

# Development of Researchers' Potential with 'PNRU Model' Course: Case Study of the Research Potential Development of Researchers in Thailand

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## Abstract

The research "Development of Researchers' Potential with 'PNRU Model' Course" aimed to construct a model to develop Phranakorn Rajabhat University's (PNRU) researchers' potential for communities and societies through the 'PNRU Model' course's activities via a participatory research process, mixed-method research, and semi-experimental research.

The course was developed and designed with the researchers' participation in reflecting on their contents and activities, with a literature review related to the researcher training. The expected skills of researchers included writing the project proposal, collecting the data from communities, and disseminating the research results. Besides, the activities were organized so that researchers could try out the course.

Through evaluating the society-community, researchers' potential and the efficiency of the model of the 'PNRU Model' course, it was found that the researchers had a better understanding in writing the research proposal and implementing the participatory research project. They could also understand the activities' significance to enhance their knowledge and acquire the skills necessary for developing their potential to be used in 16 projects.

**Keywords:** Academic development, Research development

## I. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEMS

Long-term development of Thailand's competitive potential had to be carried out through research. For example, a solution to poverty, the reduction of inequality, and the elevation of the quality of life and well-being of farmers and communities were key issues of the 20-year strategy (2017–2037) towards the nation's development. A key to the problem-solving referred to above was the community-based research process, in which communities

participated systematically and appropriately. Relevant persons and stakeholders in the communities could be integrated so that they were fully cooperative and could become the main driving force to desired goals.

Thailand's Rajabhat Universities were established as tertiary institutes for higher education and excellence in local development. Therefore, it is crucial to develop the personnel of Phranakorn Rajabhat University so that they will be fully equipped with the potential for and

expertise in the community research process. A review of research works on local development undertaken by Phranakorn Rajabhat University found an attempt to do research in response to the local development strategy and the development of the research management system through the “one-faculty-one-research-area project” (Jakkorn et al., 2017).

The aforementioned project aimed to produce more researchers and research works on local development, enhance the potential of the faculty-level research management unit, and develop an efficient research management system by learning through actual practice. The university’s faculty members could choose their preferred research areas and set up their own research team, known as the faculty research management unit (RMU).

Some researchers of Phranakorn Rajabhat University were new to the field, unfamiliar with local research but eager and willing to learn. Other key issues that needed to be addressed were the research questions and problems related to the communities’ needs, community participation, the use of research instruments, and the research process. The literature reviews enabled researchers to realise that this Social Lab could assist academics and a new generation of researchers in learning how to conduct local research.

The university administrative committee held that lessons on research should be closely examined, and the research management system design should be closely monitored and consistently evaluated. A format for evaluating the research impacts should be designed to ensure that the research management system at both the faculty and university levels are headed in the same direction. Participants were expected to obtain knowledge through supervision, evaluation, lesson study, and synthesis. The final expected results were that personnel and staff in higher education possessed the expertise, knowledge, and skills necessary in the research process. As well as determining the frame and policies for research,

building factors favourable to mobilising research works and innovation to solve various problems was essential and urgent.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

To construct the model to develop the Phranakorn Rajabhat University’s researchers’ potential through the “PNRU Model” course.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The participants of the “PNRU Model” course were 24 researchers from five faculties of Phranakorn Rajabhat University: Humanities and Social Sciences, Industrial Technology, Science and Technology, Management, and College of Teachers Training.

This research project’s sampling method uses volunteers to select the participants. The conditions for the participants consisted of genuine interest, determination to participate, ability to participate in activities at any time, and not holding an executive position while participating in the training and afterward. The sample selection’s results revealed that the voluntary participants of this “PNRU Model” course have little experience conducting research activities/academic services with the community.

## IV. STEPS IN DESIGNING THE “PNRU MODEL”

From May to October 2021, researchers developed and designed the “PNRU Model” course to enhance the skills necessary for the researchers’ potential. Concerning the steps in supervising and evaluating the “PNRU Model” course, researchers held activities to evaluate the community researchers’ potential via training based on the model studied and surveyed on key issues such as the satisfaction of researchers, advantages, benefits, and limitations or obstacles in implementing the project.

## V. RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the present research are as follows.

### ***Developing and Designing the PNRU Model Course***

Researchers developed the PNRU Model course to promote learning and enhance skills important for developing the researchers' potential. The researchers participating in the project were encouraged to be aware of their role in serving communities and society. They made use of experiences gained in training on community-related topics. A review of related literature was made on the research process to develop the researchers' potential. For example, the research by Evans (2012) identified three components necessary for developing researchers: behavioral, attitudinal, and intellectual development. Other relevant works included the studies by Kaewtep (2021), Kaewtep et al. (2018), Tongtua (2017), and Tongtua et al. (2016).

Researchers developed and designed the course through three stages: beginning, middle, and end. The skills the researchers were expected to acquire encompassed the project proposal, collection of data from communities, and disseminating the research results. The details of the course were as follows:

**Upstream:** Research questions included training on writing the research proposal and activities specifically meant to help researchers understand issues and content related to social research. The activity's objective was enabling researchers to understand the basic principles of social service research, including four essential principles: collective thinking (partnership), mutual benefits, sharing knowledge (scholarship), and social impact.

**Midstream:** Research instruments were constructed, and data were collected from the communities through the workshop's participatory community analyses. The activity's objective was enabling researchers to learn about participatory community analysis, understand the concepts and principles of

community analytical tools, and learn about community analytical tools such as timeline, outer-rim map, community calendar, life jar, knowledge center, and problem solution.

**Downstream:** The results of the research were delivered to the public through the communication channels. The objective of the activity was to enable researchers to understand the basic principles of research communication for the public, research community, and policymakers and to recognize that research can contribute towards achieving society's goals.

***Table 1. Details of the "PNRU Model" course.***

<b>Basic idea</b>	<b>Course content</b>
Research problems must come from the community	Academic work for Social Service Scholarship Research Project proposal development
Understanding the principles of community-involved research  Using an insider's perspective to obtain information	Research tools and data collection with community participation
Communication to utilize research findings	Communicating research results

### ***Follow-up and Evaluation of the "PNRU Model" course***

Activities were held to evaluate the local researchers' potential through the PNRU Model. A survey was conducted on such key issues as researchers' satisfaction, the benefits the course offered, and any limitations or obstacles they experienced while the research project was being conducted. It was found that the researchers who took part in the project had a better understanding of writing proposals and implementing participatory projects. With regard to the course, the researchers were very satisfied to have participated in the training as it improved their skill in writing proposals, and they had a good opportunity to meet experienced researchers.

*"I can apply acquired knowledge to the field study and research project. Before participating, I knew nothing. I just kept asking the experts all the time. As for now, I am able to write it myself. I hope I can apply for the research fund."*

*"I have got knowledge and understanding, gaining experience and seeing the examples of the research, the research questions and use of the research instruments. All these, I think, are crucial in developing the researchers' potential."*

*"Understand more participatory community research"*

*"Using knowledge from this course to develop into research problems and put it to good use, such as requesting research funding."*

*"Come up with ideas for the next topic."*

*"I've learned the tools used to collect data in the community."*

Furthermore, the training course became a good networking opportunity for researchers from different agencies. The results of the study are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

**Table 2.** *The benefits received from participating in the "PNRU Model" course.*

Study	Study research score
Develop skills for writing research proposals	91.1%
An opportunity with speakers who will help build a research framework	87.5%
Get research questions with the community's participation	83.3%
Network with researchers from both inside and outside the university	58.3%
Supporting funds and resources to conduct research	66.7%

**Table 3.** *The satisfaction in developing capacity for community research development.*

Study	Study research score
most satisfied	45.8%
very satisfied	50%
moderately satisfied	4.2%

After the training course's completion, the participants applied for the research funds by proposing 16 projects.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Developing university researchers is a significant process. The knowledge acquired by the researchers can directly affect the development of communities and the instructional process in the university.

The results obtained in the present research showed that the researchers, particularly the ones unfamiliar with the research works, still need training on the community research process. Particularly important are the research questions and problems from the communal needs, participation, and other issues related to the research instruments. It can be said that the researchers who participated had developed the research skills, acquired the technique essential to the local research, and knew how to conduct the research involving communal participation. Besides, they knew how to coordinate with those involved and the stakeholders in the communities. They also understood how to successfully integrate social aspects.

The training in the present work resembled the work by Akerlind (2008), who believed the development of the researchers' skills could start at an early stage of their career in the university. The stages of development were described as follows: (1) Becoming confident as a researcher; (2) Becoming recognized as a researcher; (3) Becoming more productive as a researcher; and (4) Becoming more sophisticated as a researcher. Likewise, John and Creighton (2011) showed that the development of

postgraduate students in research opportunity programmes had a significant effect on their confidence and interest.

Still, when various courses related to the researcher development process were reviewed, for instance, the multi-mentoring system (MMS), university courses in research and development, and overseas courses such as Vitae Researcher Development Framework (Bray & Boon, 2011), it was found that the activities needed for development and training in the PNRU Model course should include skills development in analyzing and synthesizing data from the data collection process. At the same time, the course on research communication should be expanded to cover different forms of communication to suit the target groups, for example, the villagers, communities, academics, mass media groups, result users, and the public and private sectors.

## VII. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research should focus on arranging development courses according to the researchers' skill levels and examining and identifying the most challenging barriers to establish suitable systems or mechanisms to support researchers and obtain professionals.

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