

# Intensive Coaching to Develop Dissertation Proposals of PhD Students in Human Resource Development: An International Program Approach in Thailand

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**Abstract.** *Good research is not just about producing the best findings, implications, and recommendations for further research, but providing the best benefits to the participants as well. Thus, the purpose of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) study is to discover the impact that intensive coaching has on supporting PhD candidates in an English-as-a-second language context. Ten PhD students were required to develop their dissertation proposals, and faced the loss of their status, as a University regulation required that all students graduate in not more than seven years. This study applied an Intensive Coaching (IC) technique to support the ten participants. The Intensive Coaching technique was generated from the GROW model (Whitmore, 2009). There were eight phases in achieving the goal: Phase 1 “Open Heart”, Phase 2 “Motivation”, Phase 3 “Building Trust”, Phase 4 “Clarify Topic of Interest”, Phase 5 “Commitment”, Phase 6 “Continue Working in Depth”, Phase 7 “Finalize: Ready to Proceed, and Phase 8 “Goal achievement”. The findings of this study provided helpful information on understanding the challenges that the PhD students faced and overcame, such as improving their conceptual analysis skills, proposal writing skills, group work, self-disciplined learning, and self-confidence.*

**Key words:** Intensive Coaching (IC), Self development, Human Capital, International Programs, Thai educational context

## Introduction

Higher education institutions in Thailand started offering international programs more than thirty years ago. The Commission of Higher Education (CHE), (2007) reported that Thai international programs currently attract not only Thai students, but also students from neighboring countries and from across the region, such as China, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, USA, Japan, India, Korea, Bangladesh and Bhutan.

In 2008, The Bureau on International Cooperation Strategy, CHE, concluded that Thai public and private universities offered a total of 844 international programs using English as the medium of instruction, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, with 296 undergraduate programs, 350 master's programs, 215 doctoral programs, and 23 other programs. The demand for international higher education in Thailand is constantly increasing, in 2005 there were 5,601

international students, 8,534 in 2006, 11,021 in 2007 and 16,361 in 2008 (Commission on Higher Education 2008; 2009).

The doctoral program in human resource development (HRD) offered by the International Graduate Studies Programs Human Resource Development Center (IG-HRD) at Burapha University requires that participants become familiar with the knowledge base that guides the theories and practices of HRD in leading organizations in both Thailand and internationally. On this platform of ideas, concepts and processes, the PhD program adds knowledge to different approaches to research, methodologies and techniques, and brings participants into contact with experienced researchers, and their research and evaluation findings, in the fields of study relevant for undertaking HRD research. An applicant with a TOEFL score of 500 - 549, or an IELTS score of 5.5-5.9, or being accepted to the program with some specific

requirements, may be conditionally admitted to the program. Such applicants are required to undertake a course in English at Burapha University or some other approved requirement whilst undertaking the coursework stage of the doctoral program (IG-HRD, 2010).

Applicants who are admitted conditionally must provide documentary evidence that they have scored above TOEFL 550 or IELTS 6.0 (IG-HRD, 2010). The IG-HRD center has offered the PhD in Human Resource Development since 2003. There were 20 PhD students in the first batch and another 40 PhD students were admitted in 2005 and 2007.

On January 7, 2007, the IG-HRD organized a seminar on HRD curriculum management. Its objectives were: (1) To exchange ideas and concepts concerning the scope of HRD at the present time for the national and international levels, and (2) To exchange ideas and experience concerning the appropriate instructional approaches and activities in the HRD field. Fifteen participants, including administrators, lecturers, HR experts and students participated in this seminar. It was reported that more than 20 PhD students were still without a supervisor or advisor (IG-HRD, 2007).

On November 27, 2009, the IG-HRD offered a three-day retreat to encourage and guide PhD students to develop their dissertation proposals. The concern was especially for the first batch whose eligibility status would expire in May 2010. So far, there are only three PhD first batch students who have graduated from this program. One student has finished his final oral exam and is waiting for his article to be published and two students had their dissertation proposal oral exams in January, 2010. Fourteen (14) PhD students have not made any progress with their dissertation proposals (IG-HRD, 2009).

In order to encourage our PhD students whose student status will expire in the near future, the IG-HRD provided an "Intensive Coaching Program (ICP)" to support these students in March, 2010.

### **What does Intensive Coaching (IC) Mean?**

It should be noted here that Intensive Coaching (IC) technique was created from the GROW model (Whitmore, 2009). The GROW model was developed by Alexander and Whitmore in 1992 and is the best-known coaching model in the UK (Drake,

Brennan & Gortz, 2008). The GROW model is an acronym for Goal, Reality, Option, and What (will you do). "G" is for goal. A goal is a dream with substance. A goal is what clients want, and implies a change. A life without goals is an empty desert with no future. "R" is for reality. We need to know what we have in order to change it, so we need to know where we start from. "O" is for options. The option step means brainstorming choices, not finding the right answer. Neither coach nor client knows the right answer at this moment. The object of this phase is to create more choices about what to do. "W" is for "What will you do?" which is the final step to decide what action to take. The coach may need to ask many questions in this phase to help clarify the action and its consequences such as "When will you do?", "Will your action meet your goal?" and "What obstacles could you encounter?". Another valuable question is a practical inquiry to help the client actively seek resources if he/she needs them: "What supports do you need and how you are going to get it?" (O'Connor & Lages, 2007; Darke, Brennan, & Gortz, 2008; Whitmore, 2009).

In this study, the coach identified that the GROW model which is most often cited as the frame for coaching assignments. However, to achieve the goal in this study we needed to more clearly understand the context and the situation from the clients' perspectives before honing the students' goals and working on action plans for their achievement. The coach realizes that the situation for these clients is critical, and that each one would need monitoring and specialized care. So, the coach then integrated "Intensive" strategies into our coaching and it has now become "Intensive Coaching", operating with the sense of urgency one would expect in a hospital ICU.

Historically, the first purpose-built intensive care units (ICUs) in the UK opened in 1964. These units offered potentially life-saving intervention during acute physiological crises, with the emphasis on medical needs and the availability of technology. For nursing to retain a patient-centered focus, it is the patients themselves and not the machines that must remain central to the nurse's role. It is a holistic care. The intrinsic needs of patients derive from their own physiological deficits, including many 'activities of living' (e.g. communication, comfort, freedom from pain) (Roe, 2000).

This client group was PhD students who were required to develop their dissertation proposals in a brief period of time, or lose their eligibility status, as it is required for all students to graduate in seven years or less, according to University regulations. The idea was offered to the students in March, 2010 and continued through June of 2010.

The students invited to the intensive program were at a critical point in their status as students and their lives as students was about to be terminated. Similar to the nursing care provided to sustain and retrain people attempting to recover in ICU, good coaching was seen as a way to provides feedback and improve academic performance (Ellinger, Ellinger & Keller, 2003).

Currently, coaching is very well known and HR departments of each organization now pay more attention to develop coaching skills. One of the crucial tools is coaching. O'Connor and Lages (2007) concluded that coaching is a management system that develops the organization and it is considered to be effective processes that help to develop the competency of working performance for employees. A similar definition is Werner & DeSimone's (2006) who defined coaching as a process that is used to encourage employees to accept responsibility for their own performance, to enable them to achieve and sustain superior performance, and to treat them as partners in working towards organizational goals and effectiveness. Coaching is not only transferring knowledge, but also means to guide, support, give an opportunity, and improve the work performance of the client. Coaching also helps employees' success in their work performance in being able to analyze, create, and solve problems (O'Connor & Lages, 2007).

Ulrich, Brockbank, Johnson, Sandholtz, and Younger (2008) study focused on HR practices for business performance. It indicated that the organizational structure contributed about 13%, talent assessment about 12%, performance appraisal about 12% and coaching about 12%. These are the most critical HR practices in predicting business performance. It is interesting to note that while coaching is not a prevalent practice (i.e., it had a lower mean score), it had a higher impact of about 12%, and while training is more prevalent, it had a lower impact of about 6%. A shift that others have documented has started to occur from developing people through training to more emphasis

on coaching.

Coaching for academia may be part of an evolving educational strategy, particularly for writers. Writing skills are not easily assessed, and scientific writing style is not a necessary requirement for admission to graduate studies. In fact, several faculties at the University have begun providing "workshops", usually weekend retreats, to assist master degree candidates in developing and writing their theses. These workshops are needed by students attempting to produce thesis in Thai, as well as those seeking international degrees. The activity of writing is a skill or art, and skills are best refined by coaches. While sports coaches have trainees, acting coaches have aspirants, and business coaches have clients, teachers who apply coaching techniques have students. Through the internet, the authors are aware of an coaching program at Warwick University where the academic coach works with individual students on developing skills for: (1) Academic writing, (2) Time management, (3) Working with your supervisor, (4) Writing literature reviews, (5) Upgrading from MPhil to PhD, (6) Preparing for your viva, (7) Personal development. Direct assistance with thesis writing editing or critique is not part of an academic coaching program (Warwick University, 2010).

In general, coaching is often used interchangeably with tutoring, mentoring, counseling, supervising, and advising. But, in fact, coaching is very unique because it provides feedback and direction to achieve a goal (Cook, 1999; Whitmore, 2009). The primary goal of tutoring is to focus on improving a specific skill or competence. Counseling tends to resolve personal and emotional issues. The goal of counseling is not performance-centered. The purpose of coaching, on the other hand, is improving performance (Ellinger, Ellinger & Keller, 2003). Mentoring typically describes a long-term interpersonal relationship that is career-focused. The distinction between mentoring and coaching is based on the outcome of the relationship (Ellinger et al, 2003). Coaching concentrates on helping the client learn how to achieve more, whereas the mentor's aim is to be a resource to the client or mentee. More importantly, some scholars conclude that coaching is motivated by results and performance, while mentoring cultivates professional guidance.

Therefore, the purpose of the Intensive Coaching Program (ICP) in this study is to motivate, support, give an opportunity, analyze, solve problem, improve the work, and achieve a goal under the pressure of a time limit. It may be an essential tool to transform the group and individuals to collaborate, communicate, and improve their performance. Our client group was PhD students who were required to develop their dissertation proposals in a brief period of time, or lose their eligibility status, as it is required for all students to graduate in seven years or less, according to University regulations.

### Purposes of the Study

1. To describe the process of Intensive Coaching (IC) in developing the PhD students' dissertation proposals for their oral defense examination before the University's time limit has expired.

2. To investigate how PhD students feel about being a client in the Intensive Coaching Program (ICP).

### Research Design

In order to apply Intensive Coaching so that the researcher and participants could work together in conducting the research, the appropriate paradigm for this study is Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Creswell, 2003, 2009). McTaggart (1997) proposed that the characteristics of PAR are such that it improves social practice by changing it, is a collaborative and a political process, uses a systematic learning process, involves people in theorizing about their practice, requires participants to objectify their own experiences, and starts with small cycles and small groups. According to Stringer (2004), PAR research's aim is to develop the quality of human resources in an organization, in society, and in a family, whereby it can use both qualitative and quantitative data collection processes. More importantly, the uniqueness of PAR research in several issues such as: (1) PAR is a social process, (2) It is participatory, (3) It is practical and collaborative, (4) It is emancipatory, and (5) It is critical (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

In short, the PAR is appropriate for this study because the researcher wanted to develop the quality of human resource in a selected University in Thailand. The human resources in this study are on the PhD students whom the researcher wishes to coach and to discover IC's impact on the PhD

students in developing their dissertation proposals in a limited time, according to the University regulation, and to describe how the IC technique improved the PhD students' performance in developing their dissertation proposals.

#### Data Collection & Analysis

Creswell (2007, p.118) stated that data collection may be visualized as "*a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions*". Creswell (2007) further suggested seven processes in data collection which begin with location sites or individual, gaining access and making, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues, and storing data. Creswell's seven processes were applied in this study. As the authors conducted the PAR research, any problem issues that needed to be explored required a complex, detailed understanding of the issues. The detail could only be established by talking directly with participants.

The focus of this study was to solve the problem and collaborate with the participants. Participants decided to act on particular topics that were generated in the PAR process. Ultimately, the actions that participants decided to take regarding their current circumstances were the result of the questions they posed, examined and addressed within the overall research process.

The initial question that framed the projects led to other questions that emerged as the research processes evolved. Those questions then became a point of entry into further reflection and dialogue that again led to new and different ways of perceiving. Sometimes, the insight gained from reflection and dialogue prompted the participants to develop a plan of action. This process of questioning, reflection, dialoguing, and discussion consisted of steps that included the following: (1) Questioning a particular issue, (2) Reflecting upon and investigating the issue, (3) Developing an action plan, and (4) Implementing and refining that plan

Indeed, the PAR processes are interconnected within one another in a spiral of reflection, investigation, and action. Those activities in turn, became entry points into yet more questions, more opportunities for reflecting and investigating issues, and more ideas about how to implement action plans that benefited those involved (Mcintyre, 2008).  
Participants/Clients

Ten Ph.D. students accepted the coaching invitation. They were all employed, so most of their academic work required weekend stays in Chonburi intensive Coaching Program (ICP)

Province. As shown in Table 1, some special effort and expense was required for them to participate. **Table 1** PhD students who participated in the In-

| Client | Gender | Age | Occupation         | Distance to the Center | Mode of Travel | Original Province |
|--------|--------|-----|--------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| C1     | Female | 34  | Public University  | 90 km                  | Car            | Bangkok           |
| C2     | Male   | 38  | Government Officer | 90 km                  | Car            | Bangkok           |
| C3     | Male   | 52  | HR Professional    | 100 km                 | Car            | Nonthaburi        |
| C4     | Male   | 38  | Public University  | 860 km                 | Flight         | Songkhla          |
| C5     | Male   | 61  | Business           | 90 km                  | Car            | Bangkok           |
| C6     | Male   | 57  | Government Officer | 520 km                 | Flight         | Khon Kaen         |
| C7     | Female | 43  | Business           | 90 km                  | Car            | Bangkok           |
| C8     | Female | 58  | HR Professional    | 90 km                  | Car            | Bangkok           |
| C9     | Male   | 56  | Educator           | 650 km                 | Car            | Mukdahan          |
| C10    | Male   | 34  | Public University  | 710 km                 | Flight         | Nongkhai          |

The PhD students were all employed, so that most of their academic work required weekend stays in Chonburi province. As shown in Table 1, there were seven male and three female participants in the ICP. Six of them lived in Bangkok (BKK), which is about 90 km from the IG-HRD center. Three were from Northeastern Thailand (C6, C9 and C10). One was from the South of Thailand, Songkhla (C4).

### The Coaching Process

In this study students brought their own background materials and laptop computers for writing. The coaching took place at conference tables large enough for four or five people to work. Most of the work was done in a seminar room near across the hall from faculty offices. Wireless internet access was available and the University Library is across the street. Whenever possible the faculty member would sit and work at the table with the students. Although the faculty member would be involved in his own writing tasks, he was able to observe the work habits of the students. The coach was readily available to review work a page at a time. Most importantly, he could answer questions about such things as proper search terms, suggest revisions, or refer to the progress of other students as examples.

Since the coach was directly observing the students writing, he did not need to ask for an explanation of any problems that they might be hav-

ing, but could directly suggest avenues to explore if they appeared to be blocked or stuck. Quite probably the students were able to learn problem solving techniques from each other, and eventually they became comfortable with questioning or even suggesting things to the coach. Students and the coach also had face to face access with their advisors and other faculty experts, and every one of them utilized this access to get feedback about their ideas.

### Trustworthiness and Ethical Issues

PAR research is a political activity that assumes action outcomes that are based on the coherence of the knowledge generated. Who determines what actions the group takes up? Who decides what is valid or true? In this study we used in-depth interviewing, focus group, and participative observation which were conducted and used multiple sources of data (triangulation), including photographs. In addition, the creditability and reliability of this study were ensured through an *audit trail*, which documented the details of the research process and the techniques and process of data generation and analysis. There are 10 folders of audit trail including proposal drafts, progress reports, discussion notes, copies of e-mail responds and reflexive notes.

## Findings and Discussion

According to PAR, this study focuses on how to solve the problem and collaborates with the participants or clients. In this study there were 10 PhD students. As participants decided to act on particular topics that were generated in the PAR process, the actions that participants decided to take regarding their current circumstances were the results of the questions they posed, examined, and addressed within the overall research process. The findings emerged during coaching from March 2010 to June 2010.

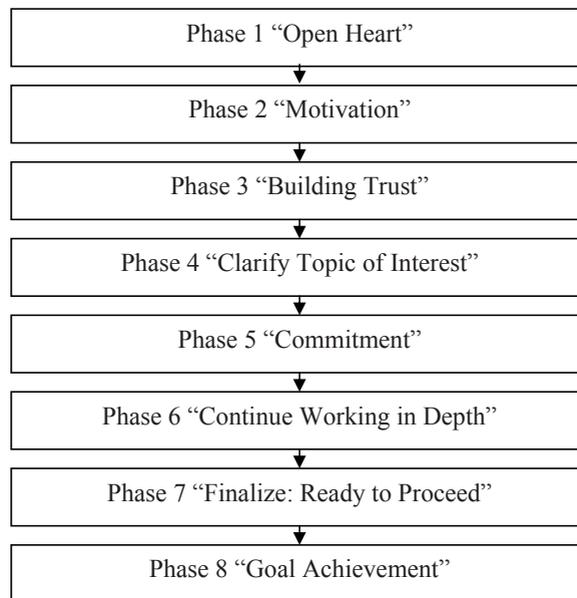
The findings indicate that most of the PhD

students had lost their momentum after finishing their coursework. There were several barriers that they were facing, such as time management, financial emergencies, personal conditions, and so on.

IC in this study was found to motivate, to support, to give an opportunity, to analyze, to solve problem, to improve the work, and to achieve the PhD students' goal under the pressure of a time limit. It may be an essential tool to assist PhD students to collaborate, communicate, and improve their performance.

The process of Intensive Coaching (IC) involved eight phases, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2** Intensive Coaching (IC) Process



In practice, the IC process was usually not as simple or direct as shown in the figure. While each phase was distinct, there were boundaries between phases.

### Phase 1 "Open Heart"

What is happening to clients (PhD students)? And why can they not go further in developing their dissertation proposals. To understand the situation and context of each PhD candidate is a starting point for any IC. An objective of this phase was to investigate "the truth", what PhD students think and how they feel about their dissertation proposals. The first working coaching session was critical for developing openness and honesty. It is called

the "Open Heart Phase". It is essential for an IC relationship. Without the appropriate rapport, it is unlikely that the clients will be able to achieve the deep reflections necessary for the success of this phase. Through carefully considering the current situation, the clients increased their self-awareness and were more able to identify areas to work on in each condition (Darke, Brennan & Gortz, 2008; Flaherty, 2010).

In the last six months before the coach offered an "Intensive Coaching Program" the coach had provided a Retreat Program near Pattaya City for three days to encourage PhD students to develop their dissertation proposals, especially for the first batch who were facing the loss of their status, as

all are required to graduate in seven years or less according to the University regulations. An open heart for Intensive Coaching is very necessary. Coaching begins when either the client or coach encounters an opening for coaching.

### Discoveries of barriers to student motivation

There were several concerns from the clients, such as that the program did not take good care of students, especially not having a good system for communication and also there was too much politics in this organization. One client expressed the view that:

“... It is so troubling! I think one of the major problems here is about politics in the workplace. There were three lecture groups playing political games against each other. It is very hard for us to deal with. We are students. We just want to study. But we finally got involved in this situation...”

There were also some personal issues of the clients, such as problems of financial support, family problems, problems in English writing, or not finding an advisor or supervisor in this program.

“... Up till now, my friends and I don't have a principle advisor. We just need the program to provide us some information or give us a list of who can be our advisor. It seems nobody cares about us...”

From their responses, most clients pointed out the management system here was not quite good enough and it lacked a system. They felt the management system could affect many things, so that the organization's management should be improved. Some clients expressed their views about studying for a doctoral degree in this organization if there is no future. Darke, Brennan, and Gortz (2008) suggested that a coach needs to listen deeply, so that the client is fully engaged and feels genuinely understood and valued. Also, the coach needs to take the time to really understand the situation from the clients' perspectives. So, in this study before coaching can begin, the coach must understand a lot more about the clients (i.e., PhD students) than what is usually necessary in their daily or weekly routine.

### Phase 2 “Motivation”

After the “Open Heart Phase” was established and the researcher had begun to acquire a sense of what needed to be changed, it proceeded to the

next phase. Phase 2 of IC was about motivating the client's sense of excitement for exploration of changes. In this study we found that most PhD candidates often described feeling that they could not see any direction in order to succeed with their dissertation proposals. One of the clients expressed his feeling:

“... I have been working on my proposal for over two years. Whenever I met my advisor he always gives me a new subject. Like today, we talked about the GMS (the Greater Mekong Sub-Region) and Asian Ways, he told me to focus on these issues. I have already had over 20 topics. I will put my name in the genie's book (laugh)... I want to finish my doctor degree (serious sound)...”

The coach also found that some of PhD students were stuck, with no clear topic for their dissertation. Therefore, it was crucial to assist our PhD students to get out of this stage and move towards a solution by providing alternative ways to think about their topics. “Motivate to change” is the result of the work in the coaching relationship. There are two main types of change: learning and development. This change happens moment by moment and builds into greater expertise in both thinking and behavior (O'connor & Lages, 2007).

### Phase 3 “Building Trust”

Trust is created from two elements. *First*, the coach needs to be sincere, that is, genuine in their actions and intention, with no hidden agenda. *Second*, the coach needs to be reliable. This means they are able to do what they say, in the time agreed, to a satisfactory standard. Both are necessary for trust (O'connor & Lages, 2007). The key to building trust is availability. Even if the answer for the clients is not readily available, the coach should be available to mentor and discuss the problems.

In this study, the coach began by providing some information, such as text books, relevant documents, and articles, as well as support in writing and editing. Then the coach had to always be in the room where students were working. The coach gave them his phone number, so that students could consult in the evenings and weekends, even long holidays.

For example, the government enacted a “State Emergency” in Bangkok, including Chonburi province where the University is located and at

the same time it was the Thai New Year, Songkran Festival (April 11-18). As a coach, the coach stood by, on call for our clients. The coach found that using e-mail and telephone coaching can be a very valuable supplement. They can also be a much disciplined way of working through a specific issue. For instance, the coach has done telephone coaching where we have not met the individual. It can still be effective when both participants feel they can engage well without having met. Shaw and Linnecar (2007) said that the power of coaching is what goes on in the conversation between two individuals. Normally, that is best done face-to-face where there can be eye contact supplemented by e-mail and telephone conversations at key moments, where there is a focused issue that needs to be talked about. These may be a powerful combination.

O'Connor and Lages (2007) concluded that clients need to respect the coach. They must be convinced that the coach is both sincere (i.e., keeps promises) and reliable (i.e., delivers what is promised). When the coach does both of these consistently, the client will trust the coach. Trust is not a thing, but a process, a relationship, something that is renewed and re-created from session to session. It takes time to build, but may be lost in an instant. While a good relationship can sometimes be built in minutes, trust usually takes much longer.

#### Phase 4 “Clarify Topic of Interest”

Phase 4 involved development of the construct of interest. In building trust, the clients eventually had to be open about their intellectual interest. Choosing and changing a topic required intensive discussion with the advisor and coach. The findings from this study indicated that the clients clarified their topics of interest with relevant issues; some clients had a topic in mind, some had many topics, some had big “save the world” concepts, and some had no clue about their topics.

To coach in this phase, we supported our clients in clarifying their topics of interest, and the search began with conceptual analysis of the interest and background. Their ideas were reduced to keywords. To do a conceptual analysis we followed what Creswell (2009, p.24) described: “*When students first provide their prospectus of a research study to me, I ask my students to supply a working title if they do not already have one on the paper.*

*How would this working title be written? Try to complete this sentence, “My study is about...”*”

It should be noted here that the coach found some of our clients to be weak in English writing. Therefore, the coach used Thai and English writing. Using both helped the students to communicate their ideas. The coach, then, kept concept mapping by discussing their ideas with our clients. After initial internet research, the topic was discussed with the coach. Especially important was discussion of possible findings or outcomes. The ProQuest database was useful for this task. Another coaching task was coaching the clients how to fit their work into the required format.

#### Phase 5 “Commitment”

In return for demonstrating his commitment to the students’ success, the coach has to find ways to get students to commit themselves to the process. For example, if the student tried to balk, by sending an email to cancel an appointment, she or he got a call in which the coach simply said “*This is your project, if it fails then it is your failure. You are the one who wasted time and effort.*”

From the study of Darke, Brennan, and Gortz (2008) once clients have set a goal, their experiences and observations of other coaches suggests that the client should write down her or his goal so that there is a permanent record of it and to increase commitment. During their studies they observed that many coaches omit this step, not wanting to see goals and/or record them. Flaherty (2010) stated that:

“I think of commitment as if it were the engine of a car. It doesn’t matter how powerful the engine is, or how well tuned up it is, or how much gasoline it is getting if it is not connected to the wheels by the transmission. The transmission is a metaphor for competence. This competence takes many forms: sometimes it is skill, as in learning how to fly a plane; sometimes it’s a capacity to observe ourselves and not become defeated by negative emotions or self-assessments” (p. 63).

In this study also found that it is very useful to incorporate Sir John Whitmore’s (2009, p. 62) suggestion that quality of good goals needs to be PURE and CLEAR. These acronyms can be used by the coach to help the client clarify goals so they are more likely to be achieved. PURE means: Positively stated; Understood; Relevant, and Eth-

nical. CLEAR means: Challenging; Legal; Environmentally sound; Appropriate; and Record. The coach worked with the client to develop goal(s) with high personal meaning and relevance and to ensure that any goal is the client's, by developing clear measures with the client, so that she or he has evidence of achieving the goal. Having established and refined the goal, it then serves as a focal point for future sessions. The coach's role is then to ensure that this goal is still important to the client as the program progresses.

### Phase 6 "Continue Working in Detail"

Phase 6 was assisting the clients to keep on track by providing a support team and organizing regular sessions to check in and follow up either via email or telephone call. According to travel and time conditions, some clients were living in other provinces. It is too far from the coaching center, the IG-HRD center. A 45 to 60 minute coaching discussion can be just as effective by telephone, once a personal relationship is established.

However, some clients had problems regarding misunderstanding in terms of telephone communication problems or errors. *Coaching is an art as well as a science—an art because it deals with human being, a science because it has a structure, a methodology and a set of principles* (O'Connor & Lages, 2007, p. 198).

Indeed, O'Connor and Lages (2007) concluded that coaching is a methodology of change. There are three basic steps that are present in all the models as a core coaching process: (1) Supporting the client and guiding their attention, (2) Giving meaning and reflecting the client's material in a way that goes beyond the client's thinking, and (3) Helping the client to take action. So, the coach worked with the client to check the reality and achievability of the plan. The coach probed clients to develop a detailed action plan and to gain commitment to the plan. There were several documents that clients needed to complete and submit to the University. As this is time consuming, the coach provided support teams to help our clients, such as providing forms that needed to be completed, making appointments and following up on their work.

### Phase 7 "Finalize: Ready to Proceed"

How to present your ideas in English at your

proposal hearing? In this study there were 10 PhD students who were Thai citizens. Many supervisors or advisors probably may not realize that this issue is a difficult one for those candidates who are second-language English speakers. PhD students at U.S. universities are supervised by a doctoral committee made up of up to five faculty members (four from their department and one from an outside, but related, field). The committee is headed by a chair, who acts as the student's primary supervisor (Siverman & Marvasti, 2008). In this study, on the other hand, there are only three faculty members (two from their department and one from outside). A chair acts as the student's principle adviser.

In Phase 7 the coach coached the PhD students how to present their dissertation proposals in English. In holding a successful mock defense, the coach provided each client with the task of making a PowerPoint presentation of 15 minutes with no more than 15 slides. The clients also needed to prepare and practice answering questions from the committee. Some questions asked of our clients included: (1) "Why did you choose that particular problem?", "Why did you not study other problems instead?" (2) "What exactly were you trying to find out?", "I'm unclear about the meaning of your problem statement" (3) "When you reviewed the literature, why did you decide to review that particular area of study?" (4) Why did you choose that particular method?", "Why did you not instead use this other method", and (5) "Can you clarify for me how the particular method you chose related directly to the problems you chose to study?" (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005).

The coach finally put more effort to increase our client's self confidence, with such statements as "You have done your best", and "Panic and frantic anxiety will not help at this stage, so the night before the proposal hearing, relax, rest, and do what else seems appropriate to help you feel at ease in the morning".

### Phase 8 "Goal Achievement"

Good coaching provides feedback and direction to achieve a goal and the purpose of coaching is to improve performance (Flaherty, 2010; Whitmore, 2009). According to the findings, the common feelings that clients who participated in the IC program expressed were improving their

conceptual analysis skills, proposal writing skills, group work, self-disciplined learning, and self-confidence.

A metaphor from James Flaherty, who founded New Ventures West (1986) and Integral Leadership LLC (2004) in order to develop a rigorous, compassionate, and pragmatic method for supporting human development to individuals and organizations is that:

*“Doing coaching is like playing jazz: the coach, like a jazz player, must understand where to begin and where to end, and what a basic structure could be in the moment, while at the same time listening well to the music that the others are playing so as to blend with it and move the entire joint effort forward. Even while a jazz musician is improving, she is always playing within a structure. That’s why I say that it fades into the background, the coach has the freedom to creatively respond in the moment, while still being confident that the desired outcomes are being realized”* (Flaherty, p.32, 2010).

The objective of this phase is to seek feedback and follow up whether the clients have achieved their goals. The coach found that one client delayed his hearing date. C10 was the last client who had his dissertation proposal hearing on June 4, 2010. Finally, there were seven PhD students who passed their proposal hearing. One is still in the process, as his principal advisor moved to another country. There were two students who lost their status as PhD students owing to personal problems.

The ICP clients’ feedback was deeply appreciated. One client expressed that:

“I don’t know what words can express my appreciation of your kindness and all the things you (coach) have done for me...you made my dream come true after I felt nearly hopeless before this day... I will remember this forever. Thank you again.

## Implications

This section presents the implications for practice suggested by the research findings. The implications are divided into three sections: for supervisors and advisors, for PhD students, and for higher education organizations and policy makers.

### Implication for practice # 1: For Advisor or Supervisor.

In general, the roles of adviser are being a role model, establishing a good relationship, supporting their advisee, understanding clearly the regulations and policies of the University and able to advise their advisee (Wongvanith & Veerachai, 2007; ThaiPOD, 2008). Based on the findings in this study, coaching may be integrated into the University’s PhD programs, instead of a separate counseling service. As mentioned earlier, coaching is often used interchangeably with tutoring, mentoring, counseling, supervising, and advising. But, in fact, coaching is unique, in that it provides feedback and direction to achieve a goal. Counseling tends to resolve personal and emotional issue. The goal of counseling is not performance-centered. The purpose of coaching, on the other hand, is improving performance.

IC in this study was found to motivate, to support, to give an opportunity, to analyze, to solve problem, to improve the work, and to achieve the PhD candidates’ goal under the pressure of a time limit. It may be an essential tool to assist PhD students to collaborate, communicate, and improve their performance. The advisor needs to keep in mind the value of the human capital held by the PhD students. This value might have been neglected by some advisors in the past. Extending the advice of author O’Connor it could be deduced that ignoring the value of these human capitals is a big loss for the nation especially in higher education. Not only do we lose the expertise of the PhD students themselves, but also the loss of budget, time, and opportunities for their future careers.

### Implication for practice #2: For PhD students

It is generally agreed that completing a PhD is a hard training ground for specific professions (Phillips & Pugh, 2000). The holder of a doctorate is someone who is recognized as an authority in his or her field by the appropriate faculty. It is useful to think of this achievement as becoming a fully professional researcher in the field. In the UK, a bachelor’s degree traditionally meant that the recipient had obtained a general education. A master’s degree, on the other hand, was a license to practice. A PhD is a thorough training in doing research and learning the criteria and quality required for becoming a fully professional researcher

in a chosen field (Phillips & Pugh, 1994, as cited in Joungrakul, 2008).

From the findings of this study, most of the PhD students had lost their momentum after finishing their coursework. There were several barriers that they were facing, such as time management, financial, personal conditions, and so on. Phillips and Pugh (1994) suggested that:

*“Take every opportunity to write reports, draft papers, criticisms of others’ work, etc., during the course of your research. Do not think that all the writing can be done at the end. If you do avoid writing, you will not develop the skills to write efficiently, or even adequately”* (Phillips & Pugh, 1994, p.71).

### **Implication for practice #3: for the organization and the policy makers.**

In order to manage an International Doctoral Program to be fully effective and ongoing, the process of choosing and implementing it should include the people involved. Dufour and Eaker (1998) supported this notion when they indicated that changes often fail because of the lack of strong leadership and decisions are made from the top down. Furthermore, Huffman and Hipp (2003) noted that in order for change to be effective, the director, and chair of the program must participate democratically with instructors/lecturers, by sharing power, authority, and decision making and by promoting and nurturing leadership among staff.

Looking at the Phase 1 “Open Heart” and Phase 2 “Motivation” in this study, the findings indicated that there were several concerns from the students, such as the program did not take good care of students, particularly not having a good system of communication and database. Also, there was too complicated politics in the organization. The implication is a need for increased accountability of the University. With almost seven years of their PhD study having elapsed, the participants had a difficult time not only to study, but

also in their personal life, including their families.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study indicated that in order to invest in Human capital, especially at a higher education level such as an International Graduate studies PhD program, faculty should be required to become involved in the coaching process, and facilitate student writing. Sources of barriers to student progress that are avoidable, including managerial inefficiencies or complicated politics in the organization, should be discovered and overcome. The PhD candidates’ learning is facilitated when administrative processes occur smoothly and predictably.

While there may be linguistic difficulty in translating terminology, differentiations in the roles of councilor, teacher, coach, coach and advisor should be made clear to faculty. In Thailand, the advisor role is expected to include being a role model, establishing a good relationship, supporting the advisee, understanding clearly the regulations and policies of the University and being able to advise their advisee.

Counselors tend to provide feedback and direction to resolve personal and emotional issues. The goal of counseling is not performance-centered. The purpose of coaching, on the other hand, is improving performance. Coaching is a unique process in that it focuses on improving the skills needed to achieve a goal.

A further difference between this coaching and traditional advising is that here the students could observe the processes of academia, including the research, planning curricula, writing, discussing subject matter or university policy with colleagues, work done in tracking students, etc. In short, they could observe what is expected of a practicing Ph.D. While as adult students, their previous exposure to academia had been primarily the classroom setting and traditional teaching.

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