

Forty Days



19/08/2020

I have forty days left. It is August 19th, 2020, and September has thirty days in it, so forty days. My ideal end day is September 30th. This allows ten working days to get printing done and deliver documents to the Doctoral school admin office. So, forty days. I can finally see the finishing line, off in the near distance, but visible.

In November 2015 I made my first forays into 'doing a PhD'. My official start date is April 2016. I am now four-and-a-half years along. I've taken the usual extra year on a three year full time doctorate, because everyone does, it's probably not possible to achieve in three years unless you are super clever or working in teams. I'm neither of these, so that's my excuse. The last six months are due to analysis taking a bit longer than I thought (and personal circumstances). But still, four-and-a-half years isn't bad.

My current word count is 83,880, excluding contents, list of tables and figures, and obviously references. Nine chapters, attempting to write in a logical clear manner, taking the reader through the project, 'making thinking visible' (Shosh Leshem). How successful I have been at this remains to be seen.

I wanted to mark this day as so much has changed since the beginning, and I have changed as a person. I am less foolish, more articulate, more considered and reflective, more respectful - no, really, I am. I can sense it. These ways of being changed as a result of this level of applied study and thinking, perhaps especially when one is a single researcher on a project, are essential qualities of the process. Perhaps they are difficult to document as must be different in each person, according to character and even subject discipline, yet, something is altered, light is sensed through a different prism.

I still need to clarify issues, be more explicit with conclusions and actual outcomes, but my supervisor is stoic, offering pragmatic and very erudite feedback. He leaves it to me to interpret what he says, he isn't there to teach me, he is there to guide me. This is something else one comes to know as the project proceeds, you stop expecting a tutor, and start expecting a knowledgeable opinion.

A key aspect of 'doing a PhD' - for probably many people - is the feeling of being an interloper, somehow you sneaked in, you're not really what a 'Dr' is, you're kidding people. But I think I'm nearly ready to accept that I am no longer an interloper, I'm almost there. Just forty more days to go. Wish me luck.

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