervising experience and, are now, performing as supervisors for the students doing dissertations, theses or research papers, at KMA and MIWB. Each interview lasted between approximately 20 to 90 minutes and was recorded and carefully transcribed. Also interview data was supplemented with on-site observations as well various written documents.

Finally, the data and information collected are presented according to the learning process, Bloom’s Taxonomy\(^{10}\), so that readers are able to recall and recognize information on writing a dissertation, to comprehend what they have learned, to apply the rules and the procedures in conducting the research, to analyze

---

\(^9\) By qualitative research, it means data regarding the detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviors, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experience (Patton, 1990).

\(^{10}\) Benjamin Bloom’s 1956 taxonomy of cognitive educational objectives reigned supreme as a sufficient model of what can be hoped to accomplish in college classes (Lowman, 1995).
the subject or topic, breaking it down into its constituent parts, to synthesis all data into a unified whole once again, and to evaluate the knowledge critically.

To summarize, this dissertation contains five chapters where chapter one introduces the background information, sources and methodology of data collection and the aims and objectives of this dissertation. Chapter two is concerned with identifying and analyzing the elements of writing a dissertation. In Chapter three, there is a discussion of the implementation of management processes in the process of research and writing accompanied by various diagrams and figures; in other words a synthesis of the elements of dissertation writing. Chapter four addresses and analyzes issues on the perspectives of the entities involved in research activities. Finally, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of producing a dissertation are presented in chapter five.

The dissertation’s objectives are as follows:

1. To identify and analyse the important elements of producing a dissertation in the field of Maritime Affairs.
2. To analyse in depth the perspectives and views of research students and their supervisors in MET institutions and universities regarding producing a dissertation.
3. To identify and analyse the problems encountered in conducting research and to discover the solutions to the problems involved.
4. To synthesis the elements of producing a dissertation in new, clearly applicable models; in other words to implement management processes in the production of a dissertation.
5. To make proposals and recommendations on how to educate and improve more effectively dissertation writing in the field of Maritime Affairs.
CHAPTER 2
IDENTIFYING AND ANALYZING THE ELEMENTS OF A DISSERTATION IN THE PROCESS OF RESEARCH AND WRITING

“The best way to become acquainted with a subject is to write a book about it”
- Benjamin Disraeli -

Before starting research and writing a dissertation or thesis or report, it would seem obvious that students must already be familiar with the elements, facts and comprehensive knowledge on what to do, why to conduct and how to complete the task. However, in reality, according to the findings of this author, most students at the outset are far from familiar with these aspects and need a much deeper knowledge of at least the fundamental research principles to be applied. Therefore, in this chapter, some essential and directly applicable elements, processes and techniques in dissertation writing are identified and analyzed. The approach and content are based on the qualitative social science research and methodology.

2.1 What is a Dissertation?
The word dissertation can generally be used interchangeably with thesis\textsuperscript{11} or research paper or report, depending on the field and on the preference of institutions. Furthermore, it has numerous definitions\textsuperscript{12}, but for convenience and brevity, here, the definition used is “a detailed discourse\textsuperscript{13} on a subject, especially one submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements or a degree or diploma\textsuperscript{14}.” In order to be able to write a long essay, the writer must do research\textsuperscript{15}, which is reported in a dissertation. An academic dissertation, in the complete sense, is an original piece of writing reporting on the research findings.

Although writers of the papers often work with materials compiled by others, they make an original contribution by organizing the data in new ways or by drawing new conclusions from existing knowledge. The writer’s creativity reveals itself in the choices made at every stage\textsuperscript{16} (Campbell et al., 1986).

According to Verma and Berd, a research is the most important tool for advancing knowledge, promoting progress, and enabling a man to effectively resolve the conflicts in his environment. On the other hand, Chircop and Linden (2007) point out that research is:

(i) The systematic pursuit of knowledge in accordance with generally accepted principles, processes and procedures;

(ii) The development of new knowledge-data gathering, experiments, measurements, analysis of samples, (legal) texts, etc.;

(iii) The review of existing matter/data/information.

\textsuperscript{11}Thesis means the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. (Oxford Reference online premium, Thesis, 2007).

\textsuperscript{12}Such as, a long essay, especially one written for a university degree or diploma; a detailed discourse on a subject, esp. one submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements of a doctorate; a long essay on a particular subject, esp. one written for a university degree or diploma, etc. (Oxford Reference online premium, 2007).

\textsuperscript{13}Discourse means a formal, lengthy discussion of a subject, either written or spoken.

\textsuperscript{14}Definition given by The Oxford American Dictionary of Current English in English Dictionaries & Thesauruses: (Oxford Reference online premium, 2007).

\textsuperscript{15}Research is a process by which the researcher extends his knowledge and possible that of the whole community (Howard & Sharp 1983, p.20).

\textsuperscript{16}Every stage means selecting the topic, locating appropriate sources, organizing information, and presenting a clearly written and accurately documented paper (Campbell et al., 1986. p. xi).
In conclusion, research is the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (Cohen & Manion 1989).

2.2 The Purpose and Nature of Research

As the academic enquiry in higher education is an aspect of lifelong learning, which both defines and creates the learning culture through highly specialized and innovative means (Chambers, 1999), research projects well reflect the response and are conducted at MET institutions. The WMU dissertation guidelines (2007, p.9) provide that “the aim of the dissertation is to provide students with experience in selecting, reviewing and analyzing material and preparing a well-reasoned paper. It also provides a vehicle for making a meaningful contribution to the development of national infrastructures and the international maritime community.” On the other hand, according to Tronsgard (1963), the dissertation is required because (i) it is a traditional step in the education of scholars; (ii) it is designed to be a contribution to knowledge; (iii) it acquaints students with research techniques and makes them more sophisticated in their use; (iv) it is a device to ensure the maintenance of high standards for a doctoral degree. However, it also depends on the type of the nature of research conducted as suggested by Grinyer (1981); it may be pure theory, testing of existing theory, description of the state of the art or specific problems and solutions (Howard & Sharp, 1983, pp.11-13). Although the purposes of a research project may vary, the most common four are: (a) to review existing knowledge; (b) to describe some situation or problem; (c) to construct something novel; and (d) to explain. Despite all values, (c) is the most favored, because to construct something that is new and useful is the ultimate goal of research. Whatever it is, research contributes as a major engine of the development of regions or States because it delivers real economic, social and cultural benefits, locally and internationally (Research at Cardiff, 2007).
2.3 Strategies for Writing a Dissertation: Contents and Processes

Although there are a countless number of books on research methods and strategies, in practice, maritime students are frustrated in selecting books because there is no single book related to maritime research guidance, unlike other fields where there are guide books such as Understanding Nursing Research, Architectural Research Methods, and even Mummies and Pyramids Research Guide (Amazon.com, 2007). Therefore, for the benefit of maritime students, the following sub sections attempt to identify and analyze the important elements in doing research or writing a dissertation based on various books, journals, internet websites and the author’s experience.

2.3.1 Planning for Writing a Dissertation

As practical learning in research reflects “real-life” phenomena and promotes long-life learning, the dissertation becomes a powerful tool for enhancing both motivation and learning. It balances between students’ independence and teachers’ control, and gives the student sufficient freedom to make and learn from mistakes even though this may involve a loss of time. However, effectiveness can be achieved through motivated, careful planning, guidance, and evaluation (McKeachie, 1999).

To reach a successful objective, a researcher must therefore think small, focus and pragmatically. In addition, it is essential that when planning a study, serious attention to the time and resources available need to be considered in order to complete it at the set deadline, since initially researchers are usually over-ambitiousness which can lead to problems later on (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

17 From Amazon.com Web Site alone, there are at least more than one thousand books related to research method and strategy in various subjects except the maritime field.
Thus, students should plan according to the concept and practical work of the dissertation. For example, what topic should be chosen? Yet even before choosing, the student must know how to choose a topic theoretically. Similarly, without having knowledge of the methodology for a research, he/she will hardly reach the answer of what method is best to use? Likewise, the questions that need to be considered before conducting a dissertation are, for instance “How will the research and dissertation be designed or planned?” “What/Which resources (man and material) are available?” “How long will it take to collect the information?”

Wasby (2001, p.841) says, “The best-laid plans are often disappointed” and “In any event, a good dissertation is a finished dissertation.” Nonetheless, to complete a dissertation, before starting, students need an effective guide book or guidance and, of course, a reliable supervisor otherwise the student will get lost or give up at the half-way point resulting in a loss of time and money, to say nothing of the social and mental aspects.

Finally, before submitting the paper, the student has to evaluate the credibility of the work including its level of validity, reliability and consistency. As a result, before starting to write a dissertation, a student really needs to have the knowledge and plans as discussed below.

### 2.3.2 Choosing the Topic

Many instructors motivate students by inviting them to write about anything that really interests them, or anything related to the course (Lutzker, 1988.). However,

---

18 Concept and practical means why, what and how one does the work.
19 Credibility means a researcher's ability to demonstrate that the object of a study is accurately identified and described, based on the way in which the study was conducted (Glossary of Key Terms. 2007).
20 Validity means the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure. A method can be reliable, consistently measuring the same thing, but not valid (Glossary of Key Terms. 2007).
21 Reliability means the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions (Silverman, 2000).
Useem\textsuperscript{22} (1997) suggests that there should be less subjective considerations and focus on tractability, resonance with organizational culture, learning a new methodology, contributing to knowledge, and assistance in a job search. On the other hand, Muirhead\textsuperscript{23} (2007) suggests, the topic chosen must be interesting, leading to new knowledge or to advance the existing knowledge, enhancing the research capability of students.

In addition, it should be noted that “Say a lot about a little (problem) rather than say a little about a lot, depth rather than breadth” states Silverman (2000, p.64). Therefore, the topic should be narrowed down, and not generalized. On the other hand, “narrowing down a research problem is not reduction” (Silverman, 2000. p.70). It means “do less, but more thoroughly” (Wolcott, 1990, p. 62). To be clearer, some acceptable and unacceptable example headings given by Lester (1987) are shown below:

- Pollution of drinking water: its causes and possible cures (acceptable)
- Pollution levels on the Hudson River (acceptable only if narrowed to an issue)
- Let’s stop pollution (not significant; who would disagree?, unacceptable)
- Nuclear war (too broad, unacceptable)
- The life of Winston Churchill (unacceptable)

Although Howard and Sharp (1983. p. 45) suggests that “The acceptability of a research topic may be judged by giving consideration to its feasibility, value, symmetry, and scope.” Nevertheless, Muirhead (2007) advises that it is vitally important to consider before deciding a topic whether:

- Data and other published information are available;

\textsuperscript{22} Useem, B. is a professor of Sociology at University of New Mexico.
\textsuperscript{23} Muirhead is an Adjunct Professor of WMU.
• The topic is manageable within the time available and the constraints imposed by the weighting given the dissertation within the course;
• The approach and methodology proposed are suitable and can be supported by the resources available.

Finally, three practical techniques are suggested, as follows, to help students to narrow down the ideas of the subject (Silverman, 2000, pp. 67-69):

1. Drawing a flow chart
2. Finding a puzzle (asking what am I really trying to find out?)
3. Looking through a zoom lens (zooming in on one small image).

### 2.3.3 Formulating a Research Question

After having found a specific topic, a research question that addresses a specific aspect of the topic must be formulated in order to have a clear focus. For example, if the topic is to do with studying the effect of industrial pollution on plant life in a particular area, then the research question might be: “What are the effects of increased concentrations of sulphuric acid in the atmosphere on production of grain sorghum?” Or “Do increased concentrations of sulphuric acid in the atmosphere lead to significant decreases in the production of grain sorghum?” (Weissberg & Buker, 1990).

### 2.3.4 Formulating a Hypothesis

In formal research work, a statement of expected results, a hypothesis which is a response to the research question needs to be formulated. For example, based on the previous research question, a hypothesis might be: “Abnormally high

---

24 It is the basis on which the study is planned and carried out.
25 It is the purpose statement but from the broad, general purpose statement, the researcher narrows the focus to specific questions to be answered or predictions to be tested (Creswell, 2003, p.105).
concentrations of sulphuric acid in the atmosphere have no effect on the production of grain sorghum.” (Weissberg & Buker, 1990).

2.3.5 Aims and Objectives

Aims and objectives are used to describe the achievement as a result after completing the work. In other words, an aim is a broadly phrased statement of intent which is long-term in outlook, however, in comparison, objectives are short term and much more specifically worded statements of what is expected to be achieved from any part of a study; identifying specifically what should be learned. Moreover, objectives have three other characteristics. They are observable, measurable and carried out by students demonstrating their achievement of the objectives. Therefore, aims and objectives must be clearly defined so that planning to carry out the study can be made effectively. Below are some recommended action verbs for writing objectives:

Distinguish, define, identify, calculate, justify, measure, name, write, label, recognize, select, illustrate, explain, formulate, predict, compute, demonstrate, analyze, separate, compare, solve, combine, summarize, organize, relate, evaluate, select, simulate, navigate, use, utilize, appreciate, defend, enjoy, and value (Fisher & Muirhead, 2005, pp. 18-25).

2.3.6 Research Methodology

According to the researcher’s finding, many students can not clearly distinguish between the words methodology and method. Methodology, strictly speaking, means “the science or study of method.” It is concerned with how the

---

26 Aim also means a purpose or intention toward which one's efforts are directed (Answer.com. Aim, 2007).
27 An objective or goal is a personal or organizational desired end point in development. It is usually endeavored to be reached in finite time by setting deadlines (Answer.com. Objective, 2007).
28 But methodology is now widely misused as a fancy equivalent of method or methods.
researcher describes his/her plans, for example, what he/she is going to do? Why and how is he/she doing it? However, method is a particular procedure for accomplishing or approaching something. In doing research, the researcher must clearly introduce the detailed research method(s) used and demonstrate the relationship between research question(s) and that method. Generally, there are three research methods: qualitative, quantitative and the mixed research method. For the social science research as mostly conducted at WMU, KMA and MIWB, qualitative and mixed methods are more widely used than quantitative.

2.3.6.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive\(^{29}\) which includes developing a description of an individual or setting, and analyzing data for themes or categories, and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusions about the meaning, personally and theoretically , stating the lessons learned, and offering further questions to be asked (Wolcott, 1994).

Another way, according to Creswell (2003), is the so-called “inductive logic of research in a qualitative study” where:

- First, the researcher gathers information (e.g., interviews, observations).
- Second, asks open-ended questions of participants or records field notes.
- Third, analyzes data to form themes or categories.
- Fourth, looks for broad patterns, generalizations, or theories from themes or categories, and
- Fifth, he/she compares generalizations, or theories to past experiences and literature.

\(^{29}\) Interpretive means the interpretation of the data collected (Creswell, 2003).
In other words, in the qualitative method, data can be collected by (i) in-depth, open-ended interviews so that the direct quotations of people’s experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge are gathered; (ii) direct observations which consist of detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behavior, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experience; (iii) written documents which yield excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys (Patton, 1990).

2.3.6.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is defined as the numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining a phenomenon that those observations reflect. The methods used in quantitative research are adopted from the physical sciences and are objective, deductive, generalizable and numerable whereas qualitative methods are the reverse. However, quantitative research using statistics as the main tool makes it possible to measure the reactions of many people but to a limited number of questions. The basic procedure for quantitative research is firstly, to set up a problem as a dependent variable. Secondly, discover the relating factors as independent variables. Thirdly, calculate these variables with statistical methods such as, organizing data, descriptive measures and regression and correlation and finally, analyze the statistical outcomes which include finding the relationship between variables and predicting the future trends (Nakasawa, 2007).

Although this is mostly used in physical science, it can be integrated with qualitative methods. For example, using qualitative results to help interpret or explain the quantitative findings and vise versa (Weinreich, 2007) which is the so-called mixed research method.
2.3.7 Writing a Research Proposal

Morse suggests that “One way to persuade non-specialists is to show the specific ways that your research can address a social problem or solve an organizational trouble.” (Silverman, 2000, p.113). This is acceptable, but the question is “How to show?” He continues that a research proposal must answer:

1. Why should anyone be interested in my research?
2. Is the research design credible, achievable and carefully explained?
3. Is the researcher capable of doing the research?

These questions can best be answered using five principles: be practical, be persuasive, make broader links, aim for crystal clarity, and plan before you write. However, to be clearer, Allen (1980, pp. 33-37) states that:

The research proposal delineates the specific area of your research; it should state the purpose, scope, methodology, overall organization, and limitations of your study and define any special terms that may be unique to your study. It could include a review of the relevant material written on the topic and should indicate how your research will make a contribution to the field and where you differ from the research conducted by others in the same general area.

The sample proposal format is shown in Appendix 1.

2.3.8 Collecting the Data (information)

Liao (1996, p. 211) states, “Information as an interface is a mediator between knowledge and the learner. It is central to the communication of knowledge.” In other words, if the learner employs a reliable mediator, then he/she is capable of absorbing advanced knowledge. Therefore, collecting reliable and valid data is
important in research work. Practically, in social research activities, data can be collected mainly by means of (a) observation, (b) statistic source, (c) asking questions, and (d) documentations. In qualitative research the most frequently used source is asking questions by which the researcher may interview the participants or mail a questionnaire where some observations may also be included (Sapsford & Jupp, 1996).

The data by which presentations and credible conclusions are made is very much concerned with validity because every report of research embodies an argument or product of a series of arguments which could lead certain people to interpret them and conclude in different ways. However, Mitchell (1983) argued that the validity of qualitative analysis depends more on the quality of the analysis than on the size of the sample (Silverman, 2000) and data collected (Allen, 1973). Ultimately, whatever methods are used for gathering data, everything will depend on the quality of the data analysis rather than upon the quality of the data (Silverman, 2000).

Again, data relating to the hypothesis is that mainly needed. Thus, Allen (1973) suggested by asking: “Of what value is this piece of information to the central purpose of my research?” or “Why is this information needed? What will it add to the study?” Therefore, it is suggested to collect only the most relevant data because the more data one has, the more confused one might be. However, depending on when and how they are used, some data can be either from a primary source\(^30\) or a secondary source\(^31\) (Lutzker, 1988).

Finally, by asking relevant questions based on Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? students can generate many ideas and gather adequate required data. “If you are writing in a particular discipline, try to discover the questions that

---

\(^30\) Data collected by primary source means data gathered from the firsthand, raw, or original materials that researchers study and analyze, i.e., from laboratory measurements; field observation; archives/collections; questionnaires, and interviews (Raimes, 2005).

\(^31\) Data collected by secondary source means data gathered from analytical works that comment on and interpret other works, such as primary sources including reviews, discussions, biographies, critical studies, analyses of literary or artistic works or events, class lectures, and electronic discussions (Raimes, 2005).
scholars typically explore. These are frequently presented in textbooks as checklists” advises Hacker (1999, p.7). For the convenience of students some advantages and limitations of the data collection types and options within types (Creswell, 2003, pp. 186-187) have been described in Appendix 2 and the sources of materials (periodical list) for maritime research students are also presented in Appendix 3.

2.3.9 Conducting a Literature Review

A literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers (Writing at the University of Toronto, 2007). A literature review forms part of a research paper, proposal, thesis or dissertation either as independent section (part or entire Chapter) called “A Review of the Literature”; incorporating into the wider text; or integrating throughout the whole work to compare and evaluate as needed.

In addition, the literature review serves to advance the state of knowledge by conceptualizing previous work in ways that lead to original ideas and new discoveries (Mark et al., 1992). Finding the relevant literature, reading, and writing up are the processes in a literature review which shows readers whether the researcher has read widely and is capable of evaluating critically and demonstrating that the findings, theory, or analysis are contributing to a cumulative process. However, a researcher must note that, a literature review should:

- Be presented chronologically;
- Include the previous research that related to the topic;
- Explain clearly which potential areas for inclusion have not been covered in the review and why they have been omitted;
- Discuss problems and/or controversies within the field;
- Critically evaluate each piece of work included;
- Focus on very recent publications;
• Help to reveal gaps in the existing body of research and
• Help to discover conceptual traditions and frameworks used to examine problems (Swales & Feak, 2000, pp. 115-117).

2.3.9.1 Critical Thinking

According to Raimes’s (2005, pp. 3-4) opinion:

Thinking critically is what we all do when we ask questions about what we see, hear, or read, when we don’t accept something at face value just because someone else has thought it and expressed it and someone has seen fit to publish it. For example, “I wonder where she gets that from. I don’t understand that point. She hasn’t convinced me at all.” Thinking critically does not mean thinking negatively in order to criticize—though if what you read is badly written, that could well be the result. Instead, it means questioning, discussing, and looking at an issue from a number of sides.

2.3.9.2 Critical Reading

The purpose of critical reading is to read and understand the ideas of authors as facts and start thinking of them as arguments. This is then followed by putting the author’s ideas into the reader’s own words. To be clearer, it is advised that one should ask questions like:

• What is the author trying to prove?
• What is the author assuming I will agree with?
• Do you agree with the author?
• Does the author adequately defend her argument?
• What kind of proof does she use?
• Is there something she leaves out that you would put in?
• Does putting it in hurt her argument?
As the researcher gets used to reading critically, he/she will start to see the hidden agendas of other authors, a skill which can be used to improve the writer’s own ability to form an argument.

### 2.3.9.3 Critical Writing

Critical writing is the most commonly used method in research papers and is often applied in argumentative and comparative writing. In the academic world it is usually referred to as critical analysis. However, it is difficult for most students to apply since they do not have clear understanding of the ways to approach it. Therefore, among the many scholars and various suggestions, Raimes’s (2005, p.53) advises that to construct a logical argument the writer should ask the following questions:

1. What is your point? (What are you claiming?)
2. What do you have to go on? (What support do you have for your claim, in the form of reasons, data, and evidence?)
3. How do you get there? (What assumptions—Toulmin calls them warrants—do you take for granted and expect readers to take for granted, too?)
4. What could prevent you from getting there? (What qualifications do you need to include, using but, unless, or if or adding words such as usually, often, several, mostly, or sometimes to provide exceptions to your assumptions?)

Meanwhile, Badke (2004) suggests that in analysis writing, an ascending or climactic order can be used. For instance, first look at smaller factors or arguments, and then move up to more crucial factors. The last section could be the most serious issue so that it leads the readers to the climax and increase tension. On the other hand, if the data are to be compared, contrasted and analyzed, two methods are possible; (i) if the two views are relatively simple to explain and analyze, then, try a longitudinal method by which discuss all related to view A, and then move to B, (ii) while, in complicated arguments, “the cross-sectional approach is needed. This deals with both
sides of each sub-topic in turn. Therefore, the researcher, finally, should have a cumulative understanding of the issues and of the reasons for the position of the researcher.

In addition, in comparing apples and oranges, for example, the Orange says, “Your bright red skin is delight to see. But the seeds inside are what make you like me.” Then the Apple says, “As a child I was told never to dare, an apple and orange... one could not compare. To find we’re alike I scarcely can bear. Don’t tell me we also are like a green pear.” This illustrates the comparative pattern analysis given by Patton (1990. p. 403).

2.3.10 Creating an Appropriate Structure for the Dissertation

Depending on the subject matter and the method approached, and the level of the research project and the institutions, the structure of the dissertation may vary. In general, however, the main body of the text of the dissertation should not exceed, for example, for the M Sc degree in WMU, 20,000 words or about 70 pages (WMU: Guidelines for written assignments and dissertation, 2007) and should be presented according to the following given order:

- Title page
- Declaration
- Acknowledgements, if desired
- Abstract or summary of the work not exceeding 300 words
- Table of contents and appendices (Appendix 4)
- List of tables, figures and abbreviations
- The major body of text:
  - Introduction
  - Well-defined chapters or sections (including end-notes, if required)
Conclusions (and recommendations if any) reached as the result of the study

- References
- Appendices, if necessary (not part of 20,000 words)

NB. Any dedication is not allowed for.

2.3.11 Style of the Dissertation

The style of presentation in a dissertation is as important as the method of data collection since it is responsible for communicating and describing the "facts". It is made up of the level of formality adopted, the sentence length, the choice of vocabulary, the word order and the tone of the writing. In addition, as the writer’s style determines the readability of the document (Guy, J. 1994), unless the style is appropriate, then the readers would not understand what the writer means and thus have difficulty in giving the work credit.

The writing style should be straightforward, economical and precise in its use of words. However, in the first draft there is a danger of overwriting due to the high level of enthusiasm of the author towards the subject. Therefore, revision and editing will always play an important role before the work is submitted (Hall, 1990).

Wordiness, for instance, is one of the examples of common style-related writing problems. It involves using more words than required to say something which causes delays in sentences so that readers might get frustrated. Beyond that, it may lead to uncertainty about the topic, lack of a developed argument, or lack of evidence. A list of common or stock phrases to locate in the paper and be replaced with a single word is listed in Appendix 5 (The Writing Center, 2007). Finally, the

32 Style is the way in putting together a sentence or group of sentences or it is the total of all the choices a writer makes concerning words and their arrangements (Kane, 1988, p. 10).
33 Overwriting means using multiple adjectives, sentences, and rhetorical flourishes (Hall, 1990).
34 See Joseph M. Williams, Style: Ten lessons in clarity and grace, pp. 93-97.
suggested facts gathered from Jordan (1992), Tagg (2007) and Internet, Style, Figure 1, may be considered to help overcome poor style.

Figure 1: Poor style

2.3.12 Citations and Referencing

Citations designate the accuracy, fairness, plagiarism, selection, style, and evaluation of the text. However, different guidelines and disciplines are given by different associations’ style sheets. Despite this, four basic options are described here: (1) within-sentence quotations; (2) Block and indented quotations (quotations of more than 40 words); (3) paraphrase/summary; (4) Generalization (combining several sources) (Swales and Feak, 2000, pp. 128-129). Their examples are respectively illustrated:

(1) According to Barzun and Graff (2004. p. 266), “Quotations, novel or startling assertions, successive elements in a demonstration or argument—all obviously require footnoting, but do not write as if the reader were convinced that you are a liar.”;

(2) As Swales and Feak (2000, p. 123) have indicated:

Citations can sometimes be ambiguous or partly ambiguous as to whether the writer means to imply that somebody else said/claimed/concluded something or actually did/found/carried out something. Such citations called “hanging” may be difficult to avoid in number systems, especially if reference numbers are placed at the ends of sentences;

(3) According to K. Hyland (1999), the high frequency reporting verbs are: argue, analyze, claim, develop, describe, discuss, explain, find, give, hold, note, observe, point out, propose, publish, report, suggest, study, show, say, think, and use;

(4) The ways in which decisions are made within the World Trade Organization are typically inefficient (Mitchell 1997; Kim 1998; Kim 1999; Kirgis 1999)\(^{36}\).

\(^{35}\)According to Barzun and Graff (2004. p. 266), “Quotations, novel or startling assertions, successive elements in a demonstration or argument—all obviously require footnoting, but do not write as if the reader were convinced that you are a liar.”

\(^{36}\)The standard APA practice is to place multiple citations in chronological order. If two citations have the same year, then they are arranged alphabetically (Swales & Feak, 2000, p. 145).
By proper citation and referencing\textsuperscript{37}, plagiarism: “the unacknowledged use of another person’s work, in the form of original ideas, strategies, and research, or another person’s writing, in the form of sentences, phrases, and innovative terminology” can be avoided (Spatt, 1991. p. 383).

2.3.13 How to Start Writing the First Draft of the Dissertation

Quintilianus, 65 AD (2007) says “Write quickly and you will never write well. Write well, and you will soon write quickly.” However, the problem is how to do well without acting quickly, despite the computer age; everything needs to be done in a hurry. Therefore, after collecting all or a certain amount of the requirements such as, books, notes, lists, diagrams, data, and blueprints, the first draft can be started. Even so it can often be hard to start, however Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 172) suggest that “remember that you are never ‘ready’ to write; writing is something you must make a conscious decision to do and then discipline yourself to follow through”.

The author has gathered a number of tips from several sources that encourage writers to steam full ahead: When writing the first draft,

- write for your peers;
- pitch the level of discussion to an audience of readers who do not know what you are talking about;
- write your dissertation with fellow graduate students in mind, not your learned committee members;
- address your subsequent studies to the many who do not know, not the few who do;
- you should concentrate on developing your ideas rather than on polishing the style;

\textsuperscript{37} The referencing style depends on the academic institutions’ recommendation, for example, American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA) for social science.
write as much and quickly as you can what you want to write most at any point and any part. Even if it is references, just keep writing, and don’t worry about gaps. You can check your notes and fill them in later;
write the beginning, the introduction, only after you have some ideas on paper that you feel you can introduce;
write at least something on each one of the sub-heading;
during writing, stop only at a point from which it is easy to resume writing, but the periods of writing should be ‘close enough to create a rhythm of work’;
write until you feel you have put down on the page most of the main points with citations and references. After that, give yourself a couple of days break or continue taking note, finding new sources or find the necessary to fill up the caps (Barzun and Graff 1977; Bell 1993; Hacker 1999; Silverman 2000; Raimes 2005).

Finally, two quotes. Shetterly says, “It is better to write a bad first draft than to write no first draft at all.” while Ionesco, depressingly for the dissertation student, commends “A writer never has a vacation. For a writer’s life consists of either writing or thinking about writing.”

2.3.13.1 Strategies for Writing the Introduction of a Dissertation

The abstract, introduction, conclusions and recommendations of a dissertation are the most important parts of a dissertation because most of the readers examine them first and continue to read if they are motivated and persuasive enough. Therefore, the writer must make sure how to best write them, particularly content, order and essential items to be included. In other words, if the background information provided is adequate for the reader to understand the context and significance of the question the writer is addressing.
However, according to this author’s and her classmates’ experience, the introduction of a dissertation is one of the most difficult items for a student to write since it is hard to start and is the first part to be attempted although usually tell students that the introduction is one of the last items to write. Moreover, there is a saying by one of my teachers, which says, “The first time is the hardest, the second time is easier and the hundredth is automatic.” Again, Allen (1980. p.72) also states that “Often the beginning of the paper is the hardest part to write; in fact, a good case could be made for writing the first chapter last.” Therefore, the contents and procedures, in other words the stages for the information to be involved and their order in the introduction should be approached from the general to specific ideas as described below:

1. General statement(s) about a field of research to provide the reader with a setting\(^{38}\) for the problem to be reported (Move from general to specific statements).
2. More specific statements about the aspects of the problem already studied by other researches (Begin with generally accepted statements of fact about an area of study).
3. Statement(s) that indicate the need for more investigation\(^{39}\) (Identify one sub area within the general area which includes your topic).
4. Very specific statement(s) giving the purpose/objectives of the writer’s study (Arrange ideas in logical sequence).
5. Optional statement(s) that give a value or justification for carrying out the study (use old information at the beginning of your sentences.) (Weissberg & Buker 1990. pp. 22, 40).

\(^{38}\) In setting, first begin with accepted statements of fact related to the general area. Second identify one sub-area within the general area and finally indicate the topic.

\(^{39}\) It may indicate that (i) the previous literature described in the previous stage is inadequate because an important aspect of the research area has been ignored by other authors; (ii) there is an unresolved conflict among the authors of previous studies concerning the research topic. This may be a theoretical or methodological disagreement; (iii) an examination of the previous literature suggests an extension of the topic, or raises a new research question not previously considered by other workers in the research field.
2.3.13.2 Strategies for Writing the Main Body of a Dissertation: Presenting Data and Information

As Howard and Sharp (1983) suggests, the student should decide on the grounds to be covered, then divide this into a mini-chapter with its own heading in which (a) makes an introductory statement; (b) provides background information; (c) supplies data, often in the form of figures and tables; (d) undertakes analysis, summarizing the analysis, and reaching some conclusions. However, Chisholm (1986, p.65) believes that “no one can ever teach anyone else how to write, but they can at least forewarn them of the dangers which lie ahead” and continues to say, “It came to me only in the midst of the dissertation that the logic of presentation in academic work rarely resembles the logic of discovery or creation.” On the other hand, Cohen and Manion (1989) provide that poor logical analysis results from: (a) oversimplication – causes are single and simple rather than multiple and complex; (b) overgeneralization – due to insufficient evidence and false reasoning by analogy. Nevertheless, for the qualitative research approach, Metcalfe (2006) advises that the data should be presented, for example, by starting with how the data has been collected; what kinds of interviewees are involved; how long it took for the interviews; how the clarifications with interview participants have been made to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected.

On the other hand, if it is necessary to write a discussion for the research findings, then the information to be included and the order is, for example -

1. A reference to the hypotheses or assumptions that underlie the study;
2. A review of the most important findings of the study, their relation to the initial hypotheses, and possible explanations for the findings;

40 Donald Chisholm holds the 1985 Leonard D. White award for the best doctoral dissertation completed and accepted during 1983 or 1984 in the field of public administration (Chisholm, 1986).
41 In addition to the kind of information and the order to be involved; the use of verb tenses in an abstract is also clearly described on page 192 of Weissberg and Buker (1990).
3. A comparison with the results of other studies;
4. The limitations of the study; and
5. Implications for practical application and suggestions for further research.

When writing a discussion, one should be careful to select the important information from each of the major sections of the dissertation, but copying sentences directly from those chapters must be avoided. In addition, synthesizing the information in the major sections must be clear, with concise statements giving the reader an accurate preview of the contents of the dissertation (Weissberg & Buker, 1990).

Comparison and contrast presents the similarities and/or differences between to persons, places, things or situations whereas, cause and effect involves the presentation of events or forces that produced certain results, and/or speculation about how things might have turned out if conditions had been different. However, in cases where the subjects can best be understood by looking at their component parts, then analysis and classification is a suitable approach in the presentation (Campbell, Ballou & Slade, 1986).

2.3.13.3 Strategies for Writing the Conclusion/Summary and Recommendation of a Dissertation

Conclusions and recommendations are usually presented in the last Chapter of a dissertation. Therefore, new information or analyses should not be introduces. Only a relatively brief summary of the findings appears in this part. Therefore, it usually included the brief discussions on what the researcher has attempted to do and what the results or findings achieved are. However, the research questions or hypotheses may restate and indicate whether it is supported or rejected. In addition,
an indication of the usefulness of the research may include, in other words, the answer for such a question as: Who could benefit from this research? How? What theories, disciplines, organizations, groups, etc. would like to know what the research has uncovered or concluded? What is the value of the effort (Allen, 1980, p. 69)?

Regarding recommendations, these should be directly derived and follow logically from the conclusions. Based on the analysis, the best solutions or recommendations are thus provided. They should answer each of the problems that have been emphasized; they should be reasonable and be possible to apply in the local environment; they should be sorted in such a way that the reader is made able to rank the decisions to be taken; they should mention future developments, forecasting, anticipating problems and adapting to foreseeable situations; and they must be in line with the future (WMU 2007).

2.3.14 Strategies for Writing the Acknowledgments, Abstract, Appendix, Notes, Glossary and Index

2.3.14.1 Acknowledgments

This section presents expressions of appreciation for assistance, guidance and generosity with time and the knowledge and contributions of mentors, colleagues, individuals or institutions who supported the researcher. Acknowledgments should be expressed simply and tactfully. For example, we thank Betsy for their assistance in preparing the data; William Poe for the medical photography; Gerri Doe for reading and correcting my manuscript; and Fred Noe for reviewing the documents. It is also suggested that those persons should be asked if they are willing to be acknowledged and if they approve the wording used to mention them (Campbell, Ballou, Slade, 1986, Gustavii, 2006, Turabian, 2007).
2.3.14.2 Abstract

The last major part to be written is the abstract of the dissertation, although it is presented before the introduction section. The abstract is a brief preview of the entire study, and depending on the information in it, many readers decide if they will read the entire dissertation or not. Therefore, students should know well the order of typical elements included in an abstract. Hence, according to Weissberg and Buker (1990) and Gustavii (2006): first, write some background information about the topic followed by the principal activity (or purpose) of the study and its scope. Then, present some information about the methodology used in the study. After that, describe the most important results or findings of the study and finally, give a statement of conclusions or recommendations.

2.3.14.3 Appendix

Original data, summary tabulations, tables containing data of lesser importance, very lengthy quotations, supporting legal decisions or laws, computer print-outs, and pertinent documents not readily available to the reader belong in the appendix. Questionnaires, forms and documents can be included as appendixes for the supplement of the text of the dissertation. In other words, text that is not appropriate to be included in the main chapters can be presented in appendices. These may be subdivided according to logical classifications. By writing appendix unduly, bulky text can be prevented (Campbell et al., 1986).

2.3.14.4 Notes

There are three standard forms of notes: footnotes, endnotes\(^\text{42}\), and bracketed references\(^\text{43}\), which are used to give the Chapter and verse when referring to an

---

\(^{42}\) Endnote means group all the references together in a single section at the end of the text as a whole.

\(^{43}\) Bracketed references are used to reduce the number of distracting footnotes and endnotes, instead, including source references within the text.
authority in the writing (whether quoting the actual words of the person or book or simply paraphrasing an idea). The footnote is the one most commonly used in academic dissertations; the remaining two being used for shorter and more modest research assignments and many modern books and journals respectively (Reader’s Digest, 1991).

2.3.14.5 Glossary and Index

According to Campbell, Ballou and Slade (1986), a glossary (a list of definitions of terms and concepts) is usually unnecessary to include in a dissertation because the writing is directed towards a professional audience. However, Turabian states that a glossary may be needed if many foreign words or technical terms and phrases that may be unfamiliar to the readers are included. In the case of an index, which is an alphabetical listing with page numbers of subjects treated in the word, this is rarely included (Campbell, Ballou & Slade, 1986).

2.3.15 Writing the Final Dissertation

After the first draft, the writer should read through the entire work again and again and filling up the pages, while making the necessary editing and proof reading before submitting to the supervisor. However, during a final read-through of the dissertation the suggestion from Reader’s Digest (1991) is to answer all the following questions. Unless the answers are satisfactory, the dissertation is not ready for submission. Therefore, allowing time for thorough revision is ultimately essential.

1. Is the subject or purpose of the paper clearly defined for the reader?
2. Does the paper really engage that subject or purpose? – And in a way that reflects my own views rather than just summarizing or quoting the views of others?
3. Have I backed up my views adequately with well-reasoned arguments, and have I substantiated my general statements with specific evidence and examples?

4. What about the structure? – is the information well organized and proportioned? Have I written a clear, and brief, introduction and conclusion? In the body of the paper, does the argument jump about too much? Does it leave any loose ends or raise any unanswered questions? Are the links between arguments properly forged, and the transitions from paragraph to paragraph properly signposted?

5. Are all the contents relevant? Perhaps some paragraphs are just digressions, and interrupt rather than aid the flow of argument?

6. Is the wording tight and economical? – Not a surplus of examples, no over-subtle distinctions, no waffle or redundancy?

7. Is the language appropriate? No overlong sentences? Not too slangy or too high-falutin?

8. Is everything accurate and consistent? – The quotations, and the footnotes and bibliography references? The spelling and grammar? The spacing and style of the subheadings?

9. Is the presentation right? Neatly written or typed?

It is also advised to show the writing to author’s college or teaching staff to get feedback. However, all the suggestions obtained may not agree with each other, and writing a dissertation should not resemble a popularity/public opinion poll (Wuffle, 1989).

Finally, in case the well-thought-out study might not develop exactly as planned and does not lead to a conclusion, then the possible strategy is to change the research design and/or the interview approach (data collection methods) and recall and understand the tips given on research writing in Appendix 6. However, once the dissertation has been done then the advantage is that the researcher has gained the
habit of thinking small, thinking focused and thinking pragmatically on a particular subject or topic (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

2.4 Summary

Through the preliminary research combined with the experience of the researcher, and existing situations, the time and resources available, the researcher will be in a position to decide what issue he/she wants/could to deal with, and be able to narrow the topic and formulate a single research question. It will be possible to define the key words, demonstrate the problem and raise the question of what things can be done. Depending on the question formulated, the researcher has to determine what data or information or evidence need to be answered. Consequently, it will be possible to decide what methodology is most suitable to collect the required information. The qualitative method, quantitative method or combined methods may then be selected. The outline may be organized to that the findings are presented in a logical and natural manner. For example, in a historically-oriental paper, it might simply move chronologically. On the other hand, in a topic related analysis, an ascending or climactic order may be used, first, by looking at smaller factors or arguments then moving up to the more crucial factors. The last section could be the most serious issue so that it leads the readers to the climax and increases tension.

The abstract, introduction and conclusions and recommendations are the most important parts of a dissertation and must be well written as these will help the reader to decide whether continue reading the entire work or not. Furthermore, style, citation or references are also very important organs of a dissertation. Finally, even though writing a dissertation is hard work for first time students, once the dissertation has been done then the advantage is that the researcher has got into the habit of thinking small, thinking focused and thinking pragmatically on a particular subject or topic (Arksey and Knight 1999).
CHAPTER 3
SYNTHESIZING THE ELEMENTS OF A DISSERTATION: FORMATION OF APPLICABLE MODELS

“Beyond each corner, new directions lie in wait.”

- Stanislaw Jerzy Lec -

Presently, there are many sources and materials related to the dissertation, thesis, research or report writing as mentioned in the previous chapters. However, the research for this work has not revealed any written paper regarding the application of management theory and the management concept in the processes of dissertation writing. Therefore, a study of the application of the management processes involved in the management task\(^{44}\) to examine the formation, structure, processes and the impact on dissertation writing is presented in this chapter. However, due to the limited time frame, the observations are not all inclusive.

To facilitate understanding, certain essential rules and principles on social writing have been modeled into flow charts, diagrams and figures to help enhance the students’ ability and capability in their research activities. Unlike listing, the technique of clustering highlights relationships among ideas (Raimes, 2005). Therefore, cluster diagrams could also be used to explore and formulate ideas for a particular topic including dissertation writing. According to Metcalfe (2006), using

\(^{44}\) Dixon, R. (2004) addresses the task of management in terms of the different processes which covers the knowledge and understanding required as part of any competency-based management programme.
trees and figures enables managers and research scientists to conceptually design logical structures that automatically generate the necessary work.

3.1 The Management Task and the Dissertation

According to Dixon (2004, p.3), “The task of management is all about organizing groups of people to work together productively towards known, clear goals, or objectives.” Similarly, the task of a dissertation involves collecting required data to produce a well organized written presentation on the topic selected.

Management is very important because, in a competitive economy, above all, the quality and performance of the managers determine the success of a business. In the same way, the management of a researcher decides whether the dissertation can be finished in time and with effective outcomes.

3.2 The Main basic Required Elements in the Management and Writing of a Dissertation

As shown in figures 2 and 3, the basic elements and their mechanism processes in management are directing and controlling a group of people or entities supported by the resources such as, human, financial, technological and natural resources to reach the goal, while in writing a dissertation, assisted by critical thinking, critical reading, and data/information collecting, a dissertation can be written.

45 Figure 1 shows the main basic required elements in management, drawn by the author with reference to the management task, Dixon (2004).
46 Figure 2 shows the main basic required elements in writing dissertation drawn by the author based on texts from various books and websites.
47 Management comprises directing and controlling a group of one or more people or entities for the purpose of coordinating and harmonizing that group towards accomplishing a goal. Management often encompasses the deployment and manipulation of human resources, financial resources, technological resources, and natural resources (Wikipedia. Management, 2007).
Main Basic Required Elements in Management

Figure 2: Main basic required elements in management

Main Basic Required Elements in Writing a Dissertation

Figure 3: Main basic required elements in writing a dissertation
Source: Drawn by the author based on the text from various books and websites
3.3 Main Processes Involved in the Management and Writing of a Dissertation

The main processes involved in management, Figure 4, are planning, decision-making, organizing, strategy leading, motivating, communicating, control, and measuring performance whereas for writing a dissertation, Figure 5, they are preliminary reading, choosing a topic, writing a proposal, planning the dissertation, deciding the methodology, collecting data or information, analyzing or grouping the data, writing a draft paper, checking and editing, writing a second and third draft, writing a final paper, printing and binding, submitting for assessing, presenting the dissertating and final printing and editing.

The processes involved in management can be applied when considering writing a dissertation. For example, through the planning, students can conduct preliminary reading which results in being able to choose an appropriate topic so that as a consequence, a proposal can be made. Similarly, with the process of decision-making, students are able to decide on the design/plan of a dissertation and the methodology used. In the same way, if the student is able to organize the related parts in a systematic manner, then he/she would be able to collect valid and reliable data or information. In addition, with a good strategy and leading or commending, then a first draft paper with appropriate analysis of data could be presented followed by editing a second, third, and final written paper which can be submitted to the supervisor and eventually, to the assessors. However, in order to reach this goal, every step and process is bound to be carefully checked and controlled by the criteria designated for the related processes. It is recommended that for each process, every uncertainty, unreliability or problem encountered is measured, and discussed with the supervisor, and if necessary, the plan or strategy used for the related steps may be changed.

48 Figure 5: the main processes involved in management and the management cycle, drawn based on the text of *The Management Task*, Dixon (2004).
49 Figure 6: the main processes involved in writing a dissertation drawn based on texts from various books and websites.
Figure 4: The main processes in management and the management cycle

Figure 5: Main processes of writing a dissertation

Sources: Drawn by the author based on the text from various books and websites
3.4 External Appraisal Related to the Management and Writing of a Dissertation

According to Collins (1993. p. 240), “appraisal provides a comprehensive review of all aspects of the project and lays the foundation for its implementation and, when completed, its evaluation.” In other words, it reviews items such as, technical details, cost estimates, and physical contingencies. Therefore, as considered in management, the economic environment\(^{50}\) for conducting a dissertation implies the researcher’s financial conditions which include the personal financial situation as well as the funding or grant for expenditures on research such as purchasing materials, field trips and so on. As an organization has to assess to the political\(^{51}\) and legal\(^{52}\) environment within which it operates, the dissertation writer must be aware of the rules and principles set up in/by the related processes and the institutions.

Likewise, just as the social environment\(^{53}\) has a great impact on a business, the social and culture influences have a huge effect on researchers doing a dissertation, for example, the attitudes, relationships and communication between the students and their supervisors, the social and culture environment in which the students conducting their practical work, collecting data by interviews and questionnaires and their field trips. To be clearer, figures on factors such as the financial and the social environment have an impact on the practicalities of designing and carrying out research and feasibility studies. The feasibility of a study has been drawn in Figure 9 where, based on the information from Arksey, H. and Knight, P. (1999. pp.60-73), the factors determining the practicalities of designing and carrying out research are presented.

\(^{50}\) The organization needs to focus on its domestic economy as well as the international economic situation when doing business globally (Dixon, 2004. p. 37).

\(^{51}\) As the political decisions such as, taxation and business subsidies, import duties and change of government, will affect the organization’s business (Dixon, 2004. p. 37).

\(^{52}\) The legal environment affects to some degree the organization. For example, the changes to the law on Sunday trading in the UK, and the EU ban tobacco advertising have greatly influenced on organizations (Dixon, 2004, p. 37).

\(^{53}\) The social environment has been affecting companies greatly. It changes consumer tastes and perceptions. For example, the growing awareness of environmental matters has led to changes in companies’ products and processes (Dixon, 2004. pp.37-38).
Finally, technological factors\textsuperscript{54} need to be considered carefully in writing a dissertation, because in view of the rapid pace of technological development, new challenges are met, and the increased level of global competition, the activities in the field of research and the technological development must be intensified and augmented. Researchers need to keep up with the changes so that the dissertation is constantly upgraded. For example, in the maritime industry, due to an increase in ships' incidents and to have better solutions for that, the research on analyzes of past maritime security incidents has been done and new feasible model has been carried out at Lund University\textsuperscript{55} (Mejia & Akselsson, 2007).

At the same time, utilizing that model as an example, the research processes and subject matter used in that study has been applied to clearly show how the processes in writing a dissertation can be used in a pilot study which is described in Figure 8. The top layer is the processes of writing, the middle is the processes involved in the pilot study and the bottom layer is the subject matters in that study. This figure can also be implied as suggested by Schepele\textsuperscript{56} (1986), “read and analyze charismatic texts\textsuperscript{57}”. The related figures on environmental influences on the organization and on writing a dissertation are presented in Figures 6 and 7 respectively.

\textsuperscript{54} In business, technological factors, i.e. changes in the supply of raw material, production methods, and new product developments are needed to be considered because of rapid changes in technology (Dixon, 2004, p38).
\textsuperscript{55} The pilot study was made by Maximo Q Mejia Jr and Roland Akselsson from Lund University and WMU (Mejia & Akselsson 2007).
\textsuperscript{56} Kim Lane Schepple, University of Michigan, is the recipient of the Edward S. Corwin award for the best doctoral dissertation completed and accepted during 1983 or 1984 in the field of public law Schepple (1986).
\textsuperscript{57} Charismatic texts are books and articles she (Schepple) admired, that reminded her of what good scholarship could be and that served as models when she got stuck and did not know how to begin a chapter, when her writing style got stale and when she ran short of ideas for a sense of what counted as an interesting ideas during the writing of her dissertation.
Figure 6: Environmental influences on the organization


Figure 7: Environmental influences on writing a dissertation

Sources: Drawn by the author based on the text from various books and websites

© Copyright Nang Arm Seng, 2007
Figure 8: The example process of conducting a research/pilot study related to the main dissertation process

Sources: Drawn by the author based on the text from Mejia & Akselsson, 2007 and various books and websites.

The example process of conducting a research/pilot study related to the main dissertation process

Sources: Combination of Mejia Jr, M. Q. & Akselsson, R. 2007 and other sources.
Factors determining the practicalities of designing and carrying out research

Sources: Drawn by the author based on the text from Arksey, H. & Knight, P. (1999). pp. 60-73
3.5 Elements in the Contents of a Dissertation

The elements that are normally observed and conducted in writing the contents of a dissertation, a thesis or a report have been identified, collected and drawn into a figure to give students an easier, clearer and more comprehensive guide chart to follow during the voyage of writing their dissertations. It is the implication of the example, as when the voyage of writing the dissertation begins (what preparation should be made, what kinds of documents will be needed and from where and how these competent requirements can be achieved) that these essential items are not easily known unless there is guidance and procedures provided just as they are for, ship owners, company managers, masters and crew members when embarking on a new voyage.

Similarly, to facilitate and make clearer for the student the content elements required in writing a dissertation are extracted from various sources and presented in Figure 10. Here, there are five main parts: (1) before the introduction under which the declaration, acknowledgement, abstract, table of contents, list of tables, list of figures, and list of abbreviations are essential to be considered; (2) the introduction, in which, generally, the topic is described supported with evidence and where the value of the dissertation is presented followed by the thesis statement or hypothesis, the aim and the methodology applied; (3) the main body, dealing with the collected data or information which are then categorized or grouped, analyzed and discussed; (4) the conclusions and recommendations which contains new findings, solutions to the problems, limitations of the research and recommendations for future study. The conclusion should also summarize and (5) after the conclusions the references must be listed systematically and, when appropriate, appendices added.
Figure 10: Elements of the contents of a dissertation

Sources: Drawn by the author based on the text from various books and websites
3.6 The Inter-relationship between Critical Thinking, Reading, Writing and Data Collecting

In this section, some elements related to the processes of critical thinking, critical reading, critical writing and data collecting are identified and modified into a layered cycle, as seen in Figure 11. In addition, some important criteria used in assessing the quality of the dissertation are also presented, since it is important for students to be aware of those criteria when conducting the research, reading and writing of the paper. In the figure, elements in the outermost third layer are criteria for assessment whereas in the second layer are elements needed to be considered during the reading, data collection and writing of a dissertation. The sources of the elements are from WMU (2007), Sapsford and Jupp, (1996) and data collection from other books and websites.

3.7 Controlling and Evaluating a Dissertation

It is incredibly important to understand how to control and self evaluate one’s own work. This section introduces the implication of the feed forward process control based on procedures with intermittent additions (Paradigm Shift) for the controlling process, as presented in Figure 13 (Mejia, 2007). This shows that based on the behavior prescribed by the rules and procedures and the controlling process, humans perform to achieve the objectives and standards set by an organization. However, if the incidents and accidents do occur during these processes, then intermittent additions to safety procedures as the results of incidents and accidents have to be applied in addition to the behavior prescribed by the rules and procedures. This results control process (the feed forward process control based on procedures with intermittent additions) is feasible which can provide effective control even where knowledge as to what actions are desirable is lacking; this situation is typical of many of the important roles in numerous organizations (Merchant & Stede, 2007).
Similarly, by application of this control process, the feed forward process control is based on procedures with intermittent additions for writing a dissertation as shown in Figure 12 and can be described as follows:

Supported by the rules and procedures prescribed in the diagram and the controlling process given in the same diagram, and if the students are able to manage the time available, data collection and presentation and personal and financial affairs, students can perform well in achieving the goals or objectives of the dissertation process. However, if the outcome of the students fails to meet the required standards of research for the dissertation, then intermediate additional procedures based on the result of the students’ outcomes have to be found and applied in addition to the rules and procedures. The outcome here may mean for each chapter/part or the entire work. Therefore, results controls based are feasible as they can provide effective control where there is a deficiency in the knowledge of the student doing a dissertation.

The evaluation of the qualitative research papers which Seale (2007, pp.189-192) has suggested, published by British Sociological Association Medical Sociology Group, 1996, is presented in Appendix 7. However, according to Flick (2007), the problem of how to assess qualitative research has not yet been solved. Extensive arguments are still the domain of discussions.
Figure 11: The inter-relationship between critical thinking reading, writing and data collection

Sources: Drawn by the author based on the text from various books and websites, WMU (2007). Guidelines for written assignments and dissertations, and Sapsford & Jupp (1996)
Figure 12: The feed forward process control based on procedures with intermittent additions for writing a dissertation

Source: Drawn by the author based on texts from various books and websites by implication of the Feed Forward Process Control flow chart
3.8 Summary

In this chapter, two main parts have been presented. First, the elements and procedures involved in the management tasks including the basic elements, main processes, external appraisal and feed forward process control process that have been compared with and can be applied in writing a dissertation. The findings were most interesting as they totally met the goals of applicability so that further detailed study could be desirable. Second, the diagrams or figures on the elements in the contents of a dissertation, the inter-relationship between critical thinking, reading, writing and data collecting, and an example of applying the main dissertation processes into a semi pilot study/research processes, attempt to show that the process of writing a dissertation can also be learnt diagrammatically which may help dissertation candidates to gain a clearer understanding and improve the quality of the product.
CHAPTER 4

DESCRIBING AND ANALYZING THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MAIN ENTITIES INVOLVED IN DISSERTATION WRITING

“Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret.”

- Matthew Arnold -

This chapter consists of describing and analyzing the perspectives of students and instructors involved in the writing of a dissertation. The information was collected by interviewing a group of five students who had newly completed their dissertations and two instructors who are responsible for supervising the research students from KMA; a group of five students who are still conducting their research and five instructors supervising them at MIWB; and a group of WMU students composed of ten students who were still processing their dissertations when interviewed, three students who have given up doing their dissertations after two months of literature reviews and ten students who have completed dissertations in various countries before studying at WMU.

---

58 Only five students were interviewed as it was hard to collect students who had graduated at that time.
59 In KMA, there is only two staff responsible for supervising research students.
60 Only five students were interviewed due to the time constraint as the interview was done during the researcher’s field studies.
61 These are staff who are mainly responsible for supervising research students as well as teaching at MIWB.
Due to the time and situation constraints, totally, forty students and instructors have been openly interviewed along with five instructors from MAAP who were asked to answer an open questionnaire by email. The interview questions and questionnaire used are presented in Appendices 8 to 12.

4.1 The Perspectives of the Students who are still conducting their Research Work

4.1.1 MIWB Research Students

In interviewing the students who were within the period of doing their research paper for the B Sc. Degree at MIWB, one of the students answered regarding problems he has encountered while conducting his research work that firstly, it is hard to start, for example, to find the topic and headings; after that come the problems of what to do next, how to conduct further study, and how to plan for the research work. Without advice, step-by-step, from his supervisor, he had no chance of proceeding.

Secondly, is the time constraint, i.e., the time allowed is about four months for preparing approximately a thirty-page research paper while coping everyday with regular class work and examinations. Therefore, they cannot work continuously and undistracted on the topic. They work only when they have free time and use facilities such as simulators and laboratory rooms when they are available. In addition, it is hard for them to understand easily what they are recommended to read because of the technical terms and contents that require more time to be comprehended.

Regarding their opinions on writing a dissertation, most of them answered that it was good and interesting because they can learn more by themselves on the subject chosen by performing almost everything on their own. In addition, they have to read more than before that results in them having more detailed knowledge on that

---

62 The topic and headings are provided by their instructors if they could not find one.
topic. However, if they are not interested in the topic or they lack motivation and the supervisor’s guidance, they do not learn much except trying to finish it anyway in time as a requirement for the course. Therefore, some students can not give any information about what they are doing in detail.

4.1.2 WMU Research Students

However, compared to the students from KMA, the students who were still conducting their dissertations for the MSc degree at WMU answered, regarding the problems they encounter, that primarily, it was to choose a possible topic which can be finished within the time frame, about three months, of about seventy pages, during which four weeks classes with assignments or examinations have to be accomplished. After that, it is writing a proposal which made most of the students frustrated because of the title chosen and the outline, as very little time is available for preparing their topic related to the possible literature review due to the assignments and exams of the subjects at that time, during the third semester. The other problems are the ways and sources of data collection, particularly, for the social science research topics. In particular, most students do not understand well the research methodology and they conduct mostly only interviews or use questionnaires. However, to carry out interviews can be both costly and frustrating since to get the replies from the questionnaires by email is quite time consuming, or even worse, impossible if open questionnaires are used and/or there is no response.

In addition, due to the limited time, searching for information about the topic is also one of the hardest aspects the students encounter, since, at the same time they have to decide and plan from where and how the primary data will be collected. Consequently, to manage the time and the plan effectively is of paramount

\[63\] Without a sufficient literature review of the topic, it is impossible to come up with a good title and outline.
\[64\] Students have to submit their research proposal during the third semester which is the busiest time for the students with regular classes, exams and assignments.
\[65\] Primary data is data collected by laboratory measurements; field observation; archives/collections; questionnaires, and interviews.
importance in order to finish properly in time. Because of these reasons, three students who applied to do dissertations quit after two months. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration the facts before deciding on the topic as mentioned in chapter two.

Moreover, the problems regarding writing a first draft include difficulties not only in language but also in writing both the content and the procedures that should be followed in the related Chapters, such as, the introduction, the literature review, the main body and the conclusions and recommendations. In the other words, the students encounter difficulties in finding the appropriate words for sub-headings and their arrangements under suitable headings. Nevertheless, with the advice from their supervisors or other instructors and/or their colleges, they may eventually manage this. However, not every student is fortunate to do so. One student said that he is doing research in the maritime context, but it demands a legal writing approach. Since, his supervisor is unfamiliar with legal writing and other professors who are unavailable, because of the time constraint, he has to find outsiders, who can assist him by email. Without this kind of assistance, he would not be able to finish his work.

One student said that “My supervisor hardly gives me any advice and suggestions on how to proceed with my work. He just says yes to whatever I show him.” Another student commented “I couldn’t find any materials that are directly related to my topic. Only a relatively few references can be found in the library. So I have to manage to do with what I have found.” One more noted “I have to ask for some information from my home country.” A further complained that “I have written my related discussion in each Chapter, but my supervisor asked me to put all the discussions into another Chapter like he did in his own master’s dissertation.” One other student reflected what most students said by suggesting “It would be better if we can have more effective guidance on how to conduct a dissertation efficiently
because we have spent so much time wondering what and how to proceed despite there being very limited time available.”

According to the opinions of the students on writing a dissertation, most of them said that it is quite interesting to do a dissertation and they like it except for the stresses they suffer from having to finish everything on time, i.e., reading, data collecting and writing, according to the schedule. They also suggested that it would be even better if they could have more time available to complete their work. In comparison with the class room teaching approach, they feel that they gain more knowledge by studying specific details and come deeper into their topics resulting in increased confidence.

Nonetheless, one student said that “If the topic you have chosen to do researches does not benefit you individually or your society in one way or another, then it is no use. Therefore, it is quite important to carefully choose the topic for research.” In addition, he said, “One can easily get lost if one does not have a good supervisor and he must also have the skills of researching, writing, analyzing, reading, referencing, and developing the plan. On top of that are the (English) language skills.” One student said, “Before, I did not know how to do a dissertation even though I’m an instructor at a maritime institution. But, now I have learnt how to conduct research work and write a dissertation by myself. So we need this research activity.” Furthermore, he said, “it is necessary, especially, for all instructors from maritime institutions to have the experience of conducting research and writing up a paper so that he/she is competent to distribute his/her knowledge to the students.”

4.2 Analysis of the Perspectives of the Students who are still conducting their Research Work

In comparison between the students from MIWB and WMU who are all still doing their research, it was seen that, undergraduate students need more (step-by-step)
specific guidance and closer supervision than postgraduate students require, as without it they could not finish their papers. However, WMU students also said that they need more assistance from their supervisors as, for some of the students, writing a dissertation is totally new because they are ex-seafarers and (they) do not have an academic background. In addition, for most non-native English speakers language is a big burden, as stated by Clairs (2003) that their frustration is magnified by the linguistic and cultural differences. However, both sets of students have the same view that they learn more by doing the research than they learn from their class work. They all are interested in their selected fields but are exposed to too much stress because of the time constraints. However, they like what they are doing as it seems like a contingency plan for maritime incidents or affairs which allows very limited time and needs a quick response according to the situations occurring. Nonetheless, some say it is not necessary for undergraduate students to conduct research work because many of them are too young to think rationally, but others say they should do this in order to learn and gain experience of how to do independent studies outside their class situation.

In fact, most of the students suggest that postgraduate students should write dissertations because it is a good opportunity and strategy to create one’s own plan on how to conduct their research work accompanied with critical thinking, critical analyzing, and critical reading and writing on the subject he/she has chosen. Furthermore, the students can master the subject matter which may be directly related to their present occupation and can be immediately or soon applied. Moreover, they can build up advanced knowledge and a good relationship among them by exchanging their views in informal discussion classes, or by helping each other when they really need assistance.

However, in this author’s opinion as a student among them, it is not realistic challenge to allow students to complete a dissertation of about seventy pages within a three-month period. During this short time with four week regular classes and
assignments, presentations and examinations, a student cannot produce a high quality paper, on his/her topic unless he/she has already considerable knowledge of it or has significant outside support\textsuperscript{66}. Nevertheless, doing research itself is a kind of training for students to find out and solve the problems by themselves in a rather tough or hard situation so that they learn how to solve the problems on their own in their present and future career. Therefore, it should be compulsory for all postgraduate students to do a dissertation in order to have the experience of how to handle and master problems on a particular subject on their own.

4.3 The Perspectives of the Students who have just completed their Research Paper

A group of five students who have just submitted their research paper for the requirement for the B Sc degree in KMA were interviewed for about twenty minutes each regarding their completed dissertations. The questions asked are listed in Appendix 9. Their answers mainly concerned with the problems they have encountered during their research and their opinions on writing a dissertation are described below.

The common problems expressed were basically that they did not know what to do and how to conduct their research although they did it in groups of two. Only after their supervisors explained, gave them the instructions on what to do, step-by-step, in a list, were they able to continue. All of them agreed, “No one knows what to do, what it (a dissertation) looks like.” As for the topics, they chose, by themselves, the one they were really interested in dealing with. However, one student said, “I have chosen a topic that is quite interesting to me, but my supervisor said it is too big

\textsuperscript{66}Here, outside support means any illegal assistance received from sources such as, the students’ relatives, close friends and/or academic staff or other sources for the data collecting or writing processes, especially, in WMU where there is no oral assessment (seminar or defiance seminar) for the students for the master degree. This is one of the draw back for the quality assessment.
a research project for me to finish within the available period. And he suggested to
me another topic. This is the one that I have done now.” oral

Further, their problems concerned the data collection. On their own, they
contacted person(s) or authority (ies) they needed to interview. Most of their data
collections were through the interview method, yet, some were done by phone
calling. Therefore, the first difficulty they had was whom to interview and what
questions they should ask. The other problem was whether they could collect the data
they needed within the time allowed, because some of the organizations were not
willing to provide their private statistical data. One student said, “They look at us as
if we were from the government or police so that they did not want to speak with us
about their work, because, it could affect their tax payment as they had been
seafarers.” He continued, “Some people didn’t want to listen to our calls, but finally,
they became better and helped us to get the data.”

On the other hand, most of the students said they learnt a lot in their research
work and it was quite interesting. One student commented, “I like it (research) very
much, because I learn how to speak with people from Baltic countries about
environmental affairs. And also we learn how they think.” However, another student
noted, “I learnt quite a lot of things that I had never got into deeply before. But the
learning outcomes were small compared to the effort I put in.” He continued, “as an
engineer basic [he is an engineer with great work experience], we are used to writing
facts in a report, but here, it seems you write a lot that seems not give you too much
to the end result: to a small end result you really need to write a big bunch of papers
and spend a lot of time. Nevertheless, it is an academic work.” Although, he had
come across technical problems such as, working with word, excel and a data base,
he suggested that “The students [from MET] need to write an academic paper
because, if they will no longer work at sea, then they need to work on shore. If they
work on shore, they will need to write. So they need to have the experience of
writing.” In addition, “As a captain, he really does not need so much writing, but for
young people, for their future work, they may need to write small reports that make people find the facts. It would be easier for them to know how to write as you may never know what you’ll do in the future.”

Another problem was dealing with financial issues because, to interview, some students needed to travel. One student said, “We had to try to get a small scholarship for travel; eventually, we managed to get it.”

The final difficulty was when they started to write and they discovered, they did not know how to do it. So they had to get advice either from their supervisors or other members of their family or/and staff such as, from the library. They said, “I had no idea how the layout should be and how it should look like.” After that everything was smooth except it took a lot of time to complete the paper. One student commented, “When I last hit the keyboard and finished the job, my happiness and satisfaction went to the top.”

4.4 Analysis of the Perspectives of the Students who have just completed their Research Paper

Although the students were working in pairs, they have no conflicts between them. On the contrary, they liked the arrangement because they can discuss with each other. While one prefers to write\(^{67}\), the other has a preference to speak so that one does more what he favors to finish the work in time. Even they had some problems at the beginning, but eventually, after receiving advice from their supervisors, they managed to complete their research work in time. Therefore, the success of the students mostly depends on the contribution of the supervisors. Even though it is not quite sure, for the future, whether the topic that they have dealt with in their dissertation will be directly useful or not in their work, to some extent, the experiences they have gained may be valuable in their future careers. However,

\(^{67}\) The student who likes to write is more responsible for writing the paper while the other prefers to speak so he takes more responsible for interviewing the interviewee.
although Zsuzsanna (2002), states that the project base may prevent the students from learning from the teacher and textbooks, for MET students, the institute should provide them with an experience on researching and writing a paper on interesting topics so as to facilitate their work either at sea or on shore.

4.5 The Perspectives of the Students who have completed their Dissertation and are now Pursuing further Studies

The ten students who previously conducted dissertations for the MSc degree in various countries such as, Sweden, Nigeria, China, Vietnam and Myanmar, and are now studying at WMU were interviewed according to the questions in Appendix 10. Their answers mainly related to the problems they encountered when conducting their dissertations in their countries and their opinions and suggestions on writing a dissertation are illustrated below.

The students, who have done their Master of Science dissertation at WMU, said that their common problems were after finding a topic, and how to focus or narrow down the topic because there was so much literature on it. The time constraints were also a problem. One student said, “You had to manage the time very well because there were many things to do at the same time.” Another commented, “The expectation of the supervisor might be different from what you were doing and it made you frustrated if you should follow him or not.” Regarding their opinion and suggestions on writing a dissertation one student noted, “First, you should have the objective, main idea, focus of the subject you are doing and find the best way and main factors to formulate your work; second, introduce your practical point of view on the issue and discuss it critically; finally, once you have a certain amount of

---

68 Every two students from each country described above.
69 At WMU, it is called a dissertation at the MSc level and a thesis at the PhD level, but for those who are not eligible to do a dissertation, they must do a literature review project instead.
related literature then you start to sit and write even though, writing is challenging, it is not impossible work. However, once you have finished it, you feel that you have learned a lot better than doing the elective learning and have confidence on the subject. Consequently, it helped me a lot in my work. I really appreciated it.”

The main problems for the student from Nigeria were data collection, research facilities and financial constraints. One student said, “For my dissertation, I had to collect the data from a town which is far from my city so, I had to go there. However, still it was not easy to get the information from the authorities though it was not confidential. In addition, it cost me a lot to get there to gather the data. It was very hard.” However, another student noted, “There were no problems for me because I could collect data from the organizations easily as my work was related to them.” Only, he said he would like to suggest that “If a student is going to do a dissertation, he/she should firstly have some background knowledge about the topic, so that he/she can learn more deeply about that subject. In addition, he/she has to know how to conduct research work: considering about from where and how the data and information can be collected. Besides, one of the most important things is to have a good supervisor who is willingly to guide well.” “One also must know if the supervisor is planning to move somewhere during or before he has finished his work. If the supervisor moves halfway into the research, then it is difficult to find another supervisor for that subject.” added another student.

Students from China had the problems of data collection from on board ships, industries, companies and organizations but, eventually, these were solved with the help of the supervisors and their friends through personal introductions. One student suggested that:

If you have any problems when conducting a dissertation, don’t hesitate to ask your supervisors as they are the closest ones who can and are willing to take out time to help you solve the problems because, they keep in mind very
well that the students are new to research work. They take this opportunity to teach their students how well to systematically conduct their research work so that they are able to contribute their knowledge to and are competent in their future careers which also benefits their country.

In addition, they said that they saw their supervisor almost everyday for advice on what they had done and what they should do further. However, for the writing down process, most of them did not know how to write except by referring to former students’ dissertations.

On the contrary, students from Vietnam said that they could not meet their supervisors very frequently because their supervisors were too busy. So they managed to collect the data on their own and write their dissertation by referring to former students’ dissertations. However, they said that it was quite different from doing dissertations at WMU. First, is the time constraint, second, the English language difficulty, third, there is no proper referencing or guide book although some guidance is provided by the university. However, from their experience, they suggested that “Before you selected your topic, you should have reviewed as much as possible the related materials and come out with outlines that you will follow although you can change them during researching.”

As the perspective on writing a dissertation from the Myanmar students, one student said:

The main different was that what we had done in our country was technical research conducted in the laboratories of the University, industries and sometimes in Myanmar central research and development department for quality control purposes. Therefore, everything done was purely practical

---

70 In Vietnam, the thesis is for undergraduates at bachelor’s level; dissertation is used for higher education like MSc or PhD (Lac Viet- Multimedia tool for building multilingual dictionaries, English - Vietnamese dictionary).
scientific experiments so that the problems were the availability of raw materials to be used in research and to get the permission for doing experiments from those departments. Of course, the literature and internet assess were also not adequate but, we managed to finish our dissertations in a strategic way in time. However, when I am doing my dissertation here at WMU, it was very difficult for me at the beginning because I did not quite know about the social science research approach and how to collect the data without researching in the lab. However, I’m very lucky to have a supervisor who provides me with a lot of books to read and arrange for me a lot of companies and shipping industries to survey. Therefore, I can say it is one of my best studying experiences at WMU. And I also would like to suggest to students, if they have the chance to conduct a research project, please take that chance. It is far better than doing electives which are rather surface studies compared to doing a dissertation which is a relatively deeper study on a specific subject and can be directly applied in the future work situation if the subject chosen is directly related to your work.

Finally, I myself as a WMU student who has experiences on writing dissertations on two occasions would like to say: I have done my first thesis closely under the guidance of my supervisor for the M Sc degree, he took very good care of his students as he recognizes that the students are purely students and they have never had an experience of conducting a research. And my supervisor said that by guiding students properly and systematically, they could contribute their knowledge in their work or to younger generations if they might become teachers. For example, I myself, when I did my dissertation for the PhD course, could carry it out very well without much help from my supervisor as she was very busy with her routine office work and other research students. In addition, after completing my PhD studies, I could supervise my M Sc students doing their theses well based on practical

---

71 The subject he chose is directly related to his present job.
72 We call a thesis in MSc level but a dissertation in PhD level in Myanmar. However, for undergraduate and post grade diploma students, it is called research project or research paper.
experiment research in the laboratory. However, when I decided to do my dissertation here at WMU, I had no idea what I should do, especially as it is based on social science. In addition, I know, to do research, the student must have some background in that subject but, it is not in my case as my background is purely engineering Chemistry. Therefore, were problems are waiting for me in doing my dissertation now. These included:

1. Choosing the present topic; as I feel I do not have enough maritime background and the time available to deal with deeper research on a particular maritime related subject; eventually, as a teaching staff member in my university, I have chosen this topic because, whenever I asked my friends at WMU if they were going to do a dissertation, almost all students said, “I’m not quite sure as I don’t know how and what to do.”;

2. Writing a proposal: ninety present of my colleagues here also do not know how to write a proposal; we have asked each other to share what he/she has written and to check for each other. However, no one knew well if it was right or wrong;

3. Writing outlines for the proposal: due to the inadequacy of time available for reading, it was hard to find out the contents to be written;

4. Collecting the data: I had no idea from where I can get the information, in other words I did not know the research methodology in social science research and I was told that it would be hard to collect information from a questionnaire because the response would be low. Therefore, I had to read the research methodology and decide the most suitable way to approach my work;

5. Writing the first draft: I did not have a clear idea of what should be written in the contents and the procedures;

---

73 As I also have to guide the research students, so it is better to learn more deeply about writing a dissertation as I recognized most of the students and even many supervisors do not know well how to do the research well. They only base it on their experiences.

74 When we write a paper in our country, like other countries in Asia, such as, China, Japan, Vietnam, we usually have a model paper, provided or referred to by our supervisors, to be followed. Thus we do not have so many problems except some relating to data collecting (based on interviews with Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese students.)
6. Supervisors: at the beginning I was supposed to have two supervisors, an easterner and a westerner, with views they were quite different making me frustrated which way to follow;

7. Time: I planned to have totally two months continuously time, without regular classes and including my two-week vacation, to arrange all the data I collected during my field studies and interviews, to review all the materials, books, journals, and to write my first draft. However, due to the change in schedule of one of my elective professors, my plan was separated into three parts which made me decrease in efficiency and increase the stress level because the deadline of the submission of the first draft was very near.

Therefore, based on these difficulties, the author would like to suggest to student who intend to do a dissertation, especially at WMU that:

(1) Previous background knowledge on the subject selected is essential;
(2) The research methodology must be known;
(3) Critical and maximum reading is needed;
(4) The writing strategies must be recognized;
(5) Communication skills are to be added when dealing with the interviewee and supervisors;
(6) Time management is of critically importance.

Bearing these facts in mind, it is hoped that, students are able to carry out their research work successfully without tears. It is even better, if the University can provide designated supervisors who are specialists in dealing with the work of research projects and dissertations, providing discussion classes every week or every other week to solve the difficulties of students and are available at any time, office time, at least during office hours, when students need help.
4.6 Analysis of the Perspectives of the Students who have just completed their Research Paper

In order to make a clear analysis, students can be classified into two groups, the students from the eastern part of the world such as China, Vietnam and Myanmar and those from the western part such as, Sweden and Nigeria. Compared to the western students, the eastern students encounter fewer problems because they are rely more on their supervisors, if they are available, and meet their supervisors nearly everyday so that they have leaders to escort them. However, in western Universities, most students have to rely on themselves as there is an insufficient number of qualified supervisors, particularly in the maritime field; most of the supervisors are ex-seafarers who have little experience in research activities. On the whole, it is better to have a process and control procedure for the research students. For instance, implementing the feed forward process control based procedures as described in Chapter 3.

4.7 The Perspectives of Supervisors from KMA and MIWB

The perspectives of the instructors who are responsible for the supervision of students form KMA and MIWB are presented. Their supervising experiences are from five to thirty years. Some are responsible for experimental and technical guidance, some are for the language and writing techniques and the others guide both the practical experiments and writing techniques. They were interviewed for about thirty to ninety minutes and the questions asked are listed in Appendix 11. Their answers regarding how they carry out their work, what their difficulties are and their opinions and suggestions on doing dissertations are presented below.

75 In the case of Vietnam, the numbers of research students are too many compared to the supervisors.
As MET students from MIWB, they have to do research papers either based on practical/hands-on or social science/human elements. Thus, for the students who do hands-on research, the supervisors must set out a system big enough for them to solve within the time available, from which the students have to find out the faults and mischief during the whole simulated voyage referred to as a virtual voyage. Therefore, students experience this as if they were on a real voyage filled with difficulties but without being in dangers. Hence, these instructors or supervisors are very skillful in setting the problems and understanding the solutions. However, one supervisor said, “I set the problems, and let the students solve them by planning step-by-step. If they have difficulties, I assist them. But, for the writing report my friend will take care of it. I don’t know well how to do it.” Another supervisor commented, “I’m a second line supervisor. I make sure and finalize the thesis or dissertation whatever you call it. I teach/do all the work that the technical instructors do not teach/do.” Nevertheless, a further supervisor said, “I’m their [students] close supervisor. I help them in all aspects.”

For those students who do the social science research, they have to choose a topic themselves or if they have difficulty, then the supervisors will recommend them a topic. After that, the supervisors give them a talk regarding on what and how to do their research. Then, they have to assist whenever students have difficulties with their work. However, one supervisor noted, “Even though you tell them how to do the research work, if you don’t tell them what to do one step after another, they just don’t do it. And they usually submit their paper late.” He continued, “Now, I have

---

76 If the students are from an engineer background they have to deal with mainly engineering work in engine room simulators and if they are students from the deck department then they have to do the research work in the bridge simulator (MIWB).

77 He has been working there for about twenty years. He is an instructor as well as a supervisor in the practical laboratory, but he does not know well how to supervise in the writing of a research paper (MIWB).

78 Some instructors can assist students in writing their research papers. This means the students who have difficulties in writing often have to ask those instructors or people who can help them for example, the library staff, their family members, their friends, and senior students (MIWB & KMA).

79 Even some students submit their research papers after the deadline; the supervisors accept them as they recognize the time allowed (according to curriculum) for the research is not sufficient for students who are slower or less motivated. The supervisors said though they do not like the system, they have to follow it (KMA).
to provide them with a list of what to do step-by-step. Still, if they have problems, they may come to ask me or other supervisors\textsuperscript{80} or by emailing us.”

Regarding the common difficulties that supervisors have are: firstly, they do not have enough instructors who are skillful in supervision. A supervisor who was an ex-seafarer said, “I’m now reading all these books related to writing a dissertation or research paper or thesis whatever you call it. I’m reading the books on the role of a supervisor so that I can guide the students very well. As my work is to supervise, I have to know about it very well”. Another supervisor noted, “We do not have enough instructors who can supervise very well because, most of the instructors are ex-seafarers.” He continued, “Therefore, we have to group the students into two or sometimes four in order to facilitate them better.” Consequently, the quality of the research students is not quite satisfactory according to by the supervisors, however, as long as the students get the experience of what research work looks like, how to write a research paper or report and their layout and style, it is acceptable.

With respect to the opinions and suggestions of the supervisors on doing research work or writing a dissertation, one supervisor said, “It is good to let them find out and produce something by themselves, so that they are able to solve problems confidently with their own ideas, and to organize and produce a kind of report. It is a step towards the MSc degree and prepares them for their future professional life.” In addition, he continued, “You can’t always depend on what students want to do. Sometimes, you have to tell them that they have to do something, because it is good for them but, they can’t see that. So we have to prepare for them for this by good teaching.” However, another supervisor\textsuperscript{81} complained, “As for seamen, it is not necessary for them to write a thesis unless it is a requirement for the B Sc degree. For the practical work purpose, there is no need to write a thesis.” On the other hand, one supervisor recommended, “It is good to let students do a

\textsuperscript{80} In their academy, they have only two supervisors for all the research students, about one hundred students a year, but they are all not doing research at the same time (KMA).
\textsuperscript{81} The supervisor is an ex-seafarer, a master who has been working there for five years (MIWB).
dissertation but the school must keep control of the subjects, topics. They must be useful and related to their jobs.” In addition, he said, “You need to explain to them well how to do the research work. If you just ask them to read the books on the research methodology, they will not read them because it is hard for them to understand, especially, the meaning of the technical terms.” Finally, another supervisor commented, “it is a good experience for students to do a dissertation because, at first they don’t think they can do it but, at the end, they achieve their objective. They learn a lot and better than before. However, the problem is about the supervising processes needed for staff and students. We need some kind of system to assist us.”

4.8 The Perspectives of Supervisors from MAAP

This section presents the perspectives of the five supervisors from the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific, MAAP which were collected using the questionnaire attached in Appendix 12.

Concerning the problems of their students, the supervisors reported that these were mainly those of time and material availability, in other words, the financial problem. For the supervisors, they also sometimes encountered time problems since this depended on the subjects, the ratio of supervisors to students which varied from 1:1 to 1:25. Regarding their opinions and suggestions, one supervisor said, “By writing thesis, students are trained to express their ideas clearly, logically and precisely.” Another said, “The students have the chance to put their theoretical aspects that they have learnt within the whole year into practical work.” A further one suggested that the students “Do not deviate from the topic.”

---

82 The students said they do not have enough time to read and comprehend the methodology books besides the books for their research and school works (KMA).
83 Due to the difficulty of reading the interviewee’s handwriting, some suggestions had to be omitted.
4.9 Analysis of the Perspectives of the Supervisors of the Students writing Dissertations

Compared to the data collected through interview, data collected from open questionnaire were not quite satisfactory because the interviewees gave minimal answers or even kept their answers spaces blank which resulted in inefficiency in presenting their perspectives. Even worse, some handwriting could not be read when the questions asked were perhaps unnecessarily many. Nevertheless, on the whole, it is obvious from their preservatives that the students really needed to be guided systematically and effectively by means of providing necessary guidelines on the processes of doing a dissertation in order to achieve the required standard for the BSc level. In addition, more instructors with essential research skills are clearly needed to cope with the number of research students. Finally, the supervisors should motivate students to be more active and participate in doing their research activities because, partially or wholly, it will be helpful for them in their future education and career. Therefore, the role of the supervisor is paramount and vital for the success and qualification of each research student. Thus, supervisors are recommended to follow all of the suggestions of Brown and Atkins (1999, p.120), regarding the role of the supervisor as listed below:

- Director (determining topic and method, providing ideas);
- Facilitator (providing access to resources or expertise, arranging field-work);
- Teacher (of research techniques);
- Guide (suggesting timetable for writing up, giving feedback on progress, identifying critical path for data collection);
- Critic (of design of enquiry, of draft chapters, of interpretations of data);
- Freedom giver (authorizes student to make decisions, supports student’s decisions);
• Supporter (gives encouragement, shows interest, discusses student’s ideas);
• Friend (extends interest and concern to non-academic aspects of student’s life);
• Manager (checks progress regularly, monitors study, gives systematic feedback, plans work).
• Examiners (e.g. internal examiner, mock vivas, interim progress reports, supervisory board member).

In addition, supervisors are not expected to involve in editing or rewriting text although they may advise on the substantive content, structure and presentation of the dissertation. Therefore, regarding to that, language lecturers have to assist and make sure the dissertation is of acceptable quality and without typographical or other errors before submission (Muirhead, 2007).

4.10 Summary

Students who are still doing their dissertations are seen as being much stressed due to the problems such as choosing a suitable topic, planning their work, collecting the data, interviewing, organizing and writing their papers. Even though they said they are pleased to do the research because they learn more than before as it is deeper than the classroom teaching and they practice something that they have never experienced previously. However, for those who have just done their dissertations, they really appreciate having the chance of doing a dissertation because they have tried something that they think they can never carry out but, eventually, completed it successfully. Now they are most satisfied and feel confident in the subject they have dealt with. Even more interesting are the opinions from those students who have previously completed their dissertations at the MSc level and are now studying at WMU. They have a good experience in their careers from the outcome of doing a dissertation. In other words, they practically recognize how the
knowledge gained form research helps them in their lives, and they feel very proud and confident in their job even though they have also suffered from the stress and difficulties while doing their dissertations. The problems for students can be summarized as similarly described by Brown and Atkins (1999).

(1) Poor planning and management of project;
(2) Methodological difficulties in the research;
(3) Writing-up;
(4) Isolation;
(5) Personal problems outside the research; and
(6) Inadequate or negligent supervision.

Finally, regarding the supervisors, it is necessary for them to give the students more detailed guidelines although this may have to come through the management of the institution, as a directive, and presumably acted upon via the Academic Deem in order to reach the required institutional quality. Further, it is necessary for the academic authorities to take into consideration the employment of additional skillful supervisors. Nonetheless, in the author’s opinion, it is essential and advisable for the supervisors to put more effort into motivating and guiding the research students as students are still students and they are like flowers or trees, the more they are natured the more beautiful and fruitful they become. Even though there are only a few gardeners, the supervisors, with the help of advanced automation and techniques, rules, procedures and strategies, quality targets can be achieved.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Marked as the transition from student to scholar, as an independent project, and as the ending of a graduate career and the beginning of work as an independent scholar (Handouts & links, 2007), studying the dissertation as a tool for communicating students’ understanding and creative abilities in the maritime fields in a social science context is the central theme of this paper. As a dissertation basically concerns working from pen to paper, students need to comprehend all the possible related materials and processes involved. Therefore, for the benefit of maritime students dealing with research mainly for their BSc and MSc degrees in Maritime Education and Training Institutions, Academies and Universities, the most suitable and reliable essential elements and processes required in social science research have been systematically identified, analyzed and synthesized with the application of elements and procedures involved in the management task, accompanied by examples from a maritime safety and security project. Furthermore, clear schematic diagrams and figures for the elements and processes were also produced using the combination of various texts from several sources. In addition, the perspectives and views of students and supervisors involved in dissertation writing have been described and analyzed.

Due to the difference in characteristics from other education systems (mainly the inadequate duration provided for research and the insufficient numbers of supervisors available) the research activities in maritime education need to be well
constructed and formulated so that students can perform effectively. To accomplish these requirements, the author has carried out research on what subject matters and the processes that should be most suitably included in developing the course of work on practical voyages, i.e., research. For example, at the very first step, in choosing the research topic, the most important element to be considered is the topic which must be narrowed and focused, interesting, advanced and a useful learning activity which should contribute to the future students’ career in the maritime field. At the same time, the possibility of collecting data and information, materials or documents to be used and the time available must be taken into consideration. Without such careful deliberations, the possibility of failure, or half done research, will be encountered and as is evident in the research here where three students from WMU quit doing the dissertation process. Therefore, by identifying and analyzing these important elements and processes, the student will be able to conduct his/her research in at least a satisfactory manner.

Moreover, due to the unfamiliar way of how to approach the contents and procedures of the introduction, the main body of the Chapters and the conclusion and recommendations of the dissertation, students spend a lot of time wondering how to arrange logically and chronologically their data and/or information into a proper reliable and readable manner and, consequently, are in danger of producing an unsatisfactory paper. However, some supervisors in MET institutions argue that, even though not all students can produce high quality papers, at least they can have the practice of doing research and writing a paper on their own, and this may be acceptable. However, in the opinion of this author, every institution has its quality benchmark which must enhance and maintain its responsibility and reputation in the competitive maritime education and training arena.

Therefore, recognizing the limited time and the limited availability of the supervisors, the author has discovered an effective way to assist students while they are conducting their dissertations. This is the analysis and synthesis of the required
elements and procedures in carrying out a dissertation visualised through diagrams and figures which enable students to see clearly and rapidly the whole picture. At the same time, the application and comparison of the management tasks (elements and processes) into dissertation writing have been made which discover that it is possible to do a study where one concept of a subject (management) can be applied to another subject (dissertation writing) to make the subject clearer and easier.

Regarding the findings from the interviews of students who are still producing their dissertations, who have just finished their papers, and who have previously completed their dissertations in various countries and continued their studies at WMU, it can be summarised that they were unanimous in pointing out that they were interested and wanted to study their subject deeper despite the inadequate time available, and the risk that they were forced to finish their work before it was entirely ready. This is partly due to the hardships they had encountered and understanding the strategy of doing research and writing a dissertation and the collection of data and/or information. Despite these difficulties, students interestingly learnt how to conduct the research and deal with people in the process of contacting the interviewees, companies and industries. For materials such as books, documents, articles, periodicals and internet access, availability was not a great problem. However, the students had financial difficulties if they should travel to collect their data when, for instance, conducting interviews. Of course, social affairs could be part of the problem for some students, but as far as the research showed, this was not a prominent feature.

In addition, another problematic factor concerned the efforts of the supervisor. Some students complained that their supervisors were not helpful because of their time constraints and inadequate skills in supervising effectively as they were ex-seafarers and/or did not have an academic background. However, from the supervisors’ point of view, they confessed that they had limited time due to the high ratio of students per supervisor and considerable amounts of other work
commitments and duties to perform. On top of this it is not unusual for them to be ex-seafarers or to have come directly from the maritime industry, so they have little dissertation experience even though they are now supervising research students; in other words they are learning the research methodology at the same time as their students. Some supervisors even complained that for students who will later perform their jobs at sea, doing a dissertation is irrelevant. However, as the shipping industry is growing rapidly, the trend for seafarers to work at sea is diminishing and they are diverting to the shore after just a few years of seagoing experience. Consequently, it is better that students have the experience of writing a dissertation so that they learn how to master a subject, do independent work and are confident when asked to write a convincing paper or report.

Finally, based on the findings of this research, the author recommends the following solutions which are intended to assist in the production of quality papers that in turn will provide the suitably high benchmark that most maritime institutions are striving for.

Firstly, regarding the institutions, each should provide a detailed dissertation manual prepared by the academic committee for their research students. Despite some supervisors arguing that it is the task of all researchers to find out how to produce a good dissertation, it is suggested that their time is much better spent on exploiting the subject they are pursuing. In addition, each institution should provide clear lectures or explanations based on the above mentioned manual, should be prepared to answer any questions, and should allow time for consultation meetings to solve the research problems encountered by their students. The best recommendation would be, for each institution, to employ supervisors whose work is mainly concerned with supervising and conducting research on the latest hot topics in order to establish the highest practicable research reputation for the institution.
Secondly, the role of a supervisor to motivate and encourage a student is vitally important since, for most students, producing a dissertation is usually the first time they enter the academic arena of creating, exploiting and carrying out their tasks independently which often results in them being stressed, frustrated, disappointed and sometimes feeling the urge to give up. The supervisor should frequently offer help by communicating with the student. In contrast, whenever students have problems and seek help, their supervisor should be able and allowed the time to assist them as discussed in chapter four under the heading of the analysis on the perspectives of the supervisors of students doing dissertations.

Regarding the length of the time given to produce a dissertation, for the B Sc level, three to four months, accompanied with class work, for a group of two doing a small research project paper, this is probably acceptable for students to learn how to carry out basic research and write a paper independently, and thus achieve the objective. However, for MSc level students, the requirements should be reasonably compatible with the time allowed, and to reach the set standards for acceptable research work at this level, it must be at least six to eight months. Nevertheless, as in the case at WMU where time is very limited, it would be better for students to submit their research proposals at the end of the second semester and have them approved before the last date of that semester so that they have more time to research during the third semester or maybe even in their one-month of vacation. Then during the fourth semester, they should be allowed to concentrate solely on their research continuously for three months, not including electives, so that the final outcome will be a much enhanced product that will benefit all the parties concerned. Furthermore, it is advised that all students who wish to write a dissertation should be allowed to enjoy the advantage of mastering an interesting subject related to his/her career under expert supervision. In addition, all MET students should be required to write a dissertation since most are instructors at MET institutions and many are ex-seafarers. By doing this they will learn from, and have the experience of writing a dissertation.
which will help them to be competent instructors and supervisors in their continuing careers.

The final recommendation, directed especially at WMU, is that the Management Committee should review the arrangement of the academic year in general and the fourth semester in particular. Currently the heaviest part of the dissertation process falls not only at the busiest period of the year with the induction of the First year students, but also during the summer season when many supervisors are on annual leave, and thus not available to fulfil their supervisory duties.

Recommendations for students from the research findings can be summarised as follows:

• Students should choose a topic that they have some reasonable background knowledge of;
• They must fully understand what is demanded of them in advance;
• They must think, read and write critically;
• They must present the information clearly, precisely, credibly, logically, chronologically, correctly and in the style required by the academy;
• They must avoid invalidity\textsuperscript{84} when collecting data;
• They should seek help whenever problems arise and when they are unable to solve them by themselves.

This dissertation has attempted to reveal a need based on research and to present specific solutions. However, during the process it has become apparent that there are a number of issues that still require attention and therefore the following three items are recommended for further research into the topic: (1) the application of management task processes in writing a dissertation; (2) learning about theses and dissertations through diagrams and figures; (3) the items needed to be provided,

\textsuperscript{84} Invalidity is a bias which is defined as “a systematic or persistent tendency to make errors in the same direction, that is, to overstate or understate the ‘true value’ of an attribute” (Lansing et al. 1961 as cited in Cohen et al. 2007).
changed, rearranged or reconstructed by institutions to discover the common strengths and weaknesses in all MET institutions resulting in a report to be submitted to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) or the International Association of Maritime Universities (IAMU) in an effort to produce uniform standards and harmonisation for doing a research paper, project, thesis and dissertation at MET institutions worldwide.

In conclusion, this author believes that working to build the reputation of any institution by delegating responsibility fairly and consistently, motivating people to do more than they ever thought they could, providing guidance in the development of scholarly habits and practice, having an inflated sense of their own importance, readily acknowledging colleagues’ contributions (Ramsden, 1998), and having the proper attitude and communication in conducting a dissertation, are paramount items important for the success of the entire entities involved in writing a dissertation at maritime education institutions. It is therefore the hope of the author that this dissertation will go some way towards highlighting the problems and providing the possible solutions to raising the status of producing a dissertation as a tool for communicating students’ understanding and creative abilities in the maritime social science context. In short to ensure that the Pen truly does its job on the Paper.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1

Sample Proposal Format

1. Routine information
   a. Name
   b. Addresses (home and business addresses and telephone numbers)
   c. College (college or school in which registered)
   d. Degree (degree sought through program)
   e. Major advisor of research
   f. Research advisory committee members
   g. Dissertation title
   h. Date

2. Research question
   a. Subject area (recognized general subject of research question)
   b. Research question (major question, concept, or hypothesis to be dealt with)
   c. Subsidiary questions (questions to be answered to answer research question)
   d. Discussion (of significance of research question)
   e. Limitations (study constraints)
   f. Anticipated contribution

3. Methodology
   a. Information (general kind of information to be used)
   b. Sources (sources from which information is to be secured; related research attempted by others)
   c. Collection (methodology by which information is to be collected)

4. Chapter outline
   Preliminary chapter titles and content summaries

5. Bibliography
   A preliminary list in bibliographic form of material relevant to the research
6. **Time schedule**

The time schedule for execution of the dissertation research project is to be stated in terms of actual dates. Scheduling should begin with the total time available from the date the project is to be initiated to the date the final copy for graduation on the desired convocation date.

a. Research and preparation of first preliminary draft copy
b. First review by major advisor
c. Revision of first preliminary draft copy
d. Preparation and review of subsequent preliminary draft copies
e. Preparation of final draft copy
f. Review by dissertation committee
g. Preparation of final copy
h. Proofreading of final copy
i. Approval by major advisor and dissertation committee and request for oral examination
j. Oral examination
k. Submission of final copies

## APPENDIX 2

### Qualitative Data Collection Types, Options, Advantages, and Limitations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Type</th>
<th>Options Within Types</th>
<th>Advantages of the Type</th>
<th>Limitations of the Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Observations         | • Complete participant: researcher conceals role  
                      • Observer as participant: role of researcher is known  
                      • Participant as observer: observation role secondary to participant role  
                      • Complete observer: researcher observes without participation                                               | • Researcher has a firsthand experience with participants  
                      • Researcher can record information as it is revealed  
                      • Unusual aspects can be noticed during observation  
                      • Useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss                           | • Researcher may be seen as intrusive  
                      • “Private” information may be observed that the researcher cannot report  
                      • Researcher may not have good attending and observing skills  
                      • Certain participants (e.g., children) may present special problems in gaining rapport                    |
| Interviews           | • Face-to-face: one on one, in-person interview  
                      • Telephone: researcher interviews by phone  
                      • Group: researcher interviews participants in a group                                                                 | • Useful when participants cannot be observed directly  
                      • Participants can provide historical information  
                      • Allows researcher “control” over the line of questioning                                                   | • Provides “indirect” information filtered through the views of interviewees  
                      • Provides information in a designated “place” rather than the natural field setting  
                      • Researcher’s presence may bias responses  
                      • People are not equally articulate and perceptive                                                                |
| Documents            | • Public documents such as minutes of meetings, and newspapers  
                      • Private documents such as journals, diaries, and letters  
                      • E-mail discussions                                                                                         | • Enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants  
                      • Can be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher. An unobtrusive source of information  
                      • Represents data that are thoughtful, in that participants have given attention to compiling  
                      • As written evidence, it saves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing                           | • May be protected information unavailable to public or private access  
                      • Requires the researcher to search out the information in hand-to-find places  
                      • Requires transcribing or optically scanning for computer entry  
                      • Material may be incomplete  
                      • The documents may not be authentic or accurate                                                                     |
| Audiovisual materials| • Photographs  
                      • Videotapes  
                      • Art objects  
                      • Film  
                      • Computer software                                                                                         | • May be an unobtrusive method of collecting data  
                      • Provides an opportunity for participants to directly share their “reality”  
                      • Creative in that it captures attention visually                                                             | • May be difficult to interpret  
                      • May not be accessible publicly or privately  
                      • The presence of an observer (e.g., photographer) may be disruptive and affect responses                     |

APPENDIX 3

Periodicals List

ABS activities
ABS annual review
AMBIO: a journal of the human environment
AMC news: Australian Maritime College news
American shipper
The Arbitrator
Armada de Chile: boletin estadistico maritimo: annual report
Aslib proceedings full text articles from 1999
The Australian maritime officer
Ballast water news
The Baltic
Beacon (Skuld newsletter)
BMT focus
Boletin informativo maritimo
Bridges between trade and sustainable development
British journal of educational technology full text articles from 1997
Bulletin: PIANC
Bulletin on social integration policies
CALICO journal
Cargo systems
The Chamber of Shipping annual review
Choices (UNDP)
ClassNK: annual report
ClassNK magazine
ClassNK technical bulletin
Cleaner production
CMI news letters
Coast Guard magazine
Coastal management full text articles from 1999
Comit Maritime International (CMI) yearbook
Cruise & ferry info
Danish shipping: annual report
Det Norske Veritas: annual reports
Digital Ship
Distance education full text articles from 2002
DNV forum
Dredging and port construction
Drewry monthly
E-doc
The Economist
EL gazette
The Electronic library full text articles from 1999
English today full text articles from 2001
LExpress
Expresso
Fairplay
Fairplay solutions
FAO aquaculture newsletter
Far Eastern economic review
Fast ferry international
Financial times
Futures
The Futurist
Gard news
Gard Services: circulars
Germanischer Lloyd: annual reports
GL-magazin [Nonstop]
GPS world
Harvard Business Review
Hazardous cargo bulletin
Hellenic Chamber of Shipping
HELMEPA: annual reports
Higher education policy full text articles from 1996
Hydro international
IAMU journal
IAMU news
IDB America
IEC E-tech
IFSIDA newsletter
IMarEST news
IMLI News
IMO current awareness bulletin
IMO news
Indian National Shipowners Association annual review
Indian shipping
Industry and environment (UNEP)
Information management and technology: the journal of Cimtech
Information world review
Innovation & technology transfer
The Institute of Marine Engineers: annual report
Inter-American Development Bank: annual report
Intercargo: bulletin not the current issue
International herald tribune
The International journal of marine and coastal law
International journal of maritime history
International legal materials
International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds annual report
The International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation Limited review
International transport journal
ISO focus
ITF Transport International
ITF Seafarers bulletin
ITF Seafarers Trust: annual report
Jeune Afrique
JFE Technical Report
Journal of Documentation full text articles from 2001
Journal of maritime law and commerce
The journal of navigation full text articles from 1998
Journal of transport economics and policy full text articles from 2001
Language teaching references to articles on language teaching, from 2002
Latin American weekly report
Lloyds maritime law newsletter full text articles from 1979
Management today
Marine fisheries review full text articles from 1998
Marine Laboratory Aberdeen: biennial review
Marine log
Marine safety newsletter
Marine technology and SNAME news full text articles from 2001
Mariners weather log
Maritime economics and logistics
Maritime policy & management full text articles from 1999
The Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control: Paris: annual report
MER: Marine engineers review
Middle East review
Le Monde
The motor ship
The naval architect
NEA
New review: the quarterly newsletter for the UK new and renewable energy industry
New scientist
Newsweek
Ocean & coastal law memo
Ocean development and international law full text articles from 1999
OECD economic outlook full text articles from May 1998
Official guide to ship registries
PC magazine
PC World
Pictorial Korea
Polish maritime research
PEM: Port engineering management
Ports & harbors
PRISM
Proceedings of the Marine Safety Council
Report on port and shipping safety and environmental protection
RTD Info
Saudi Arabia
Saudi Arabia newsletter
Saudi Aramco world
Scandinavian shipping gazette
Sea grant abstracts
Seapol Newsletter

97
Statoil: annual report on health, the environment & safety
Statoil rapport, forskning og utvikling
Statoil directors report
Statoil magazine
Sulzer technical review
Surveyor
Svensk sjöfarts tidning
The Swedish Club letter full text articles from 1997
Technical report: Korean Register of Shipping
Technical review: Mitsubishi Heavy Industries
Terra et aqua
Third world quarterly full text articles from 1995
Tidskrifen sjöbefal
Time
The times higher education supplement full text articles from October 1994;
Tradewinds archive available from 1994
Transport reviews full text articles from 1999
Trout news printed version no longer received
TTM Tecnologie & trasporti mare
Tulane maritime law journal
UN chronicle
UNDP: annual report
UNDP: cooperation south full text articles from 1995
United States Coast Guard navigation and vessel inspection circular
Via satellite
Waves: international newsletter for the maritime community
The World Bank economic review full text articles from September 2001
World dredging, mining & construction
World trade review full text articles from 2002
World of work
WTO focus newsletter
WWS: world wide shipping

APPENDIX  4

Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of contents</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Abbreviations</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Introduction

2 The concept of intermodal transport

2.1 Transport                           5
2.2 Various types of ocean transport    7
2.3 The intermodal concept              12

3 The development of intermodal transport

3.1 Containerization                    16
3.2 The role of ports and terminals     20
3.2.1 The changing port function       21
3.2.2 The sea-land interface            25

4 ..........................................................................................

5 ..........................................................................................

6 Summary and Conclusions               68

References                               75

Appendices

Appendix 1 Physical trade data - 1985-2000 78
Appendix 2 Regression Analysis            82

Source: Guidelines for written assignments and dissertations, WMU (January 2007).
## APPENDIX 5

### Common Used Words in Dissertation Writings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Used Words</th>
<th>Example Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The reason for</td>
<td>because, since, why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the reason that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to the fact that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owing to the fact that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In light of the fact that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering the fact that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the grounds that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite the fact that</td>
<td>although, even though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regardless of the fact that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the event that</td>
<td>if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If it should happen that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under circumstances in which</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the occasion of</td>
<td>when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a situation in which</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under circumstances in which</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As regards</td>
<td>about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In reference to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With regard to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerning the matter of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where ___ is concerned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is crucial that</td>
<td>must, should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is necessary that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a need/necessity for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is able to</td>
<td>can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is in a position to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the opportunity to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the capacity for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the ability to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is possible that</td>
<td>may, might, can, could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a chance that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It could happen that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The possibility exists for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to</td>
<td>before, when, as, after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In anticipation of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the same time as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneously with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Not different | similar |
| Not many | few |
| Not have | lack |
| Not include | omit |
| Not consider | ignore |
| Not the same | different |
| Not often | rarely |
| Not allow | prevent |
| Not admit | deny |
| Not accept | reject |

Some Tips on Research Writing

To overcome poor planning and management of the dissertation research students should:

• Plan the relationships between the various stages
• Use critical path analysis for data collection (a sequence of stages determining the minimum time needed for a complex operation)
• Establish a writing up timetable
• Keep clear records of sources of reference
• Keep material under control by relating data to the problem under investigation
• Check that analysis relates to collected data
• Keep informational sources filed with their relevant stage in the dissertation
• Not get diverted by ‘interesting’ side issues.

To overcome major problems in selecting and ordering material within the dissertation research students should:

• Establish good record keeping techniques
• Have a systematic plan to follow
• Keep a focus on what are being done
• Consult regularly with the supervisor
• Interact with fellow students and avoid too much isolation

Supervisory weaknesses arise if the issues below occur between supervisors and students:

• Too few meetings with students
• No interest in students
• No interest in the topic
• Too little practical help given
• Failure to return work promptly
• Absence from the University
• Lack of research experience
• Lack of relevant skills and/or knowledge

Some other Tips on Research Writing (Continued).

1. Introduce your paper well: provide your reader with a working knowledge or your topic, and state your single research question.
2. Always describe before you analyze.
3. Avoid ridicule: maintain a level of respect and decorum when you disagree with a certain author or viewpoint, address the issues in an intelligent manner.
4. Be logical: Lead your reader along gently, step by step. Don’t jump to another track without warning; put the right paragraph in the right place.
5. Be explicit: fully and clearly expressed or defined, leaving nothing implied.
6. Aim for clear writing rather than erudition: Be concise. Say what you mean. Avoid like the plague every long word where a shorter word would work as well.
7. Watch out for flawed arguments: Misrepresenting authorities, arguments from origins, arguments from insufficient evidence.
8. Know when to quote and when not to quote: unless you can not say it just as well in your own words, you have not already have a quote every page or two in your essay, and it is too long sentences, then you should quote.
9. Know some basic rules for quotations: present your own material first, and then back it up with a quotation. Quotations are for backup and support.
10. Know the uses of footnotes/endnotes/citations: their purposes are - to cite works you have quoted or borrowed ideas from; to state further bibliography for the reader who may be interested in pursuing the matter; to defend a certain position against possible objections; to deal with a related side issue that might spoil the flow of the essay itself if it were to appear in the text. Avoid equal length volumes of text and endnote.
11. Watch your conclusions: briefly summarizes the main focus of your paper and makes your final position clear. Avoid flowery, sentimental, or overly long conclusions.
12. Give your final paper a professional look: make sure you follow the proper style and format rules.

Research can be done by everyone, as long as he/she see the path of discovery as an adventure (Badke, W. 2004).

Evaluation of Qualitative Research Papers

1. Are the methods of the research appropriate to the nature of the question being asked?
2. Is the connection to an existing body of knowledge or theory clear?

Methods
3. Are there clear accounts of the criteria used for the selection of subjects for study, and of the data collection and analysis?
4. Is the selection of cases or participants theoretically justified?
5. Does the sensitivity of the methods match the needs of the research questions?
6. Has the relationship between fieldworkers and subjects been considered, and is there evidence that the research was presented and explained to its subjects?
7. Was the data collection and record keeping systematic?

Analysis
8. Is reference to accepted procedures for analysis?
9. How systematic is the analysis?
10. Is there adequate discussion of how themes, concepts and categories were derived from the data?
11. Is there adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher’s arguments?
12. Have measures been taken to test the validity of the findings?
13. Have any steps been taken to see whether the analysis would be comprehensible to the participants, if this is possible and relevant?

Presentation
14. Is the research clearly contextualized?
15. Are the data presented systematically?
16. Is a clear distinction made between the data and their interpretation?
17. Is sufficient of the original evidence presented to satisfy the reader of the relationship between the evidence and the conclusions?
18. Is the author’s one position clearly stated?
19. Are the results credible and appropriate?

Ethics
20. Have ethical issues been adequately considered?

APPENDIX 8

Questions asked of the Students who are still conducting their Research Work

1. What is the title of the thesis or dissertation you are doing?
2. Did you choose it by yourself or by other means?
3. How are you collecting your data or information?
4. Have you make the contact with the person for the interview (source of data) by yourself?
5. What are the problems you have encountered while collecting the data or information?
6. What are the problems you have encountered while doing your thesis/dissertation?
7. How have you solved them?
8. What are your opinions or suggestions on writing a thesis/dissertation?
9. How often do you see your supervisor, every week?
10. What are the facilities that are available for doing your thesis/dissertation?
11. Do you think it is necessary to write a thesis/dissertation at the B Sc or M Sc degree level and why?
12. Do you think that writing a thesis/dissertation can establish the hidden abilities of students? (If yes, then how and if No, then why)

Thank you very much for your kind support.
APPENDIX 9

Questions asked of the Students who have just completed their Research Paper

1. What was the title of your thesis or dissertation that you have written?
2. Did you choose it by yourself or by other means?
3. How did you collect your data or information?
4. Did you make the contact with the person for the interview or survey (source of data) by yourself?
5. What were the problems you encountered when you collecting the data or information?
6. What were the problems you encountered when writing your thesis/dissertation?
7. How did you solve them?
8. How often did you see your supervisor; every week?
9. What were the facilities available for you to do your thesis/dissertation?
10. What are your opinions or suggestions on writing a thesis/dissertation?
11. How did you feel when you finished you thesis/dissertation?
12. Do you think it is necessary to write a thesis/dissertation at the B Sc or M Sc degree level and why?
13. Do you think that the thesis/dissertation you have done may help you in your work in future?
14. Do you think that writing a thesis/dissertation can establish the hidden abilities of students? (If yes, then how and if No, then why)

Thank you very much for your kind support.
APPENDIX 10

Questions asked of the Students who have completed their Dissertation and are now pursuing further Studies at WMU

1. What was the title of your thesis or dissertation that you have written for you M Sc degree?
2. Do you name it as a (A. thesis B. dissertation C. research project D. others) for the M Sc level in you institution/university?
3. Did you choose it by yourself or by other means?
4. How did you collect your data or information?
5. Did you make the contact with the person for the interview or survey (source of data) by yourself?
6. What were the problems you encountered when collecting the data or information?
7. What were the problems you encountered when writing your thesis/dissertation?
8. How did you solve them?
9. How often did you see your supervisor; every week?
10. What were the facilities available for you to do your thesis/dissertation?
11. What are your opinions or suggestions on writing a thesis/dissertation?
12. Do you think it is necessary to write a thesis/dissertation at the B Sc or M Sc degree level and why?
13. Does the thesis/dissertation you have done help you in your work?
14. Do you think that writing a thesis/dissertation can establish the hidden abilities of students? (If yes, then how and if No, then why)

Thank you very much for your kind support.
APPENDIX 11

Questions asked of the Supervisors from KMA and MIWB

1. Your position held (job title) or rank, please?
2. What subjects/courses are you teaching now?
3. How many years have you been in this professional and the past experiences?
4. How many years of experience you have in supervising students writing thesis/dissertation?
5. Do you name it as a (A. thesis B. dissertation C. research project D. others) for the B Sc level in you institution/university? (please choose one)
6. Do the students in your institution/university need to write thesis/dissertation for the B Sc degree?
7. How long is the duration allowed for doing thesis/dissertation in the B Sc level?
8. What are the topic areas written by students?
9. Do the topics chosen by students be approved by the related committee or by the supervisor only?
10. What are the facilities that available for student for doing thesis/dissertation?
11. How about the availability of supervisors for students for doing their thesis/dissertation? (the ratio of supervisors and students)
12. What are the responsibilities of supervisors?
13. What strategies are applied by supervisors to encourage students to do their thesis/dissertation more effectively?
15. What are the problems that supervisors usually have during supervising the students doing their thesis/dissertation?
16. What are the problems that students usually have while conducting their thesis/dissertation?
17. What, in your opinion, are the strengths and weaknesses of writing a thesis/dissertation?
18. What are your opinions or suggestions on writing a thesis/dissertation at the BSc level?
19. Do you think it is necessary to write a thesis/dissertation for the B Sc level and why?
20. Do you agree that writing thesis/dissertation can establish the hidden abilities of students? (If yes, then how and if No, then why)

Thank you very much for your kind support.
Dear Sir/ Madam,

I’m a student from World Maritime University majoring in Maritime Education and Training. Now, as a part of the requirement for the master degree for me, I’m doing a dissertation. The title is “Writing dissertations: An effective motivation in the establishment of students’ hidden ability in the Maritime context”\textsuperscript{85}.

Therefore, I would really like to request you to support me and provide me some information that you experienced during your work as a supervisor for the thesis/dissertation writing in the institution/university by answering my open questionnaire. And, your additional suggestions and recommendations are absolutely appreciate and valuable for me to finish my dissertation.

Thank you very much for your benevolent assist.

Yours sincerely,

Ms. Nang Arm Seng
s07032 (MET)
World Maritime University
Malmö, Sweden
s07032@wmu.se

N.B. May I receive your completed questionnaire as soon as possible?

The contact address is:

Fax: +46 40 12 84 42
e-mail: s07032@wmu.se

\textsuperscript{85} As the title was not agreed by the supervisor, it was later changed to the present title.
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your full name, please?
2. Your position held (job title) or rank, please?
3. Your qualification or degree obtained, please?
4. What subjects/courses are you teaching now?
5. What is the name and address of your school, college, institute or university?
6. How many years have you been in this professional and the past experiences?
7. Do you have an experience of written a thesis or dissertation?
8. How many years of experience you have in supervising students writing thesis/dissertation?
9. Do you name it as a (A. thesis B. dissertation C. research project D. others) for the B Sc level in you institution/university? (please choose one)
10. Do you name it as a (A. thesis B. dissertation C. research project D. others) for the M Sc level in you institution/university? (please choose one)
11. Do the students in your institution/university need to write thesis/dissertation for the B Sc and for the M Sc degree?
12. How long is the duration allowed for doing thesis/dissertation in the B Sc level?
13. How long is the duration allowed for doing thesis/dissertation in the M Sc level?
14. What are the topic areas written by students?
15. Do the topics chosen by students be approved by the related committee or by the supervisor only?
16. What are the facilities that available for student for doing thesis/dissertation?
17. How about the availability of supervisors for students for doing thesis/dissertation? (the ratio of supervisors and students)
18. What are the responsibilities of supervisors?
19. What strategies are applied by supervisors to encourage students to do their thesis/dissertation more effectively?
20. Are the research papers needed to be published?
22. Does your institution/university have inter-institutional co-operation with other institutions/universities (if yes, and how)?
23. What are the problems that supervisors usually have during supervising the students doing their thesis/dissertation?
24. What are the problems that students usually have while conducting their thesis/dissertation?
25. What, in your opinion, are the strengths and weaknesses of writing thesis/dissertation?
26. What are your opinions or suggestions on writing thesis/dissertation in the BSc and the MSc levels?
27. Do you think it is necessary to write thesis/dissertation for the B Sc level and why?
28. Do you think it is necessary to write thesis/dissertation for the M Sc level and why?
29. Do you agree that writing thesis/dissertation can establish the hidden abilities of students? (If yes, then how and if No, then why)

Thank you very much for your kind support.