Introducing Thesis Research Notes

Introducing Thesis Research Notes in *ALARj*

Action Learning, Action Research Association has decided to add Thesis Research Notes (TRNs) to the *Action Learning and Action Research Journal*. A TRN is an informative paper that directly refers to and links to the author's thesis to 'whet the reader's appetite' to consider downloading and reading it as well as to gain an appreciation of the HDR candidate's research journey, motivation to choose the research topic, maintain interest in the many years taken to complete the research, and university's support.

The purpose of the TRN is that:

- Academics get early exposure to the work, given that most recent theses will have several if not many papers but these fade out over the years;

- Supervisors of HDR candidates (Master and Ph.D.) get an idea of what is currently happening in terms of trends and topics, as will the general readership of *ALARj*;

- Candidates and potential candidates get an idea of what are the motives and characteristics of their fellow travelers along this fantastic journey; and

- The TRN should provide an engaging account that offers the reader with a better understanding of what makes a HDR candidate 'tick' and what seems like a good topic, and how it was tackled, and recognition that its contribution is about understanding how the field of Action Learning / Action Research (AL/AR) is evolving.

Thesis Research Notes Guidelines for *ALARj*

Nature of questions posed by the TRN

The TRN is not a scaled-down paper on the masters or doctoral thesis that had been submitted and successfully passed. It is intended as an informative paper that directly refers to and links to the author's thesis to 'whet the reader's appetite' to consider downloading and reading it. In addition, it should help the reader gain an appreciation of the HDR candidate's research journey, motivation to choose the research topic, maintain interest in the many years taken to complete the research, and university's support.

The questions addressed in a TRN can be summarised as:

1. What was this thesis generally about in terms of the research and/or practice gap it sought to bridge: why should it be of interest to the reader?

    a) An E-link should be provided to enable interested readers to download a pdf of the thesis having their interest hopefully whetted by the TRN.

2. How did the HDR researcher become interested enough in the topic to undertake the 2-3+ year full-time equivalent study? To answer this question, provide:

    a) A brief explanation of the context of the background topic context that presented a research and practice gap opportunity to fill;

    b) A brief explanation of how the HDR candidate's academic and work experience led to this topic interest (often from a gut-gnawing niggling question that plagued the candidate for several years, perhaps?).

    c) Details of the possible influence that the chosen academic institution had on the HDR candidate, such

> as its research track record, scholarship incentive, or the reputation of the candidate's supervisor.

3. How was the research undertaken?

    a) A brief explanation of the general literature areas that were investigated throughout the doctorate to inform the thesis;

    b) A brief explanation of the action research or participatory research approach adopted and how it was deemed appropriate for the research question the thesis addressed.

    c) A brief discussion and summary of the research key findings and the contributions made.

    d) A brief account of how the university supported (or failed to support) the study so that readers may understand the type and level of support offered to HDR candidates.

4. What was the personal journey undertaken through the thesis research work?

    a) A brief explanation of the mode (full/part-time), whether undertaken at the university or remotely, and how that mode experience helped/hindered progress; whether the research was conducted in the workplace as action research or other participatory approaches.

    b) What if any were significant moments or events that are worth sharing.

    c) What career/personal opportunities opened up from the work?

    d) What areas of research or practice is the candidate now pursuing because of the research.

The aims for TRNs can be summarised as:

1. Provide readers access to recent (within the past 12-24 months) HDR theses / dissertations that have used participatory approaches to conduct the research. When reading an interesting paper, a reader is often intrigued by the topic and would like to find more about the author's work. While authors might have cited several related articles of theirs, the primary and core source is their thesis. It would be beneficial to know a little more about the thesis, its context, and how to download it electronically for further detail.

2. Provide a *summary* of the thesis. All theses require a summary at the start of the thesis, usually about 1000 to 1500 words; this can be used with modifications as the basis of the thesis note. There may also be a similar amount of content, perhaps a page or two with a helpful figure summarising a conceptual model or the findings. Usually, an outline only of the research approach is included. The idea is to provide a summary and not a full paper, and the author may have already written one or several papers already that are in print or under review.

3. Provide a context of the thesis. It would be interesting to know a little about the thesis authors and their journey to the thesis topic. Generally, they are reflective practitioners and have an interesting background that led them to this topic. After reading the thesis note, other readers may be prompted to follow a similar journey.

4. Provide a context for the university where the thesis was developed. Most readers are unaware of the variety of schools, universities, and opportunities to undertake a doctorate on a research topic. Many readers would be interested in a description or short contextual setting of the university and the research expertise that can be accessed. A short section of about a half to one page could provide useful information for readers about what opportunities are

available to conduct action research at the masters or doctoral level.

5.   Indicate outcomes from the work. The thesis notes should cite papers presented at conferences, journal papers, and any other IP outcomes such as a patent, invention, new process, or whatever else may be of practical use that came out of the work.

6.   A URL where the thesis can be downloaded. People would like to be able to download the thesis, even if it is in a language other than English.

The paper should be about 10-14 pages or about 4,000-8,000 words excluding references. It is usually co-authored with the thesis supervisor, who can add insights for where that work is now heading, the institution's philosophy that supported the research, and any other relevant issues to deliver the doctorate.

Acknowledgment

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