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Experiences, Challenges, Benefits in Research, and Suggested Activities Towards Research Capability of Marine Officers

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ABSTRACT: The study determined the different experiences, challenges, and benefits in conducting research and suggested activities to enhance the research capability of marine engineers in the maritime university, specifically, John B. Lacson Foundation Maritime University-Molo, Iloilo City, Philippines. The qualitative method was employed in this study was to capture the essence of transformation of these seafarers or marine officers who want to become "researchers" and the suggested activities which would enhance their research capability. The respondents were the ten (10) marine engineers who were teaching professional subjects for quite number of years. The results highlighted that the experiences, challenges, and benefits in conducting research among marine engineers contributed to the development and attainment of a globalized-maritime education, and training. From the experiences related by marine engineers, research in the maritime university led to new insights towards addressing demands of officers and problems in the employment of global-seafaring labor. The suggested activities by the marine engineers were: research capability seminar-workshops, attendance to national and international research conferences, and "research-mentoring with senior researchers" in the university.

1 INTRODUCTION

Research is a tool towards excellence in higher education institutions as claimed by educators, academicians, and professors. It also leads to the attainment of global competitiveness in education. It further aims to develop the knowledge, skills, and character of individuals, which is similar to the aims of educating them. Education and research have similar purposes and functions. The purposes are the fundamental goals of the processes – an end to be achieved, while functions are the outcomes that may occur as a natural result of the process – products or consequences. To achieve the goal of a university, both research and education play important roles (Alimen & Salvadia, 2015).

Meanwhile, research is the defining character that differentiates a higher education institution from basic education institution. Knowledge creation is the primary mandate of higher education in order to propel national development through a cadre of professionals imbued with new knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will make them global Filipinos (Japos, Tumapon, & Lozano, 2010)

Moreover, seafaring profession has always involved a different way of life. It is a diverse activity in which absence from family and friends and the inability to take part in activities available to other people has to be accepted. At different periods in history, the profession has been regarded in different ways. In ancient times seafaring meant involvement in commercial activities; at the time of the discoveries

seafarers were in the forefront of progress, and today it is still a profession that can provide a better way of life for families, especially for the sons and daughters of seafarers from developing countries. Seafaring has always been a dangerous activity and many seafarers have lost their lives while making their contribution to the world economy. Consequently, it should be an occupation where safety is of paramount importance (Veiga, 2005; in Alimen, 2010).

In this same source, (Veiga, 2005; in Alimen, 2010) the study highlights salient points regarding the seafaring industry particularly on the work of seafarers. The study stresses that it is a fact that the seafaring profession has changed considerably. It is also clear that it will not be what it was in the past. However, it needs to attract good quality seafarers, and this requires an open mind and forward-looking mentality on the part of the industry. It is a crucial to highlight the positive aspects of the profession and to make sure that the negative areas of the profession are considered, facilitating also the promotion of good employment practices. However, despite many attempts to better the working conditions of seafarers, few of these seafarers undergo different route in their life and work.

Meanwhile, there is a general consensus in the education research community today on the need to increase their capacity to conduct research not only on educational problems but on the other related areas of research. In this light, marine officers, who opted to change their career, become involve in the world of research to enrich themselves and help them in their professional development.

2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study presented the different experiences, challenges, and benefits of marine engineering officers in conducting research and determined suggested activities to enhance research capability of marine engineers in the maritime university, specifically, John B. Lacson Foundation Maritime University-Molo, Iloilo City, Philippines.

To further understand the present study, the specific questions were advanced:

1. What were the experiences of the marine officers before and after they become maritime researchers?
2. What challenges do these marine officers encounter in the process of conducting research?
3. What benefits were pointed out by these researchers in the process of conducting research?
4. What are the suggested activities needed by the respondents in order to enhance their research capability?

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual of this study was presented in Figure 1. It shows in the figure that the research experiences, challenges, benefits, and suggested activities were influenced towards the development of research capability of the marine officers.

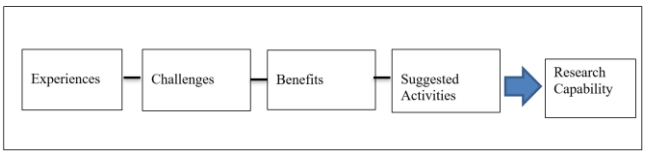

Figure 1. The research paradigm of the present study

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The researchers of the present study employed "framing" as the theoretical framework based on the study of Alimen (2010). This theory discusses the salient features of the respondents using qualitative data and information through oral and written texts from the period where the respondents were on board (marine engineers/officers) to the time they were accepted in the maritime university especially at John B. Lacson Foundation Maritime University-Molo, Iloilo City, Philippines.

Furthermore, Gamson (1989, in Alimen, 2010) defines that "a frame is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue." Entman (1993, in Alimen, 2010) explained that framing, "is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." Entman (1993) and (Charmaz, 2000) pointed out that framing in the news bears "an imprint of power" of "the actors or interests that competed to dominate the text." Multiple qualitative research methods were used in this study. The interviews and testimonies were analyzed using the categorization process.

5 METHOD

The framing approach to research focuses on the different perspectives that researcher from different backgrounds use to make sense of the issues they want to research jointly. Based on interviews, respondents' evaluations, and the researcher's conversations meetings, five aspects of frame diversity are analyzed in this research project. First, the experiences as researcher of the respondents were pointed out. Second, the researchers looked into the challenges as researchers as perceived by the respondents. Third, benefits derived from the experience of writing were looked into. Fourth, analysis of the difficulties encountered. Fifth, suggested activities needed by the respondents to enhance their research capability. The researchers likewise contend that the diversity of frames or perspectives that the respondents possess make sense of the issues of importance in this specific research context. In this paper, the framing approach was particularly used to make sense of the texts, both oral and written.

The method employed in this study was qualitative to capture the essence of transformation of these seafarers or marine officers who wanted to become "researchers" and the suggested activities which would enhance their research capability at the maritime university, JBLFMU-Molo, Iloilo City, Philippines. The researchers also utilized texts – both written and oral to capture the respondents' experiences. Interviews with the respondents were employed as part of the oral document. The written and oral texts contained the different experiences and exposure of the marine engine officers who had been on board for quite a number of years but are now engaged in the research activities of the JBLFMU (John B. Lacson Foundation Maritime University) - Molo, Iloilo City. The written texts showcased the experiences of respondents for collecting data and presenting studies in the different at national and international fora and conferences. The researcher attempted to highlight the "transformation" that occurred shared by the officers on board who turned into "researchers" and instructors in the maritime university specifically JBLFMU-Molo, Iloilo City. Framing is the theoretical grounding that this researcher had utilized to make sense of the different texts.

The respondents of this study were the ten (10) marine engineers who were teaching professional subjects at the maritime university, John B. Lacson Maritime University-Molo for quite number of years.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Ten (10) marine engineering officers were utilized as respondents of this investigation. The marine officers are coded as O1 to O10 for the purposes of discussion. Neil Ellis of the Seafarers International Research Centre shed some light on the role of maritime researchers at SIRC's website: www.sirc.cf.ac.uk . He emphasized that seafarers are encouraged to formally take part in research studies that take place in their sector, no matter who conducts them. It is only by actually taking part that their voices can be heard, and to think that they have some very valuable contributions to make to the range of debates in which maritime sector members engage. Based on the data generated for this purpose, the researcher decided to tackle the experiences, challenges, benefits, and activities of the marine officers towards the development of their research capabilities.

6.1 *Experiences of the Marine Officers as Researchers in the Maritime University (JBLFMU-Molo)*

O1's experience as a researcher has been marked with excitement and challenges. He said "I have learned to do the process of interviewing and document analyzing. I had interviewed welders and technical workers at Subic Shipyard and I enjoyed gathering information on ship building and repair."

O2 has basically highlighted his experience in the monitoring of sea grass by identifying the type of sea grasses and other dominant species in the area, measuring the height of the grasses in every quadrat, getting pictures, biomass, specimens for laboratory testing, and measuring sea grass' density.

O3 says that "exchanging my ideas on issues, concerns, and trends in education, maritime regulations in research, and other environmental concerns had greatly helped me."

O4 emphasized his experience on dealing with scientific procedures in the discovery of new knowledge. He adds that application of the different steps in conducting researches, both quantitative and qualitative has contributed to his research experience.

O5 says "enhancement of my skills and knowledge in understanding the research process and determination of scientific data needed in the research activity."

O6 writes "proper identification of the research problem specifically dealing with maritime education and training. I learned the skills of interviewing and other rudiments of conducting tracer studies."

O7 stresses that his exposure to the world of research has contributed to him both as a teacher and at the same time a marine officer. My new knowledge in science and technology has been translated into more valuable output.

Table 1 contains the experiences of the respondents.

Table 1. Experiences of the Marine Officers as Researchers in the Maritime University (JBLFMU-Molo)

Respondent	Experiences
Officer 1 (O1)	Process of interviewing and document analyzing. I had interviewed welders and technical workers at Subic Shipyard and I enjoyed gathering information on ship building and repair.
Officer 2 (O2)	Monitoring sea grass by identifying the type of sea grasses and other dominant species in the area, measuring the height of the grasses in every quadrat, getting pictures, biomass, specimens for laboratory testing, and measuring sea grass' density.
Officer 3 (O3)	Exchanging my ideas on issues, concerns, and trends in education, maritime regulations in research, and other environmental concerns.
Officer 4 (O4)	Dealing with scientific procedures in the discovery of new knowledge. Application of the different steps in conducting researches, both quantitative and qualitative.
Officer 5 (O5)	Enhancement of my skills and knowledge in understanding the research process and determination of scientific data needed in the research activity.
Officer 6 (O6)	Proper identification of the research problem specifically dealing with maritime education and training. I learned the skills of interviewing and other rudiments of conducting tracer studies.
Officer 7 (O7)	Exposure to the world of research has contributed to me both as a teacher and at the same time a marine officer. My new knowledge in science and technology has been translated into more valuable output.
Officer 8 (O8)	Conduct and experience research despite my limited background and exposure in it. I learned the art of technology like internet surfing, and finding related data that are useful in my inquiry.
Officer 9	Determining adversity quotient is a big

(O9)	experience for me brought about by research aside from the systematic process done in research.
Officer 10 (O10)	Done work on the competitiveness of seafarers on board international vessels through research. Attendance at research fora, participation in research-related activities has enhanced my research skills.

O8 conducts and experiences research despite his limited background and exposure in it. He learned the art of technology like internet surfing, and finding related data that are useful in his inquiry.

O9 says "determining adversity quotient is a big experience for me brought about by research aside from the systematic process done in research."

O10 has done work on the competitiveness of seafarers on board international vessels through research. "Attendance at research fora, participation in research-related activities has enhanced my research skills," he said.

6.2 *Challenges of the Marine Officers in Conducting Research*

O1 believes that one of the challenges in his transformation as a researcher is conducting research based on the desired research design and requisites.

O2 has basically highlighted his awareness on natural sciences and specifically conduct research on environment and other marine-related topics as a challenge for him.

O3 says that "translating research activities based on the University's mission-vision statements is a challenge on my part."

O4 stresses that scientific procedure in the discovery of new knowledge and translating this to research to validate such knowledge.

O5 says "showing the interrelationships among the variables used in research."

O6 writes "formulation of research problems and issues related to maritime education and training."

Table 2 contains the challenges considered by the respondents.

Table 2. Challenges of the Marine Officers in Conducting Research

Respondent	Challenges
O1	Conducting research based on the desired research design and requisites.
O2	My level of awareness on natural sciences and specifically conduct research on environment and other marine-related topics.
O3	Translating research activities based on the University's mission-vision statements
O4	Scientific procedure in the discovery of new knowledge and translating this to research to validate such knowledge
O5	Showing the interrelationships among the variables used in research
O6	Formulation of research problems and issues related to maritime education and training
O7	Searching for new and exciting knowledge in the field of science and technology
O8	Determining scientific data regarding different issues and matters related to my teaching as a marine engineer.
O9	Actual exposure to the research area like sea grass monitoring
O10	Relating my career as marine officer and the research work I do.

O7 states that searching for new and exciting knowledge in the field of science and technology is challenging.

O8 emphasizes that determining scientific data regarding different issues and matters related to my teaching as a marine engineer is considered a challenge to me as researcher.

O9 says "actual exposure to the research area like sea grass monitoring."

O10 contends that relating my career as marine officer and the research work I do," he said.

6.3 *Benefits Derived in Conducting Research Activities*

O1 believes that research had widened his professional career and made him a well-rounded instructor.

O2 says "I have a chance to share the knowledge I gained to my students like looking at the beauty of nature. Knowledge gained of the students on oils, lubricants, and pollutants will be counter checked by the inputs of knowledge on how nature can be taken cared of the sea grass, corals, mangroves and fish."

O3 says that "Research has sharpened my knowledge on maritime affairs, issues, concerns, and trends in education."

O4 says "Research has prompted me to read and review my knowledge. I have improved professionally through graduate research paper requirements."

O5 says "Research has improved my technical knowledge and encouraged me to study more to improve my knowledge specifically in scientific investigations."

O6 writes "I have learned by heart the rudiments of conducting research."

O7 says Exposure, participation, and involvement in research possible have been because of my interest in research.

O8 emphasized that research has helped him find solutions to simple problems and helped me in his profession. Also, he was as well helped in his teaching career.

O9 says "I had learned and understood my students well."

O10 says "My knowledge was enhanced specifically in determining materials needed for my teaching profession and professional development."

Table 3 contains the benefits derived in the research activities considered by the respondents.

The results of this study highlighted that the experiences, challenges, and benefits in conducting research among marine engineers contributed to the

development and attainment of a globalized-maritime education, training, and economic system. From the experiences related by marine engineers, research in the maritime university lead to new insights towards addressing demands in officers and problems in the employment of global-seafaring labor. And, such research provides a preview of the conflicts and issues just now emerging generally as maritime-globalization impacts a wider and wider range of workers. Aside from that, their experiences become meaningful documents from which maritime realities can be derived.

Table 3. Benefits Derived in Conducting Research Activities

Respondent	Benefits
O1	Research had widened my professional career and made me a well-rounded instructor.
O2	I have a chance to share the knowledge I gained to my students like looking at the beauty of nature. Knowledge gained of the students on oils, lubricants, and pollutants will be countered checked by the inputs of knowledge on how nature can be taken cared of like sea grass, corals, mangroves and fish.
O3	Research has sharpened my knowledge on maritime affairs, issues, concerns, and trends in education.
O4	Research has prompted me to read and review my knowledge. I have improved professionally through graduate research paper requirements.
O5	Research has improved my technical knowledge and encouraged me to study more to improve my knowledge specifically in scientific investigations.
O6	I have learned by heart the rudiments of conducting research.
O7	Exposure, participation, and involvement in research possible have been because of my interest in research.
O8	Research has helped me find solutions to simple problems and helped me in my profession. I was as well helped in my teaching career.
O9	I had learned and understood my students well.
O10	My knowledge was enhanced specifically in determining materials needed for my teaching profession and professional development.

6.4 *Suggested Activities to Enhance the Research Capability of Marine Officers*

The figure below shows the suggested activities shared by the marine officers to improve their research capability.

The research capability-building seminars or workshops were suggested by the marine engineers who were the respondents of this study because it is through these series of activities that their research skills and knowledge will be developed and enhanced. Invited speakers will usher them to the research process and enkindle their curiosity to discover and explore some areas in the maritime education, which draw their interests and concerns.

Figure.

The second one is the suggestion that the "marine officers shall be sent to national and international research conferences." This activity may help them to understand further the importance and implications of studies in their respective fields of specializations. Moreover, attending research conferences or seminars may lead them to reality that "research is fun" instead of thinking that "research is a difficult activity" as a college instructor.

The third proposed activity is to "have mentoring with senior researchers in the university" because they believe that "no man is an island," therefore, learning with their senior research-fellows or co-teachers would be a great help to improve their research skills and knowledge and drive them more to participate and be part of the third function as university-professors -- to conduct research and share the findings with the relevant communities for utilization and usability.

7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the experiences and challenges in conducting research of the marine engineers in JBLFMU-Molo were categorized and highlighted in this study. These were used by the researcher to underscore the transformation that occurred in the life of marine officers to become "researchers" at the maritime university (JBLFMU-Molo).

The difficulties and issues shared by the respondents were captured in this study and used as one of the basis for describing the transformation from "marine officers" to "researchers" in the maritime university. These lead the participants in encouraging them to present studies in national and international fora, conferences, and symposia. Attributes and benefits from sharing through written and oral documents were unveiled by the process used in this study. Framing theory was utilized to capture the focal point of the study and arrive at the objective of demonstrating the "transformation" that took place in every encounter and experience of seafarers leading to embrace the trade mark of becoming "researchers" in the university.

Furthermore, the respondents agreed that they need the following: research capability-building

seminars or workshops, to attend national and international research conferences, and mentoring with senior researchers in the university. These elements are very crucial in developing the respondents' research skills and knowledge to further address the problems in the maritime education and training (MET) through conducting scientific process or research.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are advanced by the researcher:

1. The administration of JBLFMU-Molo shall sustain the skills, enthusiasm, and drive of the "marine officers" towards the conduct of research to achieve the global competence in maritime education through in-house training and seminars.
2. Continuous training and exposure of these marine engineers in research and related activities here in the country and abroad be provided in order to prepare them to become competent "researchers" are highly recommended.
3. Experiences, challenges, and issues shared by the respondents of this study shall be noted by the Research Department in re-channeling them to become full-fledged "maritime researchers" to achieve the agenda of maritime university towards global education competence.
4. Parallel studies shall be conducted by those interested in qualitative studies to further determine other factors that may contribute to the improvement of research capability of marine officer.

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