

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

### Finally, a Researcher Development and Education Framework for an Open University in Southeast Asia

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While there is an ongoing advocacy for transformative higher education through a collaborative research culture in a national university system (Almoro, 2024; Cubillan, 2024), there lacks an explicit and unified framework for researcher development of valuable skills and competencies to inform its typology of research training, supervision and mentoring (Villanueva, 2024). We propose a researcher development and education framework to benefit open and distance elearning programs, or ODeL programs situated in the national university's Open University constituent unit with a wide reach of students locally and in Southeast Asia (Alfonso, 2014). The framework is a by-product of our sustained intellectual and intertextual networking, engagements with an international network of researchers in doctoral education and consultations with teacher-researchers and other stakeholders in an open university. The framework is underpinned by the identity-trajectory theory, self-determination theory and the community of inquiry for learning community building in harnessing positive research student experiences (Villanueva & Eacersall, 2024). Key areas of the framework are namely, research as a personal and scholarly practice, a reflective practice, a collaborative practice and a technology-enabled practice. Surrounding these key areas are shared values of: (i) excellence, rigor and creativity; (ii) agency and wellbeing; (iii) sense of community, social responsibility and service to others; and, (iv) integrity, agency and future-ready. Further validation of the framework was conducted through focused group discussions across three faculties of study. Collaborative reflections among faculty members and research students were undertaken to further define specific research competencies as well as mindsets. A natural outcome was the conceptualization of three courses pilot-test the application of the framework in varied learning spaces for a range of learners within the Open University unit.

MyPORTAL Course 1 is a formal course for graduate-level students crafting their personalized learning plans for selected research-related outputs while ASCEND Course 2 is non-formal short course for professional research staff and students to navigate their academic writing and research with the use of Generative AIs. WORKSPACE Course 3 is a self-paced micro-course as an opportunity for faculty members to spend dedicated sensemaking on current practices in mentoring and research supervision. These courses are meant to operationalize intentional learning alliance and community building to harness researcher identity development and sense of agency among research students in ODeL programs. Further research is recommended in launching these courses and towards the creation of graduate research support teams with researcher development specialists and volunteer research trainers and learning designers. The teams are meant to go beyond administrative functions to ensure exemplary pedagogy and practices, benefiting both research supervisors and their students. The study all the more highlights the Open University's unique identity as a progressive driver of innovation and within a dominant residential-based university system's seeking to translate the transformative education rhetoric into actual practice at the program and course levels. Finally, we lay our claim of an ODeL research culture that is truly open, collaborative and future-ready.

*Keywords:* researcher development, distance education, learning alliance, community of inquiry

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