Academic Writing Workshop (July 21-25, 2014)

The multilevel academic writing workshop conducted by Dr. Nick Hopwood proved to be an extremely rewarding experience. Dr. Hopwood has undoubtedly managed to deconstruct the overwhelming ordeal of doctoral research into well-ordered systematized goals made achievable through effective work practices and techniques, thereby reducing the ambiguities associated with academic writing, research evaluation and publishing.

The beginner level of the workshop (1 day) elucidated various effective and time saving techniques of note-taking and concept mapping along with several low stake writing exercises designed to enhance the confidence and writing skills of scholars. This section of the workshop was especially beneficial for scholars who were yet to initiate or were at early stages of their doctoral research and helped them to systematize their approach to research.

The intermediate level workshop (2½ days) began with contextualization of the various extraneous factors that affect the work of a doctoral scholar and how the related anxieties and miseries are often universal. The latter part of the day dealt with topics such as examiner evaluation criteria for doctoral dissertations and defence, thesis structuring, developing a robust review of literature and creative table of contents. It also involved group activities such as analyzing sample dissertations for various kinds of content structuring and their pros and cons. This session helped the scholars to understand that one could be creative in structuring research content according to methodological and field requirements while adhering to the conventional requirements of the dissertation. The next day was directed towards qualitative data analysis which gave the scholars some hands-on experience of dealing with data in various formats like videos, interviews etc. and enabled the scholars to further fine tune their observation skills and augment their data analysis expertise. An important highlight of this session was the 'Martyn Hammersly framework' which was used as a basis for critical appraisal of qualitative research. The following day was dedicated to the methodological approach of 'Ethnography'. The scholars emerged out of this session comprehending the advantages of Ethnography along with the challenges involved, as they were familiarized with collaborative ethnographic research and the various prospects of the possible impact this approach could create on the research population.

The advanced level workshop (1 ½ days) primarily dealt with the pertinent issues of presentation skills and publication. Constituting the essential ingredients of the collective nightmares of doctoral scholars, these sessions were quite engaging. The session was interactive, allowing the scholars to arrive at a realistic understanding of their own fears and limitations. It enabled them to realize and appreciate the vital role that fellow researchers and friends play in order to bring out significant links and questions pertaining to research. This dispelled the popular notion that 'PhD is essentially a lonely journey'.The importance of publications and persevering through the process of publishing was also discussed. A group activity which involved the participants circulating a piece of their own writing amongst themselves to be reviewed and evaluated served

as a highlight. This gave the scholars an opportunity to simulate the process of presenting, publishing and receiving feedback in a safe and supportive environment.

Overall the workshop facilitated a realistic and inclusive understanding of the various constituent milestones, processes and challenges in the path of a doctoral scholar and to a large extent offered solace, solutions and effective techniques which could aid in countering these challenges. This workshop undoubtedly proved helpful for research scholars to proactively prepare themselves for a possibly overwhelming intellectual ordeal!

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