



Practice, Interrupted

Narratively exploring a pedagogy for leadership
development with emphasis on knowledge and
power

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by

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Abstract

The choice of *Practice, Interrupted* as thesis title encapsulates the profoundly personal nature of this scholarly journey for me as a practitioner and researcher as I seek to go to the heart of my life's work in a way I never have before. As a Leadership Development (LD) Practitioner, I create and facilitate learning workspace for leadership in commercial learning environments. Through the process of unearthing and exploring concerns of a pedagogic nature, I challenge my sense of self, my understanding of how knowledge is created, and by whom, and the impact of power on the space for leadership learning. Adopting a critically reflexive stance significantly enhances my ability to deeply and at times painfully explore these aspects of my practice of LD.

This inquiry is located in an LD programme entitled 'Managers And Leaders Together' or 'MALT', which I delivered at a production facility over seven months. The espoused normative assumptions behind the 'MALT' programme design include leadership being viewed as collective, situated, dialectic and privileging 'wisdom in action.' It includes a view of leadership in organisations as neither position nor possession, which it claims is humanising. In this way, 'MALT' favours a view of leadership as practice (Raelin, 2016), emerging and unfolding from daily experience.

This study differentiates itself from prior research in three ways.

Firstly, most research into LD has focused on concerns of a macro nature – models, competencies, curriculum design and financial return. To date, there has been significantly less attention paid to *how* leadership development occurs within LD programmes, in particular, how LD practitioners prepare for and work with participant learners and their learning in workplace settings. Literature and research concerning the orientation and positioning of the LD practitioner as a pedagogue are to be found in higher education, public education, nursing and medical education. There is little evidence of such research in the commercial

workplace learning environment. I identify this as a significant gap in the literature which this study seeks to address.

Accordingly, the central purpose of the inquiry is an in-depth exploration of a pedagogy for LD. Pedagogy, as so used, focuses attention on that which takes place at the intersection of the practitioner, participants and the knowledge they produce, attending in particular to the conditions and means through which this occurs (Lather, 1994). Practice-based pedagogic choices are embedded in the MALT programme include experiential learning, reflective dialogue, meaning-oriented reflection and more. Emphasis is placed on using real-life experience as the basis for knowledge generation and meaning-making.

Secondly, concerning methodology, I take the position of insider-researcher, drawing upon narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to critically and reflexively explore my experience of delivering 'MALT' over seven months to 29 participants. Narrative methods are less frequently used in LD research. In this instance, the desire to access and understand the LD lived experience guided the choice of a story-telling methodology rich in detail and context.

The third aspect that differentiates this study is that I draw on adult education literature and learning to examine my pedagogic thinking and decision making. Echoing the predominant concerns of adult educators, I pay particular attention to discourses of knowledge and power throughout.

This study makes a claim to knowledge from several perspectives.

There is a substantive contribution in offering a fuller understanding of the lived experience of an LD practitioner as she navigates and facilitates her way through an LD programme with the concomitant insights into knowledge and power that this research positioning reveals. The methodological contribution concerns a novel use of first-person inquiry along with critical reflexivity in a field that has been previously dominated by texts relating to macro models and frameworks.

There is a significant impact on my practice, illustrating the value of engagement with ongoing critical reflexivity in LD practice and understanding the impact of pedagogic choices on knowledge creation and ways of knowing in leadership learning workspaces. As an LD practitioner, my capacity for agency and to foster agency in the participants is continually impacted by hidden discourses of power, which wind their way through the narratives. Drawing on adult learning perspectives supports the critical awareness of the impact of power in commercial learning workspace as it unfolds, enabling it to be interrogated and potentially transformed.

List of Abbreviations

BPS British Psychological Society

HR Human Resources

HRD Human Resources Development

IPD Institute of Personnel & Development

JOF (Pseudonym used for the client organisation)

LD Leadership Development

MALT Managers And Leaders Together

NI Narrative Inquiry

SGM Site General Manager

SLT Site Leadership Team

TLT Transformative Learning Theory

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Preface

Let the story begin ...

*'In a Wonderland they lie,
Dreaming as the days go by,
Dreaming as the summers die:*

*Ever drifting down the stream -
Lingering in the golden gleam -
Life, what is it but a dream? '*

THE END

From Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll
[1871] 2016: 145

What happened after....

'Alice' could never quite make out, in thinking about it later, how it was that she went back. All she remembers is one minute she was idling in a corner minding her own business, and the next was floating gently over the mildly chaotic "chessboard" she had just left behind, through the Looking Glass, not one month ago.

"There's the learning space", she exclaimed as she floated. "All the colourful introductory pictures; they took forever, and the day everyone was distracted and didn't want to be there (oh I did hate that so!). The chorus of voices in dialogue, and more voices in dialogue, and tensions, so many decisions and dilemmas to resolve...! Nerves at the beginning, excitement at the end, big ears, tightropes of leadership, everyday change, people different in form somehow but still the same people".

'Alice' sighed. She was aware of the most peculiar sensation of finishing something unscripted but extraordinary....glad to be back through the looking glass on this side but strangely bereft and unsure also.....

"Things do flow about so in there", 'Alice' said in a plaintive tone. "I'm pleased to be only looking down on it and not back there again. It was strange and confusing and all the time I was wondering was I doing it correctly, would I get there, if I could get there, wherever "there" was... What was it I was supposed to see exactly"?

'Alice' rubbed her eyes and looked again as the familiar but strangely unfamiliar landscape floated beneath her. "It would help if I could make sense of it. Write it down, think about it. Think about it some more. Maybe find a scrap of paper and a quiet corner to simply BE with what has happened on this crazy journey"'.

Before she could decide what to make of it, the urge to rhyme and reason overcame her, and a poem took shape. An ode to knowing then not knowing, then knowing again, a crazy tumbling of thought and action:

*"I'll tell thee everything I can;
There's so much to relate,
I felt a shock in every pore,
A-standing by the door.
You see, the world of learning
Is different through these eyes
There's much advantage to be got
From watching, by the bye!*

*The first was terror, through and through:
A challenge of biblical proportions,
It would be easier all round, I cried
To not bother with these contortions!
I'll keep with the theory, that I know
And tell of what they learned,
Surely this would be safer ground all round,
Than new miracles to be earned?*

*Two horses true, I certain steered
Through gates and over fences,*

*A racehorse one, sure and fly
The other a pony, timid and shy.
I watched the racehorse, certain and bold
Deliver the goods with flair and control
The pony, alas, unsure and reserved,
Tip-toed into the others preserve.*

*Decisions, decisions I muttered aloud.
Second-guessing this fair crowd.
How to structure, how to know?
How to ask, to enable the flow.
Seeking dialogue and changes,
And yearning for success,
Racehorse pushing through for gold
Pony exultant in the mess!*

*I'm no teacher, it is true.
Nor educator shiny and new.
Am I a trainer truth be told,
Or maybe a developer...
That's a bit....old?
What am I? I cried,
How on earth do I fathom
The depths of this practice?
I must traverse this chasm!"*

Extracted from research reflexive journal (July 2019)

I wrote this playful poem in a time of reflection and meaning-making. As I sat with the insights emerging from the research inquiry which follows, I found myself at a crossroads in my own learning arising from what I could see and feel but not yet fully understand. This imagined extension to a familiar work of literary fiction captures my doodle with metaphor (Modell, 1997) which helped me to creatively enter the experience of learning through research (Bolton, 2014) and make sense of it for myself.

Fiction can tell how research feels (Kara, 2013). Metaphors enable us to grasp feelings attached to reflective practice (Modell, 1997), a research method (Bolton,

2014; Etherington, 2004) used extensively in the course of this study. The metaphor is that of Alice Through the Looking Glass. In the childhood classic by Lewis Carroll [1871] (2016), Alice steps through the looking glass on her drawing-room wall out of unbridled curiosity. She finds herself in a world reversed and upside-down, familiar yet distorted, which she must figure out.

In 'Alice', I found a kindred spirit for my curious researcher self, a parallel to my own position as a researcher within my own practice. An insider-researcher (Costley, Elliott & Gibbs, 2010) puzzling her way through territory at once familiar and unfamiliar.

Alice represents me as a learner, occupying a watching and guiding position in the study which follows. She next appears to preface each of the stories or narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) at the centre of this inquiry with an apt quote for what lies ahead. The progression of the narratives is likened to that of a chessboard, a device used by Lewis Carroll to illuminate the uncertain, disjointed and changing nature of traversing unfamiliar terrain. Like the chessboard, the stories captured through the research process depict a world of enticing possibility with dilemma and challenge attached.

Carroll's story has long been associated with the life cycle trajectory: growth, development, and maturation. Echoing my watchful gaze, the implications arising from this study are offered as 'What Alice Saw', the illumination of a familiar space made unfamiliar through research. Amid "new and enticing opportunities for self-experiment, free from some of the constraints of the past" (West, 2008: 39), a maturation of sorts occurs as 'Alice' completes her poem in the postscript to this study.

Welcome to my world...

Chapter 1: Introduction

“I shall not first give an historical survey and show the development of my ideas from the theories of others, because my mind does not work that way. What happens is that I gather this and that, here and there, settle down to clinical experience, form my own theories, and then, last of all, interest myself to see where I stole what. Perhaps this is as good a method as any.”

(Winnicott, 1945, quoted in Davis & Wallbridge, 1991:4)

This dissertation is an intellectual and personal exploration of a world I have inhabited for almost thirty years. At the time of writing, I am a self-employed Leadership Development Practitioner. I have worked in this freelance capacity for thirteen years. I deliver bespoke leadership development (LD) programmes for various medium and large organisations in both the public and private sectors in Ireland, Europe and the US. The delivery of LD in workplace settings has been a part of my professional life through many varied identities throughout my thirty-year career: psychology graduate, trainee management consultant, training and development manager, HR professional and independent trainer and coach. To paraphrase Winnicott, I have gathered this and that from here and there over many years of my professional practice. In this research, I settle down to make sense of my experience to benefit my practice and others who work in similar LD spaces.

The original conception of this research study envisaged a series of post-programme interviews with past participants of LD; research conducted with the benefit of hindsight. As a result of a series of narrative “turns” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007: 7), which I explore in more detail in later chapters, it has become a great deal more complex, live and personal, than I could ever have imagined. What began for me as the educational pursuit of enhanced academic knowledge around the teaching and learning of leadership became a quest for something more fundamental – a deep and at times uncomfortable dive into my capacity, knowledge and agency as well as that of the participants with whom I work. With this gradual dawning, the relative surety of post-programme interviews faded in favour of a more challenging type of research that offered the possibility of the

"narration of experience" (Chase, 2018: 547). Such experiential focus was enabled by research in tandem with the delivery of an LD programme. The emerging "rumbling with vulnerability" (Brown, 2018: 17) as a result of this "turn" towards an active interpretation of mine and the participants' experience (Kim, 2015) is evident through reflective accounts in later chapters.

An intriguing question

In conversation with past participants of LD, I have heard that their working lives have changed as a result of their learning experience. Many reflect that complex workplace relationships have improved. They report that their communication and ability to impact interpersonally have been altered due to learning with me and with each other. Others observe a shift in their perspective on themselves, their workplace, leadership, attributing this change to their time spent in the learning environment or *learning space* for leadership. Normally, I walk away wondering what caused these changes to happen but without significant further thought until now.

This lingering curiosity brings me to a simple motivation for undertaking this research. I can see *what* is happening in the practice of LD in workplace settings – the process, structure and participation. My "particular wonder, a research puzzle" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 124) is to explore leadership development (LD) beyond the visible. I want to

Explore leadership development (LD) in the commercial learning workspaces in which it occurs.

I am motivated to question *how* and *why* participants engage, learn and grow their capacity to use their learning in the workplace. Significantly, I want to understand my role in creating the learning space for this to happen (Hall, 2004). To do this, I need to dive deeply into the influences and critical incidents that occupy my practitioner identity (Seemiller & Priest, 2015). I am enthused for an enhanced

understanding of what it means to engage in the teaching and learning of leadership in my workplace learning environment. I seek a deeper understanding of my journey of becoming and being (Priest & Jenkins, 2019) an LD practitioner.

Interrupting practice

The choice of thesis title, "*Practice: Interrupted*", reflects the deliberate decision to stand back and make my familiar LD world unfamiliar (Goodson, 1992), to capture myself "in the midst" (Clandinin, 2013: 203). It reflects a deepening of the sense of "self" (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1954, 1954); an "identity undoing" (Nicholson & Carroll, 2013: 1226) through my search for professional identity and practice knowledge.

As a result, the following study encompasses not simply the outcome of a particular programme at a place in time. It embodies an increasingly palpable preoccupation with elucidating what I have practised for years yet struggled to articulate in a theoretical framework. An opportunity for practice interruption presented itself in late 2018.

The context for research – MALT (Managers And Leaders Together)

The research site for this study is an LD Programme called MALT (Managers And Leaders Together), created for "JOF" Ltd (a pseudonym for the client organisation which has chosen to remain anonymous). JOF is a manufacturing company in the food and beverage sector, making a product sold to global markets. I was selected through a competitive tender process in 2018 to design, develop and deliver all aspects of MALT. This bespoke LD programme included a blend of classroom-based learning modules and 1:1 coaching support. The programme's primary purpose was to enhance the capacity of managers to carry out their people leadership responsibilities in line with a broad set of expectations which were identified by JOF six months before the commencement of the MALT programme. These expectations clustered around the need for managers to communicate, engage

with and develop their staff; manage performance, and recruit, recognise, and reward employees in line with company expectations for their role.

29 People Managers at JOF took part in MALT over seven months between September 2018 and March 2019 on a production site in Ireland. The delivery of the MALT LD programme was parallel to but not initiated by this doctoral research, and this study is not an evaluation of the initiative. The participants consented formally to their learning journey being the subject of this research.

Interconnected domains in the research: Leadership, LD and LD practice/practitioner

Several related domains are woven through the emerging research and related theoretical discussion: leadership as "topic" for teaching and learning, LD as programmatic learning space and the role and identity of LD practitioner and practice. I introduce each briefly in the paragraphs, which follow with a view to greater extrapolation in later chapters.

Leadership as "topic"

Leadership is the "topic" around which my practice is built. Leadership is a universal phenomenon, a part of the human psyche and features strongly in the quest for knowledge (Bass & Bass, 2008). This ubiquity means that the term leadership is in itself heavily contested (Western, 2013). There is no definitive definition of leadership and no one universal model or method within the vast swathes of writing on the topic (Priest & Jenkins, 2019). Competing theoretical positions throw up many dualities. These include leadership as universal vs particular to person and identity (Nohria & Khurana, 2010); or leadership as a doing and thinking set of acquired competencies (Bolden & Gosling, 2006) vs leadership capacity as a function of being and becoming through growth and identity work (Petriglieri, 2012). There is evidence of increased consideration in the last ten years of leadership from both practice (e.g. Raelin, 2016; Carroll, Levy & Richmond, 2008) and critical viewpoints (e.g. Western, 2013; Dugan, 2017). These perspectives are explored in greater detail in Chapter 3 as they relate to the research purpose.

It is important to note that this study does not purport to examine the "vast and sprawling field" of leadership, a domain lacking "contours or boundaries" (Nohria & Khurana, 2010: 6). That said, it would be impossible to deeply examine the dynamics of how LD occurs without consideration of leadership as both the object of knowledge in LD and the intended outcome of the learning process. This interconnection between the topic and how it is taught and learned (Ganz & Lin, 2012) is of significant interest within this study. Against that backdrop, detailed consideration is given in later chapters to how leadership is framed in the working world, and by whom (Snook, Nohria & Khurana, 2012; Kellerman, 2010); how that understanding shapes expectations and enactment of leadership in organisations, and the impact of such expectations and beliefs on the participants and me as practitioner engaged in LD (Marsick & Watkins, 1990; Billett, 2002).

Leadership Development (LD) in the context of this research

There is no one best way in LD (Snook et al., 2012), no prescription or agreement on best practice in a fragmented field that spans academia, industry and practice in almost all realms of society. In practice, however, just as in the literature, there is much confusion over crucial terms and concepts in LD and how they are used (Snook, 2008). As a result, LD programmes vary widely in complexity, duration, cost and orientation.

As with the topic of leadership, the LD focus within this research is on the particular (Cresswell, 2007), not the general. The locus of this study, MALT, is a bespoke LD programme blending classroom learning with 1:1 coaching support. In appearance and physical manifestation, MALT is congruent with a widely held view of LD as the teaching and learning of leadership as concerned with expanding the capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes (Riggio, 2008; Van Velsor, McCauley & Ruderman, 2010). What is different is the challenge posed by this research, to deeply consider where opportunity resides to create significant leadership learning (Owen, 2015) as MALT proceeds. Throughout the study, theoretical positions on the

future of LD as active, versatile and engaged (Brown & Posner, 2001) are critiqued. Pedagogic choices in the LD learning space are reflexively considered before, during and after their enactment in pursuit of educationally meaningful LD (Dugan, 2011). This willingness to work with the locus and context for lived leadership (Dugan & Humbles, 2018) will, it is envisaged, lead to informed, and ultimately better, LD practice as a result.

My LD Practice

There is substantial literature on professional practice and practice-based research (e.g. Costley et al., 2010; Drake & Heath, 2010; Costley & Fulton, 2018), yet surprisingly few attend to the meaning of "practice" per se. Kustermans (2016) defines "practice" as "a moving target" (p. 75), drawn from multiple intellectual traditions relating variously to process, knowledge, action and institution at the point of delivery. A simple definition of practice as "doing all of our doings" (Kustermans, 2016: 194), reflects the everywhere and continuous nature of practice. Over a century ago, John Dewey cautioned that "immediate skill may be got at the cost of power to go on growing" (1904: 15), in the case of educating teachers for practice. Despite the 100-year gap, both commentators speak to the ongoing, evolving and adaptive expertise (Steadman, 2018) required for practice.

Drawing on these observations, I propose that LD practice as described throughout this research represents an approach to the teaching and learning of leadership predicated on wisdom and experience alongside a willingness to be open to possibility. As I describe it, LD practice values the ongoing and unique nature of the learning process in MALT; fosters the capacity for change and growth inherent in the learning workspace (Steadman, 2018) and demonstrates the adaptive capacity to manage the demanding environment of workplace learning.

Locating LD practice thus raises many implications for my research. I have become a skilled practitioner in the way that one becomes a skilled craftsman – through a combination of theoretical knowledge, practice, on the job training and almost thirty years of experience. The creation of educationally meaningful LD experiences

is an intricate, nuanced business (Dugan, 2011) however. As with any skilled practitioner, I am vulnerable to playing out my own preferences, privileges, patterns and habits repeatedly and often without question (Owen, 2015). Deepening the practice "craft", in my case, the delivery of LD necessitates interrupting my flow and "teaching with intentionality" (Owen, 2015: 47), seeking to understand causation proactively, ponder agency and examine the ethics and impact of my choices and beliefs in action.

Me as LD practitioner

At the confluence of leadership, LD and the learning space is me. I identify myself as an LD practitioner throughout this research process. Drawing on Green (2009), I view myself as enacting a professional service for a fee. This necessitates invoking my expertise gained over time, drawing on reflexive experience and is contextualised to the locus of teaching and learning leadership in the development environments I enable (after Green, 2009). My educational background is in psychology. My work experience of almost thirty years is in business, predominantly in the design and delivery of LD, a practice that draws erratically from a multiplicity of disciplines and intellectual traditions (Nohria & Khurana, 2010).

I work in business, delivering LD in workplaces. I describe the learning spaces I create as *commercial* learning workspaces for several significant reasons. I work with managers who are expected and supported to perform in prescribed roles involving leadership responsibility for other people, process, change, fiscal return and more. I get paid a daily rate to deliver training and development programmes and associated activities such as coaching. Return on investment is crucial and includes return on the time and effort invested in LD programmes (Kellerman, 2012). Such programmes are typically time-bound, taking place during working hours and are located on or close to the participants' workplace, at a place of the organisations choosing, for ease of access and logistics. Principally, I am supportive of all of this. I aim to deliver a rewarding and performance-enhancing experience each time I begin a new LD programme. Nevertheless, I have questions and

concerns which have accelerated in volume in recent years. Scanning the landscape of research in LD, it appears I am not alone.

LD Research – the current landscape

LD programmes in organisations have been studied extensively since the initiation of such interventions on a large scale by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in the US in 1983 (Black & Earnest, 2009). Such interest is hardly surprising considering the significant sums of money invested by organisations worldwide on educating their leaders, estimated at \$365 billion spent globally in 2015 (Beer, Finnström & Schrader, 2016).

Later chapters will explore the literature on leadership and LD in greater detail to contextualise and inform the research undertaken. A much-debated question centres on whether LD delivers what it sets out to do. And if not, why not? There is a widespread perception that leadership skills are abstract, complex and challenging to learn, requiring a significant investment of time and money (Riggio, 2008). Generally agreed is that there is no "quick fix" (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2012: 265). However, many organisations actively seek a quick fix solution - prescriptive, off the shelf (Kellerman, 2012) or "canned" models (Riggio, 2008: 390) of LD, which is economically and administratively attractive yet questionable in impact.

In the last 20 years, in particular, several consultant-authors, business school thought leaders and academic-authors had voiced increasing concern about what they perceive as the minimal impact of LD initiatives (e.g. Raelin, 2003, 2009, 2013; Kellerman, 2012; Western, 2013; Rowland, 2016; Pfeffer, 2016; Tourish, 2019). Their concerns include challenges to leadership learning practice as being narrow and pedagogically rigid (e.g. Raelin, 2015; Rowland, 2016), simplistic in approach and disconnected from reality (e.g. Tourish & Barge, 2010; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Others accuse LD of being overly enamoured with competency frameworks that potentially mislead (e.g. Bolden & Gosling, 2006; Grint, 2007; Carroll et al., 2008). Such misdirection can underplay the impact of relational aspects,

organisational context, change and collective agency on leadership capacity (e.g. Dugan, 2011; Raelin, 2018; Scharmer, 2018).

Just as the notion of leadership itself is “deeply contested” (Tourish & Barge, 2010: 329), it appears that LD as a pedagogical model by which leadership theory is translated into learning and action is at a point of significant challenge. There is much-presumed effectiveness amid the simplification of complex processes in a field that struggles to adapt and apply leadership theory as leadership learning (Dugan, 2011). The field has reached a critical stage (Snook et al., 2012) in the ability to discharge its' educational brief well. It “*must get better*” (Riggio, 2008: 390 *emphasis in the original text*).

My vision and motivation for research

“As someone who had worked with adult learners for more than 20 years, I knew that there had to be a theory that described how they learned and why they learned that way.”
(Kitchenham, 2008: 104)

My questions and concerns regarding LD are allied to the increasing realisation that I spend my days *educating adults*. I am not a teacher, but I do what an educator does in many ways – I enable learning, share knowledge, and create space for exploring new ways of knowing and being in the world (Palmer, 2017). I exist within a dotted line boundary encompassing a diverse group drawn from myriad backgrounds who identify as leadership educators (Priest & Jenkins, 2019). The common thread is that all share the intentionality to develop and deliver leadership initiatives (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018).

This shift in my awareness of what I do birthed a restlessness that preoccupied my reflective self for several pre-doctoral years. What became more apparent to me was that I had no discernible language or substantial knowledge to reflect on educating adults as a leadership practitioner. I realised I was not alone in this. I read professional papers and books on leadership, attended seminars, engaged in

continuing professional development for leadership trainers, as we are often called. However, I rarely heard or felt the presence of a discourse that fully addressed the education aspect of what LD practitioners do (Owen, 2015), the unique experience of teaching and learning leadership. It became clear that little simultaneous focus was given to the participant, practitioner and learning, and less again to the intricacies of the learning environment created by the confluence of all three dynamics. Increasingly, I found myself driven to satisfy my need to understand in a different theoretical place – one less bounded by the topic of leadership and the business environs I inhabited. I turned to an educational perspective new to me – the world of adult education and learning.

Finding a (stretching) home for this research

Considering my educational and practice background, the natural home in many respects for research curiosity such as mine would be in a business school, majoring in leadership or organisational behaviour. Occupational psychology departments, of which there are many, could also provide the necessary academic backdrop. These are academic sites with an established tradition in studying people, business and behaviour as interrelationships. Nevertheless, I struggled to find fertile scholarly territory in either place for my research concerns. I was seeking a different perspective in my research environment to the discourses which dominate the daily delivery of LD.

The objects of my interest in LD were different from the mainstream, and I sought a scholarly home to explore this difference. As I observed it, the predominant focus in LD was on collective macro items: financial return, leadership models, competency sets or the next wave of leadership thinking (Kellerman, 2012; Pfeffer, 2016). My concern for how and why learning happens in LD; my craving to deeply understand my impact and possibility in the learning space were driven at least in part by what I have latterly come to understand as my paradigmatic beliefs, those “that guide action” (Guba, 1990: 17). These paradigms (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018) or knowledge claims (Cresswell, 2003) have evolved over time and are, I realise,

multiple in their expression of ontological and epistemological stance within my worldview.

Realising the gap in my knowledge

In my LD practice, I view reality as tentative, evolving and created through human activity (Kim, 2001). This perspective reflects a socially constructed view of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). I operate to the belief that two people looking at a leadership situation together will not see it the same way: each of us has a uniquely constructed version of the reality we carry around with us in our day-to-day experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Kim, 2001). I create LD programmes where leadership knowledge is built through doing things with others (Watkins, 2005).

As an established LD Practitioner, but one without an active community of practice or a research history, these and similar beliefs have been highly intrinsic, subconscious and backgrounded in my day-to-day ways of knowing, being and doing in the world. They are present but not excavated or their significance fully understood.

It became increasingly clear that to know more about these things, a research home *passionate* about the *teaching and learning capacity* of what is possible in a workplace environment would be vital. I located a scholarly framework for possible answers to these questions in an Adult Education Department with a few false starts. Within this 100-year-old professional field of practice (Merriam, 2001: 3), I found a language that challenged me to step outside my previous ways of looking at my world. The Department of Community and Adult Education at Maynooth University (MU), the academic home for this work, defines its vision as underpinned by two fundamental beliefs. The first is that education is a human right for everyone throughout their lives. The second recognises that education aims to foster the capacity for agency and transformation in people. The use of the term transformation, in this case, indicates the "*capacity to cope with the world as it is, to critique and resist injustices and create new egalitarian ways to live*" (MU website, 25/05/2020). Inherent in this and similar discourses on educating adults is

a deep commitment to supporting the capacity of the human to grow and the freedom to learn along life's path (e.g. Rogers, 1961; Jarvis, 2010). A focus on the learner experience and how adults learn as distinct from children (e.g., Knowles, 1978) is front and centre alongside ways of knowing and learning throughout the life span (e.g. Illeris, 2007). There is an acknowledgement of the capacity for agency and change arising from transformative learning (e.g. Mezirow, 1991) and a striving towards the more profound ideals of democracy, emancipation, freedom and social justice (e.g. Freire, 1970, 1972). I will draw on this description and engage with these principles in constructing a conceptual framework for this study, finding a way to make the familiar unfamiliar (Goodson, 1992) and address my restlessness of identity, belief and impact.

Adult Learning Theory and LD – the research opportunity

Against that backdrop, a research opportunity emerges. While economically driven and co-located with business, I argue that LD is an educational activity, a form of adult learning. Leadership learning practice, "aligning the content of what we teach with the way we teach it" (Ganz & Lin, 2012: 353), should, one would expect, draw heavily on adult learning theory to inform its pedagogy. I argue that adult learning theory is an essential factor in LD, yet it receives little mention by scholars of leadership (Conger & Benjamin, 1999; Allen, 2007), rarely featuring in the leadership, business and psychology journals favoured by research into LD. Several adult educators are actively engaged in bringing the perspectives and concerns of adult education to workplace learning (e.g. Marsick, 1988, 2009; Eneau & Bertrand, 2019). Overall, however, leadership learning as a form of workplace learning has received significantly less attention than higher, continuing, and community education concerns.

In light of this inattention from an adult learning perspective, it is not surprising that the body of knowledge on LD is based mainly on studies of *what* is taught: curriculum, content, leadership models (Day et al., 2014). However, good

leadership teaching encompasses more than simply what is taught at a curricular level, “it must be teaching that is also transformative, experiential and applied” (Priest & Jenkins, 2019: 15). To date, there has been significantly less emphasis on the nature of *how* leadership is taught or indeed learned; concerns about leadership learning practice receive significantly less attention, with many programmes delivered carelessly and casually (Kellerman, 2018). Gaps exist around leadership educators ability to prepare for and work with the "mercenary nature" of adult learners (Conger, 2013: 81) in utilising their classroom learning outside the classroom setting.

As an experienced practitioner, I am concerned that LD does not deliver on its promise to expand capacity to take leadership. I believe it can and should do better. I include myself and my practice in that assertion. Ongoing concerns regarding LD efficacy (e.g. Kellerman, 2012; Pfeffer, 2016) allied to the possibilities offered by the recent focus on leadership from critical (Dugan, 2011, 2017; Western, 2013) and practice perspectives (Raelin, 2016) suggests an opening space in which to gain insight and understanding for the future. As a practitioner, I believe adult learning theory has much illumination to bring to the leadership learning space. As a researcher, I posit that more and different work is yet to be done, and a gap in our knowledge remains to be addressed.

Addressing the gap: central aims of this research

Earlier in this chapter, I introduced my broad research focus as –

Exploring leadership development (LD) in the commercial learning workspaces in which it occurs.

The stated purpose of LD programmes such as MALT is to enhance the capacity of the participants to take leadership responsibility post-programme. The learning workspace is the environment in which this capacity is generated. I, as practitioner,

have a primary influence on the learning workspace. My practitioner purpose, beliefs, choices and actions influence the learning workspace I open and the capacity created therein to help participants learn and grow (Rosch & Anthony, 2012). Staying rooted firmly in the “how” and “why” of LD, I am deeply inquisitive of what happens when practitioner, participants and the topic of leadership come together in a shared learning space (Murphy, 2008). In this way, my research interest is on a pedagogy for LD, meaning “the conditions and means through which knowledge is produced” (Lather, 1994: 104). My research purpose becomes clearer as a result:

Exploring a pedagogy for LD in commercial learning workspaces

Focusing on pedagogy

Concerns of a pedagogical nature are elusive in the LD literature. Existing research is predominantly located within higher, public and medical education (e.g. Sergiovanni, 1998; Turner & Baker, 2017; Sandfort & Gerdes, 2017). There is scant research that connects or integrates leadership learning needs in workplace learning with pedagogical theory and insight to inform LD practice. This research aims to address this gap.

Focusing on the learning workspace

I see the LD environment in which teaching and learning occurs, the learning space, as central to the research aims of this study. Western (2013) describes learning space in leadership formation as the shaping of the contexts and conditions to nurture for emergent future direction. This view contrasts with the more controlling process of leadership learning engendered in traditional, prescriptive ways of approaching LD. Western (2013) views learning spaces as "laboratories of experience" which enable learning to flourish and leadership to emerge (p. 317). Palmer (2017), in the context of teaching, describes learning space as "opening a space where students can have a conversation with the subject and with each other" (p. 123). In a workplace setting, opening learning space comes with the hope

of experience exchange and a free-flowing creative generation of knowledge (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

From a broader systems view, the learning space is viewed as a site of potential change and transformation, both personal and social, where dialogue occurs as the system senses and sees itself with a capacity it did not previously have or recognise (Scharmer, 2018). Finally, focused on LD in particular, Petriglieri & Petriglieri (2010) call out the capacity of learning space to act as an identity workspace. They suggest such spaces function as a holding environment for identity work amid a supportive and challenging community of fellow learners (Petriglieri, 2012).

I use these descriptions to inform but not confine the concept of a "commercial learning workspace", which I use throughout the research. Drawing on these sources, I define "commercial learning workspace" to mean:

A place where participants are invited to create a shared learning experience towards the development of their leadership capacity in the workplace

Looking at the familiar in a new way

Previously, I briefly located adult learning theory as part of a scholarly framework for this research. Personally and professionally, as I entered research, I sought to access perspectives that were passionate for the teaching and learning capacity of the adult learning environment. I suggest that there is a significant benefit from taking adult learning theory to the practice of leadership learning in a meaningful and applied way, not just in theory but in practice, finding opportunities for synergy (Watkins & Marsick, 2014).

Adult education as a discipline is concerned with adult learning, the acquisition of knowledge, the means and context for that learning (Merriam, 2018). These concerns are driven by a belief in the human capacity to grow, develop and have

agency to transform (e.g. Mezirow, 1991). Adult learning theory is further motivated by the desire for emancipation, democracy, challenging inequity and freedom (e.g. Freire, 1970, 1972). Power has been a defining concern of adult education for over a century (Finnegan & Grummell, 2020) and has preoccupied many of the fields most influential minds (e.g. Freire, 1970, 1972; Mezirow, 1991; Brookfield, 2005). It is clear that the concepts of knowledge and power are deeply enmeshed in the broad-ranging concerns of adult education and adult learning theory which has emerged from the discipline.

Toward enhanced understanding

As far back as 2004, Hall sounded an alarm bell at the proliferation of management training opportunities for educators failing to account for what is known about adult learners. She highlighted that adult learning and management training and development often appeared in tension (Hall, 2004). Referencing Kegan (1994), a developmental constructivist, she notes that allegiance to the discourse of education and learning is compromised by allegiance to management discourse. Learning is frequently led by the desire for competencies at the "expense of the liberation of the mind" (Hall, 2004: 8). Taking action, she was instrumental in launching Europe's first professional doctorate several years previous. The purpose, as she defined it was explicit: specialist (topic) knowledge is not enough in management education. Knowing more about different ways of knowing and learning is vital. Understanding and working with the processes that enable and constrain adult learners in becoming effective learners is critical. Getting there involves understanding the practitioner/educators own learning. Cultivating critically reflexive capacity is at the heart of understanding how practitioners such as myself shape learning environments (Hall, 2004).

From her insider perspective, Hall articulated a critical gap eloquently and tangibly. For this LD practitioner, the missing perspective is congruent with this research opportunity. It resides in the management/learning tension space inhabited by learners and learning, mine and theirs, enabled by critically reflexive capacity focused on the learning workspaces I create. Likewise, Komives (2000) described

the need to "inhabit the gaps", noting that for her, "the process of inhabiting our personal and institutional gaps perhaps models the learning process at its best" (p. 32). For these reasons, I proffer that a scholarly framework underpinned by adult learning theory best supports my research aims to explore a pedagogy for LD, with particular attention to two critical concerns of adult education - knowledge and power.

A clear research purpose and questions

Drawing on all that has been explicated so far in this Introductory chapter, my clear research purpose is defined as -

Exploring a pedagogy for LD in commercial learning workspaces with emphasis on knowledge and power

Drawing the concept of knowledge as a lens on the research asks -

In what ways do LD practitioner and participants engage with and create knowledge in the leadership learning workspace?

Drawing the concept of power as a lens on the research invites the question -

What is the role of power as it manifests itself in the LD learning workspace?

Knowledge and Power – lenses on the research

Exploring the familiar environment of LD through the less familiar concepts of knowledge and power provides a unique conceptual framework for this research

inquiry. Theoretical lenses facilitate and influence perception, comprehension, grounding and trustworthiness of the study (Cresswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I use the lenses of knowledge and power to illuminate the pedagogic concerns I have in my LD practice for research in the following ways.

The lens of knowledge

What constitutes knowledge and how we come to know goes to the heart of how and why participants engage with LD in the workplace. As the research progresses, I find myself as LD practitioner considering questions of learning from experience, the importance of beginnings and endings, design and information sharing concerns, and the challenge of holding the shared learning space between practitioner, participants, and topic. Seeking pedagogical insight and understanding, I draw on the work of those writing about ways of knowing and knowledge from an adult learning perspective, including Illeris (2007, 2018), Knowles (1978, 1980), Jarvis (1992) and Mezirow (1991, 2000, 2009). For their perspectives on knowledge creation in the domain of leadership and LD, I draw on the insights of Carroll et al. (2008), Carroll & Levy (2010), Raelin (2009, 2013, 2018) and Scharmer (2016, 2018), among others.

The lens of power

The concept of power as drawn from adult learning theory raises questions around who has power in a learning environment, how it impacts those party to it, and concerns of democracy, emancipation, and resistance (Freire, 1970, 1972; Brookfield, 1986, 1995). In the course of the research, I contemplate the role and impact of power in several guises. I observe its manifestation in the learning workspace for both myself and the participants. Such impact includes concerns relating to learning at work with peers, organisational norms and expectations, fear and resistance and the weight of external expectation of success. Through this lens, words, dialogue and visuals from the re-storying of the programme experience illuminate important dynamics related to engagement that lie beneath the observable surface. From an adult education and learning perspective, I reference the thinking of Palmer (2017), hooks (1994), Freire (1970, 1972), Kegan (1982,

2018) and Brookfield (1986, 1995, 2005). For their perspectives on power and related discourses of resistance and agency in LD learning spaces, I draw on Carroll & Nicholson (2014), Raelin (2008, 2018), Western (2013) and Dugan (2011, 2017).

Summary of my Research Focus

With a clear pedagogic focus, this study is primarily concerned with identifying how knowledge is created in commercial learning workspace and the role of power as it manifests for both practitioner and participants in shared space.

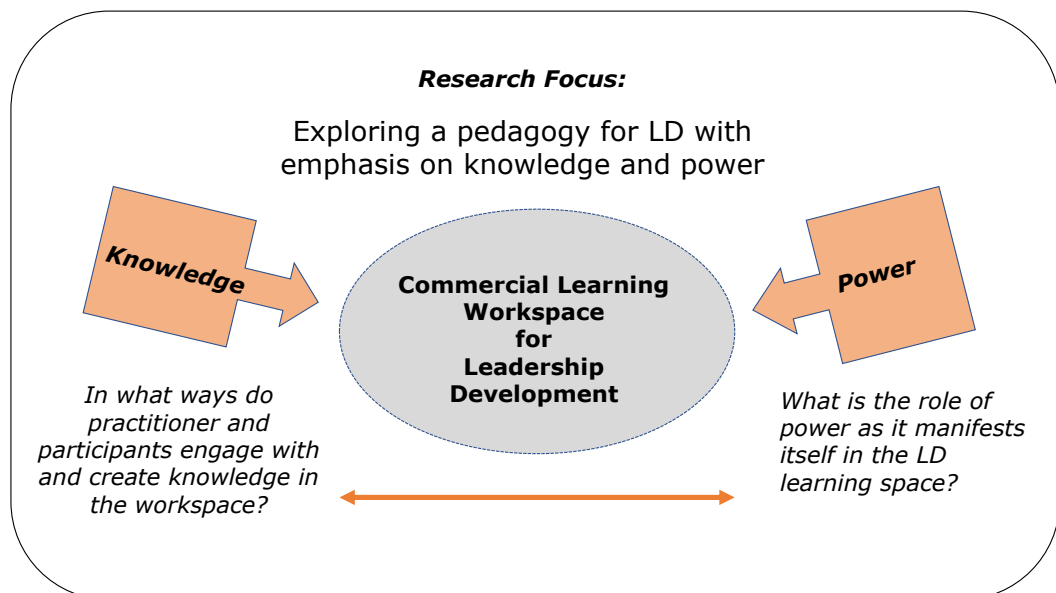


Figure 1.1 Visual Map of my Research

The figure above (Figure 1.1) provides a visual snapshot of the research focus of this study. Despite being depicted separately for visual purposes, it is important to state that power and knowledge are not distinct concepts but rather overlapping and interrelated manifestations which can help explain how adult participants learn. This interrelationship becomes apparent in the later explication of insights emerging from the MALT programme.

Research Strategy

Paradigmatic stance

As I work with participants on LD programmes, I see them strive for meaning, looking to make sense of their environment, experience, and present reality. This striving takes place in various ways – personal reflection, seeking new information, testing ideas through social contact, problem-solving and testing assumptions, among others (Bates, 2019). I understand learning as an individual's responsibility and the social setting such as a learning community as to how people learn (Cobb, 1994; Cobb & Yackel, 1996). Therefore I believe this study is situated epistemologically within a social constructivist paradigm (Vygotsky, 1978; Searle, 1996; Kim, 2001).

This stance is integral to the concept of a leadership programme like MALT, which aims to provide learning opportunities and knowledge creation where learning is "an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 3). This holds, I believe, even if that community is a transitory learning cohort, as the 29 research participants in this study are, coming together for the specific purpose of learning leadership together at a point in time. Through their participation in the MALT LD programme, the participants together create what is described by Wenger as an "engine of practice" (1998: 96).

Choice of research approach

Considering the focus on pedagogy, knowledge and power, my research concerns centre on meaning-making in context, locating the researcher in the world being observed while focusing on the participants as the instrument for research (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Most importantly, I seek to understand individuals' lived experiences of LD through which my own story as a practitioner is interwoven (Huber & Whelan, 1999). I believe a Narrative Inquiry approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) is congruent with my research aims and concerns because it emphasises reflection on experience, practice, and meaning-making. This paradigmatic stance and my beliefs about the nature of learning in LD programmes support the choice of a qualitative

interpretive methodology. Rather than attempting to manage or corral participant responses to the programme and their experience of it, this study welcomes following them "down their diverse trails" (Riessman, 2002: 696) to understand where they go and why.

Earlier in this introduction, I referenced being "in the midst" (Clandinin, 2013: 203) of the research as both practitioner and researcher with the ultimate aim to learn from the experience. I impact the participants' stories as I travel alongside them throughout the study (Clandinin, 2013). In setting out to inquire narratively into the learning of others, there is an onus on me to also locate myself on the research landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Reflexivity is central to Narrative Inquiry (Cresswell, 2007; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018). Prior, during and post research, I engage in extensive reflexive practice (Etherington 2004, 2007; Bolton, 2014) to capture and make meaning of my multiple identities of researcher, practitioner, insider and outsider in the story as I travel through the doctoral research journey including the seven months of programme delivery. Initially tentative and unsure, reflexivity became a means to make sense of my own lived experience, highlighting several critical incidents in my identity formation (Seemiller & Priest, 2015) from which emerged actions, paradigmatic beliefs and change.

The programme, the participant's experiences of the learning workspace, along with my practitioner and researcher reflective practices, are interwoven to create a series of stories or narratives which are guided by the work of Clandinin and Connelly (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000; Clandinin, 2013).

Introduction to the Research Method

Participants and the programme

The MALT programme under study commenced in September 2018 and finished seven months later in March 2019. Of the 29 participants, five were female, and 24 were male. All gave informed consent to participate in the research study

concurrent with their participation in the programme. Participation in MALT was not dependent on their consent to take part in the research.

Seven of the participants, members of a site leadership group, attended a two-day MALT learning event in September 2018 and 1:1 coaching sessions at later dates between October and March. A further 22 managers participated in a six-module learning journey between September and March supported by three 1:1 coaching sessions offered at intervals along the way. Further detail on the MALT programme content and design is shared in later chapters.

The data considered here is limited to the 29 consented participants and seven month period detailed above. At the time of writing in 2021, I am still working as a leadership practitioner with JOF, paid per programme or session as an external provider. I have continued working with the research participants and other groups of leaders in the organisation on multiple sites. This subsequent work falls outside the time remit of ethical approval, and informed consent received for research and is not in scope.

Field texts - data from a lived experience

The MALT programme took place in the working environment where the primary purpose was the programme itself. The JOF production site is a unionised workplace engaging in this learning journey for the first time with a population unused to structured adult learning programmes. I did not believe I would receive consent to voice or visual recording, and the HR Sponsor for the programme confirmed that belief. Audio or video recording would likely have been detrimental to the learning purpose in any event, and by consequence, could have undermined the efficacy of the research output.

The nature of a living programme, and the full informed consent of the participants, meant that data was available to me in a multiplicity of ways. I had workshop outputs, coaching notes, facilitator notes, field notes, exercise responses, conversation, e-mail and other communication, post-programme review and

feedback, in-programme flipcharts and other visuals and outputs from creative exercises for research. This mound of qualitative data (Butler-Kisber, 2018) comprised the sources from which field texts were constructed (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

Considering the varied nature of the available data, I chose to adopt heuristic methods within narrative inquiry (Etherington, 2004; Sultan, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Heuristic methods focus on the verbal *and* non-verbal dialogue or discourse to make meaning of the experience (Sultan, 2018), inviting a broad range of data sources, tools, and perspectives to find the underlying meanings of human experiences into the research space.

Relationships

I locate myself as a practitioner-researcher or insider-researcher (Costley et al., 2010) in this study. The very nature of working with the research participants, their wider colleagues and their employer on an ongoing basis during and post research coloured my interactions. As did the fact that the object of research here, the MALT programme, was a paid endeavour attached to which was the anticipation of successful outcomes from the programme. There are significant and ongoing "dilemmas in studying the parade of which you are part" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 81). Themes of performativity and power emerge in the narratives related to this paid positioning and expectation of success. Attaining "cool observation" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 82) is a constant challenge when positioned as insider-researcher; the risks, challenges, and benefits of which I return to frequently in later chapters.

Limitations - breadth and use

It is not the purpose of this study to examine the field of leadership. Neither does it attempt to focus on the breadth of possible LD intervention nor compare itself to other LD programmes. Instead, this research undertakes to explore the learning workspace of one LD programme. A detailed micro-analytic picture is captured (Cresswell, 2003, 2007). The captured picture is situated in a place and time as an

endeavour to get closer to the lived experience of LD, enriching the understanding of researcher, practitioner and reader as a result (Cresswell, 2007). For these reasons, the insights emerging are an interpretive "struggle with meanings" (Stake, 2010: 38), reflecting the uniqueness of this time and place. The conclusions point to the particular rather than the generalisable (Stake, 2010).

Structure of the study

I present this dissertation in nine chapters. Chapter 1 introduces and provides background context for the study. Chapter 2 opens a window into my learning journey, drawing on my engagement with reflective practice. In a direct reflection of the adult learning lenses used to focus the research, this chapter seeks to excavate where my knowledge as an LD practitioner originates. I explore the origins of the beliefs I hold about power and the agency to help others learn.

Chapter 3 offers a literature review to situate the study in the larger context of leadership, leadership development, adult learning theory and pedagogy. In line with a narrative presentation of research findings, further examination of theory and literature is woven through the study's narrative as it informs and enlightens emerging insight from the re-storying process.

Chapter 4 presents the Narrative Inquiry methodology used to story and re-story the participants' experiences, practitioner and researcher in MALT. I address research methods such as participant engagement, analysis of field texts, ethics, reliability and trustworthiness.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the research findings: narratives drawn from the learning space of participants, practitioner and topic. These are interwoven with a discussion of pertinent theories, which inform the unfolding story of the learning space. The metaphor of Alice through the Looking Glass resumes as the narrative progression is likened to a chessboard of unclear direction and playing rules, accompanied by Alice's observations on the unfamiliar terrain of the journey.

Chapter 8 offers possibilities for “new directions and new ways of doing things” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 189). This chapter summarises and reflects on the implications of the significant themes emerging from the study.

“We began in the midst. We end in the midst,” note Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 187), describing their choices in sharing stories of experience. Chapter 9 reconnects to the preface and chapter two through a continuation of reflective thought. As Alice once again, I emerge from the looking glass of research learning to bring closure to my narrative of identity at this point in my professional journey.

Conclusion

Focusing on pedagogy concerns in the interplay between practitioner, participants, and the learning space allows me to illuminate my LD practice in previously unseen ways. The emergent insights can enrich the repertoire of how I, as an LD practitioner, make choices and decisions which significantly impact the generativity of the learning workspaces I enable.

My methodological choice of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) situates this study in a qualitative approach less commonly used by researchers of LD. Narrative methods enable a study at a particular time and place that looks to reveal rather than measure. This directly enables an engagement with the lived experience of MALT.

Drawing on Narrative Inquiry methods for my data collection, analysis and reporting, I present a different perspective on LD than that typically revealed in other studies where concerns of models and curriculum dominate the research field. As a result, the voices and visuals of the participants are woven through the narratives. Their voice, I believe, is essential but under-represented in research.

Finally, this study emphasises exploring and understanding the impact of knowledge and power in the lived experience of learning leadership. These

concepts are deliberately drawn from adult learning theory, an underutilised paradigm in delivering LD programmes. I argue in this research that these concepts, more familiar to adult educators than LD practitioners, require more attention within the practice of LD.

For these reasons, I believe this study makes a unique and valuable contribution to the ongoing dialogue on LD programmes.

In the next chapter, I follow Winnicott's opening exhortation as I reflexively consider what "this and that, from here and there" (after Winnicott, 1945, in Davis & Wallbridge, 1991: 4) I have gathered along my professional pathway, and crucially, their influence on the LD practitioner I am today.

Chapter 2: Locating Maeve – I, Practitioner, Researcher

“What Authored the Author?”

(Western, 2013: xv)

“Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent.

(Palmer, 1999: 3)

Introduction

I have been shaped by my experiences and the ways I made sense of those experiences. When asked *what I am*, I have used various terms to describe myself, including a coach, trainer, facilitator, HR professional, psychologist, consultant, settling on none. I find it easier to respond to the question of *what I do* and have consistently answered with the same phrase "I help people work better together at work, and I have done this my whole working life in different ways". My professional identity has always been something that, for me, is closer to the purpose of what I do than to a title that defines me. As I engaged with this doctoral journey, issues of self, capacity, beliefs and ability increasingly emerged in my learner narrative (Merrill & West, 2009). These led me to ponder increasingly what I am and what I do in a way I never have before.

This chapter represents a recollection of critical incidences (Seemiller & Priest, 2015) and influences along my developmental pathway that surfaced throughout the doctoral journey. These have mainly emerged through my engagement with an extended period of reflexive practice (Etherington, 2004, 2007; Bolton, 2014).

Through reflexive practice, space opened where I could experiment with my stories, thereby interpreting my world and making sense of past experience (Riessman, 2005), seeking better to understand the influences on my pedagogic approach and understanding – how and why I do what I do in LD. In particular, I searched for a greater understanding of my beliefs about knowledge and power as a precursor to opening and exploring these same concepts with the research participants in the learning workspace for LD.

In attempting to make myself strange (Bolton, 2014), I followed the advice of Bolton (2014) and was guided in my reflexive practice by simple yet powerful questions. I considered what and how my pedagogical choices have been shaped and influenced along my developmental pathway. In so doing, I asked myself where my knowledge comes from, seeking to unearth and understand what has influenced my beliefs about knowledge and why? I pondered what I understand about the presence and role of power in the LD learning environment and who has shaped those views?

The following sections capture the output of this questioning, weaving seminal moments (Riessman, 2002) from my developmental pathway with vignettes taken from my reflexive diaries (Etherington, 2004, 2007). As I seek to “position myself” in the study (Cresswell, 2007: 18), I critically discuss these against the research focus on pedagogy, knowledge and power.

Shaping my beliefs about people and learning

Real people, real opportunity

The School of Psychology at the National University of Ireland Galway, from which I graduated in 1990, was positivist and objective in its orientation. The head of school for my academic years there was a prominent methodologist and statistical psychologist. Under his leadership, the focus of teaching and research was on the cognitive and the quantitative. While I respected the logical positivism in which I was being schooled, it did not always feel like it had a lot to do with real people and

the actual situations in which they found themselves. There was one notable exception to this. In my final year, a module on "clinical skills" was designed to prepare undergraduates for practice in counselling and health psychology work environments. For the first time, I was provided with opportunities to engage with real people in natural settings. This engagement ranged from administering and debriefing IQ and psychometric tests to administering a stress inventory with a 1:1 support interview and more. I embraced these practice opportunities (Steadman, 2018) in a way that I was never enthused about running rats through mazes or performing statistical analysis. I prepared, practised and reflected extensively and scored my best grades. This experience directly propelled me onto an MSc in Occupational Psychology, a taught programme at the Queen's University of Belfast with 15 participants enrolled annually. The opportunities to work with real people in their actual settings were more significant and more challenging – ethical research with doctors in emergency medicine; 1:1 support at job clubs for the unemployed; career coaching for recent graduates; ergonomic assessments in workplaces. I engaged with the zeal of a recent convert, living week to week for these real-life applications of psychology, which would stretch and grow my knowledge and contribute to the world outside our dingy off-campus lecture room. The most striking in my memory was an occasion where from the outside, nothing seemed to change:

I recall entering a job club for the long term unemployed in a socially disadvantaged area of unionist Derry as a twenty year old female catholic "southerner". I came offering help under the auspices of my upper middle class Belfast university.

Over the course of a day I met with five different men in their forties and fifties who shared with me their perspectives on their individual situation. I had no tools to use and no ready-made solutions to offer. The piece of paper in front of me listed seven questions about interests and hobbies and no suggestions on what to do with the responses. There was no structure other than to ask and help if I could. I attempted to create a rapport, construct a direction, find a relatable use of their skills, a sense of hope, or if nothing else provided a listening ear and a connection with someone new who was trying to show they cared.

As far as I can tell I didn't judge, instruct, diminish, take over or impose a solution where one wasn't possible. I listened, discussed dogs, football, pubs and parades, each of which I knew very little about from my own life experience. I came away feeling I hadn't provided much in the way of solutions but that I had connected with each person as I met him. Strangely I felt it was enough, although I couldn't quantify why.

This seemingly innocuous encounter changed me.

The person and their experience

As I revisit this time, I recognise several philosophical underpinnings beginning to emerge. I was focused on the person (Rogers, 1951), valuing their lived experience in its myriad of forms (Jarvis, 1992) even when patently different to my own. I was eager to understand the other person's knowledge and their needs and values (Maslow, 1954, 1962) then and in the context of their lives. Without being able to locate it as such at that time, I demonstrated the belief that an individual's freedom to learn is supported by my ability as a practitioner to demonstrate genuine interest, unconditional positive regard and empathy for the individual (Rogers & Freiburg, 1994). The nature of the world and what we can know about it (Snape & Spencer, 2003) became more apparent as I applied my learning to practice for the first time and considered the impact I could have on a person's direction.

From such formative experiences and through other later examples I can reflect on, I recognise that as a practitioner, I continue to draw on the humanist psychology tradition, identifying most with the work of Carl Rogers (1951, 1961, 1969) and, to a lesser extent Abraham Maslow (1954, 1962).

Drawing on this seminal moment (Riessman, 2002), I observe myself actively rejecting the dominant paradigm of my undergraduate psychology years – one of objective behaviourism (Skinner, 1938, 1971), which focused on observable behaviour alone. Even as I sat with unemployed men in Derry or engaged in career conversations with little career experience myself, I was beginning to engage with internal events such as thinking and emotions. I was operating from the belief that each person is unique at the centre of their own continually changing world of experience (Rogers, 1969).

Shaping my approach to knowledge

Embarking on the doctoral journey has triggered a fundamental re-examination of what drives my choice of content, teaching methods, and handling differing learning environments and learners. I reflect on an early transformational experience, the one time in my life where I held the title of "Teacher" and what I took from it:

I'm sitting at the kitchen table of my rented apartment in Dublin in 1994. Three years graduated and yet to find a "proper job" I have taken on a three hour "gig" teaching Psychology on a programme for the long term unemployed once a week. I am not a teacher, qualified or otherwise. Yet I "teach" on Tuesdays.

Every Monday night I sit wide-eyed and frantic at the kitchen table until 2am, long after my flatmates are asleep, feeling like I am only one bare step ahead of the class in what I know and will share with them the following morning. I have lugged my undergraduate Psychology books with me from my parents' home and I frantically re-learn what I can't ever remember learning the first time around. A huge part of me is panicked – who am I to tell people what they should learn? The guidance on what to teach was suitably vague – "a core understanding of the main concepts in Psychology".

I plunder my old textbooks – at times literally cutting chunks out to create my own version of cut and paste handouts. I write copious lecture notes that would have made magnificent revision notes had I managed to be this industrious as an actual student rather than as a novice teacher. I take the train to the Adult Education Centre each Tuesday morning knowing that if I can survive these three hours I needn't worry about it again for another week. I mentally rehearse my main lecture points all the way there.

Brookfield (2015) uses the metaphor of white water rafting to describe teaching. He describes it as periods of apparent calm jolted by "sudden frenetic turbulence" (p. 5). I can relate to his description...

Yet somehow I don't miss a day. I make teaching and learning decisions that are grounded in nothing more than gut instinct. In the absence of external guidance on curriculum, I choose to emphasise the parts of psychology which are most practical and relatable to the student's lives, the parts I too can relate to and would want to know. I find this energises and engages the students so I keep doing it. They ask lots of questions (I can't always answer) and I send them away to find out on behalf of the class. I avoid claiming to know all. They are bemused that I am not more teacher-like.

In the absence of any guidance on learning methods, I get creative. My crazy idea to hold a monthly "table quiz" to recap learning and check for understanding causes frenzied choices in team-mates and preparation. Once we have to abandon it altogether in the face of howling protests over a particular answer. These are pre-internet days, I can't check what the correct answer is so I come over all teacherly and shut it down. I regret sounding harsh but I realise belatedly that I need to maintain some structure and boundaries and I had let the group dynamic go too far. My encouragement for them to work together in small groups to help each other understand and absorb the concepts and ideas turns out to be one of their favourite parts.

There was, as I look back, "visceral joy in muddling through" (Brookfield, 2015: 3).

The Sociology teacher for the class that follows mine arrives early one of the days halfway through the year and is surprised I'm not using any overheads. I don't tell her that I don't own a computer and it never occurred to me to use one! I draw things on the flipchart, I dish out my make-and-do handouts and the class and I discuss.

I realise after my encounter with her that I've come to enjoy the talking, the relative informality, the utter chaos at times, the two-way nature of the dialogue in the room. I recognise it was born of a combination of equal parts inexperience, gut instinct and trial-and-error.

My own insecurities and vulnerability led me to deliver the class in this way. But it worked for me and them in its' own way.

As I gained more significant experience in the world of learning in the workplace, I built on this brief flirtation with "teaching" through a succession of training roles. As a result, my belief strengthened over time that humans construct new knowledge rather than simply memorising information or passing it from those who know to those who do not know. From the time I gathered my Psychology class around me, I believed this process worked best through discussion or social interaction where people test and challenge their understanding with that of others. Such a view locates me epistemologically as a social constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978; Searle, 1996; Kim, 2001).

Scrolling forward to the present day, as I work with participants on LD programmes, I see them strive for meaning, looking to make sense of their environment in terms of past experience and present reality (Cresswell, 2007). This striving takes place in various ways – personal reflection, seeking new information, testing ideas through social contact, problem-solving and testing assumptions, among others (Bates, 2019). Reality in this way is tentative, evolving and created through human activity (Kim, 2001). This belief has its' origins early in my career when I facilitated a small group working on their leadership skills as part of an LD programme:

As a young and inexperienced practitioner, I recall being handed the facilitation of my first small group skills-building session. These were the breakout spaces where the large group of leadership participants divided into smaller groups of 4 or 5 for an hour or more and worked on real life issues or opportunities. As I shepherded my charges out of the main room towards a breakout space, bringing "only themselves and needing nothing else" as the lead facilitator reminded them, I felt a tingly anticipation. I had observed the delivery of the leadership development programme for several months now. Some weeks before, I had been challenged to deliver small sections of content to the large group, which I had managed to do without losing the room or myself along the way. Being handed a small group was different though and I knew it.

We all knew, experienced or rookie, that it was in the small group setting that "magic" happened. Participants were invited to bring into that space their real life challenges, their difficult people, their interpersonal concerns, their challenging team dynamics, and their opportunities to use new learning and skills with and through other people. There was no projector, no overheads, no tools other than what was in everyone's heads. The facilitator sat among the group in a circle of chairs. The one concession to this being a training programme, a solitary flipchart, was only used for illustration purposes. The environment was intimate and challenging and had a social energy all of its own.

The interaction between the individual psychological processes and the social field in the construction of learning (Illeris, 2007) gripped me. From that point forward, I found deep satisfaction in working with participants to find their way in their world on their terms while harnessing their knowledge and insight. I enjoyed the cut and thrust of dialogue, probing questions and problem-posing (Freire, 1970) on the uncertain but valuable pathway towards knowledge co-investigation and cocreation (Mayo, 2012).

Rolling the years forward, I believe my first experience facilitating this type of small group collective learning is why I found my way back to the practice of LD as a consultant after ten years working inside organisations in an HR capacity mid-career. I longed to return to a forum that saw knowledge as dynamic, revitalising and dialogic, not static (Freire, 1970). In time I came to see the world of internal Human Resource Management as a place that primarily integrates people into the world of work through direction and pre-determined knowledge such as competency frameworks (Bolden & Gosling, 2006). I discuss the relationship between Human Resource Management and LD in greater detail in the next chapter.

Shaping my understanding of leadership

Embarking on my LD “apprenticeship”

As the offspring of teachers, I did not have much access to or understanding of how business operated as I grew up. I had limited awareness of how people acquire knowledge on the job. I had very little understanding of power and how it operates in workplaces. My perspective utterly changed when I answered an advert in a national newspaper and found myself employed as a junior consultant in a small but successful management consulting business operating out of Ireland delivering LD programmes to large companies in the UK. With this role came a step-change in my understanding of learning, psychology in the workplace and power. I describe it in retrospect as “my LD apprenticeship” and the most significant influence on my subsequent beliefs and actions in the field.

The founders of this consulting business were passionate about leadership in the workplace. I stepped into this world with lots of book learning but very little live understanding of how that book learning becomes a reality in workplace classrooms. I discovered a group of people zealously advocating for what they had termed “responsibility based leadership”. In doing so, they drew widely on influences from psychology (e.g. Bandura, 1997, 2001; Kline, 1999), business (e.g. Drucker, 1995, 2004), interpersonal effectiveness and human relations (Berne, 1968), along with experiential learning approaches and systems psychodynamics influenced by work at the Tavistock Institute (e.g. Fraher, 2004). Responsibility based leadership centred on an emancipatory paradigm: leadership can be taken by any person from any position through the use of their skills, awareness of context, ability to be assertive and negotiation. It was a challenging paradigm in which to operate as I personally discovered:

The Managing Partner looks to meet me. She asks how I think I've been getting on after the first year of my two year contract. "Great" I say. "I've been enjoying helping out, organising things, watching everyone". Everything I thought I was hired for. She asks how long I believe it will take me to become her, to take my power and own my voice. I laugh and say years and years of course. She has so much more experience and knowledge than I have. She is so much more powerful than I am. She gets it I am sure. I'm just a novice.

She grimaces. It's clearly the wrong answer. She proceeds to list four times in the last six weeks where I have been offered opportunities to stand up in front of groups, invited into the Consultant space, but have found reasons not to.

She lays it out for me.

If nothing changes my contract will end and that will be that. If I want to I can take an admittedly challenging path to new knowledge and experience. Space is open for me to really get in there and practice what we teach others to do – take my power, own my views and beliefs, move off the bystander position and make strides towards reaching my own potential. But it won't be open forever and I need to choose to lead and take my own power.

When I moved on to a different company two years later, a whole lot more knowledgeable, experienced and powerful, I thanked her for her honesty and for role modelling for me what we were asking of others. I didn't like it at the time but it changed my path irrevocably.

I did not know it, and I did not have the language to describe it at the time.

However, with the benefit of hindsight, this was an approach to leadership imbued with human agency, the intentional influencing of one's functioning, others and life circumstances (Bandura, 2006). It was a leadership approach built on the values of fairness and equality, women's rights and an opportunity for all to achieve their potential in the workplace and in life. Honest, direct communication was a cornerstone, and I was party to such a conversation, which challenged my taking of leadership in my role and in the business. From a position of greater experience, I now recognise a philosophy that was underpinned by the thinking of Habermas (1987, 1990, 2015). This was evident in a relentless emphasis on the human capacity for communication – for hearing and being heard, reaching an understanding and staying thinking, seeking win-win. Such an emphasis on the dynamics of interpersonal interaction were relatively unusual perspectives in delivering LD in the 1990s. I had never experienced anything like it in my life previously.

Shaping my understanding of power in LD

As the 1990's reached their mid-point and a new century approached, I worked as part of this same management consulting team to challenge the traditional view of leadership. In particular, drawing from our responsibility-based leadership ethos, we challenged the connotations of authority and hierarchy, which we believed were no longer fit for purpose in modern, complex and matrixed organisations. As I came to know and understand more about organisations and the nature of power, I advocated that people did not need to be monitored, driven and controlled. I pushed back against the belief, which was endemic at the time that leaders lead and followers follow (Burns, 1978). Crucially, followers did not ask questions, and leaders did not explain, a duality central to leadership theory for a long time (Bennis, 2007). I saw, and continue to see, power as a broader concept which does not have to be associated with authority but instead reflects the ability to influence and shape others behaviour (Dugan, 2017).

By contrast, many participants viewed themselves as a cog in a wheel and carried a sense of powerlessness as a result. As I delivered such pushes and challenges, I had little fundamental understanding of the intricacies and extent of internalised control and surveillance (Foucault, 2019) in workplaces. With the benefit of experience and reflection, I can see that intentionality was a hard sell in the 1990s. The belief that "people form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realising them" (Bandura, 2006: 164) was alien to many who saw leadership as authority driven and located in status. Fatalism in the Frierian (1970) sense of believing that the (working) world is static and pre-determined was widespread. As I look back, participants' inability or reluctance to address power dynamics was an ever-present factor in LD programmes (Watkins & Marsick, 2014). A tension existed and continues to persist in LD today between a leader's ability to exercise agency, the power and will to act, do, change things, and their need to follow constraints within the organisation (Nohria & Khurana, 2010) of which they are a part.

While I considered the consultancy of which I was part of being brave and ground-breaking at the time, on reflection, we did not profoundly challenge institutionalised power. We, too, were subject to that inherent duality of agency vs constraint. The largest client of the consultancy where I was "apprenticed" was a traditional, unionised, state-owned transportation business in the UK with a history of life-long multi-generational service and secure employment. Mulling over my apprenticeship experience, I realise that discussions in which identity, power and privilege arose had the potential to be construed by clients not as dialogic expressions of collective agency in LD but as an undesirable journey into activism (Dugan, Turman & Torrez, 2015). During this time, I learned that there is a delicate balance between pedagogy and power to be struck in the contradictory contested space that is the workplace classroom (Brookfield, 1995).

With the constraint of client paymaster at our backs, we chose to adopt what I can see now as a critical perspective on leadership in the workplace on a micro-scale (Dugan, 2017), encouraging those we worked with to engage in their sphere of influence and power. Amid this pedagogic balancing act (Brookfield, 1995), we moved in and out of thinking, reasoning, judgement and action in the social and political context for leadership, engaging actively with "how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge" (Habermas, 1984: 11). To use language related to power – such as emancipation or democracy (Freire, 1970, 1972) overtly would have scared away the majority of clients and their LD participants (Dugan et al., 2015). Despite this, the programme was imbued with elements of a critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) one which encouraged dialogue, reading between the lines, participant voices and distributed classroom power. I now realise that the paradigm to which I was I was apprenticed and later adopted was a fiercely owned belief, delivered delicately, contextually and subtly.

Shaping my ability to recognise and challenge inherent power

The organisation to which I was “apprenticed” valued the individual. Nevertheless, it also attended to the more extensive agenda – engaging with strategy, setting goals and direction and relishing the opportunity for strong developmental feedback for person and organisation.

Yet for all this working alongside blue-chip multinational organisations, house-hold names in the airline, service, banking and manufacturing sectors, there was a rebellious and anarchic streak I hadn't encountered before in my sheltered existence. One of the founders had been on board the so-called contraceptive train from Belfast to Dublin in 1971 to protest the lack of family planning options available to women in Ireland at that time. It was a seminal moment in the women's liberation movement in Ireland.

I was overawed by her energy and fierce commitment to her causes and genuinely amazed as to how someone from the rural west of Ireland (as I also was) came to be like this. I found her to be a heady mixture of kindness and compassion, drawn from her background in healthcare, combined with razor-sharp psychological observations which could stop a person in their standing.

I have reflected on this experience frequently in the intervening years. What I can now see which I couldn't back then was that her overtly feminist stance was too overwhelming for me to adopt at that time. I was young and immature, lacking in life experience or hardship. I had no cause to fight as I saw it. I couldn't relate to her worldview, although I could appreciate the bravery and honesty with which she lived it. I wanted to be like her in many ways but was also repelled by the strident and forthright embodiment of it.

The other co-founder was the first male feminist with whom I had worked. He set about challenging me to think deeply for myself for the first time outside the safe confines of formal education. He held me to account for my thought processes on issues of free choice and domination. He guided me to critically consider the aspects of power that could distort how things truly were, raising my power consciousness (Dugan et al., 2015) as a result. Criticality, driven by concerns of power and society, involves challenging at systemic levels, cultures and organisations, beyond what is visible (Carr, 2000). The co-founder was widely read and highly opinionated, and he invited me to spar with him on topics I had previously not considered deeply. Favoured targets included so-called pillars of the Psychology and HR establishment - the British Psychological Society (BPS), psychometric testing, and the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD). As my thinking capacity grew, the taken for granted belief systems and limiting cultural

norms (Pfeffer, 2005) within leadership, LD and our client organisations began to reveal themselves.

It was exhaustive. I rarely won (as I saw it at the time). However, I came out the other side with an enhanced capacity to question the status quo, explore taken for granted assumptions (Cresswell, 2007) and engage in challenging debate on more significant societal and professional issues for perhaps the first time. Reflexively, I view this time as sowing the seeds of an ability to stand outside the prevailing paradigm and begin to see the psychosocial influencing dynamic inherent in leadership (Western, 2013). What began as a challenge to critique accepted ways of knowing and strengthening my thinking unlocked an emancipatory form of learning that changed how I thought and acted about the hegemony of such matters (Brookfield, 1986). As a footnote, to this day, I have not sought chartered psychologist status. I retain a scepticism of psychometric testing and see the IPD as being skewed towards the transactional end of Human Resource Management rather than the transformational.

Shaping my understanding of pedagogy: power, dialogue and reflection

During my "apprenticeship" years, the pedagogical approaches deployed in LD were like none I had experienced in school, university, or my early work career. The female co-founder was a particular advocate of sitting among the participants rather than at the front or to the side, leading long and challenging discussions on urgent issues of leadership responsibility, which often overran our agreed timings. The learning space was a safe space for sharing, revealing, with frequent crying and laughter. In the midst of this, she was deadly serious in her intention to upend the traditional education approach in the workplace as stuffy, formal and one-way (hooks, 1994). She was given to the abandonment of pre-set overheads favouring drawing on flipcharts and creating hastily assembled models that sought to reflect

where the session was going rather than what was planned. She removed her shoes when they hurt and laughed uproariously and regularly. In this, and in many ways, she decentred power (Bryson & Bennet-Anyikwa, 2003) as I have never before seen in an educational setting.

This deeply engaged approach to teaching and learning continued into the nightly consultants' review once the formal day had ended:

This preoccupation with the seemingly abstract notions of dynamic, learning cultivation and climate was as intense as it was strange and new.

As an early career twenty-something year old sitting with forty and fifty-something year old practitioners night after night in what I now know to be deeply reflexive practice of a fervent nature, there were times and occasions I felt woefully out of my depth and wanted to run a mile away.

I found myself "apprenticed" to an organisation which placed the principles of adult learning at the heart of what it did. That with which we were involved was never consciously labelled as "adult education", however the words used back then were drawn from the lexicon of feminist thinking and a critical pedagogy.

Each night as we analysed the day and ourselves, we critically attended to (and used the language of) safety, vulnerability, challenge, resistance, trust, connection and experience.

This dedication to reflective practice was overwhelming on occasion -

In what was the hardest aspect of the learning zeal for an in-experienced rookie Consultant like myself, we finished these daily reviews by offering our reflections on ourselves. Each night, we were invited to bring to the group two things we had done well that day and one improver; receiving feedback in turn from peers to add to our own reflections.

I learned early on that the emphasis in this personal sharing was not on a simple appraisal of performance or tasks completed, but rather on my contribution (or lack of) to the enabling of learning, learners and the learning climate.

I frequently railed internally against what I saw as a tendency to naval gaze to the point of exhaustion.

I would roll my eyes as I finally got to bed at 10.30 or 11pm and wonder what I had signed up to.

Only to start over the next morning.....

Nevertheless, despite my childish petulance, I recognise with the benefit of reflection that I absorbed the value of high-impact learning practices such as real

dialogue and experiential learning, which, when combined with a focus on the agency of leadership learners, created more educationally meaningful LD (Dugan, 2011).

Naïvely, when I left consultancy and moved to a subsequent Training & Development Manager role, I assumed that all practitioners held the same belief system within which I had been apprenticed.

To my surprise, I found they had not:

Each potential supplier sitting in front of me pitching for my business in my new role as a buyer rather than a giver of leadership development, promised great handbooks, or an easily replicated training curriculum which would apply to any participant, introduced trainers who when probed, demonstrated little if any capacity for reflexivity or flexibility; who saw my participants as commodities rather than people, the content as a one size fits all model rather than a starting point for personal growth, exploration and connection. I developed deep concerns about the capacity of those whom I met to initiate, encourage and hold a learning system that would allow the human experience to emerge allowing participants to move to a place of transformation and lasting change.

To my surprise and dismay, the teaching and learning of leadership in the broader world was I realised, deeply embedded in a "tell" approach, simplified to the point of questionable value and deeply impersonal in it's manifestation.

What I was offered resembled nothing as much as a secondary school curriculum – tried and tested and full of useful models – but very little in the way of practical or experiential learning space within which an emerging leader becomes self-aware, diagnoses their own needs, choose what they need to do and is encouraged and supported to act, to not just do but to be a responsible leader.

As I sat and absorbed the pitches being made to me, I knew without question that I had been party to a manifestation of LD more profound and uncommon than I realised at the time. Naming it as profound meant acknowledging that pedagogic concerns were central to my operating paradigm on LD: respect for participants' uniqueness, self-worth and experience pathway (Brookfield, 1986); participation and collaboration in the learning space (Jarvis, 2010); an emphasis on communicative learning (Habermas, 1984) and dialogue, as well as space and time for reflection on perspectives and frames of reference (Mezirow, 1981). I jolted when I realised that I had absorbed and now believed that demonstrating these beliefs in the delivery of LD was the only way to do this job well.

At the time, I did not have a scholarly framework in which to locate practices such as reflection, dialogue or different pedagogic approaches. However, I had a practice perspective (Raelin, 2016) absorbed from the inside of LD. I believed the purpose of LD to be catalytic for the self-exploration and growth of the participants, a conduit for thoughts and reflections on learning and growth towards self-actualisation (Maslow, 1962). I realised right then that I had come to closely hold the importance of realising and expressing a person's capabilities and creativity. Operating from this belief system, I viewed knowledge as something co-created and shared, built from doing things with others (Watkins, 2005), not something the facilitator exclusively brings or owns in the learning space.

I noted previously that I began my early career embodying a humanistic lens that was person-centred (Rogers, 1969). With the benefit of reflection, I recognise that while maintaining a belief in human agentic potential, I became aware in a critical way of the self as located within structures imbued with power and privilege (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994). Hand in hand came an epistemological challenge to passive and acquired knowledge, favouring instead active knowledge constructed through experience and reflection (Freire, 1970).

In truth, without conscious awareness, at a point in time, I arrived at a place where facilitator and participants in workplace learning “act as subjects, not objects” (Shrewsbury, 1987: 8). I had come to appreciate the joy of an active teaching and learning environment where there is empowerment to develop among a community of learners and where the concept of power is embodied as “energy, capacity and potential rather than domination” (Shrewsbury, 1987: 8). I had arrived at a place of no return.

Shaping me as an LD practitioner

I suspect no one ever thought as a child, "I'll grow up to be a facilitator one day". Many aspire to be a teacher (a noble profession) or a businessperson (a lucrative

profession), or a psychologist (a helpful profession). I am none and parts of all of these. Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2010) view LD programmes as “identity workspaces”. They suggest such workspaces function as a holding environment for identity work facilitating the integration of new understanding and knowledge (Petriglieri, 2012). The doctoral research journey has provided such an identity workspace for me. As I critically reflect and come to an enhanced awareness of myself and the world I inhabit, I have come over the last four years to describe myself as a Practitioner, specifically a Leadership Development Practitioner.

As a descriptor, *practitioner* resonates more strongly within academic circles than in the workplaces I frequent. Importantly, however, I see *LD practitioner* as closer to answering the question of “*what are you?*” than the previously proffered titles of coach, facilitator, HR professional, trainer and more. The notion of “practitioner” is inherently a pragmatic one, taking the position that human experience is best viewed (and handled) in terms of practical outcomes and achievement (Costley, 2018). In my case as an LD practitioner, knowledge is produced in practice through LD programmes and coaching; the workplace context and situatedness are acknowledged and embraced; values are prioritised, and a range of “truths” about leadership and learning leadership is considered (Costley, 2018). As I now see it, calling myself an LD Practitioner defines *what I am* by *what I do*. Calling myself as such more accurately reflects the “doing all my doings” (after Kustermans, 2016: 177) than Trainer or Consultant. Such awareness shifts my epistemic understanding of myself by several degrees. I am still trying this on for size.

Having unearthed this new understanding, what initially emerges is not euphoria but apprehension. The reasons for this, I suspect, are again rooted in my pathway:

*I literally froze playing Ko-Ko, the lead role in the musical Mikado on stage at age 11.
All Japanese kimono and face paint.
Stranded in the full glare of the spotlights in front of my home town.
I couldn't remember my lines.
It lasted all of 30 seconds and is forgotten by all bar myself.
In my child-like memory it lasts for an eternity.
The glare of the stage lights on my open mouth from which nothing emerged...*

Unpicking my understanding of what I do while engaged in reflexive practice has ushered in the return of deep vulnerabilities I have held for years. “Locating myself” (Western, 2013: xv) has hooked me into my child self, to use the language of transactional analysis (Berne, 1968), a model I use in my practice to help others understand their reactions to people and events in their working lives. My child, when hooked, embodies a form of stage fright. I freeze, smile, then slowly back away and look to protect myself by reducing the risk of exposure. As the eldest child of two teachers, a bookish and bright student, I have perfectionist tendencies. I also have a preference for introversion. As a result, I tend to turn inwards for answers rather than outwards. If my bright perfectionist introvert self is unsure of the emerging answer, if it feels overwhelming or exposing, my child self emerges in full rescue mode where there is even a hint of a frozen and exposed Ko-Ko stranded in the glare of the stage lights. Identifying myself as an LD Practitioner and a researcher with the agency to tell a story, my deepest fear is that my practice, my hard work amounts to little.

I had anticipated the opposite to be true. I like the moniker of LD practitioner. It fits, providing lots of new and exciting possibilities. Nonetheless, I have found myself, on multiple occasions backing away. A year after Ko-Ko froze in the spotlight, the answer may partly lie in a different related experience:

At age 12 I was a dancer in an eight person group who placed highly at a world championship competition in Irish dancing.

As the only member who didn't regularly place first or second as a solo dancer, I developed the belief that I was making up the numbers.

While my medal was just as good as the other seven and I practiced just as hard, I had always felt like a bit of a fraud, not really good enough to be there.

In the weeks following our success, as our picture was taken for local magazines and newspapers, I squirmed and stood to the side.

I still say to people when they compliment my achievement, "it sounds great, but the world championships were held in Galway that year where I am from, we didn't have to go far, ha-ha".

I fear simply making up the numbers in an industry that may itself be underperforming (Kellerman, 2012). Perhaps what I do and what follows in this study will seem ordinary to others, nothing special? Who am I to speak? Why should anyone listen to me? This refrain has echoed through the past four years of reflexive study. It sits with me during this inquiry and will persist beyond, I suspect. My "fearful heart" (Palmer, 2017: 48) feels exposed, inviting myself onto a stage, but Ko-Ko like, unsure what to say.

Shaping me as a researcher

It has been tempting to be "silenced by the invitation to criticism contained in the expression of voice" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994: 423). Mine has been a quiet LD life, where I operate largely alone and unbothered by the outside world. Through research, it is about to be upended for all to see. As a lone and small operator in the field of LD, I have invested considerable time shoring up my professional autonomy, independence, personal expertise and reputation (Costley et al., 2010). I do not have a large office, unique website or the weight of a known leadership brand behind me. Engagement with reflexive practice (Etherington 2004, 2007; Bolton, 2014) and the challenges of locating myself as insider-researcher (Costley et al., 2010) in my own practice have ushered in a realisation that I have not put

myself out there for judgement or criticism mainly because I only have what I believe about myself and my ability to sustain me. My most significant practice resource is me, and what if I have this all wrong? Bringing myself voluntarily into the glare of the stage lights in this research work risks inviting all of those judgements, personally and professionally, which I have long avoided, and it is terrifying. The courage to show up when I cannot predict or control the outcome leaves me vulnerable (Brown, 2018). I recognise the action of armouring up when challenge looms as a mechanism to protect myself as a child (Brown, 2018). While beneficial when I was a child, I recognise that such tendencies prevent me from wholly occupying my space as an adult, female, experienced LD practitioner and researcher. The temptation has manifest many times in the doctoral journey to retreat into longevity, status or cynicism as a means with which to hide behind my fear of judgement (Palmer, 2017).

Despite this fear and the many other emotions that led to periods of freeze, fight and flight throughout the doctoral journey, I have arrived at this point; thoughtfully considering my own experiences (Schön, 1983) while seeking to validate or challenge these personal narratives reflexively within the methods, theory and analytic process of practice knowledge production (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

Shaping me as insider-researcher in my LD practice

I have watched myself intently throughout this journey. To this point, I have naively viewed my ways of working in commercial learning workspace as a smash and grab of what I have seen others do, have been exposed to and seems to work. Viewing what I do as “a gloriously messy pursuit” (Brookfield, 2015) has belittled my professional capacity and the craft I have honed over many years. I may not have foretold that I would grow up to be an LD practitioner. However, somewhere along the way, I have come to understandings and insights regarding leadership and my

LD practice which is my truth (Brookfield, 2015) driven by my implicit personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1974).

My capacity as an LD Practitioner has come from this incremental building of experience, confidence, insight and skill. I "perform" every time I step in front of a group of participants. I have to believe in my ability in order to summon that performance. Observing myself closely, I realise that my LD practitioner capacity is achieved through enactment, is temporal and contextual. It is not just something I have; I do it (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). In light of this, the impact of my practitioner self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), my belief in my own capacity, persistence, and overcoming obstacles is a crucial factor to which I will return.

As I hone my understanding of what it means for me to be an LD Practitioner on this journey, and with the benefit of the insider-researcher position, I seek to embrace the development of a discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984). By continually monitoring my actions and reflecting on their consequences, I seek an improved ability to respond to demands as they emerge in the immediate practice context.

“Research is not a substitute for therapy, even though it can be therapeutic “ (Etherington, 2004: 126). Looking reflexively at my professional pathway, education and early practice experiences have revealed where I have made choices and engaged in ways that laid down or shaped what I believed in, whether I was aware of that at the time or not. I regard the ones I have drawn on in this chapter as significant turning points (Riessman, 2002). The impact and legacy will become more apparent as I elaborate on my beliefs about leadership and LD in later chapters.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) comment on the risks that come with using a personal voice in research writing, describing it as "always speaking partially naked", leaving the researcher "genuinely open to legitimate criticism from participants and from audience" (p. 423). A transdisciplinary undertaking in capacity

building such as this professional doctorate aims to develop a wise practitioner (Maxwell, 2019). That wisdom emerges from practical reasoning about practical things, is drawn from time and experience, and is a significant source of knowledge (Maxwell, 2019). With some trepidation and excitement, I issue an informed invitation to the reader to consider and embrace the issues, opportunities, and insights emerging from this research as it informs and shapes my practice of LD.

Conclusion

As a practitioner and latterly as a researcher, I hold "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990: 17). As an established Practitioner, but one without an active community of practice or a research history, these beliefs have until now been highly intrinsic, subconscious and backgrounded in my day-to-day ways of knowing, being and doing in the world. These paradigms (Lincoln et al., 2018) or knowledge claims (Cresswell, 2003) have evolved over time and are, I realise, multiple in their expression of ontological and epistemological stance within my worldview. A number have become more apparent through this research journey.

What has become more evident to me is the range of experiences that have led me to believe that knowledge is socially constructed (Vgotsky, 1978; Searle, 1996). Working with participants on LD programmes, I see them strive for meaning, looking to make sense of their environment in terms of past experience and their present reality (Kim, 2001). This meaning-making takes place in various ways – personal reflection, seeking new information, testing ideas through social contact, problem-solving and testing assumptions, among others (Bates, 2019).

Through reflexive practice and the doctoral journey, what surprised me was how strongly my beliefs and practices were rooted in my early career "apprenticeship". I had emotionally and intellectually struggled with the discourses around me at that time – a propensity toward critique and questioning (Brookfield, 1986) and manifestations of a critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) in action. These occurred at a

formative time and place where I had little capacity to understand and felt overwhelmed by the people who championed it. Nevertheless, I vicariously absorbed and carried those practices (Guba, 1990) into every learning space I help to create today. It has been deeply insightful to return to a time and place and truly see it differently.

I have delighted in reconnecting with what motivated me to engage in LD in the first place: the concept of the person (O'Hara, 2016) and their resources, talent and experience. This person-centred paradigm (Rogers, 1951) goes to the core of why I do what I do – to provide a supported and safe space in the workplace where there is freedom for adults to learn.

Ultimately, despite the personal struggle with it, what has energised me is the possibility inherent in uncovering my own voice and stepping fully into my possibility for the first time. I dread it but invite it in equal measure, knowing that the adult me (Berne, 1968) can handle it deep down. I know LD, I care about LD: I can speak to it and explore. I can invite the wisdom to emerge from those places and stay open to new understanding and possibility.

With a sense of excitement and anticipation, I review the literature relevant to this research in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Engaging with theoretical perspectives - Reviewing the Literature

Introduction

My research intrigue is to explore a pedagogy for LD in the commercial learning workspaces in which it occurs. The literature review that follows explicates relevant knowledge and tensions around the phenomena of leadership, leadership development, adult learning, and pedagogy. This study draws on multi-disciplinary theory from a range of fields, conceptually and practically. It is not possible within the scope of this chapter to cover the breadth and depth of each of these disciplines, nor is that the intent. Instead, this chapter is a short theoretical frame for the study congruent with narrative inquiry methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In making a contribution to knowledge, this review focuses on concerns of knowledge and power within the highlighted phenomena related to the commercial learning workspace for leadership. Further discussion of related literature is woven into the re-storied narratives in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 when it best illuminates, explains, or challenges the emergent findings.

This review begins with leadership as a topic, contextualising the evolution of theory, locating the persistent dualities inherent in the topic and identifying a working definition of leadership for the purposes of this research. From there, the review examines the conflicted and diverse nature of LD as a vehicle for the teaching and learning of leadership. Reconnecting with research motivation at this point enables the building of a scholarly bridge between LD and adult education and learning, inviting the latter to inform the former. An extrapolation of the relevant theory in adult education and learning which helps locate this study follows. Following this, the discussion turns to pedagogy, the primary research concern, highlighting and critiquing relevant theoretical understanding, which

assists in casting a light on leadership learning workspaces. To conclude, I draw disparate threads from the review to locate my theoretical and paradigmatic position as an LD practitioner.

Mindful of the research purpose and two defining concerns within adult education – knowledge and power (Freire, 1970, 1972; Mezirow, 1991; Brookfield, 2005), a focus is maintained on these theoretical lenses (Marshall & Rossman, 2014) as a new and potentially illuminating way to look at the learning workspace for LD. Choices relating to research focus and intent will be further explained in Chapter 4 within a deeper discussion of research methodology.

Beginning at the top: Leadership

Introduction

My research question brings attention to leadership *development (LD)*, not to the concept of leadership itself. Nevertheless, I see leadership as core to LD. Therefore, it is essential to delineate in what form leadership as topic is present in the learning workspace for this study while being watchful to avoid subsuming the primary focus on development. I do not seek to present a complete discussion of leadership. This review is an abridged exploration of leadership related to this study – the central topic of the LD learning workspace.

A contested term

There are few topics more universally enmeshed in our daily lives, work, and structures than leadership (Bass, 1998; Bennis, 2007). The ubiquity of the topic is equally reflected in the expansive attention paid by the academy to the theoretical underpinnings of leadership and the nature of how it manifests in organisations (e.g. Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Bennis, 1989, 2007; Drucker, 1995; Day, 2000; Avolio, 2007; Bass & Bass, 2008; Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Bryman, 2013; Western, 2013).

A “contested term”, leadership has multiple meanings and varied practical applications (Western, 2013: 26). Burns (1978) identified 130 definitions, remarking that leadership as a concept had dissolved into “small and discrete meanings” (p. 2). It is safe to conclude that “leadership is an elusive construct, riddled with so much ambiguity that it is hard to even define...” (Nohria & Khurana, 2010: 5). Defining what leadership is or its’ constituent parts is a “complex and elusive problem” (Bryman, 2013: ix); a concept and practice so “overused and oversold” that its’ meaning is no longer “conceptually intact” (Raelin, 2016: 131).

Tracing Leadership Theory

Seeking to understand the roots of such complexity and divergence of view, I have traced the development of leadership theory (Figure 3.1 below), taking a critical stance to test my assumptions and experience in light of what has been written. As before, this chart and related discussion are not intended to be a compendium of leadership theory. Instead, they highlight concepts and beliefs from the evolution of leadership theory that can linger, confuse, and limit the understanding of leadership in LD workplace learning.

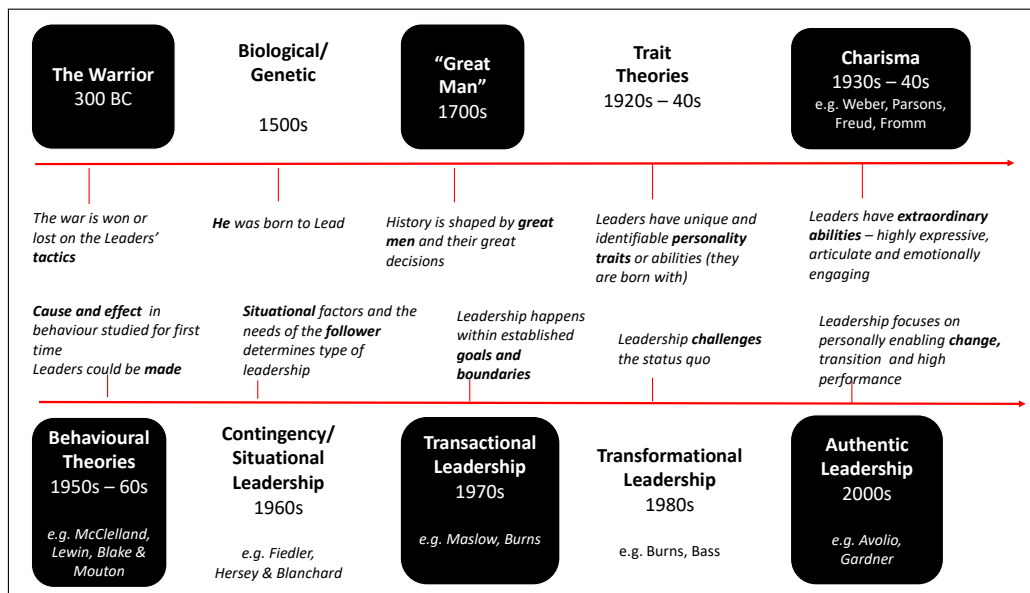


Figure 3.1 A summary of the primary shifts in Leadership theory over time

Illustrative chart created for the purpose of this study

Walking briefly through the chart, each theoretical step forward centres around a primary aspect or characteristic that most defined the leader according to the thinking of the day. A shift in that core belief signalled a step forward in thinking from theory to theory.

The earliest writing on leadership focused on stories of war and the *warrior*, giving way to a related view, carried as truth for several centuries, that leadership is *genetic*, a gift bestowed only on noble males at birth (Kellerman, 2010). The *Trait Theories* of the early 20th century perpetuated the belief that leadership characteristics were already within you. This position was supported by very early and basic psychometric and personality testing.

Max Weber (1924/2009) introduced the formerly religious concept of charisma to the study of leadership (Bass & Bass, 2008) in the 1930s. Freud (1922/1995), Parsons (1949) and Fromm (1941/1994) separately explored charismatic leaders and their followers, laying the early groundwork for later thought on transformation and authenticity in leaders.

A new perspective on leadership emerged mid-century, emphasising *behavioural* rather than mental or social qualities in leadership for the first time (e.g. Lewin, 1935; McClelland, 1951; Blake & Mouton, 1964). Research focused on personality and specifically on the cause and effect of leader behaviour. An emerging consideration that leaders could be made and not born was mooted for the first time.

Leadership theorising evolved at a faster pace from this point forward. The 1960s ushered in a recognition that there was no single way of leading which was right for all occasions. For the first time, leadership studies focused on the *Situation* for leadership and the skill capacity required to lead in varied situations. Leaders were categorised as task-oriented or relations-oriented, contingent on the ability of the leader and the demands of the situation (Fiedler, 1967). *Contingency* theories from this time indicated that leaders are more likely to show leadership when they feel

followers will respond, and the leader receives positive reinforcement as a result. Situational Leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) emerged from this thinking.

Drawing on the earlier work of Maslow (1954, 1962), Burns (1978) and others highlighted the nature of the interpersonal interaction between leader and follower in the 1970s. Their work drew attention to bounded goal-sharing, solid relationship building, and the two-way *Transactional* negotiation of resources and outcomes within perceptible and safe limits. The 1980s provided a complementary view to the perceived limitations of the transactional, ushering in a focus on leaders transforming their followers through their inspiration and charismatic nature (Avolio & Bass, 1988; Bass, 1998, 1999). In *Transformational* leadership terms, leaders create a sense of belonging, aligning followers with the leader and their purpose. Authentic leadership, which quickly followed in the early 2000s (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, 2010), added an urgency to the enactment of leadership with an emphasis on enabling change, stretching performance in workplaces and accelerating personal and organisational transitions, and emphasis missing from earlier leadership theories.

The legacy of much of this evolution lingers. The phrase "*Great Man*", in existence since the 1700s, resurfaces still (Kellerman, 2010: xxi) as leadership hums with patriarchal resonance in many workplaces centuries later. While enhancing the practical understanding of leadership, the situational perspective was narrow and binary in its application. Nevertheless, some older generation leaders enthusiastically recount that they are task or people-oriented, not both. In many instances, leaders continue to be depicted as elusive, visionary and heroic (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). The leadership world took to transformational leadership and authenticity as bywords for a "messiah" type of dominant discourse (Western, 2013) linked to cultural transformation and outstanding company success (Peters & Waterman, 1982). These last two waves of theory have brought their challenges of neo-liberal discourses, questions of how authenticity can be judged and frantic cycles of change for what can appear to be change sake. Allied to this clamour has

grown an insatiable appetite for leadership education, training and development, which continues to grow (Kellerman, 2018).

More questions than answers

Pursued from multiple standpoints and across many disciplines and intellectual traditions (Nohria & Khurana, 2010), viewpoints on leadership appear to diverge more than they converge, with many persistent myths and dualities clouding the space. Figure 3.1 powerfully represents, I suggest, that our legacy understanding of leadership is context-bound and cultural, economically, politically, and gender framed.

From the warrior of 300BC to the authentic leader of the 21st century, generations of latent thinking influence today's participants. That said, the purpose of most participants attending leadership learning events is not to satisfy a "cognitive craving" (Kellerman, 2018: 60) but rather to understand how to become leaders in a practical sense. Hidden in this most practical of motivations, and unconscious for the most part, are persistent dualities (Nohria & Khurana, 2010) at the heart of leadership theory, which impact the "frontline" of teaching and learning leadership.

To knowledge first. Many workplace leaders have been socialised to believe that leadership is a special trait or set of traits, a type of "golden chalice" (Western, 2013: 28) confined to the lucky few. This contrasts with a view of leadership as a social role defined by influence and context. Many believe leadership is universal, a common uniting force across people and situation. However, others believe it is particular to person and identity (Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Many, particularly those working within larger organisations, have been heavily exposed to a thinking and doing competency approach to leadership (Bolden & Gosling, 2006; Carroll et al., 2008). Others, fewer in number, have been encouraged by contrast to view leadership capacity as becoming and being, which focuses on evolving growth and identity (Petriglieri, 2012).

Vestiges of leadership as the preserve of the appointed hierarchical leader in whom rank and power are exclusively vested (Drucker, 1995; Bennis, 2007) persist even as our workplaces may look and feel more diverse or democratic than those which have gone before. Taking a power lens to the dualities in leadership research highlights two further tensions highly relevant to the workplace. The first tension relates to the purpose of the leader's role. Is it to produce superior performance and results in line with managerialist expectations of success (Pfeffer & Fong, 2004) or make meaning (Selznick, 2011)? The second power-related tension goes to the heart of the purpose of leadership learning. A persistent duality exists in the literature between a leader's ability to exercise agency, the power and will to act, do, change things, and their need to obey and follow constraints within the organisation, society and their context for influencing (Nohria & Khurana, 2010).

Reaching a working definition

Having traced the theoretical evolution of the topic and noted the significant dualities that continue to occupy the space, I return to the question of definition. It presents a challenging task. Bass and Bass (2008) state that the "definitions most commonly used tend to concentrate on the leader as a person, on the behaviour of the leaders, on the effects of the leader and on the interaction process between the leader and the led" (p. 15). Raelin (2016) purports that "there is no consensus... that leadership be singular or plural, that it be a trait or a set of behaviors, or that it is best viewed as a subject or as an object" (p. 131).

I consider following the advice of Kellerman (2012) to "avoid like the plague definitions of leadership of which at the last count there were some fifteen hundred" (p. xxi). Research clarity, and simplicity, demands I identify at the least my assumptions regarding meaning. I choose to research using a broad definition of leadership provided by Western (2013). Leadership for this purpose represents "a psychosocial influencing dynamic" (p. 52). This perspective aligns with my psychological and person-centred roots, my belief that knowledge is socially constructed, and enables a critical perspective on leadership which Western advocates. I further embrace his proposition that leadership is experienced as an

idea. Those who engage in leadership give it meanings, names and form while performing it; having it performed on and between them and a big part of the challenge is to locate the perceptions and emotions, both personal and cultural, attached to leadership for themselves (Western, 2013). This definition reflects humanity, practicality, interactivity and grounding in context.

This working definition also invites further questions about how parties to leadership, including this LD practitioner, give meaning and form to the idea (Western, 2013) as I support and challenge the enactment of leadership in holistic and agentic ways. This theme recurs throughout the narrative inquiry - how the LD practitioner understands and brings to life their epistemological position (Apple, 2012) on the topic of leadership from which practice and pedagogic alignment flows (Kincehloe, 2008).

Leadership Development

Introduction

It is clear from the literature that LD is becoming a discipline distinct from traditional leadership studies (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Just as there are many and varied definitions of leadership in a contested field, it follows that there are as many ways to teach the topic as there are definitions of it (Rost, 1991). Questioning if leadership can be taught, Doh (2003), in a widely cited research study, concluded that it can. However, it does partially depend on the participant and their pathway/experience of life and learning. A commonly held view is that LD concerns itself with capacity growth – building effective leadership skills, competencies, and knowledge (Riggio, 2008; Van Velsor et al., 2010; Yukl, 2012). In practice and for this research, I work from a more comprehensive definition reflecting the processual and ongoing nature of LD. In addition to growing the capacities of individuals, I view LD as a continuous and systemic process that enables the cognitive, moral and identity awareness of individuals, groups and organisations striving to meet shared goals and objectives (after Allen & Roberts, 2011). Aligning

thus locates my practice position on teaching and learning leadership as a critical one (Owen, 2015; Barnes, 2017; Dugan & Humbles, 2018) the detail, implications and impact of which for commercial learning workspaces is deeply explored throughout the narratives in Chapters 5-7.

Since the first formal textbook specifically designed to teach leadership – *Leadership in Organisations* - was published in 1985, the field of LD has exploded to service the upsurge in interest in the topic (Snook et al., 2012). Early iterations of LD served two primary purposes – to help managers transition to new or upcoming roles and reward the "up and comers", who would be regarded today as future talent. LD subsequently flirted with several socio-economic changes and preoccupations: absorbing elements of encounter and developmental T-groups in the 1970s; embracing economic demands for value for money alongside heavier customisation in the 1980s (Bass & Bass, 2008). The increased popularity of 360-degree feedback mechanisms and a focus on emotional intelligence in the 1990s has been joined by the advent of developmental 1:1 coaching in the 2000s (Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Van Velsor et al., 2010).

Recent surveys (Deloitte, 2016; LinkedIn, 2018) of executives, people managers, and HRD professionals reinforce the continued identification of leadership skills as a top priority in organisations worldwide. However, despite or perhaps because of this volume of interest and demand, approaches to LD vary widely and are many-sided (Bass & Bass, 2008) with no single recognised best way (Snook et al., 2012).

Against this fragmented landscape for LD, I review the literature, focusing on pedagogy and concerns of knowledge and power. I firstly concern myself with an exploration of LD intent, efficacy and knowledge creation in two prolific sites in which it occurs, within the academy and an organisational context. Tensions and opportunities within both are highlighted and discussed. Bearing in mind my research agenda, I move on to look to the future, asking where the literature is pointing on knowledge, power and practice in the context of LD workspaces.

A note on scale

It is important to differentiate between the large-scale Leadership Development practices, of which there are many operating on a national and international scale (Training Industry, 2020), and the smaller independent practices working predominantly with locally owned or managed companies, often small to medium-sized. In addition, independent LD practitioners typically create and deliver bespoke development solutions face-to-face in client workplaces working with a small number of clients at a time. Within this latter independent arena, I locate my practice, and the terms LD practice and LD practitioner refer in this study.

Locating LD within the academy

LD in the academic environment is not the focus of this research, yet I suggest this explication of intent, efficacy and knowledge creation begins there for a particular reason. Leadership as an academic subject is delivered by most prominent universities (Snook, Khurana & Nohria, 2012) as part of their graduate business administration, law, and medicine programmes. In particular, business schools, acting as “leadership school” (Wasserman, Bharat & Nohria, 2010), serve two powerful functions which directly influence LD in the workplace. They have traditionally set the standard on ways of knowing in leadership, and their outputs have provided ontological guidance for the practice in the field. They have educated many leaders of industry, government and politics who arrive in senior roles imbued with the beliefs of their alma mater (Snook et al., 2012). These beliefs have permeated the fabric of organisations and shaped how leadership learning is viewed in the workplace context. A glance across the mission statements of some leading business schools (QS Top Universities, 2020) reflects their purported leadership concern as of July 2020 (Figure 3.2).

Harvard wants to ...
educate leaders who make a difference in the world

MIT Sloan School of Management aims to
develop principled, innovative leaders who improve the world and to generate ideas that advance management practice

Oxford Säid Business School is developing ...
leadership in extraordinary times

London School of Economics has as it's guiding principle...
Understand today, Influence Tomorrow

University College Dublin Smurfit Graduate School of Business has as the first line of it's three part mission ...
 educating future business leaders to the highest quality international standards

Figure 3.2 Statements by leading business schools engaged in educating leaders

Compiled for the purpose of this research (July 2020)¹

Despite the promise of "difference", "purpose", and "innovation" exhorted in Figure 3.2, there are significant knowledge concerns regarding the outputs of "leadership school" (Wasserman et al., 2010) as they manifest in the world of work. The first concerns the reality that academic LD remains largely an information-sharing space focusing on what it is believed, by academics and sponsoring organisations, that participants should know about leadership. University education in leadership, typically situated in the business schools, has perpetuated the tendency to focus on conceptual or cognitive learning of leadership (Conger, 2010).

Such academic knowledge increases knowing but does not help participants to gain practical proficiency or what Chia (2004) terms "skilled improvised 'in situ' coping" (p. 29); a proficiency he suggests needs to be learned as leadership practice in action. Codifying, summarising and packaging leadership to deliver academic education to many, quickly and easily, has arguably constrained rather than

¹ Harvard University (2020); MIT Sloan School Of Management (2020); Oxford Säid Business School (2020); London School of Economics (2020); University College Dublin Smurfit Graduate School of Business (2020).

broadened and deepened the knowledge of those entering industry (Kellerman, 2012).

Pfeffer (2005: 96) argues that significant questions exist for the academy regarding what is taught about leadership against the backdrop of the inculcation and acceptance of economic language, assumptions and theory. This second concern highlights a 21st-century idea of leadership imported from the academy to the world of work. This version has much to do with numbers, is driven by measurement and performance only, and is focused on the present-day short horizon in keeping with the dominant neo-liberal ideology of the times (Thorsen, 2010). Authors indicate that such flawed leadership education in business schools does not reach “the deeper levels of learning associated with the self... the most crucial goal in higher education” (Mentkowski & Associates, 2000: 187).

Voicing a third related concern for academic leadership output, Ghoshal (2005) claims that business schools perpetuate a way of thinking through their “propagation of ideologically inspired amoral theories” (p. 76). This, he believes, is driven by several factors, among them an overriding “liberalism” and a self-fulfilling research bias that reinforces a set of pessimistic assumptions about individuals and institutions (Ghoshal, 2005). Following similar thought, radical commentators believe that there is a need to bulldoze the 13,000 or so business schools globally and start again (Parker, 2018). The central argument is that leadership is, in fact, not being taught in these places at all. Only one agenda is – that of market managerialism. This approach eschews responsibility, ethics (Parker, 2018) and the things human beings need in addition to jobs... meaning, understanding and perspective (Faust, 2009). Learning to lead, it could be argued, is learning to think, act and provide direction in the interest of the common good (Kellerman, 2018), yet much education practice does not deliver this.

Based on this evidence, I argue that ego-centric and heroic approaches to leadership perpetuate in many business schools and pervade organisations, privileging confident action without considering its impact on others, a diminution

of responsibility and moral debate (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). The assumption taken for granted in leadership teaching and research can be one of individualism (Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2010). It can be significantly easier to adopt a linear or fixed view of leadership, prioritising instrumental knowledge at the cost of inviting in the more expansive but potentially challenging communicative and emancipatory ways of knowing (Habermas, [1971] 2015).

Locating LD in the business/organisational setting

It is against this backdrop of leadership learning in the academic setting and having absorbed its' dominant ideology that workplace LD finds/locates itself. Therefore, it is perhaps no surprise to find that LD programmes in workplaces have in the main held on to a sturdy scaffolding of conceptual information alongside the introduction of tried and tested mechanisms such as 360-degree feedback (Van Velsor et al., 2010). In addition, short, discrete pieces of action learning such as the purposeful creation of a cross-functional team to work on a problem or an issue provide real-life context for application (McCauley, Kanaga & Lafferty, 2010).

Growing and developing leaders at work is essential to big business. A glance across the leadership statements of the world's five most valuable branded companies (Kantar, 2020) shows the following leadership intent (Figure 3.3):

Amazon has 14 leadership principles it lives by ...
including continuous learning and curiosity; thinking big; having backbone and customer obsession

Apple doesn't have a specific public mission statement but has stated that
Its 100,000 employees are dedicated to making the best products on earth and to leaving the world better than we found it

Google has identified and embedded in its Manager Education 10 central leadership principles
Including collaboration, communication, coaching, supporting and empowering the team

Microsoft has recently worked hard to reduce its leadership ask to the pithy... *create clarity, generate energy, deliver success*

Visa ...
sees every employee as a leader playing a growth driving role within the organisation

Figure 3.3 Statements of Leadership Intention by the World's Top 5 most valuable branded companies

Compiled for the purpose of this research (July 2020)²

The technology and financial giants sampled in Figure 3.3 are not alone. Virtually all organisations of significant size or scale have leadership expectations embedded in their mission, vision, values or strategy. LD is a top priority (Schwartz, Belsin & Pelster, 2014). Economic ambition and leadership capacity development appear to go hand in hand. Estimates of the amount spent on leadership development range from \$14 to \$50 billion, with close to \$365 billion spent globally on leadership training in 2015 alone (Beer et al., 2016; Pfeffer, 2016). In 2016, 89 per cent of companies surveyed for the well regarded Human Global Capital Trends Annual Report (Deloitte University Press, 2016) viewed leadership as an important or very important issue (up from 87 per cent in 2015), and 57 per cent cited leadership as very important (up from 50 per cent the previous year). The same report states the belief from respondents that the leadership challenge is both growing in importance and becoming increasingly urgent (Deloitte University Press, 2016).

² Amazon (2020); Apple (2020); Forbes(2020); Harvard Business Review (2020); Visa (2020).

Challenges in business/organisational LD

“Corporations are victims of the great Training Robbery” announces a review by Beer, Finnström and Schrader for the Harvard Business Review (2016). As noted, 89 per cent of companies surveyed for the well regarded Human Global Capital Trends Annual Report in 2016 saw leadership as important or very important. However, only 40 per cent of respondents believe that their current leadership programmes provide "some" value and 24 per cent report that they yield little to no value (Deloitte University Press, 2016).

There is increasing consensus that LD, as it is currently delivered in workplace learning environments, is falling short on its stated aims to deliver thinking, feeling, engaged people leaders by either pushing or pulling people through a tightly scripted learning curriculum and process (Owen, 2015; Rowland, 2016; Pfeffer, 2016). Despite a migration from expensive business schools to expensive in-house tailored solutions, in most cases, leadership interventions remain leader-centric and situation-specific to the organisation's needs at that time (Kellerman, 2012). Such economic and cognitive approaches foreground informing rather than potentially transforming (Snook et al., 2012).

The criticisms levelled at the industry are many and varied. Authors highlight overly set curricula, a rational thinking bias and rigid pedagogical approaches (Raelin, 2015; Rowland, 2016). Others believe LD is teaching the wrong things in the wrong ways, neglecting important topics and collective concerns (Cunliffe, 2009; Western, 2013; Tourish, 2019). Yet more believe LD perpetuates crude, simple approaches which deepen a disconnect between a fantasy version of leadership and the actual experiences of managers in organisations (Cunliffe, 2009; Tourish & Barge, 2010; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Bregman, 2013).

Ready and Conger (2003) believe the causes of such low efficacy are many and complex, including but not limited to; little time or resource invested, too little organisation support before, during or after programmes and limited scope. Lack of follow-through; change of focus; new CEO with different priorities; little reward

or acknowledgement for leadership effort; entrenched behaviours and poor role-modelling complete the list. Kellerman suggests that the “metrics are mostly missing” (2012: 168). She highlights the scant objective evidence to confirm that the massive, expensive and prolonged investment in the LD industry has paid off. Programmes are typically evaluated by only one measure: participant satisfaction with the experience. She wryly notes that this has no connection with intended impact or learning and may be an indicator to the contrary, as reported by Beer et al. (2016).

A growing body of work, predominantly written by female authors, academic and popular, critiques established ways of teaching and learning leadership (e.g. Carroll et al., 2008; Fairhurst, 2009; Cunliffe, 2009; Carroll & Nicholson, 2014). This calling to account is not just the domain of popular Consultant-Authors such as Rowland (2016, 2017) and Wakeman (2010), or the Academic-Popular hybrids such as Ibarra (2015) or Brown (2018). It is notably also emerging from within the very pillars of the establishment, among the bastions of leadership thinking for decades who have educated social, political and business leaders. Among them are Henry Mintzberg at McGill (2005), Barbara Kellerman at Harvard (2012, 2018) and Jeffrey Pfeffer at Stanford (2016).

A focus on the future – accessing knowledge

Contrasting with this downbeat assessment are those who offer hope and suggestions for the future direction of LD. It is not "rocket science" to reconceive leadership in less exceptional but better prepared, educated and "good enough" ways, asserts Kellerman (2018: 181).

Twenty years ago, Brown and Posner (2001) connected an active and versatile learning of leadership with more engaged and involved leadership behaviours as a result. Research since then has increasingly shown the opportunity for a broader focus for leadership in a shared way in teams and workplaces (Pearce, 2004; Tafvelin et al., 2019). Greater attention to learner voice and experience in constructing learning approaches can significantly aid understanding why and how

learning transfer occurs, including transformative learning (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; Ciporen, 2010).

More recently, there are signs of transformation underway where powerful pedagogies and emerging knowledge about teaching and learning leadership replace long-held beliefs and practices, suggests Owen (2015). What is emerging from the ongoing debate is that change requires a greater understanding of the critical levers of leadership learning (Owen, 2015). Alongside a commitment to better LD practice invested in meaning-making and a willingness to work with the locus and context for lived leadership (Dugan & Humbles, 2018). There is greater scope to recognise leadership's experiential and embodied nature and adjust teaching and learning methods accordingly (Raelin, 2016).

The future challenge may well be to help leadership learners to focus inwardly, accessing courage, stillness and consideration by creating "braver leaders and more courageous cultures" (Brown, 2018: 6). This means enabling emergent learning experiences of a non-pre-prescribed nature and creating sufficient trust and psychological safety in workplaces and workplace learning environments for authentic learning and growth to happen (Edmondson, 2018; Rowland, 2018). In addition, there is increasing evidence that it is important, and possibly essential, to create powerful, transitional spaces where self-reflection, self-learning, leadership-identity work and play can safely take place (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2012; Petriglieri, 2012).

A focus on the future – enhancing power literacy

Underpinning many such recent conversations in the LD space is a challenge to the prevailing economic-managerial view of leadership capacity. Common among those rejecting current modalities in LD is a palpable unease at the underlying premise of *homo economicus*, which sees "people as rational, self-interest maximisers" (Ghoshal, 2005: 82). Moreover, within the academy of management and organisational studies, there is concern that traditional approaches to

leadership learning have "naturalised oppressive power relationships" in the workplace in particular (Tourish, 2014: 79), and something different is needed.

This inflection point in LD relating to awareness of power is clear, and more significant interrogation to shape a different arc for the future direction of LD is still unfolding (Dugan & Humbles, 2018). Researchers and practitioners allied to a critical perspective (e.g. Alvesson & Wilmott, 1992; Reed & Anthony, 1992; Reynolds, 1998; Raelin, 2008, 2009; Cunliffe & Linstead, 2009; Western, 2013; Dugan et al., 2015; Dugan & Humbles, 2018) advocate for enhanced power consciousness in the course of LD through critical reflection, dialogue and an active engagement with the concepts of power, privilege and identity. Raising power consciousness (Dugan et al., 2015) in LD can enhance power literacy (Liu, 2013) described as an interactive and situated process of attending to what power is, who has it, how it is used, and how it flows. Insights generated through power literacy can translate into informed (rather than pre-prescribed) decision-making and enhanced leadership agency (Dugan et al., 2015).

In the last decade, Brigid Carroll and associates have written extensively on the tensions and challenges inherent in LD practice (e.g. Carroll & Levy, 2010; Kennedy, Carroll & Francoeur, 2013; Carroll & Nicholson, 2014; Carroll & Smolović Jones, 2018). Their work notes that issues of power, resistance, and conformity are often present in both LD research and delivery but are not yet sufficiently understood (Carroll & Nicholson, 2014). Moreover, they see these aspects "entangle facilitators and participants alike; yet few in that space seem to know how to work with its energies and insights" (p. 1414).

A focus on the future – adopting a practice perspective

Simultaneously, a cadre of academic writers and researchers including Carroll, (Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin, 2009, 2018; Scharmer, 2016, 2018) are actively challenging the prevailing paradigm of teaching individualistic, heroic and competency led views of leadership delivered through what they view as an

outdated instrumentalist approach to education. They challenge a paradigm of LD depicted as "forty years of spoon-feeding" (Raelin, 2009: 401). In its place, this movement (Raelin, 2016) of writers, researchers and educators advocate for a turn towards leadership as practice (Carroll et al., 2008; Carroll & Levy, 2010; Raelin, 2016). In essence, leadership is "conceived of as occurring as a practice rather than residing in the traits or behaviours of particular individuals" (Raelin, 2016: 1). A practice view of leadership denotes a discursive, emergent, mutual and imminent action (Raelin, 2016). Drawing from this belief system, MALT, the programme at the heart of this inquiry, is rooted in a practice epistemology that supports individual development but emphasises collective agency (Simpson, 2016).

A significant shift towards a more critical or practice-based LD paradigm such as those highlighted here is no easy task (Dugan & Humbles, 2018). However, what is significant is that theory, research, and practice appear to be moving towards new and unknown territories. In doing so, there is a challenge to practice, participants and LD practitioners such as myself to consider where the opportunity resides to create significant leadership learning (Owen, 2015).

A focus on the future – gaps in the knowledge

Getting under the skin of everyday leadership practice is still an emerging field of scholarly research into LD (Day et al., 2014). Recent studies using narrative methods have focused on the (predominantly informal) development of leadership practice in education settings among female leaders (e.g. Komolthiti, 2016; Morillo, 2017; Fullick, 2018). Student-centred narratives have been leveraged to inform understanding of leadership in continuing education (e.g. Miller & Plessis, 2014). Life narrative studies have sought to connect significant developmental events with leadership style and practice (e.g. Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Ligon, Hunter & Mumford, 2008).

Concurrently, increasing theoretical and research interest in leadership education pedagogies (e.g. Sergiovanni, 1998; Rosch & Anthony, 2012; Turner & Baker, 2017) has added to the understanding of the interrelationship between design, pedagogy

and practice in LD spaces. Discussion of capacity, agency and responsibility feature, for example, in a mixed-methods study by Sandfort and Gerdes (2017) of an LD programme for Public Affairs professionals at a university in the US. This study is one of the few I have found to bring these concepts to the learning space for LD in this way.

Almost all of the studies referenced are located in third level, continuing, or public sector education settings. Some are narrative in nature; others are not. Those that are narrative in nature focus mainly on informal cumulative learning experiences in leadership across a period. They draw predominantly on interviews or questionnaires as their primary data sources.

I have been unable to identify studies that attempt to capture the experience of LD in a *workplace* setting where the primary focus is on LD practice, specifically the role it plays in the shared learning space created between practitioner, participants and the topic of leadership. The individual's interaction with the practice environment and their interpretation of their own experience has been somewhat neglected (Loftus & Higgs, 2010). Concerns of a pedagogic nature in particular, such as the role of knowledge, power and agency in learning spaces, appear to have been overlooked in previous research in this arena. Further, there appear to be few if any attempts to engage with narrative methods to gain insight into the experience of LD as workplace learning of an organised (as opposed to informal) nature.

All of this bears out the concern of Day et al. (2014) that attention in LD research lies with theoretical, model or structural issues rather than leadership as a development process. More research is needed which explores the world of meaning that individuals bring to the world of work and how they learn while there (Loftus & Higgs, 2010). I conclude that LD practice has not invested sufficiently in understanding the experience of leadership learning workspaces to inform how and why knowledge is created. Little is known about the role of power or its' manifestations in the commercial learning workspace for leadership. These are significant gaps in our knowledge, and the locus of this research.

Building a bridge between LD and Adult Education and Learning: locating a scholarly framework for research

An inflection point

In Chapter 1, I outlined the motivations which propelled me as an LD practitioner, questioning the content, impact and efficacy of my life's work to seek a less familiar frame through which to challenge what had become familiar. With the benefit of hindsight, choosing to bring my research possibility to the world of adult education instead of the more familiar realms of a psychology or business school was an inflection point of its own (Dugan & Humbles, 2018).

"Leaders do not need to know all the answers. They do need to ask the right questions" (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Arriving at the right questions to ask and the right place in which to ask them, to paraphrase Heifetz and Laurie, took some time and critical reflection to unearth. The locus for MALT, the LD programme at the heart of this inquiry, is the workplace. The topic of leadership in this context is business-centric; the participants are workplace managers. Nevertheless, the practitioner questions that niggled and ultimately came to shape the research puzzle centre on teaching and learning; understanding outcomes, interactions and dynamics within the learning environment I inhabit as a practitioner. This is the domain of adult education.

The fields of Human Resource Development (to which management education and LD in organisations typically belong) and adult education are separate and overlapping (Yang, 2004) with " potential synergies that can grow out of embracing this relationship" (Watkins & Marsick, 2014: 48). The reality is that LD exists in the context of adult development (Day et al., 2014) and, in most cases, is delivered to adult learners (Turner & Baker, 2017).

Learning in commercial learning workspace

The focus on learning workspaces for leadership in this study invites definition of what “learning” means in this context. Rogers describes the act of meaningful learning for a student as “discovering, drawing in from the outside, and making what I discover a real part of me” (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994: 35). Long before this, Dewey highlighted the need to learn as fundamental to our humanity, stating that “education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which insure growth, or adequacy of life, irrespective of age” (1916: 51).

With a social constructivist epistemology comes the belief that learning is the process of constructing new knowledge on the foundation of what is already known (Vygotsky, 1978; Kim, 2001). Learning viewed in this way (Illeris, 2018) assumes the learner actively builds up learning as mental schemes or structures, which are then organised and accessed as needed with future people or situations. I favour a definition from Jarvis, who writes that learning is “the essence of everyday living and of conscious experience; it is the process of transforming that experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and beliefs” (1992: 11). In this, I am drawn to valuing the lived experience and the possibility inherent in his description.

While many factors influence the concept of a “learning workspace”, it is the occurrence of learning which is the determinant of success. In the introduction, I noted that I drew on wide and varied thinking (Wenger, 1998; Petriglieri, 2012; Western, 2013; Palmer, 2017; Scharmer, 2018) to inform the concept of a “commercial learning workspace” in the context of this inquiry. I define it as a place where participants are invited to create a shared learning experience towards developing their leadership capacity in the workplace. Moving beyond shared classroom space to learning workspace requires a site of potential change and transformation, both personal and social (Scharmer, 2018).

Places of adult learning

Workplace learning as a concept has seen increased interest and systematic attention in the last 30 years or so, reflecting extensive social, global and technological changes in attitudes to where learning happens, for how long and what is to be learned (Illeris, 2011).

Learning *at work* (Gray, 2001), in the case of LD programmes such as MALT, is distinctive for several reasons. It is as a fundamentally social process happening between, not just in people; enabling learning from the learners' perspective, and fostering participants' personal development (Marsick & Watkins, 1990; Boud & Garrick, 1999; Billett, 2002). Learning in such instances typically arises from reflection on work practices, experience and problem-solving, where knowledge creation is a shared and collective activity (Raelin, 2000).

While Human Resource Development (abbreviated to HRD from this point) and adult education are located in "overlapping and disparate fields" (Watkins & Marsick, 2014: 42), tensions manifest in the complex context of practice. The origins of HRD, the organisational "home" for LD in most organisations, are in performance at work (Watkins & Marsick, 2014), a position that is fundamentally a management-driven approach and not a learning one (Illeris, 2011). *Homo economicus*, the dominant management model of the last century, reinforces this position, viewing humans in workplaces as a fixed entity pre-determined by a stable function and resource for maximum utilisation (Von Kimakowitz et al., 2011; Dierksmeier, 2015, 2016). Predominant concerns in adult learning, knowledge, power, and agency are rooted in a different place: early concerns of citizenship for a democratic society (Watkins & Marsick, 2014). It is a significant philosophical difference - "a focus on the disenfranchised learner, the disempowered and marginalised in AE vs. the professional elite and the management classes in HRD" (Watkins & Marsick, 2014: 50). These tensions and opportunities are discussed further in the section on adult learning which follows.

Reflection, critical reflection and reflexivity

The terms reflection, critical reflection and reflexivity have already appeared in the course of this dissertation and will recur with greater frequency as the review of relevant literature moves deeper into discussion of adult learning theory and onwards to the heart of the re-storied narratives. These are contested terms, with varied and often interchangeable meaning depending on discipline or perspective. For the purposes of this research undertaking it is important to clarify that these terms are used with the following meaning within this inquiry –

Reflection —the process of thoughtfully considering one’s experiences (Schön, 1983) thereby “revisiting and reinterpreting the meaning” of the experience (Faller Lundgren & Marsick, 2020: 251)

Critical reflection - questioning at deeper levels the culture, assumptions and premise behind the experience (Brookfield, 1986)

Reflective practice - the application of reflection to the researchers professional work for the purpose of decision making, problem solving and development (Bolton, 2014)

Reflexivity - strengthening the ability to be highly attuned to oneself in how the researcher engages ; in particular the capacity to acknowledge how the researcher’s experiences and context, which may be fluid and changing, shape and inform the process and outcomes of the inquiry (Etherington, 2004). Reflexivity defined in this way necessitates that the researcher became highly cognisant and challenging of their own frames of reference (McCormack & Ryan, 2011) and the extent to which they interfere with or aid learning.

Adult Education and Learning

Introduction

In this literature review, I focus specifically on the insights and theoretical perspectives from the discipline of adult education, which I suggest best inform and contextualise this study. I begin with a snapshot of adult learning principles and theory, along with the implications and considerations of viewing LD as a form of adult learning through those lenses. Drawing on the strong position adult learning theory takes on a democratic and balanced educational space, I follow with consideration of the possibilities and challenges involved in taking a critical perspective on LD in the commercial learning environment. In line with increasing reflexive awareness of my position as an LD practitioner from Chapter 2, this section finishes with a consideration of my practice location with regard to a critical perspective on LD.

As the primary object of research, I conclude this chapter with separate consideration of pedagogy, drawing on threads and insight generated in the previous three sections on leadership, LD and adult learning.

The theory regarding adult learning is extensive. The following paragraphs explicitly focus on thinking that throws further light on the learning workspace as defined here. This includes significant learning (Rogers, 1951), Andragogy (Knowles, 1984) and Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1978, 1981).

Working with adult learners

Rogers was an early proponent of "significant learning", seeing it as involving a "change in the organisation of the self" (Rogers 1951: 390). He saw this change as almost existential and beyond the simple accommodation of new information (Illeris, 2007). While his is not a comprehensive theory of learning (Jarvis, 2010), Rogers focused on what he saw as the human need to learn through experience, to benefit from reflection. He noted that adults learn most effectively when the

learning process occurs "in response to a disjunctural situation – a problem or a need" (Jarvis, 2010: 117).

Where Rogers blended client-centred approaches with education, others looked to define how adults learn versus how children learn (Merriam, 2018). The combination of andragogy theory (Knowles, 1968, 1984), which highlighted that adult motivation to learn is intrinsic (Knowles, 1984: 12), and Kolb's experiential learning model (Kolb, 1984), which demonstrated the cyclical nature of learning, allowed specific consideration to be given to teaching and learning strategies suitable for adult learners.

Knowles (1984) assumptions have helped inform understanding of adult learner characteristics, emphasising the intrinsic nature of adult motivation to learn. Drawing his theory to LD learning workspace, for example, means accessing the readiness to learn of a workplace participant, a readiness which Knowles (1984) notes is increasingly oriented to the development tasks of their roles. He advocates that helping participants understand the reasons for learning is essential, in this instance, about leadership. Working with real-life, current work-based examples harnesses the rich reservoir of participant experience in alignment with andragogic principles. Accessing internal motivators around problem-solving and supporting self-direction in learning are crucial characteristics of adult learners (after Knowles, 1984).

Connecting with earlier discussions on the efficacy of many LD programmes, I suggest adult learning principles are not always manifest in design or content for various reasons. The reality of external pressures driven by a performativity philosophy within organisations (Bierema, 2009) manifests in pressures of time, a client-prescribed curriculum and the need to evidence quick and tangible results. In particular, the weight of such expectations can limit time for mistakes in learning and participants' involvement in shaping their learning, both recognised principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1984).

Learning progresses best when adult participants accept decisive responsibility for it (Illeris, 2006). This belief presupposes that the structure and approach adopted in the learning workspace provides the opportunity for such responsibility to be taken, through active engagement by the LD practitioner with andragogy principles, to draw on Knowles (1984). However, a complex and paradoxical situation familiar to many adult education programmes (Illeris, 2006) regularly manifests in LD when knowledge and power concerns collide. Adult participants are used to directing their own behaviour and deciding for themselves. They can and frequently do push back against the lack of control apparent in a prescribed learning environment, one which their employer can compel attendance. On the other hand, they regularly behave like pupils, taking little responsibility and waiting for the teacher to direct activity and tell them what to do (Illeris, 2006). The pedagogic tensions inherent in framing learning workspace against this backdrop of challenges and opportunities is explored in greater detail throughout the narratives re-storied in Chapters 5-7.

LD and Transformative Learning

“Arguably, Transformative Learning Theory (abbreviated to TLT from this point) has changed the way that we teach adults” (Kitchenham, 2008: 119). TLT, as first cogently captured by Mezirow (1978, 1981), begins from the assumption that everyone has constructions of reality called "perspectives", which are influenced by various sources in the socio-cultural world. When a participant in LD, for example, discovers perspectives that are not in harmony with her taken for granted assumptions, the situation creates a disjuncture or, as Mezirow (1981) terms it, “a disorientating dilemma” (p. 7). This dilemma is the precipitating event for a learning sequence that helps the person move through a series of stages culminating in acquiring, testing, and embedding new knowledge. TLT is built on the idea of more profound and lasting learning as a result of critical self-reflection.

In the context of this study, the implications of engaging with TLT are multiplicitous and challenging. Snook, Nohria and Khurana, in their Handbook for Teaching Leadership (2012), pose the question, "How does one teach leadership in a way that not only informs (students) about leadership but also transforms them...?" (p.

xxiv). The search for change, for transformation, garners close attention in the LD world. While there are many complex layers to the practice of LD, and much can be gleaned from adult learning theory about the complex processes by which adults learn, being able to point to a noticeable change in a participant's capacity is still a favoured marker of success. Even those not fully versed in adult learning theory will be broadly familiar with the concept without perhaps identifying its origin or the detailed stages (Mezirow, 1981). Herein resides a challenge. The desire for a visible return on investment from LD, combined with a light touch use of the term "transformational", has, I suggest, led to a misnomer. What is clear from the literature is that "transformational", frequently proffered as an output of LD development activities, is a term increasingly at risk of being used lightly, leached of its learner-centred meaning through being used to describe almost any instance of learning (Brookfield, 2003; Kegan, 2018; Hoggan, 2016). The proliferation of widely disparate and uneven ways of using and interpreting transformative learning means that it can become just another way to talk about change (Dirkx, 2012).

Any learning effectively done involves reassessment and growth; it is likely to be rooted in change of some sort. Drawing on my professional experience, not all learning outcomes in LD may be experienced as a fundamental challenge to aspects of being in the world. This thread is common to the theoretical approaches to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991; Kegan, 1994). LD produces a range of learning outcomes. Some participants exhibit raised consciousness, experiencing their own existence (Newman, 2012) as they encounter themselves and the social world of the workplace differently through learning. I observe such accommodative or transcendent learning (Illeris, 2018) occurring when participants break down parts of an existing scheme and change it so that a new situation can be linked in. They relinquish old meanings and reconstruct new ones, a process that is frequently challenging and painful. For others, LD provides an opportunity for assimilative learning (Illeris, 2018) which can help them handle the daily challenges of dealing with people and organisations. In this way, LD helps with developing practical skills. I proffer the reflection that any and all of these learning outcomes are helpful and valuable outputs from the LD learning workspace, reflecting the

varied pathways and multiplicity of starting points of adult learners as they commence learning. Focusing on “transformation” alone in summative ways as LD marketing tool, goal and success measures potentially risks diminishing the value of other significant formative learning (Owen, 2015) occurring along the way.

Taking a critical perspective in commercial learning workspaces

Power has been a defining concern of adult education for over a century (Finnegan & Grummell, 2020) and has preoccupied many of the fields most influential minds (e.g. Freire, 1970, 1972; Mezirow, 1991; Brookfield, 2005). Adult education as a field of practice is rooted in democratic and egalitarian values where concerns of understanding ‘power over’ is balanced with a desire to optimistically engage in the possibility of action and change (Finnegan & Grummell, 2020). Idealistically, LD could be viewed as the practice of freedom (Freire, 1970), its role to release learners to discover themselves and “achieve something more of the fullness of their humanity by acting on the world to transform it” (Jarvis, 2010: 99), in this case for the benefit of the working world. As highlighted by the concerns of multiple theorists in earlier parts of this review (e.g. Raelin, 2009, 2015; Dugan, 2011, 2017; Western, 2013), LD runs a significant risk of educating for “domestication’ (Freire, 1972: 79), serving to integrate participants into current thinking and beliefs about leadership (Pfeffer, 2016). The culture, expectation and beliefs of the dominant party (Freire, 1970), the employer organisation, shaped by the leading business schools, is transmitted to the receiving participants. They likely have a pre-determined construction of leadership reality (Carroll et al. 2008) imposed on them in a subordinate way (Freire, 1972). In current times, and drawing on the earlier discussion, this culture is quite likely to be a manifestation of the dominant neoliberal ideology of our times (Thorsen, 2010). Consequently, organisational preferences are habitually substituted for those of the learner in workplace learning (Marsick, 1988).

Both adult education and HRD emphasise the importance of understanding how participants learn, designing an impactful learning event and awareness of the system or context for workplace learning (Marsick, 1988). It is adult education,

significantly, that repeatedly highlights the need for the practitioner to consider the power dynamics and societal influences to which those party to commercial learning workspace are subject and “shape, facilitate or constrain ... agency, identity, and ability to act in ways consistent with what theory advocates”. (Watkins & Marsick, 2014: 50).

For practitioners of LD, long inculcated with the HRD tradition and immersed in its managerial messaging, taking a critical perspective (Hatcher & Bowles, 2006) such as advocated in adult learning with concomitant concerns of power and agency is less familiar. A critical perspective in LD (Dugan, 2017) is not just about capacity building or adding knowledge in an instrumentalist way but concerns the “process of meaning-making that acknowledges and interrogates social dynamics” (Dugan & Humbles, 2018: 12).

To do so is to swim against the prevailing tide. Critical thinking and reflection have not become established in management education circles for several reasons (Reynolds, 1998). Analysis of privileged position is likely unwelcome or uncomfortable among those who occupy such a place; it can appear patronising when delivered from those standing outside looking in. The language of resistance and struggle can appear antithetical to managerialist reality (Reynolds, 1998). A critical perspective is frequently viewed as a counter stance to the dominant economic underpinnings (Dierksmeier, 2016) of modern organisational thinking, HR practice, and workplace development.

Taking a critical perspective driven by concerns of power and society involves challenging at systemic levels, cultures and organisations, beyond what is visible (Carr, 2000). In LD, the paradigm is best observed in action as a critique aimed at change through dialogue and reflection. The value of reflection for raised consciousness in the practice of LD emerges through this review time and time again and is further reinforced in the narratives which follow. As Merriam (2018: 88) explains, "the context where learning takes place matters, and it is important to relentlessly challenge the inequities of the learning context".

From an adult learning perspective, Mezirow and Freire view education as a liberating force (Jarvis, 2010). Freire sees it as freeing the individual from false consciousness due to the dominance of colonisers. Mezirow sees it as more of a psychological freedom of perspective. Brookfield (1986, 1990, 2005), a proponent of critical thinking, advocates strongly for challenging the hidden assumptions, values, norms and beliefs, uncritically assimilated and perpetuated by both practitioner and participants in the course of the teaching and learning of adults. Without conscious attention to the impact of power on agency through the raising of critical consciousness, he suggests that "we are no more than reactive automatons – ciphers through whom are channelled the latest curricular or methodological fads" (Brookfield, 1986: 295). While acknowledging a "healthy scepticism" (p. 295) as to the practicality and sanity of continually exemplifying such an approach, he suggests that the philosophical commitment to a critical perspective is essential to good educational practice.

Freire (1972) posits that in discovering themselves oppressed, learners can be liberated only if they try to transform the oppressive structures in which they find themselves. Central to taking action are issues of power, identity, dominance, submission and resistance and the degree to which participants in LD are party to and aware of the existence and prevalence of these in their social relations (Tourish, 2014). Through reflection, individual participants in LD can become conscious of realities beyond those to which they have been introduced and informed.

Pedagogic tussles of knowledge and power – adopting a balanced position

These observations on a critical perspective in LD (Dugan, 2017), and the implications of same, brings this review to one of the long-standing debates in education – whether it helps people fit in (to roles, society, expectations, leadership) or helps them think for themselves (to be self-directed, autonomous). This tension finds its way into many pedagogic tussles, several of which are

highlighted in this review in the domain of LD: rhetoric and reality, theory and practice, training and education, experiential and disciplinary knowledge and more (Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 1997).

Usher et al. (1997: 29) caution that the oversimplification of this tension may cause an oscillation for progressive educators between optimism and despair as education seeks to liberate but may not deliver on that promise. Locating the conversation within leadership and LD, the criteria for emancipatory dialogue “may be elusive in managerial settings experimenting with this form of discourse” (Raelin, 2013: 828). My professional experience supports this assertion. Usher et al. (1997) believe the more crucial element is the “negotiation of participation in a learning process and a society where subjection and autonomy co-exist”.

I conclude that there is a benefit to be gained from adopting a critical perspective within LD (Dugan, 2017). The issues and opportunities inherent in handling power and its associated elements within leadership learning are multi-faceted and complicated for both LD practitioner and participants. Theorists in the leadership space (e.g. Raelin, 2009, 2015; Dugan, 2011, 2017; Western, 2013) pushing back against “forty years of spoon-feeding” (Raelin, 2009: 401) decry a limited and limiting instrumentalist approach to leadership education, echoing Freire's (1972) concerns regarding the banking model of education. The belief among these writers and influencers is that both the collective and change capacity inherent in LD has been overlooked and needs to be placed centre stage for the practice of LD in the workplace to have the impact it seeks. To do so involves invoking a critical perspective on values and beliefs which are unexamined at best (Cunningham & Dawes, 1997).

Adult learning theory, whose perspective on knowledge and power is invited into this study, respects participants' uniqueness and separateness (Brookfield, 1986). This is not to deny that critical reflection plays a central role in adult learning as the route through which fundamental differences are unearthed and alternatives raised and challenged. Good facilitation fosters and enables both (Brookfield, 1986).

Learning workspace for leadership, as envisaged in the introduction to this study, is a place that embodies the hope of experience exchange (Wenger & Snyder, 2000), a place for developing capacity participants did not previously have or recognise (Scharmer, 2018), and acting as laboratories of experience (Western, 2013). This choice of defining language reflects a learning workspace that is collective, relational, situated and challenging. Without diminishing the role of the individual, this thinking foregrounds the capacity and possibility inherent in the collective, the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), reflecting an invitation to the multiplicity of education purpose where concerns of individual capacity and collective power can co-exist.

Pedagogy

Introduction

The fourth and final phenomenon of interest for this literature review concerns pedagogy. A key term in the research question, and the object of this inquiry, pedagogy, is deliberately positioned at this point in the literature review to benefit from the previous thinking on Leadership, LD and Adult Learning. Concerns of a pedagogical nature are elusive in the LD literature, and those which foreground such concerns are predominantly within higher education (e.g. Sergiovanni, 1998; Rosch & Anthony, 2012; Turner & Baker, 2017), in the public education sphere (e.g. Sandfort & Gerdes, 2017) or the arena of nursing and medical leadership education (e.g. Natt och Dag 2017; Taylor & Hamdy, 2013). Much has been written about the skills and capacities needed for leadership and the efficacy of LD in delivering that expectation (Tourish, 2012). Participants' experience both content and process (Reynolds, 1997). Nevertheless, it appears there are significantly few attempts at connecting/integrating leadership development needs with pedagogical theory and insight. A gap exists in the delivery of learning programmes such that both curriculum and pedagogy for leadership are aligned with individual, collective and social expectations of what leadership can deliver.

In this section, I engage with theoretical perspectives which inform pedagogy within the commercial learning workspace for leadership. I begin by defining the meaning of pedagogy in greater detail for this purpose, aligning the choice of language and intent with a critical perspective. Mindful of the research purpose, I locate and define a practice epistemology for MALT from which practice-based pedagogical choices are made in the design and delivery of the programme. I highlight and discuss several such pedagogic choices – working from and with experience, experiential exercises, dialogue and reflection. I consider the nature of knowledge and implications for power throughout. Shifting to the practicalities of the learning workspace, the impact of leadership competencies on knowledge generation is considered; the challenges involved in invoking collective learning of leadership and capacity for learner agency arising from LD.

Meaning of Pedagogy for this study

Pedagogy illustrates the impact of practitioner choice in instructional strategies, learning environment dynamics and programme design (Marzano, 2007). As noted in the introduction to this study, I deploy the term pedagogy to focus on that which takes place at the intersection of the practitioner, participants and the knowledge they produce, attending in particular to the conditions and means through which this occurs (Lather, 1994). This definition, drawn from a postmodern critique of emancipatory practice in education by Lather, underlies the importance of applying critical reflection to more than the curriculum:

“By pedagogy I mean that which addresses the transformation of consciousness that takes place in the intersection of the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they together produce” (1994: 104).

Her position, Lather explains, denies the traditional view of teacher/practitioner as transmitter of knowledge, participant as the passive receiver and the knowledge itself as fixed information to be imparted. Thus, the concept of pedagogy "focuses attention on the conditions and means through which knowledge is produced"

(Lather, 1994: 104). Taking this perspective denotes something closer to the complexity of the 'learning milieu' as described by Parlett and Hamilton (1972); the "unique pattern of circumstances, pressures, customs, opinions and work-styles which suffuse the teaching and learning which occur there" (p. 11).

A critical perspective on pedagogy implies more than a passive 'facilitatory' role for the LD practitioner (Reynolds, 1997). It invites analytic perspectives from practitioner and participants to critique ideas, theories and occurrences as they are encountered. Invited also is the examination of power and influence as it emerges and exists in the social structures of the learning workspace and the workplace itself.

A practice epistemology and pedagogy

I suggest that Leadership within MALT is congruent with the view of leadership as practice (Raelin, 2016). This view bestows an operating paradigm of leadership as reflective, flexible and emergent (Raelin, 2018) amid a relational and social orientation to how it is enacted (after Raelin, 2016, 2018; Western, 2013). As such, leadership is seen as something which "emerges and unfolds through day-to-day experience" (Raelin, 2016). This practice epistemology is accompanied by an engagement with practice-based pedagogic choices in LD such as learning from experience, working in and through groups and collectives, enabling real dialogue and meaning-oriented reflection (Eneau & Bertrand, 2019; Faller et al., 2020). Emphasis is placed on using real-life experience as the basis for knowledge generation and meaning-making.

While the predominant concern of participant managers in LD may well be solutions to their problems (Reynolds, 1997), a learning workspace which is more than simply a "warm glow" (Watkins, 2005) can enable a wholly different set of informed actions, critically appraised and collectively considered (Brookfield, 2015). Practice-based pedagogic choices encourage participation. In its many forms, practical reflection can support participants in LD to make sense of theory concerning their real and prescient working lives (Reynolds, 1997). Crucially for this

research, with its interest in knowledge and power, pedagogic choices of this type can help participants intellectually and emotionally engage with and understand the learning method and purpose to a greater extent.

Working from and with experience

The intended output of MALT as an LD intervention is the creation of practical or real, everyday knowledge (Raelin, 2009; Kustermans, 2016) where skill, acquired through experience, supports the participant's ability to handle leadership situations in a social environment. In tandem, the practices which emerge from this acquisition of practical knowledge are coherent doings, sayings, actions about leadership imbued with collective and relational properties (Western, 2013; Scharmer, 2018).

There is a difference between engaging experience as the starting point of learning, leading typically to critical reflection and action (Freire, 1970) and experiential exercise opportunities constructed as a deliberate act of learning (Moon, 2004). In truth, many adult learning environments operate on a mix of these pedagogic principles drawn from multiple learning theories (Brookfield, 1986), and MALT is no different. Participant life and workplace experiences are frequently invited as the starting point for discussion, analysis and perspective in a critical sense, including, as the narratives will testify, several immediate and live workplace challenges which occur temporarily with MALT. At the same time, the opportunity also occurs in the learning workspace for experiential learning exercises using guided approaches that address course of action questions and dilemmas (Moon, 2004).

The reality is that the success of initiatives such as MALT will frequently be judged practically and economically, not educationally. Productive employees rather than critically reflective employees are the primary goal of management development (Brookfield, 1986). The dilemma for the LD practitioner comes when a sole focus on instrumental learning obscures the impact of participants on others' working lives through the agency of their power (Reynolds, 1997) to manage people and processes. Beginning from and staying with participant experience to critically

engage with beliefs, assumptions, and awareness is likely to create leadership efficacy and enhanced understanding. Nevertheless, it risks leaving participants functionally short in the domain of leadership enactment (Dugan & Humbles, 2018) the 'how to' take leadership action.

Experiential learning exercises – deliberate acts of learning (Moon, 2004)

Experiential learning is learner-centred (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006), encouraging participants to make their own sense of content and create their own connections between concepts and ideas. Kolb's (1984) research shows expertise emerging from a continuous process of experience, reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation. The cycle connects all four aspects, involving the "integrated functioning of the total person – thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving" (Kolb & Kolb, 2005: 194). The cycle has become hugely popular in management and workplace education. While not doing justice to the complexity of human learning (Jarvis, 2010), experiential learning techniques are embedded in the majority of higher and management education approaches (Moon, 2004). Its popularity stems from dissatisfaction with traditional informative approaches, increasingly seen as teacher-centred in the "banking model" of making deposits (Freire, 1970). The wholesale use of experiential learning techniques is not without criticism (Kirschner et al., 2006), but its' widespread use in vocational education and workplace learning (Marsick, 1988) has ensured its' enduring popularity.

The research question for this study asks about knowledge, wondering how LD practitioner and participants engage with and create knowledge in the leadership learning workspace? Several experiential learning techniques and exercises (Heron, 1999) feature in the design of MALT, including role-play, reflection, simulations, presentations and team activities. Experiential approaches such as these in the learning workspaces for LD promote the application of knowledge (Fink, 2013). Application is an essential element of workplace learning, facilitating the ability of participants to connect theory with practice, thereby demonstrating the usefulness and relevance of leadership learning (Owen, 2015). Experiential learning exercises can be planned and positioned by the LD practitioner, typically following and

supporting the scaffolding (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013) of new concepts. The teaching of assertiveness in MALT is one such example, illustrated in the following narratives, where new content precedes an experiential exercise based on real-life scenarios. In turn, practice in trios is followed by reflection and conceptualising action in the workplace setting (Kolb, 1984). From the practitioner perspective, experiential exercises such as these are attractive as they encourage an active and questioning style of participant engagement.

Nevertheless, experiential exercises are only, I suggest, a part of the pedagogic repertoire in commercial learning workspace for leadership. Occupying a critical perspective on LD (Western, 2013; Dugan, 2017), and holding a social constructivist position on learning (Vygotsky, 1978), means that I believe people construct their personal and collective meaning of experiences, and as a result, take an active part in co-constructing knowledge (Watkins & Marsick, 2014). This position entails individuals and collectives learning from their experiences (Watkins, 2005), of which reflection is an essential ingredient. Engaging reflectively invites enquiry, dialogue and agency, all vital elements of meaning-making and shifting existing frames of reference (Moon, 2004)

Reflection – experience as the starting point

Reflection engages a participant in "revisiting and reinterpreting the meaning of experiences" (Faller et al., 2020: 251). Participants arriving on LD programmes are broadly familiar with reflection in action (Schön, 1983), a synthesis of knowing and doing where they see something new, comparing what they see with what they already know, and reflecting on the difference. What is likely less familiar and potentially more challenging is reflection on the world to change it, or praxis (Freire, 1972). Praxis, an approach associated with Critical Theory and Freire, raises consciousness through learning and reflection in an iterative way towards taking action.

Marsick (1988) observed that workplace learning will always have an instrumental focus as the organisation exists as a productive entity. A learning paradigm

involving pedagogic practices such as reflective thought will likely continuously bump up against that overriding economic focus. Learner and learning centred approaches such as reflection and dialogue, which is discussed next, shift the dial from the expected economic performative focus towards a more radical place of possibility (hooks, 1994) and can produce a fearful response. This is especially true among those who encounter a shared LD learning space, with an active and engaged community of learners, whose prior experience may not have prepared them or the organisation for such an encounter (hooks, 1994).

Dialogue

Raelin (2013: 819) is a proponent of dialogue which he sees as the “genetic material for building a culture of democracy freeing people from institutional forces that limit their personal autonomy and leading to their acquisition of a collective consciousness”. Drawing on Habermas (1987) and Mead (1934), Raelin positions dialogue as an intersubjective tool for change but “not in the sense of problem solving as much as in the sense of working towards shared meaning around contested versions of practices as they are unfolding” (Raelin, 2013: 827), similar to praxis (Freire, 1970) in many respects. West (2019) sees a role for dialogic practice across learning environments as a source of transformation and hope. Scharmer (2018) describes dialogue as the “capacity of the system to see itself” (p. 17); to see its own patterns and assumptions. Just as form follows consciousness, it is critical that a system can sense, reflect on, and critique itself to change and grow.

Dialogue in LD represents a dynamism of approach and a recognition that humans live in a working world so unpredictable, complex and uncertain that no one single source of expertise can be relied on (Raelin, 2018), and a collective perspective is to be valued. Tourish (2014) further encourages the facilitation of disagreement and dissent in leadership as holding the same importance as the traditional emphasis on agreement and harmony within the field. Dialogue is not without risk for both practitioner and LD learning space. From a practice perspective, opening up space for dialogue that invites purposeful disagreement and dissent on the topic of leadership can potentially invite instances of failure, dissonance, crisis, obstruction

or surprises in the workplace (Raelin, 2015). Nevertheless, Fink (2013) argues that the integration of learning is impossible without the opportunity to make connections across people, ideas and context. True dialogue encourages the examination of negative and positive challenges and possibilities as they emerge. Dialogue in commercial learning workspaces enables the making of new connections, and "the act of making new connections gives learners a new form of power, especially intellectual power" (Fink, 2013: 31). I posit that dialogue decentres power from being practitioner-centred in intellect and pedagogic terms into a forum for emergent knowledge, which is learning-centred and shared.

The challenge of leadership competencies for knowledge generation in LD

Adults learn most effectively when there is a problem or a need they are motivated to resolve (Jarvis, 2010). Despite this, organisations frequently create generic frameworks or competency models to capture and summarise the skills, knowledge and behaviours expected of leaders, using them to indicate what needs to be developed in leaders (McCauley et al., 2010). Where applied as a sense-making framework, these competency sets serve to promote a shared understanding of what it means to be an effective leader in the organisation at that time. However, there is evidence that defining leadership in competency terms risks moving beyond the helpful positionality of competencies as a practical guide and into the ubiquity of a managerial concept of control colonising the leadership space (Carroll et al., 2008). From a practice perspective, as well-intentioned as leadership competency sets may be, they can never capture the "subtle, moral, emotional and relational aspects of leadership" (Bolden & Gosling, 2006: 158). When adopting a critical perspective and practice-based approaches, these vital aspects of leadership originate from participants' own experience as the starting point. They are explored collectively in the learning workspace. Where there is a strong bias to competency sets, owned and lived experience risks being neglected in favour of an essentially "mechanistic" view of the leadership possibility, leaving it "impoverished" as a result (Carroll et al., 2008: 364).

Bolden & Gosling argue strongly that competency sets in the context of LD are akin to "a repeating refrain that continues to offer an illusory promise to rationalise and simplify.... yet only reflects a fragment of the complexity that is leadership" (2006: 147). That may be so, but their influence remains pervasive in organisations and shapes leadership learning within workplaces. Embracing competency sets in an all-encompassing way risks positioning the LD practitioner as an agent for a managerial/economistic emphasis in Leadership (Carroll et al., 2008). The consequence can be the denial of the capacity of participants to decide for themselves (Ghoshal, 2005). These are positions fundamentally at odds with a notion of an LD programme allied to critical and practice perspectives, domains in which participants experience is valued and invited as a starting point.

The design and content of MALT are situated against a broad framework for taking leadership created by the organisation. The positioning and impact of this framework are discussed in later chapters. MALT does not have a defined leadership competency set against which to develop participants.

Collective learning and power

Shifting the beam away of attention from the individual and the binary leader/follower relationship onto the collective (Scharmer, 2018) opens space for dialogue where the unconscious, the un-reflected, comes into consciousness in a shared way. Shifting towards a dialogic field of conversation allows perspective to widen, and a deeper fertile field is activated from which collect ideas and responsibility can emerge (Scharmer, 2018). Similarly, Carroll et al. (2008) describe the practice approach to leadership learning as an ability to "comprehend the subtleties of sophisticated dynamics like unlearning, transition and transformation. It desires leadership to be an embodied, embedded way of being and approaching organisations, contexts and the world" (p. 371). In the context of MALT, these insights speak to a radically different development process for leadership learning than a traditional instruction type programme. Freire (1970) drew attention to the critical need for leadership grounded in community, focused on cultivating

collective capacities and characterised by social justice and democracy (Dugan et al., 2015).

There is an inseparable connection between leadership and agency; structures may pacify, but under dialogic conditions, they can also release agency (Raelin, 2016). Agency was referred to previously as the capacity to act for change within the system (Dugan et al., 2015). The term appears more frequently in the literature on teaching and learning than in discussions of workplace leadership, where it appears to be less commonly used. Despite differences in language, workplace training and development activity serves the purpose of individual growth while also benefitting society and organisations (Watkins & Marsick, 2014).

In accessing the power of the collective through dialogue, for example, there is much that LD practitioners can take from the shared philosophical foundations of adult education and HRD (Yang, 2004), where liberalism and progressivism can be observed in both. However, radicalism exists in the root system of adult education, which does not form the basis of HRD. In the LD learning space, a tacit acceptance of the prevailing individual bias in leadership thinking can manifest as a reluctance to engage in collective cultivation of leadership capacity, especially if collective engagement is perceived negatively as activism (Dugan et al., 2015). Where this proves pervasive or persistent among participants or within their workplace, the capacity to act for change within the system (Dugan et al., 2015) arising from the learning workspace diminishes.

Real learning is agentic

In leadership learning, as in other areas of adult education, providing pedagogic ‘scaffolding’ (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013) such as a curriculum, models, experiential exercises and input steady the uncertainty. I believe that real learning helps human beings make a difference to themselves, the world around them and their workplaces; real learning is agentic (Frost, 2006). To initiate the conditions towards such agency, however, requires LD practitioners such as myself to move past steadiness alone into energy, bravery and attention to the here and now; a

significant shift from the safe and passive practices of the "banking" type (Freire, 1970) of management education.

Bringing the concepts of agency and efficacy to the research purpose, the significance of the commercial learning workspace in MALT as a possible trigger, instigator, challenger, and supporter of learning possibility for those who enter it has come into sharper focus. Drawing on my professional practice experience, it is clear that adult learners hold in themselves the capacity to "transform problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2009: 22).

Efficacy, the belief that a participant in leadership learning can have an effect (after Bandura, 1997), is influenced by the extent to which they believe it to be true and possible. This construct goes to the heart of applying and maintaining leadership learning. The pedagogic environment shapes participants' beliefs about their efficacy (Frost, 2006). The persistent tension between the social and political forces, seen and unseen, limiting freedom to act, and the encouragement from within the learning workspace to push at the boundaries of influence, can bring a fraught nature to participant agency (Frost, 2006).

Reflecting the thinking of Winnicott, Kegan (1982) and Schapiro (2009) assert that practitioners of LD can create a "holding" environment for adult learners which is participant centred, problem-focused, incorporates experiential learning and caters to the needs of adult learners who integrate their learning into their lives. There is something remarkable about a learning workspace which, with "a correct and well-timed interpretation.... gives a sense of being held physically that is more real... than if a real holding.... had taken place" (Winnicott quoted in Davis & Wallbridge, 1991). From a practice perspective, psychological safety (Edmondson, 2018) in the social setting of workplace learning and the degree of trust created within the community of learners can aid or preclude risk-taking in entering and sharing reflective and dialogic practices. Such risk-taking is vital to unlocking real agentic learning (Frost, 2006). The challenges and opportunities in creating such a holding

environment in the learning workspace for leadership are explored in greater detail throughout the narratives contained in Chapters 5-7.

Locating my practice theoretically and paradigmatically

Exploring the theoretical traditions that shape my practice in this review of literature locates my practice 'on the bridge' as it were between Leadership and LD on the one hand and Adult Education and Learning on the other. I recognise that I sensitively draw on both traditions, which influence and shape my practice position and this study.

I noted in Chapter 2 and further explicated in this chapter that I am driven by a humanistic perspective (Rogers, 1951, 1961), shaped mainly by my early education and work experiences. This paradigm goes to the core of why I do what I do - to provide a supported and safe space in the workplace where there is freedom for adults to learn (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). It is person-centred (Rogers, 1961), therefore relatable, and connects to tenets of positive psychology, the 21st-century manifestation of which strongly influences the HR wellness, sustainability and responsibility agenda globally (Western, 2013).

Increasingly, I also bring a critical perspective to my LD practice (Dugan, 2017), primarily driven by later and more challenging life and work experiences. Adopting a critical stance brings a sensitive eye to the multidimensionality in which adults live and work amid the recognition of restrictive power dynamics within familiar environments. Engaging in real dialogue and reflective learning with meaning and intent, allied with a focus on the efficacy and agency of leadership learners, can, I believe, potentially create more educationally meaningful LD (Dugan, 2011). In reality, "no single perspective can do justice to the world in which we are immersed" (Jay et al., 2012: 227). Crossing the disciplinary boundaries in a coming together of humanistic and critical perspectives can make for a healthy alternative

to rigidity (Jay et al., 2012). Commercial learning workspaces are sites of complex interaction (Geertz, 1983). Learning in such places is a delicate balancing act between the individual's autonomy, growth potential, and desire to take action, balanced with the organisation's agenda and social context (Harmon, 1981). Building person-centred approaches in LD without critical awareness of context, situation and social systems can perpetuate a dyadic model of leadership and deny the complex reality in which leadership occurs (Dugan, 2011; Raelin, 2016). Conversely, bringing the participant's attention only to issues of collective concern such as power, dominance and limiting beliefs may potentially not prepare participants sufficiently for the day-to-day reality of roles and responsibilities in which leadership occurs (Van Velsor et al., 2010). It is, I suggest, the very "precarious and fluid goings on" (Chia, 2004: 29) of the organisational lived and live learning environment which determines the best course of action.

Conclusion

Leadership is a contested term. Tracing the development of leadership theory highlights the persistent residue of outdated beliefs in today's workplaces and learning workspaces. Against a backdrop of more questions than answers, a working definition of leadership for this research locates it as "a psychosocial influencing dynamic" (Western, 2013: 52), an idea to which relevant parties give meaning and form.

Within this study, LD is understood as a continuous and systemic process that enables the cognitive, moral and identity awareness of individuals, groups and organisations striving to meet shared goals and objectives (after Allen & Roberts, 2011). Enquiring into LD within the academy raises questions of curriculum, content and pedagogic intent. LD within the corporate/organisational arena appears to be at a point of inflection. Challengers suggest that both academic and organisational LD are culpable for perpetuating an individualistic, economic and managerialist

view of leadership that is cognitively skewed and overly narrow in perspective. Nevertheless, there is hope for the future with some powerful pedagogic thought around knowledge, power and practice emerging mainly from those who advocate for a critical and practice perspective on LD.

Adopting a more critical or practice-based approach in LD can be a "tricky business" for participants – "being in-formed at the same time as the very shape of the form itself is potentially changing or trans-forming" (Snook, 2008: 10). Positioning leadership as practice and the organic nature of the resulting emergent learning can present a challenging dynamic for the LD practitioner. Holding and juggling concurrent needs for an individual and collective focus on leadership while encouraging participant responsibility for learning within a structured but not rigid design ensures that LD is not a simple learning process (Dugan, 2011).

This review has highlighted that the predominant concerns in adult learning - those of knowledge, power, and agency- do not underpin learning approaches in LD as meaningful a way as expected. Adult learning theory has much to offer LD practitioners seeking to juggle such dynamics in commercial learning workspaces. Enhanced understanding of the needs of adult learners and the possibilities and challenges of engaging with critical and practice-based pedagogic modalities more common to adult learning offer, it is suggested, fresh perspectives on leadership learning workspace.

Synergising the perspectives of LD and adult learning theory is relatively unexplored in research terms and offers the possibility for a critical and progressive approach to learning workspaces for LD. Concerns of a pedagogical nature are also relatively rare in the LD literature and indicate a potentially untapped resource for illuminating LD practice. Recognising this gap and the possibility inherent in addressing it, a scholarly framework driven by pedagogy with attention to concerns of knowledge and power was affirmed for the research. The meaning of pedagogy was located from a critical perspective, focusing attention "on the conditions and means through which knowledge is produced" (Lather, 1994: 104). This scholarly

framework illuminates the nature of expression and outlet (Frost, 2006) for participant agency, the capacity to act for change within the system (Dugan, 2011).

Naming myself as a social constructivist drawing on humanistic and critical perspective could be viewed as crossing disciplinary boundaries. Indeed, occupying a position 'on the bridge' that positions Leadership and LD in shared but differing space paradigmatically from Adult Education and Learning could also be perceived in the same light. I adopt a practice view that the particular "perspectival vantage point" (Jay et al., 2012: 227) best taken is best determined in context. The dynamic tension between the competing discourses in my paradigmatic stance is a source of challenge but also of opportunity. I see it less as a struggle for dominance in my LD practice and more as a skilled intervention appropriate to context and task.

I enter the research phase of this study by "teaching with intentionality" (Owen, 2015: 47) as both practitioner and researcher. Such intentionality involves observing myself in action and interrogating the preconceptions, beliefs, and biases which frame my sense of leadership, LD, and shape my pedagogical practices (Owen, 2015). I seek a more complex understanding of the pedagogical levers of leadership learning (Owen, 2015) arising from the intense scrutiny and reflexive thought associated with the research process, the details of which follow in Chapter 4.

Chapter Four - Research Methodology and Methods

"Researchers need to reaffirm the motivations that brought most of us into academic life in the first place. These include a curiosity about ideas, a love of writing and the desire to make a positive difference to the world in which we live."

(Tourish, 2019: 368)

This chapter has two parts. Part I – Methodology tells how I conduct the research at the heart of this study. I explicate my methodological choices and the consequent considerations, decisions, and actions associated with those choices. Part II – Research Methods provides a detailed discussion of the research methods adopted for this inquiry, including context, research access, data gathering and analysis.

Part I - Methodology

Introduction

I begin Part I with a reminder of the research questions previously shared in the introduction. I discuss my choice of research approach followed by some associated practices in which I engage throughout the research. I proceed to explore and critically discuss several tensions associated with the choice of methodology for this inquiry – researching LD in this way, paradigmatic stance in the chosen methodology and tensions of the insider-researcher position.

Research focus and questions

I introduced my research focus in the opening chapter, clarifying my understanding of the main terms. I reiterate them here as a lead into a discussion on my choice of research method.

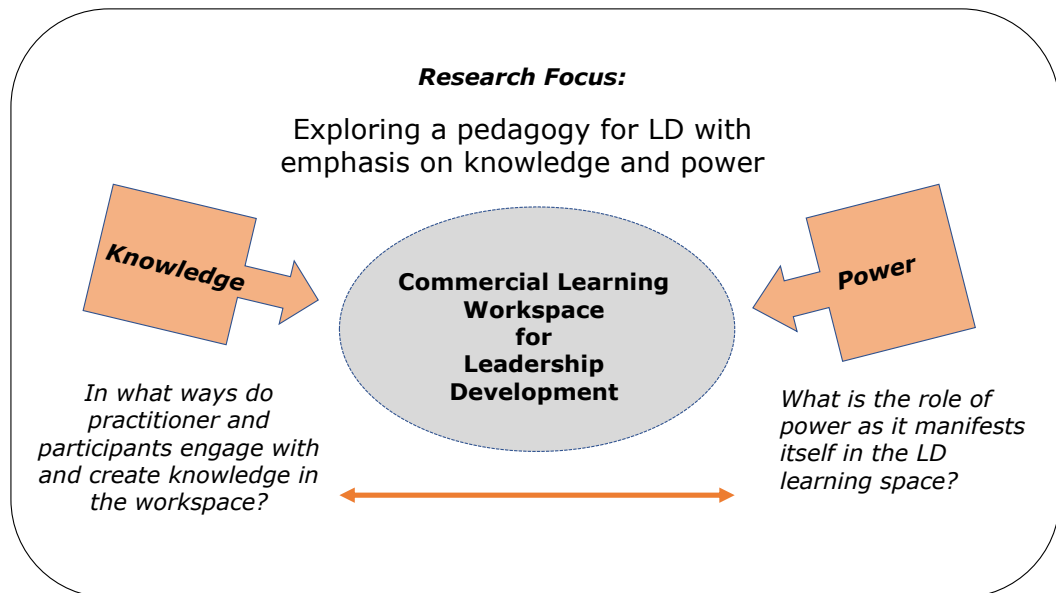


Figure 4.1 Visual reminder of the Research Focus and Questions

Choice of Research Method

A qualitative research approach

This study seeks to gain a deep situated understanding by interpreting practitioner and participants' experiences in an unfolding inquiry that is interactive, emergent and open (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The intended output is an in-depth, nuanced interpretation (Costley & Fulton, 2018) told from an interweaving of the learner's experiences and the practitioners' journey within the context in which both learn and develop together (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). In this way, the endpoint is a "thick" description (Geertz, 1973: 10) of the phenomenon under study, not just the physical behaviours as they occurred, but the subjective explanations and meanings of those party to the context and locus for research.

Stake (2010) cautions researchers to first focus on the question, and only then the methods. As previously noted, the majority of research into LD focuses on “what” happens there. As a result, quantitative or mixed methods studies dominate the field. Research questions intended to ask “how” and “why” questions of LD entail a choice of method which enables the collection of a different set of data: captured in the natural environment sensitive to the participants and context in which the study happens (Cresswell, 2007).

Qualitative research is a logical partner for the pursuit of my research question and intent. The qualitative research community comprises a loosely defined interpretive group of scholars, and the research is a complex web of threads of many colours, densities and blends (Cresswell, 2007). Here, the earlier threads of experience and belief which shape my worldview can locate themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Ensuring a robust approach to qualitative study, I am guided by the work of Stake (2010), Cresswell (2003, 2007) and Denzin and Lincoln (2018).

Qualitative studies are best at “examining the actual, ongoing ways that persons or organisations are doing their thing” (Stake, 2010:2). Qualitative researchers are generally more focused on the process of experience than the product (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), an important consideration for this inquiry. Qualitative methods, importantly, tend to embrace both the participant experience and the context in which it occurs. This study seeks just such insight and understanding, relying as it does “primarily on human perception and understanding” (Stake, 2010: 11) of pedagogy, knowledge and power in the learning workspace for LD by both practitioner and participants.

Matching research method to purpose and opportunity – Narrative Inquiry

A qualitative approach offers rich descriptions that reveal people's previously unseen perspectives within their worlds (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Drawing on this epistemological stance and noting the anticipated endpoint, I choose to explore the research questions using the qualitative methodology of narrative research, specifically Narrative Inquiry (abbreviated to NI from this point). Narrative research

has many forms, has many different practices and draws on varied social and humanities disciplines (Cresswell, 2007). Accordingly, this provides the opportunity for generating rich research colour.

In deploying NI as research methodology, I ground it theoretically in the work of education researchers Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000; Clandinin, 2013) for several reasons. As researchers, they view narrative inquiry as “stories lived and told” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 20); a collaboration between researcher and participants over time, in a place or set of places, and social interaction with an environment. Their concerns chime strongly with both my research aims and position on leadership and learning. For example, their conceptualising of the narrative inquiry space as ‘three dimensional’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 52) provides a powerful backdrop for entering an emergent research journey of LD over a seven-month duration. The three dimensions of interaction (social and personal), continuity of past, present and future and backdrop of the place or situation dovetail well with the locus of research being a learning workspace for individuals within an organisational context. The temporal dimension to their NI approach allows for movement through a series of LD learning opportunities over time. The attention to place ushers in the backdrop of anticipated change in leadership capacity due to the LD programme.

Describing what brought them to researching narrative in their work, Clandinin and Connelly conclude that they ultimately tried to understand experience. “We saw our research problem as trying to think of the continuity and wholeness of an individual’s life experience” (2000: 17). As a research methodology delving into the lived experience of LD, NI can provide stories that are richer, thicker, more compelling and importantly, give context by comparison to other non-narrative methods (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011). Ontologically, humanistically, this Deweyian emphasis on studying experience crystallises this approach to NI as the methodology of choice for my research goals and Clandinin and Connelly as appropriate guides.

Living the story

The approach to NI, which follows, is best described as living the story (Butler-Kisber, 2018), where living becomes the starting point rather than telling the story (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). This approach to NI privileges the immediacy of the narrative qualities of the experience as a reality to be examined and acted on (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). This perspective is compatible epistemologically with the constructivist worldview (Cresswell, 2007). Living the story, NI shares compatibility with humanist psychology perspectives on the individual, growth and learning, allowing me as a researcher to "work alongside" the participants, as well as documenting the daily "doings and happenings" of narrative expression as they occur (Clandinin, 2013: 79).

Methodological tensions

Several methodological tensions arose in the planning and early stages of the research for consideration. The first relates to researching LD using NI, an uncommon methodology for the purpose. The second tension relates to the awareness and impact of diverse positions within my paradigmatic stance and the impact for research. The final tension emerged from the reality of being a practitioner researching her practice. I explore the impact of these tensions and the decisions I made about them in this section.

Tension 1: Researching LD using NI

As noted previously, narrative methods appear in the study of authentic leadership and life story analysis in leadership (e.g. Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005), but it is not a standard methodology in this space. Concerns around the efficacy and appropriateness of narrative inquiry as a method for studying experiences in context (Riessman, 1993) have focused on what Hollway and Jefferson (2012) have labelled 'the relation of word to world' (p. 30). They ponder how the storyteller's motivation and memory can compromise truth. As a research approach, NI

engages with the story to make sense of people's world and their place in it (Feldman et al., 2004). So closely, that narrative inquiry “resides in the relationship of researcher and participant(s)”, allowing both to become co-researchers, and it is through this process that “co-composing of new lives for both becomes possible” (Huber et al., 2013: 220). This proximity and intertwining of perspectives bring some critical considerations in conducting narrative inquiry alongside the live delivery of a programme. These fall into several key areas – power relationships, client expectations and wakefulness.

To power relationships first.

I am paid in my role as an independent leadership practitioner to deliver the programme at the heart of this research. There are several power dynamics inherent in this (Costley & Fulton, 2018). The most concerning for research purposes is the implicit assumption that I am paid to deliver the learning programme well and improve the skillsets of the learners as a result. Should the narrative inquiry show that this is not the case and the learning approach has not delivered this, there may be pressure from the company to deprioritise the research side of things, distance themselves from the findings or ask that the research not be disseminated further. Alternatively, there may be a temptation on my part to engage in what Spence (1986) described as "narrative smoothing", where a clean unconditional plot is desired and created. Keeping the delivery of the learning programme and its research balanced and separate as far as possible is challenging (Costley & Fulton, 2018). Similarly, managing my urge to deliver something noteworthy rather than allow the learning to unfold in its own way may impact my choices in the learning workspace.

Later, in the complete discussion of research methods, I detail my engagement with practitioner reflexive processes to ensure perspective and criticality of thinking. In addition, I identified early in the research planning process a small group of peer professionals, a fellow researcher, practitioner and adult educator, whose ability to challenge my thinking and maintain my perspective I can draw on along the

research pathway. I discuss this engagement further in a fuller consideration of balance, criticality and perspective in the section on research methods.

Concerns of client relations arise early on from methodological choice.

The importance of managing JOF expectations is clear from the offset. The reality that research is taking place alongside and into the MALT learning programme does not mean that this will be the best learning journey possible. I will do everything within my professional capability to make it an excellent learning experience.

However, unforeseen group dynamics, reluctant participation, company changes or union issues can contribute to less than optimal outcomes. The research outcomes may indicate that the learning experience and practitioner approach does not enable 'better' learning or only partially enables it. Alternatively, the participants' lived experiences (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011) could indicate negativity towards the learning, me, the process, or the company. Despite these latent concerns, I believe entering research that this cannot be the "Hollywood plot, the plot where everything works out well in the end" warned of by Clandinin and Connelly (2000 p.181). In these or similar outcomes, I am clear I will share the information openly but sensitively with JOF while negotiating under what circumstances and with whom the data can be shared further.

Approaching a multi-faceted leadership programme of almost 30 participants over half a year with NI raises the risk that the story that emerges is an object in itself – exciting but not pedagogically focused or informative. As I enter the research space, I am conscious that it may be relatively simple to tell an exciting story. To unearth what the story is telling in pedagogic, knowledge and power terms will be the more significant challenge. Attentiveness to the three-dimensional narrative space (Clandinin et al., 2011; Huber et al., 2013) and being wakeful (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to the influence of the temporal, social and place dimensions helps to mitigate this risk and is critical to this complex undertaking.

Tension 2: NI with my paradigmatic stance

In Chapters 2 and 3, I recognised and discussed the humanistic and critical perspectives which shape my approach to leadership and the practice of LD. As I previously described it, this dynamic tension (Jay et al., 2012) reflects the internal paradigmatic tussle of sometimes complementary and sometimes competing humanistic and critical perspectives. I care strongly for examining the larger social conditions of organisations that shape individuals' narratives. However, I believe the best place to begin is to uncover "the fundamental reality to be examined and acted on" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 49).

Scanning the landscape of literature for this research, many of those on whose thinking I draw hold a critical worldview (e.g. Freire, 1970, 1972; Brookfield, 1986, 2005, 1995; Carroll & Associates, 2008, 2010, 2014; Raelin, 2003, 2009, 2013; Dugan, 2011; Western, 2013). Much of what has been said from these positions reflect the concerns which drove me to research practice in the first place: challenging questions of pedagogic intent, power relations, agency and making a difference in the learning workspace. A critical perspective asks such questions at a deeper and more probing level around LD than previously articulated.

As I enter research, I am aware this diverse paradigmatic stance can emerge as one of the external competing forces where clear borders in thinking and research are potentially challenging (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). In adopting NI as methodology, I am concerned that it can accommodate this tussle. Lincoln et al. (2018) note what they call the increasing existence of an "interbreed" (p. 109). Interbreeding is defined as the capacity for previously irreconcilable theoretical perspectives to co-exist and inform each other in a more diverse qualitative research landscape. They reassure researchers that their work is influenced by and infused with many varied paradigmatic stances (Lincoln et al., 2018).

NI as methodology acknowledges macrosocial dimensions which shape and potentially oppress while at the same time attending to the voices of participants and practitioner who present the possibility for enabling individual and collective

movement towards improvement and change (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Weis & Fine, 2012).

Practising “critical bifocality” (Weis & Fine, 2012) as part of NI can render visible power issues, embedded messaging and the intricate interplay of individual and social context. Crucially for this study, it provides the means by which I can pay “dedicated empirical and theoretical attention to structures *and* lives” in a “braided design” (Weis & Fine 2012: 174). I adopt a bifocal approach in the research which follows embedded within NI. Bifocality challenges me, with critical optimism (Weis & Fine, 2012: 196), to get closer to the micro-practices in the learning workspace for LD by which issues of power, agency, resistance and change are produced, sustained, and embodied. These are critical concerns for the addressing of my research questions.

Tension 3: Concerns of Insider-Researcher

The capacity to enact a balanced view in practice research is complicated by several factors, including the inevitable tensions and potential conflicts inherent in organisations (Schön, 1987). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advise that researchers are a crucial part of the storytelling context. Embedding myself within the study as practitioner-researcher or insider-researcher can contribute significantly to understanding a pedagogy for leadership learning workspaces communicated within or against cultural discourses through narrative strategies and linguistic practices (Chase, 2005).

However, insider knowledge and know-how are seen as both strengths and weaknesses in research terms (Costley, 2018). As a researcher, I do not look to erase my presence but accept that I am an active central player interpreting what is happening (Finlay, 2003). I recognise that my insights are valuable because of my depth of knowledge and experience as a practitioner, but that needs to be balanced with a criticality of my own work and openness to a range of perspectives as a researcher. My objectivity is open to challenge as I cannot truly stand outside. It is

arduous to make the familiar strange enough (Goodson, 1992) to view it freshly and reflexively.

I chose to address the tensions inherent in my insider-researcher position by adopting a rigorous approach to reflexive practice as part of my NI methodology. Researcher reflexivity is core to NI (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and a significant concern for adult educators (e.g. Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Brookfield, 1995; Moon, 2004). Reflexive practice provides a valuable “bridge” between “internal and external worlds” (Etherington, 2004: 126). Through researcher reflexivity, I can hope to understand how I influence the knowledge I create, striving to develop a critical awareness of interactions between practitioners, professionals, and politics (Costley et al., 2010) as competing forces on my research landscape. In the next chapter, I detail my approach to reflexive practice and explicate further concerns and issues relating to the insider-researcher position as part of a detailed discussion of research methods.

Conclusion to Part I - Research Methodology

The choice of NI as research methodology, a qualitative research approach, is theoretically resonant with my socially constructed epistemological perspective. Narrative methods align with my humanistic beliefs and are highly congruent with the object under scrutiny – the lived experience of the learning space for leadership. NI can encompass a non-linear learning journey; embrace emergent thinking and themes; support the interplay between learner, learning, facilitator and process as it ebbs and flows while allowing reflective space for collaborative knowledge-making. It is an approach that will help *tell* the story, *explore* the story and *make sense of the* learning space for LD in all its’ ups and downs while accommodating the actual context of a specific workplace and point in time.

A critical perspective in my paradigmatic stance ensures attention to the social context and concerns of power and agency, core aspects of the research question. Reflexive practice is a core tenet of NI where the micro can inform and potentially transform the macro.

Finally, the chosen approach allows the researcher's place within the setting to be transparent and explorable as I locate me as an insider-researcher. Balancing the potential issues of being inside the study, I engage with researcher reflexive practice throughout the research.

Part II - Research Methods

Introduction

In Part II of this chapter, I follow on from my choice of methodology with a detailed discussion of the research methods adopted for this inquiry. I cluster this under four headings for ease of navigation. I focus initially on the context for the study introducing the workplace setting, the impetus behind MALT as an LD programme, the high-level programme design and the participants. From there, I move to research access and participation considerations, including negotiating entry to the field and gaining participant informed consent. Thirdly, I detail the processes for gathering the multiple and varied sources of data accessed in the course of the inquiry. I explain the choices faced and alternatives considered in this particular research setting. Finally, echoing the forward momentum of the research process, I discuss the analysis of the data emerging from the field in the course of moving toward final research texts, explaining how I structured my analysis.

The Context for this Study

The workplace setting – JOF production site

The workplace setting for this research is a production facility located in a regional market town in Ireland. The production site is owned and operated by JOF. JOF is in turn the Irish subsidiary of a well-known and successful international company with multiple brands which are widely recognised. JOF employs over 600 people in Ireland with several manufacturing, packaging and distribution sites for its products.

This locus for research was the product of converging thought and timing. In early 2018, my personal and practical justifications for research (Clandinin & Caine, 2013) were solidifying around conceptions of the learning workspace, particularly the impact of practitioner choice, beliefs, and engagement on the learning environment created there. I was clinging to the notion that interviews with past participants in leadership could provide the platform for such insight despite niggling unease that this type of approach would not get me close enough to the object of my curiosity. The research landscape, as thus envisaged, felt singular and placed me on the outside (Silko, 1997), a place strange and unfamiliar as someone immersed in practice.

At about this time, I was offered the opportunity to pitch for a new LD programme for JOF, which I successfully won. On further reflection, and with no small degree of trepidation for the realities of stepping into the midst of a three-dimensional delivery *and* research space (Clandinin & Caine, 2013), I approached the organisation with a request to use the proposed LD programme as the basis for research alongside my delivery of it. JOF agreed in principle subject to individual consent being given by participants at the outset.

MALT - Managers and Leaders Together Framework

At the heart of this study, the LD Programme grew from a framework of leadership responsibilities entitled MALT – Managers and Leaders Together. Early in 2017, recognition was given internally in JOF to managers' role in creating the conditions for sustained success. The Human Resources team, in consultation with employees, created a framework of leadership responsibilities which collectively would be "the key to unlocking a High Performance Culture" (excerpted from MALT booklet – JOF internal document).

MALT was captured in a printed booklet distributed to managers at in-house roadshows and technical training events designed for this purpose early in 2018 (Figure 4.2).

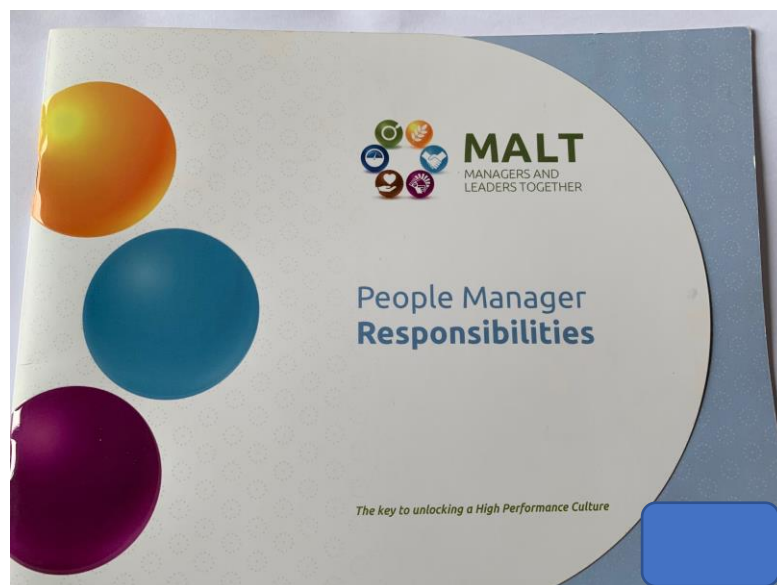


Figure 4.2 MALT booklet (Title page)

The framework of responsibilities was intended to “bring more clarity to your role as people managers within JOF” (excerpted from MALT booklet - JOF internal document). MALT contains six areas of responsibility pictured in Figure 4.3 below:



Figure 4.3 The six areas of MALT responsibility (taken from MALT booklet)

Each of these areas of responsibility was further detailed into statements. These statements clarified the expectation attached to the responsibility. Figure 4.4 contains an example taken from the framework for the MALT responsibility area of “Developing”:

 A page from a booklet with a light beige background. In the top right corner is the orange "Developing" icon. The text is as follows:

Developing

A strong manager will work to ensure all our employees realise their full potential and have satisfying careers at [redacted]

Your role as a People Manager is to:

- Be a role model for employee development
- Work with each team member to create effective Personal Development objectives
- Provide regular and timely feedback and coaching
- Know what training/resources are available to support the development of your team
- Support your people in getting the most from training by helping them actively plan and follow through on learning activities
- Have an annual conversation with your team members about their career aspirations

Figure 4.4 Detailed description of the “Developing” responsibility taken from the MALT framework

"Developing" is highlighted as a representative sample of the language and intent of the MALT areas of responsibility. Similar detail for each of the six areas is available in Appendix 1. In this representative sample (Figure 4.4), the purpose of "Developing" others as a leader is in the realisation of employee potential and career satisfaction (from Figure 4.4). This purpose is further elaborated in six supporting statements. MALT statements are written in the present tense, indicating purpose and action. These statements guide the manager on what "Developing" looks like in the context of their day-to-day responsibilities. Drawing on previous theoretical perspectives on LD (Snook et al., 2012: xiii), the statements represent a blend of –

Knowing & Doing:

"know what training/resources are available"

"provide regular and timely feedback"

And Being:

"a role model for employee development".

(Statements in italics taken from Figure 4.4)

Although not a competency set as typically envisaged (Bolden & Gosling, 2006), MALT represents a blend of knowing and doing approaches to leader capacity (Carroll et al., 2008) interspersed with a becoming and being leadership capacity which focuses on evolving growth and longevity of impact (Petriglieri, 2012). The literature review noted that most managers in organisations are typically exposed to and expected to operate with more knowing and doing types of leadership and less of the being (Nohria & Khurana, 2010). JOF is clearly seeking both from its managers based on the evidence of the MALT framework.

From MALT Framework to MALT Programme

There was an expectation entering into the MALT LD programme that participants would have their knowledge heightened, their capacity for agency activated and their worldview enhanced, a position I recognised as congruent with the practice turn and leadership as practice (Whittington, 2006; Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin, 2018). Dialogue with the HR sponsor during the early design phase highlighted practical aspects of knowing and doing through which participants could demonstrate their individual leader capacity in action (Day, Harrison & Halpin, 2009) post programme. These included clear communication in 1:1 meetings and behaviours such as giving feedback drawn directly from the MALT responsibilities. It became clear as conversations progressed that JOF wanted a programme of learning which would go further - challenging how participants view leadership responsibility and who takes it in the workplace. The enhancement of leadership capacity or *being* (Petriglieri, 2012; Dugan, 2017) would be a significant indicator for the company that MALT as an LD programme had succeeded. To this end, JOF suggested I meet with a representative sample of future participants ahead of designing the programme to ensure their concerns and context influenced the design. In turn, I would begin to understand the setting for learning (Mayo, 2012). This early dialogue provided valuable insights, information and knowledge, which I codified into the learning material, enabling a critical perspective in the learning workspace at later stages (Dugan, 2017).

Recognising the organisation's needs (Tourish, 2012) and drawing on the literature, the structure and content were designed to grow capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2010). The programme also looked to build social and collective capacity by focusing on the broader system and the workplace responsibilities for leadership in a time of change, growth and an expanded view of who leaders are (Day et al., 2009). It was anticipated that participants would emerge with a common language and collaborative understanding of leadership responsibility, having been challenged and supported to do so in their workplace context (Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016)

MALT – Programme Design

I designed and recommended three interconnected and sequential programmes of learning – MALT 1, 2 and 3. The concept of three programmes, through which participants would pass sequentially, would balance the multi-layered nature of client expectations with a design that was pedagogically capable of supporting learning in a cumulative way across the domains of knowing, doing and being in LD (Snook et al., 2012).

Learning Modules	MALT 1	MALT 2	MALT 3
People Manager 101	x		
People Manager Plus		x	
People Leadership			x
Developing	x	x	x
Engaging	x	x	x
Recruiting and Induction	x		
Recognising and Rewarding	x		
Safety, Wellbeing & CSR		x	
Empowering High Performance		x	

**Figure 4.5 High-level design snapshot of MALT 1, 2 and 3
Mapped against the framework of six areas of MALT responsibility**

Figure 4.5 above shows a high-level snapshot of MALT 1, 2 and 3 as they combine to create a cumulative learning journey. In working through the detail of the MALT framework, it became clear that the section on ‘Developing’ represented much of the knowing and doing required of managers and ‘Engaging’, much of the being (Snook et al., 2012). As a result, of the six MALT areas, ‘Developing’ and ‘Engaging’ form a common thread through each programme level.

As a guiding framework for the LD programme of the same name, the MALT responsibilities are, for the most part, articulated as a set of leadership actions. Building practical skills towards action does not always translate into leadership

(Dugan, 2017). Simply put, just because a participant knows about leadership actions and skills does not mean they can do it, or want to do it, or feel they have the right to do it. In my professional experience, and supported by theory (e.g. Day et al., 2014; Dugan, 2017), developing efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and accessing motivation for taking leadership (Chan & Drasgow, 2001) are important antecedents of enactment. These important constructs are not explicitly called out in the MALT responsibilities. They could arguably be missed (Dugan, 2011). At my instigation, JOF engaged with this reasoning. This resulted in MALT 1 and 2 beginning with a learning module focused on efficacy and motivation in leadership. These are called People Manager 101 and People Manager Plus respectively.

Note that some elements of the MALT people manager responsibilities do not fall under the aegis of the LD programme. Rewarding, Wellbeing and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) are catered for in separate ways by the company. A more detailed content outline for MALT 1, 2 and 3 as envisaged at the outset of the programme is available in Appendix 2. Keeping things simple, MALT 1 is referred to as "MALT" or the "MALT LD programme" from this point on. MALT 2 and 3 do not form part of this inquiry.

MALT LD programme – Delivery and Timeline

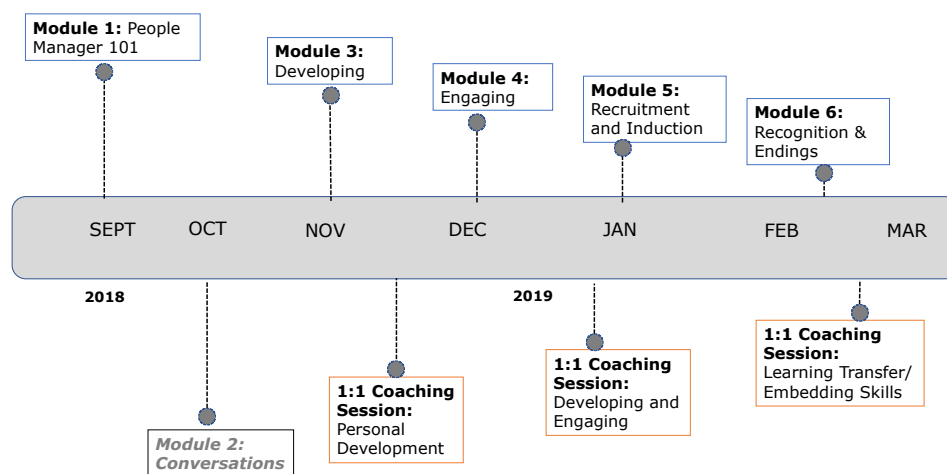


Figure 4.6 MALT Delivery Timeline & Modules Map

As depicted in Figure 4.6, the MALT LD programme at the JOF production site was structured into six learning modules. Three 1:1 coaching sessions for participants supported these. MALT was delivered over seven months, from September 2018 to March 2019. Features of the delivery included:

- **Learning modules** were spaced roughly four weeks apart throughout the length of the journey. This spacing was consciously built into the design by me to provide an opportunity for skills application and practice, reflection on learning and to support the development sequencing of the learning (Heifetz, 1998)
- Each learning Module was delivered three times to facilitate three learning cohorts going through MALT simultaneously. Where possible, the three sessions took place on the same week. While it was challenging for me as an LD practitioner to deliver three sessions back-to-back, this was a purposeful decision aimed at creating enhancing internal dialogue and creating a feeling of an active learning community (Watkins, 2005)
- **Learning cohorts** were intentionally cross-functional. This was the company position from the start, one which I endorsed due to the enhanced capacity for a diversity of views and the critical perspective possible from multiple viewpoints. At a practical human level, the building of new relationships, strengthening a community of learners would be beneficial for learning transfer (Watkins, 2005)
- Each learning cohort numbered no more than 7 or 8 participants. This constituency was necessary to facilitate shift-working and cover in a busy production facility. It had the bonus of creating learning workspaces that were sufficiently large to have multiple voices and views while being intimate enough to aid the development of trust and a holding environment (Heifetz, 1998, Kegan, 1982, 1994)
- Individual **coaching sessions** were scheduled for 50 minutes at a time and were offered at three different points to align with development sequencing (Heifetz, 1998) of the programme
 - after Module 3 focusing on efficacy and motivation
 - after Module 5 focusing on developing and engaging others
 - after Module 6 to support the consolidation and transfer of knowledge, skills and understanding back to the workplace.
 Participants were not confined to these areas for coaching purposes and were invited to guide the session towards that which concerned them most or may be hidden from collective view (Kegan, 2018)
- The HR department scheduled attendance at the first coaching session for each participant (in error). Attendance at the later coaching sessions was voluntary.. I recommended this approach to recognise the importance of adult learners having a degree of choice and control over their learning (Brookfield, 1986) in a learning workspace provided for them and shaped by myself and the company.
- Each learning module was facilitated in **meeting rooms** at the visitor centre on-site (not part of the production facility but sharing a campus) or nearby hotels
 - Four of the six modules ran for full days from 9 am to 4.30 pm
 - Two modules ran for half days from 9 am to 1 pm.
- Module 2 of MALT was delivered as a half-day refresh of a conversations tool already in use in the business. This module was delivered by a proprietary provider, not by me, and is not in scope for the research.

Figure 4.7 MALT Delivery Details

Programme participants

The JOF production site is led by -

- a Site General Manager (SGM),
- a Site Leadership Team (SLT) of 7 including the SGM
- a People Manager population of 22 who report to the team of 7.

All 29 participated in MALT, and all gave consent to the research, the accessing of which I discuss later in this chapter. Of the 29 participants, five were female, and 24 were male. There were occasional absences due to illness or unforeseen circumstances, but these were few, and all 29 participants who began completed the programme.

Participation

Attendance on MALT was mandatory, with shift patterns changed where necessary to accommodate the programme. Reflecting theoretical perspectives explored in earlier chapters, obliging participants to attend a company endorsed programme such as MALT with a company chosen provider such as myself can arguably feel undemocratic. Organisations such as JOF hold the resources, money and power to create learning workspaces for LD in commercial settings (Tourish, 2012) and decide who attends. I have made peace with this positioning, which pushes against many fundamental beliefs in adult learning about choice and freedom of participation (Watkins & Marsick, 2014). I do so because I actively encourage a democratic engagement once the participants enter the realms of learning. What they feel is, I hope, a collective, dialogic, relational space (Raelin, 2018). The later narratives explore the tensions and realities inherent in this assertion.

MALT for the Site Leadership Team (SLT)

The Site Leadership Team (SLT) of 7 were initially listed to attend MALT later, allowing the broader People Manager population of 22 to attend the initial running of the programme. When I visited the site for pre-design dialogue, many in the SLT conveyed their eagerness to know and understand the core concepts and ideas in MALT sooner. They were particularly concerned that they would not be able to

relate to the learning experiences or language (Vygotsky, 1978) of those attending in a way that could help leadership take hold on the site. They feared being on the outside of new knowledge creation (Watkins, 2005). Several approached me with the fear that they could unwittingly impede problem-solving and meaning-making (Bates, 2019) as the programme proceeded through a lack of understanding.

As a result of this eagerness and concern, I recommended a MALT immersive Pre-Learning Event to meet their need for a collective and social system around learning, a social constructivist perspective (Kim, 2001). The running of "Mini-MALT", as it became known, reflects a collective relational perspective on leadership as a way of being in the world (Carroll et al., 2008), a practice in which the whole system is engaged, not just the selected few.

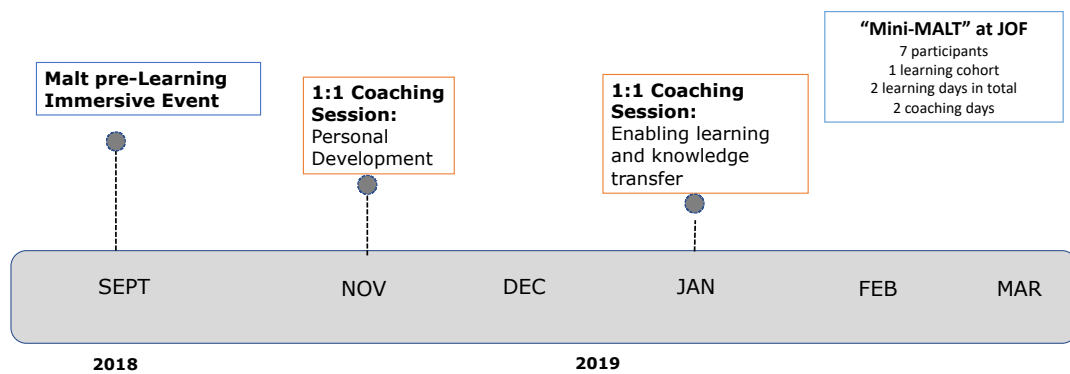


Figure 4.8 Site Leadership Team "Mini-MALT" Design and Timeline

Figure 4.8 illustrates the "mini-MALT" programme delivered over two days in early September 2018. Mini-MALT took place two weeks before the commencement of MALT for the broader population of managers later in the same month. Mini-MALT was supplemented with optional 1:1 coaching sessions for SLT members twice in the months following their learning event. The content of Day 1 was precisely that

of People Manager 101, a day in which leadership efficacy and motivation are addressed, and the substantial language of MALT is introduced and contextualised. Day 2 began with an overview of the later modules of MALT interspersed with engagement in a sample of the most salient exercises, dialogic and reflective opportunities that the wider MALT participant group would experience. My practitioner intent was clear. Engaging the SLT in knowing, doing and being (Snook et al., 2012), even within the limitations of two days, would provide a perspective on how knowledge is created in MALT, which simply talking about it could not.

The members of the SLT consented to research. Their experiences in 'Mini-MALT' are included in the narratives which follow.

Paradigmatic perspectives in the design of MALT

I brought the paradigmatic positions I have located and discussed previously in Chapters 2 and 3 to the design and enactment of MALT. As a result, MALT is underpinned by a social constructivist epistemology (Vygotsky, 1978; Kim, 2001) and is influenced by my holding of both a humanistic (Rogers, 1951, 1961) and critical perspective (Dugan, 2011, 2017; Western, 2013) on leadership, learning and LD. I sought to embed in the 'learning milieu' (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972) through design and action, pedagogic choices drawn from these perspectives. Practice-based approaches (Raelin, 2020) are foregrounded in MALT using realistic real-life opportunities and scenarios (Mayo, 2012) and through experiential learning exercises (Moon, 2004). A critical perspective drawn from both LD (Dugan & Humbles, 2018; Faller et al., 2020) and adult learning theory (Watkins & Marsick, 2014; Brookfield, 2015) ensured opportunities for dialogue and reflective thought are embedded in the design where voices could be heard, and there was collective opportunity to relate action and reflection to theory and practice (Freire, 1970, 1972; Mayo, 2012). I was aware throughout the design phase that more or different pedagogic modalities, principles and understanding would emerge through the research process, the intent of which is an exploration of a pedagogy for LD in my practice.

Gaining Research Access and Participation

As a neophyte researcher, I recognise the importance of adhering to good research practice, especially regarding access, informed consent, data gathering, potential bias, ethics, subjectivity and heightened awareness of issues raised in such a research undertaking (Costley et al., 2010). In this, the second of four sections within research methods, I discuss how I brokered and gained research access at the organisational level and the participants, securing their consent for participation. Negotiating relationships for access and consent ushers in trust-related concerns related to purpose, intention, and positioning for the researcher, stakeholders and the participants in the research process (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). In the following sections, I highlight these concerns and how I mitigated their impact.

Securing access for research at an organisational level

Organisations are dynamic and complex places where researchers, especially outsiders, can be viewed with suspicion (Costley et al., 2010). The dynamics of existing interaction and identity in such communities (Wenger, 1998) can be a barrier to new members, especially those like myself, seeking consent to insider research before the development activity began.

I approached JOF in the summer of 2018 with a request to research the delivery of MALT. The programme design was agreed upon by this time, and I was engaged in detailed content creation and pedagogic planning. Narrative inquirers enter research relationships in the midst (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). I had an ongoing and trusted relationship with my HR stakeholder before the advent of MALT, and we were in regular dialogue about the upcoming programme content, positioning and focus. Trust between us was strong, I believed. In contemplating and reflecting on my pending request (Bergum, 1999), I imagined the impact research would have on the time, space and reality of the learning workspaces MALT would create (Clandinin & Caine, 2013) by placing myself inside as a practitioner and researcher. In the process, I considered the possibilities and challenges my stakeholder might

raise with me – those of ethics, energy, distraction, focus. It was clear that enhancing my practice was the primary purpose of the narrative inquiry I was proposing. Logistically and epistemologically (Costley et al., 2010), it could be perceived as self-serving to get paid for the work and to benefit by simultaneously researching it. My personal justification for research (Clandinin & Caine, 2013) might not resonate as well with my stakeholder as it did with myself. However, reflecting on my practical research justifications, I found I could position these in terms my stakeholder could understand and relate to.

From our ongoing conversations, I deduced a shared concern for enhancing leadership as practice (Raelin, 2016) in the real world of work. She had expressed concern that it was hard to know and understand what it is like on the frontline of leadership, sitting as she did in Head Office and away from the site for learning and action. She was one of the originators of the MALT framework and was heavily invested in the programme's success. I surmised that she could relate to my practical justifications for research. Furthermore, I could usefully make visible for *her* practice, one different to mine but with common aims, the lived experience of workplace learning. At a social/theoretical I level, I could potentially influence JOF future thought and practice on workplace learning through programmes such as MALT.

In negotiating how I could be helpful (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) to my stakeholder and JOF, I balanced these justifications as best I could. I was mindful, in particular, that the proposed research was not positioned as influencing the grand narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) on leadership or LD in workplaces. Nor did I want the generalisability of findings overstated, a particular concern of narrative inquirers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Generalisability would arguably have made the “story” more attractive to share beyond the organisation and the research more attractive to engage with.

As it happened, high-level access was relatively easily achieved. However, I worked my way through the considerations and justifications I had prepared in any event,

keen to ensure an ethical and balanced understanding of the logistical and epistemological implications of agreement (Costley et al., 2010). My stakeholder was enthusiastic about the possibilities for both myself, herself and the company arising from research. She facilitated access to more senior decision-makers in the company. Research access was granted in principle (Okumus, Altinay & Roper, 2007) in the summer of 2018 to allow the MALT programme at the JOF production site and associated activities to be the subject of this research. I signed a standard non-disclosure agreement regarding confidentiality of business-sensitive information, which could arise in the course of programme delivery. The company chose to be identified in the research outputs.

Securing access for research at participant level

I did not play a role in deciding who attended MALT. The company chose the 29 participants based on their people leadership roles on the site. As a result of this decision, the possible research pool consisted of a fixed, pre-determined group and was homogenous to the people manager population on the JOF production site. I needed to ask for their informed consent to research alongside their participation in the programme. The decision to participate in MALT had been made for them. The decision to consent to research was one they could make for themselves. I had discussed the implications of a refusal of consent with the company, and we agreed it would have no impact on participation in the programme of learning. One was not contingent on the other. JOF had provided physical access, but mental access, gaining the right to access thinking, knowledge and social dynamics to understand better what goes on there (Gummesson, 2000), was mine to broker.

Asking for research consent meant that I entered an existing community as an outsider knowing that the community would judge my trustworthiness based on my perceived empathy, dignity and respect for them (Costley et al., 2010). I would not meet the participants until the opening day of MALT, where I intended to ask for their consent alongside the programme's opening. Doing this in person, I reasoned, would allow me to answer questions and fully explain the intent and purpose of my request. Without having shown myself as a facilitator of their

learning through my LD practitioner role, I needed to transcend an implicit assumption that consent was expected (Costley et al., 2010). The MALT participants could also feel “subtle coercion” (Josselson, 2007: 541) to participate in the research as their employer had formally consented and, as such, had approved the proposition (Costley et al., 2010). This did not sit well with me ethically or epistemologically. I was keen that the consent process to research would feel like it belonged to the participants to give freely and in an informed way. To enable this to happen, I considered possible concerns arising from the act of asking for and receiving consent.

Concerns relating to informed consent

The request for informed consent for research purposes, running alongside the LD programme, could heighten latent fear. I was keenly aware that the invitation to participate in research was being issued before reciprocity and trust were established between us in a shared learning space (Griffiths, 1998). There could be a kind of deception (Costley et al., 2010) in being an outsider but trying to be an insider before I had earned the right to be so. I did not and could not yet have the individual rapport with the participants (Okumus et al., 2007), which would reassure them of the collaborative environment I hoped to create.

Running deeper were other possible concerns. MALT as an LD programme was a new intervention for the participants who were learning within a workplace environment. They were expected to use what they learned back on the job. There was no explicit testing of achievement attached to MALT. Despite this and based on past educational experiences, the participants could still see me or their employer (JOF) as being in a position of judgement. They may worry they were being measured through the research process without knowing it. They may wonder if a workplace learning space is, in fact, a safe space for sharing, the learning community it purports to be (hooks, 1994).

I could provide factual information on the processes and steps in the leadership programme. However, as Etherington (2007) indicates, I could not provide

information "about processes yet to unfold" (p. 601), especially in the case of a narrative approach. The demands of context are critical (Denzin, 1997), yet participants were being asked for consent before the context they were consenting to became apparent in a tangible way. They had never worked with me or engaged in learning with each other in the MALT environment previously. Simply put, trust was not yet established.

Pre-emptive action to mitigate concerns

Gaining trust and the process of smoothing access was influenced, I believe, by my decision to engage in a piece of dynamic administration (Parker Follett, [1942] 2003), defined as the process of engaging pro-actively with the external aspects of forming a group such as setting, time, place, purpose and understanding (Barnes, Hyde & Ernst, 1999). Dynamic administration, an approach drawn from group relations, accelerates (Barnes et al., 1999) the sense of an internal holding environment (Winnicott, 1965), a safe space for thinking and engaging (Barnes et al., 1999). The participants may not have met me in person until the programme's opening day, but they had heard from me and were starting to form a view. Before the commencement of the programme, I spent considerable time consciously and carefully crafting an e-mail invitation (Appendix 3) to all participants. I led with a tone, and an intent, that I hoped would balance some of the fear inherent in participating in an unknown programme. I shared knowledge appropriate to starting on a new journey and looked to position the experience of learning as engaging, two-way and connected to their roles and work. In this way, I was actively grounding and contextualising the external holding environment. A good enough external holding environment benefits the creation of an internal holding environment (Barnes et al., 1999). Despite the distance of e-mail, I was looking to demystify the LD process and invite their awareness of what would occur.

Timing the request for informed consent

Considering the many concerns and fears associated with consent, I made a final deliberate choice to mitigate concern and encourage as freely given an agreement as possible. I introduced the consent form in the middle of the afternoon of Day 1 for each of the four learning cohorts rather than at the start of the day. I felt that if the participants had experienced my interpersonal style, approach, and sense of who I was (Costley et al., 2010), they could make a more informed judgment on whether they trusted me enough to sign the consent form. I had no idea how the story would unfold. However, I could proactively demystify the nature of the learning and seek to counterbalance possible perceptions of mandated attendance in a learning space where information flows one way and is simply provided to be banked (Freire, 1970).

By the afternoon of Day 1, there was a sense of having heard many voices, not just mine, and there was demonstrable evidence of what this learning space would be. Guided by Miles & Huberman (1994), I focused on providing as complete knowledge as possible and mitigating thoughts of harm and risk. I shared a good quality Information Sheet (Appendix 4), spent time explaining the Consent Form (Appendix 5) and simply but clearly outlined the implications of giving consent. Individual managers were free to opt in or out as they chose. Participation in the LD was not conditional on consent for research, and there was no adverse impact for anyone who did not consent to be involved in the research aspect. I made it clear that the company would not know who had given or declined consent. I positioned the participants' consent as helping me and the broader practitioner and learner community (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to benefit from their experiences in the learning programme ahead. Core to my research was a commitment to the participants that I wanted their experiences of LD to be central to telling the story of the learning process. I shared with them that this is not a common approach in the research literature on LD.

Despite my concerns, gaining this personal permission (Okumus et al., 2007) to conduct research was straightforward. I was clear the participants could read and

sign the form over their afternoon coffee break, ask me questions at any stage, including after the session or take it with them for the next time. I hoped this would feel less like they were being rushed into a decision. As it transpired, there were few questions, and all participants signed the consent form without issue.

I recognise that my actions and the consideration that underpinned them had congruence with my psychological background, formative training in working with groups, and years of experience building trust and reciprocity. Paradigmatically, my approach to access and consent aligned with my desire to create a learning community for LD where power is embodied as shared and capacity is co-created (Shrewsbury, 1987). Practically, extensive preparation and reflexive thought, engaging in dynamic administration in the lead up to the request for research consent, and choosing the appropriate as opposed to the earliest opportunity to raise consent, accelerated the “getting in” (Robson, 2002) phase of research access. When consent was requested, the participants were already moving to the “getting on” phase (Robson, 2002).

Gathering Data – From field to field texts

In this section, I explain the data gathering process for this inquiry, or as Clandinin and Caine (2013) describe it, the process in NI of “moving from field to field texts” (p. 172). At this point, I suggest it is helpful to capture the primary constituent elements of the research study visually (Figure 4.9)

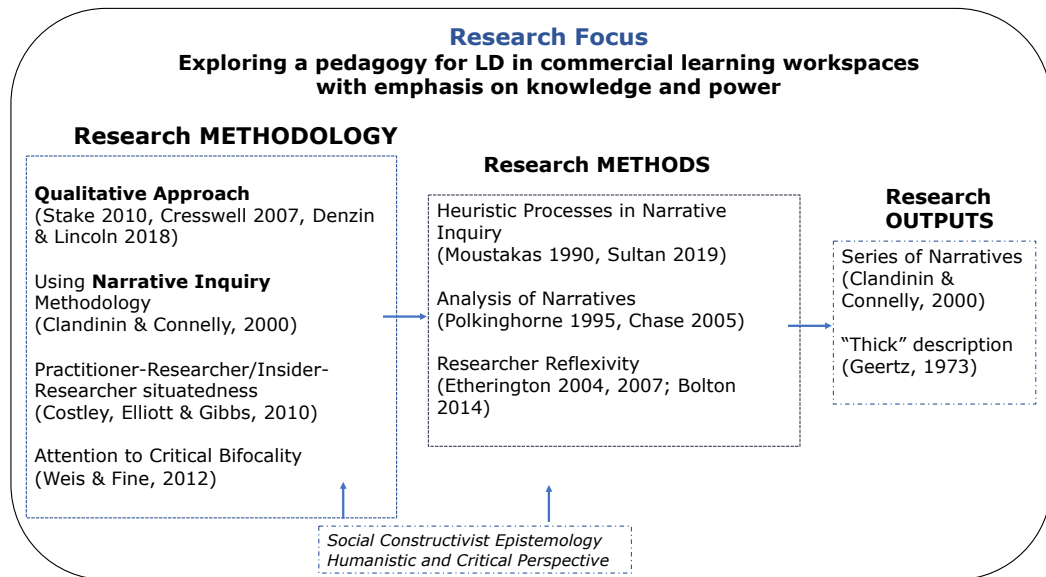


Figure 4.9 Summary chart of the primary constituent elements of the research study

This study combines many moving parts and interconnections. I begin with some short considerations of data gathering in NI. This leads to a detailed description of my data sources for the study. From there, I describe two of the moving parts central to my research methods. These are the use of heuristic processes in NI and researcher reflexivity.

Considerations for gathering data in this NI

In the overall design for this doctoral research, I aimed to construct a reflective approach and reveal the rich and diverse ways the participants and I engage with LD. Chase (2018) notes a shift with narrative research from focusing “on the narration of past events to the narration of experience”, allowing for accounts about feelings and thoughts. She highlights a redefining from "discourse" to "communication" (p. 547) to include narratives that are visual as well as oral or written. This stretching of narrative boundary allows for the inclusion in this study of the full breadth of the learning environment under examination in MALT.

Entering the field, I anticipated that insight would be generated by analysing the participants and my own language, experience, discourse, and perceptions (Bruner, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) of the LD learning workspace. This breadth of potential brings challenges in the overwhelming nature of the rich and real data emerging (Miles, 1979) from living the story and the built-in messiness of the method (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The data collection method needed to be fluid, not a set of locked down procedures or steps to follow (Clandinin, 2013).

Sources of Data for the inquiry

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that field texts in narrative inquiry are constructed rather than gathered, but to construct involves gathering together the many and rich strands of data available to explore deeply (Butler-Kisber, 2019).

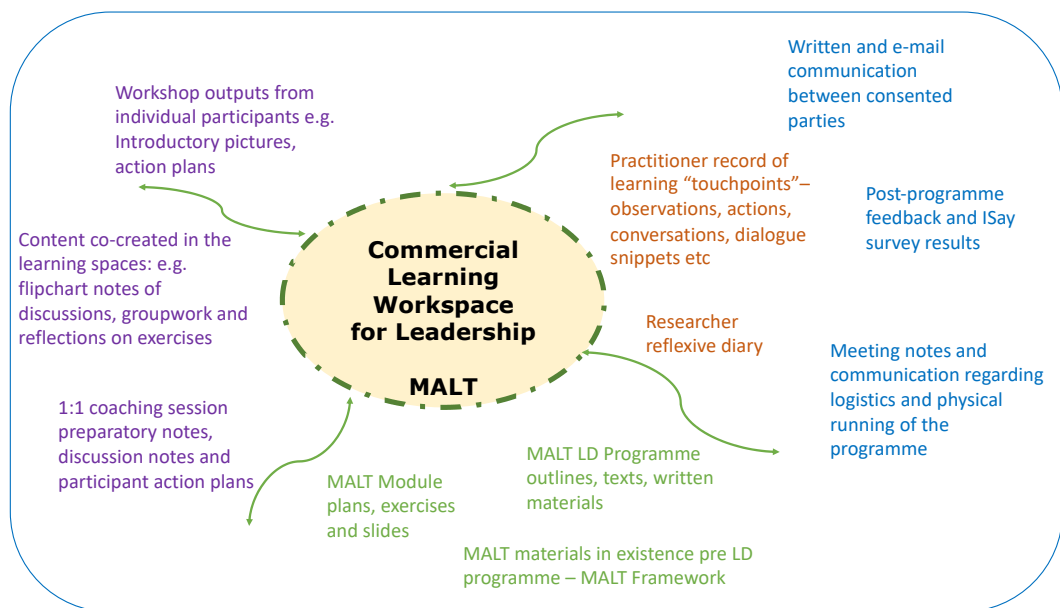


Figure 4.10 Visual representation of the sources of field data for this study

The many and varied sources of data for this NI are visually represented in Figure 4.10. The colour coding and positioning of materials are indicative of their relation as I perceive it to the learning workspace:

- Purple - sources that emerged directly from the learning workspace and are positioned closest to it visually.
- Orange - sources generated through my interface with the learning environment and research.
- Green - materials influencing the programme or created for structure, curriculum and content.
- Blue - materials from the external environment of the programme, such as e-mail communication and feedback generated post programme.

In requesting informed consent from the participants, I explained that I planned to include all course outlines and texts, detailed module plans, meeting notes, my practitioner notes, reflexive diary and classroom exercises in the study. I asked to retain all flipcharts, group and exercise outputs from each of the six classroom-based sessions (for the three concurrent learning cohorts) as well as notes from 1:1 coaching sessions. Additionally, I retained all outputs from the Site Leadership Team mini-MALT, the 1:1 coaching sessions that followed, and written and e-mail communications between myself and consented parties.

I "recorded" learning touchpoints by writing an account of them immediately following the occurrence. These voluminous "scribbles in a notebook" captured the "flood of descriptively oriented field observations" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 82), which captured what I did, what the participants did, what was around us, when, where and why it was possibly so. I noted conversations, stories, arrivals and departures from sessions, physical movement, non-verbal gestures, silence, and chatter as best I could, knowing that I could never get to everything (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I chose not to share these things in a written way with the participants, primarily as the leadership programme was foregrounded and the research backgrounded in our interactions when we convened. Instead, I chose to use emerging tentative themes from data collection as a source for reflective "check-in" at the start of learning sessions in a co-creative way. I also chose to share reflected inputs into dialogue in later group and 1:1 sessions. In this way, the research methods influenced the content and process of the sessions in a fluid and emergent way.

What I did not have was that which is arguably highly privileged in narrative research as the "superlative source" (Sultan, 2018: 33); and a precautionary step against misinterpretation of participant voice and perspective (Lincoln, 1995), first-person interview data. The extensive use of interviews in qualitative research closes time and space gaps, allowing retrospective illumination of past events and reaching reality areas that might otherwise be inaccessible (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2018). MALT took place in the working environment where the primary purpose was the programme itself. Audio or video recording of any sort would not be acceptable in that setting and would have been detrimental to the learning purpose, almost certainly diminishing the holding environment (Heifetz, 1998). By consequence, the efficacy of the research output would have also been reduced. As a practitioner researching her practice (Costley & Fulton, 2018), I had concerns for subjectivity and distance. Without interviews or live recordings of any sort, the nature of my data sources was closer to naturally occurring (Silverman, 2011) on the continuum of empirical materials than interview data, for example. On the positive side, materials that are closer to naturally occurring are specimens of the research topic, allowing me as the researcher to be in direct touch with the object of investigation (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2018).

Heuristic processes in narrative inquiry

With many possible data available to me, I was concerned about gathering and interpreting such data in appropriate, reliable, and valid ways. I came upon the concept of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) and, in particular, the capacity to adopt heuristic processes or methods within NI (Etherington, 2004; Sultan, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The purpose of heuristic inquiry is to ask, "what is the experience of?" (Sultan, 2018: 9). Humanistic in orientation and social constructivist in worldview, heuristic methods when used within NI invite into the research space a broad range of data sources, tools and perspectives (Sultan, 2018). As part of the larger NI, I readily include artwork, creativity, visuals, and other artefacts alongside journaling and reflexive practice. Non-verbal behaviours such as tone of voice, gestures, posture, movement and behaviour change were viewed as nuances that

can offer critical information to me as the researcher beyond the verbal realm alone (Sultan, 2018).

Critical pedagogic researchers view the adoption of heuristic processes in NI as an example of complex, active construction from the available tools at hand rather than a passive reception of a pre-existing correct way of going about research and narrative creation (Kincheloe et al., 2018). This enhanced knowledge made it liberating and energising rather than overwhelming to connect with all that emerges from a living leadership programme: images, tacit knowing, creative outputs, journaling. In turn, my position as researcher and gatherer of data felt less vulnerable. Paradigmatically and practically, I was encouraged to privilege all sources of data (Sultan, 2018).

Researcher Reflexivity

Clandinin and Connelly remind us that narrative inquirers are always "strongly autobiographical", our research emerging from our own experience and shaping the research's plotlines (2000: 121). Merrill and West (2009) believe that using biography in research allows us to get to more neglected parts – reflective of the three-dimensional space for narrative research. At the outset of this doctoral journey, I engaged in reflexive practice (Bolton, 2014), separate to, but running alongside, the research process. Vignettes from this reflexive engagement were contained in Chapter 2 and appear in the preface and postscript to the study.

Separately, as insider-researcher, one who delivers the workshop days and coaching sessions on-site; attends and moves about the organisation for days at a time, I generated a close familiarity with the context of my research (Costley et al., 2010). I was concerned it could be challenging to distance myself from the research over which I had the final authority to interpret and write up the findings. I chose to adopt a reflexive approach (Etherington, 2004, 2007; Bolton, 2014) to deal with the moral dilemmas inherent in researching and delivering the same learning space, being both practitioner and researcher within the NI space (Riessman, 2002).

To meet the immediate and collaborative nature of NI data gathering, I maintained a reflexive research journal (Bolton, 2014). I recorded my preparation for, concerns about and experience of each learning stage – pre-programme, classroom, coaching and discussions. I strove for a level of awareness of the contradictions, and transformative opportunity within LD, the organisation and the nature of adult workplace learning, such as I had not previously experienced or explored. This reflection in action (Schön, 1983) was aided by a small group of peer professionals assembled to explore with me the contradictions, tensions and opportunities arising from the reflexive process. I engaged with this group of three at several junctures along the journey. One, a fellow researcher from a grounded theory worldview, challenged my view of the emerging organisational themes and the nature and description of LD itself. A fellow practitioner coaxed my criticality of thinking along and, in so doing, sharpened my focus on pedagogy. An adult educator with a particular interest in journaling and reflexive methods helped me in the early stages of the study to see my own biases and assumptions because of my research stance. Together, they enabled me in different ways and at different times to make the practice of LD through MALT and the concomitant research more transparent. Engaging with reflexive practice allowed me to critically consider my practice, to understand my position and the position of others in the research (Boud et al., 1985).

Analysing the data

This final section on research methods discusses the movement from field data to interim and final research texts. I consider the challenges involved in analysing data emerging in the course of NI. I discuss the wide variety of available sources and the decisions I made to ascribe value and importance within this rich landscape. I describe arriving at an "analysis of narratives" (Polkinghorne, 1995) and the impact of choosing this paradigmatic view. I explicate the process of reaching final

research texts, a challenging engagement with themes, ethics, uncertainty and voice.

Analysing data in NI

There is little consensus on methods and techniques in making narrative inquiry (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Clandinin (2013) suggests a fluid approach that generates field, interim and research texts as the inquiry progresses. In practice, how data is analysed is determined by the purpose and goals of the study and is often adapted and refined to those needs, synthesising parts in ways different to before (Stake, 2010). The analysis of what transpired in this inquiry was ongoing, iterative, and fluid from the first day in the field (Butler-Kisber, 2019), reflecting the ambient and dialogic nature of exploring an experience unfolding over time.

Prioritising from within multiple data sources

Multiple forms of field texts yield more robust results (Butler-Kisber, 2019). However, the sheer volume of material emerging from three cohorts of participants, six modules of MALT learning and a mini-MALT for a fourth cohort, multiple coaching sessions and from myself as note making practitioner and reflexive researcher threatened to overwhelm my capacity for perspective. Differentiating between the various data sources, I ascribed primary field text status to particular material and secondary status to others (Butler-Kisber, 2019).

	Primary	Secondary
FIELD TEXTS		
Workshop outputs from individual participants, e.g. Introductory pictures, Action plans	X	
Content co-created in the learning spaces: e.g. flipchart notes of discussions, group work and reflections on exercises	X	
1:1 coaching session preparatory notes, discussion notes and action plans	X	
Practitioner record of learning “touchpoints”– observations, actions, conversations, dialogue snippets	X	
Researcher reflexive diary	X	
MALT materials in existence pre LD programme – MALT booklet	X	
MALT LD Programme outlines, texts, written materials		X
MALT Module plans, exercises and slides		X
Post-programme feedback and ISay survey results	X	
Written and e-mail communication between consented parties		X
Meeting notes and communication regarding the logistics and physical running of the programme		X

Figure 4.11 Differentiation of Primary and Secondary field texts

Figure 4.11 displays the differentiation applied to the sources of data introduced in Figure 4.10 earlier. Armed with the pedagogic focus of the research, I chose to ascribe primary status to participant artefacts, co-created content and outputs from the learning modules. My research questions focused on the lived experience of the learning workspace, particularly the creation of knowledge and the role of power. Hence, I privilege my recording of the learning touchpoints alongside my researcher reflexive diary as additional primary texts. My concern with enhancing my practice and informing what I do beyond the boundaries of this research meant that the post-programme feedback, a single source of such data conducted by JOF, along with “I Say” culture survey results, was given primary status.

Secondary field texts in this instance comprised the MALT framework, pre-dating the LD programme of the same name along with MALT theory elements. My reasoning was to focus on the research purpose (pedagogy as occurring in and between participants, practitioner and the learning environment) and NI methodology (focusing on lived experience, not cognitive knowledge or programme structure). The logistical periphery of the programme – such as e-mail communication and physical arrangements, were also deemed secondary.

Secondary materials were not analysed in-depth but used for corroboratory and contextual purposes (Butler-Kisber, 2019).

Reading the data: "Analysis of Narratives" approach

One of the strengths of NI as a methodology is its ability to creatively explore the narrative qualities of activities whose storied character is not immediately self-evident (Chase, 2018). An "analysis of narratives" (Polkinghorne, 1995) was undertaken to access this creative possibility. A paradigmatic approach, analysis of narratives involves identifying particular evidence to form general concepts or categories. It tries to fit individual details into a larger pattern (Kim, 2015). In this approach, the concepts need not be derived from data; they can be derived from literature or logical assumptions or the pre-determined foci of the study (Kim, 2015) and applied to the data (Polkinghorne, 1995). In this study, pedagogy, knowledge and power were applied as concepts to the data in search of "patterns, narrative threads, tensions and themes either within or across an individual's experience and in the social setting" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 132). The ambition was that themes related to these research foci, holding *across* stories, would allow exploration of how individuals were enabled or constrained by resources, situation and interaction (Chase, 2005) in the three-dimension space of the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

From Field texts to Interim texts

I did not use computer software for narrative analysis for two reasons. While increasing in popularity in this type of research (Kim, 2015), I felt the variety and types of data sources involved, from folded up flipchart pages to participant pictures and my researcher diaries, would be best analysed in person through human narrative coding. This is a preference shared by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Kim (2015). The second reason for my choice recognised that the concepts to be applied were clearly identifiable from the research focus – pedagogy, knowledge and power.

First stage reading and organising field texts involved a broad brushstroke approach (Bodgan & Biklen, 2016), watching for chronology, actors, the context for action, connections and gaps. My margin notes and initial codes were descriptive and tentative at this point, not much more than familiarisation with the emerging detail, "an archival task" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 131). Once the MALT LD programme was delivered, the creation of interim texts involved extensive reading and rereading of the field texts in their various forms and several attempts to narratively code followed (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These sought to highlight snippets of story, patterns of experiences and contextualisation, discontinuities and contradictions under the heading of pedagogy, and the theoretical lenses of knowledge and power.

The physical reality of this coding is challenging to transmit in writing. On occasions, it felt like creating a large-scale mood board where highlighter pens, spider lines and stickers connected threads of pedagogy, knowledge and power across multiple data sources physically spread across a wall and table in my home office. As coding iterations followed, the image in my head moved to that of a war room where more finely tuned themes started to show form and shape with stronger lines between snippets of recorded conversation, fragments from my reflexive diary, pictures on participant flipcharts, and more. Early attraction to individuals and their stories gave way to commonalities across multiple data sources, and more apparent relationships emerged among categories (Polkinghorne, 1995).

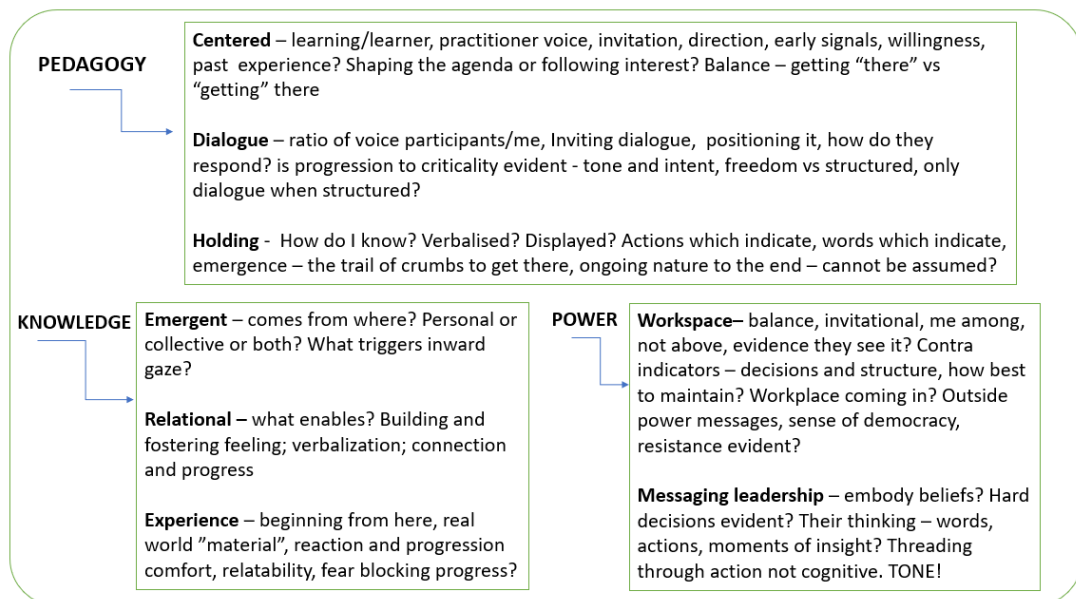


Figure 4.12 Sample of early narrative coding of concepts and themes extracted verbatim from research notes

I did not photograph this physical manifestation of coding, an error in hindsight. Figure 4.12 displays a sample of the process, transcribed verbatim from my research notes, complete with the original punctuation and capturing the disjointed nature of intense meaning-making at that time. This demonstrates I suggest the problem-posing (Freire, 1970) way the research foci as themes found their way in time to sub-themes and headings for the re-storied narratives.

From Interim Texts to Research Texts

The interim texts created from early coding of field texts were not shared with participants in a divergence from a traditional narrative inquiry analytic pathway. The research was not the primary purpose of those participating in MALT, and involvement in shaping the interim texts was not built into either the inquiry or the LD programme. In practical terms, my access to the participants was limited to the duration of the LD programme. I did not have ready access to go back and re-engage in interpreting themes emerging from the data. I had reverted from insider to outsider once the formal programme commitment ended. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) observe that interim texts can come about for many reasons, including those outside the research field itself. I brought emerging patterns, and

contextualisation discontinuities in these mid-stage interpretive accounts to my peer professional group members discussed previously to aid critical reflexivity and ethical and research distance. In the absence of engagement with the participants in moving towards the final texts, I felt I could alleviate some of the tension of this transitional stage through these engagement mechanisms.

Transition tensions

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the difference between field and research texts as the journey from early close-up description to later distanced significance. Transitioning to interpreting the more significant meaning inherent in the stories emerging from the data (Cresswell, 2007) was riddled with nervous anxiety. As a result, while negotiating the final stages of data analysis, I experienced the frequent sensation of moving back and forth between being in the field, field texts and the research texts and back again (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

I attempted, through this movement, back and forth to balance my subjective perception of what was emerging with healthy scepticism (Stake, 2010) through critical reflexivity (Etherington, 2004, 2007). Repeated reading of the interim texts, a re-examination of reflexive journal accounts and revisiting participant artefacts from the many learning days of MALT, I attempted to minimise bias and the concomitant predisposition to error (Scriven, 1998) that comes with studying “my own place” (Stake, 2010: 163). The “nested set of stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 144), mine and theirs, characterised the methodology but left me feeling unmoored occasionally when seeking a more detached meaning from the data. There was no clear path to follow and no one with whom to check the veracity of the final research texts. I returned to theory for companionship and guidance in the event, grounded myself in the three-dimensional space, and dug deep into my research foci. Reassuringly, which is not always the case (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I felt sure that the concepts I had set out to research mattered most to my practice. The clarity to craft stories explaining ‘why’ was more challenging.

Early research concerns about bias and the perception of delivering a self-serving or company-serving perspective (Stake, 2010) reappeared in full force at this stage. My early positivist training in psychological methods tussled with the reality that qualitative research is subjective and personal (Stake, 2010). Subjectivity, I realised, was not something to be eliminated but to be recognised for what it is, an "essential element of understanding human activity" (Stake, 2010: 29). As a researcher, my relationships with the participants and how I too lived within the three-dimensional space made a difference to the notes I made and the interpretation of same (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I was self-driven to enquire and made no claims to generalisability or shaping the grand narrative. Against that backdrop, where subjective viewing adds to the depth of perception (Stake, 2010), I recognised and acknowledged as such.

My system for presenting data: the Narratives

The narratives at the heart of this research are presented chronologically and thematically. They are written to convey the experience of the learning workspace for leadership in the rich detail of real-life and emotion (Ellis, 2004). Thick descriptions (Geertz, 1983) emanate from analysing research materials which are themselves thickly described in terms of person, context and concept (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Reflecting the richness of the thickly described data available to the inquiry, each narrative contains a blend of dialogue, pictures and descriptions interwoven in a way that pays attention to interaction (people and social), continuity and the situation (Cresswell, 2007) of the participants' experiences. At the endpoint, as a researcher, I inevitably wonder if I got the story right? I acknowledged that there is no "right" story but multiple stories (Cresswell, 2007: 44).

Concerns of an ethical nature

Ethical matters were negotiated over the entire inquiry process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), shifting and changing as I navigated my way through. Sensitivities of my insider-researcher position have been discussed previously, as have ethical concerns concerning informed consent. Work-based research is replete with issues

of 'power, status, language and communication' (McLaughlin, 2004: 133). Unsurprisingly, further concerns arose as I worked in the field, particularly regarding participant anonymity, gender and voice.

Power is a fact of life in organisations (Costley et al., 2010). As a researcher, I operate within a political arena where I possess discretionary power over the participants' vulnerability as learners, stripped of their typical day-to-day roles (Costley et al., 2010). In adopting an ethic of care (Costley & Gibbs, 2006), I was mindful of doing no harm (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and looking to balance the notion of power and possible exploitation which can occur in workplace research. I agreed on a learning contract with each cohort for the shared learning workspace. In doing so, I signed up with them to value honesty and trust and maintain confidentiality outside the sessions. They entered with reasonable trust, and I, in turn, was careful to accept that trust, recognising that I held a privileged and powerful position within which was the capacity to manipulate and potentially expose participants should I act against that trust. I deliberately took the opportunity at module 'check-ins' to respond to queries on research progress, regularly updating participants of my intentions, progress, and dilemmas as the research progressed alongside the LD programme.

While the research agenda was not foremost in the participants' minds, I did not hide it from view. I was cognizant of the possibility of deception (Costley et al., 2010) by sheer forgetfulness or at least a delayed reaction to the research agenda by the participants as the programme drew to a close. This was of particular concern to me as the extent to which the participants had consented became more apparent as the programme progressed. I received a few humorous asides that individuals hoped their particular learning attempts made the study for better or for worse. To counterbalance this, I shared snippets of insights or musings while clearly labelling them as research observations and invited participants to engage reflectively with them. This sharing of "interpretive accounts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 133) in motion and interwoven into the pedagogic framework as they occurred partially filled a critique void in my research process. My actions also

maintained transparency, accessibility and openness about the research agenda by inviting it into the practice space.

Concerns of programme measurement

Every two years, the parent company of JOF conducts a culture survey of its 14,000 staff globally called 'I Say'. Independently administered and validated by global HR Consultancy Willis Towers Watson, 'I Say' is trusted by employees and the company as an accurate and insightful barometer of culture, values and beliefs in action.

There are multiple questions and measures within 'I Say'. JOF was ambitious that the production site would improve on previous scores in a sub-section of the survey called "My Manager". "My Manager" responses reflect the degree to which employees feel engaged with and developed by their managers. It also reflects how well-led they believe themselves to be. As an LD practitioner, I was aware of this measure in the background as the programme progressed. Having worked inside organisations in an HRD capacity for ten years, measures like this are a part of the known landscape (Yang, 2004). As a result, I do not believe that having a measure of success such as 'I Say' significantly impacted the programme's design or pedagogic choices.

As a researcher, however, I found myself in a different, unfamiliar space with this measure. As the research progressed, my awareness often went to what could be described as concerns of a micro ethical nature (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004), minor localised tensions in the immediacy of the live research. I was by turns concerned for the emergent nature of the learning (should I tell them the answer/what to do?) and the balance between leader and leadership capacity at random moments of engagement (will they be rated well enough on 'I Say' on both doing and being?). Ethically important moments (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) occurred for which this measure was a mental agitator in the background of my practitioner and researcher consciousness. When this occurred, reflection and consideration helped me know my own thinking (Chavez, 2008), as the later narratives will attest.

Trustworthiness and credibility

I was paid to deliver the MALT programme as an external service provider. As discussed earlier in this chapter, tensions of delivery/research micro-ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) can simmer when engaged in insider-researcher practice research. The reality was that due to the length of the research process/programme delivery and the relational dialogic nature of the learning workspace created; I moved along an axis from outsider to insider (Fulton & Costley, 2018) relatively quickly and back to an outsider again once the delivery was complete. However, I remained an insider in my head as the research process for me intensified after leaving the field. I immersed myself in data sources, reliving the learning workspace differently. I came under no pressure from the company at this time.

However, I was aware that I was now in a powerful position mediating the public outputs of a learning experience. From the standpoint of my researcher disposition (Fulton & Costley, 2018) for humanism and criticality, I sought to access what I believed to be a solid moral standpoint on the research output. Bringing the focus back to me and my practice allowed me to toggle between the demands of a story well told and realistically told. I reached a place of insight that the final ethical standard in the research outputs lies in my resolute commitment to honest reflexive practice, clearly stating my beliefs, biases, aims and positioning throughout the research journey (Josselson, 2007). Through my tussle with concerns of trustworthiness and credibility, I became clearer that in taking full responsibility for what I write, the narratives are not "about" the participants but "about" my meaning-making as a researcher (Josselson, 2007: 549).

Participant anonymity

JOF and the production site in question have chosen not to be identified as the organisation and locus for research, respectively. 29 Participants from the site took part in MALT and the research process. Despite overall company anonymity, there remains a challenge to participant anonymity as Ireland is a small place. However, there are circumstances in the research that mitigated this risk somewhat. The

ability to source data from four learning cohorts operating in four parallel learning spaces over seven months meant a large volume of field data from which to draw themes, examples and illustrations. The nature of this particular narrative inquiry, an "analysis of narratives" (Polkinghorne, 1995), meant that no one individual participant story was placed centre stage. Instead, the focus was on identifying themes across stories and meaning created in the shared learning encounter while underplaying the unique aspects of each story (Polkinghorne, 1995). This type of paradigm thinking (Kim, 2015) accommodated the anonymity of individual learners while still allowing for the richness of the learning experience to be re-told.

While the participants had effectively given me full authority to say what I wished, I adopted a more cautious approach to how they were represented (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), cognisant of vulnerabilities and consequences they may not recognise (Josselson, 2007). No individual participant was identified or named in the narratives that follow. Any quotes used were anonymised. Participant artefacts such as introductory pictures were used to illuminate and inform the re-storying of the experience. Individual identifiers were removed as far as possible without diminishing the usefulness of the artefacts used in the narratives. Pseudonyms were not used. Where a narrative focuses on a particular theme or interaction involving individuals', the simple identifiers of Participant A, B and so on was deployed.

Anonymity was not a concern that was ever raised with me throughout the research process. Nevertheless, Etherington's (2007) cautionary reminder that researchers seek consent "about processes yet to unfold" (p. 601) travelled with me throughout the process of shaping and writing the final narratives.

Under the ethics approval for this research received from Maynooth University (Ethics Application Form at Appendix 6), all research data was securely held by me in line with the university research policy. This was detailed in the information sheet received by the participants when consenting to research (Appendix 4).

Participant gender

Feminist researchers have long been concerned about the distortion or misrepresentation of women's voices (Hertz, 1997). This study is not rooted in a feminist perspective, yet the criticality to which I lay claim suggested I take a reflexive position on my choices. I had, and have, a duty of care to the research participants. Confidentiality and anonymity are part of the care to "not rupture any life stories" in which the participants are proceeding (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 173). As a researcher, I recognise I also owe duty and care to the broader telling of the story, the actuality of how the inquiry was lived and its scholarly integrity.

Balancing these considerations, I chose to use the participants' correct gender. While recognising that the minority of the participants are female, they are of sufficient number – 5 out of 29 participants or 17 per cent - to retain individual anonymity within their gender category. As a female practitioner of leadership, an area with a historic underrepresentation of women in leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007), I felt strongly that I did not want to subsume the female identity of five participants under the gender marker of 'he' or 'they' throughout the narratives. It is not within the scope of this study to interpret gender differences in the leadership learning workspace. Despite this, I was unhappy with writing some interim texts to attribute knowledge and agency to one gender alone, even if that decision was taken for the purported positive reason of preserving anonymity and confidentiality. Reflexively, I felt this would be a denial of my leadership and pedagogic beliefs and could in itself be a reinforcement of an existing stereotype (Costley et al., 2010).

Voice

Work-based researchers tend to act on behalf of someone (Costley et al., 2010). As a researcher, I too am "in the parade" that I "presume to study" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 81). Within this blurring of researcher position and methodological purpose, I found myself constantly wrestling with the issue of voice asking "Who speaks and why?" and "Who speaks for whom?" (Jensen, 1997: 25). Jensen's questions raise the spectre of ownership. Do I own this story because I tell it? Have

I the right to tell it? Having taken the field outputs away to my mood board-war room of analysis, I felt an ongoing concern that my methods and voice as the researcher could inherently position the participants as subjugated voices (Jensen, 1997).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that narrative inquirers reframe the concern over voice from one of ownership to one of relational responsibility, particularly honouring the trust placed in the researcher through how the story is told.

Butler-Kisber (2019) concludes from her personal experience of narrative methods that it is not as much about who tells the story, but how it is told and why it is being told that matter. On the advice of Clandinin & Connolly (2000), I remained wakeful and thoughtful to these concerns as I created the narratives which follow this chapter.

Presentation of the Narratives

Chapter 5-7 presents seven narratives arranged temporally, reflecting the unfolding nature of learning and experience with their inherent rich and messy textures (Rowland, 2017). They do not form a story of an LD programme in its entirety. This is a particular story about the creation of a learning workspace within a particular LD programme. The primary concern here is illumination - conveying a point of view (Gergen & Gergen, 1991).

Stories by their nature “slip into” each other (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 116). It is difficult to avoid breaking the flow of the narratives when moving between data sources. The narratives capture through slipping in and out of experiential detail, the sense of time and place, alongside the inner responses of the researcher, adherence to the three-dimensional inquiry space in all its complexity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Where individual quotations, pictures or interactions are called out as data sources, these are simply marked as attributable to “Participant”.

When participants speak (excerpted from field notes, feedback, 1:1 sessions or class notes), they appear in italics and inset, for example:

“Dealing with awkward people who have little interest in doing their jobs is hard.”

As LD Practitioner and as researcher, I am identifiable as myself. I speak as "I" throughout. As practitioner-researcher juggling the choices and tensions inherent in these identities (Maguire, 2018), I call out as clearly as possible the identity and perspective from which I am speaking for the absence of confusion. When I speak directly (from memory or class notes), I appear in normal font with speech marks and inset, for example:

“I’m here to work with you on MALT, Managers and Leaders together”.

Excerpts from my researcher reflexive diary, written after the fact...

...appear in a box like this to distinguish them from direct dialogue or live re-storying

Participants in an inquiry, not an entire life

This study focuses on the personal and social in an appropriate way to this inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In the chosen approach of “analysis of narratives” (Polkinghorne, 1995), descriptions of themes that hold across stories are favoured. In the context of both of these research choices, it is essential to note that what is presented here is not a complete view of who the participants are or what they believe in. The narratives represent a snapshot of them as participants in the context of this type of learning, and at this specific time and place only (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Alice returns

The metaphor of Alice returns with the arrival of the narrative re-storying. First introduced in the preface to this study, Alice represents me as a learner, occupying a watching and guiding position in the following study. She opens each narrative with a quote indicative of what lies ahead. Expanding the metaphor of 'Through the Looking Glass' introduced in the preface, the progression of the narratives is represented visually on a chessboard, drawn on that used by Lewis Carroll to illuminate the uncertain, disjointed and changing nature of traversing unfamiliar terrain.

Conclusion to Part II – Research Methods

I chose an approach to research workplace learning which embraces the naturally occurring empirical materials created in the lived experience of MALT, the LD programme under research. I clearly delineated primary and secondary research materials from among the breadth of material available. I embraced the interpretive challenge to create and shape interim and research texts from among them. The creation of interim and research texts involved a process of narrative coding with layers of interpretation guided by pedagogy, knowledge and power, the research foci. Much of this process was riven with concern for positionality, voice, authorship and ownership.

Nevertheless, I reconciled my researcher position reflexively through engagement with theory alongside repeated consideration of my relative practice and researcher positions. Wakeful engagement with other voices outside the process meant that I reached a place of practical, ethical and conceptual alignment, which strengthened the narratives which follow in Chapters 5-7, a lived experience of LD in the learning workspace.

Introduction to Chapters 5-7: A lived experience of Leadership Development in a commercial learning workspace

'I declare it's marked out just like a large chessboard!' Alice said at last. 'There ought to be some men moving about somewhere – and so there are!' She added in a tone of delight, and her heart began to beat quick with excitement as she went on'.

'It's a great huge game of chess that's being played – all over the world – if this IS the world at all, you know.'

From: Lewis Carroll "Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There"
[1871] (2016: 32)

Chapters 5, 6 and 7, which follow, contain the re-storied narratives of MALT. The construction of three distinct chapters reflects the pedagogic progression of MALT. Discernible shifts in knowledge and power are visible between the early, middle, and later stages of the programme. These are reflected in the detailed themes emerging from the narratives.

Narratives 1, 2 and 3 are presented together in Chapter 5. These are drawn from the beginning stages of the MALT learning workspace, where themes centre on early concerns of knowledge - opening the learning workspace, signalling pedagogic intent, fostering trust and inviting voices into the learning workspace.

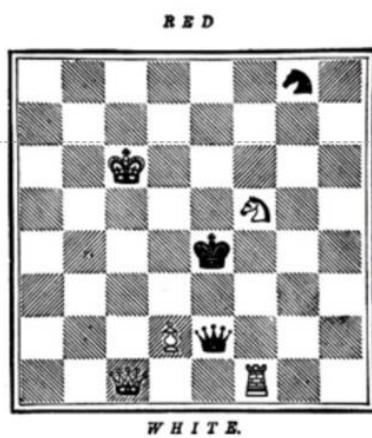
Chapter 6 features Narratives 4 and 5 from the middle stages of the LD programme where power is the predominant concern. Resistance emerges in several ways, as

does the opportunity to use experience as the starting point for dialogic and reflective learning.

Chapter 7 contains Narratives 6 and 7 re-storied from the latter stages of MALT. Interconnected concerns of knowledge, power and pedagogy come to the fore in the challenge to deeply consider the nature of leadership. Attention focuses on how participants can enact leadership in the workplace, collectively and individually, as the programme reaches its final stages.

Chapter 5 – Beginning

Narrative 1 – An Invitation to Begin



Narrative Progression

1. *An Invitation to begin, an invitation to step in*
2. *Pedagogic Tensions*
3. *Learning from and with each other*
4. *Brave Moves*
5. *Toolbox Tensions*
6. *Shifting the Beam*
7. *An Invitation to Agency*

Alice laughed. 'There's no use trying', she said: 'one CAN'T believe impossible things'. 'I daresay you haven't had much practice,' said the Queen. 'When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.'

From: Lewis Carroll "Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There"
[1871] (2016: 70)

Illustration adapted by the researcher from the original.

Introduction

This first narrative is “my worldly creation” (Riessman, 1993: 15) of the fluid and contextual experience of opening a learning workspace and starting a leadership development programme. As a meaning-making discourse (Riessman, 2002), it is more than a sequence of chronological events.

In line with the delivery structure and timeline for MALT, I delivered the first day of the MALT programme to four different learning cohorts, one of whom was the Site Leadership Team (SLT). This narrative draws from field texts relating to those four beginnings. In the mode of an analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995), attention is paid to themes emerging rather than individual stories. However, individual artefacts or conversation snippets are used to illustrate the theme.

Re-storying this narrative, I critically look at how I open and enter the learning workspace for LD. Throughout, I draw attention to my pedagogic intent and action, paying particular attention to concerns of knowledge and power, moving between them as appropriate, with the particular meaning attributed to them in previous chapters. I explore creating a climate for learning (Knowles, 1980), elements of which are already being shaped before MALT physically commences. Alignment between pedagogic intent and the physical and emotional environment in which learning happens is critical. I consider the creation of trust and a feeling of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) for the programme during the first morning in the learning workspace.

Signalling pedagogic intent from the start

Physical Choices

Knowles (1980) highlights the importance of setting a climate for learning from the start, including making the location of learning a place suitable for adults both

physically and psychologically. There are many buildings and rooms on the JOF production site where MALT can take place. The final decision on the learning location for MALT is not mine, although the HR team consults me on my preferences. I ask that the room not be a standard meeting room if possible. I am anxious not to make too “neat” or familiar an activity that is “normally messy” (Raelin, 2008: 19). With reflective and experiential intent (Lundgren et al., 2017), I want to create a more open space where the participants have a greater chance of feeling and noticing their inner responses (Rowland, 2017). Mindful that workplaces are typically action-oriented, not reflective (Faller et al., 2020), I suggest a location physically away from the view of colleagues and the everyday business of the site, which is production. I request that the chosen room has plenty of natural light, that tables be removed, and only a u-shape of chairs remain. In my mind, the physical environment is a significant embodiment of the learning pedagogy (Owen, 2015) I hope will emerge; practice-based and collective (Raelin, 2016). I do not want the room at first glance to resemble a formal meeting, or a classroom echoing workplace expectations or a traditional static curriculum for leadership (Alcozer Garcia, 2017). These small changes produce a puzzled response, particularly the removal of tables.

“Surely the participants will need to write?”

the HR Administrator asks me in a phone call in mid-August as she scours the site for possibilities.

I explain that I want to take participants away from their ordinary routine. And no, they will not need to write. MALT is not a meeting or school. I want it to feel the opposite of that. I am aware that I am pushing back against a natural bias towards physical location being a functional space, designed to be informative and cognitive, the opposite of what encourages participants to retreat and reflect (Scharmer, 2018) but very typical for corporate LD settings (Rowland, 2018). Alongside a flipchart and stand, a screen connecting to a laptop to show some slides, I request plenty of room to move chairs and people around the room. I view

learning as mental processes, added to and built upon in a socially constructed way (Vygotsky, 1978; Illeris, 2018), but the physical look and feel of the location matter (Palmer, 2017) as an antecedent to what follows.

The request for space and physical movement is lost, however. The Site Leadership Team experience their first day of MALT in the cramped confines of an old cash office, replete with dark wood panels, cash counting machines from a bygone era, a small window that does not open, heavy studded Dickensian chairs arranged around a sizeable immovable oak table. My heart sinks as I see the participants arrive and prepare for a meeting, placing their belongings in front of them, checking phones, lining up pen and paper and all of the things associated with a “doing type of energy” (Rowland, 2017: 207). I overhear comments about the surroundings. None was addressed directly to me. They do not know me yet, but they speak to each other:

“This space is tight isn’t it”

“Going to be hard to be here all day”

“At least it’s a change from being in the plant” (the production site)

“I enjoyed the ten minute walk down”

“I’ve never been in here before – what this place must have been like way back when...”

“It’s like the Dark Ages in here”

The “hidden curriculum” of the institution as “powers apart” (Palmer, 2017: 205) from the participants is writ large. The messages of institutional control and power, as Palmer sees it are all around us. Everything about the room screams history, male, money, serious intent. As an example of “built pedagogy” (Monahan, 2000: 1), the room is not a reflection of the values or philosophy of MALT or the MALT approach to leadership. I had asked to move away from the production environment. The client has, in theory, met that need. I recognise as I stand there that very few physical places can embody everything with which I give leadership form; inclusive, collective, moving and changing, emergent, being, a shaping of the

system (Gergen, 1994; Kennedy et al., 2013; Raelin, 2015; Scharmer, 2016, 2018). However, the built environment as I stand in it physically represents the antithesis of leadership as I plan to give it meaning and form (Western, 2013) for the participants. An irony perhaps only I see as contradictory to a different curriculum and learning process about to start.

Pedagogy and physical space

The room limits pedagogic choice and flexibility (Rowland, 2017). This will make some of the experiential and role-play activities I have planned harder to do, which concerns me (Salzberger-Wittenberg, Williams & Osborne, 1983). The screen for viewing slides is located off to one side, requiring a degree of cranial acrobatics by some to see it at all. The HR Sponsor who is attending speaks quietly to me out of hearing of the assembling participants:

“Well, this is fairly awful isn’t it? It’s like another day at the office, a 19th century one at that!”

I agree. She suggests that she looks for an alternative for the other MALT groups yet to experience their first day. I agree. She hurries off to make some calls and relocates the following groups to a different room for subsequent sessions. As I turn away from the arriving participants, I busy myself with the practicalities of making the best of the surroundings. My thoughts turn to the limit of my ability to convey in advance, to those making decisions on rooms and chairs and light and location, the relative importance of opening a new learning workspace for the first time. The nature of beginning is an unknown path, poised between excitement and dread (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al., 1983). I consider that I did not sufficiently articulate the need to tip the scales of physical location towards excitement. With this realisation, I find myself fighting the frequent frustrating feeling of being an outsider, a “trainer” brought in to do a task (Wallace, 2015). The inclination to be overwhelmed by the oppressive surroundings is powerful.

Pedagogic self-efficacy waning

Being in this room, I feel I have already relinquished the advantage (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al., 1983) bestowed by a physical learning workspace that positively reflects my pedagogical intentions. I recall with a jolt that I worked in a building like this once, on a different production site, as an HR professional sequestered onto a change initiative. My memory cheekily reminds me that the surroundings then did not do a lot for my professional self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) or that project's creativity. Meanwhile, the participants chat quietly and look to make themselves comfortable behind me. Hooked into a past experience no one but I can feel, pedagogic self-efficacy (Raelin, 2009) threatens to desert me despite years of experience and the smile plastered on my face.

Rebalancing myself

I bring myself back to the present day. I open learning workspaces such as MALT in the belief that leadership knowledge is not something I possess in my head but something that the participants and I create through learning together (Gergen, 1991). Knowing leadership in this way is an embodied process: human, social, material, aesthetic, emotive and more (Gherardi, 2006). In light of this, I may be giving too much credence to only one aspect of the embodied process of knowledge creation, triggered by my own past poor experience and anxiety for a positive start to the MALT programme. Learning and knowing in this space will ultimately be about what people do and say (Hopwood, 2014).

I shake myself and remember that I have the knowledge and experience to open a learning workspace and invite the participants in, even in the difficult terrain (Rowland, 2018) of a terrible room with no light or room to move. The participants watch me expectantly. The Site General Manager (SGM) approaches and says quietly:

“Everyone is here Maeve. I am ready to say a few words and introduce you. Are you ready?”

I take a deep breath. I perch on the teetering cusp of change as all eyes look at me. To embrace a new experience requires faith, hope and courage (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 2013). I trust my pedagogic choices (with ongoing adjustments for the limitations of the physical space). I look to demonstrate leadership through my approach to facilitating the group (Ganz & Lin, 2012), despite the challenges intrinsic and extrinsic that I am feeling.

Reflecting on my practice later that night, I recognised the moment I chose to take the obstacles in my way as the "messiness of real work" (Western, 2013: xv) and reclaimed my pedagogic confidence to begin.

I could feel the moment where I took the breath and dived in today. That sense of this is all up to me now: The room is terrible, but the learning doesn't have to be. I won't get a second "first time" with this group. This is the site leadership group. MALT is vital to them. And their opinions and influence on the other participants matter a lot.

In my head, I could feel all these messages coming at me: trust what you have and what you know of working with groups, rise above! and invite them to look at you, not the surroundings, invite them into somewhere that has nothing to do with the room, somewhere they have not been yet, but you know they can get there, trust in the process.

Excerpt from researcher reflexive diary 06/09/2018

(with underlining from the original text)

In retrospect, what I had experienced was so much more than a struggle with the physical environment. Emerging from within, so early in the programme, were messages of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), doubting my knowledge, power and agency. Before I had begun, I caught a glimpse of what Palmer describes as the "teacher's fearful heart" (2017: 48), an insight into what fear can feel like for participants as I felt it for myself on the starting line. The elders in the pictures on the cash office wall invited me to dance, and I did, briefly. It was a sobering lesson in just how challenging it can be in the workplace development environment to

move beyond the reach of the latent discourses of who has knowledge and power (Billett, 2004).

Opening safe space for learning

Joining the learning workspace

Successive first days of MALT occur in the plusher surroundings of the Dining Room in what was once the Site Managers cottage, now a part of the visitor centre on the JOF site. Deep carpets line the hallway, gold and brass ornaments sit in display cabinets, and a replica drawing room sits permanently ready for product presentation. The Dining Room comes with floor to ceiling cabinets on one side, complete with rare and historical product samples, a reflection of innovation and a source of company pride. On the other side are deep couches and a fireplace. High ceilings and soft drapes complete the room. There is another large oak table in the room. This table can be moved to the side and out of the way allowing for a u-shape of chairs to face a projector screen. Two floor to ceiling windows look out on restored warehouses and antique production equipment.

I consider the contrast as I enter the Dining Room for the first time. The cash office for the SLT Day 1 two weeks previous was sombre with overtones of power and performance. This room, by comparison, has a brightness attached. It is a warmer, more inviting physical place to enter.

The participants mostly respond in kind:

“I’ve never been in here before, it’s lovely”

“This is one of my favourite places on the site”

“We must be very special. This room is never used for anything other than for important customers”

“Look at this..”

As they arrive, many engage each other in conversation about the rare exhibits in the cabinets, for the most part walking loosely and comfortably around the room.

Not everyone enters as freely. Beginnings are anxious times. Learners experience insecurity at the start of anything new, even as adults (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 2013). One participant, the first to arrive on the first day for her group, shares with me that she is never in this building usually and, pointing to her utility fleece, high-visibility jacket and sturdy work boots, she comments:

“I came down from the plant. I’m definitely underdressed for being here, I hope we don’t dirty it! If I had thought about it, I would have worn something a bit better for a leadership programme, especially in this building”

Despite the programme not yet begun, she verbalises low-level concerns of belonging and identity (Petriglieri, 2012) in response to a new environment. Perhaps it is the beginning of awareness of her interaction as an individual and the environment, an essential process of adult workplace learning (Illeris, 2011).

Another of the participants finds the u-shape of chairs puzzling. He pauses when he enters the room for the first time and spends considerable time looking left and right before choosing a chair at the bottom of the u-shape. This entails leaving his things on the floor. He tries out a few different ways of doing this before settling. Sitting in a u-shape, which I regularly reshape to become a circle, is an unquestioned given in my practice. I view it as encouraging participation, placing the participants' voices on an equal footing and encouraging democracy (Brookfield, 1995).

Taking away the tables breaks down the artificial barriers they create along with obligatory writing and other echoes of childhood classrooms (Illeris, 2007). Not everyone agrees with me, however. As the day goes on, the same participant gradually moves his chair back and out of the group until he is behind everyone else

by lunchtime. He finishes the day seated sideways to the large dining table that generally occupies the centre of the room which has been pushed to the side to accommodate the session. He frequently scribbles in a notepad. The table helps with this.

Valuing difference

As a practitioner, the gradual move away of this participant concerns me. I have not witnessed it this starkly before without some verbal acknowledgement of what is happening. I am tempted to invite him to return to the u-shape. Feeling solely responsible for the learning climate (Knowles, 1980) as the group is only beginning to form, I wonder what I or others have done to cause him to withdraw physically? In the end, not knowing him or the group sufficiently, I choose not to do anything. He is quiet by the group's standards but attentive non-verbally and participative when invited, offering short, considered contributions. I do not ask him about his progressive physical detachment. I do not draw attention to it. Neither does any of the other participants, even in a jokey way, a behaviour I have witnessed elsewhere and interpret as an early attempt at testing boundaries in conforming to a new way of engagement.

As a pedagogical choice, the room set-up allows me to share material on a screen but offers the flexibility to move and reshape and ensure the room is an active one (Rands & Gansemer-Topf, 2017). For those confident, talkative and encouraged by dialogue, it can be liberating. For those who are quieter, prefer to write or for whom listening is a preferred mode, as I suspect is the case with my chair-moving participant, a u-shape or circle potentially denies that right (Brookfield, 1995).

Critically reflecting on this later, I recognise some challenges to a practice I perpetuate amid some taken for granted pedagogic assumptions on my part. My pedagogical choice to seat participants in a u-shape is rooted in an epistemological belief in dialogue and engagement for knowledge creation (Watkins, 2005).

However, some in a new group of participants may conversely experience this as a form of "mandated disclosure" (Brookfield, 1995: 10). I assume the removal of

barriers will accelerate trust. However, trust is not a given for some participants. It is to be earned by the other participants and me over time and by degrees, not through physical seating but consistency, honesty and fairness (Brookfield, 1995; Palmer, 2017).

My pedagogical choice is driven by the desire to create a shared and resourceful community of learning. I need to be alert and aware that the same space and community can also support solitude (Palmer, 2017) and an individual's pace of coming to trust and entering the workspace. I can enable this, as I did, by not drawing attention to the choice of solitude. Recognising the adult learners in front of me for whom choice is important (Knowles, 1984), I can make it a safer choice by verbalising from the beginning the freedom (Palmer, 2017) to move, write, reflect or listen as the desire takes any participant, or not.

Introductions – inviting voices and knowledge in

Approximately one hour into the first morning, I have scaffolded the programme (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013) by sharing the MALT framework and other practical information relating to the programme's modules, timeframes, and content.

I turn off the slides and say:

“To introduce yourself to the group, I invite you to draw a picture of yourself in your world of work. No awards for art; I am only at the level of stick people myself.

Consider how you would share with me and everyone here how you see yourself in your world of work – as if no one here knew you. As suggestions, you could include things you enjoy, challenges, opportunities, frustrations, what keeps you busy.

Try not to use words if you can, have some fun with it. We don't often get to draw!

I'll do it too. Grab a flipchart page and some pens, find a corner... “

Pedagogically, I believe that the active co-construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978) in workplace learning (Watkins & Marsick, 2014) should begin as early as possible. The deliberate choice to invite participants to move, create, draw and share within the first hour of participation serves several learning purposes. Firstly, such an invitation signposts what sort of experience this learning workspace can be. It is one where doing things with others is privileged (Watkins, 2005), and there is a balance between knowing, doing and being types of energy (Snook et al., 2012). Movement between cognitive structure, practical action and sharing/reflecting on experience ensures the LD pedagogy embodies and models the leadership beliefs it seeks to manifest in the participants (Turner & Baker, 2017)

Secondly, I send a message that this place honours participants experience as people (Freire, 1970; Brookfield, 1995), inviting their situations and perspective as the starting point from which an exploration of leadership begins (after Lindeman, 1926). In this way, an invitation to introductions initiates a “pedagogic blueprint” (hooks, 1994: 6) for the rest of the programme: voices are encouraged and heard in this leadership workspace.

Despite groans and mild protestations, gentle scuffles for pens and space on the floor to draw, everyone grabs a flipchart page and starts to create their “World of Work” as asked. This is unfamiliar territory and only an hour into the first morning of a seven-month programme. Nevertheless, nobody baulks at the suggestion. The subtle coercive power (Josselson, 2007) of the “teacher” resonates even in this workplace setting. All create something. Participants joke self-deprecatingly about the quality of what they have produced as I invite them to hang their charts art-gallery style around the room whenever they are ready. I choose this approach to decentre power (Shrewsbury, 1987) and diminish the fear inherent in bringing a chart to the top of the room presentation style. It is difficult to overcome the performativity bias (Bierema, 2009), however. As the participants hang their pictures, I see them glance sideways at other drawings. As movement increases and

more participants finish, some bring attention to pictures they perceive as better than their own and note loudly that:

“I was never good at art anyway”

or

“I can’t wait to see you explain that”

in response to what begins to appear on the walls.

The historical product samples are soon hidden behind slightly skewed depictions of a manager's world at work in the JOF production site.

Introductions as pedagogic modality

Towards psychological safety and trust

As the final few participants hang their pictures, I consider the exercise ahead. The group composition is cross-functional. All the participants work together on the same site, and most have some familiarity with each other, crossing paths in their work. At a practical level, the cross-functional composition allows production to continue operating alongside the programme's running. This decision enhances the opportunity for connection and relationship building between managers at a learning level, opening the possibility of a new learning community among them (Lave & Wenger, 1991). I am conscious that as the exercise of introductions begins, the learning community has not yet formed.

Feet shuffle once the physical activity of drawing is over. Nobody is sure what comes next. The group falls quiet. There is no intention to visually analyse each picture (Banks, 2018). Participant-produced pictures (Rees, 2018) in MALT are a pedagogic modality. Their primary purpose is to encourage participant voice and participation early in the programme. Their other purpose is to encourage

storytelling between participants and elicit data that is unrehearsed, complex and hard to get at with speech alone (Cristancho et al., 2014). I am hopeful they will begin to see, from the outset, that no single perspective can do justice to the world in which their leadership capacity is immersed (Jay et al., 2012).

I offer reassurance for the task ahead, recognising the inevitable nervousness associated with standing at the beginning (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 2013) of sharing at a personal level, in a new community and with a different purpose.

“There can’t be wrong answers”, I point out.

“Each participant’s experience and view of their world is theirs and we are invited through their picture to share how they see themselves”.

In this way, I am signposting a pedagogic practice that is learning centred and which values experience (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). I am making tangible my belief in leadership as practice (Raelin 2009, Carroll & Levy, 2010) by spotlighting how the participants lead every day (Petriglieri, 2012). Providing further reassurance, I remind everyone that confidentiality as a design principle for the programme (Petriglieri, 2012) has been agreed with the organisation and operates within and between the individual participant groups.

I invite a volunteer to start, acknowledging that it is hard to go first. I encourage everyone else to walk to where the volunteer has hung their picture. There are nooks and crannies in the room, and the group fluidly changes shape many times as it moves around the pictures in turn. Most stand, some bring a chair with them. I do not specify either. I locate myself within the viewing group but within sight of the participant speaking and so that all can hear me as I facilitate the session. I suggest that having heard how each participant sees their world, the group asks any questions that occur, perhaps share an observation or something they noticed as they heard the person speak.

Collective relational engagement begins

There is curiosity about the different ways people see their world. Attention clusters around a few repeated themes:

“I didn’t understand what you do in that part of the plant until now”

- Connection, shared purpose

“Why have you drawn so much busyness around you. Is that really how you see your work?”

- Time, relativity, concern

“It’s clear you have been here a long time, all of the detail and connections in your world!”

- Relationships, wisdom, knowledge

I suspect from these initial comments that leadership has been quite individualistic on the site and that many of the participants operate in a singular, task-focused way in their roles. My learning-centred pedagogic choice (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001) of pictures as introductions is starting in small ways to breach some of that:

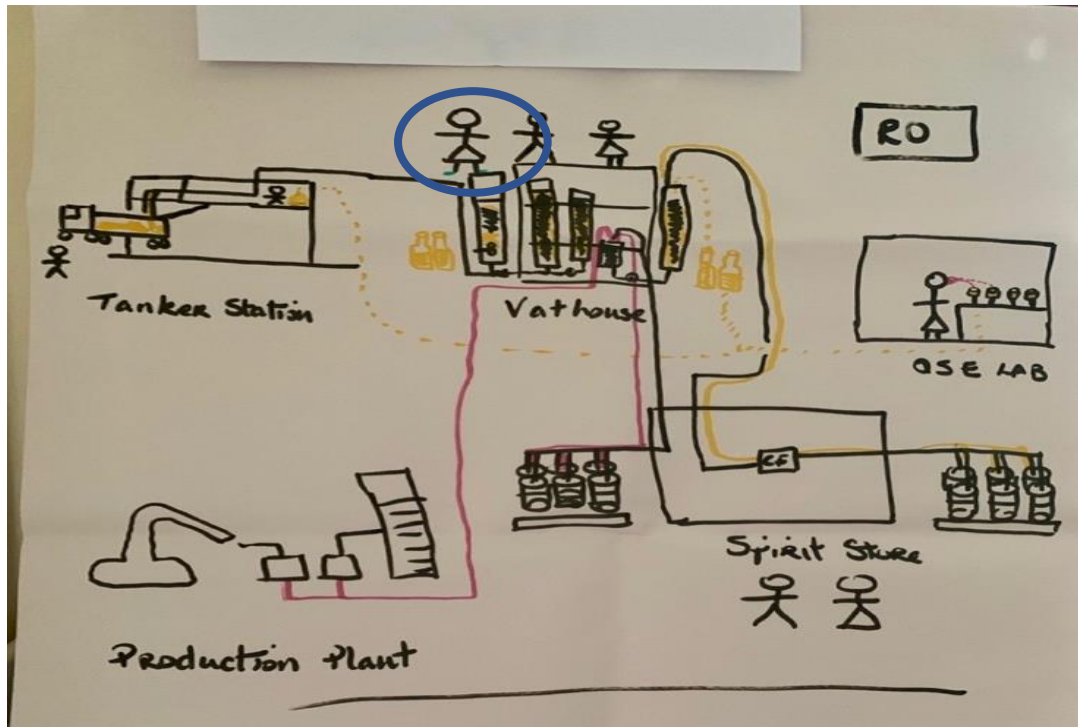
“It’s all about the people where you are isn’t it? I never knew you saw it like that and I know you well outside of this room”.

- New perspective

Many focus on the “number” or production target – a large and stretching reminder of the company’s ambition.

It becomes clear that people can *physically* see themselves as part of the system they are immersed in (Scharmer, 2016, 2018) as they replay the constant and busy intertwining of people and processes. A familiar pattern emerges (Research Artefact 1, for example). The pictures illustrate a busy workplace, a process-driven, responsible and hard-working one in which to be a leader. They portray that work

here is challenging, but it is an excellent place to be, with solid relationships and people who enjoy working together:

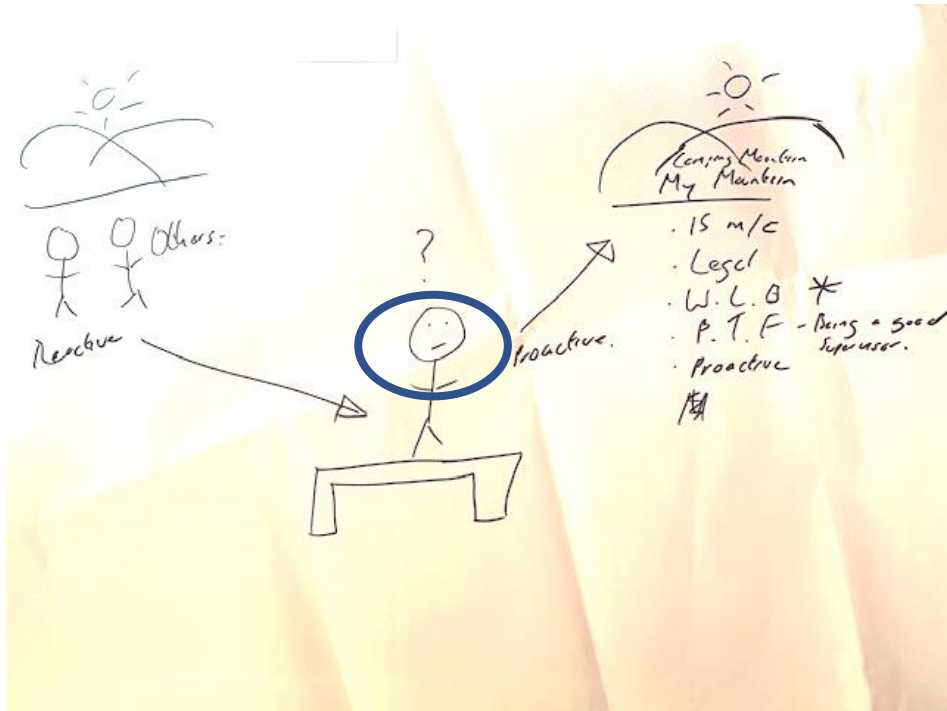


Research Artefact 1: Introductory Picture

Note: in each picture, the participant is circled in blue by me for ease of identification.

I observe a pattern emerging. Attention goes to what is done and how the person does it, but less to the how or why, the “source” (Scharmer, 2018: 6) from which each participant operates. To balance this, I model reflective questioning by sharing observations and encouraging the group to look closer at the charts through fresh eyes.

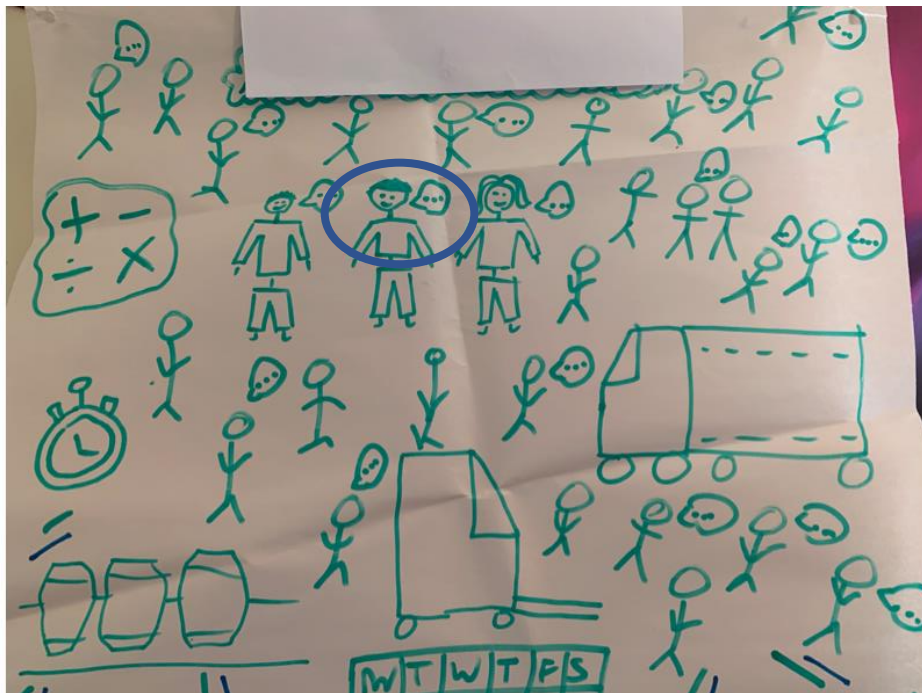
Led by some, the participants tentatively tiptoe past habitual patterns of seeing the physical alone and begin to draw out detail, discuss feelings, and describe previously unseen aspects of each other’s existence, such as:



Research Artefact 2: Introductory Picture

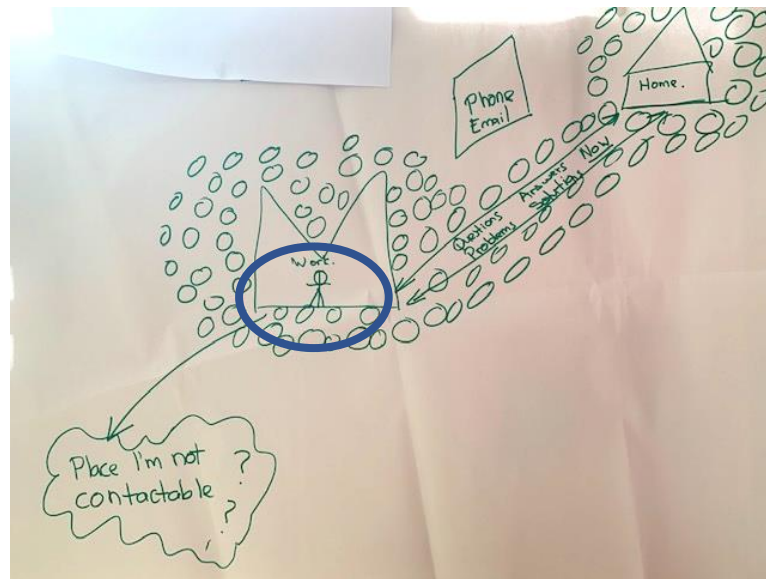
"You look all alone, and sad" (in response to Research Artefact 2)

"That's a really busy world, all those people and questions, where are you in all that? Which one are you in the picture? I can't pick you out" (in response to Research Artefact 3)



Research Artefact 3: Introductory Picture

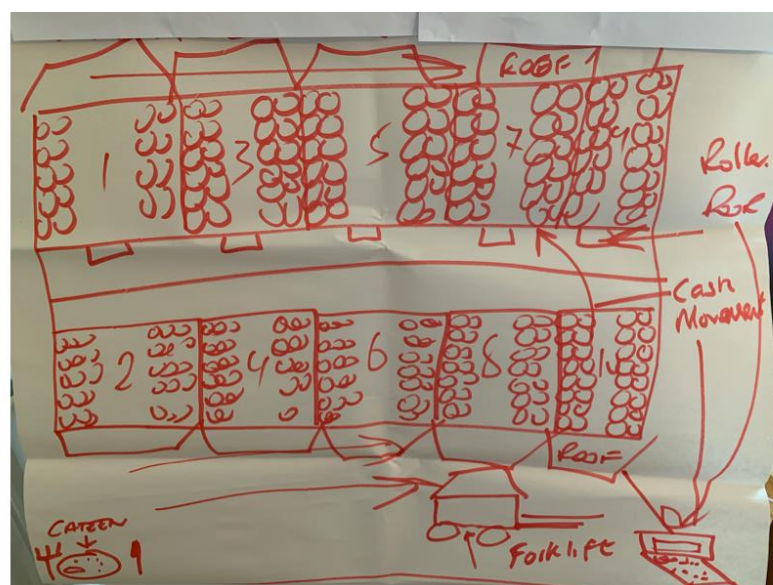
.... "You look like you are buried in concrete, is that a shower of hail? You drew yourself as tiny compared to all of that" (in response to Research Artefact 4)



Research Artefact 4: Introductory Picture

Furthermore, in some cases, the absence of people altogether is observed:

"Ah, I don't know if you noticed but there's no people in your picture. You aren't there. What's that about?" (in response to Research Artefact 5)



Research Artefact 5: Introductory Picture

My pedagogical intent in using pictures was to foster psychological safety in the learning climate, an essential condition towards creating a holding environment (Heifetz, 1998; Kegan, 1982, 1994) for leadership learning. As the introductions progress, I hear braver comments emerge, ones which are less about the work context and more about the person or social:

"I see you all the time and you look happier than that"

"I never knew you saw your world like that"

"You look sad"

"You drew yourself as tiny and everything else as huge"

Opening with detailed introductions through pictures enriches what could otherwise be a straightforward matter of getting to know each other. I hear the roots of dialogue (Watkins, 2005) begin to take shape. I observe the increasing engagement with each other and with their experiences (Dugan, 2011). Energy increases, including rapid back and forth conversations between participants, sometimes humorous.

"I'm going to remember that the next time we have a meeting."

"I can't believe that's where all the barrels have been hiding. I'm coming to find you after this!"

I remind them of mutual respect (Brookfield, 1986) for what is shared and discussed. I am intensely aware that my priority, for now, is to foster a sense of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) in this fledgling workspace. At the same time, I am mindful of later conversations where I will encourage greater reflection (Brookfield, 1986).

Some participants move to support others as they watch and listen:

"Can I help in any way? Don't be on your own"

While others push back against the system and the workplace:

“Truth is, if the cat got kittens I’d be called”

“The big bosses should know you feel that way”

“It’s like taming a beast!”

The comments reflect an early engagement with a realistic perspective on the context for learning (Freire, 1970) which I hope sets a grounded and purposeful tone for the sessions ahead (Mayo, 2012).

I am asked:

“Is it okay to talk openly like this?”

Workplaces are generally not actively engaged in revisiting and reinterpreting the meaning of experiences (Faller et al., 2020). As a result, there are few real opportunities to step back and make sense of experience significantly. The encouragement to reflect and notice starts to prise open a reservoir of experience (Knowles, 1978). Asking if it is “okay to talk openly like this”, reflects I suspect, the unusual pedagogic choice of pictures, which is creative, invitational, and personal. The same question may also reflect the nature of what is emerging from the reservoir of experience. Knowledge from a personal, social or contextual perspective is not always invited or welcomed in workplaces (Watkins & Marsick, 2014). The question “is it okay” most overtly reflects the ever-present nature of power and feeling safe enough to say it as it is. Fostering the safety to do so, for participants to believe it “to be okay” and not just because I respond in the affirmative, is challenging in the early learning climate (Knowles, 1980).

To succeed in building safety and fostering trust, helping it be "okay" raises several considerations for me. One of these is a degree of assumed positive intent – in fellow participants, in me and the process. Pictures used as pedagogical intent invite participants to share and expose elements of themselves others might judge

or see differently. Not everyone is comfortable with sharing or speaking up in front of a cross-functional peer group. Engaging fully invites vulnerability and with it the risk of possible “uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure” (Brown, 2018: 19). However, creating psychological safety in the room requires a degree of vulnerability alongside the concomitant accessing of courage (Rowland, 2017) for progress to be made. Not all risks can be made safe, nor should they be. I hope to open a workspace that can be critically reflective, dialogic and purposeful towards leadership. To get there begins, I posit, with some brave "mining" of emotions and experience for tacit knowledge (Palmer, 2017: 205).

I partially mitigate the risk through language. Practice-based pedagogic approaches use language not to transfer knowledge but as an enabler for collective reflection on experience, which in turn can expand or create new knowledge and improve practice (Raelin, 2009). Through the considered use of tone and voice, pedagogic practice can be catalytic (hooks, 1994), drawing out the unique elements in the learning workspace. I pay particular attention to my language throughout this exercise. I am aware that my words and tone contribute to psychological safety and trust while encouraging engagement and reflection.

I “invite” pictures to be created.

I say that expectations of artistic endeavour are “minimal”.

I “reassure” that “stick-people” are perfectly fine.

I “acknowledge” that participants might not have drawn like this recently.

I emphasise that whatever participants draw of their world is “*your reality*”, and there is no way in which they can be wrong.

I "encourage" sharing of experience and perspective so that "we may all start from a new place", which steps us out of the day to day and allows us to "look back on it with new eyes."

These simple words, intentionally positioned and voiced, signal mutual respect and collaboration (Brookfield, 1986: 9), contributing in this way to trust and safety (Knowles, 1980).

Different ways of knowing

Introductory pictures take until the morning break. A participant remarks on their way out for coffee that:

“it’s an unusual amount of time to spend talking about ourselves. We never do that. I thought we would be straight into the nuts and bolts. What are you doing to us?”

Another seeks me out at the break to say:

“I know more in a different way about these guys than I ever have – how they see it from inside their heads”

My concern is to ensure participants come out of this exercise feeling that interpersonal risk-taking is supported. On the last day of the programme, seven months later, there are several references to:

“starting with ‘the pictures’”
“how much it revealed about each other”

Throughout the opening day, I feel myself holding a familiar pedagogical tension in the learning workspace between nudging bravery along (Arao & Clemans, 2013) and ensuring sufficient safety and trust (Barnes, 2017) to do so.

In post-programme feedback several months following completion of MALT, participants commenting on the first day of the programme noted:

“the foundation of trust within the group which created an environment where everyone was trusting of each other which added value as we could learn from each other also.”

(from post-programme feedback 04/04/19)

Conclusion

Reflecting on this first narrative, a re-storying of beginnings, several themes emerge concerning pedagogy, knowledge and power.

A built environment conducive to the type and nature of the pedagogic intent is helpful. It can signal to the incoming participants the opening of a new and different space for learning. However, emerging from this narrative is the realisation that I have limited control over the choice, nature, and composition of the physical space in which learning occurs. Of greater significance I suggest is my ability to access and maintain pedagogic self-efficacy (Raelin, 2009), harnessing my knowledge and agency to invite experience into the new learning environment irrespective of set-up or location.

Explicitly signposting my pedagogic intent at the opening of the learning workspace appears to positively impact the formation of the learning climate (Knowles, 1980). Introductory pictures as a pedagogic modality invite a different type of creative expression and engagement. As evidenced by this narrative, what follows is the emergence of new and as yet unformed knowledge coaxed via a pedagogic approach (hooks, 1994) from within the personal, contextual and social ways of knowing of the participants.

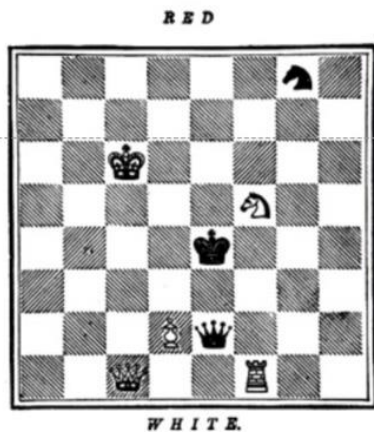
Fostering psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) and trust early among the community of learners is a critical if somewhat imprecise art. Attention to language, tone and managing boundaries encourages a feeling of psychological safety.

Ensuring the learning workspace felt like a safe space was tensioned with fostering collaborative dialogue and reflective thought (Watkins, 2005) early in the programme. The bravery to constructively challenge and take a critically reflective perspective is vital to the idea of leadership embedded in MALT (Raelin, 2016). My ambition is that in the development sequencing (Heifetz, 1998) of MALT, the

participants can embrace the breadth of leader and leadership capacity development, both the personal and the collective capacity generation. To get there, it is pedagogically essential that the seeds of dialogue and reflection are sown early. Insufficient trust and safety may limit the participants' belief that it is "okay" to speak like this as the programme progresses.

Alongside trust, knowledge creation is a core concern in creating effective learning workspaces for leadership learning (Snook et al., 2012). Narrative 2 focuses on the challenges in creating knowledge in the learning workspace for leadership.

Narrative 2 – Pedagogic Tensions



Narrative Progression

1. *An Invitation to begin, an invitation to step in*
2. *Pedagogic Tensions*
3. *Learning from and with each other*
4. *Brave Moves*
5. *Toolbox Tensions*
6. *Shifting the Beam*
7. *An Invitation to Agency*

'She very soon came to an open field, with a wood on the other side of it: it looked much darker than the last wood, and Alice felt a LITTLE timid about going into it. However, on second thoughts, she made up her mind to go on: 'for I certainly won't go BACK,' she thought to herself, and this was the only way to the Eighth Square.

From: Lewis Carroll "Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There"

[1871] (2016: 44)

Illustration adapted by the researcher from the original.

Introduction

A core concern in creating effective learning workspaces for leadership is knowledge creation (Snook et al., 2012). In this second narrative, I place knowledge front and centre in my considerations. Several significant, recurring and intertwined pedagogical tensions (Snook et al., 2012; Rowland, 2017) in adult and leadership learning manifest for the first time in the course of this re-storied narrative.

My struggle with the co-construction of knowledge opens the narrative as I invite the participants to shape and craft what leadership means in the context of the learning workspace and their workplace (Carroll & Levy, 2010; Raelin, 2020). I describe the oscillation I experience between the desire to tell what I know or elicit what the participants know. Within the dynamic tension lie concerns regarding the banking nature of education (Freire, 1970, 1972) amid a prevailing preference in LD for the prescription of thought and action (Pfeffer, 2016). Paradigmatically and pedagogically, I look to create active learners. However, as I tussle with co-construction, I recognise through this experience that it is a complex and multi-layered proposition in commercial learning workspaces.

Concluding this narrative, I consider the tension between performativity and embodied leadership – as concerns of power undermine pedagogy and knowledge choices in the learning workspace.

A little like 'Alice' in the quote, which prefaces this narrative, the path to leadership looked a shade darker and more intimidating as I stepped further into the workspace...

Co-constructing knowledge – how best for the participants to learn

Clear purpose and intent

The morning session of Day 1 invites many “little stories” of individual leadership experiences in the course of the introductory pictures (Palmer, 2017: 83). In the afternoon, I move towards the “big story” (p. 83), reflecting my idea of leadership (Western, 2013) as a fluid concept, co-created in terms of meaning (Dugan, 2011).

I do not “teach” one best way to take leadership. While a company framework for leadership guides MALT, it is not subject to a defined competency set (Bolden & Gosling, 2006). As I open the afternoon session, my purpose is to offer the participants an opportunity to begin to shape and craft for themselves (Carroll & Levy, 2010) what leadership means at this place and at this time (Raelin, 2020). Pedagogically, I invite dialogue, consideration and reflective thought into the shared space where the participants and I can co-create knowledge. In so doing, I hold open a transitional space for leadership understanding yet to emerge (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010).

I grab a flipchart and suggest:

“A good place to start might be by drawing together the challenges and opportunities that came out of the introductory pictures and other conversations this morning. I can capture them on the flipchart.

That might be an excellent jumping-off point to say then what is needed in leadership terms to meet those challenges?”

I am showing, not telling, I believe. My practitioner demeanour is open and warm, using the same invitational tone as the morning. My words and actions cause a problem.

I get some mumbled agreement and nods. I am more enthusiastic than they are by the proposition as I grab a pen moving myself and the flipchart forward until I effectively close the u-shape into a circle. This change of pace and emphasis catches most participants by surprise. I see them sit up straighter and pay attention to the flipchart and me. The energy in the room perceptively shifts from the more fun like (hooks, 1994) and personal nature of the introductory pictures.

Co-construction as unfamiliar territory in the workplace

This could be a workplace meeting, I realise! As engaging as the introductions have been, my question asks about *challenges and opportunities* using familiar business language. My question, and the blank flipchart awaiting the participants' answers, is, I suspect, echoing their workplace where performativity bias (Bierema, 2009) demands that tangible goals for everything are determined, written down, and measures of success attached. The climate of market managerialism (Parker, 2018) in which the participants carry out their day jobs privileges cognitive ways of knowing embedded within the decision-making hierarchy. As a result, knowledge is often driven down the organisation (Avolio et al., 2009) as a "given", resulting in tacit and unchallenged ways of knowing. My attempted *co-construction* of knowledge is seeking *feeling* and *being* types of *embodied collective* knowing. As I gather my thoughts, I recognise five discourses (*italicised*) embedded in my pedagogic proposition, which are counter-cultural to the dominant discourses of the workplace. Five!

As I internally process this dawning awareness, I scramble to reconnect to the energy and enthusiasm of earlier, although I feel wrong-footed by my actions and their reaction.

I seek to explain my purpose and language better. I suggest the participants' experiences and understanding of their world as they inhabit it are valuable to this conversation. I note the knowledge they have already brought into the room, giving examples of some insightful thoughts and comments from the morning related to

leadership. I get some suggestions, although there is a defensive note to most of them:

“We are performing really well”

“Doing as good a job as we can”

“We all need the skillset to lead people”

I wonder if they feel I am judging them by asking the question in the way I have about ‘*challenges and opportunities*’. I get some positive comments as well, an empathetic attempt I suspect to go where I am going without seeing clearly where that is:

“There is positivity about where we can get to”

“We can challenge the status quo”

(verbatim recorded in field notes Sept 2018)

The tentative sense of shared learning space opening up from this morning feels distant as I seek clarity on what leadership could look like for the participants. In bringing a lifetime of work and educational experience to the learning workspace, my participants are likely carrying within them a sense of what happens if they are “not up to standard” (Jackson, 2018: 146). Performativity is acting like an “emotional elephant in the classroom” (Jackson, 2018: 150), significantly undermining participant and practitioner efficacy to co-create knowledge despite my best attempts to do so.

I explain what I am asking differently:

“Think about what leadership could look like for you if you were stepping into the future and looking back.

What would you know that maybe you don’t know now?

What would you be doing or feeling?

How would you be carrying yourselves around this production site?"

Too much, too soon

I get some nods but no verbal responses and more puzzled looks. I suspect I have made it more complicated, not less, by positioning leadership as knowing, doing and being (Snook et al., 2012) in four quick sentences. Although I relate to this perspective on leadership, it is a multi-layered concept, as yet unearthed in this learning workspace.

A follow-up question comes:

"Why don't you tell us, Maeve? This is your thing, not ours.
You are the expert"

As I register the expectant faces, I wonder at the awkwardness of starting in this ill-defined and unsure place of questioning and fumbling. My practitioner fearful heart recognises the participants fearful unknowing (Palmer, 2017). The participants are familiar with being told the answers in the workplace, a knowledge discourse hard to depose (Carroll et al., 2008) in a single afternoon.

Banking Knowledge – how much to tell and how much to ask?

"Why don't you tell us Maeve?"

What is wrong with telling them I muse as I suggest a quick stretch break and walk to the picture windows to look out on the history and grandeur of the original factory buildings. At this point, it feels like the energy in the room has moved back to me alone as the provider of knowledge. I could acquiesce to the request to answer the question myself and effectively perpetuate a banking model of knowledge (Freire, 1972). As a paid LD practitioner, I feel the powerful weight of a commitment to my client to get the participants in front of me to where it is

believed they need to be in leadership terms. The MALT framework guides the structure. I did not create it, but I agreed to act within its auspices. LD and management education generally has favoured spoon-feeding over practice-based pedagogies for a long time (Raelin, 2009).

I consider how easy it would be right now to tell them what they should believe, what sort of leaders they should be. To grab the flipchart, withdraw my questions and draw a model. A clear direction and a definition of leadership and start from there. I know the statistics. Research shows that most LD programmes will begin from a rational thinking bias (Raelin, 2015; Rowland, 2016) to inform rather than seek to potentially transform (Snook et al., 2012). I will be among the majority if I take this path.

I ruefully smile. My capacity to withstand the demand to be told the answer, a demand I feel intrinsic and extrinsic to me, will irrevocably shape what follows. Suppose I define what the participants as leaders should do or be. In that case, I make a mockery of my pedagogic intention to co-create knowledge dialectically (Mayo, 2012). Moreover, I deny my beliefs about leadership as an embedded and embodied way of being (Carroll et al., 2008). I realise as I turn my back on the historical buildings and return to the room, I "teach" leadership by practising leadership, aligning my pedagogic choices with my idea of leadership (Ganz & Lin, 2012).

With a nod to the history behind me, I dive back in and try again.

Active vs Passive Learning

I determine to trust the process and engage in a more active, experiential mode (Heron, 1999) of answering the question of leadership.

I offer further context to my earlier question, describing leadership as knowing, doing and being, or sometimes described as "head, heart and hands" (Ganz & Lin, 2012: 254). There are nods of recognition in a language that is easier to relate to. I

take a few minutes to conceptually position leadership as something we create together, between people who are party to it together and within the context and location in which it happens (Dugan & Humbles, 2018).

I explain that my questions are intended to encourage thought and discussion. I am not looking for a prescription for leadership (McCauley et al., 2010). I suggest that:

“while it is challenging, it is also exciting to be able to do so”

I ask the participants to pair up this time, believing smaller dialogue clusters (Heron, 1999) might be easier than facing a flipchart and a larger system.

I step away from the circle and the flipchart and give the participants time to discuss. They turn to each other in pairs but with little energy or enthusiasm. As I glance around, the energy is muted, and I see that little has been captured on the post-its I handed out to capture their suggestions. When I invite them to share, most pairs only contribute one item to the discussion that follows; some remain confused and quiet.

Despite my determination to trust the process, I feel worn down by my efforts to elicit knowledge from the participants continually. In front of me, I recognise the reality that individuals and communities are not just standing by, ready and primed to be leaderful (Raelin, 2003). The participants may need to "evolve" an appreciation and an ability to get there (Raelin, 2003: p. 45). As many involved in adult education do, I have been acting on the assumption that the participants are self-directed, reflective and capable of a degree of independence from the system of which they are a part (Brookfield & Holst, 2014). However, that is proving aspirational at best (Gonczi, 1999).

I am tempted to reach for the flipchart and pen and provide the answers as the discussion dries up and the participants flounder to respond to the exercise. Living without answers in LD is hard (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015).

I do not fill in the blanks, despite the temptation.

I thank the participants for their contribution and explain that the knowledge we seek together emerges from thinking, reflection and conversation over time (Brookfield, 1986). We will work on it together over the length of the MALT programme and beyond. I reassure them that what I have asked of them this afternoon is different to how they are typically asked to think (Reynolds, 1998) and that:

“it is okay to find it unusual or difficult”.

They look relieved as they leave the room for a coffee break. I acknowledge what has been unsaid - they do not yet know how to initiate a view of their own leadership as they may have had no reason to think about it previously (Knowles, 1968). Nevertheless, I note that we need to think our way through what leadership means together, even if that feels a bit open and transitional right now (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010).

I empathise as I watch them go.

Tension between performativity and embodied leadership

Critical reflection as insider-researcher

Later the same evening, I go for a walk along the river, which runs through the regional town where JOF is located. I am staying in a local hotel where I have time to reflect on the day. As I walk, I deliberately change my frame of reference to that of insider-researcher (Costley et al., 2010), the shadow watching over my practitioner's shoulder as I seek to understand “my own place” (Stake, 2010: 163). It is hard to separate from the practitioner feelings of disappointment at what feels

like a shaky afternoon. I wrote my confusion into my researcher reflexive diary immediately after the session finished before I left the room:

...maybe this exercise felt like a test because I did not share much of what I believed in about leadership; the participants understood their context but not mine.

They didn't know me for long at that point. Did it feel to them like I was withholding? Trust was increasing, but maybe they felt it as manipulation or duplicitous? I wanted it to be quite the opposite.

Excerpt from researcher reflexive diary 17/09/2018

I remind myself as I walk that I have committed as part of this inquiry to the practice of critical bifocality (Weis & Fine, 2012) and draw my attention to micro-practices in the learning space for LD today. I consider which elements in the “braided design” (Weis & Fine, 2012: 174) of people, place and context I need to attend to for my learning.

I gradually recognise that I became stuck in a tension between two competing forces. On one side was the paradigmatic stance of leadership as an embodied way of being as decided by the participants for themselves (e.g. Ghoshal, 2005; Carroll et al., 2008). On the other, the “terrors of performativity” (Ball, 2003: 215), the drive to ensure that the participants know what it is they have been sent to learn. Pedagogically, the tension is a challenge to hold,

... there is pedagogic intent in holding my voice, only prompting and posing questions.... but perhaps by withholding it too much and too early in my eagerness to not “tell” they had nothing to work with...?

... not knowing where my questions were going, was it safer for the participants to wait it out...better in their eyes than getting it wrong?

Excerpt from researcher reflexive diary 17/09/2018

Structured learning programmes in most organisations retain an economic focus, not a learning one (Illeris, 2011; Watkins & Marsick, 2014). This inherently pessimistic view of managers' capacity to decide for themselves (Ghoshal, 2005) directly conflicts with my practice view of leadership as an embodied way of being and approaching organisations and workplaces (Carroll & Levy, 2010). Standing in my paradigmatic and pedagogic beliefs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), I regularly push back against the performativity discourse, as I did today. Operating from an assumption that they will meet a more familiar knowledge discourse, the participants do not always understand. Sometimes in this tension, I waver, as I did today.

The power of performativity, lurking in the background

Why did I waver today? I ask myself as I walk. The measurement of leadership efficacy in 'I Say', the future culture survey, flittered across my consciousness. For a few moments, as I stood looking at the old factory walls mid-afternoon, I considered how I could ensure a good 'I Say' score if I shared the "right answer"; how well the programme would look if the leadership rating for the site increased substantially? I was unsure at that point if I was willing to bet on emergent, messier, but potentially transformative learning (Mezirow, 1981).

Negotiating this balance felt like a facilitative and pedagogic high-wire that I, as an LD practitioner, teetered on for much of the afternoon. Insufficient scaffolding can leave participants without reference points or a place from which to begin. Too much can stifle and dehumanise (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015) leadership practice, disconnecting it from the person, the social and the context in which it occurs. "Telling" to accelerate learning, tick boxes, or score well on a culture survey could ultimately put my agency as a practitioner and as an instigator of significant learning (Brookfield, 1995) in jeopardy from the start. In turn, I could significantly undermine the participants capacity to create their own roles rather than be prescribed role-players (Freire, 1970).

This tussle between performativity and pedagogy, between my rhetoric and reality (Usher et al., 1997), stayed with me,

... driving home and thinking about it further, I recognise I still struggle with how much to tell about leadership and not take away the emergent nature of the participants coming to an understanding of it... but still help them along... not sure I have fully reconciled this yet...

Excerpt from researcher reflexive diary 20/09/2018

Conclusion

Knowledge creation is a core concern in LD (Snook et al., 2012). Supporting the possibility inherent in the learning workspace entails believing in the power of unfolding knowledge rather than directing it. Despite this aspiration, the dominant economic/managerial discourse in LD (Snook et al., 2012) entered the MALT learning workspace. This narrative suggests that there are many inter-related concerns within knowledge creation.

How much or how little to tell the participants? How best for them to learn? Underpinning both of these questions, a third emerged, how to walk the tension high-wire between performativity and embodied leadership in the lived environment of leadership learning?

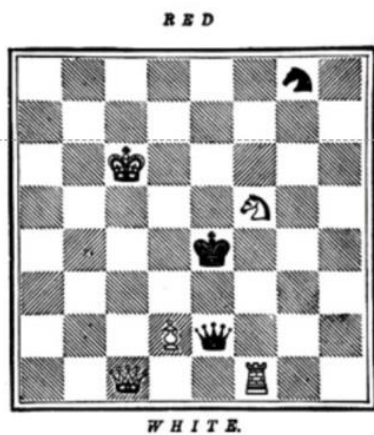
Usher et al. (1997) caution against over-simplifying these multiple paradigmatic positions from an either/or perspective as I experienced them. Positioning active vs passive learning or embodied leadership vs performativity, for example, may only trigger a practitioner swing from optimism to despair as a paradigmatic and pedagogic stance meets the reality of managerial settings (Raelin, 2013) for learning. As I can testify, oscillation is hard to avoid as power permeates every aspect of education (Brookfield, 1995). Before the re-storying of this narrative, I

was aware of my susceptibility to the performativity bias creeping into my practice. I was immersed in HRD for many years, and I have worked in a production environment very similar to the one in which the participants are located. I can deeply empathise with the participants' situation.

From the illumination of this narrative, I can see that such either/or perspectives serve little purpose for me other than to obscure a considered pathway to participation, one that balances subjectivity and autonomy of learning towards knowledge creation (Usher et al., 1997). Where a consideration of LD favoured action, adult learning was cautioning consideration and a steady pace of approach. I observe in this narrative 'pause moments', times of reflection and decision making where I could draw both on LD *and* adult learning to hold the dynamic tension I was experiencing. In this way, I suspect I was and will be better able to shape the learning workspace despite the uncertain territory.

Narrative 3 which follows focuses on collective, relational engagement in the learning workspace for MALT. Participants are encouraged to learn with each other through experiential learning exercises.

Narrative 3 – Learning from and with each other



Narrative Progression

1. *An Invitation to begin, an invitation to step in*
2. *Pedagogic Tensions*
3. *Learning from and with each other*
4. *Brave Moves*
5. *Toolbox Tensions*
6. *Shifting the Beam*
7. *An Invitation to Agency*

*“I should see the garden far better’, said Alice to herself, ‘if I could get to the top of that hill:
and here’s a path that leads straight to it...*

*But how curiously it twists! It’s more like a corkscrew than a path! Well, THIS turn goes to
the hill, I suppose – no, it doesn’t! This goes straight back to the house!
Well then, I’ll try the other way’.*

From: Lewis Carroll “Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There”
[1871] (2016: 25)

Illustration adapted by the researcher from the original.

Introduction

The research focus in this third narrative is on the interconnection of pedagogy and knowledge creation. I consider how I can create deliberate acts of learning (Moon, 2004) through experiential learning exercises such as role-playing and reflection. The learning-centred (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001) and practice-based (Raelin, 2020) pedagogic practices in this narrative provide opportunities for participants to learn through and with each other. Building on themes explored in the previous narratives, I pay particular attention to how I can facilitate and encourage emergent learning, enable less familiar ways of thinking and maintain a practical approach throughout.

In prefacing this chapter, 'Alice' illustrates the messy nature of trying to find your way through something new and as yet unclear in all its twists and turns. So it is for the participants and me in this chapter as we get to grips with new knowledge.

Encouraging emergent learning

From the first session, I observed that the participants respond positively to the move away from information sharing towards something close to real life or as much can be recreated in the learning workspace. I remind myself that by the nature of the production site I am working on, the participant groups contain many engineers, chemists, mechanics, electricians and scientists. They have told me several times that they like theory to connect to practice (Owen, 2015). As I view it, leadership is learned experientially, combining head, hands, and heart (Ganz & Lin, 2012). The participants and I are well-matched in this learning workspace. I anticipate they will enjoy engaging in experiential learning processes, an active and questioning style of participant engagement (Kirschner et al., 2006).

On the morning of Day 2 of MALT, I consider participant readiness and reflection (Snook et al., 2012) for learning as a paired and small group skills practice begins. Their physical readiness for learning is in no doubt. The participants prepare themselves to move, sit up in their chairs, smile, others fidget in anticipation of the more physical engagement ahead. In the Dining Room, there are no tables, and the chairs are on wheels. The eight participants can move around freely in the physical space. I guide them through a straightforward and non-work-related listening exercise in groups of four. This generates a degree of discussion as participants share their experiences of attempting to listen at different levels. It also increases the energy levels and has voices warmed up and heard in the learning workspace (Palmer, 2017).

“That was enjoyable and fun too!”,

I am told as they observe me for what is to come next.

I wonder what they will make of their first experience of working together at a deeper level when I invite them to move beyond doing to reflection, a vital part of deepening and strengthening their ability to learn from experience (Brookfield, 1995).

I follow the listening exercise with an invitation to a role-play on assertiveness. I suggest the participants move their chairs into two lines facing each other, as if on either side of a low fence, and then move slightly apart so that each person faces another across the fence but is not too close to the person on either side of them. I state that we are going to try out the assertiveness skill in a social environment first. We will come to their workplace opportunities soon afterwards. Role-play, a common feature in management education in academic and organisational settings, offers a way to experiment within a guiding conceptual framework (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). I have shared that my preference is to offer theory into the learning workspace as a starting point and open to

interpretation in practice, rather than fixed and un-contestable (Iszatt-White, Kempster & Carroll, 2017).

On that basis, I have earlier scaffolded (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013) this exercise with some theory on assertiveness as a skill necessary to develop individual leader capacity (Day et al., 2009). I am keen to create some conditions for practice and let the participants build their knowledge through practice and experience (Ganz & Lin, 2012).

I say:

“Person on one side, you are travelling by train to an important meeting at Head Office. You don’t have your presentation complete and need to work for at least another hour to be ready. The train is heavily booked today and you were not able to get a seat in the designated quiet carriage or anywhere else on the train. The person across from you is a stranger. He or she has been speaking quite loudly on their phone for 20 minutes and the conversation does not seem to be ending. It is clearly a social call. You decide to interrupt him or her using your assertive skills to ask them to stop or quieten their conversation.”

Lots of groans, some giggles and “*Oh no*” sounds

“Person on the other side, you are travelling on the train to a social engagement and enjoying your conversation. Do not be abnormally difficult when the person across interrupts you, respond as you would, based on the nature of the approach but don’t make it unrealistically easy either.”

They begin, and a cacophony of noise and gesture fills the space. I watch, but I do not intervene. I let the conversations on the ‘train’ run for no more than a minute. Initiating role-play using an example most participants can relate to (the person on the train) but find more bemusing than threatening, shifts a familiar modality for

learning such as role-play into a more open play space (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010) from which learning can emerge.

I call time, and a multitude of heads swing my way. Emotional responses tumble out unprompted:

“That was so hard”

“I’d never do that in real life”

“I was sweating asking”

“I thought he would swing for me”

“I gave up”

“No chance, I’d move to the corridor”

“There would always be another space on the train”

I acknowledge their feelings and say:

“Yes it is hard”

Theories of adult development (Levinson, 1978) and learning (Vygotsky, 1978) recognise the role of playful engagement in animating transition from existing to future behaviours. Role-playing as part of MALT can provide a valuable space to try new behaviours out among a peer group of fellow participants who motivate and encourage alternatives (Ibarra, 2003). I have opened a new play space (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010) and, with pedagogic intent, thrust the participants in.

I tell them that I have deliberately thrown them in, and they pause:

“Why did you do that?”

I reply with questions of my own:

“How did you feel as you tried, leaned over, interrupted?”

What did you want out of the conversation?
What did you notice about yourself? And the other person?
When you were knocked back, what happened?
What was going through your head as you spoke?
Did your understanding or position change at any time?
For those who succeeded, what got you there?"

Many of the *felt* aspects (Rowland, 2017) of being assertive emerge in response to my questions. They speak over each other and finish each other's sentences by describing what they have attempted to *do* (Snook et al., 2012) with feeling and emotion. They are animated as they encounter themselves and the world around them just a little differently through emergent learning (Newman, 2012).

As they speak, I begin to overlay their words with a more conceptual vocabulary around assertiveness without thinking: persistence, consistency of message, broken record technique...

...before I catch myself and stop.

I am at a pedagogical pause point, standing as I do among the lines of chairs and interested faces, wondering how adult learning theory can inform my choices in this LD workspace. This pause is becoming a familiar place.

My intent in engaging in an experiential exercise is to provide a framework, not a formula (Ganz & Lin, 2012). If I continue overlaying the participant words with mine, in the mode of topic expert, I can rapidly diminish their experience. I can quickly and without thinking tip the balance in the workspace toward a practitioner or subject-centred pedagogy (Brookfield, 1995; Palmer, 2017). This could indicate to the participants that the exercise in which they have just invested, and made themselves potentially vulnerable, is a mere device (Usher, 2018) to reach an ending already pre-determined. I may, if I persist, indicate that *my* sense-making, drawn from a subject and practitioner expertise, is of greater value than theirs

(Kolb, 1984). In doing so, I risk denying the inward gaze (Dugan, 2017) I believe to be crucial to LD, accessing capacity from within rather than waiting and longing for someone else to take leadership.

I exhale and let their words describe the shared knowledge around assertiveness instead of mine:

“I can be on the train and so can they, it’s finding an agreement in between”

- describes a core tenet of assertiveness: respecting the rights of both parties.

“You have to have some give and take and nobody feeling too bad afterwards”

- nicely represents win-win and looking for a negotiated outcome.

The participants' words represent very well the application of assertiveness in practice. I share that observation with them.

As the exercise concludes, I explain why I chose to throw them in the deep end. I suggest that it is almost impossible for me to convey in words the aspects of assertiveness they have just experienced and identified for themselves. Each participants' experience of role-playing assertiveness is different, shaped by how they see the world, the other person and themselves. Role-playing with discussion and reflection brings meaning and intent to this aspect of individual leader capacity (Dugan, 2011). Heads nod, and several participants offer that they can better relate to the idea of assertiveness, even after a short exercise.

I make explicit my pedagogical choices and motivations several times during the course of this exercise. I choose to do this for many reasons as I see it: to encourage democracy in the workspace (Brookfield, 1995), to place learning and the enabling of learning at the centre of why the participants and I are together (Ganz & Lin,

2012) and to role model reflection as central to development (Reynolds, 1998). I attempt to convey through action, rather than word, that I guide and scaffold the content and ensure structure and progression through a curriculum as an LD practitioner. Nevertheless, there are multiple ways of knowing in the leadership workspace, many of which emerge from the participants' own experiences and reflections (Kegan, 2018).

Reflection – a less familiar way of thinking

As I signal a move towards a work-related exercise in assertiveness, I introduce reflection to the learning workspace. The ability to reflect is a capacity central to adult learning (Brookfield, 1995). It is increasing in importance and enactment among those seeking to create significant leadership learning (Owen, 2015) with lasting and transformational potential (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2012). I know how difficult I found the reflective process in my “apprenticeship” years and how stretching it was to see myself as an instrument of learning. The ability to go deep inside myself and explore the effect of my inner world and behaviour (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2012) did not come naturally at first.

Managers in organisations such as JOF are typically good problem solvers because of the prevailing culture of action. They are less inclined towards reflection, which involves holding up a mirror to what might need changing (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2012). In the following exercise, I look for a way to combine action, through role-play practice, with reflection in action (Schön, 1983), the use of observation to problem-solve, emphasising gaining a new perspective rather than just solving the problem.

I invite everyone to swap chairs and randomly choose a different partner with whom to role play. Before introducing some scenarios with which to practice, I invite the participants to pause and remind themselves of what they understand

assertiveness to be so far. I bring their attention to the reality that they have no "how to" for assertiveness in this learning workspace, no scribbled notes or handouts to work from, other than the experiential and verbal guide-ropes (Rowland, 2018) we have co-created in the shared learning space just now. As different participants offer words and phrases into the group, the idea of assertiveness crystallises (Crotty, 1998) into a leadership capacity that the participants are shaping and putting into their field of work and can draw from as they need it.

I begin by describing some typical work-based scenarios where managers can find assertiveness challenging. These are derived from my leadership and coaching practice experience. I begin with:

"You need to approach a colleague in a different department for analysis of some figures which you can't access or compile yourself. You know your colleague is very busy and you have left it late to ask, but the deadline is coming up quickly. Your report is needed for a site management meeting which has been brought forward at short notice.

Your colleague has helped you before and is usually amenable, but you know that she has a lot on her plate right now and looks stressed as you approach. Consider how you ask for what you need"

People and chairs move around the room. Participants begin to role-play, alternating between practising the skill and being the receiver of the assertive request.

My focus in this exercise is not on assertiveness per se, but on what can emerge from it; the opportunity to reflectively learn from practice experience. I am making a deliberate choice to create a deliberate act of learning (Moon, 2004). As I share two other scenarios, the participants continue to swap and change role-play partners. They subsequently develop and practice scenarios from their roles and

responsibilities using current live issues and opportunities for further practice (Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016).

When the exercise is complete, I ask how it was to practice together with real scenarios meaningful to them? I hear general comments on the experience, but nothing reflective is offered:

“Hard but realistic”

“I got a lot from it”

“My partner was tough!”

“I couldn’t get her to agree at all”

I elect to step them through what I recognise is a fledgling reflective capacity (Brookfield, 1995), one as yet unformed or deeply considered but open to encouragement and strengthening. I ask the participants to sit quietly for a moment and step outside themselves, looking back at themselves in action. I say:

“You have just explored a new construct in leader capacity, assertiveness, and acted on it in the form of practice, getting into real scenarios and using examples that are meaningful for you”

I follow with some reflective questions leaving space between each:

“What did you notice about yourself as you practiced and tried it out?”

“What went well for you?”

“What would you do differently the next time?”

“What did you learn about yourself and your actions you perhaps weren’t aware of before?”

Some of the participants grab a pen and paper and scribble their thoughts. Others sit in contemplation. If they are willing, I invite them to find a partner, ideally someone with whom they practised one of their real scenarios. The purpose is to

invite a colleague's lens on their reflections (Brookfield, 1995). I am conscious that this may be the first time some have engaged in such an activity. I make it clear that the intent is to turn challenges into learning opportunities, not judge anyone's capacity or worth (Dweck, 2008).

Some eagerly move to join a colleague, and conversation ensues. The nature and tone vary as I listen in from a distance. Nevertheless, I hear some signs of experience becoming an object of knowledge through reflection (Watkins, 2005):

"Is that what you saw, I didn't see that. What I was thinking was..."

"I didn't think I would use those words but they tumbled out, I scared myself. I need to think about it some more"

"It looked easy for you, I found it hard and I was tempted to give up. I know it is because I..."

"It felt just like it feels back there at work. When someone comes on strong I back away. I do that and have always done that if faced with conflict. It goes back years and I need to fix it I guess"

Others are slow to move. One asks if he can sit with his own thoughts. This time I encourage the solitude, recognising and relating to the challenge inherent in standing outside yourself (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2012).

Experiential learning techniques such as role-play and reflection benefit learning situations (Jarvis, 2010). Practitioner experience means I maintain a heightened awareness for several factors, including that some participants may feel reluctant to participate. Some may experience an emotional response to the experience of stepping into an almost real situation (Jarvis, 2010).

In response to a feedback question about Day 2 of MALT, a participant comments:

"it [Day 2] has given me the confidence to "own my own space" and learn some more about myself..... I have learned why people react in different

ways and that every person is different, with different backgrounds and different challenges inside and outside of work”

(from post-programme feedback 04/04/19)

Conclusion

Experiential learning approaches are attractive as they encourage an active and questioning style of engagement. They also promote the application of knowledge (Fink, 2013). The knowledge which emanates from these processes ebbs and flows. To be with the ebb and flow requires me to believe in the power of the group, the pedagogical method and group processes. My considered balancing of content with practical sense-making (Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016) is crucial to the participants’ ability and willingness to engage with and learn from experiential learning modalities.

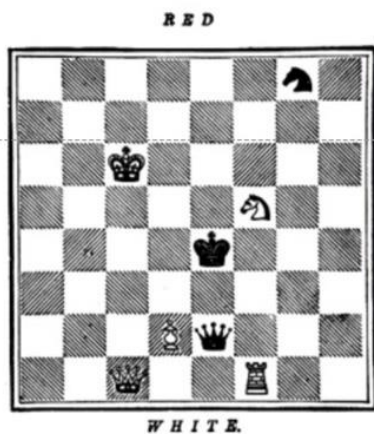
In inviting reflection into the workspace for learning, I am signalling that this is a place of adult learning, not ‘training’ (Brookfield, 1995). I recognise that at pedagogic pauses along the path of MALT delivery, my LD practice and my decisions around practice are increasingly informed by considering both LD and adult learning perspectives. In this narrative, I experience a valuable and timely coming together of both discourses to inform both my practice dilemma and the subsequent learning opportunity.

Chapter 6, which follows, presents two Narratives from the middle phase of MALT. From a content perspective, the emphasis in the middle phase of the programme is on the ‘Developing’ and ‘Engaging’ aspects of the MALT framework. These aspects emphasise the role of the leader in leading others through good communication, clarity of expectation, ongoing engagement and finding opportunities to know and

grow those around them. As both the learning challenge and trust increases, concerns of power become more evident in following narratives.

Chapter 6 – Progressing

Narrative 4: Brave Moves



Narrative Progression

1. *An Invitation to begin, an invitation to step in*
2. *Pedagogic Tensions*
3. *Learning from and with each other*
4. *Brave Moves*
5. *Toolbox Tensions*
6. *Shifting the Beam*
7. *An Invitation to Agency*

*'I see nobody on the road' said Alice.
'I only wish I had such eyes', the King remarked in a fretful tone. 'To be able to see Nobody!
And at that distance too! Why it's as much as I can do to see real people, by this light!'*

*All this was lost on Alice, who was still intently looking along the road, shading her eyes
with one hand.*

From: Lewis Carroll "Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There"
[1871] (2016: 92)

Illustration adapted by the researcher from the original.

Introduction

As stories are inquired into in narrative inquiry, possibilities emerge for reliving in more thoughtful and responsive ways in the future (Clandinin et al., 2011). In this fourth narrative, titled 'Brave Moves', I explicate the tensions which unfold when the planned learning in MALT is disrupted. Amid the pedagogic tension that follows, I access my internal thought process, which leads to embracing an unexpected opportunity to engage experience as the starting point for learning through dialogue. I trace this opportunity's engagement with and impact on the learning that follows and on practitioner and participant agency. The narrative concludes with an exploration of the hidden discourses of power in a discussion of 'what if' my decision making had moved in a different direction.

Pedagogic tension in a workplace setting for learning

Leadership as practice combines head, hands and heart (Ganz & Lin, 2012).

Participants cannot just learn *about* listening, for example. Accessing the inherent possibility to take action (after Tourish, 2014: 80) requires participants to *do* a skill like listening. Only through a participatory modality can participants try things out, judge for themselves, reflect and decide (Bregman, 2013). The applied perspective of leadership is best explored relationally, contextually and in socially situated settings (Carroll & Smolović Jones, 2018). As a result, I frequently struggle with the limitations of meeting rooms as a setting for workplace learning. This is true even in a room as welcoming as the Dining Room at the Site Managers former cottage.

It is late morning during Module 3 of MALT in the Dining Room. There is a sense of distraction and restlessness in the room. Participants fidget and are slowly returning from a coffee break. Unusually for this workspace, a participant steps away several times to text and take calls. He apologises, but it distracts me and others, and I find myself losing my rhythm. While the nods indicate participants are

following me, other concerns compete with the learning (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013), which I do not know how to identify.

Using some slides, I spend fifteen minutes bringing the participants through some structured content (Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016) on having a good development conversation with their teams. I initiate a discussion around the importance and nature of having development conversations, but there is little engagement. I have further information to share with them, but I suggest a 5-minute stretch break instead, which I hope will refocus the participants and allow me a breathing space to decide what to do next. Multiple learning methods which balance cognitive, psychological and emotional needs (Conger, 2010) are built into the programme design. Nevertheless, as I discover this winter morning, my neatly planned timings for content and exercises does not always align with participant motivation and energy.

As I walk out the cottage's front door for some air and physical space to think, I make a snap decision to stop instructing and move into some form of role-playing or practice after the stretch break. I need to get the participants moving, doing something I say to myself. I find the blurring of the leadership learning workspace's education, training and development aspects (Kellerman, 2018) challenging to understand at moments like this. The timing is off. In this instance, I would like them to understand more before moving into role-playing involving practice and feedback.

However, the participants are restless, and now, so am I.

Pedagogic intent vs action: the challenge to balance content and sense-making

As I look across at the solemn facades of old warehouses, I ask myself what is tugging at the corners of my thinking? As part of my rationale for practice (Brookfield, 1985), I strive to keep the content and slides as short as possible in each of these sessions. I increasingly recognise that the participants respond best to learning connected to reality and each other, which appeals to their senses more

aesthetically (Carroll & Smolović Jones, 2018). The words "let us practice" often come out of my practitioner's mouth, seduced by the belief that it is better or has more meaning (Moon, 2004) than other forms. I am aware that I can move quickly towards it in moments of doubt.

My reflexive thinking unearths a surprise. I am on the cusp of prioritising the dynamic in the room over the act of learning by engaging in an untethered version of role-playing *for its own sake*. Using an experiential learning exercise as a technique to liven things up on a restless day goes against the philosophical underpinnings of my practice (Brookfield, 1985). Dispirited by my new awareness, I am unsure what I plan to do as I walk back towards the participants on their stretch break.

As I approach the group, stretching their legs in the hallway of the cottage, I realise that I may have been asking the right question but of the wrong party. By the nature of my "internalised conversation" (Bruffee, 1984: 639), I am at risk of presuming factors in the learning environment today that influence my decision-making.

Role-modelling leadership and a pedagogy that embodies it, should ask what is going on in the here and now rather than assume I can decide how to proceed in a detached way. I am at risk of separating the learning workspace from the broader social and contextual factors it is a part of. I have issued an invitation to collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1984) in this workspace. I would do well to accept the invitation.

An engaged pedagogy – recognising one another's presence (hooks, 1994: 13)

In the corridor outside the Dining Room, I ask and discover the source of distraction. An electricity shutdown and changeover of a vital piece of production equipment is happening on site this afternoon. Once I metaphorically open the door to hearing the voices and recognising the participant's presence (hooks, 1994), anxiety comes tumbling in. Several participants are concerned about being away

from their roles at a time when much could go wrong. If the changeover does not go well, production may cease entirely. Participant A who was distracted by his phone throughout the morning, lets me know that his team is essential to the success of the changeover process. A less experienced but eager member of the team is deputising for him. This team member has never played a pivotal role in such an important task before.

As we walk back together from the stretch break, slightly behind the others, Participant A suggests quietly that he probably should leave as he is not focusing on the programme and is not helping his team member by being here. He is not achieving much this morning, in his view.

I tell him truthfully that I would prefer he not leave as he adds to the learning space, even a distracted version of himself.

“You bring energy and thoughtful contributions to the group”, I say.

He laughs and looks away, but I suspect he is thinking about my feedback.

The hidden discourse of power

With good intention, but without due care to my leadership beliefs and my pedagogic stewardship of the learning workspace, I can easily allow power and political interests (Bierema, 2001) to shape the encounter. As an adult, Participant A has the agency to choose whether he *should* leave or stay. What is unsaid is that the company has mandated his attendance on the programme, barring accident or illness. Despite not overtly claiming it, I realise that the power to mediate whether he *can* leave feels like it comes back to me as I walk with him. The balance of the power dynamic quickly moves from being influenced by work inequities (Bierema, 2001) to something redolent of school day teacher-student embodiment of power (Illeris, 2007). He is waiting for my nod one way or the other.

An idea forms in my head, born from the combination of pedagogic and workplace dilemmas in which I find myself. I ask:

“Will you stay with me for another hour to see if there is a way to get learning benefit for you, and the rest of us from your situation? If not, you can make the best decision for you, to be here or to go. Sometimes despite our best intentions the world intrudes and we have to withdraw”

He looks at me oddly. I wonder if he is surprised that I draw attention to the programme as a learning workspace of voluntary participation (Brookfield, 1986). Workplace participants typically feel present through a necessity or obligation to the company (Raelin, 2008).

I add:

“It is not about being physically here, it is about your head being here, and being able to participate fully, get the most from it. Maybe even use your predicament for learning?”

He nods. We catch up with the rest of the group, and as we re-enter the Dining Room he says:

“I kind of see what you mean, I’ll stay for another while, see what you have in mind”

I am not sure I do know what I mean, and I tingle with the anticipation of dropping what I had planned and taking this sluggish late morning in a different direction.

"Be brave", I say to myself as I turn off the slides I was planning to use next. My inner voice counsels me:

“See where this takes you, and them. If the workplace is insisting on making itself part of the learning today then there may be an opportunity to gain benefit from that rather than lament the loss of focus. The slides were not working anyway!”

I am aware that I now hold a genuine rationale for engaging the group in experiential learning. This opportunity fits my practice beliefs as significant, timely and connected to the learning content of the session. Still, I cannot engineer the uncertainty and discomfort, the innate vulnerability (Brown, 2018) out of changing my best-laid plans in favour of a path I have not yet figured out in my head. Portraying my humanity is, I believe, philosophically valuable to the learning and practice of leadership (Ganz & Lin, 2012; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015). I can nudge this learning workspace toward more profound development and not just skills training.

Connecting reality with a rationale for practice

I turn to the group and say:

“I picked up on the stretch break that there is a significant change happening on the site today. I can see that you are a bit distracted by it. That’s understandable, I get it”

I get acknowledgement and nods, relief that I know and have named what was lingering in the room unsaid.

“Participant A is particularly concerned that a member of his team is central to this change but has not carried the responsibility on his own before. Participant A was tempted to leave but I have persuaded him to stay a little longer”

A few moans and laughs follow:

“Thought you’d escape did you?”

I continue:

“We were working on development conversations before the break. What if we were to take this concern and use it as a live example, right now, today, of a development discussion?”

With Participant A's agreement (*he nods and smiles seeing where I am going*), we can use it as a practical way to learn... and something with immediate benefit, I hope!”

I suggest that as Participant A has indicated he is willing, we can all have a conversation to support him in deciding how to help his team member today. In this way, we can *use* work to help us tie the two together in a live experiential learning method (Mintzberg, 2012). I pull a chair into the group to form a circle and physically exclude the flipchart and slides as not relevant right now. As I do this, the participants sit up, lean forward, and their interest is piqued. They engage differently when seeing, feeling, touching, and sensing leadership together (Carroll & Smolović Jones, 2018) in a practical way.

Opening a Space for Dialogue

Participant A discloses a phone call arranged at lunchtime (an hour away) with his team member. He suggests the call might be a good focus for the conversation. I see his energy and enthusiasm return as he says:

“If the call goes well, I might not have to go back into the site at all”

I begin by asking the group:

“How can Participant A help his staff member in that call? What could he say or do?”

Suggestions and advice come tumbling out:

*“Tell him what you need,
Remind him of ..
Make sure he can...”*

I am mindful that I am appropriating this live and real workplace example for learning purposes. I steer the group into a dialogue that I hope will shift the frame of reference (Moon, 2004) from problem-solving, as evidenced by the initial suggestions, to one of development. Introducing dialogue as a modality for learning will, I hope, lead to new ways of learning for them through exploration (Yip & Raelin, 2012).

I say:

“Pause for a moment. What questions could *you* ask Participant A to help his thinking before and during the call. Remember that this morning we are working on being able to have a good development conversation. We have a live and real example to work with here. What questions would be useful to help *Participant A* develop *his* thinking on this, not to solve the problem of the changeover itself?”

With a little more prompting from me and some sample questions, the emphasis changes to development. A hesitantly offered question from Participant B moves the dialogue on:

“What can your team member learn from the experience of doing this on his own for the first time, if you trust him to do it?”

This causes Participant A to respond:

“Do I trust him to do it? That’s a great question...”

I was thinking more of getting the task done and him not mucking it up. How it would reflect on him and me, rather than what he could get from it. Good question, I need to think about that”

Having seeded the conditions for powerful questions to emerge (Kline, 1999), I subtly pull back from facilitating the conversation. A dialogue opens up between Participant A and his colleagues. One participant makes notes on the flipchart at the groups’ suggestion.

Concerns of clarity emerge first from the participants:

“Is your team member clear what’s needed?”

“Who and what can he call on to help him?”

“Is he clear when to call you if needed?”

(extracted from flipchart notes 14/11/2018)

Followed by a discussion on experience:

“Has he done anything like this before?”

“Will he feel intimidated by anyone else who’ll be there?”

“How is he under pressure?”

“What did you feel like when you did something like this for the first time?”

“What helped you?”

I hear themes important to individual and collective leadership capacity emerge in a fluid and open way through the dialogue (Cox, Pearce & Perry, 2003). The

participants reveal awareness of the connection between power and agency, experience and challenge, possibility and risk in the context within which Participant A and his team member operate (Uhl-Bein, 2006).

Later in the dialogue, questions emerge regarding how Participant A positions himself and takes leadership:

“Does he know you trust him and believe in him?”

“What do you get if he does this well, without you stepping in too much?”

“If you go back and put yourself at the middle of it like you usually would, what does that mean for you, and him? How will others on the site see him and you?”

Elements of advice-giving and problem-solving creep in, but there is an over and back rhythm of questions, reflection, consideration, and more questions for most of the next twenty minutes. This engagement with discussion on a "personally precarious venture" (Brookfield, 1986: 135) for Participant A allows for experimentation and 'what-ifs' in a non-threatening environment. There is a growing feeling of a fresh perspective on the issue as new knowledge emerges from the "hopeful inquiry" (Freire, 1970: 72) the participants are pursuing in their world and with each other. The power dynamics with which the situation is imbued are never labelled as such, but they appear. Echoing, I suspect, long-held leadership beliefs as hierarchical and dyadic (Bennis, 2007), participants are concerned about who would be to blame and how that would manifest itself for Participant A and his role. He is asked if it would:

“look bad if you are not there?”

Participants are gaining knowledge of their social reality. They are critically reflecting on it, through the eyes and real worlds needs of Participant A, while considering action to change and influence what happens.

New knowledge and leadership agency emerges

Sensing a natural ending, I invite Participant A to summarise where his head is now. He shares a greater possibility in a situation that he simply thought of as bad timing and a nuisance this morning. He shares:

“I can see that my phone call at lunchtime needs to be less about telling and more about encouraging. I can check he is clear on what to do and when and if he needs help. I was tempted to leave and not come back. To be honest, there are risks if this doesn’t go well.

But you know what, I have to trust him some time, and I do trust him. He is capable. I hadn’t really thought about that aspect or what he gets from it.

Or what I get, if this goes well. And actually, I don't have any real reasons to think it won't go well other than my own fear and wanting to make sure!”

He finishes by saying he will make a different phone call at lunchtime based on the conversation. He indicates he is less inclined to leave the programme and return to the site. He will make his mind up after the call.

Before moving on, I invite the participants to reflect on their experience of a development conversation in real-time, with a pressing concern attached for one of their members. The group have accepted the responsibility to enable another to achieve a commonly shared purpose under conditions of uncertainty (Ganz & Lin, 2012).

I hold responsibility for enabling leadership learning in all its manifestations (Kellerman, 2018), including those unplanned and fortuitous. It is essential to debrief, ground, and conceptualise the emotional experience of involvement (Jarvis, 2010). Conscious rational reflection is critical for a transformational possibility to emerge (Mezirow, 1991). In workplace settings, such engagement can

enable people to see how they can change a situation by changing how they frame it and act on it (Marsick & Maltbia, 2009).

I first ask them *what* they learned from the dialogue. What emerges in response is related more to *why* they learned. A sense of satisfaction emerges that while Participant A struggled with what to do on his own, the questioning and reflection that took place in and through interaction in the group (Faller et al., 2020) seemed to help a lot. The participants believe they understand his concern, know what he is struggling with, and relate to his leadership predicament. They, too, occupy similar roles in the broader community of leaders (Wenger, 1998). They believe themselves invested in the outcome through their participation in new thinking and action on the situation (Brookfield, 1985). More than one person comments that:

“we want him to succeed!”

I am keen to ensure that the knowledge gained can be articulated, is coherent and broadly understood alongside an appreciation for how it was gained. While allowing for the limitations of time, openness and a first-time encounter with the learning modality in this workspace (Marsick & Maltbia, 2009), I do not hear deeper reflection coming through as yet.

Moving away from the specific example of Participant A, and in the context of the MALT programme today, I ask again *what* they learned *about development conversations* from this impromptu way of learning. I ask differently this time, writing it on the flipchart for consideration:

“Having had this experience, what do you now know about having development conversations that you didn’t before?”

(extracted from flipchart notes 14/11/2018)

It is a more reflective and less performative question than “what have you learned?” In response, essential aspects of having development conversations emerge, much of which features on the slides I had intended to use and pre-emptively retired a half-hour earlier to engage in dialogue instead.

In the real-life context of application (McCauley et al., 2010), participants advise they are more aware of the importance of questions, impact, and preparation. Several participants reference an enhanced ability to stand in another’s shoes. From this place, they can consider options beyond what they believed initially to be true or justified from their own singular or limited perspective (Mezirow, 1991). They note the importance of the motivation to learn, thinking longer-term, amid opportunities to coach and develop others (Clutterbuck, 1998). Several participants noted the fear inherent in letting go and ceding responsibility to others, a challenge both to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and their latent belief in leadership as enmeshed in seniority and measurement of success (Pfeffer, 2005).

In the experience of the past hour, there has been content that is instructive (for the head), behavioural learning (for the hands) and motivational understanding (for the heart) (Ganz & Lin, 2012). I would likely have described all of these things using slides. My description would, by necessity, be singular and abstract. By contrast, using real experience as the starting point for dialogue develops a more contextual leadership consciousness (Kellerman, 2018: 133) for development conversations. The sense of agency emerging from the participants’ generation of knowledge is palpable. Following this engagement with a knowing, doing, and being way of learning leadership (Snook et al., 2012), the energy is high, and participants sit forward and follow each other intently.

In my class notes, after the session finishes, I write:

...Participant A made his call at lunchtime to his team member and returned for the afternoon session. He shared with the group that he tried hard to get clarity, trust and development opportunities across in the call.

As the afternoon went on, he checked his phone less often and got no emergency call.

At the afternoon tea break at 3.30, a MALT participant from a different group happened to join us as he queued to buy coffee next to our break area. With no knowledge of the morning's development conversation, he said to Participant A, unprompted, that his team member was "spot on, very good, no problems".

Participant A broke into a grin and visibly exhaled. Everyone else smiled and nodded too. It was clear we were all holding our breath along with him...

Extracted from class notes (14/11/2018)

Seizing opportunity

It can be easy to miss an opportunity if it does not present itself as such. As a practitioner, it can be tempting to view as extraneous, occurrences or material which do not conform to the purpose and pedagogy of leadership (Kellerman, 2018) as I carefully plan and construct them.

While staring across at the warehouses, I asked myself a question rooted in a practitioner-centred agenda:

Is what I have planned next the right learning strategy for the rest of the content I need to get across?

Embracing disruption in this learning workspace invites a different and more critically reflexive question while staring at the old warehouse walls:

What *possibility* is there for working *with rather than against* the contextual factors I am picking up in the learning workspace today?

Changing how I frame the situation changes how I think about and act in it (Mezirow, 1991). It shifts my perspective substantially, and also that of the participants. Being genuinely open to emergent learning possibilities necessitates a deeper engagement with the context and situated nature of the learning workspace (Western, 2013).

Unsaid – the hidden discourses of power in the learning workspace

An acute awareness of the concept of power is central to transformative education (Taylor & Jarecke, 2009). Maintaining the possibility to transform rather than simply inform (Snook et al., 2012) in the MALT learning workspace necessitates walking "the labyrinth" of power with intentionality and choice (Lange, 2009: 202).

I believe it is important to explore an *unspoken* which hovered in the background of this narrative. Hidden discourses of power lingered in the interaction between Participant A and me as we walked back to the Dining Room together. The alternatives posed by such discourses could send the programme's pedagogic pathway, and leadership intent in multiple directions had things transpired differently.

A key goal for workplace learning pedagogy has always been to develop robust knowledge for use on the job (Billett, 2002). This pedagogical position, perceived as narrow, technical and economic among many in the field of adult education (Yang, 2004), can deliberately or inadvertently shape the kinds of learning experiences when the workplace crowds into the learning space.

For example, in walking back from the stretch break, I could have encouraged Participant A to leave the programme and sort out his distracting issue.

I might have said,

“If the site goes down, everyone is in trouble. We can learn another day, I can catch you up on what you miss. The business would surely want you at the centre of this significant changeover”.

Suddenly there is nothing more important than his departure to undertake a heroic version of leadership (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). While this is a leadership identity that I paradigmatically reject, in the moment of ‘what if’ urgency, I could enact just such a model when surrounded by workplace performativity norms (Billett, 2002) which indicate the (work) day must be saved, by participant A, immediately. There is no other way, and learning comes second.

Following the thread of what could have happened, had I eagerly agreed with or indeed urged Participant A to leave, the group may have been more settled without his restless energy and constant phone checking. Conversely, his departure could have sent a tacit signal into the learning workspace that there is no way to reconcile work and learning without detaching and acting on each separately. Such a signal echoes a well-documented fault-line that has dogged LD practice for many years: that the workplace in which leaders act, and the learning workspace in which they learn leadership, are separate existences (e.g. Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin 2016).

Conclusion

Despite having a clear rationale for practice, it can be challenging in day-to-day practitioner reality to realise that rationale (Brookfield, 1985). The learning workspace does not always conform to the practitioner’s careful plan. Hindsight is

excellent, and chance plays a part in shaping the direction in any learning environment. Learning opportunities which strike a dynamic balance between reality, context and curriculum, such as the one at the centre of this narrative, are admittedly rare. In this instance, the proximity of a real, situated work issue/opportunity opened pathways to dialogue and reflection beyond what instructive or non-situated role play could have yielded.

'Alice' prefaced this chapter with a pithy observation on missing what was happening ahead while keeping her eyes firmly down on the road. Emerging from the re-storying or reflection is the significant role of readiness from a practitioner perspective; the readiness to engage with unplanned change and opportunity even if that presents as difficulty and distraction. The narrative illustrates that readiness is enabled by a transparent belief system and rationale for practice (Brookfield, 1995) and leadership (Ganz & Lin, 2012; Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016), guiding pedagogic decision making when disruption presents itself.

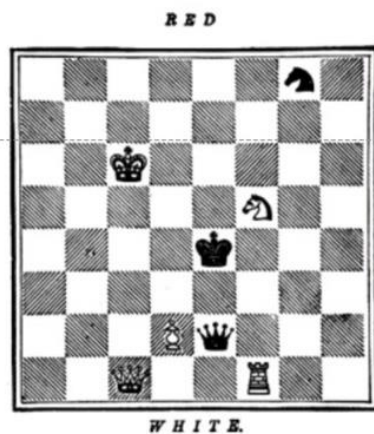
Accepting the challenge to work with difficulty further demands of me as a practitioner, the courage to walk back into the room and take the programme in a direction where I do not know the outcome (Brown, 2018). The agency for myself and the participants lies, I suspect, in the willingness of both to engage wholeheartedly (Brown, 2018) to see where an uncharted approach can take the learning.

Finally, there has been extensive criticism of leadership learning approaches which deepen a disconnect between an abstract version of leadership and the actual experiences of leaders in organisations (Gardner, 1993; Cunliffe, 2009; Tourish & Barge, 2010). Getting under the skin of what happens in the everyday lives of leaders as they practice and develop their abilities is becoming more widespread in LD (Day et al., 2014). As a practitioner in this narrative, being present in participants' located experience, not outside it, meant that I participated in the sensed and felt aspects (Carroll & Smolović Jones, 2018).

Concerning the ‘what if’ reflection as this narrative concludes, I am forcibly reminded how challenging it can be on any given day as an LD practitioner to maintain a focus on connecting learning with reality. The unseen and hidden discourses of power can snatch away that focus and rob the learning workspace of valuable opportunity at numerous decision-making points throughout a single day of learning. Engaging with critical reflexivity (Brookfield, 1985) can guide the right question to ask about pedagogy and knowledge and unearth hidden discourses of power.

The second narrative in Chapter 6, ‘Toolbox Tensions’, picks up this thread. Focusing on resistance that arises at the start of a MALT session, the re-storying seeks to deepen understanding of the impact of power and the holding environment on the leadership learning workspace.

Narrative 5: Toolbox Tensions



Narrative Progression

1. *An Invitation to begin, an invitation to step in*
2. *Pedagogic Tensions*
3. *Learning from and with each other*
4. *Brave Moves*
5. *Toolbox Tensions*
6. *Shifting the Beam*
7. *An Invitation to Agency*

“The Sheep took the money, and put it away in a box: then she said ‘I never put things into people’s hands – that would never do – you must get it for yourself’. And so saying, she went off to the other end of the shop, and set the egg upright on a shelf.

‘I wonder WHY it wouldn’t do? Thought Alice, as she groped her way among the tables and chairs, for the shop was very dark towards the end. ‘The egg seems to get further away the more I walk towards it’

From: Lewis Carroll “Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There”
[1871] (2016: 76)

Illustration adapted by the researcher from the original.

Introduction

The title of this narrative, 'Toolbox Tensions', is a play on the term 'Toolbox Talks', a phrase used in parts of the site to describe short morning catch-ups held to 'check in' with teams before the day ahead. In the course of a Toolbox Talk, timely site and task information are shared, and concerns or issues are raised. In this way, agreement is reached informally on the nature of the work before it begins.

Drawing a parallel, I seek to excavate narratively (Riessmann & Speedy, 2007) in 'Toolbox Tensions', a particular struggle that emerged through the process of 'checking in' to the leadership workspace. To provide context, I define 'check-in' and my pedagogical purpose in using it. I explicate the challenge I experienced in maintaining an engaged pedagogy of dialogue and reflection as a participant struggles with his feelings of resistance to attending MALT.

This re-storying is significant as it illuminates the ever-present and related realities of power and resistance, the manifestations of which I am particularly keen to understand through the research process. I turn the critical lens of reflexivity on my practitioner position, addressing the power symmetry between practitioner and participants and the feelings associated with handling challenges borne of struggle in the learning workspace.

Checking in to learning

'Check-in' is a process where participants are invited to share their feelings, questions, examples, or concerns at the beginning of each day (Clemans, 2011) relating to themselves as learners and to the shared agenda for learning leadership. This invitation to the MALT participants to present themselves (Neufelt & Guralnik, 2008) occurs in a participatory space where listening, support, challenge and guidance are encouraged (Clemans, 2011). At the outset of the programme, I

facilitate a discussion of the parameters around these behaviours. The principle of 'check-in' as a valued and important action in the learning space is agreed upon. The 'check-in' process typically takes between 30 and 45 minutes for each learning group of 7 or 8 participants and myself. 'Check-in' is not intended as a light touch, round-robin task at a superficial level, but rather as a planned, skilled reopening of the learning workspace (Clemans, 2011).

'Check-in' as an invitation to shared responsibility for learning

The pedagogical choice to begin each day with a 'check-in' is motivated by my concerns for mutuality, respect and fairness/inclusion in the learning workspace (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994).

The invitation to 'check-in' typically begins with two simple questions:

"How are you today?"

and

"How has your learning been since we were last here?"

The first question recognises that as they re-enter the shared space, individual participants carry the reality of multiple competing discourses from their lives with them. Although the 'check-in' maintains a learning focus, participants feelings emerge in response to the invitation to share how they are. Checking in to the learning environment with each other can reassure participants they are not alone in their thoughts, actions and struggles (Clemans, 2011). Starting the day with a re-engagement within the mutual learning process strengthens and builds the relationship (Brookfield, 1995) between myself and the participants in the shared learning workspace. Checking-in can also strengthen a sense of belonging (Maslow, 1962) to the learning workspace as a community of learners (Watkins, 2005).

The practice of leadership embedded into MALT is predicated on real, relational connectivity and interdependence (Western, 2013; Kennedy et al., 2013). The second 'check-in' question, *"how has your learning been since we were last here?"* invites the participants to re-engage around leadership as the shared purpose for learning. This question invokes a parallel process (Schulman, 2006), where open and engaged participation in checking-in looks to replicate and potentially strengthen a shared responsibility for developing leadership practice by those who work together (Raelin, 2003, 2015, 2016).

In signalling 'check-in', I close the u-shape by standing with my back to the flipchart drawing the group into a standing circle which flattens the sense of 'classroom' between us (Mintzberg, 2012). To randomise who goes first, I have a small stitched beany ball that I throw to a participant to begin the process. Once complete, that person chooses who goes next by throwing the ball onwards, and so on until everyone, including myself, has checked in. This playful pedagogy is similar in purpose and intent to the talking stick (Kagan, 1994) adapted for adult engagement. I use and articulate arbitrary conditions for my choice of who goes first: a person who happened to walk in the door with me this morning, a colour catches my eye. I choose something that indicates collaborative rather than performative intent in my choice (Shulman & Shulman, 2004), although it is impossible to eliminate all types of perceived bias. I highlight in this narrative a particular 'check-in' that occurred mid-way through MALT.

Struggle and resistance

On a dark Tuesday morning in mid-November, a group of seven participants, anticipating the 'check-in' process, step up from their chairs as I signal a start to the day by walking towards them.

On this morning, before I get the opportunity to make a choice, Participant B asks if he can have the ball and go first. He steps forward slightly, and I throw him the ball, saying:

“of course you can.”

A fizz of anticipation runs around the group. One or two participants look to catch my eye as if to say this is different.

He speaks loudly and quickly while not making eye contact with anyone in particular:

“I went to my senior manager in a panic this morning. I’ve been out for 10 days. There’s so much needs doing, I really don’t want to be here today. He told me that MALT is the most important thing happening today and I need to be here. But I really don’t want to be here...”

He pauses...

“I’m just being honest”

Choosing to use a ‘check-in’ process reflects my humanistic philosophy that everyone present has the right to take part and be heard (Glassman, 2009). While characterised by generativity, activity and meaning-making, the leadership learning workspace is not a superficial or continuously joyous place (Brookfield, 1986). It creates social energy of its own, and mutual engagement and participation are often tacitly agreed upon (Wenger, 1998). However, that does not imply harmony or collaboration in perpetuity.

There is a collective intake of breath and a few half steps back. His fellow participants look to me for my response.

I am human. I freeze in place. I envisage my well planned day disappearing in a sea of disgruntlement. I am Ko-Ko again, age 11, frozen on the stage with all eyes on me. I feel his discontent and appreciate his honesty (which I invited) even as my inner voice says, "they see this a nuisance". It is just "training", and I have to work so hard to make it more than that! I wonder if they all feel this way but do not say it? I feel poised on the edge of something deeply uncertain.

Inviting emotions, messy reality, and the ebbs and flows of adult learning to be articulated is essential to understand the leadership learning process as the participants are experiencing it. Such understanding informs my ability to critically reflect on my practice and avoid the naivety that I presume to know and understand what is happening in the learning workspace (Brookfield, 1995).

I pause as I look at him. The rush of emotion and lack of eye contact is unusual. I have experienced him thus far in the programme as engaged, intuitive and considered when he speaks. However, I also recognise that I have no fundamental understanding of how it is to be him this morning or how he experiences his workplace outside this learning environment.

I respond:

"I hear you *Participant B*. The timing is clearly awful for you today. I understand."

I feel my hands move out in front of me before I speak again. I look at my hands and physically experience the sense of 'holding' the leadership learning environment at this point (Petriglieri, 2012). I try to be with the experience and not feel undermined by the resistance and struggle of the participant (Brookfield, 1986). I feel rejection in his displeasure at having to be here and a creeping feeling that the reflective dialogic style I have encouraged leaves me vulnerable to following through on what I attempt to 'teach' (Ganz & Lin, 2012). In earlier sessions of MALT, I have encouraged the framing of questions, the disruption of assumptions,

prompted links to actual experience and feelings of doubt and vulnerability (Iszatt-White et al., 2017). Having stood “into this power” with the participants, I cannot now adopt a “power over” stance (Iszatt-White et al., 2017: 590) and hope to retain the integrity of my embodied pedagogic and leadership position. I need to step in and respond.

Power makes itself known

Participant B makes eye contact with me for the first time since he began to speak. I feel an invisible but palpable energy channel opens up between him and me, and no one else speaks. Neither of us is physically standing off to each other, but I feel a gauntlet thrown down. At this halfway point through the MALT programme, there are carved out lines of "institutional, pedagogical and relational power" (Iszatt-White et al., 2017: 591); rarely articulated realities in LD workspace (Carroll & Nicholson, 2014). Power and authority are implicit in my practitioner position and expertise even as I attempt to embody a facilitative and less didactic learning environment around me (Iszatt-White et al., 2017).

I view the learning workspace as a place where the participants engage in conversation with leadership and each other (Palmer, 2017). From within that conversation can emerge expressions of adult need and pain, which benefit from exploration, contemplation, and possible proactive steps (Brookfield, 1986). Despite these beliefs, I find myself fighting the urge to defend what the programme offers, to sell the benefits of being here today, a positioning of LD as a seductive offering (Sinclair, 2009) that cares and envelops. However, such an offering does not necessarily prepare him or his colleagues for the harsher realities of organisational power inequities (Ford & Harding, 2007). I observe that at this moment of vulnerability, I am tempted to engage in the rational dialogue of the expert, to avoid what feels like a "pedagogy of the unknowable" where I cannot

know myself, others or what the impact of my actions will be (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015: 186).

What stalls my temptation towards expertise is the realisation that this struggle is not about me, although it may look like it. "Struggle" in a learning and development context is a more "nuanced and ambivalent reality" (Fleming & Spicer, 2008: 305) than simple dissatisfaction with time or place. Such a struggle is characterised by the interplay between power and resistance in an interconnected dynamic (ibid). Participant B is likely pushing against multiple competing forces he cannot influence or see (Mumby, 2005; Iszatt-White et al., 2017).

I ask myself what will help. I recognise that the communication of mandatory attendance, however it was intended, has been internalised with a 'power over' message by Participant B (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Both the senior manager and I in the role of LD Practitioner occupy that 'power over' position, "an implicit position of mastery" (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015: 186). Participant B may well believe that the SGM sent him to this room, and I am keeping him here. He is physically present in the programme, so he did not actively dismiss his manager's advice. It appears he is simultaneously consenting and resisting (Carroll & Nicholson, 2014). What is being said is not a rejection of the programme, although it may sound like it.

Reflective dialogue: engaging the unknown

"What would help you right now? I ask.

He huffs and puffs as he says:

"I don't know. More time. Less to do. Not feeling I have to do what everyone else wants me to do"

"Work with that", I suggest.

“What do you, *Participant B*, want to do?”

He pauses, looks around the group, drawing the others back in as he speaks,

“I want to be here but I want to feel better about it, and not cross about it. I do actually enjoy MALT but my head is so distracted today.”

He grabs his head in his hands and pulls it downward.

The ‘check-in’ has only heard from one person so far. I am conscious of diluting the dynamic between him and me to balance the power symmetry by inviting in more voices and engaging the natural capacity in the room to support and learn from each other as a community of learners (Mintzberg, 2012). This collective interaction sets the tone for everyone else and the day ahead. Feeling a hint of movement forward, I ask:

“What would help you to feel better about being here and what can the rest of us do to help with that?”

Questions of various types emerge (Morgan & Saxon, 1991) from the other participants, inviting participant B to attend to:

His feelings:

“What would change how you are feeling right now?”

His hypothesis:

“There is important work going on here too although it’s harder to put your finger on it. What have you gotten from MALT already and what could you get by being here today?”

His judgement:

“There’s lots to do back at work and MALT doesn’t always land on the best day of the week. It sounds like you are cross because you didn’t have a choice? Is that the problem?”

Following on from the questions, several perspectives are offered by participants. As I listen, these reflect a deepening awareness of the habitual, social, emotional and situated aspects (Scharmer, 2018) of the issue faced by Participant B.

Participant dialogue and agency

I look around and realise that the group as a whole has taken up the concern expressed by Participant B. They do not rush to agree with him as I feared when he first spoke, but engage with the issues raised. I am saying little as a reflective dialogue naturally opens up.

A fellow participant provides feedback on the contribution and value Participant B brings to the learning group for her:

“I enjoy having you here. It would be less of a group without your input. You ask questions and give good feedback”

Another shares a perspective on why the senior manager took the stance he did:

“The site needs this, needs MALT. We have to learn to lead and really do our jobs fully. [Senior manager] acted because of that, he believes in MALT”

This capacity for a "standing back" reflection (Moon, 2004: 144) on the dilemma energises and engages the group. As a probing dialogue moves around the circle, a peer-learning opportunity emerges, probing but supportive (Moon, 2004).

The demeanour of Participant B begins to visibly change as a fellow participant latches on to his earlier assertion that he enjoys attending MALT. His face relaxes, and a touch of a smile arrives.

A fellow participant says:

"We can see something happening, maybe. This could be really good for us"

Heads nod as another participant offers:

"There is an open and waiting learning place here for us. A group place that we don't get anywhere else in work. That is worth staying for. I believe it's worth staying for and I have a million jobs to do too. Trust it?"

Strengthening this capacity to engage with broader and multiple perspectives is valuable for creating embodied, collective and relational leadership (Scharmer, 2018).

Conscious of the need to move to other participants and their check-in, I ask Participant B where his head is now.

"I feel less cross. The work is still waiting for me back there, and I could do with a good day in the office but ..."

Participant B indicates a move forward in this thinking:

"I feel better able to be here after that conversation. I can't tell you exactly why but I feel calmer for talking about it and you all listening and helping."

There is value to be gained from being here. I know it is important in the bigger scheme of things.

As I said, I like it and enjoy it; I just couldn't see that clearly for a while. Thanks for that".

His physical participation as such is not voluntary. However, his willingness to view participation as a good use of his time appears to have moved him to a place of consent with agency rather than consent with dissent (Carroll & Nicholson, 2014), a position that risked physical or mental withdrawal by him.

As I turn to the remaining participants to invite them to 'check-in', I acknowledge to myself that despite brimming with frustration as he spoke, Participant B believed that he *could* speak and that he would be respected for his "uniqueness, self-worth and separateness" (Brookfield, 1986: 13). He trusted that the evolving learning climate (Knowles, 1980) would support him as he worked his way through his struggle.

The remaining participants 'check-in'. They are contemplative in what they share with two participants reflecting that:

"it was useful to be able to be honest about what you feel"

"It is not always okay to do what [Participant B] did."

Without revisiting what has just transpired and being careful not to judge or reopen it, I choose to reaffirm what the participants themselves have raised and how they have acted. I say that this is a shared collaborative space for learning (Western, 2013) within which we are real people learning at work (Gray, 2001). Real dilemmas, physical and emotional, happen (Newman, 2012). Our leadership challenge is not whether we raise issues or not. It is how we listen and engage

when someone bravely shares what is important to them in this arena (Brown, 2018).

Conclusion

As a form of expressive and dialogic inquiry, narrative seeks living, open dialogue, looking to learn from and live with difference (Bochner & Riggs, 2014). When learning boundaries are stretched into uncharted space (Palmer, 2017) as they are in this narrative, the 'holding' of a trusting and democratic learning environment (Heifetz, 1998; Schapiro, 2009) feels like a significant practitioner challenge. To welcome struggle and resistance and not feel challenged or undermined as an LD practitioner because participants disagree or express dissent is challenging in that moment of occurrence (Brookfield, 1986).

Heifetz (1998) describes it as "lonely on the point" (p. 250), with those taking responsibility for the holding environment, not themselves expected to be held. On the one hand, this narrative reminds me that in LD, I do the holding alone. I run the risk of the moral regret that accompanies being on point (Heifetz, 1998). The psychological and emotional stakes are significant. I balance this "pressure cooker" (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997: 126) all the time, moving between turning up the heat to stretch leadership thinking and releasing the steam of distress caused by disorientation and struggle (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). To do this, I stand into my practice beliefs and skill, asking questions, reflecting feelings and reinforcing the learning climate so that it does not unravel.

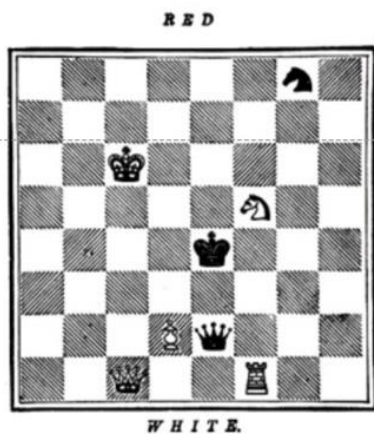
Fostering a reflective dialogue signals recognising the importance of developing a sense of their personal power and self-worth (Brookfield, 1986), a central principle of adult education. As the programme has progressed, the group's increased ability to provide the holding (Heifetz, 1998; Schapiro, 2009) for each other is evident. This narrative reminds me that I become less crucial to the process, allowing the

unspoken lines of power (Iszatt-White et al., 2017) in the learning workspace to soften and bend, engaging dialogue and choice instead (Lange, 2009) and creating a greater sense of collective ownership of learning and leadership.

Chapter 7 contains the final two narratives 6 and 7 drawn from later stages of MALT. Interconnected concerns of knowledge, power and pedagogy come to the fore as practitioner and participant consider how leadership can be enacted in the workplace, collectively and individually, as the programme reaches its final stages.

Chapter 7 – Learning Transfer and Endings

Narrative 6: Shifting the Beam



Narrative Progression

1. *An Invitation to begin, an invitation to step in*
2. *Pedagogic Tensions*
3. *Learning from and with each other*
4. *Brave Moves*
5. *Toolbox Tensions*
6. *Shifting the Beam*
7. *An Invitation to Agency*

'Take care of yourself! Screamed the White Queen, seizing Alice's hair with both her hands.

'Something's going to happen!'

And then (as Alice afterwards described it) all sorts of things happened in a moment.

From: Lewis Carroll "Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There"
[1871] (2016: 135)

Illustration adapted by the researcher from the original.

Introduction

Narrative Inquirers write about “people, places and things as becoming rather than being” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 145). Earlier narratives have manifest themes of knowledge, power and agency emerging from practitioner engagement with participatory learning, experiential role-play, and reflective dialogue within the workspace for leadership learning. "Shifting the Beam" has two meanings, both of which become clear as the re-storying progresses.

Early modules in the MALT LD programme, like many similar initiatives, primarily focus on building the skills, knowledge and understanding to take effective individual leadership (Van Velsor et al., 2010). In the first interpretation of shifting the beam, this narrative explores what happens when the LD practitioner deliberately shifts the beam of attention to the broader perspective of leadership as collective practice (Western, 2013; Scharmer, 2016). This shift occurs within the situated context of change at the JOF production site and against the backdrop of enhanced role responsibility for the participants on MALT.

Shifting emphasis in the learning workspace can be challenging for participants. Drawing attention to a social, relational, and responsible perspective can challenge existing beliefs and ways of knowing in the workplace (Jarvis, 2010). As a result, a host of themes relating to the discourses of knowledge and power can emerge as the learning system is encouraged to view and challenge itself and its' collective leadership responsibility (Scharmer, 2018), often for the first time. Shifting the beam is also a nod to the perspectival shift, which can occur as the change in emphasis within the learning workspace prompts a revisiting of the participant frames of reference through which leadership is viewed (Mezirow, 2009).

The second interpretation of shifting the beam applies to revisiting my frames of reference several times throughout the narrative (Taylor, 1998). MALT is rooted in a practice epistemology that supports individual development but emphasises

collective agency (Simpson, 2016). Delivering an LD programme from this viewpoint necessitates fostering a collective critical perspective through encouraging dialogue, fostering reflection, and working within the locus and context for lived leadership (Taylor, 1998; Dugan & Humbles, 2018). Shifting attention in the learning workspace from individual leader capacity to leadership capacity (Day et al., 2009) in this way is a challenge for the LD practitioner, not just for the participants.

This narrative unfolds over a half-day in the MALT learning workspace. The day opens on an inner struggle between the dual voices of my practitioner fear and agency in the process of critically reflecting on the day ahead. My identity as insider-researcher (Costley et al., 2010) competes with my practitioner consciousness and further stokes concerns of power and agency.

Later that morning, the participants engage in an experiential learning exercise to practice 'courageous conversations'. Arising from the exercise, the participants acknowledge and interrogate the wider contextual and social dynamics in which their leadership capacity is located (Dugan & Humbles, 2018). This brings them, and me as practitioner, to a threshold moment (Meyer & Land, 2003). Epistemic assumptions about leadership (Kitchener & King, 1990), what is known about who takes leadership, and why, are unearthed. Certainty about what the participants know (Mezirow, 2009) begins to change. This part of the narrative focuses on my pedagogical holding of this disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 2009) as it enters the learning workspace.

Thirdly and finally, the group engages in a reflective dialogue. Learning to reason for themselves (Mezirow, 2009) through advancing and assessing reasons for their judgement proves challenging. I consider the nature of engaging at the intersection of theory and practice, occupying multiple places simultaneously (Schapiro et al., 2017). The tensions inherent in holding the safety and the challenges (Schapiro, 2009) of the learning workspace are explored.

Critical reflection: Practitioner fear and agency intertwined

Inner voices

It is late evening in my hotel room.

My head is swirling with unsettled thoughts. My shoulders are tense. I cannot seem to get them down from my ears this evening. I plan to open a bigger stage tomorrow, a discussion about the need for collective leadership. It will tie the programme right back to the company culture. It feels like I am taking the participants and myself out of a skills and communication bubble and into a tougher version of the real world.

Although we have worked with real-life issues all along, why does it feel like it will be hard?

I fear the participants will not see the need for debate, reflection, challenge and wonder what the hell I am doing. Will they think I am a crazy woman????

I fear I will incite a riot if I light too vigorous a sparkalthough I think that is less likely.

Why am I afraid??

I am really fearful that they won't go there with me, out of their own fear, or reluctance or politeness for their employer (which is a good and caring employer, hugely respected and generous in many ways). I see glimpses of pushback and the ability to be critical, but I suspect they could see dialogue as odd and unsettling and out of step with the programme so far...

I am most fearful that.....

.....all I open is a window into helplessness.

I have been here before on other programmes... I initiate and encourage a conversation which leads to enhanced awareness and insight and energy enters the room.... but falls on the hurdle of institutional inertia, nothing changes, the people who should change are not here, people ask why us, or push back that it is too hard..... and I feel my lack of power, I can't take them any further!

Extracted from practitioner reflexive diary 13/12/2018

I re-read what I have written the following morning over breakfast. I am taken aback that I used the word “*fear*” five times... I observe my language as tentative... “*glimpses*”, “*suspect*”, “*here before*”. I recognise my own past experiences crowding around me, warning me that opening such an organisational dialogic space is a fraught activity, an exercise in reinforcing “*helplessness*” (Ashkenas, 2012). I push back my chair and walk out of the hotel, trying to ground myself for the day ahead. As I have done at different stages of research and practice, I consider which elements in the “braided design” (Weis & Fine, 2012: 174) of people, place, and context can bring clarity as I march around the car park to clear my head.

Practitioner agency under threat

I turn away from the car park and walk into the inner courtyard of the hotel. As thoughts crowd in, I become aware that I am physically *marching*, my pounding feet echoing my racing thoughts. I slow my gait as the reality of my anxiety for what has *not yet occurred* strikes me. My practitioner agency to do and to lead is under assault from my inner voices of resistance, fear and judgement (Scharmer, 2018), and I have not yet started the day. Why I wonder? And why now?

In attending to the forces swirling my consciousness, I surface a question that I suspect goes to the core of my practitioner fear for the day ahead:

To what end do I open critically reflective dialogue about collective capacity for leadership in the bigger organisational context?

I hold an unresolved tension in my practice regarding the efficacy of engaging with collective leadership capacity. Many leadership efforts fail because of organisational factors such as lack of real support for learning and change, entrenched behaviours and little acknowledgement for leadership effort (Ready & Conger, 2003).

As I sit and reflect on a hard outdoor bench at 8am in mid-December, I wonder why I am overcome by this concern *today*? I have been aware of this concern in my practice for several years.

Researcher identity crowds the space

I realise that this question has attained more significant uncertainty in my mind as an insider-researcher (Costley et al., 2010). Reflecting on my familiar LD world through the less familiar perspective and purpose of adult education, I have reached an inner place of greater doubt. A significant question bounces around my head:

Can existing systems in organisations be challenged and changed as a result of reflective dialogue?

As a researcher, I am increasingly aware that there is much that LD practitioners can take from the shared philosophical foundations of adult education and HRD (Yang, 2004), where liberalism and progressivism can be observed in both. However, a radicalism exists in adult education's root system, which does not form the basis of HRD (Yang, 2004). This is a messy position. I recognise it as essential to occupy, but I do not know what to do about it on a freezing bench in December.

I acknowledge that I have not sufficiently explicated my position in my thinking. I have been working to an implicit value (Senge, 2006) that critical shared dialogue in LD leads to change. I get closer to the heart of the issue:

Can I honestly say this is true from my past experience?

I am deeply fearful that I am merely paying lip service to reflective engagement, dialogue and democracy in the learning workspace for leadership. When the most likely outcome in LD is an energetic discussion - followed by reinforcement of the existing order, proving to those who engage in challenge and critique towards change and collective responsibility for leadership that it was never there for the taking.

I am unsure of the answers, but I recognise that I am unearthing appropriate questions to take me into greater reflection (David, Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2013). Discourses of power and agency, mine and the participants, crowd my field of vision, discourses which I should attend to and read (Tisdell, 1993). I am deep in the "swampy lowlands" (Schön, 1987) of uncertainty more than halfway through the delivery of the LD programme. Epistemological questioning is feeding pedagogic doubt. Increasing my researcher knowing through engagement with adult education and learning theory appears to be triggering a decrease in my practitioner certainty (Phillion & Connelly, 2004). My concerns will not be resolved in an hour or a morning. I hear fundamental questions of practice and intent in my unsettling reflections.

I have ceased walking, but time continues to march mercilessly on. It is 8:20 am, and I need to get to the Site Managers cottage to set up for the 9 am start. All the while, I am aware that my internal dialogue continues like a ticker-tape. I feel like I am moving towards the session, having laid down sticks of psychological dynamite (Brookfield, 1990). Reflexivity can help "construct a bridge between research and practice" (Etherington, 2004: 31), but I cannot cross it just yet. I take stock of my thinking. I recognise that my recent engagement with adult learning theory, along with adopting an unfamiliar identity as a researcher, are both niggling my deeply rooted frames of reference (King, 2004). It feels like I am attempting to differentiate these multiple aspects and integrate them into my practice in a meaningful way (Mezirow, 1991). I am at a point of transition, I realise.

As I drive to the site, I consider what I can draw on to direct me without knowing where I need to go? Where is my compass? (Bolton, 2014). A social constructivist approach to reflexivity invites me outwards into shared language, avoiding the limitations of a personally subjective view alone (Gergen & Gergen, 1991). I remind myself firmly but kindly that philosophically I am committed to a model of leadership which is collective and responsibility driven (e.g. Western, 2013; Scharmer, 2016, 2018). Pedagogically I invite participation, reflective dialogue, active engagement and challenge (e.g. Brookfield, 1986, 1995; hooks, 1994; Raelin, 2016; Dugan, 2011). These form my compass (Bolton, 2014). Together they represent the place from which I draw agency without knowing exactly how.

I can draw from another source outside myself. Practically, experientially, psychological safety and trust have been growing with this group of participants. Together we have already encountered and worked our way through periods of difficulty (Rowland, 2017). I can draw on the here and now. I trust the group.

I arrive and park. I have trust, using my compass to guide me, at least enough to begin (Bolton, 2014). If I approach the session today with generosity and curiosity, choosing to sit with not knowing (Gerber, 1994), perhaps the wisdom to understand more about my vexing questions will emerge? I am not entirely convinced as I walk towards the Dining Room to begin the day. I recognise that I have not gotten to the root of my fear, something I recognise impacts my pedagogic self-efficacy (Raelin, 2009), but it will have to wait.

Pedagogic choices invite a learning threshold

Shifting the beam

Two hours later, the participants are completing an experiential exercise in courageous conversations. Courageous conversations access deeper purpose, challenge existing habits, aid the formation of new ones, and align expectations for

the future. Such conversations usually involve sharing feedback that the other party may not want to hear or does not see in the workplace. The participants are practising in triads, using real-life issues and concerns. Each participant is getting the opportunity to deliver, receive and observe a courageous conversation in turn. Working in triads provides an opportunity to connect with their own and others' experiences and develop their capacity for self-evaluation and reflection (Graves & Jones, 2008).

I anticipate that the participants may find the practice of courageous conversations challenging. The construct as positioned in MALT requires the participants to balance a performance standpoint with a coaching perspective (Whitmore, 1992). Front line managers such as those in attendance today have not traditionally owned messages around performance, behaviour or attitude on this site. Such ownership has resided with senior leaders alone. As a result of changes to roles and responsibilities, and supported by MALT, it is expected that the participants will engage in these types of conversations going forward.

I walk around the room "eavesdropping" (Mintzberg, 2012: 208) for language and tone from a slight distance. I listen carefully:

"I can't do this. I don't want to be tough on you"

"This is hard, she keeps giving me excuses"

"It's really (senior manager) who does this - I just tell her and she deals with it. Why am I the one having the conversation?"

I identify fear emerging as the inner voices of resistance (Scharmer, 2018) seek to guard the threshold of something new and challenging. I capture the emerging thoughts on a flipchart:

"Scarily like real-life."

“Run and hide”

“What if the conversation comes back at us?”

“Don’t have the stripes [*seniority*] to have this conversation”

(extracted from flipchart notes 13/12/2018)

An interruption is underway

This practice session is unearthing a long-held cultural norm and bringing it to conscious awareness, troubling conventional wisdom (Tourish & Barge, 2010) around who takes leadership on the production site and why. The courageous conversations exercise, positioned pedagogically by me as an act of deliberate learning (Moon, 2004), has interrupted the participants' ways of knowing.

I feel and hear a new language, a different type of pushback than I have heard previously. Whether it is termed “disruption” (Scharmer, 2018: 4), “dis-equilibrium” (Van Velsor et al, 2010: 9), “identity defence” (Illeris, 2018: 9), “disjuncture” (Jarvis, 2018: 21), “destabilization” (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002: 623) or a “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 1981: 7); an interruption is underway. There is a sense of stopping in place and seeing something in a new or changed way that is not immediately reconcilable. This interruption or disruption can, I hope, trigger reflection, new meaning-making (Mezirow, 2009) and leadership action (Scharmer, 2018).

This sense of a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1981) continues as I am told:

“That’s not how we have done it before”

“The union wouldn’t like it, we’re asking for trouble”

I provide support, reassuring and encouraging the participants to keep going.

In response, one triad comment:

“We don’t like you quite so much this morning. This is hard!”

I do not deny what the participants are feeling. I acknowledge that it is tangible and real for them right now. As I step back and look around at the triads hard at work, I find myself concerned with the concept of holding once again (Heifetz, 1998; Kegan, 1982). However, even as I do, I recognise that I cannot and should not look to displace or absorb the fear or discomfort attached to the current exercise. Transitional anxieties within the holding environment (Schapiro, 2009) of the learning workspace are to be expected (Van Buskirk & McGrath, 1999), as is normal over the life course and development pathway (Kegan, 1982). I recognise the parallel to my own early morning engagement with anxiety, my “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 1981: 7) of identity and unresolved perspectives.

Learning theory often assumes a relatively stable social context within which an individual participant experiences personal disorientation (Nicolaidis & Marsick, 2016). This is not the case in the learning workspace. The context for, and nature of, who takes leadership (Bryman, 2013) on the site is changing, and that awareness is starting to emerge in the practising triads.

Choosing to work with, not against, fear

Once the exercise in triads is individually complete and debriefed, I invite the group to wheel their chairs back into a circle. I wheel my chair in to join the circle, looking to deliberately flatten the power in the room (Mintzberg, 2012). I recognise a threshold moment for myself and them as I sit down to join them. I suspect that we are about to open a new way of thinking about leadership, an interpretation that was not in the room previously (Meyer & Land, 2003). Indeed, I hear the emergence of a view which needs attending to as I moved around the room:

“So how are you feeling after that practice session?” I ask.

I do not have to ask twice:

“What gives us the right to have these conversations?”

“Should we speak to people who work for us about such things?”

Several worry that they:

“might not get it right”

and it will become:

“a bigger “issue”. You really don’t want to get the union involved and that’s what would likely happen”

“Why do we have to do the dirty work?”

Others offer:

“This is a small site and we all know each other”

“What was wrong with the way it was?”

As expected, discourses of power and agency tumble forth in response to my question. I hear assumptions about authority, context, relationships, and previously certain interpretations becoming uncertain (Kitchener & King, 1990). Sitting with the group in the circle, I choose to work with the resistance I anticipated and invited. Using this as a site of live leadership learning, I hope with due care that I can facilitate a process from which challenge, inquiry and dissent can service learning (Carroll & Nicholson, 2014).

Several belief systems intersect at this point, informing my pedagogical choice to keep going with this learning modality, which works *with* rather than *against* the emerging fears and concerns.

The first belief system I draw on relates to leadership. Developing leadership using a practice orientation necessitates eliciting the more dynamic social processes of the participants (Raelin, 2009). This is the ambitious agenda for MALT; using, real, emergent concerns and reflections as the basis for a more questioning, critical and reflective stance that goes beyond habitual thinking (Western, 2013; Scharmer, 2018).

The second belief system driving my choice relates to knowledge. I see knowledge for leadership learning as being generated in the midst of action (Raelin, 2009). This engagement with the “microdynamics of everyday life” (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992: 437) sits in contrast with the pervasive discourses of leadership as heroic, privileged and elite (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Bryman, 2013) and the ubiquity of competency models which serve to define without adequately contextualising leadership (Carroll et al., 2008).

The third and final belief system driving my choice at this point is drawn from adult learning theory (Freire, 1972; Brookfield, 1986, 1995; Mezirow, 1991, 1999). Adult learning aims to meet meaningful and relevant learning needs while also attending to inclusion, participation, critical reflection and representation (Nicolaidis & Marsick, 2016). Along with individual experience, critical reflection and dialogue are privileged for their ability to enable the emergence of new meaning-making processes while guiding practice and action (Taylor, 2009). These approaches bring into consciousness frames of reference (Mezirow, 2009). In the learning workspace, these frames of reference include assumptions, beliefs and predispositions about who takes leadership, when and why (Dugan, 2017). These frames of reference can be critically considered and potentially changed if problematic (Taylor, 2009).

These three belief systems place me paradigmatically and pedagogically where I want to be: opening a realistic, action-oriented dialogue amid everyday dynamics that is participatory and critically reflective.

As the group takes a stretch break ahead of a further meaning-making process, my inner voices of morning fear return. I realise that I set a very high, possibly mammoth expectation on the space for dialogue. As a rationale for practice, my beliefs are strong. I draw on Brookfield (1995), who maintains a "healthy scepticism" (p. 295) as to the practicality and sanity of continually exemplifying an approach such as I envisage. Instead, he suggests that the philosophical commitment to a critical perspective is essential to good educational practice and, after that, to essentially trust me and the process (Brookfield, 1995).

I summon my inner voice of agency and work with the fear. As the participants return from their stretch, I acknowledge to myself that in taking a reflective and dialogic stance rather than a prescriptive one (Shotter, 2006), I am choosing to robustly hold (Heifetz, 1998; Schapiro, 2009) both the participants and the learning objective (Nicolaidis & Marsick, 2016) and trust what emerges.

I have no idea where this is going to go, but I trust the group. Moreover, I trust myself.

Dialogue in a time of disorientation

Opening a space for dialogue, I ask questions and draw attention to possible connections, feelings and meaning-making. I make it clear to the participants that I do not have answers. I draw their attention to the comments, feelings and reactions in the earlier exercise. From there, I encourage the conversation into a broader discussion about who takes leadership on the site and how and why.

An intense dialogue ensues.

Some of the participants do not want the collective responsibility for leadership. It sounds like they want to abdicate it:

"It sounds like it is my responsibility now. When I was a (junior role), I could say, '(senior manager) said so, and I don't know or agree either'. But now I can't or at least you are telling me I shouldn't!"

Others want to defer to a higher authority, perpetuating the existing locus of leadership with a select few who have positional authority (Bennis, 2007):

"It will be hard not to be able to use '(senior manager) says' or '(senior manager) wants'....they carry more authority than we do..."

Others fear exposure if they step into a shared responsibility for leadership and are unsure where their perceived new power and knowledge is coming from:

"Feels like we are being pushed out there on the front line... Do we know enough? Are we able? Do people see us as having a right to...?"

Others identify the potential conflict associated with occupying a leadership stance:

"It's a hard thing to be brave and say things people might not like to hear. It's all well and good but when it comes to the meeting you might get a lot of pushback. It's not safe"

The over and back of the dialogue is replete with messages of identity, expertise, hierarchical position and power (Nohria & Khurana, 2010). In the beginning, the participants look to me after each movement in the locus of resistance.

I make it clear that I do not have the answer, a position which frustrates some:

"Why are we talking about it so if you don't have answers?"

"Is that not what your job is?"

“So you are saying we just have to change. There’s no choice...”

While enabling this session and guiding the process, I feel and learn my way along with them; practitioner and participants are jointly learning (Freire, 1972). I am deliberately trying to support them in constructing new knowledge by examining the premise of leadership and redefining it for themselves in this context and situation (Mezirow, 1999). I step into problem-posing using what I hear to ask questions and connect emerging perspectives and frustrations. The balancing act is challenging at this intersection of theory and practice, occupying multiple places at the same time (Schapiro et al., 2017)

As an LD practitioner, I have expertise, knowledge and experience to share about leadership. As a pedagogue, I am invested in the process of drawing attention, through dialogue, to assumptions in thinking and asking questions that encourage more significant excavation of statements and positions. As insider-researcher, my inner voices return to remind me that I have not yet reconciled my own competing frames of reference regarding the practice I am currently engaged in.

I choose to trust pedagogy. Paradigmatically I do not believe that a cognitive understanding of leadership alone is sufficient for leadership learning (Carroll et al., 2008). My insider-researcher struggle (Costley et al., 2010) I need to deal with elsewhere. I silence the inner voices.

Listening for the edge of meaning

In choosing pedagogy, I bring my attention back to the dynamics in the learning workspace. I observe that many statements and positions are being taken with little willingness to explore alternatives or go further. They are finding their voice. Nevertheless, the ability to name their world, and in so doing, construct new meaning for themselves (Freire, 1970) is still out of sight. I listen in as I wonder why this is so. I am listening now for the transitional space of knowing and meaning-making (Berger, 2004). I look to understand the limitations of their knowledge and where the stretch is opening up. In this way, I hope to guide the dialogue by paying

attention not just to the conditions for it but the nature of focus (Taylor, 2009). I come out of my head and listen intently.

It becomes clear as I encourage the dialogue along that the participants were informed of their managerial responsibility for taking day-to-day leadership for people and processes:

“We have new roles. We are managers of people now. In a way we haven’t been before, not properly”

MALT was created to provide the framework for managing and leading successfully, and the LD programme was provided to support the development needs associated with the transition.

What I suspect has not happened until now is the emotional and psychological transition associated with giving up an old identity and way of being and moving to somewhere new (Petriglieri, 2012). I relate to this “bewilderment” (Berger, 2004: 342), having wrestled with questions I cannot yet answer driven by engaging with my researcher identity just this morning.

The disorientating dilemma of today is less of a pushback against the expectation or a lack of information than I initially believed:

“It is all agreed. Negotiated with the unions and all”

“This is what the site needs. You can’t have 7 people doing all the managing and leading when we are growing. There is so much change with new processes and more people than ever”

The invitation today to shift the beam of focus from individual leader skills to consideration of leadership in a lived way as an embodied collective practice

(Raelin, 2016) has made it actual and imminent in a way it simply was not previously. Leadership has been made real and discussed in the learning workspace.

Fully embodying the holding environment

Again, I find myself on point (Heifetz, 1998). It is different this time. Greater urgency is in the air as I consider my options with an enhanced understanding of the nature of disorientation for the group and for me.

The holding environment for LD enables growth, potential and transformation (Kegan, 1982). Embedded in the holding environment, participants receive confirmation of themselves as a group of able and self-directed learners. They feel the support of a community of learners even as they experience contradictions and challenges, as they have today and in earlier sessions (Kegan, 1982; Schapiro, 2009). They have not substantially experienced until today a different function of the holding environment, creativity (Schapiro, 2009).

Creativity necessitates opening possibilities while acknowledging the anxiety associated with the disorienting dilemma (Schapiro, 2009). Creativity in the holding environment opens new ways of looking at change, adding new and considered ingredients to the mix in paradigms, perspectives, and experiences that encourage possibilities. In this way, the holding environment provides continuing support as participants "cool down" (Schapiro, 2009: 97) from the heat of critique and imagine new ways.

I can act as a conduit for dialogue as a practitioner, recognising that I am not merely a bystander (Brookfield, 1995). I, too, have wisdom to share. The most challenging place to occupy is where the past is untenable, but the future is not yet clear and attainable (Berger, 2004). There are "costs and consequences" (Hoggan, Mälkki & Finnegan, 2017: 53) to adopting new perspectives, a position to which I relate. I choose wisdom that will enable a reflection on frames of reference, not simply dictate what should replace old assumptions.

I stay sitting as I speak to my own experience in and around organisations and work with leadership. I share my “apprenticeship” and how it shaped my beliefs. I tell it as an unfolding story that has emerged for me over many years of working and reflection (Bolton, 2014). I get rapt attention. I conclude by saying that I have come to my understanding and beliefs over many years. While the company expects them to take leadership, guided and supported by the MALT framework and this programme, they can and should come to their own understanding of what leadership means for them. It will not happen today or tomorrow, or even while I am with them. Leadership development is an unfolding process over time (Kellerman, 2018). Figuring it out can be a messy, frustrating business in the day-to-day (Carroll et al., 2008).

There are nods, and several participants share snippets of past development. I have chosen to input into the dialogue after their initial discussion and in response to it. I have done this not from a theoretical but an experiential and embodied position. I have a heightened awareness that no pedagogical design can determine the learning outcome independent of the participants’ experience and existing meaning structures (Hoggan et al., 2017).

The dialogue swirls and moves until the group reach what feels like an apex with a question that encapsulates the discursive threads of power, change and agency. A participant asks of the group:

“Is there a real commitment to a new way?”

I am aware that this question is essential to the emerging concept of leadership identity in the room (Kegan, 1982), which is tentative at best.

Encouraging the sharing of reflections, often roughly formed and emotionally felt, even in an invited dialogue such as this, could be seen as disruptive and challenging of management. Reflection in this way can be damaging rather than helpful to learning (Siebert & Costley, 2013), leaving more rather than less confusion in its

wake. A significant perspectival shift is not ideal in every learning environment (Hoggan et al., 2017). MALT as a programme and I as LD practitioner step into the lifelong learning process and the evolving culture at the JOF production site in the midst (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The participants continue once MALT is complete and I have left.

One participant voices the concern:

“Will we really be having challenging conversations, backed up by senior management when we need it?”

Will we be sharing in decision making? Can I feel confident to speak out, have a view beyond my own small area, step up and be brave? See something that needs doing and organise it?”

Will we be able to disagree and know it is okay to do so?”

With this question, I suspect the participants have touched the root of my fear this morning, which cautioned my agentic practitioner self to be careful. I feel it like a trapped nerve lodged in my body.

I pause before responding.

I have felt for many years that at this point, I hold, unfairly, all temporal perspectives on leadership, past, present and future. I have felt the need to justify past leadership irrespective of the organisation or any intimate knowledge of it. “Different times”, I have said, “old ways”, “it is that type of business”, “they did not know any better”. I have also dangled the future leadership promise, making commitments I would not be here to keep – “they definitely mean it”, “you will see”; “lots of time and money invested”. Without conscious thought, I have encouraged a performative (Bierema, 2009) measurement of leadership success – highlighting time, money, investment, glossy materials as evidence of change. As an incentive for shifting leadership perspectives (Pfeffer, 2005), I have promised a

frame of reference (Mezirow, 2009) to which I cannot attest and is economic (Dierksmeier, 2016).

I cannot do it again. If I do, I become inauthentic in my practice (Taylor, 2009). In the push to make new meaning, under pressure to succeed and feeling alone on point (Heifetz, 1998), I recognise I can become inauthentic (Cranton, 2016) in my holding of the learning workspace. In the balance between safety and provocation (Schapiro, 2009), I can find myself applying a soothing balm to the provocation while standing within it.

I choose what I say with care, holding only the here and now:

“I do not have the answers to your concerns. I cannot prescribe ready-made rational solutions for fears and concerns which emerge from how you feel when I don’t live in the organisation every day like you do.

I hear your fears, I know they are real for you, and I empathise with them. I have been there too, so they are honest, and change is hard. I cannot guarantee that you will be backed 100% every time something occurs. Nobody can.

I do not have a magic wand to ensure the future looks bright and rosy for you as aspiring leaders”.

I get some puzzled looks, but they listen. I move toward creative holding (Schapiro, 2009) as I say:

“What I do know is that together we can work through what you can think, feel or do to ensure that the conditions for leadership come alive around you. I’d like to focus back on “you” collectively rather than “they” although I know “they” play a big part in how you take your learning into your roles. There is bravery and trust needed here and your actions toward leadership can bring “them” along the road with you”.

I am mindful not to climb onto a soapbox of eulogy. I do not want to replace reality with rhetoric (Usher et al., 1997) as I rebalance the holding environment and my position in it. This is a practical action-oriented workspace in a practical action-oriented business. I finish with:

“How many beliefs or thoughts in life do we move past and choose to leave behind because they don’t serve us anymore? I suggest together we step into what you individually and collectively can make happen, what your capacity is to make the change happen rather than wait on it.”

I get subdued agreement:

“I guess we could”

“Maybe so”

“What would that look like?”

I call a natural break sensing perhaps a need for the participants to dialogue with each other away from the formal setting of the learning workspace.

When the participants return, there is modest energy towards further dialogue. I can see that they have spoken over the break and while some display their reluctance through their body language, several display eagerness to begin. I encourage the group to wheel their chairs into a loose circular shape and explore the collective disorienting dilemma (Schapiro et al., 2017) in a discursive and future-facing way. Not everyone is active or contributes, and I do not push. The transitional space of knowing and meaning-making (Berger, 2004) is apparent. Over time, I have come to know the participants in the learning workspace and recognise that this journey will be different and take longer for some than others. The cooling off (Schapiro, 2009) in the holding environment has begun as the participants offer suggestions into the workspace, tentative and unformed in this transitional space.

Most begin with:

"We could"

"I guess"

"Maybe"

"What if"

"We are a large group..."

I nod, support, connect suggestions, listen and reflect back on what I hear.

As time is up, I affirm that what we are engaged in, as one participant observed:

"making leadership ours, in our way, kinda?"

Further, it is indeed:

"a hard thing to do",

as a participant reflects while she packs up her bags for the day.

Conclusion

There is a view that the "teaching" of leadership is almost "relentless in its sunniness" (Kellerman, 2018: 97). Drawing on the Alice quote which prefaced this narrative, all sorts of things can happen in a moment! As evidenced in this re-storying, shifting the beam to collective concerns can produce hardships that manifest as resistance when practitioners and participants experience disjunctures (Jarvis, 2010).

The disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991), which brings the group to a fundamental consideration of leadership, poses a pedagogical and paradigmatic challenge. Fostering new knowledge is elusive and an ever-shifting approach,

rooted in ideals, but the practicalities at the coalface of delivery can be substantially different (Taylor, 2009) as I experienced in the course of one morning. My fears mirrored that of the group; their leadership challenge is emerging in parallel with my disorienting dilemma of knowledge and power triggered by my strengthening researcher identity.

Providing a holding environment (Kegan, 1982; Heifetz, 1998) in the face of resistance to new meaning-making is challenging but possible. The transition space from old to new ways of knowing (Berger, 2004) is replete with tensions, anxiety, and a desire to push back. I felt it in my research position; individual participants verbalised it in the learning workspace, and the collective group demonstrated it. Vulnerability in the form of fear and anxiety can lead to new ways of knowing, a necessary if not always a welcome part of learning towards changing problematic frames of reference (Mezirow, 2009).

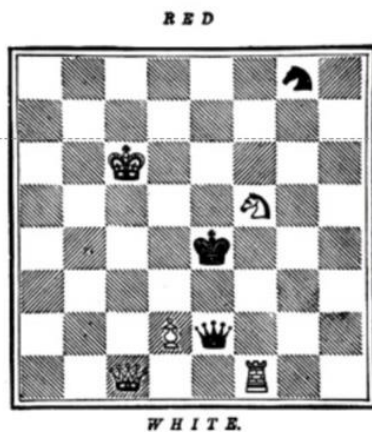
I have noted on several occasions the importance of aligning the topic I teach with the way I teach it, embodying in my practice the leadership I aspire to for the participants (Ganz & Lin, 2012). I have a deeper awareness following this narrative experience that to help participants approach their edge of transitional leadership meaning-making (Berger, 2004), embracing and working with my own unpleasant edge emotions (Hoggan et al., 2017) is necessary and vital. In working with rather than against my own fears and vulnerability, I authentically acknowledge the difficulty of being at the edge of transition and the courage it takes to grow from there (Berger, 2004).

As evidenced by this narrative, despite the pedagogic challenges, dialogue is a powerful means to surface a critical consciousness in the learning workspace. Critical pedagogy seeks to strike a delicate balance between social change and helping participants acquire personal critical thinking skills (Maviglia, 2015). Liberating talent means liberating dissent (Western, 2013: 311) and with it the possibility of surfacing messy, fluctuating realities (Chia, 2004) along with the voices of cynicism or resistance (Scharmer, 2018). Accessing and working with resistance

re-envisaged as productive resistance, which fuels learning and leadership coping, is challenging but possible (Carroll & Nicholson, 2014).

The seventh and final narrative, which follows, focuses on endings and the invitation to agency offered by completing the MALT programme and leaving the shared learning workspace.

Narrative 7 – An Invitation to Agency



Narrative Progression

1. *An Invitation to begin, an invitation to step in*
2. *Pedagogic Tensions*
3. *Learning from and with each other*
4. *Brave Moves*
5. *Toolbox Tensions*
6. *Shifting the Beam*
7. *An Invitation to Agency*

'I wouldn't mind being a Pawn, if only I might join – though of course I should LIKE to be a Queen, best'

From: Lewis Carroll "Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There"
[1871] (2016:32)

Illustration adapted by the researcher from the original.

Introduction

The title of this narrative, "An Invitation to Agency", purposely connects the formal learning processes' ending with the beginning, nearly seven months earlier. At that time, the participants were invited to step with me into a workspace for leadership learning. Since then, they have embraced reflective thinking, engaged in experiential learning and dialogue (Moon, 2004). Along the way, they experienced disorientating dilemmas (Mezirow, 2009) and struggled with resistance (Carroll & Nicholson, 2014). Their frames of reference (Mezirow, 2009) were challenged when the concept of what leadership means on their site and at this time was considered. Alongside them, I have explored a pedagogy for LD, watching for how knowledge is created and examining the impact of power as manifested in the learning workspace for leadership. I have engaged reflexively with my positionality and identity as an LD practitioner and researcher along the way, explicating my pedagogic knowledge and power.

I consider several themes related to pedagogy, knowledge and power within this final narrative. Firstly, I consider how I invite participant learning to manifest itself in the learning workspace as MALT draws to a close. I do this through a re-storying of a final-day exercise. In this exercise, the participants are invited to reflect on their leadership learning and share this with the broader group. As the exercise begins, I consider the perspectives from which I listen for and engage with participant learning and agency, the capacity of the participants to take action as a result of learning (after Tourish, 2014: 80). Post-programme, I reflect on the nature of practitioner achievement and satisfaction and an organisational measure of success, the 'I Say' culture survey.

Engaging with endings – inviting learning to manifest in the workspace

Endings in LD are strange things. The holding environment for learning (Kegan, 1982; Heifetz, 1998; Schapiro, 2009), which has sustained and nourished struggles and difficulty, challenge and progress (Rowland, 2017), is about to disband in its physical form. I am conscious as I begin the day that modelling leadership in the learning space (Ganz & Lin, 2012) is as much about managing endings and times of change and transition as it is beginnings and creation. The almost universal avoidance of endings, leaving much unacknowledged and unsaid (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 2013), is not on the agenda for today.

Late morning on the final module of MALT, I invite the participants to consider how they take their understanding of leadership back to the organisation and their day-to-day roles. Connecting with where the journey began, I remind them of the Introductory pictures, where they shared a snapshot of themselves in their world of work. At this point, I invite them to consider:

“What do you know about yourself, your role and the context for leadership since we began.

As we finish the formal programme, what will taking leadership look like to you? And to those you work with? What will they see you do?”

I contextualise this invitation by invoking the broader context and learning pedagogies the participants have engaged with previously:

"It might be helpful to consider what you learned from the role-play exercises and dialogue, group experiential learning and working in pairs. Each time you practised, you received feedback. Each time we had a

conversation in the larger group, we discussed taking leadership, how that happens, the barriers and upsides.

You have also given and received feedback as part of your learning cohort and worked with me in 1:1 coaching at different stages along the way. We have checked into the learning space on six different occasions, and each time you have been invited to share how you have used your learning in between sessions. You have listened to each other, built on suggestions and created a learning climate together.

I suggest that all of this gives you many things you know about yourself and the leadership practices you have tried out. Most of it is not written down, but that is okay. You have experience, practice, feedback and conversation accumulated over the months together.

You have the time and space now to bring together what you have come to know about leadership."

I am aware that this invitation could reduce leadership to a mere set of skills (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015) which I am anxious to avoid. Engaging the participants with the epistemological positioning of leadership within the programme, leadership as practice, (Raelin, 2016), I finish with:

"Leadership development also has a huge amount to do with who you are and how you take leadership; how you carry yourself in your role, in your interactions with your colleagues, on this site, at this time".

My language is chosen deliberately. Leadership in MALT is positioned as an embodied and embedded way of being in the world of work (Carroll et al., 2008).

Having taken their time to consider and reflect, I suggest that the participants share whatever they wish with the learning group in any way they choose once they have

completed the individual reflection. They can speak, write, draw, make something, whatever they prefer. I specified flipchart drawings for the Introductions. I leave the choice of method to them this time. I opened the learning space, they direct it from here (Brookfield, 1986).

Participants take themselves and their rolling chairs to different corners of the room. One finds a quiet corner in which he sits and thinks. Several grab pens and flipchart paper and spread out. Another participant moves to the side of the room, where there is a small bar area and high stools. I have left some basic craft materials there, which I indicate to the group, should anyone choose to use them.

Two participants call me over:

“What exactly do you want us to do?”

“Is it a before-and-after?”

I reiterate that there is no specific direction or prescription. I am demonstrating my belief in their capacity to be self-directed as adult learners (Knowles, 1980).

“It is helpful to consider where you were when you began MALT and what you know about yourself now. However, think a little bigger if you can - about how you take that learning and understanding to your role, your world, step outside yourself and look back in.

What will others see in you? How will they see or experience your leadership in action?”

I am again concerned to humanise rather than elevating leadership to something lofty (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015) or heroic (Raelin, 2004, 2007). My choice of pedagogic language is important as the participants respond to my clarification with renewed energy - heads nod:

"In action",

is a helpful phrase I am told and,

"how others see and experience it."

avoids the exercise looking like

"navel gazing".

I smile at their response, my concern for language was well placed, and words were well chosen.

People digest learning experiences differently. One participant moves to the quiet entrance area, saying:

"I do these things better when I am on my own and away from everyone".

I recall the first day when the same participant took his chair and himself out of the circle and to a table at the side of the room. This time I acknowledge and welcome his need for solitude (Palmer, 2017). This time he has, I suspect, sufficient safety (Edmondson, 1999) in the holding environment to engage with me on his choice.

Forty minutes later, the participants share their reflections and plans. I invite each person to begin without mandating any format or length of time. The workspace, which has been devoted to learning for many months, has shaped and influenced their emerging leadership identity (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Carroll & Levy, 2010).

My invitation has asked the participants to make knowledge conscious and communicate it (Gurm, 2013). I am cognizant that this invitation may be challenging for some who prefer reflection to be private or ongoing. My eyes travel to my

participant with a preference for solitude. The "mandated disclosure" (Brookfield, 1995: 10) of a final day 'show-and-tell' is not far from my mind. Despite these risks, I have chosen this pedagogic approach with collective leadership in mind. The participants attend LD as individuals. However, they are asked to take collective responsibility upon their return to the workplace. Hearing, seeing and feeling the momentum of others in the shared learning workspace can evoke leadership as a system of participants, colleagues and context of which they are all a part (Kellerman, 2018).

Researcher note:

I noted in the review of literature that LD produces a range of learning outcomes. Some participants experience their own existence (Newman, 2012) as they encounter themselves and the workplace differently through learning. For some, the experience changes their underlying meaning-making structures resulting in perspectival shifts (Hoggan et al., 2017). Others indicate that LD helps them handle the daily practical challenges of dealing with people and organisations (Illeris, 2018). Some participants in LD emerge exploratory and questioning: still engaged in the process of learning (Berger, 2004). However, others demonstrate little discernible learning (Illeris, 2018).

Reviewing the 29 reflections and plans that emerged from the final module of MALT as field texts in the research context, four discernible themes emerged in the self-reported learning of the participants. Using language embedded in the programme delivery and epistemology, the themes which emerged are:

- Developing individual leader capacity and skills
- Enhanced leadership identity
- Little observable change in insight or learning
- Engaging with leadership as a collective, embodied way of knowing

I highlight in the next section four individual participant reflections. The four chosen by me represent the four themes emerging from the field texts and align with the analysis of narratives research method (Polkinghorne, 1995) adopted throughout this study. Individual instances have been highlighted throughout the narratives as indicative of a wider theme drawn from the field data.

Listening for Learning and Agency

My frame of reference for listening

As the participants share their leadership reflections, I listen for learning emerging from the programme. Within my humanist perspective, I anticipate examples of participants discovering and drawing new thoughts and insight into themselves and connecting what they have learned to their sense of self (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). As a social constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978), I watch for new knowledge added to and enhancing what was already there. I hope to see that the participants have actively built up mental schemes or structures that they have organised somehow (Illeris, 2018) to access them for use in their workplace leadership responsibilities.

Leadership is an ongoing activity that evolves and flows between parties in everyday interactions (Raelin, 2016). With that perspective on emergent leadership learning, I watch for indicators that the learning from MALT connects with the participants everyday lived experience of leadership role and responsibility (Jarvis, 1992; Dugan, 2011). I aspire to hear the participants connecting this learning experience to knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs they can meld into their workplace existence when they leave (Jarvis, 1992).

I will be surprised if I do not hear of some disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1991), and I am keen to observe if there have been any perspectival shifts or new frames of reference as a result. Enacting a critical perspective in MALT (Brookfield, 1995; Dugan, 2011) has brought reflection, dialogue and challenge into the workspace. I

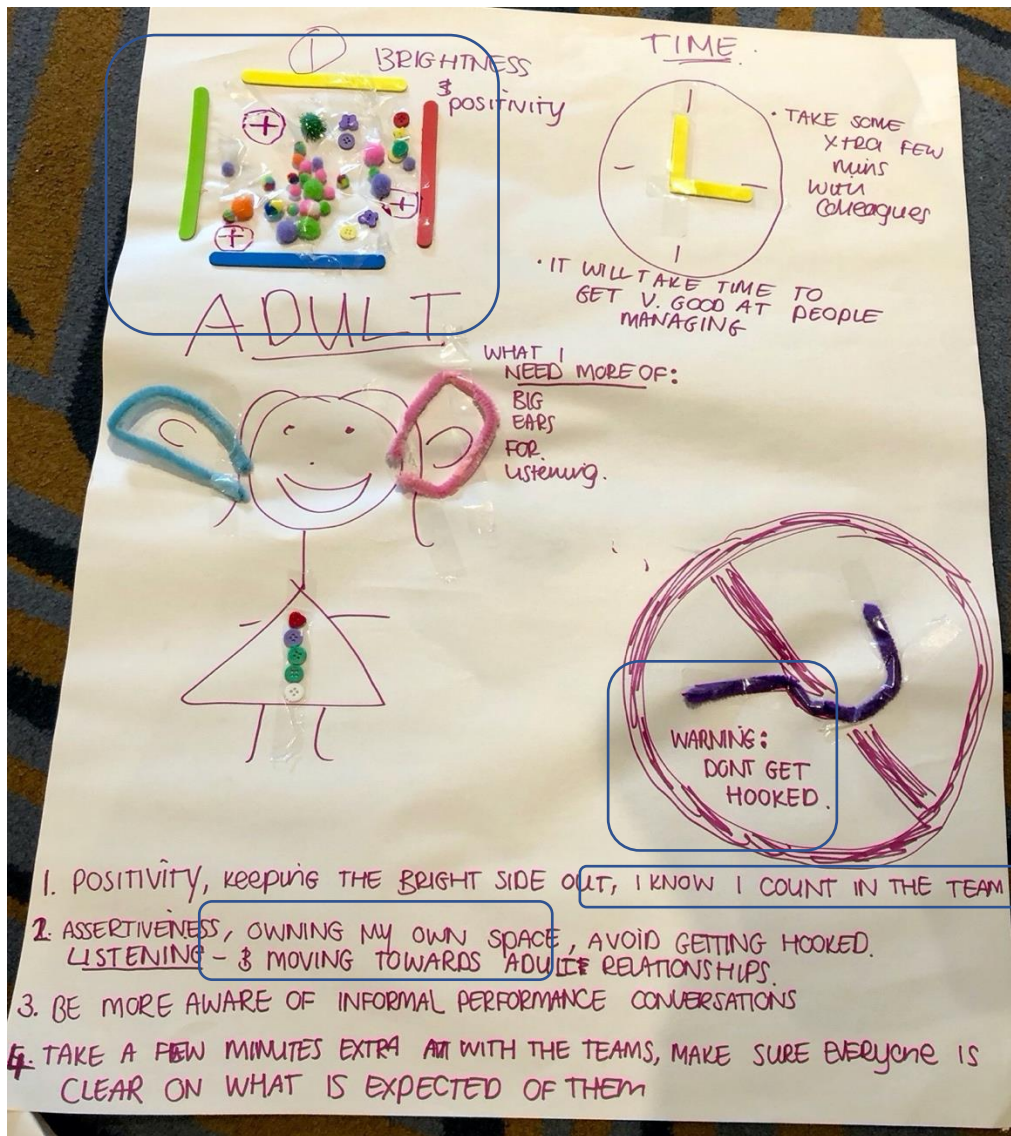
anticipate (and hope) that I will identify reflective and critical thinking about the nature of leadership, and power, in general, and on this site (Western, 2013).

Agency is not a common term in the lexicon of LD practitioners. As I watch for agency, I seek the participants' sense of their power and that of others (Stones, 2005). In the context of leadership, this power, when mobilised for action, reflects a deeper understanding of the participants own identity, that of others in relation to themselves, and the social dynamics and power dynamics of the workplace in which action is taken (Tourish, 2014).

Thus, the participants share their learning...

Theme 1: Individual Leader Capacity and Skills

Participant C has created a picture which she shares (Research Artefact 6). She begins by saying that she sees the exercise as a beginning, not an ending, the start of an essential journey to *“a stronger sense of myself as a leader in the organisation”*. Hers is a complete and colourful chart with a giant smile on her face:



Participant C – Leadership Reflection

(Research Artefact 6 – 15/02/2019)

Discussion points from the narrative are outlined in blue.

Participant C highlights individual leader skills development (Van Velsor et al., 2010) she is aware of in herself:

"I have drawn big ears for listening. I developed that here and need to do more of it."

As I listen, I hear the new skills complementing and adding to her existing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978).

She articulates several times a renewed self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997):

“I feel I can own my own space, and avoid getting hooked”

“knowing I count has been important to me to realise”

Participant C describes her increasing sense of building *“positivity”* as a leader, *“spending time with teams, helping others be clear”*. She connects new insight into her sense of herself (Rogers & Freiburg, 1994).

She feels strongly that she and others can and should be taking that responsibility *“together”* and *“being brave”*. There is evidence of a perspectival shift toward a new collective frame of reference (Mezirow, 1991) for what leadership is and how it occurs (Western, 2013; Raelin, 2016; Scharmer, 2018).

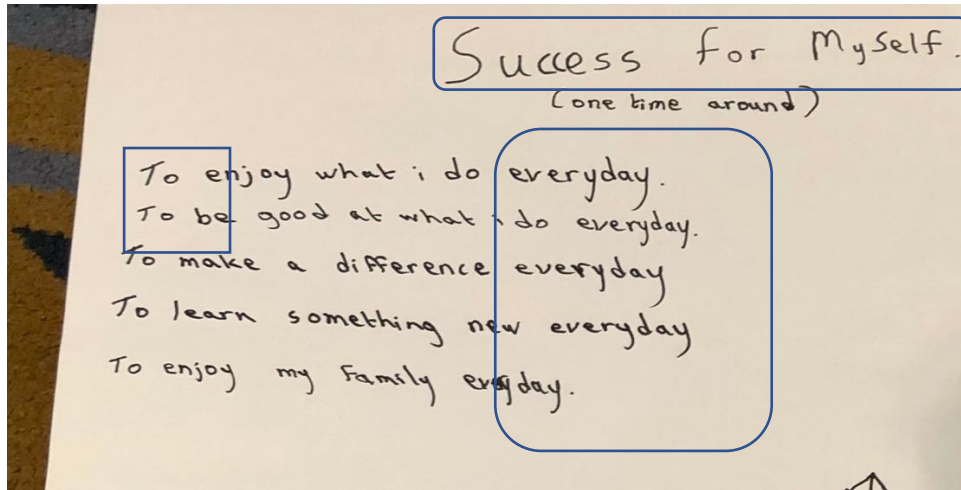
She finishes with the observation that she is *“feeling more aligned”* with the other managers and *“can turn to people here if I need them”* after MALT. In doing so, she reflects the sense of group holding in the learning workspace as she has experienced it (Kegan, 1982; Heifetz, 1998).

I ask what she is most energised to do with her learning. She pauses and then says that she is *“keen to really get the skills I highlighted just now to work for me, and to use them with the wider team. I really do think I can see myself being a good leader for others”*. I hear growing awareness of her agentic power in this, although she does not firmly position it in relation to others (Tourish, 2014).

(All participant verbatims from Practitioner notes, 15/02/2019)

Theme 2: Leadership Identity

Participant D offers a different reflection on leadership. He takes an intensely personal view from the opportunity to learn (Research Artefact 7).



Participant D – Leadership Reflection

(Research Artefact 7- 13/02/2019)

He also chose to create a chart and draw the group's attention to its top, particularly where he has written several short lines. He describes a shift in seeing things from a different perspective (Mezirow, 1991) since he created his initial picture seven months earlier.

He shares that he has thought deeply about his role, his life, himself and *“what matters in all those things”*.

He highlights his frequent use of *“everyday”* as he is:

“working on not worrying about the past or the future so much”.

A fellow participant notes that he has used the words *“success for myself”*. He replies that he sees what he wants to do well in the everyday start and finish with

him. A personal agency is evident in his word and action, a quiet determination to shift his position. Enhanced self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) is evident:

“I can make those things happen, I can enjoy and learn, but I have to choose to, I haven’t been choosing to, I realise. I have been letting the world run me, and not enjoying it as much as I should, including work”

His description of this shift in his thinking is intensely felt, and I sense, deeply owned (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). He is asked if any one thing brought him to this place. He responds:

“No, it was gradual. Each time we have been here I’ve found myself thinking about something different that happened or came up. The same at home and at work. I have been sort of standing outside myself”

Reflection has aided his meaning-making along with new opportunities to assimilate knowledge (Illeris, 2006) into existing knowledge:

“Feedback helped as did the coaching support we got. I was able to see other perspectives and work through challenges I have”

He is seeking to balance his work and personal identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003):

“It wasn’t fully clear until today that this is what leadership means for me.

I hope it will benefit me, my family and my job. My chart isn't crowded full of work things as it was on the first day, but I think I will be better in work for having a fresh perspective on myself and my world”

Participant D has applied his own personally meaningful criteria (Brookfield, 1986) to what successful leadership learning means. The ongoing nature of the leadership

journey is evident; his repeated use of “To” on his chart indicates a continuation, not an arrival point (Kellerman, 2018).

(All participant verbatims from Practitioner notes, 13/02/2019)

Theme 3: Little observable change in insight or learning

Participant E has not written or created a chart. Using generalised terms, he restates several individual leader skills from early MALT modules:

“You need to listen more. You know, let the lads do more. It has been useful, learning how to manage people better”

There is no “I” or “we” or “leadership” in his language. He says:

“You must do what you can as a manager”

Accommodative learning adds skills and processes which help complete routine tasks (Illeris, 2006). However, he does not appear to have constructed new mental schemes with the skills he mentions. As he speaks, new knowledge appears detached and disconnected from him as a learner, informative but not assimilated (Illeris, 2006). Despite my prompting and some questions from the group, there is little evidence of reflection (Brookfield, 1986).

Perhaps sensing this, he offers:

“Good to get time to do the course though, although it is hard to get time to do everything with work being so busy all the time. It’s useful to have a toolkit”

He sits back in his chair as he says this with a finite tone in his voice and breaks eye contact with the group.

There is minimal evidence of mindful personal engagement with the workspace as reflected in his repeated use of the third party “you” (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). There is little visible agency (Tourish, 2014) in his words beyond generalised exhortations of “*you must do*”.

(All participant verbatims from Practitioner notes, 12/03/2019)

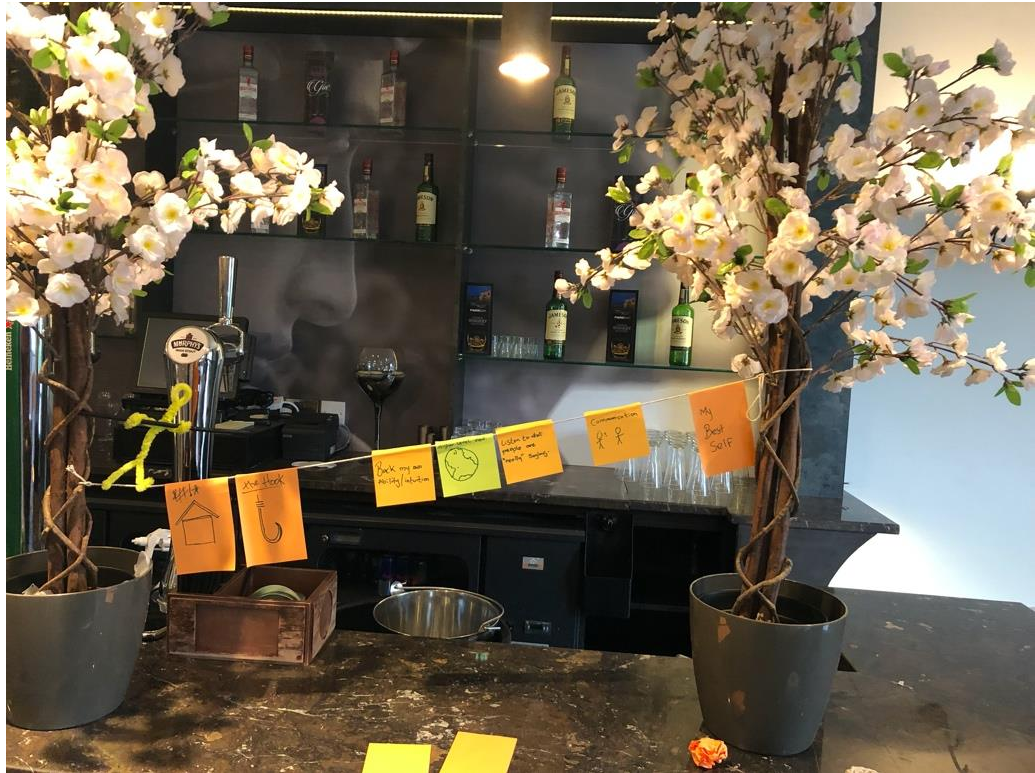
As another participant takes the floor, I recognise there is only so much I can do. As a pedagogue, I can support the "heavy lifting" (Kellerman, 2018: 180), but I cannot *make* somebody be knowledgeable or agentic. They have to do that for themselves.

Theme 4: Leadership as a collective and embodied way of knowing

Participant F leads the group to the alcove bar, where he shares something he has constructed while reflecting (*Research Artefact 8*). It is visual but straightforward.

He has created a tightrope between two potted plants where a pipe-cleaner version of himself navigates between the two points. He describes the tightrope as a connection between old and new, a journey to his “*best self*”.

The novelty of the presentation captures the attention of the group as everyone gathers around.



Participant F – Leadership Reflection

(Research Artefact 8 – 15/02/2019)

Participant F speaks to the ‘post-it’ notes he has placed on the tightrope, each representing:

“leadership steps I need to take”



Participant F – Leadership Reflection

(Research Artefact 8 – close up view)

The first he described as:

“getting the house in order”

referring to the changes in process and role underway and:

“my contribution to that as a manager and leader”.

He indicates an emerging view of leadership as collectively owned and shared (Scharmer, 2018). He is concerned with self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997):

“backing myself; trusting my insight and intuition more”

He shares that he has a higher level organisational view of leadership which he did not have before. This perspectival shift has ushered in a new frame of reference (Mezirow, 1991):

“I can see the importance of context and the bigger picture more than even before. I simply didn’t think that way before this programme”

I observe a change in his way of knowing (Kegan, 1994, 2018):

“I want to listen to what people are “really” saying and be a better communicator with others, in a way I haven’t before. I need to see and hear what is unsaid and taken for granted and challenge it”

I notice that the tightrope image he has created reflects much of what leadership in MALT is about, and I draw the group's attention to this. His inclusion of leadership skills necessary to routine interaction such as *“listening”* and *“communication”* along with *“getting the house in order”* reflects an awareness of leadership in the workplace as a “perpetually unfolding dynamic” (Raelin, 2016: 3). He has positioned himself as a leader on a journey delineating the steps he needs to take along the

tightrope to embody it and bring it to life; heads nod, a valuable connection to solidify this paradigmatic stance, even on the last day.

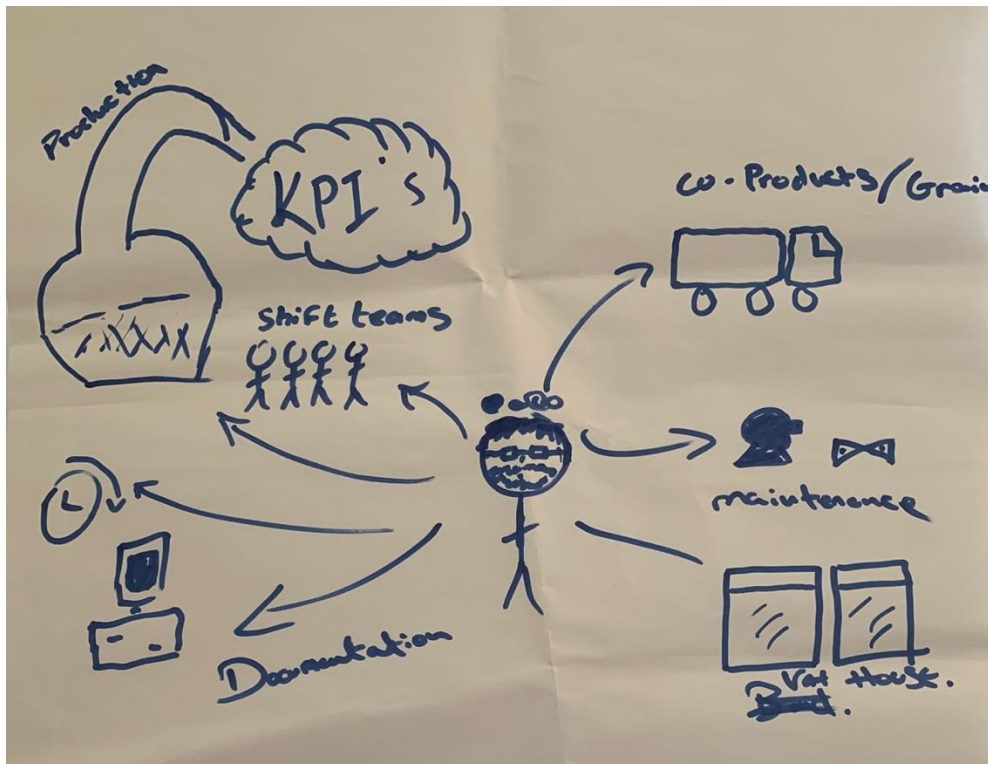
There is evidence of an enhanced awareness for Participant F of himself actively occupying and influencing the leadership space (Raelin, 2016). He refers to “context” often as he speaks. He returns to “*what the site needs*”, “*the changes we are all part of*”, “*what I can do*”.

As his fellow participants ask questions, he reiterates that the learning workspace has:

“allowed me the time and space to put the big pieces together”

“I own this now, I think that is what this was all about”

I ask Participant F about the most significant change he can remember from his introductory picture on Day 1, which he has with him among his notes (Research Artefact 9):



Participant F – Introductory Picture from the opening session

(Research Artefact 9 – 19/09/2018)

He pauses and considers. He replies that it is not as much what is visible but what it feels like inside:

“the sense of what is possible. What I can and should do for myself and the business as a people manager and leader. That I should just go for it”.

The sharing of learning reflections and action plans finishes, and the group step out for a coffee break. As they leave, I wonder if I have just been party to transformational learning? In earlier chapters, I argued that to use the term "transformative learning" (Mezirow, 1981, 2009) lightly or inappropriately in the context of this type of leadership programme was not something I can do as a practitioner. Some participants may be transformed as a result of the experience. True transformation, however, requires claims to breadth, depth and relative stability (Hoggan, 2016), all of which are simply not possible to ascertain in this learning context and at this time.

Engaging with endings – the practitioner reflects

Following completion of the programme, I sit and reflect on the experience of the learning workspace. Brookfield counsels that as a result of critical reflection, "the essential ambiguity of teaching" (1995: 239) can surface, the letting go of the reasonable assumption of final solutions and verifiable knowledge. Increasingly I recognise that my pedagogical role in enabling learning in participants is always an unfinished and unformed project. I can enhance mindful engagement while participants are with me in the learning space; the power for what they do with it is with the participants (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

I ponder where the essence of MALT has been for me and where satisfaction comes from. Standing outside and looking in (Bolton, 2014), I see the essence of MALT

illustrated in the post-programme feedback, captured by JOF six weeks post-programme and emailed to me.

I take satisfaction in what I read:

“MALT has provided me with the skill set to be a Brave, Considerate, Responsible, Problem Solving Adult”

I have encouraged meaningful questions and directed attention to systemic issues and opportunities (Heifetz, 1998). I am delighted the participant views reflect this:

“[MALT] has made me ask more questions and give context if I request something. It allows more insight into others challenges and regular tap ins allows for less information or assumptions being made. Still a lot to learn but it’s a great start”

Much of the time and space within MALT was spent helping the participants navigate and understand the context and challenge for taking leadership individually and collectively (Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016). They appreciate and recognise this:

“Definitely more aware of myself and more aware of others. This is a good starting point.”

“It has helped me hugely in my new role, helped me deal with people and situations better”

(All comments are taken verbatim from post-programme feedback 04/04/19)

Organisational view of success

The visceral struggle (Clarke, 2013) with measurement and outcomes is as real in LD as it is across the broader education spectrum (Ball, 2003). I am familiar with the statistics. I shared many of them in earlier chapters. Many LD programmes fail to deliver on their promise (Kellerman, 2012; Beer et al., 2016).

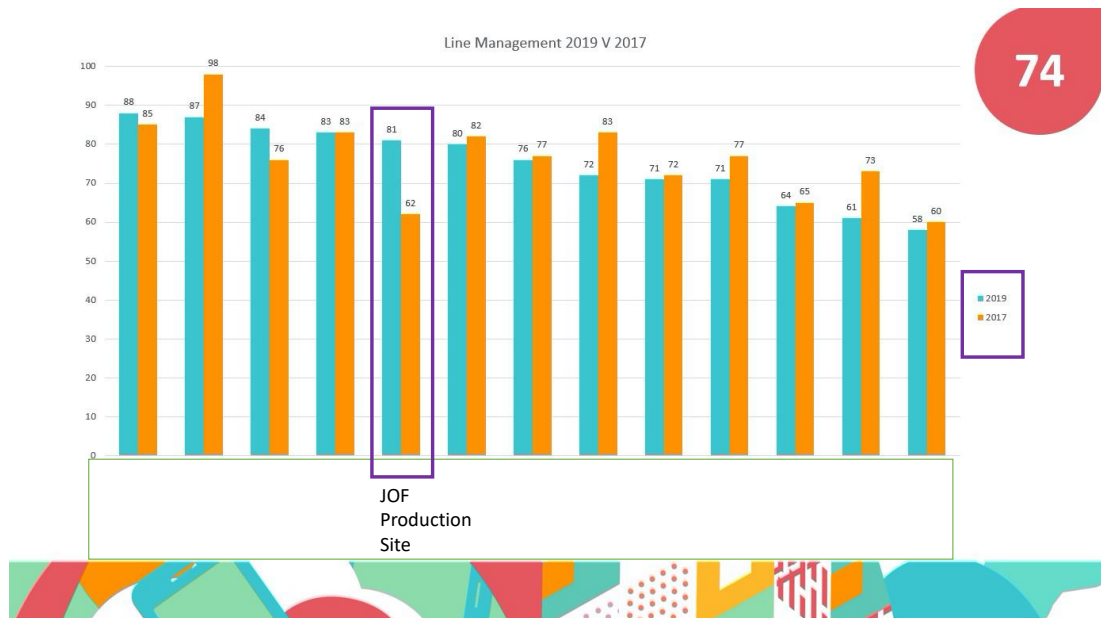
In an earlier chapter, I noted that every two years, the parent company of JOF conducts a culture survey of its 14,000 staff globally called 'I Say'. Independently administered and validated by global HR Consultancy Willis Towers Watson, 'I Say' is trusted by employees and employers globally as an accurate and insightful barometer of culture, values and beliefs in action. There are multiple questions and measures within 'I Say'. JOF was ambitious that the production site would improve on previous scores in a sub-section of the survey called 'My Manager'. 'My Manager' responses reflect the degree to which employees feel engaged with and developed by their managers. It also reflects how well-led they believe themselves to be.

On Kirkpatrick's hierarchy of evaluation (1998), an independent measure such as 'I Say' represents level 4 of 4. It recognises what is termed 'Community Impact' as a result of learning intervention, placing culture change at the apex, beyond reaction (level 1), learning (level 2), and behaviour (level 3). Level 4 achievement requires independent measurement, the criteria for which are objective and unalterable.

Philosophically, pedagogically and practically, much of MALT does not, and could not by its nature, fit the accepted managerialist indicators of performance and effectiveness (Ball, 1993: 224). Nor was MALT built or delivered to achieve a particular score on I Say. Nevertheless, the company is hoping for an improved score. Truthfully, I am too.

In July of 2019, five months after completing the MALT programme, the JOF production site registers an uplift from 62% satisfied with 'My Manager' in 2017 to 81% satisfaction in 2019. (Research Artefact 10). This score improvement represents the highest percentage increase in the 'My Manager' score for any site or function within the Irish business for the two years covered by the survey.

Site Leadership and the HR Sponsor believe that the success of the learning workspace created for MALT to be the most significant contributing factor in this score improvement.

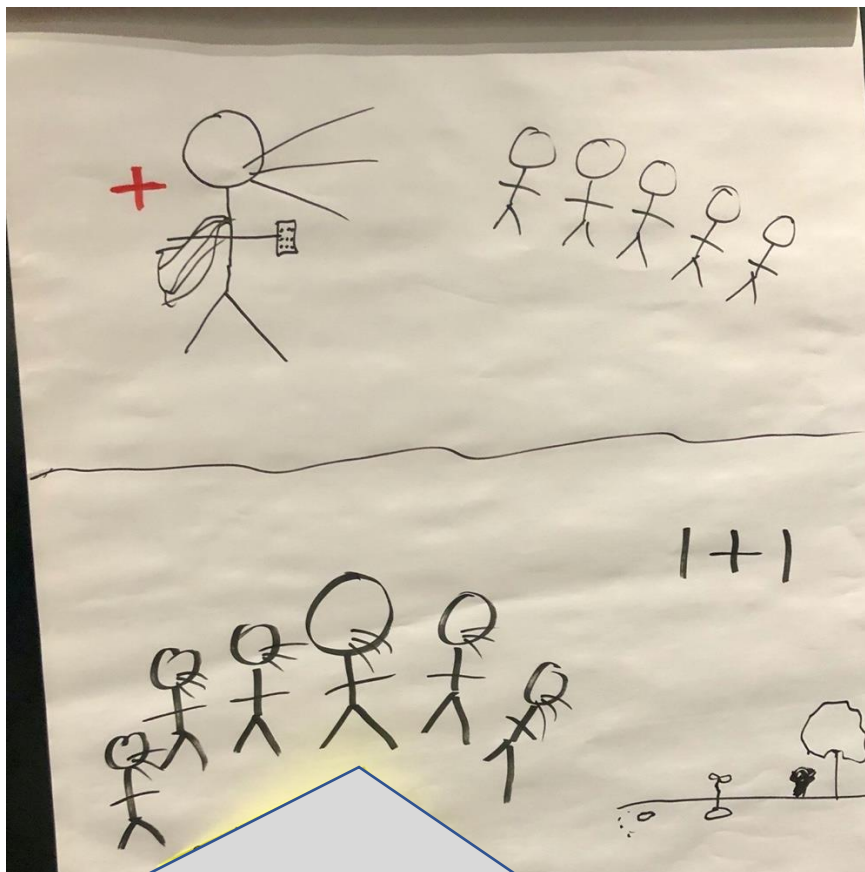


**Summary chart taken from JOF parent company 2019 'I Say' survey results
 Percentage satisfaction with 'My Manager' measure in 2017 (orange)
 v percentage satisfaction in 2019 (blue)³
 (Research Artefact 10)**

³ Chart extracted from JOF 'I Say' 2019 final report and provided for use by the MALT HR Sponsor in this research. The JOF production site score highlighted in purple. The identity of other JOF locations and functions has been concealed for confidentiality reasons. The scores for these locations and functions are retained for comparison purposes.

Conclusion - “postscript” to the Narratives

Despite my advice that an “Invitation to Agency” is not as simple as a ‘From...To’ Participant G chose to ignore my exhortation and captured a simple image, without words or adornment, as his final reflection. This simple image (Research Artefact 11) lingers with me as I conclude these narratives.



Participant G – Leadership Reflection

(Research Artefact 11 – 12/03/2019)

Triangle conceals participant name to maintain confidentiality.

I highlight it here as I turn to summary implications from the research process in Chapter 6. As I do, I am mindful that my core task as an LD practitioner in MALT has been to encourage the participants to “perceive the relative, contextual nature of previously unquestioned givens” (Brookfield, 1986: 284).

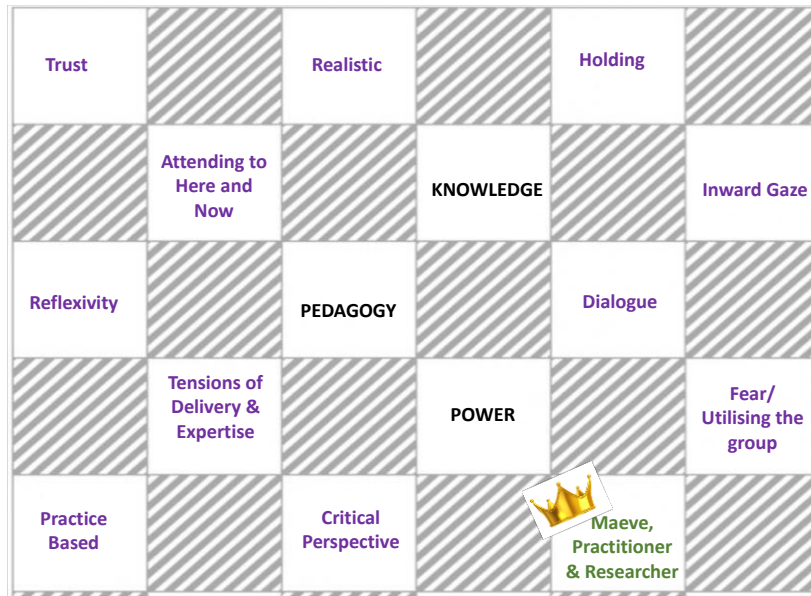
This picture, I suggest, powerfully conveys the impact of such encouragement in the LD learning workspace. It captures, simply and strikingly, the journey from knowing to knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978; Mezirow, 1981, 2009; Illeris, 2006), from tacit acceptance of ‘power over’ to embracing ‘power with’ (Freire, 1970, 1972; Dugan, 2011). It illustrates the contextual and embodied nature of leadership in and among workplace colleagues (Western, 2013; Raelin, 2016; Scharmer, 2018)

Participant G described it as *“everything I need to work on in a nutshell”*.

I am satisfied to have enabled this leadership learning and development. This is job satisfaction, in a nutshell.

Chapter 8

What Alice Saw: Reflexive Knowledge for Enhanced Practice



'Oh how glad I am to get here! And what IS this on my head!' [Alice] exclaimed in a tone of dismay as she put her hands up to something very heavy, and fitted tight round her head.

'But how CAN it have got there without my knowing it?' she said to herself, as she lifted it off, and set it on her lap to make out what it could possibly be. It was a golden crown. "

From: Lewis Carroll "Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There"
[1871] (2016:120)

Illustration modelled on the original by the researcher

"...When everything changes, the small and immediate to the vast and abstract – the object of study, the world immediately around it, the student, the world immediately around [her], and the wider world around them both – there seems to be no place to stand so as to locate just what has altered and how."

Geertz (1995 p. 1/2)

Introduction

At the outset of this study, I stated my desire to make sense of my own experience, which I believed was drawn from "this and that, here and there" (after Winnicott, 1945). In Chapter 2 I looked back, through reflective practice, on what shaped "Maeve, Practitioner, I". In doing so, I came to a deeper understanding of my practice beliefs about knowledge, power and pedagogy through examining the critical incidents that occupy my practitioner identity (Seemiller & Priest, 2019).

In this final chapter, having attested to the relatively unique experience of standing outside one's own work, I ask, what did 'Alice' see? What is the "golden crown" (Carroll, 2016: 120) of new knowledge and how will my practice change moving forward as a result of research?

In summary, I have acquired three distinct pieces of knowledge -

- **A new frame of reference on my LD practice** which includes greater reflexive capacity, heightened power consciousness and a new ability to 'stand outside' the learning workspace for LD
- A set of recurring themes synthesised from the research and captured as a suggested "**pedagogic blueprint**" (hooks, 1994: 6) for LD
- A refreshed perspective on **LD in commercial learning workspace** including the need for a stronger presence for adult learning theory epistemology and pedagogy within the field of LD

In this chapter, I consider the benefit these three pieces of new knowledge can bring to myself and to my fellow LD practitioners while drawing on insights emerging from the narrative inquiry. Firstly, I focus on the impact of the research on me as an LD practitioner and my practice. I elaborate on each of the elements in my new frame of reference, highlighting acquired and enhanced knowledge. I focus on the effort invested and challenges overcome in the research process to reach this point of perspectival shift.

I change the viewing position in Part 2 of the chapter. While writing predominantly from a personal standpoint throughout this inquiry; as the research draws to a close, I offer the richness of insight I have gained to the wider community of LD practitioners for their enhanced knowledge and benefit. Drawing on the depth and breadth of this multi-faceted inquiry, I synthesise seven recurring themes arising from research into a “pedagogic blueprint” (hooks, 1994: 6) for LD. I suggest that this blueprint represents a valuable insight into the facilitation of LD in commercial learning workspace, drawn as it is from a lived experience of LD. It encapsulates the essence of what MALT has to teach the practice of LD.

Thirdly, I conclude with some observations about and considerations for commercial learning workspace and the future of LD as I see it arising from this research. In so doing, I advocate for an increased role for a strong adult education epistemology and pedagogy within the field of LD. I believe I have identified and begun to fill a marked gap in my LD practitioner knowledge. I suspect I may not be alone in this.

A note on broader implications

This inquiry took place in one organisation over seven months. Narrative inquiry as methodology raises and discusses questions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In teasing out those questions, this is a re-storying of lived experience in a particular place and at a particular time in Ireland. There is no assumption that findings can be generalised to all LD practitioners, other commercial learning workspaces designed to deliver LD or the broader manager population in industry.

Part 1: A new frame of reference on my practice

In addressing the question of new knowledge, I return to my motivation for embarking on this research journey in the first place. I chose to interrupt my practice to dig deeper, see what was unattended to, satisfy my increasing craving to understand more about my life's work. In doing so, I sought a robust understanding of the impact of my choices, decisions and actions as an LD practitioner. Against this backdrop, I believe I have attained all of these and much more. Simply put, I have acquired a new frame of reference (Mezirow, 1981) on my practice.

The perspectival shift (Mezirow, 2009) enabled by the research experience has ushered in a clarity and depth of understanding which has significantly strengthened my abilities as an LD practitioner in the commercial learning workspaces I create. This new frame of reference is composed of five distinct but interrelated elements –

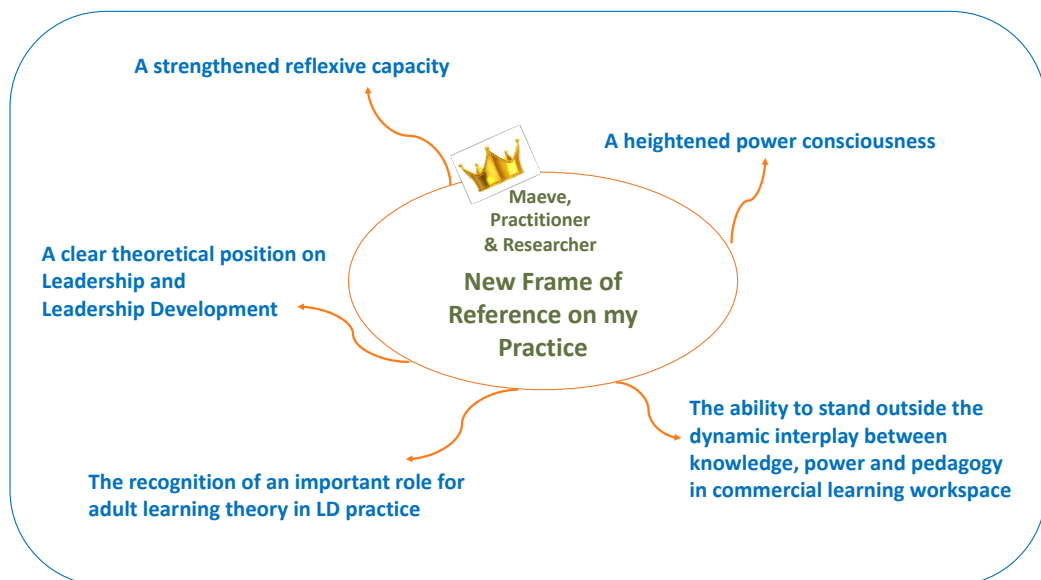


Figure 8.1 Visual of my new frame of reference on my practice

Strengthened reflexive capacity

The strongest legacy of this research is undoubtedly the accessing of a reflexive capacity in myself. Throughout the course of this narrative inquiry, I have engaged as an LD practitioner in reflection (Faller et al, 2020), examining and re-examining experience; and in critical reflection (Brookfield, 1986) where I have questioned at deeper levels the culture, assumptions and premise behind the experience. Equally, I have invited the participants in MALT to reflect on leadership skills and experience; and in the latter stages of the programme to critically reflect on the nature of leadership in their work setting with the specific challenges that a critical perspective on leadership brings. I alone as insider-researcher (Costley et al, 2010) have engaged reflexively (Etherington, 2004, 2007), strengthening my ability to be highly attuned to myself in how I engaged with the leadership learning workspace and the participants who entered it; using that listening and heightened awareness to enhance the learning experience. At the same time, engaging reflexively necessitated that I became highly cognisant and challenging of my own frames of reference (McCormack & Ryan, 2011) and the extent to which they were interfering with or aiding the learning of leadership in the commercial workspace.

Engaging reflexively in this way necessitated wrestling intellectually and emotionally with big themes – what I understand leadership to be, what I believe LD can deliver; whether a critical perspective in LD can flourish in workplaces which are often time-poor, prescriptive and where participants in learning have become dependent on being “told” what to learn and what to do. Simultaneously, engaging reflexively necessitated grappling with some very personal themes, the depth of excavation inviting my vulnerability centre-stage as my researcher diaries have attested. Rigorously reflecting on my thinking, the positions I take, critiquing my choices and beliefs (McCormack & Ryan, 2011) was stretching and hard. Yet despite this struggle, reflexivity has provided an invaluable bridge between my internal and external worlds and between research and practice (Etherington, 2004).

Engaging reflexively pushed me to account for myself, and continues to push me, long after the formal research processes have concluded: I pondered early on why participants should listen to me and whether I could locate the flotsam and jetsam of almost 30 years in practice theoretically and make sense of it in practice. I continue to reflect on whether I have the necessary bravery and vulnerability to practice what I preach and teach leadership in a way concurrent with what I believe it to be (Ganz & Lin, 2012) when there are comparatively easier, faster and more prescriptive ways which do not open space for dialogue or value participant experience as much in a real-life, emergent, often messy practice of leadership.

Ensuring I wasn't being self-indulgent or simply affirming my life's-work, in addition to asking tough questions of myself, I dug deep into theoretical positions on three areas related to my practice – leadership, LD and adult learning theory. It was in bringing all these together to examine the previously unexamined in my practice, that reflexive possibility emerged. With this possibility, my agency as a practitioner grew, bringing with it an optimism for commercial learning spaces for LD, something I feared I was beginning to lose.

A clearer theoretical position on Leadership and LD

I have a clearer view of leadership, the topic I teach. A surprising output perhaps and not an intended objective of the research. Yet my reflexive engagement highlighted the critical importance of aligning "the content of what (*I*) teach with the way (*I*) teach it" (Ganz & Lin, 2012: 353). This initiated a necessary and overdue revisiting of what I believe leadership to be. Like many practitioners, I suggest, I had lost my bearings theoretically, rarely revisiting what I believe the complex, messy topic of leadership to be.

My model of leadership is now clear. Theoretically and reflexively, I appreciate how it has been formed in me through my pathway and experience. I can identify and acknowledge how it has equally been shaped by external forces. Engaging with and reflecting on the cognitive, emotional, and social experiences of the participants in MALT has reinforced my belief in leadership as socially constructed, a fluid concept

co-created in terms of meaning (Dugan, 2017). I support participants' right in LD to decide for themselves (Ghoshal, 2005). Propelling such democratic tendencies encourages participants to “act out of their own craftsmanship when and where needed” (Raelin, 2020: 4). Leadership viewed as emergent, relational and dynamic (Kennedy et al., 2013) fundamentally challenges traditional perspectives. Through this lens, leadership is found where people act in the every-day as invested, interconnected, collaborative parties (Raelin, 2020). I view leadership as a shared responsibility that exists interdependently irrespective of level, rank, or qualification. The meaning of terms such as leader, follower, and shared goals is not fixed but continuously framed and reframed between contexts and over time (Gergen, 1994, 1995; Drath, 2001; Uhl-Bein, 2006). Post-research, I can advocate in a stronger way for this, the model of leadership that I believe in.

Allied to concerns of what I believe leadership to be, I engaged afresh, both theoretically and practically, with the world of LD, using theory to inform and understand practice. Despite concerns for the efficacy of LD to deliver on its promise (e.g. Kellerman, 2012; Pfeffer, 2016) and a large volume of downbeat academic thinking on the topic (e.g. e.g. Raelin, 2003, 2009, 2013; Kellerman, 2012; Western, 2013; Rowland, 2016; Pfeffer, 2016; Tourish, 2019), I conclude the research process with optimism for the future of commercial learning workspaces for LD. The reasons for this emanate from within the delivery of MALT.

Significantly, MALT operated from the shared space between LD and adult learning theory, resulting in an engaged pedagogy based on the workplace's realistic here and now perspective. This was manifest in the practice-based approaches (Raelin, 2016) used throughout MALT, favouring experiential learning exercises, dialogue, meaning-oriented reflection, and more. In this way, MALT incorporated several significant suggestions advocated in the literature as remediation for the future of LD (e.g. Owen, 2015; Dugan, 2017; Raelin, 2016). MALT demonstrates that through considered pedagogic choice, commercial learning workspace can relate action and reflection to theory and practice (Freire, 1970) while keeping the process of learning grounded and purposeful (Mayo, 2012).

Combining a clearer theoretical position on LD with an enhanced reflexive frame of reference on practice, I know with greater clarity than before, that I cannot settle for the fast or the short or the prescriptive in my LD practice. This holds true despite the challenging task of convincing stakeholders, participants and clients of this point of view as they are increasingly buffeted by a neo-liberal climate (Thorsen, 2010) for workplace learning which values speed, measurement and a prescriptive version of leadership. Having taken to the “epistemological road” as it were (Kincheloe, 2008: 19), I choose to walk a path less taken in LD terms, one which is imbued with realism, leadership in the everyday (Raelin, 2009) , dialogue and reflection (Faller et al, 2020) and allied to a critical perspective on power, structures and possibility (Western, 2013, Dugan, 2017).

Ability to stand outside the dynamic interplay of knowledge, power and pedagogy in commercial learning workspace

Having stood on the outside of my own practice, looking in, I can observe the dynamic interplay between the elements of knowledge, power and pedagogy in ways I previously could not. Immersed in the day to day creation of commercial learning workspace, running from session to session, I previously had little available capacity or inclination to understand these elements as they enter, occupy and significantly influence the learning workspaces I create. I had lost, or perhaps never owned, the capacity or willingness to stand outside and see the key elements of adult learning in action. To invert the thesis title, “interrupting practice” provided an opportunity I did not realise I was missing.

It is important firstly to highlight the researcher choices which enabled my ability to stand outside the dynamic interplay before discussing what I observed.

As a researcher in this inquiry, I took on the mantle of "teaching with intentionality" (Owen, 2015: 47). "Intentionality" involved observing myself in action and interrogating the preconceptions, beliefs, and biases that frame my sense of leadership and LD and shape my pedagogical practices (Owen, 2015). Aligning this

mantle with my research question, I paid particular attention to concerns of knowledge, power and pedagogy throughout. “Teaching” in this way, with eyes firmly on myself and with clear research lenses through which to look, shook me from my passive state. I was able to observe commercial learning workspace for LD for what it really is – a complex, multi-layered and interconnected manifestation of knowledge, power and pedagogy in action.

Engaging reflexively throughout MALT, along with teaching with intentionality, encouraged me to use the insights I gained “live” as I facilitated, to influence my own decision making in the moment, to hold, change course or challenge assumptions about what to do and when to do it. As I came to understand with greater clarity what I was seeing in knowledge and power terms, I could choose how to engage pedagogically.

Several of the narratives attest to the usefulness of this live engagement. The pushback on attendance at check-in where I chose to open and stay with the difficulty despite not knowing where it would go. Utilising the opportunity of an unsettled group due to a site changeover led to an unplanned but fruitful dialogic learning opportunity which could not have been more prescient or real in its manifestation. The run-up to the large group dialogue about leadership on the site where my own conflicted inner thoughts fought for dominance and certainty, challenged me to be brave while recognising that there were no guarantees of success.

In each case I believe that teaching with intentionality combined with reflexive thought, live and in the moment, changed and ultimately improved the direction of the learning in the LD workspace at that time. Actively sifting through my thought processes, making sense of the concerns of knowledge and power around me and recognising that my pedagogic choices are a reflection of the forces of knowledge and power at work not just in the workplace classroom but of social, political and cultural factors outside the classroom and invisibly pervasive to the progress therein, significantly improved the experience of MALT.

What I observed has profound consequences for my practice. In the course of the narratives, the commercial learning workspace for LD repeatedly emerged as a complex, multi-layered context that, without due care, can act to simply replicate existing leadership knowledge and create or recreate forms of consciousness (Apple, 2012) associated with dominant paradigms of leadership. It is relatively simple, and arguably much more straightforward, a pedagogic proposition, to draw leadership knowledge from established and elite knowledge producers (Kinchloe, 2008) such as the leading business schools (Snook et al., 2012). The epistemological dominance of such a heroic, individualistic, prescribed, and competency-driven conception of leadership (Raelin, 2009, 2018; Carroll et al., 2008; Crevani et al., 2012) risks reducing the educative practice of LD to the transmission of what those in positions of knowledge and power perceive to be legitimate knowledge (Parker, 2018). To seek to transform as opposed to merely inform participants (Snook et al., 2012); to patiently believe in the power of unfolding knowledge (Raelin, 2013) in the LD environment is challenging as a practitioner. It means embracing a deeply contextual, situated, complex and critical view of pedagogy well beyond a standardised curriculum and approach.

I emerge from the research process with a heightened sensitivity to the complicated nature of what we call knowledge in LD and who has it. There is significant power inherent in overtly or tacitly deciding what knowledge is considered important in leadership learning workspace, for whom and in what ways, whose voices are heard and when (Freire, 1970). I have made visible a stark reality through my engagement with reflexivity (Etherington, 2004). What the practitioner calls knowledge harbours profound consequences (Apple, 2012) for the participants and the learning workspaces I create. The research findings unequivocally highlight that I significantly shape not just the participants but act as an agent for the knowledge they encounter (Apple, 2012).

Embracing the role of adult learning theory in LD practice

The creation of educationally meaningful LD experiences is an intricate, nuanced business (Dugan, 2011). More than once in MALT, I found myself unsure about enacting the learning workspace I had envisaged. I struggled with the pedagogic self-efficacy (Raelin, 2009) needed to convert intention into reality. I am not a trained teacher, nor do I view myself as an adult educator. I am an LD practitioner. Many of those who engage in LD in the commercial sector such as myself have come to leadership training or consultant roles in diverse ways – topic expertise, HR experience, a passion for workplace education and myriad other pathways. Many, including this LD practitioner, are not formally trained in adult education and learning tools, techniques and approaches. We simply do our best or replicate what we have experienced in our own pathway.

Against this backdrop of a relative lack of formal teaching and learning qualification, I made the deliberate choice early on to invite adult learning theory into the research space believing it would offer a fresh perspective on the teaching and learning aspects of commercial learning workspace. I hoped that an epistemological tradition concerned with the creation of knowledge and the impact of power in the adult ‘classroom’ would enable new insight, help to make the familiar unfamiliar, and allow me to move beyond my habitual ways of knowing. I hoped that I could somehow fill the gap I perceived in my practitioner knowledge by occupying the ‘borderlands’ of HR and adult learning (Yang, 2004; Watkins & Marsick, 2014) through the research process.

The result is that I have gained a deep appreciation of the importance of adult learning theory in understanding and shaping the learning workspaces I create. This extension of my perspective on learning and specifically adult learning, has resulted in a valuable theoretical and reflexive frame of reference which was not previously available to me as a practitioner. In particular, engaging extensively with adult learning theory has transformed my ability to articulate, own and inhabit the role of pedagogy in LD practice. Pedagogy as I have defined it in research terms references the conditions and means through which knowledge is produced at the intersection

of practitioner, participant and the learning environment where they produce it together (Lather, 1994).

Prior to MALT, moments of thinking and decision making were located predominantly within my subject matter expertise - leadership - and focused on enactment modalities that enabled those beliefs to come to life. The topic of leadership drove my decision making about teaching and learning. The urgency to act and keep moving the "training" agenda forward (Kellerman, 2018) – to teach leadership - was significant in MALT and continues to impact my practice. The pervasiveness of the neo-liberal agenda (Thorsen, 2010) in this way left me stranded and untethered at times. What emerged as I maintained a high degree of reflexivity throughout MALT and the congruent research process, was that leadership theory and practice beliefs alone could not provide the answers to some of the dilemmas of teaching and learning I face in the learning workspace. Indeed, it became clear as MALT progressed that the challenge to guide participants through the learning journey often unbalanced the equilibrium between expert knowledge and practitioner assistance (Rowland, 2018); the boundary between what is to be learned about leadership and why it is to be learned in particular ways.

The evidence is clear from the research. When tensions arose in MALT, pedagogy emerged to occupied a third space, acting as both translator of theory and enabler of practice beliefs. As insider-researcher (Costley et al., 2010) watching myself moving through the delivery of the MALT programme, I ultimately came to see and engage pedagogy as a stabilising third paradigmatic leg of a stool (Figure 8.2).

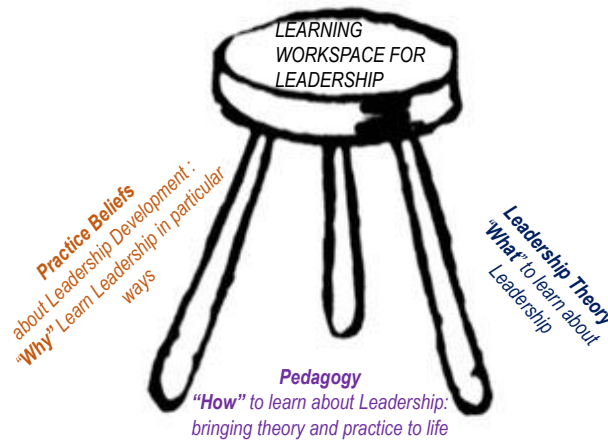


Figure 8.2 Three-legged stool analogy

Pedagogy as a stabilising force in the creation of commercial learning workspaces for LD

Engaging pedagogically at such times of doubt and uncertainty shifted my attention to the conditions and means through which knowledge is produced, asking reflexive questions at the intersection of practitioner, participant and the knowledge as they create it together (Lather, 1994). My practitioner perspective is significantly strengthened by my ability to take what I have come to recognise post-research as a moment of *pedagogic* pause. Taking a pedagogic pause locates me in the 'learning milieu' (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972: 11) with all the uniqueness and circumstance with which it emerges and shapes itself. It widens my consideration of factors beyond the subject matter of leadership alone.

Heightened Power Consciousness

I have referenced power multiple times in this chapter already, highlighting instances where power infiltrated knowledge creation, shaped pedagogic decisions, influenced practitioner choices and more. Despite earlier discussions, I believe it is important to separately highlight that an significant legacy of the research undertaking emerged is a heightened power consciousness. Engagement with adult learning theory cast a light on a lack of epistemological curiosity (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2008) within leadership teaching and learning. Power shapes knowledge (Freire, 1970), influencing overtly and covertly the roles of various parties to

knowledge creation – participants, practitioner, organisational stakeholders and the broader economic and cultural context for learning. In simple terms, the depth of bias towards what is ‘right’ and generally accepted to be correct (Nohria & Khurana, 2010) in leadership and LD left me dismayed.

In power terms I was consumed throughout MALT with the challenge of enabling a dynamic sense-making process (Brookfield, 2005) which invites critical reflection by looking inwards to see leadership in action (Dugan, 2017). The pedagogic principles I sought to deploy were ones which do not feed the performativity bias (Bierema, 2009) for prescribed outcomes but instead favour the gritty realism of leadership in the everyday (Raelin, 2009). The consideration and deployment of these was frequently unscripted and unsettling as a practitioner.

Indeed, Marsick et al. (2008) advise that the prevailing culture, structure, processes, and practices play a crucial role in “enabling or inhibiting the motivation, time, resources, expectations, and rewards for learning” (p. 591). Individuals generally have less power to change the system surrounding them than the system has to change them (Beer et al., 2016). Against such carved out lines of power, it can be challenging to maintain belief in “power to” and “power with” in the learning workspace (Iszatt-White et al., 2017; Fleming & Spicer, 2008) as evidenced throughout the experience of MALT.

Despite this hardship, I support the proposition by those taking a critical perspective on LD (Dugan et al., 2015; Reynolds, 1998; Reed & Anthony, 1992; Raelin, 2008, 2009; Western, 2013) that increased power consciousness through critical reflection, dialogue and an active engagement with the concepts of power is an essential element in the learning workspace for LD. Increasing power literacy (Liu, 2013) for participants through attending to what power is, who has it, how it is used, and how it flows can translate into informed decision-making and enhanced leadership agency (Dugan et al., 2015).

It can be difficult to challenge past experience with management and leadership education (Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016) but not impossible. The illumination I draw from the narratives is that to enable a different arc of power reflection (Dugan & Humbles, 2018) and increased power literacy among participants (Liu, 2013), I need as a practitioner to continuously engage and strengthen my own power consciousness and increase my power literacy (Liu, 2013), a core concern of adult learning theory (Finnegan & Grummell, 2020).

Part 2 - A suggested pedagogic blueprint (hooks, 1994) for LD

As signposted in the introduction to this chapter, I shift perspective at this point, moving from a personal standpoint on my learning into one which addresses the wider audience of LD practitioners.

Across the narratives and the entirety of the MALT programme, seven recurring themes emerged from the interplay between pedagogy, knowledge and power. These synthesised themes represent I suggest, a valuable “pedagogic blueprint” (hooks, 1994: 6) for facilitating LD in commercial learning workspaces. In addition to acting as a guide-map for my own practice going forward, I offer the richness of this research insight to others who regularly create and facilitate leadership learning in commercial settings and beyond.

I highlight the seven recurring themes in Figure 8.3 below, followed by a discussion of each and its implications for LD practice.

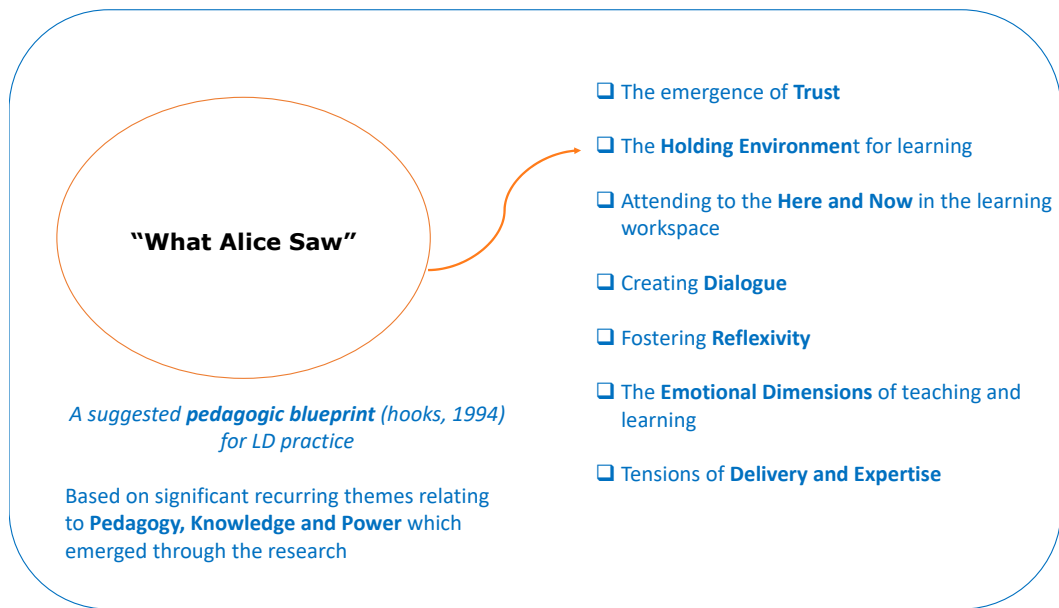


Figure 8.3 A suggested pedagogic blueprint (hooks, 1994: 6) for the facilitation of LD commercial learning workspaces

Theme 1: The emergence of Trust

Building trust for learning began in Narrative 1 and continued throughout the lifespan of the MALT learning workspace. Many words, actions and individual decisions contributed to the emergence of trust, a prerequisite for psychological safety, vulnerability and shared new knowledge to emerge in the evolving learning climate (Knowles, 1980). Retaining the research focus on pedagogy, I posit several implications for LD practice.

Explicit signposting of pedagogical intent supported learner concerns and insecurities (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 2013) in the early stages of MALT. A physical layout that removed barriers and created an open space worked alongside a deliberately invitational style that encouraged participation. These choices placed the participants' voices on an equal footing and encouraged a sense of democracy (Brookfield, 1995) early on.

As the programme progressed, trust was enhanced through my willingness as an LD practitioner to engage wholeheartedly (Brown, 2018). This was evident in several important ways. The consistent entanglement with participants' actual experiences

(Moon, 2004) rather than operating in the abstract grounded the programme in realism. Inviting experience rather than telling how leadership should be (Schein, 2013) empowered the participants to participate and take the risk to share and explore.

In choosing pedagogically to work with rather than against unplanned interruption and challenge to the programme and participation, trust was indicated in the process and the group in those instances. The opportunity for deeper learning emerged as a result. Taking a position of inquiry in pursuit of emerging knowledge rather than one of power in existing, widely held knowledge, reinforced the trust and strengthened the holding environment for learning (Schapiro, 2009).

Welcoming unplanned dialogue and strong pushback, revealed my pedagogic values and beliefs and helped encourage a relationship of equals (Schein, 2013). Despite struggling with challenging pedagogic self-efficacy (Raelin, 2009), I engaged honestly and directly as the programme reached the stage of clarifying the leadership expectation of the participants (Narrative 6). It is challenging to do so considering the vulnerability of such a place for both participants and practitioner; and a degree of unfinished business associated with not providing the correct answer or a neat scripted finish (McCauley et al., 2010).

Theme 2: The holding environment for learning

Following on from the theme of trust is that of the holding environment (Heifetz, 1998; Schapiro, 2009) for learning, the creation of the safe space for trial and error, vulnerability, and stretch in thinking and learning. The research process has consistently and repeatedly highlighted the importance of enabling such a space where the support exists to change instead of retreating backwards in the face of competing thoughts and possibilities (Schapiro, 2009).

Drawing on a "pressure cooker" analogy offered by Heifetz & Laurie (1997: 126), what emerged from the research is that the holding environment of the commercial learning environment for leadership requires careful pressure

regulation. There is a fine pedagogic line to walk between the (necessary) “heat” of developing leadership thinking and challenge; in this case, through dialogue, reflective and experiential learning; and the possible distress, fear, or anxiety arising from new or changed thinking. Releasing the "steam" arising from the distress and disorientation while recognising that "nothing cooks without heat" (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997: 126) is core to creating a holding environment and requires practitioner attention and ongoing critical reflection.

Providing a holding environment for adult learners of LD which supports growth, development, and possibly transformation requires a careful balancing of confirmation, contradiction, continuity (Kegan, 1982), and creativity (Schapiro, 2009). As evidenced by the preceding narratives, attending to concerns of trust and relationship building from the opening of the learning workspace aids the emergence of a holding environment over time. Trust and a well-developed holding environment enables the emergence of the next recurrent theme; the challenge of attending to the here and now.

Theme 3: Attending to the ‘here and now’ in the learning workspace

A social constructivist epistemology considers learning to be the process of constructing new knowledge on the foundation of what is already known (Vygotsky, 1978; Kim, 2001). Practice-based pedagogic choices were embedded in the design and delivery of MALT, including experiential learning, dialogue, meaning-oriented reflection, and more. A view of leadership predominantly drove these pedagogic choices in MALT as an "embodied, embedded way of being ... in the world" (Carroll et al., 2008: 371). Engagement on mutual problems was accompanied, crucially, by the opportunity to collectively reflect on experience at the right time and in the right amount to be immediately valuable (Raelin, 2020).

The widespread preference for competency or pre-prescribed thinking in the teaching and learning of leadership emphasises measurement against pre-determined success (Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016), thereby imposing structure and constraint (Bolden & Gosling, 2006). Engaging with leadership in the abstract or

theoretically can potentially bypass the "rich vocabulary" required for leadership's diverse, complex and interconnected nature (Bolden & Gosling, 2006: 158) in actual circumstances. Drawing on the richness of engagement in the MALT learning workspace when taking a here and now perspective, this study supports active engagement with current, live, and real scenarios within the participants' realm as the primary source of knowledge generation and meaning-making (Illeris, 2018).

This inquiry also highlights that attuning to the here and now leadership reality invites a gritty realism (Chia, 2004) into the learning workspace. It became clear as MALT progressed that working with participants' real problems in the scene of everyday action necessitates fluid, emergent and adaptive pedagogic ability. This adaptability challenges the LD practitioner to ask the right questions rather than provide the right answers (Heifetz, 1994); listen attentively for connections and inter-relationships in complex live situations (Uhl-Bein, Marion & McKelvey, 2007) and recognise the boundaries of the organisation and the political climate within which the participants carry out their leadership roles (Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016).

The practitioner's challenge in engaging with the here and now is that it can prove confusing, demoralising, or uplifting to participants within the same learning session. Further, the research shows that the LD practitioner choosing to engage from the here and now has little choice but to follow where the surfaced realities' emotional, political, and practical manifestations lead (Denyer & Turnbull-James, 2016).

Theme 4: Creating dialogue

Dialogue reflects the human capacity for language and meaning at its highest (Watkins, 2005). As a paid external LD practitioner and facilitator of leadership knowledge, the participants and I were not equal in the MALT learning space. Despite that, I believe this research has shown that both can learn from each other as we "co-investigate dialectically the object of knowledge" (Mayo, 2012: 10); in this case, the enactment of leadership in the workplace. This inquiry indicates that

engaging in meaningful dialogue about points of difference (Dugan, 2011) with colleagues is vital to developing leadership capacity and understanding.

The pedagogic choice to favour interactive engagement, dialogue, and the lighting of a fire (Freire, 1972) rather than filling a pail (Haase, 2019) can, on occasion, feel slow and counter-intuitive in the commercial learning environment. In these spaces, time is limited, and knowledge creation opportunities are shaped by prior learning experiences (Brookfield, 1986). Dialogue, the meaningful exchange of ideas and understandings, invited a critical review of context, opportunity, the capacity for agency, and the implicit or explicit manifestations of power in the workplace setting for leadership (Dugan, 2011).

Emerging from this inquiry is the painful awareness that despite planning for and advocating a dynamic and dialogic belief system, the temptation to operate from a position of topic expertise arises. In MALT, this occurred early in the programme (Narrative 2), where responses to questions were not forthcoming, and participants struggled to understand what was being asked. Later, in Narrative 5, a challenge arose regarding the value of attending MALT above resolving live work issues that could not wait. The temptation to draw on the expert position surfaced a third time. Pedagogic and epistemological insecurity surfaced (Apple, 2012) regarding the authenticity of an invitation to dialogue on applying leadership learning in a committed way (Narrative 6). Latterly, this urge is recognisable as prompted and enabled by the underlying performativity bias of the workplace (Bierema, 2009). The study highlights the oscillating tension between subjectivity and autonomy of learning towards knowledge creation (Usher et al., 1997). This tension is challenging to navigate, even with the best of practitioner intention. The temptation to get the job done expeditiously and provide participants with the knowledge and information presented itself on multiple occasions in MALT. The findings illuminate the immense internal energy and pedagogic self-awareness required to continuously engage at such a level of reflexive awareness.

Theme 5: Fostering reflection

The constructivist perspective considers reflection an explicit and conscious process (Lundgren et al., 2017). Reflection through this lens engages an LD participant in “revisiting and reinterpreting the meaning of experiences” (Faller et al., 2020: 251). Commercial workplaces, such as the one at the centre of this inquiry, are generally places of action, not reflection (Faller et al., 2020). In the commercial environment, results are the primary focus. There are few real opportunities to step back and make meaningful sense of experience resulting in a change in a belief, attitude, or understanding (Marsick, 1988). For many participants in MALT, the learning workspace re-storied here was likely to be the first such concentrated opportunity to do so.

The pedagogic intent in the invitation to reflect is to deliberately challenge the notion that the practitioner’s sense-making is of greater value than the participants (Kolb, 1984). In MALT, emergent knowledge was sought, and an inward gaze was encouraged (Dugan, 2017), believing both were crucial to leadership development. There were several pedagogic tipping points throughout MALT where a conscious decision was made to deepen the reflective and dialogic nature of the programme (Narratives 4, 5 and 6). Doing so brought the learning experience further away from the relative safety of a structured curriculum and topic and deeper into the unknown territory of unformed thought and an engagement with the other voices in the room and discussion. An engagement with critical bifocality at these crucial times (Weis & Fine, 2012) enabled my understanding of why this was the correct choice. A desire for a balanced and participative adult learning environment that felt mutual, respectful and inclusive (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994) underpinned my practitioner thinking.

This study demonstrates that shifting deeper into reflective thought and dialogue benefitted the learning experience (Hall, 2004). This is evidenced by the constructive and open dialogue surrounding check-in in Narrative 5 and engagement with collective responsibility for leadership on the site in Narrative 6. Nevertheless, making this choice was a challenge to practitioner self-efficacy

(Raelin, 2009). Fear of where the learning workspace could end up is a genuine concern for the LD practitioner in a commercial environment, which is a paid role of considerable responsibility. The prevailing discourses of leadership and LD do not, in general, favour such embodied or reflective learning modalities in commercial environments such as this (Dugan & Humbles, 2018). This approach creates an awareness of the emotional aspects of teaching and learning, a related recurrent theme.

Theme 6: The emotional dimensions of teaching and learning – a focus on Fear and Utilising the Group

Fear emerged on multiple occasions in the narratives. The participants expressed fear of what they did not know, what this learning experience would be like, what it was safe to say, of the honesty required to express disagreement or dissent, fear for the leadership responsibility on their shoulders which they did not understand. The narratives cast, I posit, intense illumination on the presence and nature of fear in commercial learning workspaces such as MALT. The inner voices of resistance (Scharmer, 2018) sought to guard the threshold of something new and challenging as fear emerged for both the participants and LD practitioner. This “disruption” (Scharmer, 2018: 4) in leadership development terms; or “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 1981: 7) in adult learning terms, signalled an interruption to existing frames of reference, how both parties saw and experienced the world (Mezirow, 2009) which was apparent and tangible.

The implication for practice is, I suggest, to recognise the authentic and valid nature of fear, not to deny or diminish its entry into the collective space. The challenge for the practitioner is to sit with and support the interruption or disruption, which may trigger reflection, new meaning-making (Mezirow, 2009) and leadership action (Scharmer, 2018).

In taking the learning into reflective and dialogic places rather than prescriptive ones (Shotter, 2006), the LD practitioner can robustly hold both the participants and the learning objective (Nicolaidis & Marsick, 2016) and trust what emerges.

Frequently that necessitates sitting with fear and not knowing where the process will take the group, the learning or the practitioner.

Utilising the power of the group grew in significance as the programme progressed and as the group found its voice in the process of learning (Freire, 1970). The participants ability to name their world, and in so doing, construct new meaning for themselves (Freire, 1970) was of intense interest to me pedagogically.

Nevertheless, it was a struggle at times to see or hear it in the transitional space of knowing and meaning-making (Berger, 2004). LD is an unfolding process over time (Kellerman, 2018) and figuring it out can be a messy, frustrating, emotional business (Carroll et al., 2008).

In the narrative re-storying, the lonely position of the LD practitioner being alone on-point (Heifetz, 1998) in holding the learning content, pedagogy and learning climate was highlighted. In a significant illumination for practice, this inquiry has instigated a rethink of that position. Rather than looking over a shoulder and seeing an abyss, the LD practitioner can engage and utilise the group to hold the learning and the responsibility together for forward movement (Carroll et al., 2008) and trust them to be self-directed learners (Knowles, 1980). In MALT, the participants were invited to share the responsibility for learning towards leadership (Carroll et al., 2008). They were challenged and supported to embrace adult learning that was uncomfortable and unfamiliar for many, yet they demonstrated their capacity to embrace new and strange ways (Brookfield, 1986).

Theme 7: Tensions of delivery and expertise

Brookfield (2015) posits that the essential knowledge teachers need to do good work is understanding how students experience their learning. In extrapolating the themes emerging from the research, I have alluded to the constant tension between being content-led and being led by the emergent sense-making of participants. In MALT, the prevailing notion of learning was the commonly held belief that learning = being taught (Watkins, 2005). Many participants approached their first day expecting to be taught. The prevalence of competency led and

prescriptive approaches to leadership and LD in the commercial landscape for learning (Carroll et al., 2008) lead most workplace employees to the reasonable expectation that they will be told the answer and what to do with it (Illeris, 2006). What the narratives repeatedly reveal is the gap between LD practitioner intention and reality. The reflexive based pedagogical intent not to simply teach leadership as a topic comes to the fore. This tension manifests most noticeably in concerns of delivery and expertise.

Delivery

Commercial learning workspaces are purposeful places of learning, bounded by time, money and expectation. Facilitating learning in such spaces is an art, not a science (Barnes, 2017), balancing the tension between structure and invitation; momentum and consideration are vital ingredients to get right from the beginning. The pedagogic choices and approaches of the LD practitioner can actively encourage the emergence of a community of participants who collaboratively learn from and teach each other (Watkins, 2005).

Many of the approaches used in MALT: creating a learning contract, checking in and out to the learning space, pairing and sharing in skills-building practice sessions, agreeing to confidentiality, feedback, are deliberately chosen to increase the sense of the learning workspace as safe (Barnes, 2017) and a place where bravery is possible (Arao & Clemens, 2013). These approaches draw on varied influences, from psychodynamics in the Tavistock tradition (Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2014), adult learning approaches and understanding (e.g. Brookfield, 1986; Freire, 1970), and critical feminist pedagogies in a classroom setting (e.g., hooks, 1994). Such pedagogic choices set out to harness and leverage the differing and complex dynamics inherent in the organisation (Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2014). They encourage an active learning environment (Watkins, 2005), countering the commonly held belief that sitting in a classroom like environment must entail school-type learning (Illeris, 2006)

To this end, experiential learning exercises are embedded in MALT as a deliberate choice to create a deliberate act of learning (Moon, 2004). Participants learn together in pairs, triads, and small groups as much as possible using their real-life scenarios and fostering a community of learners (Watkins, 2005).

There was no significant pushback from the participants in MALT to engagement in the pedagogic approaches highlighted. Nevertheless, it would be naive to assume that their inclusion is unproblematic for all participants. The cautionary note sounded in Narrative 1 about solitude (Palmer, 2017) and the default creation of an open U-shape of chairs as the best way to encourage sharing (Brookfield, 1995) are reminders to the LD practitioner that choice is important for adult learners (Knowles, 1984). It takes time to develop trust and safety to learn (Palmer, 2017). It cannot be assumed that it is present from the start and all participants feel equally engaged in the delivery methods and choices of the practitioner, even if initiated for the (pedagogic) right reasons. The subtle coercive power (Josselson, 2007) of the “teacher” can resonate even in the commercial workplace setting for learning.

Expertise

The illumination emerging for future practice of LD is that to teach leadership by practising leadership (Ganz & Lin, 2012) requires a deep and ongoing engagement with practitioner critical reflexivity (Etherington, 2004, 2007; Bolton, 2014). This entails engaging reflexively with sources of fear, instability and paradigmatic wavering as they occur. Surprisingly, the research has also highlighted that the LD practitioner can bring leadership to life in another way - by actively demonstrating the faith, hope, and courage of their deeply held pedagogic beliefs and actions in the learning workspace. This latter insight emerged from the data at different points; in overcoming a poor physical location for learning in Narrative 1, for example, and changing pedagogic direction in response to a distracted learner group and new information in Narrative 4.

The implications appear paradoxical. Reflexively excavating practitioner thinking “in the moment” demonstrates leadership in action. Supporting the strength of

practitioner pedagogic experience and knowledge by moving forward confidently also embodies the leadership being conveyed. The reality may be that, on occasion, it is wholly necessary to mentally step back and cast a critical eye over possible pedagogic steps at the coalface of delivery (Taylor, 1999). On other occasions, sometimes following on from the moment of critical reflection and sometimes not, affirming practitioner pedagogic choices already made based on belief, prior experience and practitioner wisdom invokes the courage to continue (Brookfield, 1985). The research journey provided evidence that both practitioner reflexivity and efficacy for action are enabled by a transparent belief system and rationale for practice (Brookfield, 1995), and for leadership (Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016; Ganz & Lin, 2012).

Conclusion to the pedagogic blueprint

The approach advocated in this pedagogic blueprint does not, for example, advocate or prescribe a competency-based understanding of leadership (Carroll et al., 2008). Further, this type of pedagogy, one which is dialogic and reflective, actively invites into the learning space questions of power, authority and collective responsibility for leadership, encouraging questions rather than providing the right answers (Brookfield, 1986). These divergences can pose problems on several levels for organisations and participants in commercial settings for learning (Reynolds, 1998).

Collective reflection to expand and create new leadership knowledge (Raelin, 2020) can be stretching, demanding, and contra to the expectations of many participants commencing LD programmes. Commercial workplace “classrooms” are frequently populated with minds less concerned with leadership’s cognitive or relational dimensions and more with practical realities (Kellerman, 2018). The same minds do not always relish turning to the laborious task of dissecting and disrupting interpersonal or communication practices, which may provoke uncomfortable responses.

It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the type of pedagogy emerging from this research and which underpins my LD practice will not suit all organisations or their leadership participants. Choosing an LD practitioner to create the learning workspace evident in MALT requires at least a broad alignment of values between stakeholder and practitioner on pedagogic intent such as realism, reflective thought and engaged learning methods. Perhaps more significantly, the stakeholder needs to believe in the practitioner's ability to hold the learning environment (Heifetz, 1998) and handle the disorientation and resistance provoked by critical and reflective pedagogic choices (Kegan, 1982). These are practitioner abilities that are difficult to demonstrate or prove until they occur in real-time.

Adopting this pedagogical blueprint is a brave choice (Brown, 2018) for those who invest in LD. It invites a greater vulnerability for both the organisation and the participants in the process of learning. Yet, MALT demonstrates that careful facilitation of LD learning workspaces, cognisant of the elements of this blueprint, can present the opportunity for participants to cultivate a critical perspective on concerns of knowledge, power and leadership in the learning workspace and the workplace. For some of the participants in MALT for example, this was their first exposure to an approach where biases are unearthed, beliefs are challenged (Barnes, 2017), and the enactment of leadership debated openly without fear or favour. Engaging with adult learning theory enabled a considered focus on pedagogy throughout, which enabled insightful group engagement (Barnes, 2017), using dialogue and reflective thought as essential pedagogic tools, fostering a critical perspective on leadership (Kincheloe, 2008). These approaches enabled shared experiences, knowledge, and differences to emerge when used appropriately and judiciously.

Part 3 - Observations and considerations on commercial learning workspace from the research

In this final section, I conclude with some observations and considerations for commercial learning workspace and the future of LD derived from the research. Within that discussion, I advocate for an increased role for an adult education epistemology and pedagogy within the field of LD. This I have identified as a significant gap in my LD practice knowledge and one which I suggest is widespread in commercial LD practice.

Commercial learning workspace – hope for the future

This study highlights MALT as an example of a commercial learning workspace that incorporated several significant suggestions advocated in the literature as remediation for the future of LD (e.g. Owen, 2015; Dugan, 2017; Raelin, 2016). Many of these suggestions draw on the shared borderlands between adult learning and LD, a space where greater knowledge about powerful pedagogies and the levers for leadership learning is possible (Owen, 2015). Among such suggestions, a commitment to better LD practice has been advocated; one which is invested in meaning-making within the locus and lived context for leadership, a willingness not always displayed by LD educators (Dugan & Humbles, 2018). Teaching methods adjusted for the experiential and embodied nature of leadership (Raelin, 2016) are also posited towards greater efficacy in the delivery of LD. The narratives at the heart of this study indicate that MALT has incorporated elements of these propositions within the boundaries of the time and space available for the programme. In doing so, MALT swims against the tide of commercial learning workspace in several significant ways.

MALT invited participants to turn their gaze inwards. Inviting consideration of personal potential, collective capacity, and shared responsibility, participants were provided with the space to consider what is possible in their workplace if they consider that they can be the leaders they have been waiting for (Grace Lee Boggs,

2007). Evidence shows that this is atypical. Much of the time and energy, feelings, and opinions spent on LD have reflected an outward gaze (Dugan, 2017), a longing for someone else to come along and make lives, workplaces, society better.

The teaching and learning of leadership can equally be “relentless in its sunniness” (Kellerman, 2018: 97). Deliberately shifting the focus from rhetoric to reality (Usher et al., 1997) as happened in MALT, can be perceived as putting a negative spin on a good news concept. Further, participants and their stakeholder organisations can be suspicious of the invitation to consider what is not working in leadership terms and critically reflect on causes, dynamics and responses, viewing it as contrary to the desire to see the positive only. Productive employees rather than critically reflective employees are, after all, the primary goal of management development (Brookfield, 1986). A significant shift towards a more critical or practice-based LD paradigm in our workplaces, including the elements highlighted here, is not a simple task (Dugan & Humbles, 2018).

Very few client organisations are content to release large numbers of employees and pay large sums of money for LD programmes without agreed clarity of purpose, content, structure, and anticipated outcome. In principle, I agree with Tourish (2012), who advocates that LD should be designed to meet the needs of client organisations, linking the development effort in the learning workspace to people's jobs for maximum return on investment. However, in practice, a pedagogic stance such as I have articulated in this chapter is at odds with many aspects of the prevailing discourses in leadership learning not least because of difference over where power resides over knowledge and learning. Organisations can view with suspicion any attempt, as they see it, to upend existing power relationships (Tourish, 2014) and push for a safer, more scripted approach based on case studies, for example.

However, I argue the desire to stabilise and rationalise leadership (Bolden & Gosling, 2006) in this way colonises the learning space where the natural unfolding of relationships, trust, judgement, and sense-making in the leadership context

could take place. A pedagogical position which views the context for leadership as dynamic and emergent believes that leadership is a function of the sense a person makes of it (Dugan, 2017). In this way, a dynamic tension can emerge between what the organisation believes leadership to be and what an individual participant uncovers for and within themselves. The risk associated with a 'becoming' model of LD (Petriglieri, 2012) is unacceptable to some client stakeholders who value clarity and economic expedience (Snook et al., 2012).

Despite such hurdles and concerns, I posit that the example of MALT proffers hope and optimism for the future of LD. I believe it demonstrates that a commitment to better practice by LD practitioners and educators, one which is invested in meaning-making within the locus and lived context for leadership (Dugan & Humbles, 2018), opens a space where greater knowledge about powerful pedagogies and the levers for leadership learning is possible (Owen, 2015). My belief is that MALT has demonstrated that reflective, dialogic, practice-based modalities, which have been increasingly advocated over the last ten years (e.g. Raelin, 2009, 2016; Carroll et al., 2008; Owen, 2015; Dugan, 2017), are possible in commercial LD workspaces. Convincing interested parties of the value of LD learning as thus envisaged continues to be a challenge (Dugan & Humbles, 2018).

Adult learning theory – a necessary (and overlooked) component of LD

Earlier, I attested to my increased understanding of knowledge as a result of engaging with the ever-expanding mosaic made up of insights, theories, models and principles which together illuminate the field of adult learning (Merriam, 2018). The more I know, the better I can design activities for better learning and the “better (I) can prepare adults to live full and engaging lives in today’s world” (Merriam, 2018: 94). Deliberately choosing to engage at the shared borderlands between adult learning and LD (Yang, 2004; Watkins & Marsick, 2014) has significantly enhanced my practice throughout my doctoral journey. In particular, post-research I can see where adult learning theory has begun to shape and influence my understanding of the role of power in learning workspace for LD. I feel attuned with a heightened

power consciousness to choice, impact and consequences in the learning environment.

As previously noted, MALT operated from the shared space between LD and adult learning theory, favouring practice-based approaches (Raelin, 2016) such as experiential learning exercises, dialogue, meaning-oriented reflection in an engaged pedagogy. Such choices in adult education relate action and reflection to theory and practice (Freire, 1970) and keep the process of learning grounded and purposeful (Mayo, 2012).

My hope for my future practice lies in the recognition that I can increasingly draw on LD *and* adult learning theory to hold the dynamic tension between pedagogy, knowledge and power in the commercial learning workspace. Kincheloe (2008) speaks of the necessity of “taking to the epistemological road” (p. 19) in search of new knowledge and ways of being. To do so as an LD practitioner in MALT was to invoke subjugated knowledge, inviting wide and varied knowledge to emerge in ways that are strange to some and possibly threatening to others. Operating in such ways, contrary to accepted discourses of how teaching and learning of leadership should occur (Snook et al., 2012), focused attention instead on possibility, engagement and debate (Freire, 1972). Inviting a critically aware frame of mind (Brookfield, 1995) among a community of employees with shared leadership purpose signalled this was a place for adult learning, not training. Reflection in the learning workspace alongside real, situated work issues and opportunities opened pathways to dialogue and valuing actual experience.

The narratives attest to the reality that as the MALT programme proceeded, there was an increase in the experience of power in the learning workspace alongside a rise in the participants' sense of their personal power and self-worth (Brookfield, 1986) in the process of knowledge creation and learning. Ultimately, the strongest invocation of adult learning in the MALT workspace was evidenced in those moments where I chose to trust the process and the group and the group in turn trusted the process and me. In those moments, the unspoken lines of power (Iszatt-

White et al., 2017) softened and bent in the learning workspace allowing for real dialogue and choice instead (Lange, 2009).

Ultimately, it is my firm belief that the creation of a commercial learning workspace for leadership which is dynamic and privileges lived experience, can benefit significantly from the adoption of an adult education epistemology and pedagogy to scaffold a more critical version of leadership than the more common instrumental, prescriptive and competency based versions of LD. I hope that the MALT experience has planted a strong signpost along the “epistemological road” (Kincheloe, 2008: 19) of fellow LD practitioners - pointing towards adult learning theory and education.

Conclusion

I undertook research armed with “... a curiosity about ideas, a love of writing and the desire to make a positive difference to the world in which (*I*) live” (Tourish, 2019: 368). In return, I have significantly and irrevocably ‘shifted the beam’ (Scharmer, 2018) on what being an LD practitioner in commercial learning workspace means through revisiting and re-examining my frames of reference (Taylor, 1988)

Through a scholarly framework for research drawn predominantly from adult learning theory, I have increased critical awareness of the intricate relationship between pedagogy, knowledge and power (Apple, 2012). Insights drawn from examining this interrelationship and the themes emerging from the narratives have challenged how I position my practice with future clients and stakeholders. I have chosen a path less taken in LD as evidenced by the pedagogic blueprint (hooks, 1994) drawn from recurrent themes in the learning workspace for LD. Allied with a clearer perspective on my model of leadership, I consider myself in a stronger epistemological and practice position (Brookfield, 1985; Kincheloe, 2008; Apple, 2012) as I conclude this study.

In occupying the shared borderlands of LD and Adult Learning theory, I am highly attentive to the responsibility I bear for developing power consciousness in the participants with whom I engage (Kincheloe, 2008). I have identified a position on power in LD that does not oscillate between the extremes of despair (Usher et al., 1997) and emancipation (Raelin, 2013) but instead offers realism and negotiation of participation in workplaces with enhanced capacity and understanding (Usher et al., 1997; Hoggan, 2016).

I have greater insight into what unseats my pedagogic self-efficacy (Raelin, 2009). I draw strength from the realisation that I can engage in a pedagogic pause in moments of decision making, which strengthens my practitioner choices and actions. I draw heart from the increased understanding that I do not create or hold the learning environment single-handedly (Heifetz, 1998; Schapiro, 2009). Embodiment of leadership as a pedagogic stance emerged as a key challenge - the ability to teach leadership by practicing it (Ganz & Lin, 2012). In response, I have trusted the group, the process, my own experience and practitioner wisdom, and my faith has been well placed.

I now approach my pedagogic position with a reflexive knowledge (Etherington, 2004) and theoretical clarity not previously in my possession. As a result, I own my practice position with greater insight and authority, with less risk of a “failure of nerve” (Apple, 2012: 24) in advocating for and delivering LD successfully in commercial environments. I feel considerably strengthened in creating commercial learning workspace of significance moving forward.

Chapter 9 Postscript



Figure 9.1 Handwoven rug from my family home bearing the family motto in Irish

“Ó Conaire” translates as “Conroy”

“Maireann A Scriobhtar” translates as “What is Written Survives”

*“When we have the courage to walk into our story and own it,
we get to write the ending”*

(Brown 2018: 240)

A final note from ‘Alice’

Metaphor helps make sense of the world, inviting the invisible to become more visible (Bolton, 2014). The metaphor of Maeve the researcher as Alice stepping through the Looking Glass was teased in the preface to this work. An unseen but ever-present Alice ushered the narrative progression through the "chessboard" of a familiar landscape of LD made strange. She represented my identity as insider-researcher (Costley et al., 2010), introducing each narrative with a quotation reflective of curiosity and an amount of trepidation for what lay ahead.

Adopting the persona of a curious Alice for the final time, I complete my poetic reflection on learning in a post-script to this study, going that bit further, walking out into the air of the unknown (Heaney, 2008) beyond this research process.

Alice emerges from her reverie, shaking herself down and considers where she finds herself. ‘I must finish what I started, in this crazy world of looking glasses and chessboards and the like’.

She pauses to consider what she now knows. ‘It was hard in places and confusing in places and has no real finish. I was flying, so very seen and yet so unseen, doing and watching all the time through this strange land. Lonely a lot of the time. With so many questions, what am I? Who am I? What am I doing here?’

She grabbed her pen as the urge to rhyme returned...

*But reader dear, it's not that clear
As many a good Alice will tell you
Blended roads and pathways too
Are rarely clear and never straight through!
Flying high above the scene
Perspective it has created
A greater sense of learning pain
And choices – good and ill-fated.*

*What am I? I wondered, what do I believe?
My heart always on my sleeve.
Listening, sharing and 'messy' abound
Flexing while trying to be pedagogically sound!
A three-legged stool, now that is new,
A pedagogue aligned in thought and view.
Power is a curse and a possibility too
Borderlands feeding a wiser view.*

*Reflexive practice be the key
To hell with habit and repeat,
For with each run the Racehorse holds,
the ponys' sacred hopes and dreams!
For in watching and waiting with hope and fear
Pony taught Racehorse to persevere,
There's no "one way", there's no "one learner"
There's no "one delivery", ... Revere.*

*You may disagree,
That's perfectly fine!
It is my story, you see,
Mine, only mine.*

This inquiry has been more vital for the deeply personal, pathway and practice excavation undertaken. This thesis has come to represent my journey as I travelled alongside others who appear within the narratives just presented. My pathway to a more profound understanding of LD practice is reflected in their pathway to enhanced leadership learning. My exploration of the interplay between pedagogy, knowledge and power from a practitioner perspective mirrored their grappling with the same. My struggles and vulnerability strikingly mirror theirs.

Palmer describes good educators as sharing one trait - “a strong sense of personal identity infuses their work” (2017: 11). That which I have come to know about myself – as practitioner, pedagogue, developer and person, I know at this point in time.

As I complete this post-script in early 2021, I recognise the change wrought on my practice and perspective. My practitioner reflexive diary, still close at hand, reflects this change:

I had a call today with a HR stakeholder in an organisation new to working with me.

He pushed hard for his idea of LD built around a set of leadership competencies, limited in scope in my view. It became increasingly clear as we spoke that he wanted these competencies “taught”.

I found myself clearly and without preparation advocating for the opposite. I swear it was like an out of body experience (!). I explained that the relational and dialogic elements of LD are critical to success. I brought my recent experience of MALT alive (as best I could over the phone). I spoke (passionately - maybe a bit too much so?) in defence of the space to find and create leadership rather than have it prescribed for the employees.

I empathised with his objective and acknowledged the pressures he was under to adhere to guidance which has come down from a Head Office located in another country and without context.

I was clear as the call progressed (and I hadn't planned this!) that I would prefer to walk away from the delivery opportunity rather than prescribe or limit the potential of the learning workspace. I surprised myself and myself I suspect with the intensity of my owned position on learning.

He said that he would reconsider in light of what I had said.

(From practitioner reflexive diary May 2021)

Personally significant transformations “involve a critique of premises regarding the world and one’s self” (Mezirow, 2009: 22). I have come to know and sincerely appreciate that in seeking to understand how I can help others find their leadership voice, I have found mine.

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Appendix 1: The six areas of the MALT framework extracted from the MALT booklet





Recruiting & Induction

Great recruiting is about hiring for both technical skills and culture fit. When welcoming a new member to your team, you should give them the best possible start to their career in our company.

Working closely with your HR Business partner, your role as a People Manager is to:

- Create a good candidate experience
- Ensure that internal candidates feel that they have had a fair chance and have learned from the experience
- Ensure that the selection process is fair and consistent
- Make sure you are well prepared for the interview and understand the legal side of recruitment
- Provide timely, honest and evidence-based feedback
- Ensure your new employees have a positive induction into our business by creating a strong plan
- Actively manage our probation process



Developing

A strong manager will work to ensure all our employees realise their full potential and have satisfying careers at [redacted].

Your role as a People Manager is to:

- Be a role model for employee development
- Work with each team member to create effective Personal Development objectives
- Provide regular and timely feedback and coaching
- Know what training/resources are available to support the development of your team
- Support your people in getting the most from training by helping them actively plan and follow through on learning activities
- Have an annual conversation with your team members about their career aspirations



Recognising & Rewarding

A great people manager can communicate effectively with their team on all aspects of reward and can recognise those who live our values and behaviours in a meaningful way.

Your role as a People Manager is to:

- Make sure you and your team understand [redacted] approach to recognition and reward
- Educate your team on the link between personal performance and reward
- Ensure that you and your team understand the total package offered by Irish Distillers including bonus and profit share
- Explain your reward decisions by having evidence-based discussions with team members
- Be familiar with our benefits portfolio and share this information with your team
- Be an active user and promoter of our recognition programme, [redacted]
- Ensure you give your team any B [redacted]s they have been nominated for in a timely fashion
- Say 'thanks' and 'well done' frequently and take time to celebrate success



Safety, Wellbeing & CSR

Great people managers provide employees with a safe place to work and care about their health and wellbeing. They also support their teams in giving back to our community through our CSR initiatives.

Your role as a People Manager is to:

- Be aware of your responsibilities and those of your team relating to Health & Safety and regularly discuss these with your team
- Ensure that your team follow safety guidelines and procedures
- Regularly check that all work areas are tidy and free from hazards
- Investigate and report on all incidents, accidents and near misses
- Promote and encourage your team members to attend IDL Wellbeing programmes if they express interest
- Enable your team to gain a healthy approach to work/life balance
- Act as an ambassador for [redacted] and ensure that your team understand the importance of [redacted] on [redacted]
- Understand [redacted] policy for site charity partnerships, employee matched funding and volunteering leave and support your team if they wish to participate in these activities



Empowering High Performance

A good manager will help create the right conditions for every employee to be able to deliver a Remarkable performance.

Your role as a People Manager is to:

- Help your team to understand that by delivering their performance objectives they contribute to the success of our business
- Ensure that your members fully participate in [redacted] (where applicable)
- Provide direction to your team on performance objectives, ensuring that they are SMART and stretching
- Give regular feedback and provide coaching in areas where improvement is needed
- Ensure that you rate performance fairly
- Help create and implement timely performance improvement plans (PIPS) if the performance of a team member is not meeting expectations



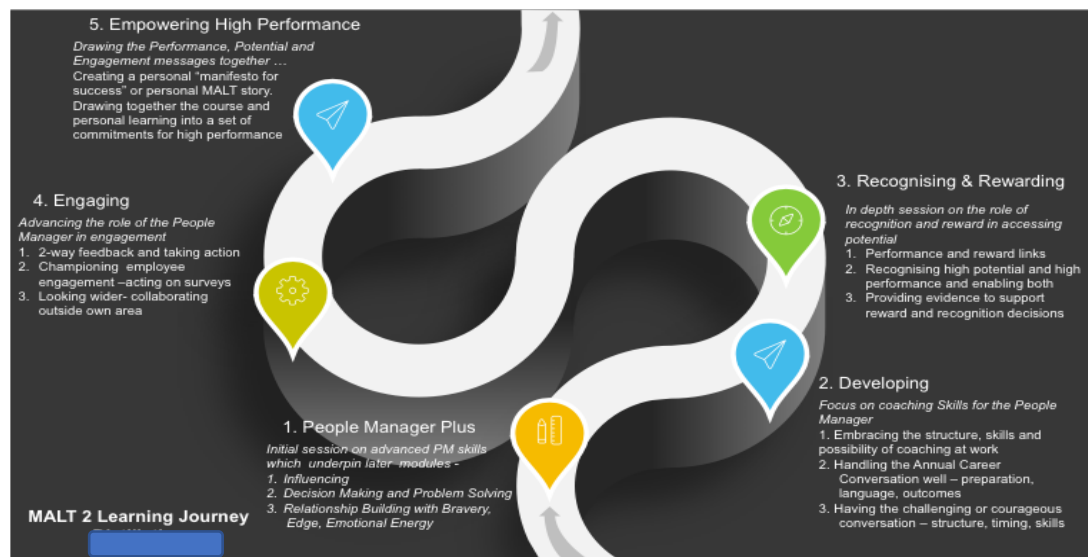
Engaging

Clear and frequent communication between People Managers and their teams leads to greater employee engagement and motivation levels.

Your role as a People Manager is to:

- Ensure you understand our Vision, Values and Strategic Priorities and communicate them frequently to your team
- Role model best practice by ensuring you live our values and behaviours
- Be an effective two way communicator by using the [redacted]
- Foster a trusting culture in your team
- Ask for feedback and take action as appropriate
- Act as a champion for employee engagement surveys (Taking Stock and I Say)
- Conduct regular 121 meetings with your team members
- Promote collaboration between teams, departments and functions
- Understand your role in supporting your team through change

Appendix 2: Content outline for MALT 1, 2 and 3 as originally envisaged at the outset of the MALT LD journey





1. Manager As Leader – Real, Responsible, Remarkable!

Exploration of the leadership role of People Managers against the backdrop of the Values

1. Understanding the differences between management and leadership and when to embrace one or the other
2. Contribution to building and maintaining the **I** as Leaders – what do we own and how can we embrace it?
3. Challenging the what and how of some key behaviours such as Straight Talking, Listening and Owning the Business Mindset – what's our role?
4. What does bringing "Remarkable" to life truly look like – inspiration, stimulus and debate to get under the skin and incite a greater urgency and commitment
5. People Managers and People Leaders – a commitment to the way forward

MALT 3 Learning Journey

Appendix 3: E-mail invitation to all MALT participants in advance of attendance

Text of E-mail 1 – Sent to participants six weeks prior to commencement of MALT

Dear Colleagues,

We are happy to invite you on an important Learning Journey commencing in September 2018 and running through to February 2019. This Learning Journey is called “MALT 1”. You will shortly receive Outlook invitations with the specific date, time and location where your programme will run.

This is a bespoke development programme designed specifically to support you in your role as a People Manager by providing you with the space and time to explore the tools, understanding and skills required to excel in the role of leading people.

You will see below an overview of the MALT 1 Learning Modules. To be successful, managers of people need to Know what is expected of them, Do what is expected with a responsible management hat on and Be the first line enablers of teams, communication and delivery. Our aim is to provide the opportunity for you to explore, learn, question and challenge yourselves around the MALT responsibilities such that as we progress through the learning journey, you will feel increasingly confident that you know what is expected of you in each of the areas; can do what is needed supported by tools, approaches and ideas provided in the training by the Facilitator and your colleagues and ultimately feel confident to be the first line enablers of your own teams.

The training programme mixes content, discussion and practice. The main modules will be delivered by Maeve Conroy, Trainer, Coach and Facilitator. Maeve has helped similar businesses to [REDACTED] develop learning journeys that are relevant, timely and interactive. We know that adults learn best when what they engage with is practical, relevant, relatable, rooted in experience and has some humour attached. Maeve will stick to these principles as the training progresses. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] will also deliver a module on their communication tools as part of the sessions. These have proven to be valuable and useful and are in widespread use throughout the business.

MALT 1 Modules Snapshot

Module 1 September	People Manager “101” Core understanding of the responsibilities of managing people, the role, new responsibilities and expectations Exploring and managing Self and owning your own impact – all leadership starts with knowing and growing yourself Embracing the learning journey to become an enabler of people, team and performance
Module 2 October	[REDACTED] Conversations Using language effectively as a Manager to get to clarity and drive commitment
Module 3 November	Developing Helping people succeed and grow Managing performance effectively and efficiently Handling conversations and situations that require courage and clarity
Module 4 December	Engaging Knowing and embracing the importance of communication with the team Handling challenge in 1:1 and team – maintaining trust, boundaries and clarity Harnessing the power and energy of a team – how to get the best out of a group of people

Module 5 January	Recruitment & Induction Fairness, measurement and decision making Candidate experience Bringing on board new joiners
Module 6 February	Reward & Recognition Understanding the [REDACTED] approach to reward and explaining to others as appropriate Recognising effort and achievement in the day to day job Understanding and utilising the [REDACTED] Rewards

We look forward to working with you on the learning journey ahead!

Regards,

[REDACTED], HR

Maeve Conroy, Facilitator of MALT

Text of E-mail 2 – Sent to participants three weeks prior to commencement of MALT

Dear Colleagues,

Preparation for MALT

The most important part of any learning journey is to come ready to learn with as positive a mindset as you can muster on the day! Learning involves change and change is hard for Adults in different ways. It means we have to look at ourselves, explore what we don't know and invest time in trying something new.

It helps if we have done some thinking beforehand about what we need to learn and ideally discussed that thinking with our own Manager to get their perspective on where the programme might benefit us.

In advance of starting the programme, can you please reflect on and consider your thoughts on the following questions (and discuss with your Manager if you can):

- *What does this change mean for you day to day – your role, use of time and focus?*
- *How will you signal that your role is different now and what obstacles might you need to overcome to do that?*
- *What could you do on a practical level to best help yourself get off to a great start with people, tasks and new responsibilities?*
- *What do you think will be hardest for you to take on, think about or to do (be honest!)?*
- *What do you need to learn that you don't know about right now?*
- *What will you have to stop doing that you currently do? What will be the impact of that?*
- *What does success look like to you if you fully embrace your role and its' responsibilities? What would you like to be able to point to or talk about as progress in 3, 6, 9 months' time for example?*
- *What wisdom does your Manager have about how they see you stepping into new responsibilities?*

We look forward to working with you on the learning journey in three weeks time.

Regards,

██████████ HR

Maeve Conroy, Facilitator of MALT

Appendix 4: Information Sheet for research consent

Maynooth University Tier 2-3 Research Ethical Approval Number: SRESC-2018-033



INFORMATION SHEET

MALT 1

Proposed Research

Context - The Learning Journey explained

The MALT 1 Learning Journey has been designed to support you in the delivery of your People Management responsibilities as part of your role in [REDACTED]. Constructed around the core MALT responsibilities (shown below), the learning journey provides a space here you can learn, explore and grow your ability to manage and lead the people who report to you.



The learning journey will unfold over a 7-8 month period and will include

- 6 x Classroom type learning sessions
- 2 x Group Coaching sessions

In addition, the learning will be supported by relevant short readings, the opportunity to support each other through “learning buddies” and keeping reflexive learning logs, among other good learning practices.

Research alongside the learning

There is a wide range of thought in the area of teaching & learning in the workplace. A key question surrounds the nature and style of learning that best enables adults to learn in the workplace classroom.

I am interested in researching the nature of adult workplace learning and specifically **how people experience the learning journey to people leadership**. This is why I am asking for your informed consent to record the journey of which you are part to help me and the wider Practitioner and Learner community benefit from your learning experiences along the way.

I would like to use the learning/data that emerges from the running of the MALT 1 Learning Journey to better understand the creation of an adult learning environment and to inform my research as part of an EdD (Doctorate in Adult Education) which I am undertaking at

Maynooth University. The EdD is designed for those who work as educators and trainers and we are encouraged to research our own teaching environments.

In running the Learning Journey, I want to review and reflect on the learning over the duration and track the learning that occurs for you, your group of fellow learners, and me. Core to my research is a commitment to you that I want your views and opinions to be central to the telling of the story of the learning journey.

To enable this to happen, I would like to:

- Retain all notes, flipcharts and outputs from our sessions that are created jointly or collectively
- Keep detailed reflections on the sessions and provide an opportunity for you to reflect on these with me, and add your own reflections to them, through a “check in” process each time we meet
- Record the main themes coming from these reflections on a flipchart and retain them
- Share with you in writing any key thoughts or observations from any 1:1 learning opportunities that arise on the journey including the “1:1 Skills and Opportunities” session at the end of the Learning Journey and invite you to add or amend these thoughts from your point of view
- Take a measure at the start and end of the Learning Journey regarding your sense of knowledge and ability in the MALT areas of responsibility
- Capture your sense of the journey at the end; by agreement with you on the most appropriate way to do that

How the research information will be handled

The company will be identified (*if this is agreed with* [redacted] *or*
The broad company sector will be identified as [redacted] (*if this is the company's preference*).

I will not identify or name any member of the group.

Any quotes used will be anonymous. If you do not want your feedback or input to be included in the research you can withdraw at any time.

I will not use voice or visual recording for the sessions.

Learning outputs for research purposes such as flipcharts, class exercise material, baseline survey outputs, reflexive diaries, meeting notes and reflexive exercises will be captured manually and stored securely in locked cabinets at my registered business office.

Any digital data in relation to the study created by computer will be encrypted, devices password protected and stored on a desktop computer at my business address and backed up to a secure external server.

These will be retained for 10 years in line with Maynooth University research policy and then will be confidentially shredded (paper sources) or wiped (digital sources) by me.

The information will be used for the purposes of writing a thesis for submission for my EdD degree.

Future possible uses including conference papers outside the Ed.D process, book or book chapter or case study presentation to relevant professional bodies in the areas of workplace training & development, adult learning, occupational psychology and coaching.

Despite the commitment to confidentiality detailed above, It must be recognized that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by

courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances Maynooth University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.'

Concerns during research

Should you experience any discomfort or concern in relation to this research, at any point on the learning journey, please contact [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Culture and Capability Manager in confidence on:

[REDACTED]

Appendix 5: Research Consent Form

Maynooth University Tier 2-3 Research Ethical Approval Number: SRESC-2018-033



INFORMED CONSENT FORM MALT 1: Learning Journey: Proposed Research

Research	A case study in how adult learners experience the learning journey to people leadership in the workplace
Researcher	Maeve Conroy [REDACTED]
Research Supervisor	Dr. Mary B.Ryan Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University School of Education [REDACTED]

I, _____ confirm that I am giving consent to Maeve Conroy to use material from the MALT 1: Learning Journey Learning Event as part of her research in the EdD programme at Maynooth University. I have had the opportunity to read the **Information Sheet** and to discuss within the learning group and with Maeve the implications of giving consent. I understand that I am free not to participate in the research and my participation in the MALT 1 Learning Journey is not dependent on or impacted by my consent to participate in the research.

Please complete the following by circling Yes or No for each statement

I consent to participate in the research project	Yes	No
My quotes and comments can be used anonymously	Yes	No
I agree that all materials including flipcharts, exercises, reflections and summary flipcharts generated within the group in the course of learning will be kept and can be referenced or quoted while maintaining anonymity	Yes	No
I understand that the research information will be used for the purposes of EdD thesis submission and <u>may</u> at a later date be used for conference papers, book or book chapters or case study presentation	Yes	No
I understand the information provided on the Information Sheet	Yes	No

I have received satisfactory answers to any questions I have

Yes

No

Confidentiality

All research information generated is confidential and will be retained for 10 years in line with Maynooth University research policy and then will be confidentially shredded (paper sources) or wiped (digital sources) by Maeve.

Ethics

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the Maynooth University Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Participants Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Date:

Appendix 6: Research Ethics Application Form



Social Research Ethics Sub-Committee

Protocol for Tier 2-3 Ethical Review of a Research Project Involving Participation of Humans

Please note the following:

1. The ethics committee will review the protocol and determine eligibility for Expedited Review. If the committee decides that this project is not eligible for expedited review you will be notified and the protocol will automatically be assessed by standard review. **The committee will make the final decision regarding eligibility for tier 2 review.**
2. Before submitting this application, all researchers named within it should have read and agreed the contents. In addition, all student submissions should be countersigned by the Supervisor.
3. While attachments may be appended, it is important that you do not simply refer to them, but that you fully address all points in the text of this form. Please keep in mind that your application could be read by someone who is not a specialist in your field, so it is important to make your explanations as clear and thorough as possible.
4. Place your cursor inside the box that follows each question and begin to type – the box will expand as you type. *(Text in red italics is for guidance only and can be overwritten)*

1. Tier 2 Expedited Review



Select from [specific criteria \(1-4\)](#) that entitles the project to be exempt from standard review.

Please give a short justification for selecting Tier 2 review based on the specific criterion selected above.

Specific criteria No 1-

1. *Research involving adults (with the exception of those identified vulnerable) where the material is of a non sensitive nature where the research subjects may be identified either directly or through a key/indicators linked to subjects. This includes surveys, interviews and/or observational studies.*

In this study, I will research workplace training with adults learning People Leadership in [redacted] This is a learning programme I have previously delivered in my

practice. However, this is the first time this group of learners will go through the learning programme with me.

The organisation [REDACTED] may be named in writing up the research and as a result there will be some indirect indicators linked to research subjects although I propose to anonymise the data and not to identify any individual learner/research participant.

While the learning journey may be challenging in parts for the learners, many of whom have not been in a classroom of any sort for a while, the nature of the content and the teaching techniques are of a non-sensitive nature.

This study is observational in nature being a Practitioner led Narrative Inquiry.

1a. **Tier 3 Standard Review**

2. **Title.** Brief title of the research project:

If this is a funded research project, you must include the funding agency reference/contract number here (e.g. SFI/RFP2017, IRC- REPRO/2015/76):

Can you “Sherpa” adult workplace learners to People Leadership?
A Case Study in bringing newly appointed People Managers on a leadership learning journey.

3. **Information about the researcher(s), collaborator(s), and/or supervisor (if the researcher is a postgraduate student)**

Please include a letter from the supervisor (see template at the end of this form) outlining how the student is suitably prepared/qualified and will have adequate support to carry out the type of research proposed.

Name:	Qualifications or Student No:	MU Address/Dept.	MU Email only:	MU Telephone only:	Role in the project:
Maeve Conroy	Msc Occupational Psychology BA Psychology Student No. [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Researcher

Dr. Mary B. Ryan	Head of Department	Department of Adult and Community Education - Maynooth University School of Education			Supervisor
------------------------	-----------------------	--	--	--	------------

4. Previous ethical approval for this project (if applicable)

(Please attach a copy of your approval letter)

Other Ethical Approval	Reference
Maynooth University Ethical Approval [] Yes [X] No	<i>SRESC-201x-xxxxx</i>
Other Institutions [] Yes [X] No [] Under review	

5. Research Objectives. Please summarize briefly the objective(s) of the research, including relevant details such as purpose, research question, hypothesis, etc. (**about 150 words**).

Objective:

To explore the factors that trigger transformational learning in the workplace classroom with a group of adults learning people leadership in a formal way for the first time.

Research Question:

The impact of taking a “sherpa” model approach to adult learners in workplace training: how does guiding rather than pulling or pushing them “up the mountain” of learning enable transformational learning?

Purpose:

This is a practitioner inquiry into the researcher’s own educational practice as a professional workplace trainer. The purpose is to deeply explore what helps or hinders adult learning and what triggers the moments of transformation where learners move from not knowing or not willing to engagement and reflexivity.

Hypothesis:

Traditional methods of providing people leadership training are not as effective as they could be. Leadership development as it is currently taught in workplace classrooms is falling short on its’ aims to deliver thinking, feeling, engaged people leaders by either pushing or pulling people through a tightly scripted learning curriculum and process. It is the hypothesis of this researcher that a third, emerging approach, based loosely on the idea of the “Sherpa” – a guide with humble wisdom and knowledge who enables, supports and challenges, listens and signposts but ultimately travels the journey alongside the climber/adult learner - is worthy of

greater research as the indicators are that it enables transformative learning in a more long-term and sustainable way.

Learning Journey research opportunity:

The opportunity has arisen to explore this research question through live action research with a client organisation within my professional practice as an Adult Educator and Trainer. That client is [REDACTED] who manufacture, distribute and sell [REDACTED] and other [REDACTED] worldwide [REDACTED] has asked me to partner with them on the creation, design and delivery of a pilot Learning Journey in People Leadership for newly appointed People Managers at their [REDACTED] [REDACTED] as well as their [REDACTED]. The learning journey will take place over a 9 month period.

6. Methodology.

6a. Where will the research be carried out?

Location(s)	[REDACTED] Using internal training facilities in all three locations or local suitable hotel facilities provided by [REDACTED] in Dublin, Cork or Portlaoise.
Proposed start date	Mid-April 2018
Approx Duration	9 - 12 months

6b. **Research Methodology and Methods to be used** (Tick all that apply)

- Observation/ Ethnography
- Documentary Analysis
- Arts-based/Visual
- Action/Narrative/Participatory Research
- Experimental Research
- Analysis of existing data
- Interviews and/or Focus groups

- Surveys and questionnaires
 -
- Other including online web-based (please specify below)
 -

Baseline Survey approach:

I plan to use creative methods for this Survey.

I will explain the purpose and output to the participants.

I will then invite the participants to use whatever creative means they choose to represent where they see themselves at the start of the people leadership learning journey.

When they have created something, I will invite them to share their output in small groups using standardised questions.

Once the small groups have shared, I will invite all participants to share the emerging themes in the large group and use questions to further explore and establish the learning baseline.

- I will repeat this exercise at the end of the learning journey inviting participants to create something to represent how they now feel in people leadership terms, and invite them to compare the beginning and ending themes and the degree of change/learning that has occurred.

In using this creative survey approach I will follow the qualitative research guidance on narrative research of Hollway and Jefferson (Doing Qualitative Research Differently, 2013, 2nd ed, Sage)

6c. Please describe briefly the overall methodological design of the project.

Structure of the learning:

The Learning Journey which I propose to research contains three learning elements or “touchpoints” –

1. 6 classroom sessions at monthly intervals – 3 full days (9am - 5pm) and 3 half days (10am – 1pm)
2. 2 group coaching sessions positioned after classroom session 2 and 4 (of 2 hours duration each time)
3. 1 individual coaching opportunity 4 weeks after completion of classroom session 6 for each participant (1.5 hours duration per person)

Learning Group Size is anticipated to be 15 participants.

It is anticipated that there will also be a two-day pre-programme learning event for the Site Leadership teams at [REDACTED] to whom these learners report.

The purpose of that session is to “enroll” the Site leadership teams to support the learning and learners during and after the learning Journey. Approximate size of this group is 10.

In support of this Learning Journey, there will be ongoing 1:1 meetings and debriefs with the HR Sponsor for the learning journey and the Site Managers who manage this population of learners and their appointment to the position of People Managers. In working in this area for 20+ years, I have gained a lot of experience in managing the boundaries of such debriefs.

Proposed Research Methodology:

I propose to use **Narrative Inquiry** as my primary research method where the learners co-create the learning space with me. I believe this approach is best suited to this type of research, to the learning environment in which it will take place and as a way of accessing lived experience of the journey, theirs and mine.

Within Narrative Inquiry I propose to use an *Analysis of narratives approach* – treating stories as data and use analysis to arrive at themes that hold across stories (Polkinghorne 1995)

My ultimate aim is to elicit learnings and themes on three levels (which are all connected)

–

- the **learner lived experience** (as a way of understanding transformational “magic moments” of learning in the workplace)
- the **people leadership journey experience** (as a way of contributing to the debate about how best to provide leadership education)
- the **facilitator as educator lived experience** (as a way of informing this practitioner and other practitioners)

6d. Depending on the methods/techniques to be used, elaborate upon the research context(s), potential questions / issues to be explored, tasks/tests/measures, frequency/duration of sessions, process of analysis to be used, as appropriate.

Research Questions

At a Fundamental Level:

How do adults learn People Leadership in the workplace?

Exploring the factors that trigger transformational learning in the workplace classroom with a group of adults learning people leadership in a formal way for the first time

Broad Research Questions:

What triggers the moments of transformation where People Leadership learners move from not knowing or not willing to reflexivity and engagement?

What roles do the practitioner and construction of the learning journey play in enabling transformative learning to happen?

What helps or hinders adult learning in the workplace classroom setting? Can a “Sherpa” style approach help? (Rowland, 2016)

To address these research questions and in order to engage with this “live” and co-created approach of Narrative Inquiry, I propose to:

Gain full **informed consent** from the learners, HR sponsor, Site Leads and Site Leadership teams as appropriate. This ensures I can research the entire learning journey not just the classroom events.

Include **course outlines and texts**, detailed module plans, meeting notes and classroom exercises as research inputs.

Retain all **flipcharts**, group and exercise outputs from each of the 6 classroom based sessions, two group coaching sessions and 2 day Site Leadership event.

Take **detailed observational notes** during (as appropriate) and immediately after all sessions from the point of view of me as Educator/Practitioner and to aid memory of the journey for me as Researcher.

Maintain a **reflexive research journal** in which I record my preparation for, concerns about and experience of each learning “touchpoint” – Pre-programme, classroom, group coaching and 1:1 coaching. Explore **opportunities and concerns** emerging from this with a small group of critical peer reviewers brought together for this purpose. I will engage with a group of three – a Peer Researcher; a Peer Practitioner (who is also a Coach Supervisor) and Peer Educator with specialism in journaling and reflexive methods.

“Record” each learning touchpoint through **writing an account of it** immediately following the occurrence, drawing from all the sources listed above. I don’t propose to share this in full in a written way with the learners, but rather to use themes emerging from it as a source for reflexive “checkin” at the start of the next learning session in a co-creative way.

Sharing themes are likely to be presented to the group as reflective writing: “Here’s what I noted when we met last... let me read some of it to you...what are your thoughts?” or as an invitation to reflect “what did you notice about learning dynamic when we last met?”.

Create a **baseline observational survey** to use in an exploratory way with the learning group at the start and the end of the learning journey to reflexively measure the starting point and the degree of learning change.

In line with the “sherpa” approach of guiding rather than telling, this will be creative and energetic in nature – e.g. “draw a picture, or choose a set of words or images to represent where you feel you are today in people leadership terms, starting on this learning journey?”

And asking the same at the end: e.g. “draw a picture, choose a set of words or images to represent where you feel you are now at the end of the learning journey?”. What differences do you notice?

Share with individuals in writing any key thoughts or observations from any 1:1 learning opportunities that arise on the journey including the “1:1 Skills and Opportunities” session at the end of the Learning Journey and invite them to add or amend these thoughts from their point of view.

I **don’t propose to use voice or visual recording** for the sessions I feel this would compromise the openness to learning and create a self-consciousness that could negatively impact the core of what the research is attempting to explore – that of transformative learning. As this is a unionised workplace, entering this type of learning journey for the first time with a population unused to structured adult learning, I don’t believe I would get consent to voice or visual recording in any event.

I don't intend to name any of the learner participants. Whether the company will be named, or merely the broad nature of the business identified by me, will be the subject of negotiation with them. The research does not necessitate naming the organisation and is not dependent on it.

All data gathered in the course of the above will be strictly stored and retained by me in accordance with the University's Research policy. This is clearly explained to research participants on the Consent and Information forms (copies of proposed forms submitted with this application)

7. Participants.

7a. Who will the participants be?

Core group of 15 learners
HR Sponsor and HR Business Partners (3)
Site Leads for [REDACTED] (2)
Site leadership teams to whom the learners report in their jobs (10)

7b. Approximately how many participants do you expect will be involved?

30 approximately

7c. How will participants become involved in your project? If you have formal recruitment procedures, or criteria for inclusion/exclusion, please outline them here.

Core learner group chosen by the company [REDACTED] as participants on the People Leadership learning journey based on their recent appointment to People Management roles

Site Leadership Teams participate in the pre-learning event based on having reportees who are embarking on the Learning Journey

HR participate as Sponsors, key stakeholders and gatekeepers for learning in the [REDACTED] business

7d. What will be the nature of their participation? *(Tick all that apply)*

- One- time/short-term contact
- Longer term involvement
- Collaborative ongoing involvement

- Other (please outline below)



The 9 month duration has been emphasised on the Information Sheet

7e. What will research participants be asked to do for the purposes of this research study?

The research participants will be asked for their informed consent to record the journey of which they are part to help me and the wider Practitioner and Learner community benefit from their learning experiences along the way.

I will ask for their agreement to use the learning/data that emerges from the running of the Learning Journey to better understand the creation of an adult learning environment and to inform my research as part of an EdD (Doctorate in Adult Education) which I am undertaking at Maynooth University. I will explain that the EdD is designed for those who work as educators and trainers and we are encouraged to research our own teaching environments.

I will explain that in running the Learning Journey, I want to review and reflect on the learning over the duration and track the learning that occurs for them, their group of fellow learners, and myself. Core to my research is a commitment to them that I want their views and opinions to be central to the telling of the story of the learning journey.

To enable this to happen, I will specifically state that I would like to:

- Retain all notes, flipcharts and outputs from the sessions that are created jointly or collectively
- Keep detailed reflections on the sessions and provide an opportunity for them to reflect on these with me, and add their own reflections to them, through a “check in” process each time we meet
- Record the main themes coming from these reflections on a flipchart and retain them
- Share with them in writing any key thoughts or observations from any 1:1 learning opportunities that arise on the journey including the “1:1 Skills and Opportunities” session at the end of the Learning Journey and invite them to add or amend these thoughts from their individual point of view
- Take a measure at the start and end of the Learning Journey regarding their sense of knowledge and ability in the people leadership area
- Capture their sense of the journey at the end; by agreement with them on the most appropriate way to do that

Further I will be clear on how the research information will be handled:

The company will be identified *(if this is agreed with [redacted] or [redacted] or [redacted])*
The broad company sector will be identified as [redacted] *(if this is the company’s preference)*.

I will not identify or name any member of the group.

Any quotes used will be anonymous. If they do not want their feedback or input to be included in the research they can withdraw at any time.

I will not use voice or visual recording for the sessions.

Learning outputs for research purposes such as flipcharts, class exercise material, baseline survey outputs, reflexive diaries, meeting notes and reflexive exercises will be captured

manually and stored securely in locked cabinets at my registered business office ([REDACTED]).

Any digital data in relation to the study created by computer will be encrypted, devices password protected and stored on a desktop computer at my business address (as above) and backed up to a secure external server.

These will be retained for 10 years in line with Maynooth University research policy and then will be confidentially shredded (paper sources) or wiped (digital sources) by me.

The information will be used for the purposes of writing a thesis for submission for my EdD degree.

Future possible uses including conference papers outside the Ed.D process, book or book chapter or case study presentation to relevant professional bodies in the areas of workplace training & development, adult learning, occupational psychology and coaching.

In relation to confidentiality, I will add:

“Despite the commitment to confidentiality detailed above, It must be recognized that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances Maynooth University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.’

7f. Does the research have the potential for a conflict of interest?

Yes

No

If yes to above, please outline the basis of the potential conflict of interest and describe the steps you will take to address this should it arise?

[Access the Conflict of Interest Policy here](#)

7g. Will the research involve power relationships e.g. student/employee/employer/colleague etc.?

Yes

No

If yes to above, please outline the basis of the potential power relationship and describe the steps you will take to address this should it arise?

Yes – two primary power relationships exist within the research

1. Learner – Practitioner/Researcher.

The content of the learning journey is new for these learners. They are also learning within a working environment where they are expected to use what they learn on the job. There is no explicit testing of achievement attached to the learning journey or back on the job. However, based on past educational experiences, the learners/research participants could see me or the employer ([REDACTED]) as being in a position of judgement. The learners could also feel that they have no

choice but to be participants - in both the learning journey and because of that, in the research. This could impact openness, trust and contribution.

This can be addressed by me through:

- sharing a good quality Information sheet
- spending time on explaining the Consent Form at the start and the implications of giving consent
- reminding participants that although they are part of the learning journey as determined by the company, they can withdraw from the research side at any time
- reiterating that the research will not name or identify any individual or individual contribution
- agreeing a learning contract with the group from the start around dynamics like openness, involvement and honesty and checking in with this each time we meet
- being very clear that there is no testing of achievement attached to the learning journey or the research and that they are adult learners being invited to learn and grow in a safe environment

2. **Researcher/Practitioner – Employer.** I am getting paid in my role as an independent Leadership practitioner to deliver this work. They have kindly given me permission to incorporate my research as well.

There are a number of power dynamics inherent in this: ■ may decide at any stage to change their minds and not continue with the learning journey. This is a power dynamic over which I have no control and if it happened it could terminate my research early. I believe this to be unlikely but in the event it should happen, I would seek to negotiate an alternative way to conclude my research or their permission to use partially gathered data.

There is an implicit assumption that I am paid to deliver the learning journey well and improve the skillsets of the learners as a result. Should the Narrative Inquiry show that this is not the case and the learning approach has not delivered this, there may be pressure from the company to deprioritise the research side of things, distance themselves from the findings or ask that the research not be disseminated further.

This can be addressed by me through:

- Keeping the delivery of the learning journey and the research of it balanced and separate as far as possible
- Managing my own awareness of the need to “deliver” transformation rather than allow the learning to unfold. I can use the reflexive process and peer review group to keep this in perspective.
- Ensure ■ expectations are managed from the start – the very fact that research is happening alongside the learning journey does not mean that this will be the best learning journey ever. I will of course do everything within my capability to make it an excellent learning experience but unforeseen group dynamics, reluctant participation or company changes or union issues can all contribute to less than optimal outcomes
- Should the research outcomes indicate that the “Sherpa” type approach does not enable better learning or only partially enables it, or the lived experiences of the participants indicates negativity towards the learning, the facilitator or the company, I will share this openly but sensitively with ■ while negotiating that the write-up of the research can still go ahead and under what circumstances and with whom the data can be shared

7h. Will the participants be remunerated, and if so, in what form?

No

8. Vulnerable Persons.

8a. Will the research be carried out with persons under age 18?

Yes

No

Please note that children under the age of 18 are deemed vulnerable.

[See MU Child Protection Policy \(in particular section 5\)](#)

NOTE: Research cannot begin until Garda vetting has been completed. For Maynooth University Students, this is facilitated through student.vetting@nuim.ie and Staff humanresources@nuim.ie

[Access the MU Policy on Garda vetting here](#)

8b. Will the research be carried out with adults who might be considered vulnerable in any way?

Yes

No

8c. If yes to (a) or (b) above, please describe the nature of the vulnerability and discuss special provisions/safeguards to be made for working with these persons.

NOTE: Depending on the nature of the vulnerability, sessions may need to be supervised or the researcher may need to undergo Garda vetting as stated above under point 8. In such cases, the researcher must also be prepared to demonstrate how s/he is suitably qualified or trained to work with such persons.

9. Risk/Benefit Analysis

9a. Potential Risks: Please identify and describe any potential risks arising from the research techniques, procedures or outputs (such as physical stress/reactions, psychological emotional distress, or reactions) **and** for each one, explain how you will address or minimise them.

I don't foresee any significant risks arising from the research techniques.

I plan to lead the Learning Journey as I would ordinarily do so in the workplace environment – contracting with participants around learning style, confidentiality, supporting each other and engaging in reflexivity along the way. The research outputs will

come as a by-product of ensuring reflexivity by me and the participants along with attention and time given to analysing outputs for themes and evidence of learning.

There is no judgement of success or failure attached to the journey – the learners don't pass/fail so there is no incentive for them to falsely "load" the learning bases as it were.

I will be mindful of their degree of being "on show" - at least initially - and ensuring trust is built in me as an Educator and facilitator of the Learning Journey and that my identity as a Researcher is secondary in their eyes.

Resistance to learning will always appear on a learning journey of this sort. Typically the angst of experiencing transformation is aimed outward at the company, the educator or at Line Managers or HR who either don't understand or are asking for too much. The risk here could be that the resistance is aimed at the research and the fact of the research taking place alongside the learning is somehow to blame. In this case the responsibility is with me as the Educator (and Researcher) to help the group reach clarity on what is causing tension within themselves and to be comfortable to hold the period of discomfort without losing sight of the either the learning or research aims.

Some of this learning population are unionised and may harbour a default suspicion of "the real agenda" behind the research. I need to reassure them that there are no recording devices, anything shared will be anonymised and they are free to ask any questions they need. This research request was generated by me and was never part of the company's agenda. I will remind them they are also free to take time to consider their consent and free not to participate if that's their choice.

There is a risk that as part of the transformational learning journey, participants choose to disclose past or current events such as harassment, bullying or personal/life issues. The [REDACTED] policy around disclosing and reporting of bullying/harassment is very clear (*Separate attachment as this is a lengthy document*). Should such a disclosure occur in the course of the learning journey, I will direct the employee to the reporting policy and ensure they understand the protocol. This has been agreed with HR in [REDACTED]

Further, should other personal or life issues arise that are outside of the scope of the learning remit, I will guide the employee to the [REDACTED] confidential Employee Assistance Programme [REDACTED] have an extensive EAP programme with Spectrum Health. (*Details attached in a separate document*)

9b. Potential Benefits: Provide a list of potential benefits for this Research.

The outcomes of this research have a number of potential benefits:
Informing future running of the learning programme for other locations within [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], including their Head Office in [REDACTED]

Importantly for the research aims, [REDACTED] envisage running a "Train the Trainer" programme at a later date to enable internal HR and Business staff to become

“Sherpa’s” in the delivery of the People Leadership programme. My insights as a practitioner/researcher from this pilot case study will directly influence the content and style of a “Train the Trainer” programme which they have also asked me to design and deliver.

I envisage using the outcome of the research to help challenge the current “status quo” around the delivery of curriculum heavy; practitioner and business centric approaches to People Leadership in Ireland and further afield. This case study can help improve outcomes for learners, practitioners and businesses in this important area.

9c. Risk/Benefit Analysis: Taking into account your answer in section 9 (a) & (b) above, please provide a short justification for proceeding with the research as outlined in this project.

While being relatively small in scale, the opportunity exists to use this research to contribute to an emerging debate about how well leadership development is delivered.

Crucially, this case study can stimulate debate on whether leadership development delivers on its’ aims for the learners; and potentially influence approaches taken by practitioners and business to teaching people leadership in the workplace in the future.

10. Informed Consent.

This section focuses on what and how, you tell participants about your research, and then obtain their informed consent as outlined in [section 3.4 of MU Research Ethics Policy, 2016](#).

NOTE: See the template at the end of this form showing standard information that must be included on all consent forms.

10a. Will you be seeking informed consent from participants [referring back to sections 6-8 of this submission].

Yes No

If Yes to above, when, where, and by whom is consent obtained e.g. do participants get an information sheet and sign a consent form, keeping a copy for their records or is consent secured by another means?

If No to above, please give the reason why consent is not been sought?

Written consent will be obtained from all parties to the research (proposed Consent form submitted with this application). They will be fully informed as to the limits to confidentiality (statement to this effect included on Consent form).

Each participant will receive an information sheet (proposed Information Sheet submitted with this application). They will be asked to sign a consent form in hard copy and given a copy to keep for their own records.

The parties from whom I will seek informed consent include:

HR as a learning partner/key stakeholder – [REDACTED]

For the [REDACTED] Site – [REDACTED]

For the [REDACTED] Site – [REDACTED]

For the Site Leadership groups – from each individual in their pre-learning journey session

From the Learners – from each individual learner at the start of the learning journey

In addition I will sign a Non Disclosure Agreement (NDA) with [REDACTED] on any commercial sensitivities that enter the learning space although there is no focus on commercial information in the research

10b. If applicable, please also justify deceiving or withholding information from participants [\(see section 4.9 MU Ethics Policy, 2016\)](#).

N/A

11. Follow-up. As appropriate, please explain what strategies you have in place to debrief or follow up with participants – especially in cases where information is withheld or deception is involved or where research has been carried out on sensitive topics, and/or with vulnerable persons.

N/A

12. Data Management, Storage and Retention

Please consult Maynooth University data protection procedures and policy: http://dataprotection.nuim.ie/protection_procedures.shtml

12a. Identifiers - recording of personally identifiable information about research participants. *(Typically, by their very nature, projects involving repeated contact with research participants require the collection and retention of identifiers)*

(Select all those applicable)

- Name and Contact Details
- Details regarding Geographical location, culture, ethnicity, etc.
- Video recording
- Audio recording
- Other please specify

- Not applicable (go to 12c)

12b. Anonymity – Will personal data collected be anonymised? Yes No

Page 2 of the [MU Research Integrity Policy](#) states 'where ever possible personal data should be rendered anonymous in order to provide the best protection for participants'.

If No to above, please explain your decision & rationale for not adhering to the policy.

12c. Data Access and Security:

Data must be stored in a safe, secure and accessible form, must be held for an appropriate length of time, to allow (if necessary) for future reassessment or verification of the data from primary sources,. as outlined in the [University's Research Integrity Policy](#).

Please tick the box to confirm;

- Only the researchers listed on this application will have access to the personal information and data collected from participants
- Electronic Information sheets/consent forms and data collected will be encrypted and stored on a PC or secure server at Maynooth University
- Hard copy Information sheets/consent forms and data collected will be held securely in locked cabinets, locked rooms or rooms with limited access on campus
- Please justify any exceptions to the information stated above

I do not have access to locked cabinets on campus but instead propose to store hard copy data in locked cabinets at my registered business address – [REDACTED]

12d. Data Storage:

- Are you planning to collect data on a mobile device (SB keys, smart phones; video recorders; audio recorders and/or laptops)?

Yes No

If yes, please confirm:

- Data collected on a mobile device will be encrypted where possible and the device password protected with a strong password

- Data will be removed from the mobile device as soon as is practicable
- Data will be removed to a desktop PC or server in a secure location at Maynooth University

12e. Secondary Use and Processing:

- Are you planning for any secondary use of the data?
Yes No

If yes, please confirm you will obtain **explicit consent** for;

- Re-use and/or sharing of anonymous data at the beginning of the project
- Re-use and/or sharing of the identifiable data for any purpose other than the current research project
- Depositing in an Archive such as the *Irish Qualitative Data Archive* or the *Irish Social Science Data Archive*? N/A

12f. Data Retention:

Please confirm:

- That Primary data should be anonymised (where possible) and retained for a period of **(ten years)** from publication. This information is reflected in the consent form, information sheet, and/or consent script

12g. Data Disposal: Data should be destroyed in a manner appropriate to the sensitivity of that data.

Please confirm:

- Paper based data will be destroyed by confidentially shredding or incineration
- Electronic files will be deleted by overwriting

13. Professional Codes of Ethics. Please append an appropriate code of ethics governing research in your area to this protocol, and/or provide a link to the website where the code may be found.

British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics

https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/bps_code_of_human_research_ethics.pdf

14. Declaration

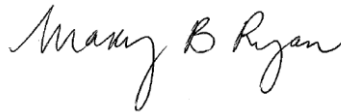
This declaration must be signed by the applicant(s) and Supervisor(s) if appropriate (*electronic signature is sufficient*).

I(we) the undersigned researcher(s) acknowledge(s) and agree that:

- a) It is my (our) sole responsibility and obligation to comply with all Irish and EU legislation relevant to this project.
- b) That all personnel working on this project comply with Irish and EU legislation relevant to this project.
- c) That the research will be conducted in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Ethics Policy.
- d) That the research will be conducted in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Integrity Policy.
- e) That the research will not commence until ethical approval has been granted.

Signature of Applicant(s): _____ Maeve Conroy _____

Date: 15th March 2018 _____



Signature of Supervisor(s): _____

Date: 15th March 2018 _____