

GAINING CLARITY ON MASTER DEGREE THESIS TOPICS



In the six years Dr. Thitiwan Sinthunok taught Human Resource Management at the Panyapiwat Institute of Management's MBA program, one recurring challenge students faced was to determine what subject to select for their research and final thesis. It is one thing to write a thesis and make it worthwhile of the Masters' diploma. But Dr. Thitiwan saw that the biggest struggle was to get started: not for lack of determination, but for lack of clarity about what they should focus their thesis on. Some were simply stuck. Others kept changing the topic and wasted time along the way. Most carried this burden alone and stressed out as time passed and deadlines grew nearer.

When Dr. Thitiwan discovered Action Learning and became certified as Action Learning coach, she introduced the methodology to her HR students. The first purpose was to ensure future HR partners in corporations were familiar with Action Learning as a powerful way to solve problems, develop leaders and build teams. But she went one step further and decided that students could only really value Action Learning once they experienced the process. She therefore used Action Learning to tackle the problem of thesis identification that had bothered many cohorts of MBA students.

The Action Learning sessions were a real breakthrough. Several problem presenters ended the session with a clear thesis topic. Others identified what concrete steps they needed to take to move towards conclusion. In addition to this direct benefit, students also appreciated that they got help from others, and managed to help others, whereas in the past this was a lonely struggle. Not by telling others what they should do, but by asking powerful questions that often created a-ha moments. Most students saved lots of time through the Action Learning process in concluding their thesis topic compared to previous semesters.

Written by Peter Cauwelier, MALC, based on an interview with Dr. Thitiwan /published2018