

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter presents discussion of the findings as they relate to the literature, conclusion and recommendations, and limitation of the study.

#### Discussion of the Research Findings

The online course is an alternative method to improve professional knowledge and skills. The LCM online course was designed to meet the needs of executive nurses among ASEAN countries in order to overcome leadership and change management skills. The content modules provided rich information enough to inspire participants' practical application in their workplace. Moreover, the learning activities encouraged participants from ASEAN countries to make meaningful interactions among participants and resource persons.

Further, the online content module produced by experts from various countries is also another powerful component to empower the online course that resulted participants' satisfaction.

One of the key aspects of maintaining a sense of community online in this research was "reflection" or "Knowledge Sharing" session. Phillips (2005) suggested that the uses of active learning strategies in online education could enhance learning outcomes. The main purpose of these reflective activities was to encourage participants to critically analyze what they were learning and openly share their thoughts among participants. Educators served as facilitators played an important role in promoting self-learning and achieving learning outcomes through web-based communication (He & Hu, 2012).

Effective facilitators keep encouraging and supporting participants to share their knowledge and experiences openly, regularly and timely. The similarity and differences of the individual or community of practice were explored and discussed. It was agreed that any answers provided by participants to questions posed were neither true nor false, thus encouraging all to contribute to the discussion and to learn from others. This process fostered

the building of relationships and networks among the participants and the facilitators. Haggerty (2009) asserts that trust relationship is necessary to build up social presence and interaction between learners and teaching staff.

The effectiveness of the orientation to the program was essential to the success of this online course. Though the face-to-face orientation class was not arranged in this study, the online orientation module should be effective enough for participants to familiarize online learning environment and get ready in studying the online course. However, some registered participants withdrew from the study. This may have been because of internet access barriers and work pressures. Williams, Gunter & Nicholas (2006) state that accessible, computer literacy and technical issues can be barriers to the establishment of a virtual community of practice. Most participants reported that they had problems with internet access that extended the time completing modules. The obstacles related to online study were stated above.

Finally, the face to face intensive seminar created the space for participants to explore the meaningfulness of the information they had acquired and its application to practice. It provided an opportunity for participants from many countries to share their experiences, brainstorm and to creatively construct the “leadership competencies for ASEAN nurses”. This is the highlight of the powerful online course in the new era of education that very much associated with online sustainable communities of learners (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek 2012; Cleveland-Innes 2010).

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

Since the LCM project based on the connectivism approach, the development of the online course on “Leadership Development and Change Management for Nurse Executives in ASEAN Countries” was therefore focused on learning process and facilitated by researchers as facilitators, bringing people altogether, as well as building up ASEAN network. According to a principle of connectivism, it is also believed that “a right answer today now, it may be wrong tomorrow”. As a result, supporting, mentoring, and monitoring approach to participants throughout the online course by facilitators were quite necessary to encourage their continuous attendance in the entire online course, and to become lifelong learners.

The Connectivism approach places emphasis on the learning process; it also inspires participants to apply knowledge to practice concurrently. This program realized good learning outcomes that included participants gaining knowledge and experiences, as well as building networks among ASEAN nurses. This online course demonstrated that it is innovative and different from other online discussions and other courses.

Therefore, if this important course in ASEAN region is to be distributed to ASEAN nurses, particularly to nurse in other countries who did not have opportunity to attend this course, they need to be provided with additional assistance to ensure they are able to successfully attend the online course in the future. Moreover, the online course can be further developed by considering possible ways in which such a training course could be improved in the future.

Future research should be designed with controlled trial design and larger sample sizes to better evaluate the effectiveness of this program. The participants need to be selected with inclusion and exclusion criteria in order to limit attrition occurring particularly related to infrastructure access namely reliable internet access and work time release to complete the program. The findings would be beneficial to design the most effective online nursing course.

### **Limitations of the Research**

There are several limitations in this study. The major limitation of this study is the small sample size, making it difficult to generalize the results to a larger population. In addition, the small sample size contributes to the low statistical power of the study. The small sample size was due to the limited time frame for course announcement. The second limitation was the limited time frame. The study took place in a specific and limited time frame. Some participants found it difficult to complete the course within the schedule timeframe due. The next limitation was the research design utilized to evaluate the program. Quasi-experimental design without randomization and a control group is not as strong a design as other designs such as an RCT which yield more robust definitive outcomes. The convenient sample and lack of randomization limit generalization of the study findings but provide preliminary information to improve the online program for ASEAN executive nurses.