Macro-structures of action research articles
Old bottles for new wine?

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Action Research

- Action Research
- Participatory Action Research
- Collaborative Research
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Emancipatory Research
- Evidence-based Research
Goals of AR

• To solve an immediate problem in a particular context
• To engage the researched (stakeholders) in individual and collective reflection/learning
• To generate knowledge or theory (effective guidelines for actions)
Process and methods

- Cyclical
- Methods
- Outcomes
- Contingencies
- Reflection & learning
Reporting AR

Would the traditional structure of empirical research article (IMRD) work for reporting action research?

“Can we pour new wine into old bottles?”
(Canagarajah, 1996)
Experimenting with genres

- Ethnodramas
- Slideshows
- Poetry
- Works of art
- Booklets
- Web-based dissemination

Mostly for the researched and readers outside of academia

- Formal reporting to academic and/or bureaucratic audience
- IMRD still advocated

How do AR authors grapple with the IMRD structure that is not intended for reporting AR?
Research questions

1. Do AR articles follow the conventional IMRD structure advocated in guidebooks?
2. Are there alternative structures which accommodate the unique nature of AR?
3. How are the alternative structures different from the IMRD structure?
Data

- 30 AR articles
- 11 Hospitality and Tourism journals (SSCI-listed)
- Publication years: 2006-2018
Number of sections

- Total 222
- Min: 3 sections (N=1)
- Max: 14 sections (N=2)
- Ave: 7.4 sections/article
## Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic sections and their names</th>
<th>I, M, R, D (plus variant names)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other generic sections and their names identified recently</td>
<td>LR, Closing section names (e.g., Conclusion, Summary, Implications, Contributions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others functional headings identified in the current corpus</td>
<td>Research Questions, Site, Research Approach, Action Research, Development, Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical headings</td>
<td>Marahau; Tourism in Ngadha villages; Participant Empowerment; The food diary (HACCP record keeping)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Counts of section types

57 sections 26.7%
Counts of documents carrying the sections
Types of topical sections

- Literature review (studies, theoretical framework)
- Names of places (Site)
- Development or design of solution (Development)
- Actions or methods carried out to apply a solution (Implementation)
- Methods used to evaluate a solution (Evaluation)
- Findings
- Reflection
Nature of topical sections

![Bar chart showing the nature of topical sections](chart.png)
All identifiable sections

Functional and topical combined
All identifiable sections across documents
Variations in focuses of M

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focuses</th>
<th>Number of articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach description/justification</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of project</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical study of problems/needs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of solution</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed description of all stages and outcomes in</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some of the stages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method for investigating a phenomenon in a project</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g., failure, language use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variations in content of R

- Findings of diagnosis
- Outcomes of a solution (e.g., artefacts, actions taken, etc.)
- Evaluation of solution
- Findings about a phenomenon in the project partnership/collaboration, language use, failure)
Macro-structures of AR articles?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional headings (IMRD or ILrMRDC)</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having conventional section types only (with sections carrying topical headings included)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having <em>conventional</em> and <em>unconventional</em> sections (some carrying multiple sections of the same type (e.g., I-Lr-M-R-E-E-R-D-C))</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See handout
Improvisation

Old bottles for new wine?

• Appropriating use of the Methodology section by
  – Summarizing or detailing various key stages of work in Methodology

• Improvising the conventional macro-structure by
  – Creating new sections to accommodate unique nature of AR, e.g., Development, Implementation, Evaluation and Reflection
  – Creating topical section headings for some of the new sections
Publishing strategies

• Publishing selected key stages of AR in different papers, e.g.,
  – problem analysis in one paper, solution and evaluation of solution in another.
  – analysis of failure in a separate paper
• Publishing post-action evaluation and post-post action evaluation in different papers
• Publishing a phenomenon arising from one key stage of a project (language use, or project failure).