



Evaluating Academic Research Writing and Publication Training Workshop Organized by Indreshwor Campus Panauti, Kavrepalanchok Nepal

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Abstract

This study evaluates a three-day academic research writing and publication training workshop organized by Indreshwor Campus Panauti. The training was funded under the University Grants Commission Nepal's higher education nurturing program. The training targeted faculty, students, and campus management committee members with the broader aim of strengthening human capital through academic publications and advancing the quality of higher education in Nepal. Kirkpatrick's four-level training evaluation model was utilized as a framework for evaluating the program. In doing so, the study used narrative reflections of nine learners obtained from an open-ended questionnaire that is organized around the four levels of reaction, learning, behaviour, and results. The narrations were analyzed qualitatively with a thematic analysis approach to discover common patterns of changes and experiences. Results show that the participants were positive about the facilitation, content and materials; acquired new knowledge about peer review, journal quality indicators, abstract writing and research ethics; started to apply these new skills to writing and teaching; and, in a few cases, assisted in institutional outcomes, including new writing groups, a research support committee, and submissions to journals. The study also identifies issues and gaps, such as insufficient hands-on exercise time and inconsistent follow-up support. The study finds that the training mainly achieved the desired outcome in all four of the evaluation levels. However, additional efforts are required to achieve a continuing research writing culture at campus and sustained institutional commitment, more time for practical activities, and effective follow-up mechanisms.

Keywords: Higher education, capacity development, academic research writing, training evaluation

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Introduction

Academic research writing and publishing has emerged as a pressing need for the community campuses in Nepal. Numerous students and faculty members struggle with writing articles that are accepted by peer reviewed and indexed journals (Sharma, 2018). The lack of exposure to research methodology, inexperience with conventions of citation and referencing, lack of understanding of the peer review process, and poor confidence in academic English writing have all contributed to keeping publication volumes at such institutions relatively low (Aitchison & Lee, 2006; Belcher, 2007). Understanding this, University Grants Commission (UGC) Nepal has introduced its higher education nurturing programme, which is being financed by the World Bank. To build up human capital and in the long-term, the overall quality of national higher education, UGC has prioritized training interventions (UGC Nepal, 2020; WB, 2019).

As per this, Indreshwor Campus Panauti conducted a three-day Academic Research Writing and Publication Training for the faculty, students, and CMC members of the campus. The training was designed according to the core competences that were identified as essential for research productivity such as structuring research paper, choosing an appropriate journal, conducting literature review and citation, understanding research ethics and avoiding plagiarism, and discussion and conclusion as well as understanding the process of publishing research paper. The sessions were conducted by three resource persons who used a mix of lecture, model articles and interactive discussions.

Indreshwor campus has been publishing two Journals (Panauti Journal & Punyawati Journal) since 2023. The effort put in publishing this campus is like a milestone in the field of academic work in multi-disciplinary fields on local level (Karmacharya & Pasa, 2026). As a result of the study, such trainings are often conducted, but do not always have a structure that can measure whether the training was a value-added investment that led to lasting results beyond satisfaction. A training could be liked by participants without any measurable increase in their knowledge, let alone in their behaviour in their work or institutional products. This has been an ongoing issue in the evaluation literature on training, as more in-depth measures of the transfer of learning and organizational impact have consistently demonstrated weak correlations with reaction-level indicators of satisfaction (Alliger & Janak, 1989; Alliger et al., 1997). Therefore, the Indreshwor training has to be assessed using a system that tracks the process from participant reaction to institutional outcomes as outlined in Tamkin et al. (2002).

The analytical framework for evaluating the training in this study was Kirkpatrick's four level training evaluation model which consists of reaction, learning, behaviour and results (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). The model has found great use in professional development and higher education training evaluation in differentiating the immediate experience of a training event from the

longer term effects on practice and organizational performance (Guskey, 2000). The study is based on narrative data collected from nine training participants, including faculty, students and a CMC board member, and uses thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify patterns of experience and change at each of the four levels.

Objectives and Methodology

The general objective of the study was to evaluate the participants' response to the training in terms of expectations, facilitation, materials and environment. The specific objective were to check the knowledge and skills which the participants report having acquired; to explore the extent to which participants have transferred the knowledge gained from the training to their teaching, writing and research behaviour; and to investigate the individual and institutional outcomes which have resulted from the training. The research, therefore, adopted a qualitative approach with a case study design, which was suitable for the context of a single site and small group of trainees undergoing an evaluation of the training. An open-ended narrative questionnaire was administered to nine participants from the training including teachers, students, and a member of the CMC board of directors to gather data from the training, and it was designed directly in accordance to the four levels of Kirkpatrick. The instrument consisted of 12 guiding questions – three questions for each of the four components recommended in the literature for training evaluation: reaction, learning, behaviour and results (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016; Tamkin et al., 2002).

Individuals who participated in the training were purposively selected to reflect the stakeholders who were present during training, including experienced faculty, undergraduate students and representatives of institutional governance so that both individual learning trajectories and the level effects of the training could be captured. The four-levels of information generation strategy were not analyzed as separate categories as the analytical strength of the model was to trace the information gains from one level to the next. These questions were designed for this reason, to be paired with questions on behaviour and results, so that participants could consider how the initial experience of the training related to the impact of the training on their own practice, rather than answering each one separately. This design choice also allowed the analysis to identify cases in which a participant reported strong reaction and learning but limited behavioural transfer, or conversely, modest reaction but substantial results, providing a richer picture than a reaction-only satisfaction survey would have produced.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participation in the narrative interviews was voluntary, and several participants opted to respond anonymously; their responses have been reported without identifying detail. Where participants are named, this reflects their own willingness to be identified in the evaluation record. As with any qualitative evaluation relying on self-reported narrative data. The findings are subject to recall bias and social desirability bias, and the results level in particular reflects

participants' own perception of institutional change rather than independently verified organizational records; this limitation is addressed further in the discussion section.

Generated narrative information were then analysed using thematic analysis following the six phase process of familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). Codes were organized separately within each Kirkpatrick level before being examined for cross cutting patterns, such as the recurring emphasis on journal quality indicators and on the transition from passive learning to active manuscript preparation. The narrative data were triangulated against the training's own evaluation tool and topic outline to confirm that reported themes corresponded to the actual content delivered.

Findings

The findings are presented according to Kirkpatrick's four levels: reaction, learning, behaviour, and results. Table 1 summarizes the dominant themes identified at each level before the narrative discussion that follows.

Table 1. Level Wise Themes and Illustrations

Kirkpatrick Level	Dominant Themes	Illustrative Evidence from Narrations
Level Reaction	1: Alignment with expectations; positive facilitation and materials; request for more practical time	Participants rated facilitators as clear and energetic and materials as useful, while several requested more hands-on exercises
Level Learning	2: Peer review process; identifying indexed journals; abstract writing; plagiarism and citation	Participants described learning to identify Scopus/WoS-indexed journals and structure abstracts using context-action-answer-implication elements
Level Behaviour	3: Applying structure to writing; sharing knowledge; forming writing groups; drafting manuscripts	Several participants reported forming peer writing groups and beginning manuscript drafts after the training
Level Results	4: Increased submissions; new research support structures; institutional confidence	One participant reported establishing a research writing support group; another reported submitting revised manuscripts to an international journal

Level 1: Reaction

At this level, training program found to be content-focused as participants reported to be satisfied with the contents of the training. The faculty members who participated pointed out that the topics covered: structuring research papers, writing abstract and introduction, and identifying appropriate journals directly corresponded to gaps they had identified prior to the participation in the sessions. Students also found that sessions about the publication process were most meaningful as they provided a detailed, sequential explanation of how an article gets from a draft to publication, which they had never read.

Nearly all narrations were rated favorably on facilitation, materials and environment. The participants expressed their appreciation of the resource persons who were energetic, interactive, professional and effective in using the materials and model articles of the information and communication technology. According to one narration, the day-long training, delivered back to back at the campus, facilitated an interactive and supportive learning experience for teachers, CMC board, and students to directly interact with the training material. Simultaneously, the participants provided positive suggestions for future improvement, the most common being a greater amount of time in practical, hands-on activities as opposed to lecture delivery, and a few a few participants did bring up logistical concerns such as the room temperature and how the opening session was organized, which they felt affected their overall experience. Almost all participants reported an initial sense of relevance of the content – a necessary, but not sufficient condition for learning transfer – for their own contexts: in creating coursework, guiding student research, or starting their own manuscript.

Level 2: Learning

At this level, both declarative and procedural knowledge were reported as gains by the participants. One consistent theme was the use of knowledge in identifying quality, indexed journals. Specifically, several participants noted their learning of how to identify journals indexed by Scopus, predatory journals, and gaining an understanding of how quartile rankings and editorial decision processes are used to identify a target journal, areas that had been identified as gaps in the literature (Kwan, 2010).

Another central theme was the structure and standards of academic writing. Participants reported learning the key components of a good abstract – context, action, findings and implication – and also the general structure of a research article from introduction to discussion and conclusion. A related theme was the enhancement of participants' knowledge of citation practices and research ethics such as the definition of plagiarism and the various forms of plagiarism, allowable degrees of similarity, and ways of writing based upon evidence and appropriately citing sources. This was a point about which several of the respondents spoke with particular specificity, and one that has been

echoed in other studies of academic staff and students' prior knowledge of plagiarism, which has been found to be inconsistent (Devlin & Gray, 2007). A third theme was of the peer review process itself. The participants also said that they learned not only about the workings of peer review as an author, but also about being a reviewer and writing thorough, detailed, and fair review reports, as well as how to respond to comments from reviewers respectfully and constructively. In addition, methodology, research design, validity and reliability, and the scope and limitation of a study were also mentioned as new areas of learning which followed a closely similar topic outline to that of the training.

Level 3: Behaviour

At this level, participants reported a variety of implementation or practice strategies in which they had started to apply their learning. Some participants said they were able to transfer the model they had been taught to apply to their own research paper, term paper or manuscript draft and were more careful and systematic when it came to citing than prior to the training. Partnerships, group co-writing, or initiation of drafts of a manuscript after training, were explicitly described by multiple narrators.

Knowledge sharing behaviour was also common. Participants reported sharing their knowledge with their colleagues, classmates or faculty members who had not been to the training, and most reported that there was positive response, especially in regard to plagiarism avoidance and identifying trusted journals. One faculty participant shared an example of how the peer review module was implemented in their own programming for master's students, demonstrating a cascading effect, where training content was repurposed as teaching content for another group of students.

A few participants reported more advanced behavioral transfer such as active reading of a work by a colleague and following the feedback format of the training, or starting to act as a reviewer for a journal included in Scopus. When combined, these narrations suggest that behavioural transfer was not consistent and in some cases only took its early form in coursework; in other cases, it was present in the development of the work of the manuscripts and in peer review. Together, these narrations suggest that the depth of behavioural transfer was inconsistent, ranging from early forms in the coursework to active forms in the development of the work written for the manuscripts and in the peer review, but was present in most respondents in some form.

Level 4: Results

At this level, individual and institutional outcomes of the participants were reported. Participants reported individually that the most significant results of the course were greater confidence and productivity in research writing; that the course made them more organized; less anxious to submit their work to a peer-reviewed journal; and able to

meet the expectations of a peer-reviewed journal. Some of the participants directly attributed this newfound confidence to specific tasks, writing a manuscript, joining a writing group, and finding a journal in which to publish a thesis paper.

Institutional outcomes that were reported as noteworthy were the creation of new infrastructures designed to continue the research after the training itself. One said that a small peer writing group had been started, in which members read each others' drafts, and another, who is a faculty and CMC board member, reported that the training had led to discussion with the campus chief about setting up a formal research committee and that it had already led to the creation of a research writing support group for faculty. Three further participants reported having revised two papers based on feedback they received during the training that had been submitted to an international journal, a direct verifiable publication outcome. Together, participants hoped this could lead to more submissions to the campus journal, better peer review quality, and better overall publication quality at the campus. Participants were asked what they wished to see repeated in the training, and they all agreed that it needs to be extended in length to include more practical work, especially related to data collection, data analysis and manuscript editing; that there should be follow-up sessions for the participants, where they can get feedback on their own drafts; that technical and financial support should be improved for participants; that at the institutional level, there should be two tracks for the training, one for beginners and one for more advanced faculty, to allow the latter to participate in things like grant writing and funding opportunities.

Discussions of Findings

The findings suggest that the Indreshwor training was effective across all four levels that is not guaranteed in professional development research (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). A substantial body of evaluation literature has cautioned against assuming that positive reaction data predicts learning, let alone behavioural or organizational change; meta-analytic work has repeatedly found only weak to moderate correlations between reaction and the deeper levels of Kirkpatrick's hierarchy (Alliger et al., 1997; Alliger & Janak, 1989), and critics of the model have argued that its implicit causal chain, in which reaction leads to learning, which leads to behaviour, which leads to results, is rarely tested empirically and can obscure the contextual and organizational factors that actually determine whether training produces lasting change (Bates, 2004). The Indreshwor case is therefore notable in that participant narrations describe outcomes at each of the four levels, including institution-level results such as a new research support group and manuscript submissions, within a relatively short period after a single three-day training.

Several factors plausibly explain this pattern. First, the training included explicit research writing mechanics instruction as well as content on research ethics and the peer review process, which encompassed both the technical and normative obstacles reported

in the literature of research writing instruction in non-native English and periphery research settings (Belcher, 2007; Cargill & O'Connor, 2013). Indreshwor training seems to have directly tackled the structural, ethical and procedural issues that novice researchers in under-resourced institutions typically encounter, as highlighted by scholars who have studied research writing pedagogy in similar contexts (Kwan, 2010; Casanave, 2019).

Second, the involvement of institutional stakeholders, including one member of the CMC board, with the training participants seems to have had an impact on the creation of outcomes in the result domain. Professional learning and organizational change go hand in hand, as it is during the process of professional learning that decision-makers, who can most effectively translate individual learning to organizational policy or structure, are most likely to be directly involved (Guskey, 2000). The narration of follow-up discussion with the campus chief about a research committee is an example of this, indicating that the inclusion of representatives from the governance was a purposeful and effective design decision, which is what happened with Indreshwor.

Third, participants' focus on plagiarism, citations and identifying the product as a journal article mirrors the increased number of general concerns in the literature about predatory publishing and accidental violations of academic integrity in early-career, low-resource researchers (Devlin & Gray, 2007; Kwan, 2010). There is explicit mention of this as part of the training, and the participants repeatedly identified it as a need they had felt they had not met in their institutions before, and thus had made it an area of focus for training. The fact that this was a content area that was explicitly included in the training and was consistently identified by participants as an area where they felt they had been lacking in their institutions and something they had worked on in the past, indicates that the training was not in a generic content area of research-writing but in a content area that had been identified as the institutional need.

Meanwhile, the results reveal significant shortcomings. Though present, behavioural transfer was not uniform; some participants reported applying early-stage transfer to their coursework while others reported more substantial transfer, such as journal review activity or manuscript submission after training completion; this lack of uniformity is consistent with literature on evaluation which highlights that the transfer of learning is dependent on the individual motivations, workload, and institutional support of the transferor after training is completed (Alliger et al. 1997, Tamkin et al. 2002). The need for longer practical sessions and structured follow-up was stated explicitly by several participants, and has been well documented in research on professional development that one-off PD events, regardless of their quality, are less likely to lead to lasting change than are sessions that are part of a longer programme of PD sessions, follow-up and institutional support (Guskey, 2000). Due to the nature of measuring outcomes through the participant self-report instead of institutional research, in this study, it is a

promising early indicator, but not a definitive impact, and is best followed longitudinally.

It is also important to note that the training took place in a community campus, not a constituent or a research-intensive university, which influences the interpretation of the results. Community campuses in Nepal usually have fewer resources, less research infrastructure and less exposure to international academic networks than their constituent-campus counterparts and faculty at community campuses in Nepal often suffer from heavy teaching loads, meaning that little time is dedicated to research writing (Sharma, 2018). In this context, even the development of small measures of achievement, such as a small group submitting journals or a peer writing group becoming effective, is a significant step in institutional capacity building. This implies that for institutions with limited resources, such as those evaluated here, a short-term and well-targeted intervention might be particularly useful because the pre-existing research writing capacity is low and thus can be modified, but not fully consolidated, by a focused training.

Conclusion and Implication

This study concludes that the training program resulted some noticeable improvements in structuring research paper. The training led to significant behaviour change in the novice researchers in the form of manuscript preparation, peer review activity, and the sharing of knowledge, and to the emergence of institutional outcomes such as new writing and research support groups, and at least one instance of a manuscript being submitted after training-informed revisions. All four levels of training workshop capacity development was met successfully. The impact that was consistent with the institutional gap in research writing on the campus and the training that was aligned to it. These conclusions have a number of implications. The study recommends that the impact of the training should be strengthened by embedding it within a well-designed follow up system, such as a monthly supportive writing of manuscripts session, a research writing support group, and mentorship pairing between senior and junior researchers at Indreshwor Campus. In the eyes of the UGC Nepal and the higher education nurturing programme, the case highlights the importance of engaging institutional governance representatives apart from faculty and students in the capacity development training as it appears that their engagement reflects the outcomes at the institutional level (Guskey, 2000). Further training design at analogues community campuses would also benefit from more time for practical, hands-on learning (as often requested by participants), and more of a follow-up evaluation cycle which would allow for tracking learning and behaviour-level gains to verifiable, longer-term results.

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