# TEACHING-LEARNING METHODS IN THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OF A PHILIPPINE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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## ABSTRACT

The adult learner - self-directed, self-motivated, and ready to learn for further growth – needs to learn through teaching styles of professors and actual classroom activities which are sensitive to their needs. Guided by Knowles' philosophy of andragogy and Conti's principles of student-centered teaching style, this research describes the teaching-learning environment and the activities conducted in an adult education classroom according to the self-assessment of 180 Graduate School Business Development and Management Program (BDMP) students of a Philippine university. Through the use of the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS), the management graduate students label their adult learning experience through their instructors' teaching style as "somewhat student-centered". The general environment in the BDMP classroom has succeeded to satisfy the principles of adult learning, though graduate school professors can still improve in learner-centered activities and flexibility for personal development factors. Through a list of actual activities that happen in the classroom, student-respondents state that a final written project is almost always required; but case studies, which allow students to apply theory and practical knowledge to a real management problem, are rarely applied. Recommendations are given for the consideration of the BDMP to help enrich the learning experience among its graduate students.

**Keywords**: principles of adult learning, student-centered teaching style, graduate school activities

## Introduction

United Kingdom Prime Minister Winston Churchill has been quoted to have said: "I am always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught". This statement, from a man of vision, good communication, engagement, and influence, well depicts the typical adult learner.

Adult learners are those above 18 years of age; beyond age 18, the adult learner is a non-conventional student - different from the traditional, established, and habitual student (Kapur, 2019). Expectedly, they are different from younger learners, and they show six characteristics: they are life-centered or problem-centered; they have specific results in mind for education; they are self-directed; they are often skeptical about new information; they seek education that relates or applies directly to their perceived needs; and, they accept responsibility for their learning if they find it timely and appropriate. These characteristics illustrate the principles of andragogy, a theory popularized in the United States by Malcolm Knowles – which embodies the methods and philosophies used in adult education (McConnell, 2013).

For higher educational institutions, this description of the adult learner may necessitate modification and adjustments of standard teaching methods to reflect the more modern ways that adult students choose, gather, and use information. They try to do more with less, have a very short time available for learning, and they always get pressed for time (Grovo, 2015; Hogle, 2017). Especially for a graduate school with adult learners who are navigating modern methods, communications technology, and their careers - the description of the modern learner also highlights the need to improve the delivery of degree programs and courses to be able to meet institutional objectives.

Integral to the attainment of its mission, this Philippine university commits itself to provide a quality education that responds to the challenge of producing globally recognized graduates. It is with this institutional objective in mind that there is a need to look at the teaching methods in the business and management courses in the Graduate School of this university located in the southern Philippines.

Aside from their competence and qualifications, professors in graduate school create an impact on their adult students through their teaching approaches. Teaching styles help ensure more confidence in the learning abilities of students in higher education (Nessipbayeva, 2015). Since there is a significant relationship between teaching style and academic achievement (Conti, 1985) as well as teaching style and academic engagement (Shaari, Yusoff, Ghazali, Osman, & Dzahir, 2014), professors and teachers-facilitators need to be alert and sensitive to the needs and characteristics of their adult learners for learning to be successful (Florea, 2014; Kapur, 2015).

Learning is defined in the dictionary as the process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practicing, being taught, or experiencing something. Learning has become about what students do and less about what teachers do. Teaching is defined as engagement with learners to enable their understanding and application of knowledge, concepts, and processes. Teaching is

engaging students in learning and getting them involved in the active construction of knowledge (Christensen et al, 1991).

There is a rise in adult learning. Enrolment is steadily growing as adults seek a graduate education to get a new job, get career advancement, or seek general self-improvement. This is the case with the Business Development and Management Program (BDMP) within the Graduate School of a Philippine university.

The BDMP is defined as the academic cluster encompassing the degree offerings of Master of Business Management (MBM), Master of Public Service Management (MSPM), and Doctor of Management (DM). The program has been created to contribute to the University's business and management education that is competitive, innovative, and of international standards.

This institutional research aims to identify the environment in an adult education classroom through the teaching-learning methods teachers use and recognize the activities conducted in an adult education class according to the assessment of the BDMP graduate school students. This study can serve the BDMP as it shall characterize how the professors and students engage with each other in the delivery of courses in the BDMP and ascertain methods appropriate for adult learning. As it looks into the teaching and learning methods in the university against new initiatives in teaching adults, the research enables a critical reflection if the current practices in the graduate school indeed provide effective learning among its students. The study aspires to be a reference point in the continuing efforts to improve the delivery of classes and courses within the BDMP of the graduate school.

The research framework stems from andragogy, the adult learning theory by Malcolm Knowles, as it defines the adult learner and their characteristics of being self-directed, self-motivated, and ready to learn for further growth. Through his work on this theory which spanned from the 1970s to the 1980s, Knowles offered a type of learning for adults which adapts to their personalities and characteristics (Smith, 2002).

Building upon this description of the adult learner would be the principles of adult learning further enhanced by Gary Conti, who proposed that teaching-learning methods are either teacher-centered or student-centered.

Various studies suggest that a teacher's actions affect student achievement. Good teaching does not only need competence but also a commitment to a systematic understanding of learning for the teacher cannot transform a student without their active participation. Teaching is fundamentally about creating the pedagogical, social, and ethical conditions under which students agree to take charge of their learning, individually and collectively (Christensen et al, 1991). Therefore, actualizing the principles of adult learning are the teaching styles of professors which, in turn, create the learning experience of adult students.
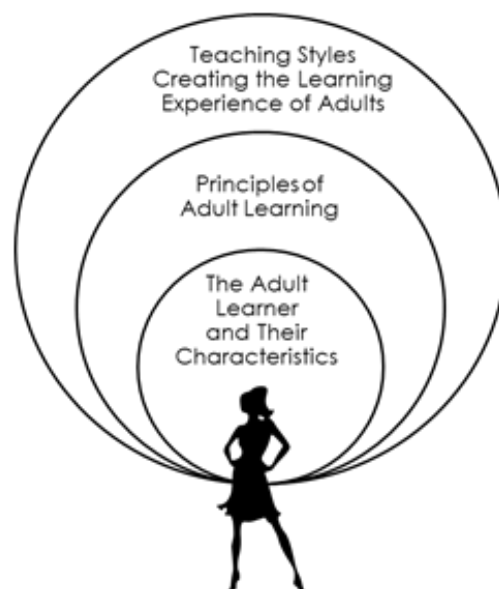
**Figure 1: The Research Framework**

The research carried these concepts and answered two specific questions: What is the adult learning experience in a graduate school classroom in terms of the teaching styles of the professors? What are the adult learning activities used by professors in a graduate school classroom? What can be learned from this study to benefit the Business Development and Management Program of a graduate school?

**Andragogy and the Adult Learner**

Defined in its general terms, pedagogy is the instructional techniques and strategies that allow learning to take place (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden & Bell, 2002) as cited by Child Australia (2017). But Malcolm Knowles (1980) distinguished pedagogy from andragogy by describing it as having an emerging role and technology for adult learning.

Andragogy, or the art and science of teaching adults, was proposed by Knowles as early as the 1970s to distinguish the way adults learn from that of children. As Knowles conjectured, adult learners demand self-direction, are significantly affected by their prior experiences, are motivated by internal stimuli, and explore or experience their interest in learning. Therefore, andragogy presents an alternative to pedagogy – as a process-oriented and student-centered approach (Rismiyanto, Saleh, Mujiyanto, & Warsono, 2018).

The manner that the adult learner is described in andragogy reflects the profile of the modern learner (Kearsley, 2010). Teachers can therefore draw on concepts of andragogy, as a step forward from pedagogy or the child-focused teaching approach, to make graduate school education classes more effective.

**Teaching and Learning Methods and Styles**

Andragogy has come to represent a learner-centered approach to learning, as an alternative to pedagogy which is more teacher-centered. They can be considered as two kinds of teaching philosophy.

A teacher must consider that adult learners bring their knowledge and experience, as well as their values and beliefs governing their thoughts (Jarvis, 2004). Their training must focus on their experiences and interests (McConnell, 2013). The way they think and feel about their education influences how they learn and retain what they learn.

Graduate students - adult students - learn like their younger counterparts: through retention and transfer (Cassuto, 2013). Graduate professors should therefore teach in a manner that promotes knowledge transfer and retention in the best way possible. Keeping knowledge of the different approaches will enable teachers to apply them in practice and help to nurture their students (Akimenko, 2016). Yet for the most part, student-centered learning has not reached graduate school level yet (Cassuto, 2013).

Thus, teaching is best viewed as a continuum, which can swing from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach (Herod, 2012). The challenge is how to find the right balance of teaching style for adult modern learners. A teaching style is much broader than teaching strategies and methods. As professionals, teachers must be aware of their teaching styles, so that they can assess their practices in the classroom and their beliefs about these practices (Yoshida et al, 2014).

Conti (2004, 2007) writes that teachers must identify and assess their teaching styles so they can state their beliefs about teaching, the nature of their learners, and their mission in education. Teaching style refers to the distinct qualities displayed by a teacher that are persistent from situation to situation regardless of the content.

Teaching styles build upon the two types of teaching philosophy. As the professor creates the atmosphere in the classroom, their teaching style may either be teacher-centered or student-centered. There is a relationship between teaching style and adult student learning (Conti, 1985). If a teaching method is comprised of the principles and manners of teaching students, then it is also the method with which students are enabled to learn.

Conti (1985, 2004) created the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS), an assessment tool to enable educators to measure the frequency with which they practice the teaching-learning principles of adult education. Originally intended to be answered by teachers, the questionnaire was adjusted so that students will gauge their adult learning experience as provided by their professors. The scale has seven factors, namely: (1) learner-centered activities (2) personalizing instruction (3) relating to experience (4) assessing student needs (5) climate building (6) participation in the learning process, and (7) flexibility for personal development.

*Learner-centered activities* are the core of a learner-centered approach to teaching. For these types of activities, the teacher takes the role of facilitator and allows the students to take the lead and the duty for learning, encouraging participation from them. This is closely related to *participation in the learning process;* where, with the guidance of the teacher, the student is given the responsibility to identify the learning material, reflect on teaching procedures, and engage themselves in the manner that the material is revealed and learned.

*Personalizing instruction* considers the adult student's abilities, needs, and limitations, and these are matched with the learning objectives and teaching techniques. This is also associated with *assessing student needs* and *relating to experience* since students' personal goals and their current and prior experiences of the students are taken into account in the teaching method.

As *climate building* creates a positive environment for adult learners within the learning space in the university, this is complemented by *flexibility for personal development* which allows for adjustments for student needs and situations, as well as the adaptability of the teacher whenever circumstances so demands it. In all, each of these factors may illustrate how to deliver student-centered teaching-learning styles based on the philosophy of adult education.

## Methodology

This descriptive study sought the personal assessment of students in the business development and management degree programs of a Philippine graduate school. Through a survey questionnaire, the study determined how the students gauge their adult education experience through the teaching styles of their professors and also revealed the teaching-learning activities they experience in their classroom.

The first part of the survey questionnaire, to identify the environment in an adult education classroom, used the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (Conti, 1985, 2004). The second part of the survey questionnaire, to identify the activities conducted in a class among adults, consisted of a list of activities that may be used by professors as their teaching-learning methods. The list of activities was generated through a key informant interview of three students from each of the degree programs – MBM, MPSM, DM - who provided their thoughts on the teaching and learning techniques and activities that can be experienced in the graduate school classroom. Their aggregate responses were used as the basis for the list of teaching-learning activities in the survey questionnaire.

The research set out to seek the full participation of the 296 students who were enrolled in the Business Development and Management Program of the graduate school, the population for this study. Visitations to the classrooms were conducted, and students were invited to take part in the survey. While efforts were taken to survey the total population of management students, the study came up with a response rate of 61%; only 180 completely- and correctly- accomplished survey questionnaires from students were used and analyzed to provide the data for this study. It is therefore acknowledged that, with a non-response rate of 39%, some degree of selectivity bias may be present in this study.

Almost half (46%) of the 180 participants are taking up their MBM, while 32% are pursuing their MPSM, and 22% have their DM degrees. The graduate students are mostly female (63%), and almost all (92%) are employed while pursuing their graduate education, though a very big majority (86%) do not receive a high-level monthly income, getting just less than P50,000 per month. The age of participants was not collected, as all of them are of adult age or above 18 years.

The participants were asked to answer the adopted Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS), created by Gary J. Conti (1985, 2004). The 44-item questionnaire was adapted to measure the teaching-learning environment of adult learners. Permission to use the questionnaire for this study was secured from Conti. But to simplify the survey for participants, the response options were also reduced from six to four: Always, Usually, Rarely, and Never. The coefficient of reliability test of the actual survey questionnaire showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.97. This high level of internal consistency is expected of the adapted questionnaire, as it has been confirmed in several instances (Rachal et al, 1994; Spoon & Schell, 1998; Conti, 2004; Yoshida et al, 2014; Kovacevic & Akbarov, 2016).

Scoring was based on the guidelines provided by Conti (2004), both for the positive and negative items with reversed scores. A student's total score on the instrument was calculated by adding together the value of the responses to all items. Factor scores were calculated by summing the value of the responses for each item in the factor (Conti, 2004). These total scores were converted to their PALS mean scores.

All BDMP student-participants were informed of the purpose and methodology of the study, and their consent to participate was solicited. They were assured that they will not be named in any manner of publication and that all information gathered about them as a result of this study will be secured and confidential. There is definite assurance that confidentiality and anonymity were observed during and after data collection, as well as in the storage of the research data.

## Results

### Adult Learning Experience

Students responded to the 44-item Principles of Adult Learning Scale by Conti. Table 1 shows their frequency and percentage distribution according to their PALS mean scores.

**Table 1: Principles of Adult Learning Scale Scores**

| Range of Means | Interpretation | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3.26-4.00 | Very Student-Centered | 0 | 0.00% |
| 2.51-3.25 | Somewhat Student-Centered | 152 | 84.44% |
| 1.76-2.50 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered | 28 | 15.56% |
| 1.00-1.75 | Very Teacher-Centered | 0 | 0.00% |

The mean score of 44 items in the PALS reveals the strength of commitment of the BDMP professors to a style of teaching, which in turn is the learning experience of adult students in the classroom. High scores on the scale (2.51-4.0) indicate a student-centered learning experience, while low scores on the scale (1.0-2.5) denote a teacher-centered learning experience.

BDMP graduate school students label their adult learning experience as somewhat student-centered. While 15.56% think that the teaching style is *somewhat teacher-centered*, a big majority of 84.44% regard the teaching style as *somewhat student-centered*.

The overall PALS score is divided into seven factors, with items grouped to compose each factor or teaching method. Table 2 shows the results for each of the factors.

**Table 2: Factors of the Principles of Adult Learning Scale**

| No. | Factor | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|-----|--------|------|-----|----------------|
| 1 | Learner-Centered Activities | 1.80 | 0.18 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 2 | Personalizing Instruction | 2.68 | 0.69 | Somewhat Student-Centered |
| 3 | Relating to Experience | 3.35 | 0.07 | Very Student-Centered |
| 4 | Assessing Student Needs | 3.29 | 0.09 | Very Student-Centered |
| 5 | Climate Building | 3.30 | 0.21 | Very Student-Centered |
| 6 | Participation in the Learning Process | 3.32 | 0.05 | Very Student-Centered |
| 7 | Flexibility for Personal Development | 1.73 | 0.15 | Very Teacher-Centered |
| | Overall PALS | 2.78 | | Somewhat Student-Centered |

*(Factor1=12items; Factor2=9 items; Factor3=6 items; Factor4=4 items; Factor5=4 items; Factor6=4 items; Factor7=5 items)*

The overall PALS is described by BDMP students as *somewhat student-centered* (overall mean of 2.78), but with a standard deviation of 0.73, this indicates that the points of the responses are spread widely. The numbers show that participants are pulled differently in their assessment of their general experience inside the classroom of adult learners.

A clearer view of the seven factors is needed to better understand the principles of adult learning used in the scale. These factors, namely: (1) learner-centered activities (2) personalizing instruction (3) relating to experience (4) assessing student needs (5) climate building (6) participation in the learning process, and (7) flexibility for personal development, are also explained by each of their item components.

Firstly, *learner-centered activities* in a classroom help define the teaching-learning method. A high score means a teaching style that emphasizes informal evaluation techniques, encourages initiatives, and on having students take responsibility for their learning.

**Table 3: Learner-centered Activities**

| Item | The teaching-learning environment of the Graduate School BDMP classroom… | Mean | Interpretation |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| 02 | Uses disciplinary action, or the process for dealing with behavior that does not meet expected and communicated performance standards, when students need it. | 1.96 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 04 | Encourages students to adopt business and professional values. | 1.87 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 11 | Determines the educational objectives for each of the students. | 1.66 | Very |

| | | | Teacher-Centered |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | Plans the courses of instruction that differ as widely as possible from the students' socio-economic backgrounds. | 1.41 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 13 | Gets the students to motivate themselves by confronting them in the presence of classmates during group discussions. | 1.81 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 16 | Uses one basic teaching method because the professor has found that most adults have a similar style of learning. | 1.82 | Very Teacher-Centered |
| 19 | Uses written tests to assess the degree of academic growth in learning rather than to indicate new directions for learning. | 1.74 | Very Teacher-Centered |
| 21 | Uses what history has proven that adults need to learn as the chief criteria for planning learning episodes. | 1.82 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 29 | Uses methods that foster quiet, productive, deskwork. | 1.78 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 30 | Uses tests as the chief method of evaluating students. | 1.78 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 38 | Uses materials that were originally designed for students in elementary and high schools. | 2.17 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 40 | Measures a student's long-term educational growth by comparing their total achievement in class to their expected performance from standardized tests. | 1.78 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| | Overall Mean | 1.80 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |

However, the scores in Table 3 indicate teachers' support for inflexible courses of instruction that do not relate to students' socio-economic backgrounds (mean 1.41), and their establishing educational objectives for all students (1.66) as well as preference for written and formal tests to assess the degree of academic growth (mean 1.74). Discipline and quiet work are preferred in classrooms (mean 1.78), which can discourage a creative and fluid learning environment among adults. For this factor, the BDMP is hence labeled by participants as somewhat teacher-centered (overall mean 1.80).

**Table 4: Personalizing Instruction**

| Item | The teaching-learning environment of the Graduate School BDMP classroom… | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 03 | Allows older students more time to complete an assignment when they need it. | 2.92 | Somewhat Student-Centered |
| 09 | Uses lecturing as the best method for presenting the subject material to adult students. | 1.75 | Very Teacher-Centered |
| 17 | Uses different techniques depending on the students being taught. | 3.17 | Somewhat Student-Centered |
| 24 | Lets each student work at their rate regardless of the amount of time it takes them to learn a new concept. | 3.11 | Somewhat Student-Centered |
| 32 | Gears the professor's instructional objectives to match the individual abilities and needs of the students. | 3.29 | Very Student-Centered |
| 35 | Allows a student's motives for participating in continuing education to be a major determinant in the planning of learning objectives. | 3.38 | Very Student-Centered |
| 37 | Gives all students in the class the same assignment on a given topic. | 1.63 | Very Teacher-Centered |
| 41 | Encourages competition among the students. | 2.01 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 42 | Uses different materials with different students. | 2.90 | Somewhat Student-Centered |
| | Overall Mean | 2.68 | Somewhat Student-Centered |

Table 4 summarizes the items for the second factor, *personalizing instruction*. Participants describe it as somewhat student-centered (mean 2.68). Results show that faculty practices in personalizing instruction are varied: though they allow the students' motives as the determinant

of their learning objectives (mean 3.38, very student-centered) yet they still use lecturing as the best method for presenting the subject material to adult students (mean 1.75, very teacher-centered). However, BDMP professors do not rely solely on lecturing, and they design the learning situation depending on the students being taught (mean 3.17).

Personalizing instruction in the BDMP encourages self-paced learning, allowing students to work at their rate (mean 3.11) and more time to complete coursework (mean 2.92).

Another teaching style is *relating to experience,* see Table 5. BDMP professors are found to plan learning sessions that take into account students' experiences, as evidenced by this factor getting the highest score (overall mean 3.35).

### Table 5: Relating to Experience

| Item | The teaching-learning environment of the Graduate School BDMP classroom… | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | Plans learning episodes to take into account the student's prior experiences. | 3.28 | Very Student-Centered |
| 31 | Plans activities that will encourage each student's growth from dependence on others to greater independence. | 3.37 | Very Student-Centered |
| 34 | Encourages the students to ask questions about the nature of their society. | 3.44 | Very Student-Centered |
| 39 | Recognizes adult learning episodes according to the problems that the students encounter in everyday life. | 3.31 | Very Student-Centered |
| 43 | Helps students relate new learning to their prior experiences. | 3.43 | Very Student-Centered |
| 44 | Teaches courses of instruction about problems of everyday living. | 3.28 | Very Student-Centered |
| | Overall Mean | 3.35 | Very Student-Centered |

This indicates a very student-centered approach, recognition of the importance of encouraging students to ask questions about their society (mean 3.44) and relate new learning to prior experiences (mean 3.43). This result is relevant because 92% of the BDMP graduate students hold careers and have work experience.

### Table 6: Assessing Student Needs

| Item | The teaching-learning environment of the Graduate School BDMP classroom… | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 05 | Helps students diagnose the gaps between their goals and their present level of performance. | 3.33 | Very Student-Centered |
| 08 | Shows the professor to participate in the informal counseling of students. | 3.17 | Somewhat Student-Centered |
| 23 | This shows the professor has individual conferences to help students to identify their educational needs. | 3.28 | Very Student-Centered |
| 25 | Helps students to develop short-range as well as long-range objectives. | 3.37 | Very Student-Centered |
| | Overall Mean | 3.29 | Very Student-Centered |

*Assessing student needs* is the fourth factor that describes a teaching-learning approach in the classroom of adults (Table 6). The high score (overall mean 3.29) points to very student-centered practices of determining and addressing the needs of BDMP students. Their teachers help students diagnose the gaps between their goals and their present level of performance (mean 3.33). The BDMP classroom environment helps the adult learners develop short-range as well as long-range objectives (mean 3.27) through regular conferences between teachers and students (3.28). Professors conduct regular informal counseling or consultation sessions with students (mean 3.17).

Table 7 shows the results for the fifth factor of adult learning teaching style, *climate building*. Teachers initiate the classroom environment – the social situation which influences and encourages interaction. A high score (overall mean 3.30, very student-centered) reflects that BDMP teachers trying to establish a learning climate that is friendly and comfortable for the adult learner – including dialogue among the students (mean 3.54), accepting errors as part of the learning process (mean 3.34), and utilizing the different competencies of adult students (mean 3.25).

**Table 7: Climate Building**

| Item | The teaching-learning environment of the Graduate School BDMP classroom… | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | Encourages dialogue among the students. | 3.54 | Very Student-Centered |
| 20 | Utilizes the many competencies that most adults already possess to achieve the educational objective. | 3.25 | Somewhat Student-Centered |
| 22 | Accepts errors as a natural part of the learning process. | 3.34 | Very Student-Centered |
| 28 | Allows the students to take periodic breaks during the class. | 3.03 | Somewhat Student-Centered |
| | Overall Mean | 3.30 | Very Student-Centered |

**Table 8: Participation in the Learning Process**

| Item | The teaching-learning environment of the Graduate School BDMP classroom… | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | Allows students to participate in developing the criteria for evaluating their performance in class. | 3.34 | Very Student-Centered |
| 10 | Arranges the classroom so that it is easy for students to interact. | 3.24 | Somewhat Student-Centered |
| 15 | Allows students to participate in making decisions about the topics that will be covered in class. | 3.36 | Very Student-Centered |
| 36 | Allows the students to identify the problems that need to be solved. | 3.34 | Very Student-Centered |
| | Overall Mean | 3.32 | Very Student-Centered |

Another important factor of the teaching-learning approach is *participation in the learning process*. Table 8 shows a high score of (overall mean 3.32), interpreted as a very student-centered approach by BDMP teachers. This demonstrates that through the course of the semester, teachers can let students participate in making decisions about the particular topics that will be covered in class (mean 3.36). Teachers also allow students to help identify which priority problems need to be solved (mean 3.34) and participate in the development of the criteria for

evaluating their performance (mean 3.34). As students take responsibility for their learning, teachers prepare the classroom so that it is easy for students to interact (mean 3.24).

The last factor involves *flexibility for personal development,* see Table 9. The participants of the study gave this a low score (overall mean 1.73) signifying a very teacher-centered approach. This suggests that a disciplined classroom is a major consideration for learning (mean 1.53). The BDMP teacher is shown as a provider of knowledge rather than as a resource person or facilitator (mean 1.69). Professors also stick to the program objectives previously established (mean 1.70).

**Table 9: Flexibility for Personal Development**

| Item | The teaching-learning environment of the Graduate School BDMP classroom… | Mean | Interpretation |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| 06 | Shows the professor to provide knowledge rather than serve as a resource person. | 1.69 | Very Teacher-Centered |
| 07 | Sticks to the instructional objectives established at the beginning of the program. | 1.70 | Very Teacher-Centered |
| 26 | Maintains a well-disciplined classroom to reduce interferences to learning. | 1.53 | Very Teacher-Centered |
| 27 | Avoids discussion of controversial subjects that involve value judgments. | 1.88 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| 33 | Avoids issues that relate to the student's concept of themselves. | 1.87 | Somewhat Teacher-Centered |
| | Overall Mean | 1.73 | Very Teacher-Centered |

In this approach to teaching and learning, there is no flexibility in the instructional objectives, the students' concept of themselves and their value judgments is avoided (mean 1.88). The low score on this factor appears consistent with the low score given by the students for the factor on Learner-Centered activities.

In summary, only in two out of the seven factors on the principles of adult learning has the BDMP been found wanting by student participants.

**Adult Learning Activities**

Andragogy is a teaching philosophy or approach that espouses student-centered while the teaching methods of graduate school professors include their interpersonal approach to facilitate the learning of adult students, these methods are delivered through different means or activities. Activities in graduate school are unique because they must consider that the students are life-centered yet time-pressured individuals who directed themselves to learn. Students assess the teaching-learning methods of the BDMP through their actual classroom activities (Fig. 2).
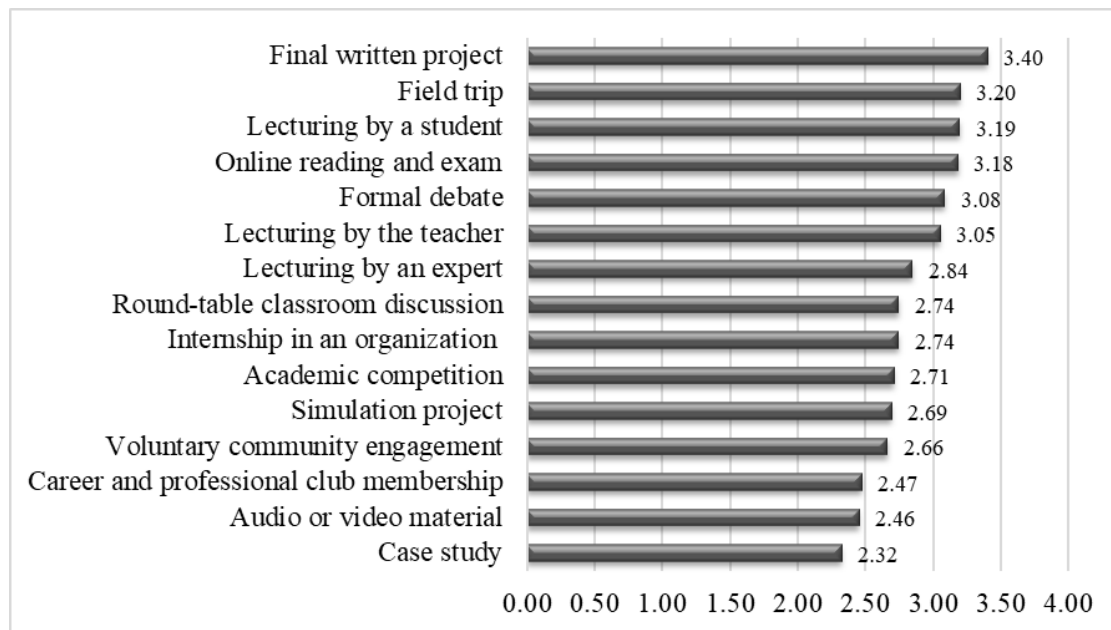
*(Range of mean scores and interpretation: 3.26-4.00=always; 2.51-3.25=usually; 1.76-2.50=rarely; 1.00-1.75=never)*

**Figure 2: Teaching-Learning Activities in the Classroom**

According to participants, BDMP classes almost *always* require a final written project (mean 3.40). These are usually experiential projects conducted by students, either individually or in small teams. Final written projects summarize and highlight course objectives and the student's growth in the course. Final written projects can include individual policy analysis, team workshop documentation, rapid research with limited participants, and technology need assessment with a chosen industry partner. The final written project supports the philosophy of adult education that students want to learn through experiential learning.

Case studies describe real-life management issues, theories, analysis, and proposed solutions and thus develop the problem-solving skills of students. Often used in teaching management, case studies allow students to apply theory to a real management problem. However, according to them, these are *rarely* applied (mean 2.32) as a teaching-learning method in the BDMP. Good and full-length business and management case studies are purchased by the university. To manage costs, some classes use shorter and similar versions found in books and the Internet.

Lectures as a learning activity are the most basic of teaching methods. Important to note, however, is that providing knowledge within the classroom is not dominated by the BDMP professors (mean 3.05) as there are more opportunities for students to share what they know (mean 3.19) from their self-study or actual work skills and proficiency. Experts from the industry are also invited (mean 2.84) to help enrich the learning experience.

The other teaching-learning activities *usually* utilized in management classrooms are field trips (mean 3.20), online reading and examinations (mean 3.18), formal debate (mean 3.08) and round-table discussion (mean 2.74) inside the classroom, an internship in an organization (mean 2.74) through the course project, academic competition (mean 2.71) within the classroom and

the program, course simulation project (mean 2.69), and voluntary engagement and interaction with members of the community (mean 2.66).

However, there remains an opportunity for professors to engage students through audio or video materials (mean 2.46) aside from lectures and inspire the adult learners to draw knowledge, experience, and networking from career and professional club membership (mean 2.47). These teaching-learning methods are still *rarely* used in the BDMP. The first is gaining popularity due to access to computer and Internet technology, and the second encourages practical knowledge through academic engagements outside the classroom.

## Discussion

### Implications of Research

This study, through the assessment of students, shows that the teaching-learning methods in the Business Development and Management Program (BDMP) of the graduate school are *somewhat student-centered*. This is important for the Graduate School since it is the department of the university which serves adult students who are at the apex of their learning journey.

A One-Way ANOVA test resulted in an F-statistic of 0.1696 and a significance level or p-value of 0.8441, demonstrating that there is no significant difference among the Principles of Adult Learning Scale results among the students – whether they are enrolled in MBM, MPSM, or DM. This may be explained by the graduate school's practice of hiring professors to teach across the three-degree offerings of the Business Development and Management Program; hence, the general experience of the students can be described as typically similar. An important thing to consider is that almost all faculty members are teaching in the graduate school on a part-time basis; their main profession may be in the industry, or they are teaching in the college or tertiary level of the university.

This Philippine university needs the BDMP to identify improvement areas to better deliver its promise of providing quality education and this research provides the chance to do that. This study brings out how adult students characterize their learning experience through the teaching methods and styles of their professors. The study recognizes new initiatives and good practices and identifies areas of improvement – like the level of expertise and preparation of the faculty members. For example, because of the complexity of the case study methodology, some faculty members may avoid conducting it as a teaching activity.

The research also comes at an opportune time, when the university embarks on a paradigm shift for teachers to introduce student agency among its higher levels. Student agency fully supports student-learning methods of teaching-learning, and the graduate school can lead the way.

This study measures the teaching styles of the BDMP faculty of a graduate school through the experiences of the students, rather than by self-assessments of the teachers. Classroom environments and conditions are defined by the experience of students more than by the

curriculum and the syllabus. This study confirms the principles of adult learning, allowing student-participants to paint the picture of their experience.

**Recommendations**

Results of this study can be offered to this Philippine graduate school for the review and improvement of its curriculum and course syllabi, as well as for the career development of its instructors. By ascertaining the various teaching styles and methods appropriate for graduate education through various literature and studies and using them as benchmarks for improving the teaching-learning experiences of its students, this study reminds BMDP professors to practice the ways of adult education in their classrooms.

- Specifically, learner-centered activities and flexibility for personal development can be fostered to provide student learning for adults. Understandably, the graduate school curriculum provides a specific and planned instruction process as approved by education regulatory bodies. But faculty members of the BDMP can foster adult education by designing a syllabus linked to the experience of students, and incorporating more activities that are responsive to the prerequisites of an adult learner. While the BDMP operates following the general policies, standards, and guidelines (PSGs) for graduate programs, on the one hand, the graduate programs must also direct courses that allow the full degree of independence as described by the Philippine Qualifications Framework. This means a high substantial degree of independence in individual or teamwork that demands leadership for research and creativity, as well as autonomy and accountability. This is usually encouraged in the final written project of students, but this can also be brought into the weekly engagements between teachers and adult students.

- Secondly, flexibility for personal development makes the teacher a knowledge facilitator and not the sole source of knowledge. Teachers must engage the students in content, connection, and application of their personal development so they are motivated to learn and can bring their own experiences to the learning process. These can include activities that involve solving problems which they may meet in their personal and work life and even provide them an opportunity of improving themselves and even their status. Most students in the BDMP take their graduate studies for professional growth - so they may prepare for a promotion or a higher rank and responsibility. Aside from inviting experts to provide supplemental lectures, professors in the BDMP can adopt case studies that provide rich information on various management functions. The university must invest in purchasing and subscribing to databases with these stories through the viewpoint of real people and real organizations – as this can effectively present situations that business and management students may face and need to resolve in their workplace. By performing case studies, aided by simulation projects through the aid of audio and video materials, professors can bring learning beyond the four walls of the classroom.

- Thirdly, adult students must be allowed to see immediate application for their learning and where they can also share what they know. Community engagement and project simulations will allow BDMP classes to collaborate with the real players from the industry. Students may work on their final written projects in partnerships with managers, entrepreneurs, special government projects, and organizations. Their overall learning will be strengthened by the implementation, and thus the validation, of their knowledge. The BDMP can create a network of private and public partnerships for its various activities.

- Focused and engaging faculty development can never be overemphasized. The BMDP, acting as the body that organizes, supervises, and evaluates the curriculum, procedures, and personnel of the MBM, MPSM, and DM cluster, must equip its teachers with their knowledge, skills, and values about andragogy that will escort them to the application of well-balanced and effective teaching-learning methods for adult learners.

- Looking forward, the study can be expanded into correlational research and even include the assessments of teachers to create a more comprehensive analysis and help BDMP ensure that its adult students learn through teaching styles and classroom activities that are sensitive to their needs. Learning styles are defined by teaching styles. The Business Development and Management Program of the graduate school can seek opportunities to make the learning experience revolve around the students themselves and thus better understand the challenge of andragogy. The BDMP can also embark on continuing research about the preferred teaching and learning methods of students, their limitations and challenges, the effective teaching methods particularly for business and management students, and the role of student-centered learning in online or distance education, which is marked by a strong preference among contemporary adult learners.

**Conclusion**

Students learn the way the teachers teach. But more importantly, teachers must teach the way students learn. For professors teaching adults in graduate school, this means an understanding of andragogy – where the learning environment must be characterized by equality, mutual respect, collaboration in planning and objective setting, inquiry and independent study, and self-assessment (Herod, 2012).

To summarize the results of the PALS factors, the Business Development and Management Program of this particular Philippine Graduate School has classrooms with a general environment that succeeded to satisfy the principles of andragogy and adult learning, namely in the following factors: relating to experience, participation in the learning process, climate building, assessing student needs, and personalizing instruction.

While this is an achievement for the BDMP, this finding is better understood through a closer look at each of the seven teaching styles to find areas for improvement. Therefore, to be able to

continue its practical approach to the principles of adult learning, the Graduate School BDMP needs to improve its learner-centered activities and flexibility for personal development.

The principles of adult learning translate into the activities that the faculty introduce in the classroom. The BDMP must understand student perspectives on how to effectively teach management to adult learners who are professionals themselves because, at end of the day, the professors of the graduate school must be held to higher standards of teaching.

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