

Category: Review, integrative, policy or conceptual papers

From “traditional” PhD thesis to thesis “by publication”: Reasons & narratives

Dr Amelie Hanna , PhD
Amelie.Hanna@outlook.com.au
Flinders University

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/Amelie-Hanna>

Prof Lindsey Conner
Lindsey.Conner@flinders.edu.au
Flinders University

<https://www.flinders.edu.au/people/lindsey.conner>

Background: In 2006, I won University President Scholarship (UPS) from the University of South Australia (UniSA) as International Student from Egypt. During my candidature in UniSA, I presented 18 research papers in national and international conferences and forums from my research, some of them were peer-reviewed. As an international student with restricted visa duration, it was too risky to do the PhD by publication because the publication process has no standard timeframe. Although I was considered one of top five PhD Candidates in UniSA, and this led to spending the last three months of candidature at Hawke Research Institute, I could not find a space in academia due to “collapse” in research funding. Many academics started to lose their positions due to lack of funding. These experienced academics are competing with early career researchers where more value is given to “publications” in highly ranked journals.

Method: As an auto-biographer, I am sharing my experience with those interested in research, academia and research education. In an attempt to overcome this barrier, I have approached a number of journals, after my graduation, but the lengthy process in the review and then rejection has widened the gap. At that time, I lost connection with my previous supervisors for many different reasons and lost access to the university library – so, I did not know what to do or where to go. In 2015, I became an Australian Citizen. In 2016, there was an introduction for Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) which allows people to do equivalent degrees. I have searched a number of universities to apply for another doctorate program, and I was looking if they offer it “by publications”, to overcome my academic career interruption and enhance my journal article publications profile.

Findings & Recommendations: I successfully won the RTP Scholarship at Flinders University. I am aiming to publish research papers out of my research with collaboration with my PhD supervisors. The dynamic nature of academia at the moment has its impact on research students and their supervisors. I am sharing my experience so universities and research supervisors promote the form of “thesis by publications” – as it benefits universities by increasing the university impact, research students by helping them to avoid the overwhelming effort of managing lengthy “traditional thesis” and at the same time, enabling them the experience in research publishing, and research supervisors by being active contributors and maintaining the interest in their students’ research. During my application process, there was significant variation in the number of papers required and their peer-reviewed status at the time of thesis submission for which the policy makers need to consider to establish a common practice for more clarity.

Keywords: autobiography, thesis models, conventional thesis, thesis by publications, and research education.

References:

- Gough, K. 2008, 'Writing a PhD as (published) papers', *Publishing in Geography: Guide for New Researchers*, pp. 21-25.
- Mason, S. & Merga, M. 2018, 'A current view of the thesis by publication in the humanities and social sciences', *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, vol. 13, p. 139-154.
- Merga, M. K. 2015, 'Thesis by publication in education: An autoethnographic perspective for educational researchers', *Issues in Educational Research*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 291-308.
- Nethsinghe, R. & Southcott, J. 2018, 'A juggling act: Supervisor/candidate partnership in a doctoral thesis by publication', *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, vol. 10, pp. 167-185.