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Theatre at Work

The Characteristics, Efficacy and Impact of Participatory Actor-Based Applied Theatre in the Workplace

Submitted by Richard Mark Feltham to the University of Exeter

as a thesis for the degree of

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Abstract

This thesis examines the use of actor-based Applied Theatre methods within the workplace. Typically such methods are employed for behavioural skills training with the intention of enabling staff to effectively perform their work roles in a context of rapid and fundamental change to work practices and structures. This research uses case studies and mixed methods and finds that whilst work-based Applied Theatre may be commissioned for reasons of efficiency, in practice there is also the potential for individual efficacy. Whilst competitive forces drive the imperative for increased efficiency, the practice opens a space where the human consequences of this pressure can be explored. Studies of Applied Theatre have ignored or excluded the workplace as a site of research and consequently applications of these methods are under researched and little understood. This thesis questions the exclusive assumptions of the academic field, presenting a more complex picture of the practice than currently appears in the literature. Whilst the workplace presents many tensions that must be negotiated, this research finds that the participative, embodied and dialogic qualities of the practice can enable a space for catharsis, negotiation, expression and learning not possible through other methods. These dialogic and participatory qualities are found to promote a social model of leadership and interaction that is progressive, facilitating a shift away from pervasive mechanistic command and control approaches to management and leadership. A central quality of this efficacy and impact was found to be the role of the workplace actor which has evolved beyond the delivery of performance and into innovative approaches that aim to increase the actor's contribution to learning. This emerging hybrid role is defined here as the 'pedagogical actor', drawing on skills of calibration, feedback and facilitation in addition to delivering a credible performance. Case Studies include an examination of the use actor-based role-play within financial services company Friends Provident and Forum Theatre used by the multi-national 3M, in addition to numerous case examples.

Table of Contents

Abstract **3**

List of Figures, Tables and Images **9**

Acknowledgements **11**

Introduction **13**

Chapter 1 ..... **23**

When is Applied Theatre not Applied Theatre? 23

The Problem of Work 32

Chapter 2 ..... **41**

Methodology and Methods 41

Case Studies 43

Gatekeepers, Consent and Access to the field 45

Semi-Structured Research Interviews 47

Transcription and Analysis 48

Case Studies and Case Examples 48

Chapter 3 ..... **51**

Case Studies and General Points of Theory Arising From the Case Studies 51

Introduction 51

Case Study: Friends Provident: A Critical Stage for Learning 53

Process of Data Collection and Analysis 53

Friends Provident – A history 55

Actor based Applied Theatre and the Voice of Change Programme 55

Case Study: Spotlight on the Actor 85

Process of Data Collection and Analysis 86

General Points of Theory Arising From the Case Studies 109

The Actor as Expert in Not-Knowing 109

From Technical Rationality to Reflection in Action. 111

An Embodied and Social Practice 116

Dimensions of Applied Acting 122

Chapter 4 ..... **135**

Provenance, Forms and Aesthetics of Participatory Actor-Based Applied Theatre 135

Introduction 135

Design, Delivery and Evaluation of Actor-Based Training 135
Performance at Work: Forms of Actor-Based Learning 143
Role-Play and the Dramatic Difference Through the Use of Actors 145
Bespoke Role-Play 151
Forum Theatre in the Workplace 165
Forum Theatre Example 1: Association of Colleges Training Days for Work-Based Assessors 168
Forum Theatre Example 2: 3M, Forum Theatre and Performance Management. 178
Simulation Exercises 185
War Games: Outward Bound Exercises Take a Dramatic Turn. 185
Making a Drama Out of a Crisis 187
Aesthetics 191
Chapter 5 197
The Act of Work-Based Learning 197
Connections Between Participatory, Actor-Based Theatre and Learning Theory in the Context of the Workplace 197
Drama at Work: Learning in the Knowledge Economy and a World of Accelerating Change 198
What is Learning? 201
Behaviourism 204
Cognitivism 206
Constructivism 209
Social Constructivism 212
Situated Learning 214
Adult Learning Theories 215
Connections Between Identity, Habitus and Learning 216
Experiential Learning Theory 220
Social Cognitive and Self-Efficacy Theory 225
Mind the Gap: Exposing dissonance between theory and practice 229
Learning and Intelligence 230
What Type of Learning is Taking Place? 234
Learning to Reinforce or Change the Status Quo 237
Learning and the Status Quo 237
Learning and Change 238
The Problem of Transfer of Learning 239
Conclusion – The Act of Learning 242

Chapter 6 ..... **245**

The Impact of Actor-Based Applied Theatre: Lessons in the Evolving Language of Work and the Expansion of Work-Based Literacy 245

Introduction 245

Organisations and Interpersonal Communication 246

Interpersonal Skills 247

The Act of Leadership 250

Leadership as a Social Process 251

Leadership, Empowerment and Hegemony 254

Social Constructionism and the Role of Discourse in Change Processes 258

Metaphors as Ways of Seeing 263

The Paradigm Shift From Machine to Organic Network 265

Metaphorical Images of Organisations and Their Impact on Behaviour. 267

Conclusion 273

A Social Model of Leadership 274

Access to Discursive Channels 275

Organisational Change 276

Summary and Conclusion **279**

The Actor 281

The Participant 283

The Organisation 285

Problems and Possibilities 286

Bibliography **289**

List of Figures, Tables and Images

Fig.1 Karpman's Drama Triangle (1968)……..102

Fig.2 The hybrid skills of the pedagogical actor……122

Fig.3 A six phase process of facilitated actor-based role-play……158

Fig.4 Johari's window (Luft and Ingham, 1955)……..208

Fig.5 Kolb's experiential learning cycle (in Jarvis, 2003, p58)……..221

Fig.6 Images of organisation……271

Fig.7 The interconnected impact of actor pedagogies……..274

Table 1 Methodological Triangulation……47

Table 2 Strengths and weaknesses of Actor and peer role-play in relation to supporting learning objectives……149

Image 1 The choux pastry scenario……174

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Richard Feltham, January 2012

Introduction

The great majority of our lives is shaped and defined by work and by our interaction with the people we work with. The quality of these relationships can be crucial in determining our sense of engagement, fulfilment and achievement at work. Uncertainty and change are defining features of the contemporary workplace, driven by the forces of technology and globalisation. Unchecked, these competitive pressures can lead to damaging division and conflict. This is the context in which actor-based Applied Theatre methods are increasingly being used in order to address these challenges. This thesis examines the use of actors and Applied Theatre methods in the problematic context of the workplace. By this I refer to actor-based techniques including Role-Play, Forum Theatre and Simulation. These methods are becoming increasingly common in workplaces throughout the world for behavioural skills training, typically with the intention of enabling staff to effectively perform their work roles in a context of rapid and fundamental change to work practices and structures. Despite the increasing popularity of these techniques, analyses and examples of the practice are scarce in the academic discourse of Applied Theatre. This situation inspires the first question addressed by this research, namely why is the use of Applied Theatre techniques in the workplace so often marginalised from the academic discourse? I address this in Chapter 1. I have identified

a need to generate substantive theory which is closely linked to the practice, and this has led to the formation of two central questions addressed by this thesis. Firstly, what are the defining characteristics of workplace acting? and secondly, what is the potential efficacy and impact of these actor-based techniques on individuals and organisations?

Actors and theatre methods are used by organisations in many and varied ways, some of which are outside the scope of this research. Therefore it is necessary to define the delimitations of this examination in order to clarify the focus of this research. The focus for this thesis is the use of actors who are physically present in participatory settings, predominantly for the purpose of training, learning and development. Applied Theatre encompasses a wide range of practices, many of which do not require the use of actors. These non-actor based iterations lie outside the scope of this enquiry. Educational theatre performed at work for passive audiences, which lacks a participatory element between actors and audience, is excluded. Also actors may be used but are not physically present with the learner in distance learning, such as videoconferencing and telephone skills training. Hence these forms of learning are also excluded. Acting in the production of educational films, videos and websites are also excluded as, again, the actor is not physically present in the learning space. The employment of actors in other work-based settings lacking a pedagogical aspect, such as corporate entertainment, product launches at trade shows and so on is also excluded.

This research presents a more complex reading of Applied Theatre in the workplace than is currently reflected within the academic field's literature. To date the field has either overlooked, or excluded, workplace practice from its discourse and when it has occasionally engaged in the context, a partial view of the practice is presented focusing on the use of theatre techniques in support of an efficiency agenda. This research finds that whilst work-

based Applied Theatre may be commissioned for reasons of efficiency, in practice there are also potential benefits for the individual. Whilst competitive forces drive the imperative for increased efficiency, the practice opens a space where the human consequences of this pressure can be explored. I examine how Applied Theatre techniques can provide a unique space to articulate and negotiate the tensions that can exist between the individual and the demands of work. The driving line of my thesis is that the dialogic and participatory qualities of work-based Applied Theatre promotes a social model of leadership and interaction that is progressive, facilitating a shift away from pervasive mechanistic command and control approaches to management and leadership. These mechanistic modes of thinking can marginalise the human element and I theorise that the social and embodied qualities of actor-based learning challenge this paradigm and generate new ways for people to behave at work. Over time, this learning can support a shift away from the mechanistic paradigm towards organisational cultures that are more like flexible networks which are conceptually more organic in form. Whilst the networked organisation is flexible and consequently can be well equipped to survive the uncertainties and rapid change due to globalisation and technology, it is also unstable. The networked organisation requires flexible employees who can negotiate these uncertainties and actor-based theatre methods are used here to model and develop the required collegiate behaviours. I suggest that these qualities support a strong case for further engagement by the academic field into Applied Theatre and the problematic context of work.

The methods used for this research raise the problem of the interaction and influence between the researcher's values and beliefs and the research findings. For many researchers, a degree of reflexivity provides a solution to this problem, and this is the approach I have adopted here. It is therefore necessary for me to declare the experience, beliefs and values which have influenced the framing of my research questions, my interactions in the field and the construction of this research. Firstly, I need to declare my interest in the practice and

situate myself within the research field both as practitioner and researcher. Over almost twenty years I have worked throughout the United Kingdom as an actor in the workplace with individuals in the public, private and voluntary sectors. In recent years, as the consultancies I work with have expanded, I have worked internationally with global corporations. This experience has provided access to the problems and possibilities of actor-based learning methods in spaces far beyond the public gaze. As a consequence, I am well placed to conduct this research as I have extensive exposure within the field. My familiarity and engagement with the practice has made estrangement from the object of study problematic, and has presented me with the challenge of shifting between reflective and intuitive engagement as practitioner to a place of conscious, reflective and critical academic analysis. The hundreds of training events and encounters that I have worked on, in many and varied contexts over the decades, have convinced me that, when certain conditions are in place, theatre facilitates transformative experiences that can have far reaching and unpredictable implications. I strongly believe that poorly-designed programmes and insufficiently-skilled delivery can provide a negative and possibly damaging experience for participants[1]. Over the years I have experienced and witnessed both good and poor practice. My intention has been to use this knowledge to examine the forms and impact of the practice and to define what the conditions for efficacy are. Throughout the process of research I have been in dialogue with practitioners, testing ideas and models as a participant observer, noting connections between theory and practice. My continued engagement with the practice drives my motivation to produce substantive research findings which are strongly connected to the field data in order to

[1] The use of actors is expensive and can be controversial. For example, The Chairman of the Conservative Party Eric Pickles attacked the Audit Commission in The Telegraph (12/2/10) for spending £170,000 on actors for training and assessment purposes. Pickles apparently did not feel this was an appropriate use of taxpayers' money, stating "It's like an episode of 'The Office'", referencing the BBC comedy series which memorably mocked the use of role-play (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/election-2010/7215354/Audit-Commission-spends-170000-on-role-play-training-for-its-own-staff.html accessed 17/8/11). The Telegraph continues is run of role-play stories (17/7/11) with a criticism of the BBC's £1 million spend on actor-based training methods which are, according to one internal unnamed source "considered a total and utter joke – it's like something from The Office – you expect David Brent to walk in at any minute" (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/bbc/8643451/BBC-spent-nearly-a-million-pounds-on-actors-to-help-train-managers.html accessed 17/8/11).

contribute both to the academic discourse of Applied Theatre and to support the development of this emerging practice.

This thesis is presented over six chapters and a conclusion. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this research topic, rather than presenting a separate literature review, I discuss key texts as I progress through my argument. Below I introduce and summarise the six Chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 1 is entitled *When is Applied Theatre not Applied Theatre?* This chapter contributes to the debate that the field of Applied Theatre is an 'exclusionary discourse' (Ackroyd, 2007). Despite claims of being an inclusive portmanteau term (Giesekam, 2006), the discourse of Applied Theatre has marginalised contexts and practices that are not considered as ideologically suitable (Ackroyd, 2007). The workplace is one such marginalised context and I argue the Applied Theatre methods used here would benefit from academic scrutiny and research. I define workplace Applied Theatre as a form of lifelong learning which is used to adapt to conditions of uncertainty and change within a rapidly changing global economy. I seek to engage and expand the Applied Theatre discourse by arguing for engagement in the workplace and by presenting a more complex picture of the practice and its impact than is currently contained within the literature.

Chapter 2 examines the case study and mixed methods approach used as the methodology for this research. Here I explain the rationale for the selection of this methodology and examine the problems and possibilities of using case studies. Ontological and epistemological questions in relation to these research methods and the forms of knowledge they generate are discussed.

In Chapter 3 I present two case studies. *Friends Provident: A Critical Stage for Learning* is constructed from five research interviews undertaken with stakeholders in an actor-based training programme used by the insurance company *Friends Provident* as it faces a period of far reaching change. The life of the programme is mapped from the point of commission, through to problems of evaluation. The perspectives of three of the participants are examined, one of whom was also the overall commissioning manager. Two other people are also interviewed, the first an actor who worked on the programme and the secondly the Director and trainer of the company commissioned to deliver the training. The second case study, *Spotlight on the Actor*, focuses on the role, process and impact of the workplace actor. The themes which emerged from interviews and focus groups with work-based actors and facilitators are then discussed.

The findings of these two case studies are then theorised under the heading *General Points of Theory Arising from the Case Studies.* Applying Zarilli's notion that an actor is always implicitly or explicitly enacting a theory of acting (Zarilli, 2002) to the hybrid and interdisciplinary role of the workplace actor, I identify, define and analyse these enacted theories under four headings. Firstly I explore the notion of *the actor as expert in not-knowing.* Here I examine the potential for the actor to create the conditions in which knowledge can emerge. In *From Technical Rationality to Reflection-in-Action* I question of impact of the practice and examine how it contributes to the emergence of forms of knowledge that challenge mechanistic thinking grounded in an epistemology of technical rationality. Next I focus on the qualities of participatory actor-based learning as *An Embodied and Social practice*. This discussion provides a foundation for my examination of experiential learning theories contained in Chapter 5. I examine the potential of embodied and social qualities to provide a heuristic learning space in which forms of knowledge difficult to develop through other methods are created. In the fourth section, *Dimensions of Applied Acting,* I define and analyse the skills

which combine to create the hybrid role of the work-based actor. This emerging pedagogical role is more than 'acting' and dynamically draws on a range of skills. These skills are addressed under the titles of credibility, calibration, feedback and facilitation.

Chapter 4 explores the provenance, forms and aesthetics of participatory actor-based Applied Theatre. This Chapter scopes the ways in which these forms of theatre are used in the workplace. This is necessary because an overview is currently lacking in the literature. These actor-based forms of practice are identified as Role-Play, Forum Theatre and Simulation Exercises. The evolution of these forms and their eclectic roots are identified. The section on actor-based role-play defines the variations of forms which are grouped together under the umbrella term 'role-play'. I examine how the actor can be used to develop reflective learning skills (Schön, 1987, 1991). I analyse a specific form of customised role-play that works with biographical material and how the actor can rapidly produce a credible representation of a real person from limited information. Forum Theatre is introduced by an examination of its provenance in the work of Augusto Boal (Boal, 1994, 2000, 2004). Two workplace case studies are used to demonstrate the flexibility of Forum Theatre for purposes that may share little common ground with Boal's intentions. I will then examine the use of actors within simulation exercises. This Chapter concludes with a discussion of aesthetics and an analysis of the potential of the practice to deliver powerful aesthetic learning experiences despite the use of limited stagecraft.

Chapter 5, titled *The Act of Work-Based Learning* explores connections between participatory, actor-based theatre and learning theory in the context of the workplace. In this chapter I survey a wide range of learning theories and question the effectiveness of actor-based methods in relation to these theories. I examine education policy and practice as a culturally

and historically located activity, situating actor-based learning methods as a form of lifelong learning within the generic skills curriculum of industrialised countries (Burns, 2002). This skills agenda places a premium on behaviours for which theatre methods can provide an effective learning medium. Actor-based learning methods can accommodate a broad range of learning theories and I provide a survey of these learning paradigms. I draw upon Illeris (2011) to conclude that learning is both a socially constructivist and an individual cognitivist process, and that a well-executed theatre intervention can facilitate both these facets of learning. Experiential learning theory is of particular relevance to this study and is discussed in depth. The framing of empathy and interpersonal skills as *Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, 1996; 1998; Burns, 2002) has provided a popular language to discuss the role of the emotions within the workplace. Emotional Intelligence has gained credibility within the discourse of work-based training and I examine the efficacy of actor-based learning to facilitate a space where understanding of the impact of behaviours and personal insight may be developed. The penultimate topic is to question whether these forms of learning reinforce or challenge the status quo. The political aspects of learning and change are also addressed. The Chapter concludes with an examination of the problem of learning transfer from the training room to actual practice.

Chapter 6, entitled *The Impact of Actor-Based Applied Theatre: Lessons in the Evolving Language of Work and the Expansion of Work-Based Literacy*, builds on the discussion in Chapter 5, where I analysed *why* actor-based methods can be an effective learning strategy to consider, in this Chapter, *what* is learned and to theorise the deeper impact of these pedagogical processes. The discussion begins with an analysis of the central role of communication in organisational life and the capacity of actor-based methods to provide a learning space in which communication strategies can be tested and refined. I then address leadership skills. The shift towards less hierarchical organisational structures has fuelled the

notion of the empowered employee with greater delegated decision-making power, thus the drive to develop leadership skills has spread throughout the hierarchy (Hannagan, 2008). I draw upon various definitions of leadership and align my argument with the notion of leadership as a social or collective phenomenon (Tietze et al, 2003). I argue that socially-situated actor-based methods problematize the notion of leadership as residing within the individual and promote, instead, a social theory of leadership. Social constructionism (Burger and Luckman, 1967; Burr 2003; Gergen, 2009; Searle, 1995, 2010) and the role of discourse in constituting the social world are then analysed and the connections between this and the practice of participatory actor-based theatre are drawn. The wider impact of social and embodied actor-based learning on discourse and language within organisations is then examined. Drawing on Lakoff and Johnson's work into metaphor (2003) and Morgan's work into metaphorical conceptions of organisations (1997), I investigate the notion that metaphors powerfully drive behaviours. A mechanistic conception of an organisation can marginalise and alienate those who work within it. I believe that because participatory actor-based Applied Theatre gives primacy to human discourse, it can support a paradigm shift away from a mechanistic understanding of an organisation, towards enabling a new conception of an organic and interconnected network. These networked structures operate in conditions of flexibility and uncertainty and require high levels of interpersonal skills and a collegiate attitude in order to function. The conclusion of this Chapter is that the overarching purpose of actor-based Applied Theatre for leadership development is to support the construction of these collegiate, empowered identities.

A summary and conclusion is presented at the end of this thesis.

Chapter 1

When is Applied Theatre not Applied Theatre?

I wish to suggest that applied theatre has created its own discourse to articulate itself and now masquerades as something neutral and democratic. Yet it emerges as a restricted, even an exclusive, theatre form. (Ackroyd, 2007, p.3)

The above quotation is from Judith Ackroyd's 2007 paper that questions whether Applied Theatre has become an exclusionary discourse, researching only a limited range of specific practices. She says:

> So, rather than applied theatre being an umbrella term for a range of practices (which have specific intention, participation and operate beyond conventional theatre spaces), the term is emerging as a label for particular types of practice (Ackroyd, 2007, p.7).

She argues that practices outside the constructed politics of the field are excluded on grounds of being ideologically unsuitable. The practices that are included are "a particular mode of good" (ibid), and a hierarchy of practice has developed which excludes forms of practice which do not conform to the dominant values of the discourse. Research into the use of theatre methods in the workplace is one such excluded practice. Applied Theatre is an emerging field, and the forms of practice considered 'Applied Theatre' has changed over time. The name of the field is also fluid, only recently having settled on Applied Theatre after a period of debate as to whether the forms of participatory practice were best described as *drama* or *theatre*.

Giesekam states how the term Applied Theatre was briefly associated with drama techniques and their uses for professional development. He states: "in the late 1980's it referred more to using drama to develop communication skills/role play exercises with businessmen, the police, medical students and so on" (Giesekam, 2006 p.91). Through the 1990's the discourse shifted towards an increasing focus on theatre with the disadvantaged and those at the margins of society. As an emerging field, relatively few books have been published and therefore those that have can be a significant force in shaping the evolving discourse. Ackroyd identifies some of these significant voices as Nicholson (2005), Taylor (2003) and Thompson (2003). Fields are constructed by those who write about them, and when references to work-based practice can be found within the literature these examples are frequently cursory, or dismissive. For example, Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton's 2009 text *Applied Theatre* asks 'where do we find applied theatre' (p.3). In their overview of forms and contexts, work-based applications are conspicuous by their absence, despite stating that "In our view, this 'very capricious portmanteau term (Giesekam, 2006, p.91) is inclusive and does not carry any limiting fixed agendas" (2009, p.6). Prentki and Preston's *The Applied Theatre Reader* (2009) provides fifty chapters of case studies and analyses of the field, but no examples of work-based practice are included. Balme's chapter on Applied Theatre, published in 2008 uses one sentence to acknowledge that Applied Theatre is used in the workplace, stating "even in corporate management where, ironically, Boal's techniques are applied to great effect" (Balme, 2008, p.193-194). Nicholson acknowledges the existence of work-based practice, stating that changes in the work-place from a Command and control style of industrial management towards more apparently egalitarian management has made corporate commissions for some "a palatable option" (Nicholson, 2005 p.49). Her critique of work-based practice is predominantly theoretical, with her field research apparently limited to an analysis of the marketing text on a website of a theatre in business company.

A refreshing contrast to the 'exclusionary discourse' is provided by Adam Blatner and various contributors, who, writing from an American perspective in 2007, use Applied Theatre as an umbrella term to explore forms of participatory theatre delivered with specific intentions. The book covers a wider range of practices than are typically found in the UK literature, with descriptions and case studies of thirty-two such methods in different contexts, including case studies of Applied Theatre in business. One case study describes the work of theatre in business consultancy *Dramatic Diversity* and their use of role-play and storytelling to explore the 'root metaphors and narratives' that may be obstacles to a more diverse workforce[2] (Gluck et al, 2007). In its own terms Dramatic Diversity is apparently successfully using drama methods to build a more equitable workplace; the immediate impact was to bring what was hidden out into the open and in the longer term it is possible that such interventions could be the foundations of more open an egalitarian workplace. Such diversity work has its critics within Applied Theatre. Nicholson argues that the core motivations for such engagements are business efficiency and increased profitability. She argues that the marketing materials of such work "emphasises staff recruitment and retention rather than any political or moral reasons for creating an equitable working environment" (Nicholson, 2005, p.50). Nicholson presents organisational effectiveness and political and moral reasons as a dichotomy, apparently suggesting that the marketing which promotes specific benefits of the work excludes other benefits. In actual practice, I argue that the freeform nature of theatre-based learning can generate wide ranging discussions and it is perhaps down to the needs of the group and the skills and values of the actors and facilitators that dictate to what extent the wider moral and

[2] The drama interactions are sandwiched between a research & development phase and evaluation and policy development. Role-play scenarios are created, typically five or six, with identifying details changed to preserve confidentiality and to provide a sense of distance. These scenarios contain brief information about the context and background to the encounter. The drama interaction forms part of a training event, where the scenarios are improvised with workers in small groups. Workers take turns to role-play with an actor, whilst the remaining colleagues are peer observers providing advice on how to proceed. The exercise is managed by a facilitator, who at the end of the role-plays draws out a list of things that need to change in the workplace. With this list some planning is undertaken to identify who will be responsible for driving the change and what resources may be required. The policy and evaluation phase takes place six months later, where the issues are revisited and changes that have been successful are encouraged to be made permanent changes to organisational policy.

political aspects are explored. This *Dramatic Diversity* example demonstrates how the use of Applied Theatre as an umbrella term brings forms of practice into the field's discourse. The inclusion of such practices therefore presents a more coherent picture of forms using Applied Theatre techniques than is currently possible within the 'exclusionary discourse'.

Whilst the field of Applied Theatre has marginalised work-based forms of theatre, other fields have conducted research into the topic, for example *Organisation Studies* devoted an edition to Theatre and Organisation in 2004 and *Harvard Management Update* in 1999 noted the effectiveness of theatre as a form of training. The Organisation Studies journal provides useful analysis for this study, in particular the article by Nissley, Taylor and Houden (2004). They cite evidence that management has increasingly sought to "colonise theatre as a source of competitive advantage" (ibid, p.818), which includes the specific use of management education which is the focus of their study. Their article uses Boal's language of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' to represent the roles of managers and workers to create a framework for critically analysing theatre-based training, identifying those interactions where management has greater control over the script with a passive audience as 'oppressive' and worker controlled, self-improvised, self-directed encounters as less oppressive. Control of content is seen as key to progressive practice: "We simply suggest that asking who controls the script and who controls the role allows the politics to surface" (ibid). The analysis of control is helpful to identify those interventions where the workers have most power, however as the authors acknowledge, interventions are typically not as simple as management controlled versus worker controlled: "Most modern organisations have interests that are conflicting, but management and workers also have interests in common" (ibid, p.828). For reasons of control, they express reservations over the use of professional performers, as they state "When professional actors perform the role, we typically see that they have been hired by management and thus are likely under greater management control" (ibid, p.821). According

to Nissley et al the meaning of 'professional actor' appears to be an actor who performs in a script for a passive audience. As I will come to in Chapters 3 and 4, the function of the 'professional actor' has evolved beyond performing scripts into a more flexible and dynamic role. Whilst this can be used to increase management control, the actor can also serve the needs of the learner and facilitate emergence through holding the space of uncertainty. This uncertainty is, for Nissley et al, central to accessing the potential of theatre based learning:

> The sponsors of theatre intervention or training must recognise that they cannot control the event. Giving up control is usually difficult for managers, yet it is essential for transformation (Quinn, 2000 in Nissley et al, 2004, p.832)

I will explore further in Chapter 3 how the actor facilitates a space of emergent learning. Nissley et al conclude their investigation with an offer to scholars and theatre- based training practitioners:

> The most truly powerful organizational theatre-based training and interventions are not presented to audiences as a finished product or grand narrative; rather they encourage the audience members to find themselves (role) and their voices (script) in the performance. (Nissley et al, 2004 p.834)

Their conclusion suggests that worker controlled performances, such as certain forms of role-play or Forum Theatre can strike a balance between efficiency and efficacy. As I shall come to in Chapter 4, these are the main forms in which actors are used within the workplace. Nissley, Taylor and Houden make a welcome contribution to understanding the forms and politics of theatre in organisations, and I find it regrettable that similar analysis is apparently excluded from the discourse of Applied Theatre.

In her critique Ackroyd references theatre applied to the needs of business as one form of practice excluded from the field, providing an example of theatre methods used to "support bosses who need to feel better about making people redundant" (Ackroyd, 2007, p.8). She argues "While we may construe this as ugly, this should not deprive it from academic attention

and analysis" (ibid). It is interesting that Ackroyd characterises an emotive example of theatre and redundancy to support her argument that Applied Theatre should widen its research beyond those areas it finds ideologically suitable[3]. I argue that problematic contexts such as these, brimming with potential conflict and division, are precisely where the power of Applied Theatre can meet an urgent demand for dialogue and expression. They should not be shied away from as redundancy is a fact of our lives due to the ever changing economic, technological and social factors of our age. An increasingly global employment market means that any worker that does not have to be physically present is at risk of their job being done cheaper and more efficiently elsewhere. Redundancy is a reality many of us will face, and the manner in which a redundancy process is handled can have long-term consequences in terms of confidence and mental health for those affected. Anyone who has ever been given bad news knows the difference between given the message well or badly. Even though the outcome may be the same, the manner in which the news is shared can be critical. Academics may find this context of practice 'ugly' and avoid it. However in doing so they may lose an opportunity to research and disseminate best practice into Applied Theatre's role in this increasingly common life event. Whilst Applied Theatre may not be able to stop a redundancy programme, it can facilitate a space for listening and debate that can reduce some of the human pain that may be experienced. A timely Applied Theatre intervention may even reduce the likelihood of redundancy by helping build the skills so that people may adapt and keep their jobs in a rapidly changing competitive world. I'll analyse the structural changes of workplaces and the role of Applied Theatre within these processes of change in Chapter 6. Working in such a problematic context inevitably presents a host of challenges, as Gluck & Rubenstein acknowledge: "One challenge for the practitioner in this work is to balance the oftentimes competing demands of management with the needs of employees" (Gluck & Rubenstein, 2007, p.139). I suggest it is precisely because of these problems and ambiguities

[3] In her paper *Applied Theatre – Problems and Possibilities (2000)* Ackroyd also referred to the emotive subject of drama used to support a process of sacking teachers to "to encourage governors to feel good about themselves, rather than guilty" (Ackroyd, 2000, p.5).

that the context would benefit from inclusion into the academic debate within Applied Theatre.

Most examples of work-based Applied Theatre are less controversial and emotive than redundancy, and are concerned with developing the skills and competencies so that individuals and organisations may thrive in conditions of uncertainty and, hopefully, avoid making staff redundant. In chapter 6 I explore those aspects of the generic workplace skills curriculum which industrialised countries have established and which Applied Theatre techniques can be used to develop. Applied Theatre methods can reduce the problem of transfer from the learning space to the workplace due to their capacity to credibly simulate work-based problems and stimulate reflective learning. Connections between learning theory and work-based Applied Theatre are explored in Chapter 5. By focusing on the skills agenda I suggest that work-based Applied Theatre is usefully and coherently framed of as a form of Adult Education, part of the Lifelong learning agenda (Burns, 2002). So conceived, the practice is an extension into adulthood of the educational practices currently included in the canon of Applied Theatre such as Educational Drama and Theatre in Education (Nicholson, 2005; Prentki & Preston, 2009; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009). The omission of work-based adult education from the canon of Applied Theatre is not coherent when such a broad range of theatre based learning activities are included within the field's discourse.

Helen Nicholson analyses the notion of a cultural hierarchy where Applied Theatre is perceived as lesser than pure theatre (2005), a notion further addressed by Judith Ackroyd in 2007. This hierarchy, and the problems it generates, are not a new phenomenon. In 1987 Schön addresses the issue of a hierarchy of knowledge, where, in the field of science, Basic, 'pure' science is held above Applied Science and at the bottom of the hierarchy are the "technical

skills of day to day science" (Schön, 1987, p.9). He states "The greater one's proximity to basic science, as a rule, the higher ones academic status" (ibid). I consider there is a connection to the debate within Applied Theatre. Is it possible that the Applied Theatre discourse, which has fought against considerations of its practice as somehow 'second best' to pure forms (Rasmussen in Nicholson, 2005, p.6) is eager to claim its own superiority over the lesser, day-to-day skills and behaviours that are frequently the domain of work-based participatory theatre? For Schön it is the domain of the day-to-day that is so frequently overlooked by the academy where precisely "the kinds of performance we need most to understand" (Schön, 1987, p.13) are located. This is often the level at which actors engage in the workplace. Perhaps for some researchers this level of engagement is lacking in the aesthetic potential of canonical forms of Applied Theatre, but I suggest it can be closely aligned with the concerns and needs of participants and open a space for personalised reflection that may be rare within the workplace. In Chapter 3 I draw further on Schön's work as well as exploring the perceptions of practitioners and participants in relation to work-based practice.

I suggest a further driver as to why the context of the workplace lies outside the canon of Applied Theatre is more structural than ideological. Except for a few exceptions, work-place Applied Theatre has not invited academic interest. Whilst specific work-places such as medical education, where there is a culture of practice informed by research, have published on the use of actors for simulation (e.g. Alreaek & Baierheim, 2005; Kurtz et al, 2005; Thislethwaite & Ridgway, 2006; Skelton, 2008; Whelan 2005), other work contexts have been less accessible to researchers. This point is reinforced by Alain de Botton when he notes "Even in an era of increased political transparency, business remains uninterested in acquiring observers" (de Botton, 2009, p.48). Work-based Applied Theatre exists in a different funding ecology to other forms of practice, and will be funded by different sources and may have less to gain from academic involvement than, for example, a social inclusion project for which an academic

partner could be beneficial to strengthen a funding case. Work-based Applied Theatre has thrived without academic partners and has not typically sought research into its activities. This situation may be changing, as in recent years the requirement for research to demonstrate impact and knowledge exchange has become central to securing funding from Academic Research Councils[4] and it seems likely that this focus will stimulate research by the humanities into applied contexts, such as the workplace. At the level of practice the ecology is more mixed and in my experience the actors and practitioners who deliver projects do not restrict their work to specific silos of practice, typically using their skills flexibly in a variety of contexts, from community-based practice to the workplace to mainstream theatre and television. Many of them rely on a freelance income and need to employ their skills flexibly in a range of contexts in order to survive.

The creative industries have a long and deep association with business activities[5]. Many actors provide their services to advertising campaigns, where the generous rates of pay can subsidise careers in the comparatively low paid theatre. Few actors are able to make a living solely by performing in theatre, television and film. The extent of the challenge of sustaining a career as an actor is made clear through research conducted by the UK Performers and Creative Professionals Union, Equity. Equity surveyed a random sample of 543 members for the year to November 2005 and published their research in the Spring 2006 edition of Equity Magazine. They found that 50% of actors earned less than £6,000 from the profession. 15% earned more than £20,000 and only 6% earned more than £30,000. The average earnings were £9,200. The findings state that "traditional types of work, such as theatre and television, (are) gradually being replaced by less traditional (work), such as corporate events and role play." (p.27) 17% of those surveyed had worked in corporate events or role-play in the previous year: "In

[4] http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/About/Policy/Pages/KnowledgeTransferPolicy.aspx accessed 13/12/11

[5] For example, Llewellyn reports on the surprising scale of corporate film production "More money is spent on corporate production each year than on the whole European film industry" (Llewellyn, 2003, p.xvi)

particular there has been a remarkable growth in corporate events and role-play with one in six members saying that at some stage in the 12 months to November 2005 they were involved in this work" (ibid). This is evidence that getting work within workplace Applied Theatre can be an important source of income for actors struggling to make a living. For 2011/12 rates, equity minimum for a day's role-play is £220 and the minimum for a week's theatre work is £400 (www.itc.org.uk accessed 28/10/11). Some work-place commissions may pay considerably more, so Applied Theatre work can provide an important additional income stream. These figures and statistics perhaps provide a different perspective on Helen Nicholson's remarks as to why some practitioners find it 'palatable' to use drama skills in the corporate sector. Nicholson was referring to the ethics of the issue. For the actors, Nicholson's 'palatable' may have a different meaning, and may refer to the food they can now afford for their dinner plate. For actors with young children or caring commitments the demands of touring or long theatre engagements may not be a practical reality and short term workplace engagements can provide an avenue for them to continue to exercise their skills without compromising their other responsibilities. These perspectives highlight the limitations of decontextualizing a practice from the wider social and cultural context in which it operates.

The Problem of Work

The labour process is the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence.

Karl Marx, *Das Capital* 1867, p.290

Work is what you do so that some time you won't have to do it anymore.

Alfred Polgar 1873-1955 in Thomas, 1999, p.30

This discussion still needs to address a central question: Why is the context of the work so problematic for the field? After all, as Lars Svendsen points out, "Work is, for almost all of us,

an unavoidable feature of our daily lives" (Svendsen 2008, back cover). As state retirement ages are increasing work will be part of our lives for longer. When we finally do retire the value of pension funds, for those that have them, are linked to the success of the labours of those still in work. Work is a broad phenomenon and Svendsen cautions against statements about work "in general" (Svendsen, 2008, p.9). Despite this caution, it is necessary here to provide an overview of the key changes in the workplace and to situate work-based Applied Theatre within these changes, although inevitably specific work-place cultures will vary from the following overview, some of them to a significant degree.

Theories of management are a modern phenomenon, with influential works published early in the 20th Century shaping the processes and politics of the industrial workplace. Two theorists have been particularly influential; Frederick Winslow Taylor and Henri Fayol. Whilst from the early nineteenth century onwards some industrialists practised a benevolent paternalism, preferring the carrot to the stick to ensure a committed workforce (Pahl, 1988, p.168), others adopted a different strategy to increase production. Fredrick Winslow Taylor's studies of time and motion led to new notions of scientific management first published in 1911. His methodology identified the processes to achieve industrial tasks and then proposed the most time efficient way to achieve the task. The description of the approach as 'scientific' was used to justify the authority imposed on workers to achieve the task (Pahl, 1988, p.168). The influence of his work spread beyond the factory floor – the arts also embraced the concept of efficiency with enthusiasm. Taylorism inspired the work of theatre director and pedagogue Meyerhold, a contemporary of Stanislavski, and led to the creation of his efficiency-based actor training system and aesthetic of BioMechanics (Pitches, 2003). Today one might be unlikely to find artists so willing to celebrate the 'progress' achieved by the Taylor inspired drive for efficiency. The second influential figure is the French Industrialist Henri Fayol who, in 1916, was the first to publish on the functions that constitute the role of Manager. Fayol's

definition of management contained five elements: To Command, Control, Co-ordinate, Organise and Plan (Hickson, 1989). Taylorism combined with Fayol's command and control management style still informs the approach of many managers working today, despite the inadequacy of these approaches in post-industrial settings and the emergence of more progressive approaches to work.

Taylorism and strict command and control management frequently generated resistance and failed to achieve projected efficiencies due to their mechanistic approach, which has been criticised for being dehumanising and restrictive of innovation (Capra, 2003; Seddon, 2005). They are also theories of management designed for a world that no longer exists, but despite this, their influence is still pervasive. For knowledge driven economies these approaches to work are, in general, not fit for purpose, a position concisely summarised by systems theorist and consultant John Seddon when he states: "Command and control is failing us" (Seddon, 2005, p.8). This combined with market uncertainties and new technology has led to new paradigms in management which have changed the relationship and expectations between worker and management. New approaches to management have evolved, with the current dominant iteration being Performance Management within an Enterprise Culture (Cameron, 2000).

The term *Enterprise Culture* is used to describe a suite of "attributes, values and behaviours - such as resourcefulness, self-discipline, openness to risk and change that enable people to succeed in bold and difficult undertakings" (Cameron, 2000, p.7). These values and practices go under different names, such as entrepreneurial management, empowerment and excellence (ibid, p.9). Enterprise Culture marks a shift away from bureaucratic, hierarchical, command and control towards flatter management structures and claims of empowered employees "liberated from bureaucratic constraints" (ibid, p.10). Employees are managed in

this new culture by systems of performance management, a term which encompasses a range of practices that link overall organisational objectives with individual performance and objectives (Armstrong & Baron, 2005). There is no consensus over the impact of these changes. Some voices argue for the twin benefits to the individual and the organisation, seeing an opportunity for mutually beneficial cooperation. For example, Nikolas Rose advocates the potential of Enterprise culture;

> Employers and managers equipped with these new visions of work have claimed there is no conflict between the pursuits of productivity, efficiency and competitiveness on the one hand, and the humanisation of work on the other. On the contrary, the path to business success lies in engaging the employee with the goals of the company at the level of his or her subjectivity….Through striving to fulfil their own needs and wishes at work, each employee will thus work for the advance of the enterprise (Rose, 1990, p.56 in Cameron, 2000, p.12).

An alternative view is presented by Elliot and Atkinson, whose 1998 work *The Age of Insecurity* argues how the removal of restrictions on the global movement of capital have shifted the risk from capitalists to workers, leading to increased insecurity in the workplace and consequently stress, overwork and corrosive uncertainty. A third perspective is proposed by Paul Du Guy's 1996 work, *Consumption and Identity at Work*, where he argues that it is simplistic to view enterprise culture as unambiguously liberating or monolithically oppressive. He suggests the culture change has produced "new ways for people to be at work", which are not necessarily better or worse. "They bring new costs and benefits which different people negotiate in different ways" (du Guy 1996 in Cameron, 2000, p.13). It is likely that Paul Du Guy's view will resonate with the management consultants and actors using Applied Theatre in this context, conceiving of their role as supporting organisations to make their performance management systems more than a semantic game. Despite the shift to these allegedly more egalitarian work practices, the residual models of industrial management still pervade and a culture gap can exist between a progressive espoused theory of management and a management style in practice which is command and control.

Applied Theatre techniques can be used to shift an organisation from a residual command and control culture into a new culture more suitable for the need of workers and the operating conditions. In chapter 6 I will draw on the work of Morgan (1997), Capra (2003) and Diamond (2007) to theorise how work-based Applied Theatre is helping to realise notions of work that do not marginalise the human element and why working to effect change from within organisations is necessary to achieve this change. Theatre methods can be a particularly effective tool for culture change through their ability to de-familiarise a pervasive and normalised culture of command and control, as Seddon argues:

> Because we are inside it, we do not see the enormous waste of time, effort and money it imposes. We shrug off its obvious imperfections as normal –'that's the way it is'. There is therefore little cause to question whether it could be bettered (Seddon, 2005, p.9)

Employing a version of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (Mumford, 2009; Willett, 1974) severed from its Marxist roots, work-based theatre provides the tool to make strange the normalised problems of command and control and to explore new approaches to creating organisations better able to adapt to current and future conditions rather than using outdated industrial thinking that has outlived its usefulness (Seddon, 2005, p.9). Work-based Applied Theatre can help objectify the problems and impact of unnecessarily authoritarian management and provide the space to rehearse the new modes of behaviour as a step towards realising a new culture in reality, accelerating a discourse of management that is moving away from command and control towards more egalitarian approaches to management. The same methods can of course be used to support more authoritarian management approaches, but in practice this does not seem to be the case, as evidenced through my field research and case studies, and for reasons I will explore further in my discussion of impact in chapter 6.

Today's workplace exists within the global economy. Globalisation is not a new phenomenon, but comparatively recent developments in transport, information and communications technology have intensified global interconnections. The impact of globalisation is a contested subject that has both positive and negative consequences for employment. New jobs have sprung into existence whilst job security has reduced (Scholte, 2005). Whilst globalisation has its defenders and critics (e.g. Bauman, 1998; Gray, 2002), there is consensus over the staggering inequalities of our global economy. Stegar identifies how the wealth of the world's richest three individuals is more than the combined GDP of the world's poorest countries and their 600 million citizens. Corporations continue to build their reach and power; of the one hundred largest economies in the world, fifty one are corporations and only forty nine are countries (Stegar, 2003). I can speculate that Applied Theatre's distaste with the inequalities of globalisation and the unelected power of transnational corporations may view work-based Theatre as a Quisling, collaborating with unethical global corporations with a record of oppression and exploitation. This is a description from which many businesses would seek to distance themselves, some of them legitimately. Theatre methods are used by large and small enterprises, in all sectors of the economy, from global transnational corporations, to government and its agencies, to health services and voluntary organisations. Each setting provides its own ethical problems. A wholesale and reductionist rejection of the context of work as a legitimate site of practice perhaps betrays its roots in late 20th century radicalism. Given that most people have to work is it not sensible that, where possible, Applied Theatre methods might be used to enable them to make the most of their situation? Rather than waiting for the revolution perhaps we should make the most of what we have. I am not suggesting that such a position absolves work-based Applied Theatre from the ethical debate, after all, work-based Applied Theatre claiming a progressive impact would have a hollow ring if those same participants oversaw the manufacture of products in a Third World sweat shop. I am suggesting that a win/win situation is possible in that Applied Theatre can support an efficiency agenda so that the organisation can survive whilst also promoting the politics of a

more democratic and harmonious workplace through working with individuals and facilitating dialogue and building self-efficacy[6]. This is a level of pragmatic engagement which some find unpalatable; a position tackled by academic and business consultant Brenton Faber. His work explores the challenges of engagement in the work of organisations, contrasting his evolving views on attempts at influencing organisational discourse with the problems he identifies with the disengagement and disconnection of academia with contemporary life as experienced by many outside the academy[7]. He draws upon Gee, Hull and Lankshear's work as an example of disengaged academic criticism. They argue that employees "only have agency in so far as this agency acts in the interests of the company" (Faber, 2002, p.65). Their central argument is as follows:

> The newly empowered and newly 'critical thinking' workers cannot really question the goals, visions and values that define the very parameters of the new capitalist business in the new global work order. Such questioning might well mean exiting the new capitalist world and seeking employment in Third World-like, low wage, marginal jobs and in the remaining backwaters of the old capitalism, or having no employment at all. The workers 'freedom' is fixed within the margins of the goals, ends, and vision set by the new capitalism and the theoreticians. The problem can be put another way: real commitment and belief, as well as real learning, requires that learners be able to engage in genuine dialogue and contestation with viewpoints, but such genuine contestation is ultimately problematic in a business setting where, in the end, profit is the goal and the competition is at ones heels. (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996, p xvi in Faber,2002, p.65)

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[6]This contention is supported by the Staffordshire University research that compared pre and post self-efficacy levels of participant in an actor-based role-play intervention and found levels of self-efficacy to be significantly higher post workshop. This research is referenced further in chapter 4. A further example is provided by William Ferris who used Boalian methods to expose the power imbalances than were derailing team work with a software company that called him in to facilitate a dialogue between a dysfunctional team. Levels of stress was affecting employees behaviour towards customers and each other (Ferris, 2002, p.24). He recounts how his work with the team provided a shared language and context to talk about difficult issues, providing a framework in which less confrontational approaches were developed to enable the team to function more effectively. These included providing additional training in sexual harassment, gender and conflict issues. Ferris concludes that “The anecdotal and empirical evidence suggest that, when the fit is right, image theatre techniques can improve team function and, more vitally, company performance” (Ferris, 2002, p.25). He reports that the backlog of customer issues fell 84% from 670 to 110 (ibid). On the face of it Ferris provides an example of a happier working environment and improved performance that has struck the balance between the needs of the workers and the needs of management.

[7] A view echoed by Svendsen: “Much academic writing on work does seem to be carried out at such a distance from its object that it actually loses its connection to it, and becomes more or less irrelevant except as part of the academic industry itself” (Svendsen, 2008, p.4)

Gee, Hull and Lankshear argue for the creation of a new discourse to challenge the drivers of the new capitalist economy, promoting localism, critical thinking and forging links with the marginalised. Whilst agreeing with the need for a new discourse, Faber writes that "Ultimately, despite their intentions, Gee, Hull and Lankshear's proposals seem as utopian as the fast capitalists texts of which they are critical" (Faber, 2002, p.66). He is critical of academics who critique, comment but rarely act themselves:

> In nearly two decades of dramatic and sweeping changes in corporate America, changes that included massive layoffs, technological revolutions, increased educational needs, and organizational restructuring, academic researchers remained largely on the side-lines, commenting and critiquing but rarely acting (ibid, p.68).

Faber's concerns present a challenge and a choice which may be shared by the actors and consultants who work with organisations. Either to work with individuals in order to shape organisational discourse within the limits and complexities of the context, or to read such engagement as collusion with the status quo, and to critique from the outside. By so doing, as Faber argues, important dissenting voices find a forum for expression, but through a lack of engagement may surrender the possibility of influence. I suggest these are important considerations for the field of Applied Theatre.

Work-based Applied Theatre doesn't call for admittance into the canon of the academic field. Theatre in the work-place is a thriving practice and the imperatives for lifelong learning and the unique contribution of theatre to embodied and social work-based learning suggests that the practice will continue to grow, whether the field of Applied Theatre includes the practice in its discourse as a site for research or not. Currently the field is virtually silent, and therefore failing to exert any meaningful influence over the evolving use of theatre at work. Ackroyd's exposure of the field discourse as exclusionary signals that this conspicuous silence is being broken. Moving towards an umbrella definition of Applied Theatre, encompassing participatory theatre delivered beyond traditional theatre spaces with specific intentions, will

open new lines of enquiry and inform the development of practice that will, perhaps in small ways at first, impact on the discourse of the workplace. Gluck and Rubenstein (2007) provide what I believe is a compelling argument for the field to engage with work-based practice and to extend its reach of influence into this problematic context. They identify what, for them, is the main impact of theatre in the workplace: "employees and managers alike begin to see each other and their customers as people, human beings with similarities and differences. This outcome is perhaps the most dramatic – helping people value, not just tolerate, different ways of looking, speaking and behaving" (Gluck & Rubenstein, 2007, p.139). Put in these terms, I suggest that such an outcome is one likely to be valued by any Applied Theatre practitioner and researcher, whatever their working context.

Chapter 2

Methodology and Methods

The objective of this research is to analyse the efficacy and impact of theatre at work and based on this analysis define the hybrid qualities of the work-based actor. A secondary aim has been to position this work within the field of Applied Theatre which was my main focus in Chapter 1. I have therefore selected a methodology and adopted the following structure in order to achieve these research aims. In this Chapter I examine the methods and methodology used for this research. I have sought to examine the practice and its impact at several levels, with each chapter addressing my research questions from a distinct perspective. In subsequent Chapters I start with in-depth case studies and then move through a discussion of what forms the practice takes, to how it works as a learning tool and finally an examination of what is learned and its impact. In Chapter 3 I present two case studies that illustrate and analyse the efficacy and impact of the practice through in-depth examples. These case studies provide a foundation for the analysis contained within the following chapters. Chapter 4 describes and analyses the main forms of actor-based Applied Theatre. Two additional case studies support the examination of Forum Theatre at work, with additional case examples drawn upon as necessary. Chapter 5 examines the connections between the forms discussed in Chapter 4 and learning theory in order to establish how the practice supports learning. Here I question the effectiveness of theatre at work to support specific aspects of the workplace curriculum. Chapter 6 builds on the examination of how theatre at work supports learning to here question what is learned. My analysis extends into organisation and leadership theory to theorise what model of leadership is being promoted through actor-based learning and to address questions of the impact the pedagogy may have on individuals and organisations. The

main findings are then reviewed in my summary and conclusion. This structure is designed to facilitate my analysis into the forms and techniques used by work-place actors, the efficacy of the dyadic interaction between the actor and participant and my examination of the organisational impact at a broader level. My argument is constructed from a range of methods, including field research as a participant and an observer, semi-structured interviews, focus groups. I draw upon some central theoretical strands from Applied Theatre, Leadership Studies, Organisation Studies, Social Constructionism and Learning Theory. I have selected these strands because they address questions of the efficacy and impact of the practice. The intersections between the practice and the leading theories from these fields are used to construct an analysis that is enriched through this interdisciplinary approach.

Before I come to the research techniques and approach chosen as suitable to forward these aims I will first define the terms methodology and methods. Methods can be defined as the technical rules for how data may be collected reliably. 'They lay down the procedural rules to follow for obtaining certifiably objective and reliable data' (Brewer, 2000, p.2). All Research methods exist within broader philosophical and theoretical frameworks and a methodology can be defined as the philosophical and theoretical frameworks within which these procedural rules fit (ibid, p.2). These frameworks provide a lens through which a subject may be studied, hence a methodology reveals an aspect of the subject for interpretation and analysis, but no methodology can provide a total picture as its findings are bound by the limits of its philosophical and theoretical frameworks (Law, 2004, p.8). All methodologies have their own procedural rules or methods, and these lead to particular forms of knowledge[8] (Brewer, 2000,

[8] A researcher embarking on a research project will make certain assumptions, including “a stance towards the nature of reality (ontology)” and “how the researcher knows what he or she knows (epistemology)” (Creswell, 2007, p.16). Oliver defined ontology as referring to "the fundamental nature of the world and what it means to exist in that world" (p28). Epistemology is defined as "the study of the grounds on which we claim to know something about the world" (ibid, p.29). Ontological concerns are connected with epistemological concerns, as assumptions regarding the nature of the world have implications for the selected epistemological position (ibid, p.29). John Brewer draws on the work of John Hughes to define two philosophical positions of social research. These are the natural science model, based on positivism, and the humanist model, based on naturalism (Brewer, 2000, p.29).

p.28). This research adopts a case study and mixed methods approach, using a mix of primarily qualitative methods, with supporting quantitative evidence called upon as necessary, driven by a pragmatic approach focussed on the aims and outcomes of this research (Creswell, 2007, p.22).

Case Studies

Case studies have been used as they enable in-depth analysis and description in order to unravel the relationships, processes and interconnections between the practice and the context. As the academic field of Applied Theatre has overlooked the workplace as a legitimate site of practice it was necessary to provide in-depth examples to challenge the assumptions of the field's 'exclusionary discourse' (Ackroyd, 2007, p.3). It is intended that these case studies enrich the Applied Theatre debate by providing a more complex picture of the practice than is currently reflected within the literature.

Case studies typically draw on multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2007) and the case studies here are constructed from qualitative semi-structured interviews, participant observation and

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Naturalism, in the context of social research, is the study of social life in real, naturally occurring settings. Experience and observation is stressed over prior hypothesizing (ibid, p.33). Positivism "believes the world to be an external, knowable entity, existing 'out there' independent of what people believe or perceive it to be" (ibid, p.31), a position challenged by the epistemological and ontological stance of naturalism which argues that people are discursive and that meanings constructed and reconstructed by the people themselves (ibid, p.34). In essence, naturalism "is discovery based rather than hypothesis testing" (ibid, p.34), and the methodological justification for ethnography comes from naturalism and humanism (ibid, p.37). The dominance and power of Positivism is evidenced as for why alternative forms of knowledge, such as naturalism seek to make their case for legitimacy in relation to it. However, since the 1960's there has been an intellectual attack on Positivism (Brewer, 2000, p.31). Some of these challenges feature throughout this dissertation, for example, Social Constructionism in Chapter 4, Schön's challenge to Positivism and Technical Rationality and his call for a new epistemology of practice later in this Chapter, The shift from machine to systems thinking in Chapter 4, as well as the qualitative methodology selected as the primary research methodology. For Creswell, the debate has moved on in that naturalism does not need to be presented in opposition to Positivism. He argues that qualitative research based on principals of naturalism no longer needs to be contrasted with positivism in order to gain legitimacy; "Qualitative research is legitimate in its own right and does not need to be compared to achieve respectability" (Creswell, 2007, p.16).

observation, video recordings of work-based training, scripts and other relevant documents with subjects and settings purposefully selected due to their relevance to this research. Denscombe identifies four types of case study, and the selection of the appropriate type will depend on the way in which the case will be used. He defines these types as *typical instance*, *extreme instance, test-site for theory* and *least likely instance* (2007, p.40). The case studies here have been selected as typical examples of actor-based theatre at work, with the *Friends Provident* case study examining the use of personalised bespoke role-plays and the *Association of Colleges* and *3M* cases providing two examples of work-based Forum Theatre. The logic for identifying and using a typical instance is "that the particular case is similar in crucial respects with others that might have been chosen, and that the findings from the case study are therefore likely to apply elsewhere" (ibid). My extensive experience of working as an actor within the workplace has guided my selection of these cases as representative examples and hence the findings are likely to be applicable elsewhere. A further case study, *Spotlight on the Actor* is constructed primarily from interviews with workplace actors and seeks to further define this emerging and hybrid role.

A challenge for all forms of research is to untangle the connections and influence between the researcher and the researched, and a consequence of this interaction demands considerations of reflexivity. For research into the social world, the requirement for reflexivity by the researcher is a central, though controversial, concern (Davis, 2008, p.3). Reflexivity is seen by some as a necessary component of the postmodern, post-positivist model of social research (Davis 2008; Brewer, 2000). For Brewer, reflexivity is taken to mean that “the scientific observer is part and parcel of the setting, context and culture he or she is trying to understand and represent” (Brewer, 2000, p.127). For Davis, reflexivity “at its most immediately obvious level refers to the ways in which the product of research are affected by the personnel and processes of doing research” (Davis, 2008, p.4). This means that the researcher’s identity,

values and beliefs are recognised as part of the equation (Denscombe, 2007). As they cannot be eliminated, the researcher needs to reflect on these background factors and use their judgment as to the degree to which they need to declare to their readers "the possible influence of the researcher's self on the interpretation of events or cultures" (Denscombe 2007, p.69). Evidence of this reflexivity can be found in this dissertation, for example, in my personal description of my beliefs, interests, experience and expertise in relation to the use of actors in the workplace contained in the Introduction.

Gatekeepers, Consent and Access to the field

As I stated in Chapter 1, the internal operations of workplace typically does not invite attention and gaining access to the relevant people, spaces and documents in order to construct these case studies has required perseverance and negotiation. Where names of individuals and business have been included in the case studies written consent was obtained. In addition to these case studies, short accounts of work-based theatre provide illustrative examples throughout the thesis. These have typically been drawn from participant observation. Where it has not been possible to gain participant and organisational consent for these accounts, I have sought to avoid ethical problems by stripping away information that could identify the individuals or organisations concerned. Where names and contextual details are used the explicit consent of the participants was obtained. All those interviewed also signed a release form, created in line with the principles outline by Denscombe for obtaining written consent (Denscombe, 2007, p.145-147).

My own work as an actor within the field has provided contacts and access and made me well placed to undertake this research. I have also undertaken research where I was less closely associated with the field in order to more easily facilitate the necessary critical distance.

Whilst I have striven to maintain my critical faculties throughout all aspects of this research, in some cases the 'Gatekeepers' (Denscombe, 2007, p.71) who provided access to the field and for interview are also friends or acquaintances, so whilst this helpfully facilitated access to the field which would otherwise be closed, such associations also heighten the requirement for reflexive analysis. In order to provide a fuller picture of the activities and impact of work-place actors and to validate the findings from participant observation and interviews with existing contacts, I have sought additional new sites for fieldwork.

I sought to undertake some of my field research with individuals and places with which I had no prior association for two reasons. Firstly, in order to reduce the risk of challenges to legitimacy of the research that prior association could generate, and secondly, to provide different perspectives on the research topic, with the intention of aiding understanding through investigating the topic from different positions. This process is a research method known as triangulation (Denscombe, 2007, p.134-p139; Winston, 2006 p.46-47). A tension when using case studies is the relationship between the uniqueness of the subject and the generalizability of its results (Winston, 2006, p.43), and through triangulation I have sought to produce research that is valid both in its process and findings. The specific form of triangulation here is known as Methodological Triangulation (ibid p.135-136). The following methods have been used for this research:

Table 1. Methodological Triangulation

	Method used
Method 1	Interviews with actors, trainers, commissioners and participants
Method 2	Observations in the training room
Method 3	Participant observation in the training room
Method 4	Documents, scripts and evaluation reports
Method 5	Video recordings of Theatre at work and contemporaneous participant interviews
Method 6	Focus Group with actors and trainers

Semi-Structured Research Interviews

Twelve semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted for this research. I have drawn on advice for conducting interviews from a range of sources, including Bell, 2005; Creswell, 2008 and Denscombe, 2007. Audio recordings of these interviews were made. With the semi-structured interview format I had a defined list of issues which I wished to cover, whilst reserving the flexibility to deal with the issues in terms of the order they were covered and to provide the space for the interviewee to develop their points of interest. At the start of each interview I would outline the focus of this research into the process and impact of actor-based learning, and thereafter would strive to maintain a balance between using open questions in order to elucidate from the interviewee their experiences and thoughts in their own words and closed questions in order to clarify specific points of interest. Other listening skills, such as paraphrasing, summarising and empathy were used throughout the dialogue in order to keep

the conversation flowing and on topic. Whilst neutral and non-committal responses to comments by the interviewee are generally recommended as good practice (Denscombe, 2007, p.185), I found it was necessary to flex and adapt my style to the tempo, language use and personality of each person I was interviewing, responding to, for example, those interviewees who presented as nervous for whom I needed to be particularly sensitive to in order to generate a climate of trust where the interviewee could relax and more ably make a useful contribution to this research project.

Transcription and Analysis

These interviews were then transcribed, using *Soundscriber* software to aid the transcription process. This transcription process deepened my familiarity with the data, which was then grouped into categories and concepts. Themes and relationships between these categories and concepts were drawn. This analytical process formed links between the data provided by different interviewees. This data was then constructed into the following case studies.

Following the convention of using transcriptions as described by Wolcott (Wolcott, 2009), in the case studies interview text is précised with quotations used when a point is succinctly made by the interviewee. In places, longer sections of interview text are used. In these cases my judgement was that this was necessary as the interviewee had expressed their point with clarity and a précis was unnecessary.

Case Studies and Case Examples

This thesis contains four case studies and numerous case examples. The following Chapter contains two case studies; the first examines a range of stakeholder perspectives on Friends

Providents use of bespoke role-plays. The second case study analyses the role of the workplace actor, drawing on interviews with experienced workplace actors.

Two further case examples are included in Chapter 4 that illustrate and analyse the use of Forum Theatre in the workplace. These case examples serve to illustrate the tensions that can exist between workplace bureaucracy and the agency of the individual. Forum Theatre is examined as a space to articulate, explore and negotiate through these tensions.

Numerous case examples are used throughout the thesis. These concise case examples support my analysis in order to draw connections between theory and practice. They are drawn from my own participant/observer field research.

Chapter 3

Case Studies and General Points of Theory Arising From the Case Studies

Introduction

In this chapter I present two case studies examining the characteristics, efficacy and impact of actor-based training methods in the workplace. In the first case study I investigate a training programme with insurance provider Friends Provident and their use of bespoke actor-based role-plays. The actor, the training commissioner, the training provider and two participants were interviewed for this case study. These five interview subjects were selected to explore different perspectives focussed on the impact of actor-based role-plays and to provide a space for the subjects to reflect on their experiences. The second case study contains an analysis of semi-structured interviews with experienced work-place actors. These actors have experience of work-based practice in the public and private sectors, in assessment and development contexts and using, amongst other methods, the tools of role-play and Forum Theatre. The chapter concludes with general points of theory drawn from these case studies and the field work conducted for this thesis. These points of theory establish a set of core principles that are analysed further in subsequent chapters.

Case Study: Friends Provident: A Critical Stage for Learning

This case study maps and analyses the process of an organisation using actor-based Applied Theatre from commissioning to evaluation. Semi-structured interviews with those connected with the programme were undertaken to gather their thoughts as to why actor-based methods were used and their contribution to learning. Through this analysis I seek to define the factors involved in an effective use of actor-based role-play and articulate the forms of learning and impact that are generated.

This case study focuses on the use of actor-based role-plays used as part of programme entitled 'Voice of Change' (VoC). This programme was targeted at Project Managers and sought to equip these staff with the skills to fulfil their work roles in a period of unprecedented change. Friends Provident[9] had not used actor-based learning methods prior to this intervention, and their extended use of actor-based role-play can be considered innovative for an insurance provider that is process driven and traditionally conservative in its use of training methodologies.

Process of Data Collection and Analysis

Five extended interviews provide the qualitative data for this case study. I was able to access key individuals in respect of the commissioning, delivery and attendance on the programme and whilst it was not possible to gain access to the training programme itself to observe and record the programme in action, these interviews provide sufficient data for analysis in terms of the process and impact of the work. My intention was that interviewing individuals with

[9] *Friends Provident* changed its name to *Friends Life* in March 2011 after merging with life assurance businesses with Bupa and AXA insurance (http://www.friendslife.co.uk/doclib/GEN1100.pdf accessed 20/12/11). I have continued to use the name *Friends Provident* as this was name the organisation used at the time of the interviews.

different roles in respect of the programme would provide a range of perspectives on the practice. These perspectives would triangulate the topic and provide data for deep analysis into the use of actor pedagogies at Friends Provident. As the format of bespoke role-plays used at Friends Provident is a widely used application of actors in the workplace, some of the analysis and conclusions can be extrapolated to draw more generally applicable themes to this form of work.

The five individuals interviewed represent four distinct roles in relation to the actor-based role-plays:

Andrew Turner - *Friends Provident*[10] Manager who drove the Commissioning process for the work. Interviewed at Friends Provident's Exeter office on October 15th 2009.

Andrew Taylor - Managing Director, Trainer and Consultant for *People Deliver Projects*[11], the provider who delivered the VoC programme for Friends Provident. Interviewed at the People Deliver Projects registered address in Bristol on November 2nd 2009.

Dan Long - Actor with People Deliver Projects who worked on VoC. Interviewed in a Starbucks Coffee shop near Bristol Temple Meads on May 10th 2010.

Andrew Turner selected the two Friends Provident Project Managers who were participants on the programme to be interviewed. The factors which informed his selection process are unknown. The Project Managers were:

Nigel Harris - Friends Provident Project Manager who attended VoC as a participant. Interviewed at the Friends Provident Exeter office on 9th November 2009.

[10] www.friendslife.co.uk
[11] www.peopledeliverprojects.com

Ross Klinkenberg - Friends Provident Project Manager who attended VoC as a participant. Interviewed at the Friends Provident Exeter office on 9th November 2009.

These interviews generated 51,980 words of transcribed text. These transcriptions were then analysed for common themes and meanings which were then structured into the case study below.

Friends Provident – A history

Friends Provident is currently going through a period of change that is perhaps the most far reaching in its long history. Friends Provident was established by Quakers, including Joseph Rowntree in the 19th Century, providing insurance services with a strong ethical policy. It continues to provide a range of pension, insurance and income protection products and services. The company was demutualised in 2001. More recently it has gone through a period of accelerated change, with significant modifications to operational structures and the numbers and roles of staff. This process of change has been driven by the acquisition of Friends Provident by Resolution for £1.8 billion in 2009. Resolution describes itself as "the financial services restructuring company" [12] and has acquired a number of insurance providers in order to consolidate the insurance industry. An implication of this consolidation is a significant number of redundancies and a culture change for Friends Provident[13].

Actor based Applied Theatre and the Voice of Change Programme

The case study is presented under six headings. These are:

[12] Source: http://www.resolution.co.uk/news/resolution-expands-financial-services-activity/ accessed 9/9/2011

[13] source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/jan/25/resolution-friends-provident-chief-executive accessed 1/7/2011

1. Commissioning Actor-Based Training
2. The Format of the Actor-Based Work in the Voice of Change Programme
3. The Skills and Approach of the Actor Facilitator
4. The Impact on the Learner
5. Evaluation
6. Summary and Conclusions

The study begins with the story of how the training provider *People Deliver Projects* used the same theatre based methods deployed in its training as a marketing exercise which led to Friends Provident commissioning the Voice of Change actor-based programme.

1. Commissioning Actor-Based Training

As part of their marketing strategy *People Deliver Projects* use a combination of theatre based events at trade shows and also free introductory sessions where prospective clients can experience for themselves the value of actor based learning.

Andrew Taylor, Managing Director of *People Deliver Projects,* described a theatre piece which they perform at an Olympia trade show twice a year that has proved highly successful as a marketing exercise.

> *One of the lovely things in my market is that (theatre is) such a contrast from the utterly dull… The industry makes exciting things – projects – really dull, through methodology, tools and software and so on. And it's a dull world, so people are out there on dull missions buying software, doing all that stuff, and then this thing (the theatre) appears in the middle of it. And so it's like a honey pot. It just pulls people towards it.*

This theatre piece is based on the format of Forum Theatre, with a narrative that reaches, in project management terms, a point of crisis at which point the audience are facilitated to

suggest alternatives with which the actors then work. The theatre is playfully performed, using humour to deliver its message in a disarming manner. Andrew describes the structure:

> *At the first level It's about empathy and at the next level it's about frustration and eventually antagonsisation until they are standing up going 'just bloody tell him!' so you pull them in – and it's all about- I don't know how to say it psychologically – but it's all about having the audience member feel that affinity with the struggling guy on the stage, and see them as themselves on the stage, and put themselves in their shoes and want to do something.*

This description of the power of Forum Theatre to compel the audience to act could almost be a Boalian Joker describing a Theatre of the Oppressed performance of Forum Theatre. Here the engaging qualities of Forum Theatre are used to present problems with which the audience will identify, with the implication being that the training solutions provided by *People Deliver Projects* can help solve similar problems back in the workplace. On one level, Forum Theatre becomes a form of advertising.

The oppositional theories and politics that have shaped the field of Applied Theatre (McConachie, 2007) may drive some commentators to have severe misgivings about the use of T.O. techniques being used instrumentally as a marketing exercise. However, other readings can be drawn from this performance; marketing is only part of what is happening here. What the Forum Theatre is doing in this highly systemised, process driven context is foregrounding the human element. I can speculate that for some in the audience there is a value in seeing a reflection of their world performed, and through the plastic mechanism of Forum Theatre, exploring possibilities for change. At the very least the theatre is providing an entertaining diversion from the "really dull" methodologies, software and tools that are the mainstay of the Olympia experience, and also providing a catalyst for a shared topic of conversation between audience members. There is even perhaps, a deeper impact of the work. In the highly systemised workplace of project management, it is the human element which is at risk of being

marginalised, a point articulated by Andrew when he described what was for him the central message of the forum piece:

> *We are saying – it's not like that actually –it's about people- project management is about people…the actors bring it to life, and that expression Bring It To Life is the central piece that kind of summarise in its simplest form what the whole experiential bit does in the business – it brings it to life, so people can see it, access it.*

Training that doesn't address the human element can result in wasted potential as only those with a natural talent are most likely to succeed. I suggest the 'honey pot' draw of the theatre here is that it provides an antidote to the prevailing mechanistic thinking of Project Management that people resent as they don't like being treated like cogs in a machine (Capra, 2003). Herta Elizabeth Renk argues that such methods are effective as they work with, not against, human processes of understanding: "drama teachers have inadvertently found a method of communicating that is much better adapted to the human processes of understanding and orientating than the abstract and denotive teaching prevalent in schools" (Renk, 1993 in Wright, 2000, p.28). Here on this improvised stage at a trade show, the human element, with its conflicts, resolution, humour, disappointments and so on are held up for all to see; the very elements that are integral to the embodied experience of work which are marginalised in the pervading mechanistic processes of work spaces. It is not difficult to imagine how placing the human centre stage would prove so engaging for an audience where so often it is the systems, procedures and technology that are top of the bill.

The other form of theatre-based marketing used by *People Deliver Projects* is through free taster sessions for potential customers. These events used actor-based bespoke role-plays and it is through attending one such event that Andrew Turner of Friends Provident first came across this method of training. A number of factors drove Andrew to seek new approaches to equipping his team with the requisite skills. Prior to the Voice of Change programme, Friends Provident had focused its training on technical knowledge, putting staff though industry

recognised qualifications such as the project management methodology *Prince 2* or *MSP for Business Analysts*. Andrew Turner expressed his reservations in respect of this form of training in relation to actual practice:

> *Prince 2 does not equal an increase in capability – I won't get better project managers. I'll probably get more engaged staff. They'll recognise we're part of a professional operation with professional qualifications. They'll recognise the level of investment putting in. But they won't be better practitioners.*

He sought to address what he identified as 'behavioural developments'. Andrew appears to be making the distinction between professional knowledge and professional competence, seeking a training provider to increase competence. The driver for seeking a provider to deliver behavioural training was that Andrew had a target to increase capability amongst his project management team, who, as a consequence of reorganisation were now required to work more flexibly within project specific cross departmental teams. This form of working can be referred to in the workplace as 'matrix management' (Morgan, 1997; Hannagan, 2008), the implications of which were explored with in Chapter 4. Essentially more fluid operating structures can generate divided loyalties and increased conflict, and so for such unstable systems to work a high level of collegiate interpersonal skills are desirable. He came across the provider they commissioned, *People Deliver Projects*, almost by chance when he and a colleague attended one of the free taster session provided by the consultancy. Initially, however, Andrew was sceptical of the pitch being delivered, when it became clear that a form of role-play was going to be used. Andrew's previous experiences of heavily scripted peer role-play had been particularly negative and uninspiring:

> *They didn't use the words role-play, but what they described of the morning event we both went (ANDREW FROWNS AND ROLLS HIS EYES). Role-play completely turns me off. Role-play experience for me has always been heavily scripted, it's always been very much about operating within this framework, within this box-this is how we're going to play it – too artificial, just doesn't connect for me.*

Andrew's initial negative reaction to the use of role-play is common, and for many, even the suggestion of role-play carries negative connotations. There are a number of reasons for these negative connotations. Poor design, over or inappropriate use and bad facilitation provide part of the explanation. I have witnessed facilitators self-sabotage their introduction to a role-play session by saying "I know we all hate role-play but…". Dr Danielle Peet adopts a similar strategy in the introduction to her article on the use of actor-based role-play for GP selection and training with this opening statement:

> Role-play. Does that word bring you out in a cold sweat? I am afraid that it is unavoidable during your time as an Associate-in-Training (AiT) and beyond, it is even incorporated into 'trainer's training'! What is it about role-play that strikes initial terror in many but, if done well, can give you a deeper appreciation of your communication skills? (Peet, 2010, p.655)

I suggest that, despite Dr Peet's intention to promote the value of role-play, her use of words and phrases such as 'cold sweat', 'terror' and 'I am afraid it is unavoidable' can only serve to create or reinvigorate negative connotations associated with the learning method. I am not suggesting that experiential forms of learning do not and should not generate some level of anxiety; as I will argue later in *General points of theory arising from the case studies*, feelings of anxiety are closely connected with stepping into the unknown and learning something new. Facilitators and actors need to understand this and channel these feelings productively. In Andrew's case, anxiety connected with learning does not seem to be informing his poor perception of peer role-play. His view seems to be based on his experience of the form as artificial, limited and tightly controlled.

I suggest that actor-based role-play is a substantially different method to peer role-play, and confusion can arise due to both methods being referred to as 'role-play'. A variety of practices are grouped under the heading of role-play, including peer to peer role-play, scripted role-play, role-play for assessment, bespoke role-play and so on. This presents a problem of

terminology; the term 'role-play' can carry significant baggage that can generate resistance and act as a block to engagement with the method. *People Deliver Projects* didn't use the term, instead referring to the practice as *experiential learning*. The problem of terminology remains in that the term role-play is frequently used to refer to both peer and actor role-play, and what is referred to as actor role-play encompasses a wide range of practices from replicating a role in an assessment context to settings where the actor is also an educationalist. Actor based role-play developed out of peer role-play and these related forms also possess their own distinct qualities. Arguably they should have their own terminology. For the actor Dan Long "Role-play is a totally wrong term. It's a short hand." He did not have his own preferred name for this form of work, but did feel that a better definition of the role was necessary and would be useful.

Andrew's initial scepticism was challenged when a short while later they worked in small groups with an actor:

> *I found myself plugged into a group with 3 other people from other organisations. I'm in this group with Dan (the actor) and he literally just says 'throw me something', throw me a scenario, something that's going on…a brave lady in the group with me says 'I've got something – let's play this one' and she started playing it out to him. And suddenly it's clicking away (ANDREW CLICKS HIS FINGERS) and you can see her interaction …you could see her difficulty…could I have a bit of a time out – break out – bit of conversation between us as a group – a little bit of coaching, a little bit of observation. Dan* (The Actor) *is very good at drawing that out of the guys… the thing that really impressed me was his ability to go (MAKES SWITCH SOUND) OK I'm switching off – let's have a quick chat about that – how's that going, how's that playing out, what's that feeling like for you – what can we do differently – bit of conversation between the group – switch back in and it wasn't scripted. It wasn't artificial. He was able to plug straight into the role… the space... the context that worked for her. A bit of conversation afterwards was really quite powerful actually. I saw something quite powerful play out there with this very brave lady from this other organisation.*

Andrew raises a number of issues here as to why the bespoke role-play he witnessed had the impact he described. He identifies the credibility of the interaction with the actor when he

says 'it wasn't artificial', suggesting that the actor, Dan, was able to generate rapidly a character based on the brief from the 'brave lady' that achieved a level of realism that contributed to the power of the encounter. The actor's ability to tune into the locus of the interaction rapidly and to step out of role periodically to facilitate a reflective process amongst the brave lady and the group further enriched the knowledge creation from the exercise. The trans disciplinary quality of the practice is revealed here by the fusion of project management skills developed through a theatre-based pedagogy. Alraek and Baerheim identify three theatrical devices which are used in this form of training and which can also be found in Andrew's description. These are 'as if', 'manipulated temporality' and 'the fourth wall' (2005, p.8-10). These three devices appear to have contributed to Andrew's 'powerful' experience. Alraek and Baerheim suggest that credibility was a necessary condition for building the fiction from which a student may learn, and Stanislavski's concept of 'as if' assists in the creation of credibility within the fiction. The 'brave lady' was able to identify with the actor 'as if' they were a real person from her reality. The skills of the actor in being able to produce a credible performance with which the learner will identify are discussed later; for now let us accept the concept of the actor's credibility as an important element of the methods efficacy. Time is manipulated in the example; halting the action so that a space for reflection was created, then re-entering the simulation, jumping backwards and forwards in time as required, or even re-running aspects of the interaction. Alraek and Baerheim state that "Through stopping the progress of time, students gain a *meta* perspective on the situation" (2005, p.9), a perspective that will potentially enrich the quality of reflective learning. Closely tied to *manipulated temporality* is Alraek and Baerheim's third device of *the fourth wall.* This form of learning freely flips between the fictional and real world: "participants must keep up with two different 'worlds' at the same time: the fictional and the reality" (ibid, p.9). This forth wall is constructed and demolished at will; Alraek and Baerheim suggest that the fourth wall is both a *stable* element that enables the fiction of the role-play to keep going, and an *unstable* element when the wall is broken during a pause or at the end of simulation. I suggest that the

concentration required by participants, observers and actors to 'keep up' with these worlds contributes to the powerful sense of engagement described by Andrew. The repeated shifting of perspective, from interacting within the 'as if' space to pausing the simulation and reflecting on events, drawing on self-reflection and feedback from peer observers, is a central element in the efficacy of this form of learning. The design of such sessions is based on Schön's *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action,* which is explored below in *General points of theory arising from the case studies*. For Alraek and Baerheim, such a design "is especially suited for research in aesthetic disciplines as it focuses on validation of insight acquired through action" (ibid, p.6). Andrew described his discovery of this form of experiential learning as 'a eureka moment':

> *I tend to describe it as a bit of a eureka moment – which was there's something here and I'm not sure what the something is, but there's a formula of something here that works…We actually really struggled to articulate what it was we saw. Very hard to describe what formula was which is why we've ended up just calling it experiential learning... The essence of what we liked there was the experiential part. Really really powerful.*

This embodied and social form of learning may seem particularly challenging and unfamiliar to those more used to the more traditional forms of pedagogy, and it is interesting here that Andrew and his colleague stated that they 'struggled to articulate' what they saw, underlining that actor pedagogies may be seen as an innovative break from conventional teaching and training methods based on an epistemology of technical rationality. The embodied and social nature of this form of learning are explored in greater depth later in this Chapter in *General points of theory arising from the case studies*.

Andrew's description of the woman as a 'brave lady' point to the level of anxiety and apprehension that is often present when entering the unfamiliar territory of small group work with an actor. Working in an embodied manner with problematic work-based biographical material has the potential to trigger a surge of adrenalin and the fight or flight response. This

provides a 'high focus' (Baim, Brookes & Mountford, 2002) encounter that can be stressful for this individual in the spotlight. As a space of action, the format can reveal dissonance between espoused theory and theory-in-action (Schön, 1991), consequently exposing the individual learner's performance to their own critical judgement and that of their peers. Monk suggests that these uncomfortable feelings should not be shied away from, as "it is essential that participants begin to acknowledge their own physicality and to recognise that they are as much engaged in the process of learning in an embodied sense as they are in an intellectual one" (Monk, 2011, p.118) (I will discuss connections between anxiety and learning later in *Spotlight on the Actor.*). These factors present the actor/facilitator with the responsibility to manage these feelings and to handle them constructively. This requires consideration of ethical issues and developed group management skills, which from Andrew's comments, appear to be satisfied here. That these facilitation skills are outside of what we might usually consider as acting confirms that 'acting' here is a hybrid role drawing on skills that stretch beyond performing a credible role. These additional skills are examined later in this case study.

As a consequence of this positive introduction to experiential, actor-based learning methods, Friends Provident commissioned People Deliver Projects to run a pilot programme for eight Friends Provident Project Managers and Business Analysts. The programme was titled Voice of Change, a title perhaps designed to resonate with the role of language and behaviour in navigating and thriving in the shifting demands of the operating environment. A pilot programme in 2009 was the first time that the Exeter office of Friends Provident had used actors for experiential learning, and was also the first time any of the staff interviewed had encountered working with actors in a training context. Andrew Turner has an annual training budget of £175,000 which provides £1000 per employee to spend on training. At the time of interview he stated that £40,000 had been spent on actor-based training, representing a significant proportion of his annual training budget on this form of experiential training. The significant sum invested is perhaps an indicator of the commitment he developed to the actor-

based approach of *People Deliver Projects.* Andrew states what were the main behavioural changes and skills which the programme aimed to deliver:

> *I want them to have a bit of confidence. Awareness of how to interact with others, how to manage stakeholders, how to manage difficult conversations…how to manage difficult individuals.*

This pilot programme was deemed successful in light of the strong feedback from those who attended the first Voice of Change. After some minor changes in structure in response to this feedback and evaluation process, three further programmes were commissioned, with plans to develop the partnership with People Deliver Projects further.

2. The Format of the Actor-Based Work on the Voice of Change Programme

It really was about learning on the job.
Learning in the experience

Nigel Harris, Friends Provident, research interview.

For Andrew Taylor much that passes as leadership and management training does not support the forms of learning which individuals require in order to perform better in their work roles. He said:

> *I've seen this happen so often that I know that it's a really dangerous area of learning – management learning, which is that this huge syllabus of stuff, there's endless stuff you could go through, model after model after model…actually is an opportunity for people not to grow….Because you come away able to describe concepts and ideas and things, but is that learning? The delivery mechanism of behavioural stuff is us, not the solution or the tools and the skill. It's us. So we have to grow it by doing it.*

He is critical of overloaded syllabus with a focus on professional knowledge as opposed to professional skills, 'downloading' management model after management model. Whilst these courses may be delivered by experts in their fields, they are not, from Andrew's perspective, experts in learning and behavioural change, a notion reinforced by Sheull: "It is important to remember that what the student does is actually more important in determining what is learned than what the teacher does" (Sheull, 1993 in Fry et al, 2003, p.22). Andrew continued:

> *The most important ingredient in the transition for an individual from doer to leader or manager to leader is their own confidence and commitment, throwing off the things that are in their way, the person inside them which says you can't – and say actually I can. And I don't think you get that from 5 days at a University environment talking about leadership and reading stuff. You get it actually from tough experiences on the job, in life, and what we do it to create microcosms of that in the learning environment so, practice – having a go.*

Andrew's passionate commitment to learning from experience can be theorised, in terms from Schön, as a commitment to an epistemology of practice, which is radically different from an epistemology of technical rationality constructed on positivist principles. Andrew encapsulates what for him this reflective practicum is achieving:

> *They're learning to learn. Or developing the capability to learn which comes from the reinforcement that they felt themselves do it in a difficult place.*

An analysis of this epistemology of practice which informs the reflective practitioner design of forum role-play, used here with *Friends Provident,* is analysed in *General Points of Theory* section below. It is this theory of learning which informed the design and delivery of the programme.

The programme was delivered over a total of four days, delivered in two blocks of two days with a break between the first and second block. Actor-based role-plays constitute a total of two days, with one day in block one and one day the second block of two days, with the rest of

the course delivered in seminar format in which relevant theories and processes were introduced and discussed. Drawing on notions from Monk et al, the theory session can be thought of as the space for learners to *apprehend* knowledge, which they then come to *comprehend* during the actor sessions. The theory session solidifies an abstract concept for the participants to understand which is similarly rendered in the actor based sessions, but this time not by the trainer but by the learner themselves (see Monk et al, 2011, p.122). In practice, new theories will be introduced during the actor sessions and a degree of comprehension is likely to occur in the theory sessions, but the distinction between *apprehending* and *comprehending* knowledge are helpful to argue the efficacy of the actor-based sessions. For the first iteration of the programme, the course consisted of alternate days of theory input and actor role-plays, and this was adapted for subsequent iterations of the programme with a half day of theory followed by a half day of actor role-plays for each of the four days, as those on the course felt that a "whole day is pretty tough" (Nigel Harris). Months after the four day programme, a fifth day took place. This also used actors and bespoke role-plays, working with the same groups as during the four day programme. The intention of this day was to refresh the learning from the programme and to provide a space where course attenders could reflect on how their skills had developed in the intervening months.

The format of the actor-based sessions split the course group of the eight people into two groups of four. These groups of four were fixed for the remainder of the programme, and were allocated to one actor who was assigned to their group. Each actor session had a topic as a focus, such as negotiation or influencing and the role-plays themselves were bespoke role-plays. In the groups of four, individuals took consecutive turns for around twenty minutes of role-play with the actor, with the other three in the group observing. This format of a small group taking turns to work with the actor is typical. Acting and facilitating can be a demanding

role, and a common variation is for a separate facilitator to be present. A video recording was made of each role-play using a standard laptop webcam. At the end of the role-play the digital video file was copied onto memory stick so that the participant could review their performance later. For Nigel Harris, the interactive actor-based method was preferable to reviewing a video recording where it is not possible to rework to a successful outcome; "You can (role) play it again immediately. That's the kind of benefit of it. You don't go away, looking at the video going, oh I didn't do very well." Video recording was not routinely referred to within the sessions, but could be reviewed in order to reinforce a learning point (for an example of video playback and its use in training, see Pinnington, 1991).

There was some initial experimentation with mixing the groups up and swapping the actors, but this was quickly dropped in response to feedback from the groups. The groups had developed their own approach and rhythms to the work, and built an atmosphere of trust. A change to the group membership was deemed disruptive. Tuckman's model of small group formation (1965) provides a theoretical model that provides an explanation for this experience of group dynamics. Tuckman describes four stages of group formation as Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing. Tuckman argues that each time a group is formed or changed it progresses through this sequence. The model suggest that if the groups had rapidly worked through the process of group formation then a reformatting of the groups would require them to go through the process again.

As I said above, this programme was the first time *Friends Provident* had used actors for role-play in its training. As Andrew Turner reported, previous experiences of peer to peer role-play had not been positive, and his experiences had been artificial, heavily scripted and operating within such a restricted framework as to be unhelpful. I was curious to learn if these views

were reflected by the two participants, Ross and Nigel, and I asked them how peer role-play compared to actor role-play. They both expressed reservations over the use and effectiveness of peer to peer role-play, and identified what for them were the benefits of using actors:

> ***Ross Klinkenberg:*** *I've been on courses previously where you do that and you feel like a tit basically – you think 'look – I can't pretend to be angry – you know what I'm like'…. one of the real advantages of the Voice of Change was the use of actors. I couldn't compliment them enough on their professionalism and how good they actually were and able to take on a different persona, understand and read a situation very very quickly, but also they remained within the boundaries of the theme that we were actually looking at at that point, without wandering off and just getting into an argument, or taking it down a route it doesn't need to go, so I thought that was particularly good. I thought that wouldn't have ever happened using peers.*

Here is Nigel Harris' response to my question "Have you ever found it useful when role-playing with your peers as a tool?"

> ***Nigel Harris:*** *Not to a great degree. Very limited. And that's part of the reason why people go ' urghhh' at role-play – 'cos if you don't feel any benefit from it then the next time it comes along it can feel like something to beat you over the head with… I mean it's almost a bit David Brent in the Office here, you can get people who will just be as difficult as possible and it's just not….it's not what it's about – it doesn't help anybody – it just stresses people. Everyone can play the idiot, nightmare customer, but you just don't get the…it's not real. And people would largely set out to be as awkward as possible. Which is, I think, of very limited value, because you don't get much from that…..But this working with actors was a different thing.*

The credibility of the peer's performance, and the calibration of the level of difficulty seem to be two aspects that are central to Ross and Nigel's reservations with peer role-play. From the examples above it seems that the balance between challenge and protection, stressed by Heathcote and Bolton (1999) as essential for effective peer role-play was absent. Morry van Ments cautions that peer role-play is "a powerful technique, which, like any other tool, can be misused. The onus is on responsible tutors to ensure that they have the skills and ability to use the technique in a sensitive way" (1999, p.28). The poor experiences by *Friends Provident* suggest that van Ments guidance was ignored. The actor was also seen to help maintain the

focus of the exercise on the learning objectives, suggesting that the use of actors provides greater control over the process than might be possible in peer role-play. These comments contributed to the table of differences between peer and actor based role-play, contained in Chapter 2.

It is to the skills of the actor delivering this form of work to which I turn next.

3. The Skills and Approach of the Actor Facilitator

The *Friends Provident* work required the actors to possess a range of skills. Dan Long, the actor, summarises the form of work which was undertaken:

> *The next generation of role-play – I use that term very loosely – is to do emotional, observational, and a coaching sense. You're not coaching them, but you are using an element of coaching style to say what are your thoughts, what were your options, what else could be your options, how far or how near were they to their original goals.*

From the *Friends Provident* interviews, the themes of **credibility** and **calibration** emerge as characteristics that the skilled actor brings to the simulation whilst in role, in addition to **facilitation** and **feedback** skills when out of role. These four dimensions of practice also emerged from the *Spotlight on the Actor* interviews and are explored in depth under *General points of theory arising from the case studies*.

4. The Impact on the Learner

Whilst the tool may illuminate new behavioural paradigms, the replication of these behaviours elsewhere is contingent on a variety of factors, including learner motivation, personality, self-efficacy and a supportive work environment. The desired shifts in behaviour in work-based training are typically of a much lower order than those required in some other applied drama contexts. For example the behaviour changes to reduce recidivism can require significant

behavioural modification, whereas putting new interpersonal skills into practice in the work place can present a more achievable goal. Despite the relatively small nature of the behavioural shifts the practice is seeking to support, transfer of learning can still be problematic and is not automatic, a point addressed by Andrew Taylor of *People Deliver Projects:*

> *(Transfer) is a very big problem. It's a problem for learning whether you have actors there or not. My belief is that the use of role-play improves this parameter- the parameter being retention… I think (actor role-play) doesn't solve it, but we shift the odds a little bit. I'm actually quite open to clients about that, saying we can shift the probability, but we can't fix this problem.*

Andrew's conviction here is that the use of actors increases retention of learning, or at least 'shifts the odds a little bit'. He identifies relevance of scenario, personalisation, feedback, iteration and positive encouragement, with **Relevance** and **Personalisation** identified as the key factors in supporting the transfer of learning. When placed against our understanding of the complex factors that influence learning, this position is well founded. As discussed in Chapter 3, the smaller the 'gap' between the learning and the practice aids transfer of learning, as is sufficient training to aid retention in order to gain mastery over the new learning. Whilst extending learning processes increases the likelihood of retention, Andrew highlighted how this also presents a problem as buying more training days as it is also good business, and a client may question whether financial reward as opposed to pedagogy is driving the requirement for extra training. He suggests that a strong relationship with the client based on trust is necessary to design and deliver an extended and effective programme.

Friends Provident staff confirmed that they did carry out in the real world the conversations they had practised with the actor. Whilst this outcome is likely to be pleasing to commissioners of the programme, this alone would represent a very high cost per conversation and a poor return on the £40,000 spent on the VoC programme. The question is therefore posed as to whether the practice was able to achieve deeper behavioural change beyond rehearsal and

performance of specific conversations. Both Ross and Nigel stated that they had learned new approaches:

> **Nigel Harris:** *I think my mind-set is a bit different now. I think I deal with conflict differently. And I think I deal with difficult conversations differently. It's very hard to quantify them. It's just – I think it's imbedded within me – 'cos conflicts you get every day – not massive rows within a project – people dealing with people all the time – there are little conflicts – difficult conversations that have to happen. But I believe I am slightly different and improved.*
>
> **Ross Klinkenberg:** *In my day to day to life it has helped…understand how I naturally am as a person and perhaps use it to the best in any given situation. Rather than forcing something that would suit another person but not necessarily myself.*

Their responses on impact are explored further below, which I have grouped under the headings of ***Behavioural Change*** and ***Therapeutic Benefits***

4.1. Behavioural Change

Nigel Harris provided an example of behavioural change where he challenged a senior manager, Mike, the head of his department, over a strapline used on the headed paper for their newly formed department. Nigel described how the strapline was presented as a fait accompli, and read 'The Power of Change'. Nigel felt that the strapline would read better if the word 'of' was changed to 'for' in the strapline. To an outsider this may seem a trivial change; for Nigel who felt that challenges to Senior Management were risky and could escalate into conflict, such a conversation presented a significant challenge. He chose to simulate raising this issue with Dan taking on the role of Mike, the senior manager.

> *I thought the Power of Change means nothing. To me if it had said the power FOR change, just a little thing, but to me that says what we're doing. And so I had this thought, and this idea, and I mentioned it to a couple of my colleagues and I said I thought it was a bit crap. And when on this course, on this programme, I was thinking – d'you know what, what I could have done is say to Mike – Mike, I think, you know, it's*

crap – the strapline is crap. And so on this programme, from my point of view I was quite brave, so I said Danny, this is what I want to do. SO I did it, and these people observed, and one of them – it's interesting – one of them said – thank god for that – that's exactly my thought. And one of them said I couldn't care less. I don't know what you're talking about….But it was interesting that at least somebody (agreed)…So what actually happens is, a week after the programme I go and see Mike and I say, 'Mike, the strapline is crap'. And of course he says, OK, I'm interested, and it was all perfectly good. And that was the whole point to me with a difficult conversation: you should have it. Because it probably isn't going to be that bad. Do you know what I mean – so it was that – for me it was excellent.

Nigel's example demonstrates how the fear of the unknown stifles action. It suggests how management hierarchies and power creates barriers to the flow of ideas and information. Nigel described that, "from my point of view I was quite brave", as he considered he was risking conflict with a senior member of staff through criticising a decision, which, without careful handling could be read as a challenge to authority. Nigel described what the whole experience had taught him about difficult conversations:

You can not have them; that's fine, easier not to. But if you do, good things probably will happen. And nothing really bad will happen.

From a relatively trivial scenario, Nigel's experience with the actor produced a behavioural change which may have far reaching implications for the manner in which he exercises his power in the workplace. Nigel's experience provides an example of him claiming for himself the courage and the voice to speak up assertively in relation to a problem. The work with the actor provided a safe liminal space in which to find the words and manage his own emotions in relation to a specific, potentially problematic, topic. From reflections on this encounter Nigel extrapolated general principles applicable to other situations, which can be expressed as follows: if one wishes to change the discourse, no matter how slight and small that change may seem, then one must speak up and have the conversation.

For Ross Klinkenberg, the practice developed his empathy, increasing his awareness of how his words were landing on the other person, and as a consequence, increased his ability to create social meaning:

> ***Ross Klinkenberg:*** *In a conversation it can be very easy to be so preoccupied with your own thoughts and approach that no regard is given to the way that the words are landing with the other person. As soon as you start taking that on board and understanding how those words are going to affect another person you will then start to have control over the choice of words, the pitch, the body language, the timing, when to say particular key phrases with the conversation.*

Ross' comments suggest that the embodied and social aspect of working with simulation can support insight into the impact of behaviours; for Ross, the practice developed his supported empathic awareness and emotional intelligence. Discussion of the potential of drama based learning to develop empathy and emotional intelligence can be found in Chapter 5 and the embodied and social aspects of the practice are examined in *General points of theory arising from the case studies.*

4.2 Therapeutic Benefits

Not all of the Friends Provident encounters were about rehearsals for future conversations. The format of bespoke role-play used here provided a space of relative freedom to explore issues beyond the presenting problem and to work with what the learners decided. As long as there was some connection with the workplace, the actor was happy to run with the material. This relative freedom is typical of my own practice and experience in bespoke role-play, revealing that the practice can provide an open space which can include the therapeutic exploration of work based problems. This therapeutic potential suggests at times the impact of the work is perhaps closer to psychodrama than they are to an agenda of efficiency. Ross Klinkenberg described one role-play where he tackled a problematic conversation with a more

senior member of staff from the past which he didn't have in the real world. He describes the effect of finding the words he wished he had said in the fiction of the role-play:

> ***Ross Klinkenberg:*** *I think because I was able to replay it in my mind I feel as though I have had that conversation now. It wasn't any kind of counselling session (LAUGHS). They didn't counsel me or anything! (LAUGHS)*
>
> ***Richard:*** *It's interesting though isn't it – things can be therapeutic without being therapy…*
>
> ***Ross Klinkenberg:*** *Yes – I saw with other guys as well – I saw that with difficult conversations which they feel they cannot have at work – and they had those conversations and you could visibly see them change after they'd had that conversation. There was a – I don't know whether there was a conversation within themselves thinking 'how have I not been able to have that conversation when I've just gone ahead and done it now – more or less – well – it felt like for real'. And at the same time there was a visible confidence. There was a relief that you had actually went through that conversation and came through the other side of it. And yet there was the confidence to think that's fantastic – I can actually do that, now that I've lived it once – I can continue living it. And that was a REALLY really great thing to see that in other people. // If you were to have had that conversation with somebody internally, and the internal person had taken the role of the actor, that wouldn't have happened. There was a – quite a valuable and unique bond between four people that we were doing the enactments with – and the actor of course.*

Ross describes the therapeutic cathartic release that he experienced and witnessed as a consequence of working through conversations which, for whatever reason, as Ross states 'cannot' happen at work. His description of a 'visible change' and a 'visible confidence' in his colleagues suggests that they had received a psychological benefit from working through an encounter which prior to the simulation had remained unresolved and unsatisfactory. Ross suggests that the sense of cathartic release and relief does not reduce the imperative to act. In fact he seems to be saying the opposite, when he says "I can actually do that, now that I've lived it once – I can continue living it." This view suggests that the form of cathartic release experienced here does not mitigate against the potential for action in the real world, instead building confidence and resolve that next time the individual will, perhaps, exercise their voice to say what they feel needs to be raised. The meaning of 'catharsis' in this context is similar to the meaning Boal gives to the word in relation to the catharsis experienced through his

Theatre of the Oppressed. Here Boal argues that catharsis is a purification which removes barriers in order to dynamise the individual into action. For Boal, his rehearsals for action are not a substitute for action (Boal, 1995, p.72). Boal differentiates this form of catharsis from three other forms of catharsis; **Medical Catharsis**, where a purgative is employed to expel a noxious element, **'Morenian' Catharsi**s, based on Moreno's notion of catharsis, where the suffering caused by dysfunctional behaviours and thoughts is alleviated by a purgative event and consequent change in behaviour, in order to work towards the goal of individual happiness (ibid, p.71); and **Aristotelian catharsis**. Here Boal argues that this form of release, experienced by a passive audience witnessing theatre, is "disempowering and tranquilising" (ibid, p.71), as it seeks to release the spectator from the desire to act and therefore maintains the values of society. With the Friends Provident example, Ross is perhaps alluding to the purification, release and commitment to future action that suggests a form of catharsis related to Boal's use of the term in relation to Theatre of the Oppressed. The socio-political context and purpose which created the space for Ross to experience his catharsis, and the actions that the process sought to dynamise in him will perhaps share little common ground with Boal's socio-political agenda. Ross' experience perhaps serves as a reminder that the oppressive effect of past experiences is a common human experience whether in the mainstream or at the margins of society where Boal's work is more frequently practised. The improvised nature of bespoke role-plays means that situations can be presented that the actor may feel crosses an ethical line in terms of duty to the programme objectives or strays beyond the therapeutic into the territory of therapy. Johnson & Johnson state that “little consideration has been given to the ethics of conducting experiential learning activities” (2000, p.68). They contribute to this emerging debate by proposing that those working with experiential learning activities need to develop their own personal code of ethics to which they hold themselves accountable.

The actor must carefully balance serving the needs of the individual with the course objectives, and must use their judgement as to whether a biographical scenario proposed by a learner is appropriate to work on. I asked the actor, Dan, what he did when the course objectives did not correlate with what the learner presented as a potential scenario. Dan responded by using an example of an organisation going through change which the learner is resisting:

> *If it's not working with their reality you're not actually going to get very far in helping them to take on a new skill set, or happy to move into (the next stage)…. Unless you help them get past the anger/denial and get down to the confusion, they'll never accept. So it's no good creating a new skill set – that's the accept bit – until you've actually helped them on the anger/denial/confusion thing. And that's where we can lend a massive contribution.*

Dan's response is that one must first work with where the learner is, with their reality, which may establish a platform on with which to build towards the learning objectives. Such an approach, along with the 'massive contribution' he refers to, would not be possible with a more rigid curriculum, such as role-plays where the scenarios are generic and tightly defined. His comments suggest that the practice is opening a space for critique, which the politics and culture of the workplace may suppress in other circumstances. Elena Antonacopoulou argues that critique is a necessary dimension of efficacious reflection, but in practice the opportunities for such critique are limited in the workplace. She argues that in practice managers seek to avoid the risks of critique for reasons of maintaining security and self-image. For Antonacopoulou, it is necessary for emotions to be brought to the fore as they are an integral dimension of reflective learning, a proposition that the politics of the workplace can make difficult (Antonacopoulou in Reynolds and Vince, 2004, p.8). The space for critique opened by actor-based learning can provide a rare forum within the workplace where critique, and associated emotions, can be aired and examined.

As well as evidence of the cathartic potential of forum role-play, I was curious as to other therapeutic benefits of the practice and asked the interviewees whether they felt there were other psychological benefits, inquiring whether they felt less stressed, or an increased sense of wellbeing as a consequence of the practice. As the practice seeks to equip individuals with the skills to cope with increasing complexity, it seemed possible that with the increased sense of skill and competence with which to carry out one's day to day tasks one also feels an increased sense of job satisfaction which could be described as an increase in wellbeing[14]. Quite apart from questions of an organisation's ethical responsibilities to its staff, a work culture that supports wellbeing can impact on the bottom line, leading to lower levels of sickness absence, reduced staff turnover and a motivated workforce which is more likely to put in discretionary effort than a demotivated workforce which will only comply grudgingly with minimum standards.

At *Friends Provident,* the three interviewees gave a highly qualified response to questions as to whether they felt less stressed as a result of the programme, suggesting that whilst the actor-based work has increased their sense of control and developed their skills for effective handling of uncomfortable situations, any benefit to personal wellbeing was mitigated by increasingly stressful working conditions. Andrew Turner suggested that morale had reduced due to the on-going process of redundancy: "We've done an awful lot to disengage our people recently; we just made 56 people redundant… At the same time we were then restructuring, so we had bit of derailing in our relationship in the sense that we were doing some difficult things at a difficult time. A bit unsettling… " (interview comment). It is easy to see why it is

[14] In the UK the Prime Minister David Cameron has established an enquiry to investigate the impact of policy on wellbeing (http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/nov/14/david-cameron-wellbeing-inquiry accessed 14/7/11), evidence that questions of wellbeing are increasingly becoming part of the discourse. Challenges to the assumption that economic growth leads to happiness is, for societies which have passed a level of basic material needs, are increasingly being voiced. For Marks (2011), the measure of Gross Domestic Product is not only ineffective as a proxy measure for wellbeing, it is damaging to it, due to the environmental and human cost of the pursuit of increased output (Marks, 2011).

difficult for participants to register a positive impact on their wellbeing when working in such an insecure environment. The acceleration of change, office closures and redundancies driven by *Resolution* will have been distressing both for staff who have lost their jobs and for those that remain in post. Despite the challenges of working in conditions of uncertainty, the participants did express that they either felt a benefit, or that their working lives would be worse without the skills they had developed on the programme. In response to being asked if he felt less stressed or if there was a personal benefit, Ross Klinkenberg stated that "I think I am being tested constantly on the project that I am on at the moment and drawing on these skills and I think my world would be a lot more uncomfortable had I not been on these courses at the moment." (Interview comment). Nigel Harris qualified his response by reflecting on the difficulty of imagining where he would be if he hadn't been on the course, and within this consideration did feel there had been a benefit in terms of reduced work-based stress: "It's not a kind of life changing thunder flash…I think I'm sort of 5 – 10% better off in dealing with the stuff. Cos what you'd have to do if you weren't prepared to have these conversations, is you'd be fudging it a bit, and you'd be hiding behind your boss." (Interview comment)

To summarise, the elements of feedback, iteration, positive encouragement, relevance and personalisation sought to provide the conditions in which new knowledge and skills could emerge. The actor, through their calibrated and personalised performance, facilitated the learners to go to a place of uncertainty and 'not knowingness', with the intention of generating the conditions where this new learning could emerge. Participants felt they had gained increased insight into the impact of their behaviours on others and increased self-efficacy. They also reported that the reflective learning process had taught them how to learn, suggesting that they had acquired the habit of reflection-in-action. Whilst the participants reported that the process was effective in developing their practice, they also acknowledged that the full impact of the work was difficult to quantify, partly due to the interaction of their

knowledge and skills with the challenging social context in which they work. As a consequence of the level of trust between the actor and the learners, and the actor seeking to tailor their contribution as relevant and personalised, historical and emotionally charged biographical material was worked with. This had a therapeutic benefit for the learner. Here the actor-based approach provided a rare in-work opportunity to share, process and reframe negative emotions generated through conflict or conflict avoidance.

5. Evaluation

The guys come away from the programme genuinely feeling good. More so than they do when the guys come back from Prince 2 for example, with a 'Blimey that was tough', 'Heavy week, but it'll be great on my CV'. Guys come back from Voice of Change on a bit of a high, a real high actually; 'that was tough', 'it was emotionally quite demanding', 'it wasn't quite what I expected',' a bit different',' but it was good.'

Andrew Turner, Friends Provident, research interview

For Andrew, the cost of £1000 per person for four days of training represents good value in terms of the behaviour change he believes it had facilitated in participants. He had, however yet to solve the challenge of presenting his executive board with the quantitative evaluation data they sought which would demonstrate return on investment. Andrew was struggling to find a solution to this problem of how to measure meaningfully the impact of the practice empirically. How can Andrew get the 'hard measures' to satisfy his board? Perhaps the hunt for these illusive 'hard measures' is misplaced. Creswell states that in some circumstances it is more appropriate to use qualitative research "because quantitative measures and statistical analyses simply do not *fit* the problem. Interactions among people, for example, are difficult to capture with existing measures…..To level all individuals to a statistical mean overlooks the uniqueness of individuals in our studies. Qualitative approaches are simply a better fit for our

research problem" (Creswell, 2007, p.40). Andrew possessed an abundance of qualitative feedback from participants in addition to his own experience of the programme:

> *I can honestly say in 23 years having been through multiple training courses…multiple (peer based) role-play sessions…multiple programmes around leadership and change…I have never been part of something that has been quite so impactful – I can say that without ANY doubt at all. It is quite time consuming – so a half day actor session is very powerful but actually the guys are asking for more…they want more of that experiential time, so the feedback I'm getting is can we cut back on the theory bit and do more experiential... It's worth the cost given the sort of return that I think I'm getting.*

Despite this passionate testimonial, the search for 'hard data' perhaps reflects the economic imperatives and process driven culture of the project management world, bound in an epistemology of technical rationality where what cannot be quantified is deemed of lesser importance. Whereas technical knowledge can easily be tested through examination and ascribed a percentage grade, the skills of day to day practice which are the focus of actor pedagogies are more difficult to measure quantitatively in terms of impact and behaviour change. Interactions in the social world are subject to complex, interconnected variables and are highly contingent on the context. With *Friends Provident's* use of simulation, the provision of a high context learning experience that is highly customised to the individual learner's context is particularly challenging to assess. Despite this complexity, behavioural competencies can be assessed and measured through observation of real or simulated interactions as they are routinely, for example, in clinical skills communication assessment in Medicine that makes extensive use of simulated patients (Kurtz et al, 2005). These assessments are not however an impact assessment; that is something wider, as discussed by Michael Etherton and Tim Prentki when they examined the problems of impact assessment in Applied Theatre in their RIDE editorial "Drama for Change? Prove it! Impact Assessment in Applied Theatre" (Etherton & Prentki, 2006). They highlight the distinction between evaluation and impact:

> A creative devising process that deals in human relationships is always prone to communicate more or something different than is intended. Monitoring and evaluation tends to be constructed to measure what is intended by the initiative or project activity. Impact assessment, on the other hand, must take account of any result which provokes change, regardless of the stated aims of the project or programme (ibid, p.417).

Would *Friends Provident* follow Etherton and Prenki's advice and seek to take account of any resulting impact, including unintended changes? The capacity of participants to use their voice to effect change was increased through the programme, and could impact on the organisation in both predictable and unpredictable ways. Some of these impacts would be politically charged, for example questioning and negotiating with senior managers.

Andrew never did get to develop the 'hard measures' to satisfy his executive board. In a further round of restructuring he was made redundant from *Friends Provident* in 2010. As the main champion of the *Voice of Change* programme the programme also ended with him. *Friends Provident* has shifted its behavioural work towards a coaching model, and has engaged a company to train up internal coaches to provide support and behavioural guidance for staff. I can question if the illusive 'hard measures' would have saved the programme from the axe. Perhaps, but I doubt it. The data rarely 'speaks for itself' and the new commissioning manager who took over Andrew's responsibilities would be keen to bring in their own ideas and make their mark. It is a common consequence of changes to key staff that this frequently triggers a cycle of change. This discussion may seem a long way from the pedagogical impact of actor-based learning, but for the jobbing actor the fragility of the web of relationships that maintain their flow of work is a practical reality. The choice for the actor is either to become accustomed to the uncertainty or seek more stable employment elsewhere.

6. Friends Provident- A Critical Stage for Learning: Summary and Conclusions

Andrew Turner's powerful experience of actor-based role-play led him to commission a £40,000 programme for 40 of his staff. He was seeking behavioural based training in order to equip his staff with the skills required by new more flexible ways of working in a changing business context. The delivery team of actors from *People Deliver Projects* had extensive experience of working with the form of bespoke role-plays which constituted the actor based work on this programme.

The use of actors enabled the provision of a learning space tailored to the individual needs of the learner, striving for ***Relevance*** *and* ***Personalisation***. Central to this were the skills of the actor. These skills were defined as ***Credibility, Calibration, Facilitation*** *and* ***Feedback***. These dimensions are explored further in *General points of theory arising from the case studies.* The actor's ability to ***react*** in character was identified as one of the key components of credibility. Drawing on available information and making a judgement informed the level of challenge the actor embodied during the role-play. As with many of the aspects of this work, these judgements are perhaps more of an art than a science. The skills of Calibration, Facilitation and Feedback are outside the conventional canon of acting skills, suggesting that there is a need to find a more appropriate descriptive term for the practice than 'role-play actor'.

In terms of impact, the staff interviewed reported an increase in their ***Emotional Intelligence,*** *skills of* ***reflective practice*** *and* ***self-efficacy***. ***Therapeutic*** aspects of the work were identified through the reworking of problematic historical biographical material.

The programme generated very positive qualitative feedback. The problem of producing quantitative data on the impact of the programme was not resolved.

Case Study: Spotlight on the Actor

There is definitely a demand for people like me who can bring more benefit. They don't just want the actor to turn up and do something and go away.

Dan Long, Actor, research interview

I become increasingly uncomfortable with the generic term 'actor' as I think it does not describe the job we do and carries with it a host of implications for the potential learner. Implications of 'being on stage, being watched or on show, being a good actor' etc. which is not what is being asked of them in the situation.

Rachel Vowles, Actor, email correspondence

For this case study I have interviewed four people who are experienced workplace actors. My aim here is to present an analysis of their reflections on the use of actors in the workplace in order to further define this hybrid and emerging role. The focus of the interviews was to examine the connections between acting, learning and the impact of the work. Perceptions of the status, efficacy and impact of the actors' work are also explored. To the four voices of the actors I also draw in additional points from two other individuals who have worked closely with actors in work-based contexts.

Process of Data Collection and Analysis

Four extended semi-scripted interviews with actors provide the majority of the qualitative data for this case study. The label 'actor' carries with it a broad meaning, and is used here to specifically mean 'work-place actor'. I have an association with three of the actors prior to their interview and we have worked together on various work-based training events. These actors were selected for interview as each of them has a track record over many years of acting work in training and assessment contexts. The forth actor is Dan Long, who also features in the *Friend's Provident* case study.

The names of the four individuals, along with a selective biography are:

Wendy Harbutt – Wendy is Co-Director of *Dramatic Improvement*[15], a training consultancy that uses theatre methods. She also works as an actor/facilitator, with her own company and also with a variety of training consultancies that use her acting and facilitation skills. Interviewed in Cheltenham on 2nd November 2009.

Dan Long –Actor with *People Deliver Projects*[16] who has worked with other consultancies, including *Actors in Industry*[17]. Interviewed in Bristol May 10th 2010.

Anita Parry – Actor with stage and screen credits. She has acted in corporate contexts since the mid 1980's. Interviewed in Crediton on 16th September 2010.

Martin Reeve – Actor with Stage and Screen credits, in addition to work-place training and assessment acting work. Interviewed at his home in Devon, 2nd July 2010.

[15] www.dramaticimprovement.co.uk
[16] www.peopledeliverprojects.com
[17] www.actorsinindustry.co.uk

These interviews generated 38,000 words of transcribed text, which has been analysed for common themes, meanings and points of interest. These findings have then been structured under the following headings:

1. We Call it Acting, But Are Actor Pedagogies 'Acting'?
2. Working in Partnership with a Facilitator
3. Anecdotes of Impact and Hidden Agendas
4. Bad Practice
5. Summary and Conclusions

1. We Call it Acting. But Are Actor Pedagogies 'Acting'?

> *None of us have been trained. None of us has been specifically sat down and told this is what's required. We've all learnt by doing, by weeks and months and years of sitting in the classroom. Hearing inputs. Reading the models – seeing the materials, seeing the examples, learning from all the different applications of all the different skills, learning by being involved and doing. And that starts to weed out in the acting community who has an intuitive, natural bent to this, and who have to realise they can only go so far.*
>
> ***Dan Long, Actor, research interview***

Dan's comment above describes how he developed the mix of skills required of work-place acting by learning on the job. His story is typical. The actors interviewed for this study have honed their work-based skills through experiential learning, observation and reflection. Dan states that acting is just one aspect of the hybrid mix of skills the work draws upon, identifying feedback skills, facilitation skills and a commitment to supporting learning and development in addition to acting as the qualities he looks for in a work-based actor. Dan notes that not every actor will have an intuitive, natural, bent for this work. The hybrid nature of the work raises the question as to whether this form of work can still be thought of as *acting* or whether the

practice has evolved into something else. Prompted by Judith Ackroyd's investigation in whether teachers working in-role are acting (Ackroyd, 2004), I was curious to investigate the similar question as to whether the pedagogical practice of the 'actor' in the workplace is acting. How far does the work stray from the definition of the actor as 'the reciters of dramatic texts' (Balme, 2008, p.17)? And to what extent does the use of actors by the workplace seek to exploit popular conceptions of what it means to be an actor? Ackroyd's conclusion included the notion that drawing on acting theory could benefit the practice of teacher in role and lead to innovations beneficial to learning, and the assumption that the work is not acting could be limiting (Ackroyd, 2004, p.166). I suggest that work-based actor pedagogies come to Ackroyd's question from the opposite direction: Are actors working as 'trainer in-role' still actors? Actors working in learning and development are explicitly or implicitly drawing on theories of embodied and social learning, communication, leadership, management and so on. Due to this hybrid and interdisciplinary nature of their work, did the actors interviewed here think that their work can still be legitimately described as acting?

Whilst there was agreement that the work-place actor is drawing on acting skills for this hybrid role, there was a variety of responses as to whether this hybrid form of work can still be termed 'acting'.

> ***Anita:*** *I think it is acting. But instead of serving the playwright or serving the piece, you're serving a need, you're serving a client, but there is still something outside of yourself that you need to be serving. And that calls on different skills and I think you need more analytical skills and need to be more in control and less kind of absorbed if you like – not that I don't think that good actors are ever completely absorbed in their part – I think you always need your antennae looking at the overall picture- but even more so when you are doing role-play.*

Dan's response resonates with Anita's in that acting skills are an important component of the work, and that additional skills are called upon:

> ***Dan:*** *Its more acting plus. The acting bit cannot be ignored, because that's the massive difference... Because If you've had any sort of classical training, if you appreciate anything about Stanislavski, even the minutest little bit about taking on a behaviour, taking on a role – who are you, why are you in this room. Why are you having this conversation….What can you bring to the role to allow the genuine response to happen usefully? And on top of that is the awareness of what the requirement is and the context of the development course, the training course, assessment, whatever it is. Plus your experience.*

Dan places a value on actor training. Like Dan, Wendy stressed the requirement of acting skills. She stated that "I think it really matters that they are a good actor" whilst stressing that acting was an important element in a wider mix of skills required by the work:

> ***Wendy****:* *Not everyone can do it. You can get people who are great actors, very credible and believable, and I quite often see great actors, but that don't have, for some reason, the ability to do that multipart processing that's required to be a great role-play actor, because the feedback, time and time again, clients will say, the feedback is the most important part of the process and it's the thing where they get the value.*

Wendy identifies feedback and the quality of active listening by the actor as important components of the role. Giving full attention to the feedback process in order to facilitate the learner's reflective process can therefore be seen as an important element of the efficacy of the process. Similarly for Martin, acting is also only part of the skill set of a work-place actor:

> ***Martin:*** *Part of those skills is about being able to be a character, to be credible as someone, but that's only part of it. The rest of it is being able to notice what you're doing when you're doing it, notice what's going on for you when you're having an encounter with somebody else and then having the language with which to reflect that back afterwards and to be able to pick out moments that were important in terms of that person's learning, where change is happening in the situation and understanding why they're doing it and being able to pinpoint those as well, so it's an additional set of skills in a way from acting. So they're not synonymous, role-playing and acting are not synonymous. And you don't need to be an actor to be a role-player.*

Some role-players are trained actors, others are not. Anita suggests that the predominantly improvised nature of the practice can be effective without formal actor training:

> ***Anita:*** *My experience of working with improvised work is that it's better for many actors who are probably not full time actors because it means that they can be real, because their starting point is themselves, and that can be very effective.*

This view is echoed by Thislethwaite and Ridgway (2006) writing about the use of role-play actors as simulated patients in medical contexts. They state that acting experience is not required, although many of the people undertaking this work have performance experience of some kind, amateur or professional or in training (ibid, p.8). Whilst they don't stress a requirement for actor training or experience, they define the ability to act a role as the most basic competence for this work (ibid, p.11). The ability to generate a role credibly is an important element of this work, and the work draws on those elements of acting technique that support the generation of improvised roles.

The actors interviewed here agreed that acting skills are an integral element in their work-based practice although there are distinct qualities to this work of which acting is only a part. There are specific demands of acting in the workplace and these include the rapid improvisation of roles and the responsive, participatory nature of the work. These aspects are explored next.

The workplace actor creates their bespoke characters in front of the participants. This is a distinction from conventional theatre where the actor is in role for the duration of the performance, and casting is based on ability and appearance in order to serve the requirements of the script. This rapid creation of roles generates a technical problem for the actor, as they must select from limited information the signifiers which will serve as a credible metaphor of the character for the learner. Whilst the actor's function as a metaphor, discussed in further depth in chapter 4, enables the actor to play a role some distance from their own appearance, behaviour and voice, the actor must still somehow credibly signify the

character for the participant in order to trigger their imaginative engagement and internal rich cognitive associations. The actors were asked about their process to generating roles in these circumstances. Dan Long focussed his response on the learner and it triggering their imagination and feelings:

> ***Dan:*** *It doesn't matter a dam that I'm a 53 year old white bloke; I could be a 22 year old Muslim female – it doesn't matter – it's real in your head and your heart.*

How does the actor mitigate against the mismatch of their own appearance and voice to the character they are representing, which may cause the metaphor to break down and compromise the learner's perception of the credibility of the exercise? Firstly it is necessary to refine further what is meant by 'credibility'. The actors described a range of techniques which would assist in generating a credible character that did not look or sound like themselves. Central to their analysis was the need to focus on behaviours and language use. Gender may be suggested by a slight shift in body language. Unfamiliar accents are typically avoided due to the difficulty in improvising with an unfamiliar voice.

> ***Martin:*** *It's not about doing accents at all – it's not about showing that you're good at being somebody from wherever – that's not the important thing. Whereas in theatre it might be.*

Identification and performance of emotional state, vocabulary range, tempo and loquaciousness were identified as what the actor was working to replicate:

> ***Dan:*** *definitely vary the vocabulary, depending on who the character is. So if it's a person who is less articulate, or who swears a lot, or doesn't say anything, or who uses precise technical terms, that's what we've got to try and replicate.*

The actor appears to be selecting those behaviours and language use which will serve as a catalyst for the learner to read the performance as credible. These signifiers are

predominantly language based and the work-based actor must be able to flex their vocabulary and language use in order to generate their roles. It is interesting to reflect that despite the paucity of the illusion of character, despite the laying bare of the process of an actor becoming their role in-front of the participants and the continual breaking and rebuilding of the forth wall, the process can, as we heard from the experiences at *Friends Provident,* still feel plausible enough for the learner to enter the 'as if' space. The learner's imaginative engagement does not seem to be compromised by the obvious artifice of the actors manufacturing their roles, one after another, in the presence of the group.

Training consultancies position and promote their use of actors and acting in different ways; whilst some consultancies seek to capitalise on popular cultural associations of 'the actor' others seek to distance their use of acting skills from these associations. An internet search for 'actors in business', 'business role-play' or 'role-play actors' will return a large number links to consultancies using actor-based methods in their training. There are interesting variations in how closely these consultancies position their use of theatre based methods with the wider world of acting. Some consultancies seek specifically to promote their use of only using drama school trained professional actors, for example *RoleplayUK* state on their website their policy to only recruit actors with a CDET[18] or NCDT[19] accredited drama school training (http://www.roleplayuk.com/our-actors-2/actor-recruitment/ accessed 18/09/11). Others seek to differentiate their work from acting, for example, *Impromptu* avoids associations with professional actors in its promotional brochure, making no references to acting, but instead to "The high credibility of our professional role-players – recruited for their business experience and understanding of the training environment" (http://www.impromptultd.com/wp-content/themes/impromptu/docs/brochure.pdf accessed 18/09/11). Martin has worked for

[18] The Council for Dance and Education and Training, http://www.cdet.org.uk/
[19] The National Council for Drama Training, http://www.ncdt.co.uk/

Impromptu, and provides his take as to why they seek to avoid strong connections between their role-play work and acting in the wider sense:

> ***Martin:*** *'Actor' carries with it a huge amount of baggage…you'll be introduced as the actor and often the participants or clients will come up to you in the tea break and say 'what have you been in – what have you done' and you really don't want them to see you through that lens. You want them to see you as somebody who is part of this experience they are having, uncontaminated by some other thing which has nothing to do with it.*

Martin describes how strong associations between role-play with the identity *actor* can impact negatively on the learning environment. *Impromptu* sought to mitigate against these unhelpful associations by dispensing with the term 'actor' altogether, and instead use the term role-player. Martin suggests that the motivation for this is that role-playing skills are different from acting skills. Acting is only part of what the role-player is doing. Helen Nicholson suggests that Applied Theatre is always contaminated by context (Nicholson, 2005, p.12). Martin's point suggests that this contamination is bi-directional, as in the context of the workplace the actor can bring unhelpful associations that can themselves cause interference with aims of the work. Whilst some consultancies attempt to distance their use of actor-based simulation from these wider associations with *acting*, others seek to embrace them. Andrew Taylor, of *People Deliver Projects,* embraces the term 'actor' along with the energy or presence of the actors he works with:

> ***Andrew:*** *When an actor does it we go with it – because it's a little bit —that specialness that comes from the parallel universe thing. They live in a different universe to us, and they come into visit ours so let's give it a try. Let's see what this is about. I think that's one of the reasons why you can do things which are more radical. And I think that's really really important, because we do do some things that people wouldn't do normally.*

Andrew suggests that the actors "presence or energy or whatever it is – let's play with words and say their personality - makes an impact" and inspires curiosity and that it is this curiosity which leads to engagement which is an important element of the learning process. Martin

suggested how the positive associations with the concept of 'actor' can be used in order to promote the facilitator's agenda:

> ***Martin:*** *Almost invariably there is a kind of frisson of 'oh the actors are the going to be here tomorrow' and quite often facilitators will use that as a kind of way of justifying what they do in a sense of making it important, that we've got actors coming along. Real actors who are going to come and for this work with us, therefore the work is important.*

So we can see that consultancies seek to use the qualities of actors and acting in different ways. Some providers seek to capitalise on the curiosity that romanticised perceptions of actors and acting can inspire in participants, whilst others seek to distance their use of acting techniques from associations with the actor. Those aspects of acting associated with the arts and entertainment are not why the workplace uses actors. I argue that central to the potential 'baggage' that comes with the actor is the notion that the actor is the focus of attention. We go to the theatre to watch the actor perform, but in the workplace the focus (should be) on the learner. In theatrical terms, as I have said elsewhere, the spotlight is not on the actor, but on the learner. The efficacy of the practice requires the work-place actor to understand this distinction.

Problems can arise if the actor sees their work-place role as theatrical as opposed to developmental. Theatrical associations can be damaging, as conventional aesthetic judgements are inappropriate due to the distinctive developmental aims and methods of the use of acting in this context. Martin provides an example of the problems of reading the practice as theatrical as opposed to developmental. He had an initial poor impression of actor role-play, suggesting that there is something debasing about an actor selling their skills in this context. He said:

> ***Martin:*** *I really didn't regard it very highly at all. And I'm really embarrassed by that fact that on the very first one I did I said to other actors 'this is kind of*

prostitution isn't it'. And I literally said that word. And I feel so ashamed of myself for doing that. Because I do recognise that it's something different.

Martin was probably well aware of the irony of seeing a connection between this form of acting work and prostitution; the association between acting and prostitution is not new. Diderot, the French philosopher, in 1773 stated "The genius actor feels nothing at all in order to get the audience maximally involved in the staged character-emotions" (Diderot in Konijn, 2002, p.62), drawing a link between actors and prostitutes as "the whore who feels nothing for the man she is with, but lets herself go in his arms anyway as a demonstration of her professional competence" (Diderot, 1773 in Roach, 1985, p.138). Martin expanded on his initial impressions:

***Martin**: I felt it was a sort of use of your skills which was not what successful actors do. It's what failed actors do - Is to do role-play.*

For Martin, he dismissed these initial impressions by rationalising that actor pedagogies belong to a different field of practice to performance:

***Martin:** I don't feel like that anymore. But that's partly because they inhabit two different spheres. They don't cross over to the same extent I thought they did… They're not part of the same career path; in a way…It belongs amongst training, and teaching and education and therapy not performance. Those are the two different spheres I think. I thought they belonged to the same world…acting as a role-player was also part of this world of performance and glamour, but it was at the bottom end of it – it was a means to an end – but actually its nothing to do with that. It's a completely different thing.*

By reappraising his initial situating of the work at the bottom of a hierarchy of theatrical forms of performance, and instead conceptualising the practice as belonging to a different field of developmental acting, Martin was able to reappraise his initial critical view that the work was 'a form of prostitution' and understand the distinctive dimensions of work-based acting. Work-based acting shares common ground with other Applied Theatre practices in that the

process of learning is typically more important than aesthetic product, and conventional aesthetic judgements are therefore misplaced due to the distinctive aims of the practice.

2. *Working in Partnership with a Facilitator:*

It is common for overall responsibility for the session to be held by a separate facilitator. Martin shared his thoughts on working with facilitators:

> ***Martin:*** *It's a really critical role actually, and you can have a completely wasted session or a few days with a facilitator who doesn't have a clue what they're doing, because there's no focus and there's no sense of what is the learning outcome. A really skilful facilitator will be able to bring everybody into the space in terms of their engagement with it, and their learning about what is going on and their desire to learn and their understanding that something can be learned from this as well. That's what the really good ones do. The bad ones will just tell them what they've learned. The worst ones don't accept the group for where it's at, which is what it's about in group situations. The facilitator is just what the title says – they need to make sure the situation is right in order for the learning outcomes to be made possible*.

Anita provided her thoughts on what an effective facilitator and actor collaboration looks like:

> ***Anita:*** *It is a partnership, it's a collaboration, and it's a recognition that the actors have a unique position in as much as they are on the receiving end of what was happening, and so from a feeling point of view, that felt…that felt this, and I felt that and that didn't happen. All of the jargon and all of the cleverness can come from everyone else. What the actor is, is they give you a visceral sense of what it's like to be on the receiving end. And that's invaluable, that can't be replicated by anybody else in any other way. It can in theory but not in practice.*

Some facilitators take a much more active role in managing the process than others. This was put to the test in April 2010 when a colleague, Gillie Stoneham and I sought to explore the differences between facilitation styles. We delivered a session to a group of trainer associates with *Training in Action*, a training consultancy with a twenty year history of experiential learning that has made extensive use of actors in training delivery. We performed a role-play in order to create a space where we could focus on and explore the interaction between the

actor and facilitator. As part of our session we work-shopped the role-play mechanism of stopping the action when the trainer suspended the role-play in order to give feedback and facilitate reflection-in-action. (The stop, start, rewind process is described in Chapter 4). In our exercise it was notable how the trainers made variable use of the 'time out' stop mechanism. Some would frequently use the mechanism, perhaps only letting the role-play run for a few seconds, before stopping the action and opening a space for reflection and feedback. Others would prefer to let the simulation run for longer, gathering more information about the learner's performance before judging that a critical point had been reached and stopping the action. Each of the trainers had a rationale behind their more or less interventionist approach and decision to pause the simulation, each striving to establish a specific pedagogical point. Whilst the reasons for the pause were always to flag up a learning point or to highlight and reinforce something the learner was doing particularly effectively, the trainers made different judgements as to which points to focus on and when. Any actor who has worked with multiple facilitators will recognise this variability of intervention. This variability is inevitable due to the interaction between the facilitator, actor and learner, each enacting their own iterations of theories of practice in the context specific skills under scrutiny.

The implication is that the deeper the understanding actors and facilitators have of each other's processes, the better the delivery is likely to be, as both actor and facilitator can develop their own collaborative working rhythm.

3. *Anecdotes of Impact and Hidden Agendas*

What do actors consider as to the impact of their work on the learners and, by association, the organisations for whom they work? Here is what the actors said as to the impact of their work:

> ***Wendy:*** *One of the benefits of role-play is that it can give people a tremendous insight into themselves and their impact on others.*
>
> ***Wendy:*** *I think it takes a concept away from being a theoretical thing we discuss or write about and it turns it into a version of reality in the current context.*
>
> ***Martin:*** *At its best what it can achieve is adult relationships between two people… So that each recognises the other, and they are together in that. Rather than one agenda excluding another one. So it's about creating dialogues.*
>
> ***Wendy:*** *I hope that we create an environment that's safe enough that whatever emotion they are feeling, it's ok to feel it and it's ok to express it, which one would normally censor in the workplace. We all censor ourselves all the time… We wouldn't want you to censor yourself too much whilst you're trying to learn; otherwise you hamper your own learning.*
>
> ***Wendy:*** *(With) chalk and talk training, people learn things, but what they don't learn in that kind of training is how to go and apply it. So one of the great advantages of role-play is it starts to give people that first step towards applying their learning that that means they can then get to apply that learning actually out in the workplace.*
>
> ***Wendy:*** *I've worked with a lot of people who have not been having conversations for years. Years and years. Because they didn't feel able for a whole host of reasons. They were too fearful of the outcome, they were too fearful to attempt the conversation.*
>
> ***Dan:*** *It might not be the miracle breakthrough – they felt a bit better, and that's a breakthrough. So they can have little sense of having come out of the bruising experience, the challenging experience, a little bit of them still intact – a little bit of them ready for the next phase – and that's wonderful.*
>
> ***Anita:*** *I think shifts are small, but I think once they start moving they're moving and they will move irrevocably forward. It won't happen overnight, but if somebody hears something and they hear it well, and it resonates somewhere, then that is a shift… And if it's really thought through and short sharp hits of it, in a very focussed way, you can make big big leaps. Big leaps.*
>
> ***Wendy:*** *I mean a classic one is in bullying where people know that they've experienced a behaviour, but it's not until they talk it through and practice it through in a role-play environment can it be identified as bullying. And can they be given some*

way to address that bullying when they get out. I've had that quite a few times. A surprising number of times, and that makes a big impact on people's lives.

The actors suggested their work could benefit the learner in a number of different ways.

- Increased insight
- Developing Emotional Intelligence
- Space to express how the learner is feeling
- Increased Empathy
- Facilitating adult relationships by creating dialogues
- Conflict resolution
- Helped tackle long standing problems
- Reducing self-censorship
- Explored Theory in Practice
- Acquiring the skills and confidence to tackle unacceptable behaviour, such as bullying.

These impacts are related to increased self-awareness and or behavioural change. It is interesting to note the benign and learner centred impact which the actors identify, as opposed to impacts related to increased business efficiency. This suggests the actor foregrounds the heuristic qualities of the practice, empowering the learner with a degree of control over their selection of material and the process.

The actors highlighted passion, engagement and interest in the learner as important qualities for the actor to possess, viewing their work as a benefit to the learner:

Dan: *I think the key ingredient is: are you really and truthfully interested in other people's development.*

Wendy: *I think it requires a level of kind of passion and engagement with the process-it's like you do actually have to want to help these people develop or change,*

or face what they've got to face or go through assessment in the most appropriate and fair way, or whatever you've been brought into to do.

Both Wendy and Dan stress a quality of the actor being present, of positive regard and undivided attention as important aspects of effective practice. These qualities are supported by Knowles' work into adult learning who states a learning environment should support the learner both physically and psychologically and that the learner should feel "accepted, respected and supported" (Knowles in Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p.273).

Any benefit for the individual must be seen in the wider context of the organisation's aims, and it is here that the ethics of the practice are more complex. A tension can exist between the aims of the organisation and the needs of the individual. The work-based actor cannot ignore this tension. Martin recounted a conversation with a colleague who used actors in the workplace and was questioning the impact of the work:

> ***Martin:*** *I had a discussion with someone who runs this other company I've done quite a lot of work for, with whom I've mostly done private sector stuff about this very question. Because he said he had a dilemma about working with business and stuff, because he understood full well that what they're doing is making a company more efficient and improving its profit margins, basically as a bottom line. His sense was that in having these encounters, in doing this coaching, in training people how to coach, what he's also doing – not only making the company more efficient – is developing these people as human beings in terms of their own ability to interact with other human beings and those were things that they would carry outside of the sphere of work in their own private lives.*

Martin's quotation illustrates how work-place actors are operating in a place of tension between individual efficacy and organisational efficiency. His comment suggests that the ethics of working in this context can be complex. Dan Long draws upon an example which he witnessed illustrating how this tension was presented to employees by a senior manager of an international business:

> ***Dan:*** *He made a statement which has stuck with me ever since and it should be absolutely true of all development people now is that development is for your benefit. Because it's personal development. Of course there is a company agenda. Of course there is. Of course I'd like you to take on these six new skills, but there is an undeniable generosity in us providing this for you because this, nine times out of ten is a transferable skill, it's a personal stamp. And he says I run the risk of personally developing you out of the business.*

The tension Dan refers to between the benefit to the individual and the company agenda is the site of practice of actor pedagogies. The politics of empowerment, hegemonic processes and the collegiate identities the practice is seeking to create are a consequence of this tension and are discussed in chapter 6.

These anecdotes of impact suggest the actors create a space for dialogue between the individual and the skills the organisation is seeking to develop. The impact of the work extends beyond skills training into a space to express and process the tensions and ambiguities experienced by workers as they deal with the daily challenges of modern working life.

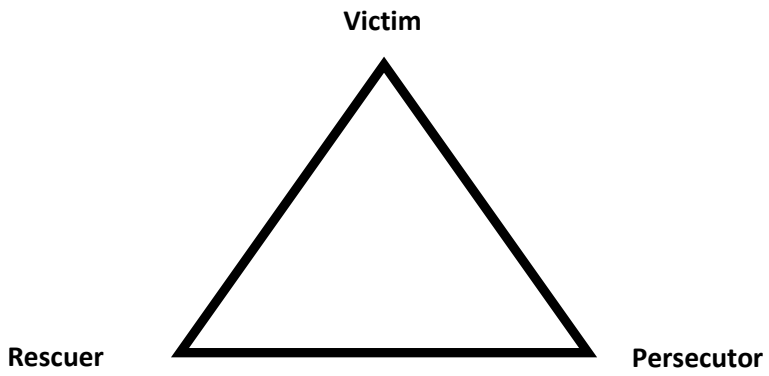
Another aspect of impact is the damaging consequences of bad practice, to which I come to next.

4. Bad Practice

Bad practice in terms of actor pedagogies can be defined as work that is not credible (simply bad acting), with no attempt at or poor calibration, destructive, poorly executed facilitation and inadequate and/or destructive feedback. Unfortunately bad practice is not uncommon[20].

In discussion with the Trainer and Facilitator Rachel Dymond, we explored some of the potential pitfalls of working with actors. Rachel referred to Karpman's Drama Triangle (1968, p.39-43), a model of co-dependency. The model is reproduced here:

Fig. 1 Karpman's Drama Triangle (1968)



The model illustrates how the role-play actor could fall into potentially unhealthy dynamics. It is the role of the actor to help the learner to practise strategies, not to 'win'. Rachel stated

[20] One actor suggested there were arguments to move towards some form of accreditation, for example as there has been with professional coaches, to differentiate their refined skills from bad practice and less demanding work such as assessment centre and simulated patient work. Standards and accreditation can however deliver less than they promise (Garvey et al, 2009, p.196). Accreditation could provide an element of quality control, and could weed out some of the worst of bad practice, but I would be cautious of a mechanistic process of training and assessment that presented itself as an alternative to the situated learning through which the actors interviewed here refined and developed their work-place skills. It would be ironic for a practice that challenges the dominance of Technical Rationality to rely on a mechanistic process of assessment for its own development; for a pedagogy that champions experience and reflection there is an elegant symmetry in that that is also how the practitioners themselves learn their art.

that she had worked with actors who "needed to look good", incorrectly focusing on their own performance and ego as opposed to the learning needs of the participant. In terms of Karpman's model, the actor may legitimately take on any of the three roles of persecutor, rescuer and victim, however the motivation must be to serve the aims of the exercise and the learner, and not out of a personal drive to play interpersonal games. This requires the actor to possess a level of self-awareness so that they can differentiate between their personal motives and those required by the role-play.

Other potential problems of working with actors include the actor misjudging the level of calibration of difficulty. A calibrated performance aims to challenge the learner. This challenge is necessary for new learning to emerge, as without challenge then nothing new will be learned. This means that the actor is generating conditions which will cause a degree of anxiety. Ethically and pedagogically the actor must reduce their level of challenge if they read that the learner is experiencing excessive anxiety. For actors who are more focussed on their own performance instead of holding the multiple perspectives of participant observer (Johnson & Johnson, 2000) their performance will not be calibrated and problems will arise. On the one hand, the level of challenge will be insufficient and the learner will learn nothing new and may disengage from the process. At the other extreme, the actor may generate an unacceptably high level of anxiety in the learner. For example, the actor may play an overly aggressive character which is upsetting for the learner. These excesses are not always the fault of the actor, as inexperienced trainers may enjoy the novelty and spectacle of actors performing strong emotions. I recall a job for the retailer Woolworths[21] some years ago where the in-house trainers recounted a story whereby they were impressed by an actor who performed aggression so credibly that the learner was reduced to tears. They asked if I could

[21] Woolworths was a high st retailer. The retailer faced a mix of problems, including access to credit and failure to adapt to changing demand, and went into administration in 2008 leading to 27,000 job losses. (source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7811187.stm accessed 26/09/11)

'go for it' in a similar way. I refused to perform such fireworks. This discussion stresses for me the importance of actors understanding the underlying pedagogical aims of their work, and of trainers understanding how to use experiential learning methods. Without such knowledge there is a risk that at best the work is ineffective, and at worst that the work strays into unethical practice.

For Wendy, poor feedback is the most common instance of weak practice, perhaps due to feedback skills being an additional skill outside the canon of acting skills.

> ***Wendy:*** *I have seen – I think the most common thing I see is feedback that is a lower quality than it could be. Feedback that's woolly. Feedback that's too judgemental. Feedback that doesn't serve the delegate's agenda or doesn't serve the organisation's agenda. So quality of feedback is an area that can often go badly wrong.*

Feedback skills are discussed under *General points of theory arising from the case studies.* Wendy also expressed her misgivings over actors who played games amongst themselves and didn't take the work seriously. She felt their lack of professionalism damaged perceptions of the work and contributed towards some individual's negative associations of working with actors. Anita also expressed her concerns over the damage that bad role-play inflicts:

> ***Anita:*** *Good role-play is invaluable; and bad role-play does the business a lot of harm, and isn't useful – it's a waste of everybody's time.*

A lack of clarity and understanding regarding the pedagogical purpose of these uses of acting and theatre methods will also contribute to bad practice. Earlier Martin expressed his initial view that the work was a form of prostitution, an attitude that is unlikely to contribute to high quality work. It was when Martin theorised that the work belonged to a different field of practice, of training, as opposed to being at the bottom rung of acting that he was able to

move away from his initial poor impression. Anita also referred to some actors' perception of the work and how this damages the practice:

> ***Anita:*** *I think some actors who go into role-play feel they may be slumming it or whatever, and I don't think they are, except when you're working for companies who actually don't care themselves, and then it's deathly.*

Anita's comment illustrates the connection between the perceived value of a practice and how these perceptions shape the act of performance, and to an extent, become self-fulfilling. For those who dabble in work-based practice with the view that they are 'slumming it' and that the work is somehow pimping performance, I suggest it is likely that such an attitude will shape their performance and is unlikely to lead to a positive learning experience for the participants.

5. Spotlight on the Actor: Summary and Conclusions

The best practitioners are using much more than acting skills to replicate the behaviours of a human being in a particular situation...it is knowledge and understanding of the learning outcomes required and of the underlying values that drive decision-making, that ensures the role-play has relevance; it is skilled facilitation that fosters a learning environment of curiosity and playfulness in which to debate and experiment with desired, more effective behaviours.

Gillie Stoneham, Actor Factor, email correspondence

The workplace actor draws on a range of skills, of which acting is only a part. Despite being typically referred to as 'acting', to be effective the role requires additional skills, attitudes and knowledge. Being a good actor in another context does not necessarily mean they possess the aptitude and skills for pedagogical acting. Acting skills are used to develop **credible** roles, and can inform the process of **calibration**. **Feedback** and **facilitation** skills are additional skills that the pedagogical actor may call upon. The purpose of the work shifts the centre of gravity of the practice from the actor to the participant, and all those interviewed stated that knowledge of the learning goals and associated theories was necessary for the actor to support and scaffold learning.

Actors are used by the workplace with varying degrees of autonomy. At its most basic level, the actor is used to replicate behaviours consistently for the purposes of assessment. Collaborating with a facilitator in a learning and development context requires a broader range of skills from the actor, as here the actor needs the skills of calibration and feedback. Actors working at higher levels of work will also facilitate their own work, requiring that they are able to rapidly switch between the roles of facilitator and sharing feedback, in addition to rapidly creating credible, calibrated bespoke roles. These actors appear to possess a broad set of skills and produce work that is informed and shaped by an eclectic web of theory.

At present there is no standard terminology that differentiates these levels of work, although amongst those delivering this work, terms and roles such as 'assessment centre work', 'actor facilitator' and 'bespoke role-play' are emerging. The actors interviewed here learned to work at various levels of practice through experience, channelling their acting, training and facilitation skills to the particular requirements of the workplace. The actors interviewed here came to this work through a combination of networking and possessing a mix of aptitude, behaviours and technical knowledge that suited them to the flexible demands of workplace training and assessment.

Bad practice, and the damage this inflicts on a potentially powerful tool for embodied learning was analysed. A lack of understanding of the differences between applied acting and conventional acting was identified as a factor in bad practice, as well as actors lacking the necessary specific skills for effective work in this context. Perceptions of the practice as 'low end' acting work are both erroneous due to the different aims and methods of the practice, and also as there is anecdotal evidence that perceptions of the low status of the work leads to low quality work on behalf of the actors who stray into this form of practice.

General Points of Theory Arising From the Case Studies

Philip Zarilli in Acting (Re)considered states "Every time an actor performs, he or she implicitly enacts a 'theory' of acting' " (Zarilli, 2002, p.3). Applying Zarilli's notion to the hybrid role of the work-place actor, what are the theories enacted by the actors working in this context? What theories of acting, work-based communication and learning inform the judgements-in-action of the actor in this improvised context?

General points of theory emerge from the case studies which I will address these finding under the following headings:

- *The Actor as Expert in Not-Knowing*
- *From Technical Rationality to Reflection-In-Action*
- *An Embodied and Social Practice*
- *Dimensions of Applied Acting*

The Actor as Expert in Not-Knowing

The efficacy of the practice lies in creating the conditions in which new knowledge can emerge from feedback generated by the experience. This requires a delicate balance between providing a safe environment whilst not imposing too much structure and control which will reduce the potential for emergent learning from taking place. In order to support the learner gaining ownership of their own learning, the actor must therefore be comfortable in operating a space of uncertainty. Uncertainty is an integral aspect of experiential learning and this can generate feelings of anxiety for everyone involved in the process. For Naomi Raab, this anxiety is associated with *confronting unknowingness*, an aspect of learning which, she argues, is not sufficiently acknowledged by traditional models of teaching. She states that "learning is the

struggle of not knowing" (Raab, 2004, p.261) and that teachers and learners collude to avoid anxiety, and in doing so prevent learning. She argues that assuming the role of 'expert' can be attractive as "it reduces their anxiety about not knowing" (Raab, 2004, p.261) and that the students can also project an expectation of being an 'expert in knowing' onto their teachers, but that the teacher in the role of 'expert' can constrain learning by preventing the learning from working with their own unknowingness. As a defence against uncomfortable feelings of anxiety, teachers can impose too much control and structure which constrains learning (ibid, p.263). For learning to take place one must facilitate a space of not knowing by productively working with uncomfortable feelings: "Anxiety is not all bad. Increased anxiety occurs when change is imminent. Learning and growth occur more in an acknowledgement of not knowing than knowing" (ibid, p.266). I suggest that actor pedagogies can provide the conditions in which this anxiety in not-knowing is both generated and productively harnessed. I suggest the skilled actor is calibrating their performance to generate this place of not knowing. The threshold of not knowing will be different for every learner and this process of *calibration* is described further in *General points of theory arising from the case studies.*

I argue that the skilled actor is an expert in *not knowing.* The actor must be able to tolerate their own anxiety of *not knowing* as well as being able to productively harness the anxiety of the learners they are working with. I am not suggesting that the actor lacks expertise in the communication skills and processes with which they are working, rather that the actor operates in a place of uncertainty where their knowledge may be called upon in dynamic and unpredictable ways. For Raab, tolerating and staying with anxiety requires the teacher to "confront the present, being with what is" (Raab, 2004, p.268). Being present and 'in the moment' are central themes in the art and skill of acting. These aspects of the dramatic arts equip the actor with the skills to channel their own anxiety triggered by uncertainty into experimentation and creativity. As a consequence, the actor is well equipped to operate in a pedagogy of *not knowing.* The actor's *not knowing* is an elemental component of improvised

practice; the actor cannot know in advance what will emerge due to the actions and feedback from the group. This place of *not knowing* is central to the efficacy of the practice as it creates the conditions for emergence of new knowledge. The challenge for actor pedagogies is to provide some form of safety within which *not knowing* can be contained. Raab argues that the challenge for teachers is to contain this anxiety somehow so that it does not prevent useful work from being done; "some defence against anxiety is necessary" (Raab, 2004, p.262). I suggest that the structures used by the practice, typically limiting the time to a productive level in which the learner is exposed to their own *not knowing*, and skilful facilitation judging when to change approach provides the necessary frame of safety within which learning can take place and *not knowing* can be transformed into *knowing.*

This emergent approach to knowledge creation is highly suited to develop the skills of practice. Due to relevance and personalisation, actor pedagogies provide the forum for learning new approaches to tackle the highly contextual problems which individuals face in their day to day working lives. As we shall see next, this heuristic and emergent approach to learning is a radical departure from traditional models of professional education based on an epistemology of technical rationality.

From Technical Rationality to Reflection in Action.

We distance ourselves from the kinds of performance we need most to understand
(Schön 1987 p.13)

The notion of working with the actors somehow providing a bridge between theory and practice was raised by several of those interviewed. The need for this 'bridge' suggests there are gaps between theory and practice that are not otherwise being addressed. This gap can be thought of as the tension between professional knowledge and professional skills, with which

traditional teaching methodologies fail to adequately engage. Whilst there have been advances in our understanding of effective teaching and training methodologies the implications of these developments are frequently missing from training curricula with consequences for their efficacy. Monk states that despite the abandonment of the Cartesian separation of mind and body as a credible intellectual precept, it still remains implicit in many of the methods of teaching and learning (Monk, 2011, p.118). Our education system is built on foundations designed for the industrial age, which have insufficiently adapted to the uncertain demands of the 21st century. The theory of knowledge that shapes our education system is founded on principals that can be traced back to the Enlightenment and are based on an industrial and mechanistic model of delivery of education. Schön defines this dominant epistemology as technical rationality which he argues has shaped western professional education and training. Here I will explore the implications of an education system built on enlightenment principals in a post-enlightenment world, and argue that the epistemology of actor-based learning presents a radical departure from systems of learning based on enlightenment principals of thought.

I argue that actor pedagogies develop the skills of professional competence that are overlooked by much professional education with its focus on professional knowledge. To support this argument it is necessary to define the dominant theory of knowledge that shapes professional education. In order to do this I will draw upon Schön's work on technical rationality and identify the problems and solutions for this influential mode of thinking. Donald Schön's work into how professionals think in action has been highly influential (1991). His notion of reflection-in-action, which is examined below, has made a significant contribution to the literature on learning and many other scholars have developed and refined his ideas (e.g. Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004; Fry et al, 2003; Illeris et al, 2009; Jarvis et al, 2003; Moon, 2003). For Schön, the notion of technical rationality has powerfully shaped the thinking and practice of professional work. It is an epistemology of practice based in Positivism

(Schön, 1991, p.31). For technical rationality, those forms of knowledge operating outside the positivist paradigm are given a lower order in a hierarchy of knowledge. As a consequence, those propositions which "were neither analytically nor empirically testable were held to have no meaning at all" (ibid, p.33). As a consequence, actions in the social world are problematic for positivism due to their highly contextual attributes.

The technical rational view of professional activity is that it consists of "instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique" (Schön, 1991, p.21). This view has shaped professional academic education which is largely based on abstract knowledge and analytical skills. There are problems with this approach. The convergent nature of scientific thinking is at odds with the divergent nature of practice (Schön, 1991, p.45) and the skills of practice, drawing upon different forms of intelligence and knowing, are consequently marginalised. Practice does not neatly fit within the epistemology of technical rationality, and hence its solutions to the problems of practice are limited. Positivism's response was to use scientific knowledge of cause and effect to answer the question 'how ought I to act' in a given context. Using scientific method, the best course of action could be selected. This approach is not without merit. For example, Trainee Doctors can develop their patient consultation skills through studying standard models and practising with Simulated Patients (e.g. Kurtz el al, 2005). Problems arise with this approach when an interaction falls outside the standard models, as they frequently do in the situation of practice where problems do not present themselves as well formed *givens* and are highly contextual to their *setting* (Schön, 1991, p.40). The mechanistic model of technical rationality cannot adequately deal with novel problems which are increasingly presented by the uncertainty, changes and instabilities of our globalising world.

Schön's response to these problems was to search for a new epistemology of practice that does not ignore the complexities of setting:

> If the model of Technical Rationality is incomplete, in that it fails to account for practical competence in 'divergent' situations, so much worse for the model. Let us search, instead, for an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict (Schön, 1991, p.49).

Schön suggests that the qualities exhibited by outstanding practitioners are outside technical rationality. These practitioners are said to possess 'wisdom', 'talent', 'intuition' or 'artistry' (Schön, 1987, p.13). As these qualities lie outside conventional strategies of explanation, enquiry into these aspects is typically closed off and consequently "we distance ourselves from the kinds of performance we need most to understand" (Ibid, p.13). Schön argues that a core of artistry lies inherent in professionals whom we recognise as unusually competent, and that this artistry is a form of knowing which is not inherently mysterious, but which can be learned (ibid). He identifies reflection-in-action as the process that lies at the heart of professional artistry. Schön states that through reflection-in-action the learner takes on the role of researcher, constructing their own unique theory pertinent to their specific context, rather than relying on established theory. Reflection is a much debated aspect of learning, and many definitions of reflection have been proposed. Moon suggests that despite these various definitions, a 'common sense' definition of how we use the term 'reflection' in everyday language has emerged, and she provides this working definition of reflection as:

> Reflection is a form of mental processing –like a form of thinking- that we may use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome or we may simply 'be reflective' and then an outcome can be unexpected. Reflection is applied to relatively complicated, ill-structured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution and is largely based on the further processing of knowledge and understanding that we already possess (Moon, 2004, p.82).

Moon's definition provides a working definition of reflection which can be used here in two ways. Reflection-in-action is defined here as this mental processing taking place within an activity and reflection-on-action is the mental processing taking place after the event, possibly

immediately afterwards. If reflection-in-action is central to professional artistry, the question is posed as to how others may learn what is an entirely hidden process based on experience, judgement and intuition. This artistry cannot be learned through conventional teaching methods (Fry et al, 2003, p.17). Is it possible to devise educational strategies so that reflection-in-action may be learned? Schön suggests the conditions by which technical artistry may be learned are grounded in experiential learning similar to those used to teach the arts:

> Perhaps, then, learning *all* forms of professional artistry depends, at least in part, on conditions similar to those created in studios and conservatories: freedom to learn by doing in a setting relatively low in risk, with access to coaches who initiate students into the 'traditions of the calling' and help them by 'the right kind of telling' (Schön, 1991, p.17)

The conditions for the development of this artistry can, for Schön, be created through a combination of learning by doing and 'the artistry of good coaching'. I argue that these conditions can be generated by the sufficiently skilled actor and can provide a viable strategy for developing reflective professional skills. The structure of the actors work described in the case studies facilitates the learners to reflect *in* and *on* action[22]. It also provides a space for vicarious learning into the reflective learning processes which are usually internal and hidden from study. For Moon "reflection is the means by which awareness of an experience is recognised as knowledge and is made explicit and generalizable to other situations" (Moon, 2004, p.158), therefore without a reflective phase a role-play with an actor may be no more than a rehearsal for a specific problematic conversation. Role-play sessions that do not foster the development of the transferable skill of reflection are providing a very expensive method of training. Moon's investigation into experiential and reflective learning concludes that "experiential learning usually involves reflective learning – except where the material is unchallenging to the learner" (Moon, 2004, p.130). Moon's conclusion reinforces the notion of calibration of their role by the actor as central to the efficacy of the practice, which I will come

[22] In Chapter 5 I examine Kolb's Learning Cycle. Reflective practice is likely to follow Kolb's cyclical pattern of experiential learning (Fry et al, 2003, p.17)

to below. The actor's credible, calibrated performance can provide the learner with a high context, personalised and relevant experience, but it is through facilitating reflection where both the learning from the specific encounter can be captured and generalizable knowledge acquired.

The emergent production of knowledge through experience is diametrically opposed to the 'download' model of knowledge inherent in technical rationality. Fry et al summarise Schön's argument: "Rather than look to another body of research or knowledge, practitioners should become more adept at observing and learning through reflection on the artistry of their own particular profession" (2003, p.17). I suggest that pedagogies promoting reflection-in-action are part of the wider agenda of workplace empowerment[23], as reflective learning, unlike non reflective learning stimulates change in the prevailing social structures (Jarvis, 2003, p.63). I have argued that actor pedagogies operate in conditions of not knowing and reciprocal feedback which facilitates emergent knowledge through reflection-in-action. Learning to reflect-in-action can be thought of as learning how learn, which I suggest is an essential quality for adapting to the conditions of accelerating change and uncertainty which are a consequence of global capitalism.

An Embodied and Social Practice

The case studies describe how actor-based learning provides a space for exploring the relationship between mind, body and the social space. Teaching and learning methodologies that strip out channels of feedback provided by the social and physical elements of practice in the real world, such as the surge of adrenalin when confronted by a stressful encounter, or feelings of stress caused by another person's interpretation of events differing radically from your own, rely on the learner to work out for themselves the bridge between theory and

[23] In chapter 4 I explored the problems and possibilities of empowerment in this context.

practice, with a consequent reduction in the likelihood of transfer of learning. Embodied and social learning provides a radically different conception of learning from internal, cognitive theories that do not engage with the humans as social beings. For Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, "learning is an embodied, dialogical, and existential activity immediately tied to how we feel, what we say, and how we respond to others" (2004, p.8). Integrating mind and body in learning experiences can provide a rich and memorable experience for the learner. Mallika Henry summarises the power of experiential drama as a learning medium:

> Students gain extra-cognitive knowledge through actions and feelings, using their own bodies to inscribe events in time and space, while garnering a multi-dimensional experience of an event...They discover and empower themselves in action, through heightened awareness and through developing the courage to explore actions and interactions (Henry, 2000, p.52).

Central to the efficacy of actor-based learning are the two interconnected aspects. These are the *embodied* and *social* nature of the practice. These qualities support the development of particular types of knowledge that are situated and highly contextual. The embodied quality of the practice enables new forms of knowledge to be produced by the participants themselves. The *Friends Provident* case study explored how the actor-based sessions provided a space where the participants actively engaged with the topics that were the session's focus. Here the actor facilitated a process in which participants created their own knowledge from a fusion of individual and social learning. For Monk, factors that support this form of knowledge creation include "a range of ideas around embodiment and kinaesthetic learning, notions concerning space and its hierarchical or non-hierarchical-nature, and ideas concerning the creation of the ensemble" (Monk, 2011, p.117). These embodied and social qualities of the learning-space enable pedagogy to catch up with developments in neuroscience and psychology that stress the holistic nature of mind and body (ibid, p.123). Monk articulates what, for him, are the problems of learning spaces that are not social and embodied: "lacking a

social and embodied context individual learning can become attenuated, unreflective and solipsistic" (ibid, p125). Other commentators have made a similar point; Ken Robinson dryly describes much that passes for learning lacks an essential aesthetic element and would be better described as *anaesthetic* learning (Robinson, 2010). Embodied methods embrace the physical and emotional aspects of learning which are ignored at the cost of efficacy. The politics of embodied learning place the learner as central to the process, and therefore require control to be relinquished and the toleration of uncertainty.

David Wright's reflection on the body in education explores the embodied aspects of drama based learning which he argues has been given insufficient attention. For Wright, the embodied nature of drama can, when skilfully facilitated, generate emergence. He says: "The structure of learning in drama is such that the emergent cannot be anticipated or known in full beforehand" (Wright, 2005, p.2). He draws on the work of N. Katherine Hayles to define emergence:

> Emergence implies that properties or programs appear on their own, often developing in ways not anticipated by the person who created the simulation. Structures that lead to emergence typically involve complex feedback loops in which the outputs of the system are repeatedly fed back as input. As the recursive looping continues, small deviations quickly become magnified, leading to complex interactions and unpredictable evolutions associated with emergence (1999, p.225).

Hayles uses systems theory to suggest how complex feedback systems lead to the evolution and emergence of new knowledge. Wright suggests that knowledge produced by the recursive process of reflection and improvisation can produce "challenging and unpredictable results" (Ibid, p.2). For Wright, this is at odds with conventional pedagogic practice, as the drama practitioner "must consider themselves 'participants in' something they can only partly know (and/or determine)" (ibid). Wright's comments are akin to Raab's notion of expertise in *not knowing* which I discussed above. The notion that the practitioner can only partly know and

or determine the process of emergence means that, for the actor, they must operate in conditions of uncertainty as they do not know what will happen when they act, react and respond in an improvisation. Similarly, the learner is in the same space of embodied not knowing. These elements combine to create the conditions for emergence of new knowledge.

I described above how actor pedagogies develop reflective practice. Until relatively recently experiential learning and reflective learning were seen as separate, with their own literatures and experts (Moon, 2004, p.vii). This situation is now changing, as a growing body of scholars explore the relationship between experience and reflection (e.g. Moon, 2004; Wright, 2000). Kate Collier investigates the relationship between the imagination, the theatrical space and productive reflection (Collier, 2009). For Collier, the place for imagination and creativity in the reflection process are often absent from discussions of productive reflection. She stresses the role of the imagination and creativity in the reflective process, arguing that these aspects of reflection can be usefully connected to aesthetic understanding of the arts. For Collier, the arts can make intangible feelings and sensibilities knowable, and furthermore the art frames the imagination, bracketing it off from the world so that it can then be examined and contemplated through aesthetic enquiry. "Aesthetic consciousness requires a person through focussed contemplation, to be acutely present in the moment, a quality that is also relevant to reflective thought" (Collier, 2009, p.154). By this definition, the highly focussed small group work at Friends Provident with the actor Dan Long can be thought of as facilitating a space for the imagination, creativity and aesthetic consciousness, where the intangible and abstract is made present. Each role-play imagines and gives significance to a specific interaction, which, for Collier, brings the aesthetic dimension into play. Those participants interviewed here support this notion when they referred to the credibility of the actor which was sufficient to engage their imaginations. The close relationship between credibility and calibration is also likely to be also an important element in sustaining the imaginative space for the learner, as a poorly calibrated work from the actor is likely to shatter the fragile credibility for the learner.

The actor's function in engaging the imagination of the learners and facilitating individual and group reflection can be seen here as central to the process of learning.

In Chapter 6 I argue that actor pedagogies promote a social model of leadership, and a theory of leadership as a social influence and linguistic process (Tietze et al, 2003). This is a radical shift from the notion of the 'great leader', instead viewing leadership as a social, collective phenomenon that is highly contextual. The *social* qualities of actor-based learning challenge essentialist views of leadership and provide the space where the exercise of power is negotiated and the language of collaboration is learned. Through the performance and examination of professional skills in a social space the politics of work-roles and work-culture are objectified for examination and critique. For Elkjaer, conflict and power is central to learning in a social space: "To take learning away from inside minds to social relations is also to move learning into an area of conflicts and power" (Elkjaer, 2009, p.87).

Situating the learning socially and operating in conditions of emergence can generate ancillary effects. Participants may self-select material to work with that has burdened them for some time; perhaps a stressful encounter from the past or a challenging conversation they have been avoiding. Working through the scenario with the actor can provide a cathartic release and also create a stage for their hidden narrative to be witnessed by peers. In the *Friends Provident* case study Ross Klinkenberg spoke of the 'visible change' and how he witnessed a 'visible confidence' in his peers when problematic material was worked with. With a sufficiently skilled and ethical practitioner, emotionally charged biographical material can be worked with in the embodied social space which can have therapeutic benefits for the learner. Therapeutic aspects are beyond professional skills and competence and provide an example of the types of unpredictable events that may emerge from an embodied learner driven environment.

As with all Applied Theatre methodologies, multiple, interactive factors contribute to the form and content of the knowledge created. The enacted theories of the actor/facilitator play a central role in the creation of the learning space, and their philosophy of learning will shape the environment. This philosophy may strive to create a collaborative, learner focussed space. Alternatively, actor-based work embodying a more traditional educational ideology will have a different outcome. For example, Millika Henry raises the negative possibility of too much control over the process of drama, which, as with research, undermines the results; "The more conspicuous the leader in drama or research, the more the findings will reveal only this individual and little else" (Henry, 2000, p.52). The interpersonal politics of actor pedagogies are situated within the wider political context of the workplace. The work-based knowledge produced is historically and culturally located, subject to the discourses of the time and place. Helen Nicholson questions whether work-based Applied Theatre is creating “designer employees or active, participant citizens” (Nicholson, 2005, p.49). Embodied learning can be a highly effective vehicle by which the values and ideology of the work-place can be adopted and internalised by participants. I suggest that the social and reflective qualities of the practice open a space of debate and negotiation into the tension between the needs of the organisation and the individual. This space may be denied by more traditional forms of teaching and learning.

Dimensions of Applied Acting

Some of your brain is devoted to the task of acting in as realistic and real a way as possible, part of your brain is tailoring your delivery to ideally – hopefully – match the person you are working with and what they are seeking to get out of this intervention, and the third thing is a part of brain is working on analysis of what's going on in the moment and formulating that down to a focussed piece of feedback that you can give at the end of the role-play.

Wendy Harbutt, Dramatic Improvement, research interview

Wendy's comment above encapsulates the multiple processes of the work-place actor. The actor implicitly or explicitly is operating within a theory of work-place acting. The actor's performance will be shaped by their own sense of what constitutes good and bad workplace behaviour. Similarly, the actor's internalised sense of leadership will shape their interactions. In a wider sense it will be shaped by their cultural mind-set of how human beings should behave towards each other, which it is suggested in the west is democratic and individualistic, with a belief in the value of the other person who should be taken seriously whose thoughts have value (Skelton, 2008, p.17). The actor also has an educational function, through their performance and the provision of feedback, and the extent to which they recognise and effectively manage their twin roles as actor and educationalist will have consequences for the efficacy of their work.

Each aspect of the actor's hybrid role is shaped by different theories of acting and learning. In order to examine these different aspects, I have defined four dimensions of actor-based role-play. This form of actor-based work is perhaps the most common type of actor-based practice and was the form used at *Friends Provident*. The dimensions of **credibility** and **calibration** emerge as characteristics that the skilled actor brings to the simulation whilst in role, **feedback** which is provided in and out of role and **facilitation skills** when out of role. The skills of

calibration, facilitation and feedback are additional to the acting skills of generating a role, providing further evidence of the inadequacy of the uncomplicated use of the term 'actor' to describe those undertaking this work.

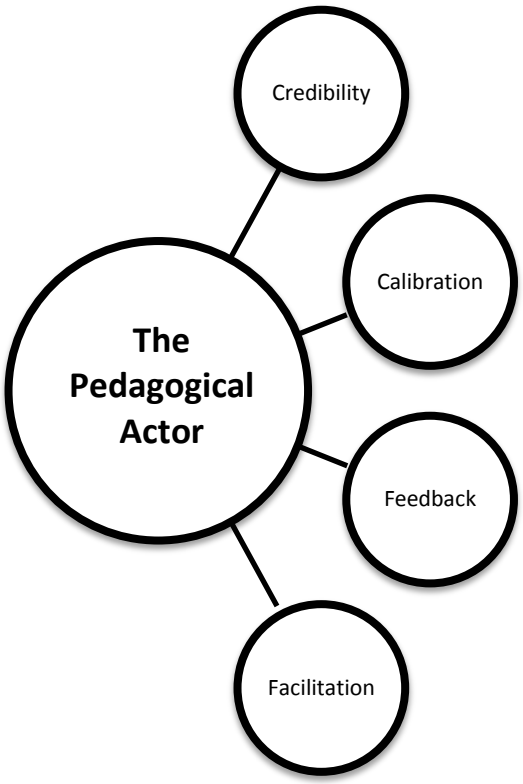


Fig. 2 The hybrid skills of the pedagogical actor.

I argue that a skilful combination of credibility, calibration, facilitation and feedback are needed to constitute the hybrid role of the pedagogical actor. I'll now explore these four skill domains in greater detail.

Credibility

You forget that actually that this is not real – and I guess that is the point about using an actor. It is real.

Nigel Harris, Friends Provident, research interview

Without exception, Dan can flick the switch and become Hugo or Silvia – almost frighteningly so. An ability to capture something which I think is probably the magic of it.

Andrew Turner, Friends Provident, research interview

The actor's ability to improvise a character which reflects the given context and behavioural characteristics as described by the learner contributes to creation of the liminal 'as if' space of the simulation (Alraek and Baerheim, 2005; Yardley-Matwiejczuk, 1997). Some actors consciously draw upon Stanislavski's notion of the given circumstances (Benedetti, 2004; Merlin, 2007; Stanislavski, 1979), whilst others have developed their own methods and approach. Whatever the basis for their approach to character generation, the actor is seeking to imagine and perform a character that will be identifiable to the learner. They will achieve this by finding answers to the key questions of who their character is, what is the context and why they are having the dialogue. For improvised work, this process of role creation happens rapidly, typically taking no more than a few minutes in dialogue with the learner with whom they will be acting. This information, combined with the actor's tacit knowledge of what is acceptable in the organisation's culture and of the language specific to the workplace assists the actor in the generation of a credible character with whom the learner could identify. In Andrew Turner's interview he stated that early encounters were 'a bit organic' as both the learners developed their confidence in the process and the actor tuned into the needs and language of the learners, and that some participants took to the process more rapidly than others, suggesting that a certain amount of acclimatising was taking place for both learner and actor.

What are the factors that enable participants to identify with the actor as a credible proxy for a real person? The actor is unlikely to look and sound like the characters he is representing, so the key to the actor aiding the learner's engagement with the fiction of the role-play is not by providing an impersonation of Hugo or Silvia. Plainly the learner does not believe the actor by some magic becomes Hugo, Silvia or whoever. Scholars have proposed a range of theories as to what we see when witnessing theatre. The traditional notion that an individual somehow 'suspends disbelief' is no longer regarded as credible and new theories have been proposed. For Rebellato, theatre is metaphorical (2009); McConachie (2007) draws the concept of conceptual blending from neuroscience to describe the multiple frames through which a theatrical experience is simultaneously perceived. For Marton and Booth (in Moon, 2004), their notion of appresentation describes how a fragment can trigger richer cognitive associations in the mind. These notions are described further in Chapter 4. Whatever the reason, this research has found that in the workplace, skilled actors are able to represent effectively a real person whom, in all likelihood they have never met. What processes make this possible? Perhaps the answer lies neither with the actor nor in the imagination of the learner, but through channels of reciprocal feedback between both actor and learner. The suggestion is that the learner's briefing of the actor on a biographical problem begins the process of orientating their imagination towards considering the actor 'as if' they are Hugo or Silvia. The actor's performance 'blends' with the learner's imagination to generate a credible learning experience, and, as suggested by Alraek & Baerheim, the learner must keep up with both the fictional and the real world (2010, p. 9). It is down to the skill of the actor to identify and perform the signifiers which will aid the learner's imaginative and embodied engagement. The learner's emotions, triggered by reactions to the actor's credible performance, further enrich the embodied experience. Throughout the actor will be reading verbal communication and non-verbal communication channels, responding to tone, pitch, content and pace, use of silence, paralanguage, proxemics, kinesics, haptics and oculeisis. The actor may react instinctively, or may use this information to inform the reactions which he or she judges would

be credible for their character. For the learner, the actor can be thought of as a *blank canvas* upon which they can project the character in mind. The actor lacks any prior association with the learner which aids the imaginative process, mitigating against the problem of familiarity which peer role-play can present. Ross described this familiarity problem with peer role-play when he said: "I can't pretend to be angry – you know what I'm like" (interview).

The ability of the actor to react is the most important factor to the credibility of their role. No amount of background research and tacit knowledge can compensate for an inability to react in character. The extent to which this ability of the actor to react credibly can be considered realism is a matter of debate. Skelton, writing about the use of actors as simulated patients, suggests that the actors are not simulating reality, but something different:

> I would invite you to conclude that simulation does not imply realism. The role of the simulator (role-player, course designer) is not to be the same as the world. In a sense, that it what the world is for. Rather it is to offer opportunities to practise the relevant skills, to apply the relevant knowledge, and to reflect on the relevant attitudes, in as effective a manner as possible. The point about role-players, if they are sufficiently skilled, is that they are not patients, but something else, a point that is only now being beginning to be understood (Skelton, 2008, p.14).

Skelton's notion that simulation is not realism makes a useful contribution to the debate, supporting the idea that this form of acting has qualities distinct from conventional acting. The function of the 'sufficiently skilled' actor here is to support learning and I have argued above that one way in which the actor does this is to seek to challenge the learner, pushing them to the border of *not knowing*. The actor is working to anchor their performance in credibility whilst calibrating their performance for pedagogical efficacy. I suggest that it is the dimension of calibration which Skelton's 'sufficiently skilled' actor is incorporating into their work. Calibration is discussed next.

Calibration

You're looking at subtext, looking at the backstory, all the signals we send to each other, plus hearing them talk about why they think they are in the room, through asking questions about expectations of the day, contracting stuff, you soon get a very clear indicator as to whether a person either intellectually doesn't get it, or this is too slow, too boring for them, and they are ahead of the game and they want to get on. So we need to be flexible with some of this stuff. It's a judgement call.

Dan Long, Actor, research interview

We trust the actor to pick up on this, to understand the options, the choices they've got and to go a different way. And a lot of it they do intuitively.

Andrew Taylor, People Deliver Projects, research Interview

I suggest that the actor is mediating their credible performance by a pedagogical element, which I have defined as calibration. The purpose of calibration is to provide a level of challenge which is neither overwhelming for the learner nor too trivial[24]. Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote address a similar point when setting a role-play problem, describing the medium of peer role-play as both an opportunity and a hazard. They stress the need to strike the right balance between challenge and protection stating that "If you over-protect they will not learn; if you under-protect they will not learn" (Heathcote and Bolton, 1999, p.58). I am suggesting that the sufficiently skilled actor walks a tightrope between opportunity and hazard not just when framing the role-play, but throughout the process when in role. The actor's process of calibration aims to deliver a performance at a level of challenge which provides a stretching, but manageable encounter for the learner. As there is no standard language or methodology for this form of acting I do not know how widespread is this dimension of the practice, but my experience and research interviews suggest that for those actors who grasp the educational purpose of their role, what I am calling here 'calibration' is a part of their process. To calibrate their behaviours-in-role, the actor is making an assessment of the

[24] This is different from the calibration that occurs between actors in assessment situations, as here the process of calibration is undertaken to establish a consistent level of challenge between actors with the aim to provide a fair assessment process for each candidate.

learner's abilities in relation to the skills under examination and making a judgement of the learner's potential, what Vygotsky termed the learner's zone of proximal development (Daniels, 2005). This assessment process leads to a diagnosis of one or more problems to be worked upon. I suggest that work-place actors who never prioritise realism over calibration are not fully exploiting the potential of this learning medium.

The actor's judgement as to the calibration of their role can be informed from four main sources of information. The first of these will be the actor's research and briefing prior to the event. This briefing material may take the form of written documents such as job descriptions, competency frameworks and staff profiles, company websites and also video and/or audio interviews with staff. This initial research provides the actor with a general picture of the learners with whom they will work, and can suggest the level of not knowing that the actor will be operating at. For example, an experienced actor will have a higher expectation and a sense of the level of skill they will encounter if they are working with senior executives in a large multinational than if they are working with aspiring managers. This information will be general, not personalised. Once on site, the actor may get a further briefing from a trainer or facilitator. This could be advice on being gentle with an individual who is finding aspects of the course vexing, or maybe that a strong performer may need an opportunity to develop empathy and so on. Both these sources of information are useful, but it is when interacting with the individual whom the actor will be working with that most information is obtained. When briefing the actor, the learner may articulate for themselves the nature of the problem they wish to tackle and define the behaviours they would like the actor to perform. These three sources of information provide the actor with a reading of the learner which can then calibrate the actor's initial formation of their character.

This process of calibration continues throughout the role-play. In role the actor continually reads signals from the learner seeking to sense the border between the learner's knowing and not knowing. This will be a place of uncertainty and to some extent anxiety, and I suggest that the actor is attempting to read the level of this anxiety expressed through verbal and non-verbal signals to calibrate the intensity of their performance. Should the actor read that the learner is in a place of knowing, he or she will increase the intensity, attempting to pitch their performance at the threshold of the learner's skills. The actor will reduce the intensity of their performance if they read the learner as being overwhelmed by their own not-knowingness. When the role-play is temporarily paused for reflection, the actor can acquire further direction in order to calibrate by listening to feedback. This process of calibration is itself an example reflecting-in-action and the actor is modelling the same reflective process that the simulation is seeking to develop in the learner.

Feedback

> *I could actually say anything I liked and have feedback and was able to get it wrong and was shown when I was getting it right. You're able to play it through several times and get the feedback several times whether or not from the actor or some of the other guys who feedback – (this) lets you know exactly how you could improve and where your style or the words that you've used has made the particular conversation or your decision making process be less effective. Identifying where things have gone wrong, where you actually need to improve, is something that a lot of people don't get the opportunity to do.*
>
> ***Ross Klinkenberg, Friends Provident, research interview***

> *(With) four people to give feedback, they may all be contradictory: She's sitting there – he's sitting there – I'm sitting here – there's a different filter going on. And that has to be accepted as well. No one is wrong. It's your perception. Your feedback. It's a terrific challenge to try and manage feedback, because some people are very unskilled, because they leap straight into 'oh well if I was you …I remember when…' and they're off down their own track.*
>
> ***Dan Long, Actor, research interview***

Feedback is a critical element for learning. Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall define feedback as "Oral or written developmental advice on performance so that the recipient has a better understanding of values, standards, criteria etc." (2003, p.435). I am using a broader definition of feedback here to include all the channels of communication available to support the learner's reflection-in and on-action. Feedback from others strongly influences the abstract conceptualization stage of experiential learning (Fry et al, 2003, p.14), contributing potentially valuable data for the learners' *reflection-in* and *reflection-on* action. The purpose of feedback is to stimulate behaviour change. For Susan Knights, the process of reflective learning is most profound when "it is done aloud with the aware attention of another person" (Knights, 1985, p.85)

Kurtz, Silverman and Draper define three positions from which an actor can give feedback once the simulation has halted. These are:

- In role, in 'neutral'
- In role, still in emotion
- Out of role.

They define in role 'neutral' actor feedback as the actor staying in character, but not in the emotional state. They suggest that this is a more constructive mode of feedback than the second position of *in role still in emotion*, as "In general, feedback given in role, still in emotion, leads back into the emotions or dilemmas that the learner and the (actor) were experiencing during the interview rather than allowing learning from what just occurred" (2005, p.96). They suggest that out-of-role feedback can be highly problematic when poorly handled, such as when the actor resorts to general statements as opposed to feedback grounded in their specific interaction with the learner. This feedback process will be facilitated, either by the actor or by a facilitator. When the actor is facilitating feedback, the

actor will typically give feedback out of role, as in-role feedback whilst also facilitating is probably impossible.

Feedback requires skilful execution in order to be taken on board. For Milan et al, an atmosphere of trust is a central requirement: "Complex feedback situations challenge even the most experienced educators and require the use of empathic listening and rapport building to create an atmosphere of trust" (2003, p.47). There are many feedback models (for examples see Fry et al, 2003; Milan et al, 2003; Kurtz et al, 2003), and the actor may be asked to deliver their feedback in the manner of a preferred model, for example, Pendleton's rules for feedback are widely used at all levels of medical education (Kurtz et al, 2003, p.111)

To the three positions of actor feedback defined by Kurtz et al, I suggest there is a fourth position:

- Live in-role feedback.

This is where the actor adjusts their performance during the role-play in order to support a learning objective. This technique can be particularly useful when learners are at a relatively early stage of developing their communication skills. For example, with a learner seeking to develop their use of open questions who habitually uses closed questions, the actor may respond strictly with closed responses to closed questions. This approach is unlikely to be realistic or authentic, but it can provide the learner with useful live feedback and support their learning. Along with calibration, I suggest this aspect of the practice is recognised by experienced actors but is not directly referred to in the relevant literature. The actors 'improvisational qualities' to react to more or less skilled learners is referred to Kurtz et al (2003, p.90), which suggest that they appreciate that in some way the actor is adapting to the learner. Thislethwaite and Ridgway in their thorough examination of actors and simulated patients make no reference to pedagogical compromises to realism, and state that "simulated

patients should be as authentic as possible" (2006, p.11). I have already referred to Skelton's suggestion that the 'sufficiently skilled' actor is supporting the learning by something more than realistic performance. I suggest that calibration and feedback in-role are the dimensions of practice where the actor is supporting the learning beyond producing an 'authentic' performance. The sufficiently skilled actor compromises realism in order to support a learning objective. I suggest the actor is dynamically balancing the dimensions of credibility, calibration and live feedback, seeking to meet the learner's needs whilst also generating a 'credible enough' simulation. Taken together, these balanced dimensions of the actor's practice can hold the space of *not knowing* for the learner in which new knowledge may emerge.

Delivering feedback out of role is closely related to facilitation skills, to which I come to next.

Facilitation

The role of a facilitator carries responsibility for ensuring the group operates effectively within a learning environment. The role includes "anything and everything you (the facilitator) do before, during, or after the learning experience to enhance people's reflection, integration and continuation of lasting change" (Priest et al, 2000, p.19). Often the actor works in partnership with a separate facilitator. This separate facilitator may bring specialist expertise to the forum, working in partnership with the actor to support the learning. For example, Stoneham and Feltham's *The Act of Dialogue* (2009) examines my own work as an actor working with a facilitator who, in addition for carrying overall responsibility for managing the session, drew upon her specialist knowledge as a speech and language therapist to develop the learner's interactions when the role-play was paused for reflection-in-action:

> With the intention that learning outcomes for the group and the individual will be met effectively, the tutor facilitates learning from outside the interaction between student

> and (actor), taking control of the overall structure and process of the experiential activity. With the intention that the same learning outcomes for the group and the individual will be met effectively, the actor facilitates learning from both inside and outside the interaction, taking a unique perspective from within the student-led interview, and contributing to the rich dialogue when stepping out of their client role. The qualities of facilitation that maximise learning will apply to both tutor and actor (Stoneham and Feltham, 2009, p.6).

This form of working partnership between actor and facilitator can add significantly to the focussed learning on the session when a constructive collaboration is established. A sufficiently skilled actor and a sufficiently skilled facilitator partnership can assist in holding the space of reflection and emergence. In practice, these partnerships are negotiated as both actor and facilitator learn to work with each other's processes, and they can develop over time. An element of the practice is the artistry and judgement involved in problem formation; the specific issue(s) that will be worked on through the simulation are frequently unknown at the start of the role-play, and actors and facilitators who are not working together in a focused and effective manner with the learner can produce a confusing experience for all concerned. Such is the fluid nature of the medium that these challenges occur in the most mature of actor and facilitator partnerships.

When the actor also has the additional responsibility for facilitating the session, this makes for a demanding role for the actor as they dynamically switch between different roles. The actor is working to maintain their credible, calibrated role whilst also making a mental note of feedback to share when the role-play is paused for reflection. The hybrid role of actor and facilitator shares much common ground with *Teacher in Role* (Ackroyd, 2004; Verriour, 1994). As facilitator, the actor will have overall responsibility for managing the feedback process. Facilitating feedback from the learner and the peer observers can require careful management. Kurtz, Silverman and Draper describe the dual role of actor and facilitator as a 'tightrope', arguing that this role requires enhanced skills beyond those of acting and giving

feedback from their character's perspective. They argue that actors can make excellent facilitators when they are adequately trained and equipped with the requisite skills. They will "need an enhanced understanding of the 'what' of communication skills along with a clear idea of the objectives of the particular session or the particular learners they are facilitating" (Kurtz et al, 2005, p.97). An implication here is that actors who may be effective when working with a separate facilitator may be lack the aptitude, skills and knowledge to take on this additional role themselves.

Chapter 4

Provenance, Forms and Aesthetics of Participatory Actor-Based Applied Theatre

Introduction

The workplace uses a variety of actor-based approaches for training purposes, with variations of role-play and Forum Theatre being the most common. These hybrid and interdisciplinary methods have evolved and freely adapted from practices in disparate fields, from theatrical and Applied Theatre influences, to therapeutic contexts, to military training exercises. In this Chapter, these roots of practice are identified and their distinct qualities are analysed[25]. To support the section on Forum Theatre, two further case studies are included that serve as representative examples of Forum Theatre at work. The first case study examines The Association of Colleges and their use of Forum Theatre for work-based assessors. Theatre was used here to address low NVQ pass rates in the South West. The second study examines the multinational 3M's use of Forum Theatre with the aim of improving the consistency of its performance management system. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the aesthetics of these workplace forms.

Design, Delivery and Evaluation of Actor-Based Training

The actors work on a training programme is part of a wider process of design, delivery and evaluation. Unless actors take on additional roles, their input will be restricted to the

[25] These forms are described in detail as an overview of these forms is currently lacking in the literature.

rehearsal and delivery phases[26]. Actor-based training typically progresses through the following stages from conception to evaluation:

1. Problem setting
2. Research
3. Script and scenario development
4. Rehearsal
5. Delivery
6. Evaluation

The quality of execution of each of these stages will affect the efficacy and impact of the work and it is therefore necessary to examine each stage in turn.

1. Problem setting

During this initial phase the training needs to be addressed are defined. Training may be only one component in a suite of initiatives employed to achieve the desired objective and Applied Theatre techniques will only be effective for certain forms of learning. Whilst traditional forms of education and training can be effective at developing professional knowledge, they are less effective at developing professional competence (Fry et al, 2003; Moon, 2004; Schön, 1991). Experiential learning methods, such as the actor-based methods which are the focus of this study, can be effective in developing professional competence (Collier, 2009; Jarvis, 2003; Moon, 2004). In this Chapter are several examples of the training needs for which actor-based

[26] Experienced actors seem to be increasingly contributing to the other phases of project delivery. For example, some actors with People Deliver Projects take on responsibility for client liaison in addition to their role as an actor in the delivery of training. In terms of remuneration, actors can find themselves at the end of a long chain of subcontractors, and an incentive for taking on additional responsibilities is that they can increase their personal earnings. It is interesting to note that this context sees the return of the Actor Manager, who both perform and run their own company. This multi-faceted role was once popular in mainstream theatre, but in recent decades has become a rare phenomenon in mainstream theatre ('Whatever happened to the actor-manager?' http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2008/jul/16/whateverhappenedtotheactor accessed 14/10/11). Actor Managers may be involved in each stage of the process.

methods were engaged; The Association of Colleges problem of poor literacy and numeracy pass rates, 3M's problem of validity in its performance management system due to high variability between managers of the grading of their staff. As with all the case examples in this thesis, a behavioural aspect was identified, and a consultancy specialising in theatre-based learning was then contracted to address this need.

2. Research

Applied Theatre works with defined audiences in specific contexts and practitioners need to research the context and incorporate these findings into the delivery. This research phase may last a few days or can take several weeks[27] (Gluck & Rubenstein, 2007, p.136). This usually involves a site visit by a researcher who gathers information about organisation. Often employees are interviewed to gain tacit knowledge about their work roles and also their perspectives on the problems they face in the organisation. The researcher is seeking to identify the narratives and metaphors (ibid) used within the organisation for developing Forum Theatre scripts and role-play scenarios. Work-based theatre and role-play can provide a powerful forum to enable dialogue about aspects of the culture which may not be openly part of the discourse. Scott writes of the 'hidden transcripts' (Scott, 1990), which are the conversations that take place outside the hearing of the powerful and enable subtle forms of resistance. "In organisational theatre it is often the 'hidden transcripts' that are enacted in a public arena" (Nissley et al, 2004, p.833). Scott categorises two types of discourse that explore the politics of power and resistance. The 'public transcript' identifies how subservience is

[27] For Dramatic Diversity, their research phase is undertaken by Organisational Psychologists who interview workers at all levels seeking to identify the core issues to be tackled. Through this research they aim to establish the ways in which diversity is and is not embraced by the company. This will include eliciting specific incidents in with a diversity angle; "These stories can range from brief occurrences – such as an ethnic joke told during lunch- to long, ongoing events such as a promotion process tainted by political agendas or interdepartmental warfare"(Gluck et al, 2007, p.136). With this information role-play scenarios are created, typically five or six, with identifying details changed to preserve confidentiality and to provide a sense of distance. These scenarios contain brief information about the context and background to the encounter.

performed; “In ideological terms the public transcript will typically, by its accommodationist tone, provide convincing evidence for the hegemony of dominant values, for the hegemony of dominant discourse” (Scott, 1990, p.4). The term ‘hidden transcript’ is used to characterise the discourse taking place ‘off stage’ beyond the direct observation of the powerful (ibid). Scott is interested in the discrepancy between the public and hidden transcripts, a discrepancy that that is also often explored in organisational theatre and uncovered during a well conducted research phase. The impact of this approach is summarised by Schreyögg who states that “organisational theatre aims at getting the audience deeply involved and confronting it with hidden conflicts, subconscious behavioural patterns or painful truth” (Schreyögg and Höpfl, 2004, p.697). The function of theatre in this process of reflection is famously encapsulated by Shakespeare in Hamlet:

> *..to hold as t’were the mirror up to nature: to show virtue of her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.* Hamlet, III, ii

Brown articulates the meaning of Hamlet’s mirror: “What Hamlet expected the ‘mirror’ of the stage to show was not an ordinary reflection, but one which revealed to the audience the truth about themselves: this is a magic mirror, and not always a flattering one” (Brown, 1997, p.8). The researcher is seeking to identify the hidden narratives which can be aired and perhaps resolved through theatre. Whilst each context presents its own specific and local problems, a dominant theme tackled by Applied Theatre is in relation to the challenges of organisational change, a topic I explore further In Chapter 6.

3. Script and scenario development

Field data from the research phase, perhaps in the form of audio or video recordings of interviews, feeds into a process of dramaturgy. From this data verbatim dialogue can be extracted and used in the development of role-play scenarios and forum scripts, usually

devised or specially adapted for the specific workplace in which they will be used (van Ments, 1999). A well-constructed Forum Theatre script or role-play scenario strives to represent an aspect of the audiences' world with which they will recognise and identify[28]. The challenge for devising work-based scripts is to tap into this shared common identity of the audience as a space for debate. For the theatre to connect with its defined audience, Elizabeth Burns proposes that authenticating conventions must be used to signify this connection between the theatre and the audience (Kershaw, 1992, p.25). These authenticating conventions may include the language used, such as industry specific jargon, as well as recognisable behavioural conventions such as formal or less formal forms of address. The workplace, like any social grouping, can carry tensions which can be detrimental to the mental health and functioning of the group, and a purpose of the script can be to explore these tensions. In addition to scripts, the research phase can also produce a briefing document providing information which the actor can draw upon as required during improvisations.

4. Rehearsal

Short rehearsal periods are common for this form of work. For example, a day's rehearsal for Forum Theatre is typical and it is rare for the budget to provide more time. As a consequence, actors need to be able to quickly create a role and to efficiently devise work with the other performers. Whilst the actor can be prepared to some extent through rehearsal and the research into the context specific issues, language and behaviours, most of the performance will be improvised at the point of delivery. This form of work typically requires minimal stagecraft in terms of props and staging which further reduces the need for rehearsal. The limited stagecraft may not necessarily impact on the efficacy of the practice for reasons outlined below in aesthetics.

[28] Samples from two work-based forum scripts are included later in this chapter.

5. Delivery

A central quality of all the forms discussed in this Chapter is the actor's ability to improvise. Actors need to be able to adapt and react in response to the group dynamics. For example, in Forum Theatre, a playful, humorous performance may resonate with one group, helping to create a productive learning environment; for another, a more serious business-like presentation may be appropriate. The actor needs to read the group and use their judgement as to the appropriate pitch for their role. This judgement is based on what many writers and practitioners argue is central to defining what lies at the heart of acting; that "acting is reacting" (Moseley, 2005). Boal said that acting in Forum Theatre requires that "the actors must be dialectical, must know how to give and take, how to hold back and lead on, how to be creative. They must feel no fear (which is common with professional actors) of losing their place, of standing aside" (Boal, 2002, p.266). Boal articulates the often intuitive judgements which actors working in fluid, improvised settings must make. Actors must balance their spontaneous reactions whilst also maintaining the credibility of their role. At the same time they need to remain focussed on the learning objective(s) of the exercise. Information gathered during the research phase combines with the actor's knowledge, skills and experience to provide a library of tacit knowledge, workplace jargon and behaviours which the actor can draw upon as required.

6. Evaluation

As seen in the *Friends Provident* case study, evaluation is a potential problematic process that seeks to identify some form of return on the investment in training. The following model of evaluation demonstrates that evaluation operates at incremental levels each measuring different variables. It is based on Reid and Barrington's five levels of evaluation and impact (1999, p.257) and Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation (1994).

Level 1: Learner satisfaction: Reactions of trainees to the content of training

Level 2: Learning outcomes: Learning attained during the training period

Level 3: Performance improvement: Did the learning transfer to changed job behaviour back in the work environment?

Level 4: Team Performance improvement: Effect on the trainee's department. Has the training helped departmental performance?

Level 5: Results. Has the training served the ultimate well-being of the organisation in terms of profitability or survival?

Evaluation of the effectiveness of training is recognised as problematic, particularly at the higher levels (Reid & Barrington, 1999, p.258). Part of the difficulty lies in that in order to demonstrate what new skills and knowledge have been acquired it is necessary to know the exact state of knowledge and skill of the learner prior to the start of training. Whilst this can be achieved (see the *Peugeot* example below) it is resource intensive. In order to evaluate the impact at the higher levels the challenge is to establish cause and effect (ibid). Precisely isolating the impact of actor-based training on organisational performance is difficult due to the complex social arena in which behavioural skills operate. Kirkpatrick (1994) identifies four necessary conditions for change to occur. These are:

1. *The person must have the desire to change.*
2. *The person must know what to do and how to do it.*
3. *The person must work in the right climate.*
4. *The person must be rewarded for changing.*

Kirkpatrick states that "training programmes can accomplish the first two requirements by creating a positive attitude towards the change and by teaching the necessary knowledge and skills" (Kirkpatrick, 1994, p.32). This analysis demonstrates the potentially complex factors

that influence the impact of training and that some factors are outside of its control. The factors of climate and reward can mitigate against the desired ultimate results and impact of training. For these reasons evaluation processes may concentrate on levels 1 and 2, as reaction and learning can be established relatively easily through the use of feedback forms. Despite the complexity, desired impact can be achieved and measured, as I will explore later in an example of Forum Theatre that was able to evaluate the intervention at the fifth level of results. This example will explore the use of Forum Theatre by the Association of Colleges and the consequent improvement in NVQ Literacy & Numeracy pass rates, suggesting that Kirkpatrick's four conditions for change were satisfied here. Kirkpatrick's conditions are helpful in understanding why a well implemented actor-based training programme may fail to transfer to behavioural change in the workplace; the training event is just one stage in a complex process of change.

An example of an evaluation of an actor-based role-play intervention is provided by research conducted by Mel Hall and Dr Mark Forshaw at Staffordshire University. The Department of Psychology and Mental Health conducted an independent study of the impact of actor-based role-play on 49 staff who worked for the *Peugeot Motor Company.* The training provider was *Impromptu Limited.* Six qualitative questionnaires were completed by participants prior to working with the actors and again at the end of the course. The questionnaires measured decision learning styles, locus of control, public and private self-consciousness, confidence and self-perception and delegates perceptions of the impact of role-play (Hall & Forshaw, 2009, p.1). The report concluded that the use of actor-based role-play raised self-efficacy beliefs in participant's communication skills, listening skills and self-confidence (ibid, p.19). The use of actor role-play was found to achieve a depth of learning that is rarely achieved through other methods (ibid, p.18). Undertaking an evaluation of this depth requires time and expertise. This research was conducted over a three month period (October 2009 – December 2009),

which is a level of resource beyond that available to many training programmes. Despite the robust methodology, the research findings are at level 1 (reaction) and level 2 (learning outcome) of the model of evaluation, which are the least problematic levels to assess. Evaluating the impact of the workshop at higher levels would be a more ambitious research undertaking, and whilst the increased confidence of the participants suggests it is likely their newly acquired skills will transfer back to the workplace, this level of assessment was beyond the scope of this particular research project.

It is due to these problems of evaluation that we must rely on theory to understand the impact of theatre-based interventions. I have already articulated general points of theory arising from the case studies, and this theoretical discussion builds throughout this thesis. This chapter closely analyses specific forms of actor-based Applied Theatre. In chapter 5 I survey the learning theories that underpin the practice and in Chapter 6 I theorise the impact of the practice in terms of supporting an agenda of structural change.

Performance at Work: Forms of Actor-Based Learning

Next I will identify and analyse the variety of forms in which the actor and performance are used in workplace training. I have grouped these variations of actor-based work into three categories. These are: ***Role-play***, ***Forum Theatre*** and ***Simulation Exercises.*** Actors are also used to provide interactive simulations for workplace assessments, and in practice it is common for actors to work in both development and assessment contexts. However, as

assessment is distinct from learning it is not within the focus of this thesis. See this footnote[29] for discussion of this related form of practice.

[29] Actors are used in role-play simulations for the purpose of assessment to test candidates' communication skills. Assessment is closely related to training as it often drives the curriculum and what is assessed can shape what is taught and learned (Fry et al, 2003, p.253). Whilst the focus of this thesis is on training and development applications, all of the actors who I have interviewed for this research and who act in work-based contexts have also worked in assessment contexts. Actor/training companies commonly provide actors for both assessment and/or training, and so the inclusion of assessment here provides a more complete picture of the type of work which actors deliver in the workplace.

The use of actors to simulate standardised interactions with candidates provides a mechanism for assessors to observe and measure how the candidate performs against criteria. Often role-plays with actors constitute only one form of assessment as part of a series of tests which can include written exercises, group exercises and presentations. This is integration of elements into a major task can reduce the problem of fragmentation of competences resulting in an "atomised assessment of the many elements rather than a holistic assessment" (Burns, 2002, p.239). Assessment exercises are undertaken to establish a candidate's suitability for employment, promotion or retention or to identify training and development needs (Reid & Barrington, 1999, p.224). These experiences can therefore be stressful for candidates and the implications for passing and failing can be far reaching (e.g. Whelan et al, 2005, p.200). Assessment centres can process large numbers of candidates, for example at the Clinical Skills Assessment Centre in Croydon in 2010 3,585 GP registrars were assessed undertaking 46,605 role-plays with simulated patients (source: http://www.rcgp-curriculum.org.uk/mrcgp/reports.aspx accessed 17/10/11). Assessment procedures are open to challenges if they do not deliver a fair and consistent process for all candidates. This requirement places particular demands and restrictions on actors working in assessment settings.

The actor may replicate their standardised role many times, repeating the role-play for each candidate so that their behaviours and responses can be assessed against the same scenario. I was once memorably catheterised 72 times over a two day period for the assessments of the communication skills of Accident and Emergency Doctors applying for promotion for the role of Registrar. The same role may be played by many actors, and consequently inter-actor variability must be reduced to ensure fairness. This can be achieved through training for actors prior to working with candidates. For example, an example demonstration of the scenario may be performed which other actors observe and then model when working with candidates. Training can ensure that candidates are provided with the same specific information in the form of verbal and non-verbal cues (Russell, 2011, p.481). Even after this process of training and calibration, no two actors will deliver identical performances. For this reason some assessment centres are designed with multiple assessments role-plays with different actors in order to reduce the impact of individual variability.

A problem with the use of simulation for assessments is the assumption that behaviours demonstrated in the simulation can be generalised to performance in the real-world work-place (Burns, 2002, p.339). Fry et al state that an assessment process that produces highly consistent and reliable results is not in itself an indicator that it is measuring the attributes and characteristics that are required (2003, p.261). The issue here is the tension between validity and reliability. Thislethwaite and Ridgway define validity as "how well a test or instrument measures what it should be measuring" (2006, p.116) and reliability as concerned with the "reproducibility or consistency of a test" (ibid, p.117). They state that "validity is often gained at the expense of reliability and vice versa" (2006, p.116). This tension impacts on the actor, as the driver for reliability may define and restrict the parameters within which they improvise their roles, consequently restricting the actor's ability to fluently improvise and react credibly. As a consequence of this compromise to realism, the validity of the assessment as a test of how the candidate may behave in the real world can be reduced. In training situations the actor has a duty of fairness is to the individual learner, and they may calibrate their performance so as to provide an effective level of challenge for this specific encounter. In assessment, the actor's duty of fairness is to

Role-Play and the Dramatic Difference Through the Use of Actors

Actors in role-play help transport the delegate into a parallel reality where they can work through interpersonal challenges at different levels according to their own skill maturity and experience

Chris Cotton, Director, Training in Action, email correspondence

Role-play is the most common form in which actors are used in the workplace. There are many variations of actor-based role-play, typically based around the simulation of a dyadic dialogue. These various forms have themselves developed out of peer role-play, where participants role-play with each other[30]. The term role-play is an umbrella term used to describe a wide variety of approaches, as Baim, Brookes and Mountford state "Role play is used and adapted so widely that there is no universally agreed definition" (2002, p.150). They identify a wide range of contexts where the term is used, including describing imaginative play of children, therapeutic encounters including psychodrama and large scale disaster planning. Baim, Brooks & Mountford provide a definition of role-play which captures the meaning of the

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be consistent both to each candidate and with other actors performing the same role for different candidates. Actors who fail to demonstrate an understanding of this distinction in their assessment role-plays exposes the assessment process to the risk of being challenged on grounds of reliability. John McTaggart describes The Police recruitment process which serves as an example of where the tension between reliability and validity has produced a form of actor role-play that has evolved into a distinct form of examination for which specific skills must be learnt and demonstrated by the candidates. McTaggart advises that candidates learn to 'play the game': "So, to answer the question as to why some people pass the assessment who will never make effective police officers in a million years, it is because they play the game. No matter how much the police service may argue against it, if you know how to play the game, you can pass the assessment." (McTaggart, 2010, p.20). In this assessment process, the actors have pre scripted lines of dialogue which they are required to deliver on cue. Whilst this methodology produces a highly consistent and reliable assessment process, it has done at the expense of validity. The candidates' interactions with the actors are no longer a credible proxy of a real world interaction, but have become instead a test of candidates' abilities in passing a particular form of examination.

[30] Nissley et al (2005) use the term 'organisational actor' to refer to peers role-playing with each other. Due to their use of 'actor' with a different meaning to which I use it here, I have decided upon 'peer role-play' as the most suitable term for this study.

term as it is commonly used in both peer and actor role–play, describing role-play as falling into two broad categories. These are *Role-Play for Exploring, Raising Awareness and Encouraging change.* The second is *Skills Focussed Role-Plays* (Baim et al, 2002, p.151). In work based training both these categories of role-play are used. Johnson and Johnson state that 'role-playing is a vital training tool for mastering new skills" (Johnson and Johnson, 2000, p.60) and they identify four qualities of the method. These are:

1. Experience the situation concretely.
2. Identify effective and ineffective behaviour.
3. Gain insight into this behaviour.
4. Practice the skills required to manage the situation constructively.

The extent to which these attributes are achieved will depend on sufficient time for the exercise and the extent to which the exercise is set up and managed, the motivations of the participant and the facilitation of the process of reflection.

Morry van Ments (van Ments, 1999) has defined the categories of roles that can be played by role-players. These are; where the participant plays themselves; where they play a real person other than themselves (either within or outside the learning group) and thirdly; playing an imagined character. On work-based training, actor role-play usually requires the participant(s) to play themselves, with the other role(s) taken by an actor or actors otherwise unknown to the participant.

As I will demonstrate, actor-based role-play provides a learning space distinct from peer role-play, but despite some significant differences both peer and actor role-play share common ground. Therefore the literature on peer role-play provides a useful basis for discussion of these shared aspects which I have drawn upon throughout this thesis (Baim et al, 2002;

Baruch, 2002; Blatner, 2007; Bolton & Heathcote, 1999; Corsini et al, 1961; Koppett, 2001; Maier et al, 1975; van Ments, 1999). There is very little literature providing a voice for the actors' experience within role-play and workplace Applied Theatre, (for example, Alreaek & Baierhem, 2005; Thislethwaite and Ridgeway, 2006).

Actor role-play is a hybrid form with theatrical, therapeutic and pedagogical roots. Maier, Solem and Maier (1975) state that work-focused peer role-play derives from both the therapeutic work of Jacob Moreno and the case-study approach to learning developed at Harvard and published in the 1950's. Moreno developed his methodology of Psychodrama as a form of dramatized therapy (Feldhendler, 1994, p.87) using role-play whereby personal narratives could be rewritten through dramatizing troublesome personal events and exploring alternative approaches. Case studies provide a setting where theory must negotiate the power dynamics, personalities and time pressures of a specific context. Moreno's role-playing technique was adapted and combined with the Harvard case study approach to produce the peer role-playing technique suitable for work based training. The earliest record that I have been able to find of actors being used for role-play dates from 1962. Howard Barrows introduced simulated patients for medical communication skills development at McMaster University in Ontario. He published his work in 1971, and the technique has been widely disseminated and developed further since then (Thislethwaite & Ridgway, 2006, p.2). The form also shares common ground with Teacher-in-Role (Ackroyd, 2004; Bolton & Heathcote, 1999; Verriour, 1994). This is a pedagogical tool where the teacher performs a role-play for pupils in order to achieve learning objectives. To the threads of therapy and pedagogy, actor-based role-play also draws upon acting skills. These skills are adapted and applied in specific ways to support the educational aims of the exercise. In Chapter 3 I theorised how the skills of acting can be adapted and augmented so as to best serve this educational purpose.

Whilst peer and actor role-play share common qualities there are also important differences. It is to a discussion of these differences to which I turn next. In the table below I note the strengths and weaknesses of actor and peer role-play in relation to supporting learning objectives.

Table 2. Strengths and weaknesses of actor and peer role-play in relation to supporting learning objectives.

	Actor based role-play	Peer based role-play
Strengths	The actor is 'blank canvas' serving the objectives – no prior/on-going association with the participant. Ability to act, generate credible behaviours and generate atmosphere, in order to facilitate the participants entry into the 'as if' space of the role-play. The actor can support the learning space through their commitment to the process. Use prior information, judgement and in-role feedback to calibrate the level of challenge to the participants Zone of Proximal Development, and scaffold learning. Feedback is related to the here and now due to no prior association. As the actor is not part of the specific work culture, the actor brings new perspectives, which may challenge group think and provide a fresh perspective. Lack of technical expertise focuses the learning on behaviours and the interaction, not on technical knowledge.	Peers may have greater knowledge of technical considerations; therefore these may be tackled effectively in the role-play. Low cost.
Weaknesses	Expensive resource. Limited technical knowledge of the context. Limited efficacy when tightly scripted and controlled by management. Actors unskilled in the pedagogical aspects of their role may compromise learning and at worst may cross ethical boundaries.	Difficulty of peers holding/entering the 'as if' space. Familiarity with peers and well established modes of communication may limit exploration into new territory. Variable acting quality.

The use of actors provides greater control over the learning environment than is possible with peer role-play. Whilst for Nissley et al this is seen as providing greater management control

over the process (2005), I suggest that this is not always the case, as for example with bespoke role-plays where participants may choose to practice conversations where management is challenged. However, actors must manage the tension between working with the participants and the requirements of those paying for the work. The thoughts of a sample of actors on this tension are explored in Chapter 3. The actor's job is to support the learning objectives which she or he can do in several ways. The actor can hold the 'as if' space of the simulation which work colleagues role-playing with each other may find difficult or embarrassing. Peer role-play can inspire resistance. Kate Collier's Phd Thesis examines peer role-play from a theatrical perspective and reflects on problems of engaging participants (Collier, 2005); Gavin Bolton reports from a particularly challenging workshop where some of their group initially refused to engage describing the method as 'bloody rubbish' (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999, p.61). Learning something new can inspire feelings of anxiety which may be magnified in the social learning space of role-play. Resistance is a possible tactic to avoid such uncomfortable feelings. For the participant to enter into the potentially risky and anxious place of a role-play, an atmosphere of safety must be carefully crafted along with feelings of trust that the experience will be worthwhile. The actor can support the participant in this potentially exposing and uncomfortable place of learning through their commitment to the process and also through calibrating their performance to a level of challenge that is neither overwhelming nor too trivial. These aspects of work-based acting are theorised in Chapter 3.

A variety of forms of actor-based role-play have evolved. At its most basic, the actor is required to perform a credible, pre-defined role. More demanding forms require the actor to give feedback, to develop roles within the session and at its most demanding also to facilitate the entire process. I have adapted Thislethwaite and Ridgway's (2006, p.9) work on the various levels at which simulated patients may work to apply more generally to the work-place

actor. This describes the various stages of development which an actor may pass through as they develop their skills and take on more responsibility.

Different levels of work-based actor role-play

- Role-plays a well-developed role; does not give feedback
- Role-plays a well-developed role; gives feedback out of role in a facilitator-led session
- Role-plays a well-developed role; gives feedback in role in facilitator-led session
- Gives feedback in and out of role and can change the feedback mode to suit the desired learning outcome
- Role-plays a well-developed role and can act as a facilitator of a small group
- Works with facilitator. Builds roles during the session from material supplied by the learners (Bespoke role-play)
- As actor/facilitator builds roles during the session from material supplied by the learners

From the above list it can be seen that the role-play actor bases their role either from an existing scenario or they build their role live, during the session. Building a role during the session creates additional challenges for the actor and these aspects warrant further investigation.

Bespoke Role-Play

Bespoke role-play is the name used by some actors and trainers for a specific form of role-play where the participant works with autobiographical material which is simulated together with the actor. The actor's character is based on a description provided by the participant as to the

typical behaviours and responses of the person they are representing. For the participant, bespoke role-play can meet a relevant and personalised training need which cannot be addressed by other learning technologies. The setting for bespoke role-plays is never in the present, situated either as a rehearsal space for a future dialogue, or as a space to work with a historical scenario. Future-based scenarios assist the learner to focus on a specific problem that is unique and highly contextual, providing a space to reflect on and rehearse alternative approaches before having the real conversation at some point in the future. Historical material may be worked with to support the participant's reflective process of learning from a past experience, and may also be a therapeutic exercise to bring closure to a problematic encounter through providing an alternative narrative to what actually happened.

Ethical aspects of bespoke role-play

The improvised and autobiographical aspects of bespoke role-play raise specific ethical problems. Bespoke role-play can all too easily stray beyond the realms of work-based skills development and into the realms of therapy. The practice requires carefully established boundaries and must not stray into territory where strong emotions and painful memories may be unearthed without adequate support. To do so would cross an ethical line and duty of care to both actor and participant and the work may have a damaging impact on the individuals involved. The challenge for practitioners is that the boundary between the therapeutic and therapy are rarely neatly defined. Baim, Brookes and Mountford consider the particular risks when participative drama is focused on personal issues, stating "Because drama-based methods are often highly spontaneous, we should be particularly mindful when we raise issues or facilitate activities that may be traumatic or emotionally volatile for participants" (Baim et al, 2002, p.33). Nicholson echoes this view, recognising that "in non-therapeutic settings sometimes the narrative is taken in unexpected directions by participants, and this may touch nerves or invoke feelings for individual members of a group" (Nicholson, 2005, p.67). Role-play scenarios using fictional narratives are generally safer than

autobiographical material due to their distance from reality, but all forms of role-play may generate surprising levels of emotion and emotions are frequently expressed by learners in role-play. Chris Johnston in *House of Games* states that "those new to drama sometimes over-exaggerate the potential damage incurred in expressing emotion" (Johnston, 2005, p.99). He argues that emotions should not be feared or excluded from the workshop; "A respectful circumspection towards inner emotion may prove a better guide than fearfulness" (ibid, p.100). The expression of strong emotions can have a legitimate place during role-plays, but this is distinct from the specific intention of probing personal problematic emotional areas that cross the boundary into therapy and into unethical practice. Essential components for ethical practice are *Informed Consent* and *Mutual Agreement*. The learners need to know that they are going to participate in a role-play, and that they will analyse their own behaviour and the behaviour of the colleagues for the purposes of learning applicable to the workplace. Participation should be voluntary, and learners can refuse to take part. Johnson & Johnson state that "little consideration has been given to the ethics of conducting experiential learning activities" (Johnson and Johnson, 2000, p.68). They contribute to this emerging debate by proposing that those working with experiential learning activities need to develop their own personal code of ethics to which they hold themselves accountable.

There is no standard terminology for this specific form of role-play and training companies use their own terms to describe similar processes. For example, *Training in Action* has used the term 'Customised Role-Play'. *Mark Huggins Associates* uses the term 'real play' for the same form[31], perhaps borrowing the term from the field of coaching and mentoring where *real play* has been used to describe a form of peer role-play based on autobiographical material (Garvey et al, 2009). Trainer Rachel Dymond avoids the term 'role-play' altogether due to its potentially negative associations for the learner due to pervious poor experiences with peer role-play and

[31] www.corporatedrama.co.uk accessed 1/8/10

refers to the form simply 'skills practice'. *People Deliver Projects* describe the form simply as Experiential Learning.

Bespoke role-play requires specific skills of the actor. They must be able to rapidly generate a credible character which may be of any age or gender. More than any other form of work-based theatre bespoke role-play requires the actor to be prepared to work with uncertainty and to improvise a credible character with minimal preparation. Such rapid generation of character presents significant problems and pitfalls. For actors working in theatre or film who are playing a real person, there is typically an extended research phase into the psychological and biographical aspect of their character (Cantrell and Luckhurst, 2010, p.3). In the workplace the actor may have just a few minutes for their research. The actor must also work with the learner to frame the scenario in terms of behaviours and professional competence. Bespoke role-plays are not a forum for developing technical professional knowledge and this must be understood by the learner. The practice raises questions and issues for the actor such as:

> *How to support the participant whilst also not colluding with them by reducing the bespoke role to a stereotype?*
>
> *How to judge how far to push the level of challenge for a participant who has courageously selected a difficult encounter?*
>
> *Conversely how to nudge a participant who has selected an unproblematic encounter into the realm of developmental challenge?*

These tailored role-plays require the actor to have grounding in general business concepts and language as well as context specific tacit knowledge which they can draw upon during the improvisation. Without this grounding, the actor may not be able to provide the authenticating conventions necessary for induction and sustaining the 'as if' world. Whilst the participant may have been given time for prior preparation to write their own scenario, the

briefing of the actor by the learner typically takes just a few minutes, and the actor will have time only to focus on the essential information needed to play a character. Whilst there is no standard briefing, the following questions are typical when establishing a bespoke role-play character:

- *Describe this person to me in one sentence.*
- *What is your relationship to them?*
- *What is the context of this conversation?*
- *What do you want to get out of this conversation?*
- *How do you think they will react to you?*
- *Is this person talkative, or more circumspect with their language?*
- *Are there phrases they might typically use, and if so what are they?*

Essentially, the actor is working to rapidly establish what Stanislavski defined as the given circumstances of their character; the *who, what, when, where* and the *why* of the character whom the actor is playing (Stanislavski, 1980).

In my experience it is common for participants to report that bespoke role-plays can feel very real and that the actor's characterisation was 'just like' the real person. In Chapter 3 we heard from participants who describe their bespoke role-play experiences as 'frighteningly real'. Such participant reaction is interesting as the elements of the role-play which may be considered as 'real' are a simulation and these are themselves moderated by the artificial setting of the simulation taking place in front of spectators. This artificiality is reinforced by the frequent pauses of the role-play for reflection. Time can be paused, wound forwards and backwards and alternative 'takes' may be undertaken, with the purpose of striving to find the

best possible outcome in the given circumstances. How is it then possible for the participant to describe their experiences as real in conditions of such obvious artificiality?

Dan Rebellato has tackled this question in relation to an audience's experience of representational theatre. He questions notions that theatre is illusionary and argues that theatre is metaphorical, in that in theatre we are invited to think of one thing in terms of another (Rebellato, 2009, p.25). Rebellato's notion that theatrical representation is metaphorical provides an explanation of how the bespoke role-play represents the participant's autobiographical world. The actor is performing a metaphorical representation of the other party in the dialogue. The notion of metaphor explains how bespoke role-play can effectively create a simulation when the actor may not resemble their character. As a metaphor, the actor is not limited by notions of resemblance (ibid). Hence the actor can potentially play across appearance, age, gender and cultural background.

Metaphors work by foregrounding specific meanings whilst marginalising others (Morgan 1997; Tietze et al, 2003). I suggest that the process of the participant briefing the actor provides the actor with information to foreground behavioural characteristics to enable the metaphor to function. The actor is seeking to empathise with the character they are required to play, using their skill and judgement to construct and perform their character from the partial information provided by the participant. This can be thought of as the actor trying to read the metaphor that the participant has in mind.

I suggest the actor is seeking to identify and perform sufficient signifiers for the metaphor to function. What constitutes sufficient signification will depend on the unique conditions of each bespoke role-play. This could vary from the actor doing very little beyond listening to the

participant to performing a display of strong emotion in a fast paced interaction. Whatever the specifics of the dialogue, I suggest that the notion of *appresentation* is useful for theorising how the superficial qualities of the simulation can generate meaningful associations for the learner. Appresentation is the term that Marton and Booth (1997 in Moon 2004) use to describe how an external fragmentary experience triggers a far more meaningful internal experience.

> Appresentation is the manner in which a part of something that is perceived as an external experience can stimulate a much more complete or richer experience of the 'whole' thing to be conjured up…Internal experience can therefore be much richer than external experience and when we have information about an object, we will tend to respond to it on the basis of the appresentation of the object in internal experience instead of the thinner information 'of that moment' from the external experience of it (Moon, 2004, p.23-24).

This suggests the actor provides the fragmentary external stimulus which activates the participant's rich network of internal associations. The actor serves as a metaphorical key into the participants own network of internal associations. Establishing the actor as a meaningful metaphor for the participant is aided through the process of the participant creating their own scenario and briefing the actor. During the role-play, the actor reflects back the signifiers which were identified during the briefing stage, augmenting their performance through reactive improvisation drawing on their tacit knowledge of the context. The lack of prior association between the participant and the actor may aid the participant's imaginative reading of the actor as metaphor, as the participant doesn't have to filter the conflicting associations which may be generated by role-playing with a peer whom they know well. This can be thought of as the actor providing a blank canvas upon which the participant can project their imagination.

The notions of metaphor and appresentation contribute to an explanation as to how participants can describe bespoke role-play as *real*. To these aspects I suggest there is an

important additional element, which are the emotions which are triggered in the participant during their embodied engagement in the process. Learning can trigger feelings of anxiety, as learning something new requires engagement to some extent with the unknown. I suggest that in a well-executed role-play the actor seeks to calibrate its level of challenge so that the learner is positioned in a place of not knowing in which new knowledge may emerge from the feedback the experience generates.

The Role-Play Process

Whilst there are many variations of actor-based role-play, they will typically follow the process illustrated in the following diagram:

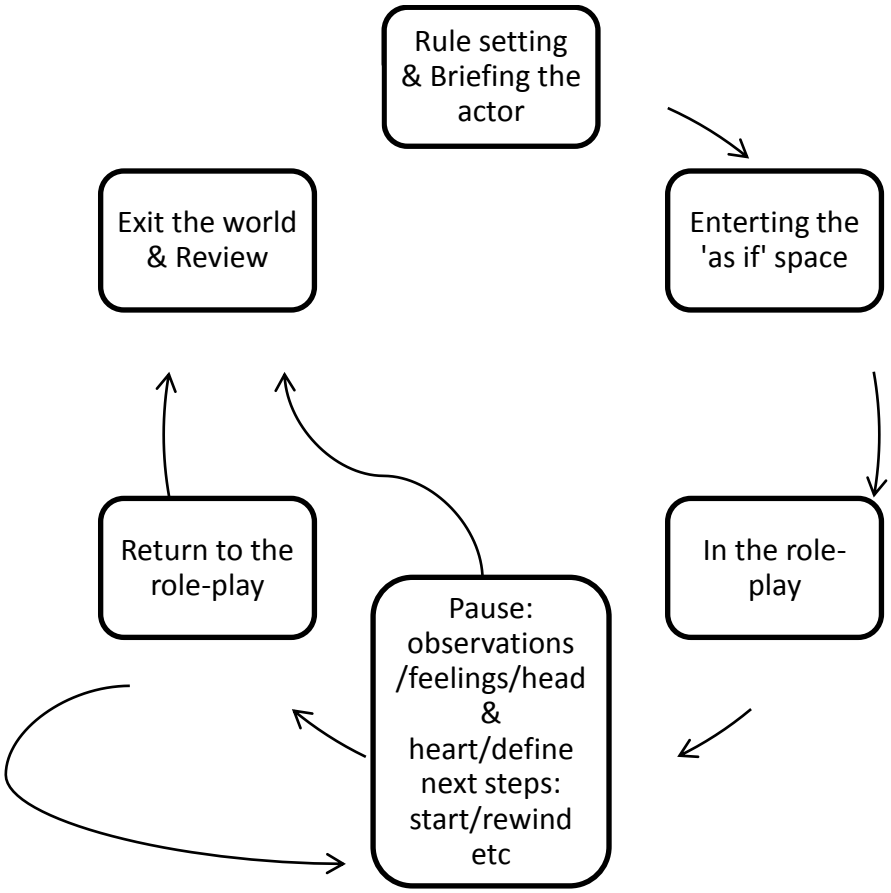

Fig. 3 A six phase process of facilitated actor-based role-play

The model provides a framework within which to examine the typical actor-based role-play process. These six phases are discussed next.

Phase 1. Rule setting & Briefing the actor

Before the role-play begins, the rules by which the exercise will operate are explained to the participants. When present, a trainer facilitates this process, or this function may be taken by an actor/facilitator. The rules are typically explained as follows.

1. Larger groups will be split smaller groups of up to six, each working with an actor and a facilitator.

2. The group will take it in turns for each learner to have an opportunity to practise their skills.

3. Learners waiting for their turn also participate by considering how they would handle the role-play, providing an opportunity for vicarious learning.

4. The action can stop at any point, but only at the discretion of the learner in the 'hot seat' or the facilitator.

5. During a pause, the learner can then ask the facilitator or their colleagues for advice, before returning to the role-play.

6. The actor may also be asked how they feel the interview is going from their perspective.

7. The role-play can then restart from any point in the interaction as required, even going back to the beginning if necessary.

8. After each role-play the group will reflect on what happened. The facilitator manages the feedback involving as many perspectives as possible. The learner invited to feedback first, followed by the peer observers and then the actor.

Once the groups are established, and the first participant has volunteered, the briefing of the actor can begin. Here the actor may need to refine the given circumstances (Stanislavski, 1980) to tailor a generic brief to the participant's specific context and work role, or, in the case of bespoke role-plays which are discussed later, co-author a scenario with the participant. Many writers identify the need for this particularization and detail as important induction concepts, for example, refer to Yardley-Matwiejczuk's table of authors in (Yardley-Matwiejczuk, 1997, p.58). The actor will need to perform their character in a manner which the participant will interpret as credible. An element of this credibility is predictability (ibid, p.122), that the actors characterisation and reactions must be coherent, which can be summarised as the "action/reaction/decision wave sequence in which we're all involved in every moment in our lives" (Merlin, 2001, p.53). A subtle, but important, function of the actor during this briefing is to connect with the participant and work to rapidly establish trust and to reinforce that they are working to support their learning. It is unfortunately not uncommon for participants to have had poor experiences of working with actors and role-play in the past, which may add to a sense of performance anxiety and exposure which the participant may be experiencing. The actor may need to work to mitigate against these anxieties. Yardley-Matwiejczuk proposes the notions of *particularization* and *prescening* as the two major principles for induction into the 'as if' world of the role-play (Yardley-Matwiejczuk, 1997, p.95). The simulation can be particularized through agreement over the contextual setting of the role-play and presenced by suggesting the real space that is being recreated for the role-play. Often an office environment is being recreated, so a table and two chairs are sufficient. Generally the training spaces where these role-play takes place have at hand the minimal

signifiers that are necessary to provide the particularisation of the imaginary space for work-based role-plays.

Phase 2: Entering the 'as if' space

Of central importance to all forms of role-play is its quality of 'As if'. The role-play exists within a framework "that serves to separate the events within it, from events occurring outside it in the mundane world" (Yardley-Matwiejczuk, 1997, p.77). The role-play requires participants to imaginatively engage in a scene. In this way the role-play provides a rehearsal space where new strategies may be tested and mistakes can be made and learnt from, away from the consequences of the real world. It is common for a participant to need a few moments to get into their stride and enter the 'as if' world of the role-play. The actor will need to use their judgement as to when the participant is engaged in the simulation. In practice, this may mean the actor needs to hold back a little in these first few moments, starting slowly before accelerating the role-play to the speed of real life. Some participants present as feeling a little self-conscious in these first few moments. Perhaps the hint of a smile or a lack of fluency from the participant provide the actor with the cue that they need to judge the intensity of their performance carefully in order to scaffold the participants transition into the 'as if' space.

Phase 3: In the role-play

The actor supports the learning in the role-play by calibrating their performance to the learning objectives. Experienced facilitator Rachel Dymond states this is what actors can bring to the role-play;

> *They bring focus, intensity, they engage the delegates. They bring a serious commitment to the process and therefore the delegate feels safe to participate. The actor holds the energy of the role-play, maintaining consistency and depth. They are able to go straight back into character after a pause, and can hold the intensity during a pause for reflection.* (research interview)

For the participant, being the locus of this intense engagement from the actor can further explain why participants may describe role-play experiences as 'feeling real'. Whilst the role-play actor will strive for a credible characterisation, the purpose of the role-play is to aid learning. There are therefore circumstances where the actor may sacrifice realism for educational efficacy. The role-play actor may consciously break the empathic link facilitated by realistic acting so as to highlight a pedagogical issue, an approach that shares some common ground with Brechtian acting. For example, the actor could artificially extend a period of silence to enable a chatterbox to practise waiting for the other person to speak first. Perhaps the actors manage this dual role of performance and pedagogue by ensuring their responses are a consequent *reaction* to what the participant says, grounded within their character brief. By grounding the actors input in reactions, their performance is able to reflect back to the participant the impact they are having in the dialogue, providing the participant with in-role feedback.

The actor's credible reactions can develop the participant's *self-efficacy* (Bandura, 1986) in the likely outcome of a similar dialogue in the real world. The use of Applied Theatre to build self-efficacy is examined further in Chapter 3. Through the device of freezing the action of the role-play, the learning can be expressed and captured which might otherwise be lost in the experience of engagement in the fictional world. The experience doesn't work to negate potentially powerful feelings of catharsis or empathy, but to value these feelings as part of a wider process of behavioural change. This focussed environment of safety and discovery, of working through a multiplicity of perspectives and processing both cognitive and affective feedback, is made possible due to the format working in small groups, of typically around four or five participants working with one actor and a facilitator.

Phase 4: The Pause

Decisions as to when the pause the role-play will vary depending on how interventionist the facilitator chooses to be. From my experience in practice and focus group research with facilitators (*Training in Action*[32] Trainers Forum, April 2010) it is apparent that there is considerable variation in facilitator's judgement as to when and why a role-play should be paused for reflection. There are circumstances where it will be appropriate not to pause the role-play at all, processing all the feedback at the close.

The pause to reflect is an important component of the efficacy of the format, fostering the ability of the participant to reflect-in-action. Reflection-in-action is a quality which Schön (Schön, 1987, 1991) identifies as central to developing effective professional practice.

Phase 5: Return to the Role-Play

After a pause the role-play may then be re-entered to enable the participant to try new approaches based on their own reflections and any feedback they have received. This cycle may be repeated any number of times, before a point of progress is reached and then the role-play is stopped and final learning points and reflections may be shared.

Step 6: Exit the 'as if' world & review.

Typically the facilitator will intervene to bring the role-play to a close. The actor can support this transition back into the mundane world from the 'as if' world of the role-play by dropping their characterisation. Depending on the intensity of the simulation, there may need to be some acknowledgment and debriefing of emotions which the role-play may have released for

[32] www.tia.co.uk

the participant. Feedback from any observers, which may be invited at any of the pause points will also be shared at this closing stage.

As can be seen from the model, the participant switches from engagement in the 'as if' role-play, to stepping out of the role-play and reflecting on their performance, to listening to the reflections of the observers, actor and facilitator. See Stoneham and Feltham for a case study and analysis of this dialogic process in a clinical education setting in *The Act of Dialogue* (Stoneham and Feltham, 2009). We can describe the learner's mode of engagement as one that shifts on a continuum between participation to reflexive observation, providing a space for multiple perspectives to be explored. The encounter segue ways through a range of vantage points from participation, to aesthetic reflection and back into participation. This plurality of perspectives can allow for cathartic release and the expression of empathy without these emotions being the end point of the experience, as they may be in the bourgeoisie theatre of realism to which Brecht strived to overcome through his epic theatre and techniques of *verfremdung* (Brecht and Willett, 1978; Willett, 1984; Mumford, 2009; Counsell, 1996). When skilfully facilitated and executed, the role-play can selectively exploit the qualities of realism to physically create an otherwise imaginary dialogue any moment of which can be expanded and analysed to provide new insights and learning.

Actor-based role-play shares common ground with Forum Theatre. Role-play can be thought of as a distilled moment of Forum Theatre, focussing on an encounter between the protagonist, played by the learner, and the antagonist, played by the actor. Forum Theatre in the workplace is discussed next.

Forum Theatre in the Workplace

Forum Theatre is still in its infancy, and much research and experimentation will be required before this new form reaches its full maturity; at present we are still at the stage of exploration, of finding and opening up new ways of working

(Boal, 2002, p.253)

The term 'Forum Theatre' is often used to describe the short interactive plays used in work-based training. The name and approach of Forum Theatre is strongly associated with Brazilian Augusto Boal as part of his Theatre of the Oppressed. Whilst similar theatre-based peer learning approaches have been developed, for example Rohd's *activating scenes* (1998 in Baim et al, 2002, p.162), Forum Theatre is the name most commonly used to refer to interactive theatre in work-based training. The question therefore arises as to how work-based Forum Theatre differs from Boal's model in both politics and form. Next I will summarise the key aspects of Boal's Forum Theatre before moving onto examine how the form and content of Forum Theatre has evolved to serve the requirements of the work-place.

Augusto Boal is credited with the creation of Forum Theatre, as part his exploration into participatory drama techniques in the unstable political environment of South America in the 1960s and 70s. His work was heavily influenced by the pedagogic principles of Brazilian Educationalist Paulo Friere (Friere, 2000; Babbage, 2004). Boal developed non-didactic interactive theatrical methods that encouraged participants to develop their own strategies for finding the language to speak out against and challenge oppression. Freire defined oppression as 'The Culture of Silence' arguing that to be fully human is to guide one's own destiny (1996). Boal's techniques sought to challenge oppression and he described these participatory techniques as the arsenal of the Theatre of the Oppressed. These techniques use drama to rehearse action that may then be extrapolated into real life. Forum Theatre is the most well-known method from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (Sullivan et al, 2007, p.218; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009, p.69). Boal argued that a monologic theatre is oppressive,

reducing the audience to passive receivers. He asserted that when theatre is transformed from monologic to dialogic the potential for transformation and liberation is realised (Boal, 2000). A Forum Theatre event is a short play performed by actors which examines a dilemma or some form of oppression designed to resonate with an audience. After the initial performance, the theatre enters an interactive phase where the play is re-run and this time the audience can stop the play at any time and intervene to test alternative strategies to challenge oppression. Boal developed his own terminology for the key roles in Forum Theatre. The facilitator who leads the workshop is called the **Joker** (Boal, 2000, p.119), so named to suggest that, like the joker in a pack of cards, the role has no particular affiliation (Sullivan et al, 2007, p.223). Boal also refers to the joker as 'the difficultator' rather than 'facilitator' (Jackson in Boal, 1994, p.xix). The Joker handles the interaction between the world of the play and the world of the audience. Boal referred to this interchange as *metaxis.* Boal defined metaxis as:

> The state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image. The participant shares and belongs to these two autonomous worlds (Boal, 1994, p.43).

The state of being in both the fiction and reality is an important concept in theatre based pedagogy (e.g. Alraek & Baerheim, 2010). Boal terms audience members **spect-actors**, underlining their potential for action as opposed to passive recipients of the drama. The **antagonist** is the main oppressor. Sullivan et al suggest that this is the most challenging of the acting roles as the actor must field all the challenges and test their credibility (ibid, p.224). The main oppressed character is known as the **protagonist**. This role is the focus of the play and the actor playing this role may step aside to enable a member of the audience to step into the role. In performance, the play builds to a point of crisis at which point the play is then presented again. During this second performance the Joker encourages the spect-actors to freeze the action at any point and to provide advice to the oppressed protagonist. The

intention is that the audience will be compelled to provide support for the protagonist, driven by the impulse to challenge injustice. A spectator may take the place of the protagonist and try alternative approaches to challenge the oppression of the antagonist. Through this approach multiple strategies can be explored, with the Joker and actors working to avoid arriving at neat, simplistic resolutions that would not be credible in the real world. Whilst Forum Theatre has rules, Boal states that if the audience desires to change these rules then this is permissible, save for two unalterable principles: "Spect-actors must be the protagonists of the dramatic action and these spect-actors must prepare themselves to be the protagonists of their own lives" (Boal, 2002, p.270).

Forum Theatre is not intrinsically anti oppressive, and its use is informed by the agenda to which it is employed. Some practitioners refer to Forum Theatre used with dominant social groups as 'theatre of the oppressor' (see Joseph, 2011). As Nicholson states: "similar dramatic strategies may be effective in contexts which have very different educational aims and political agendas" (2005, p.51). The assumption that the use of Forum techniques is in the workplace is automatically theatre of the oppressor is questionable. Binary oppressor/oppressed labels may be reductionist and unsatisfactory, a topic I explore in chapter 6 with an investigation of a discursive view of power which questions traditional readings of power.

The Forum Theatre method can provide an engaging focal point for peer learning which is not possible through other learning strategies and it is due to this potential that the workplace has co-opted, adapted and applied Forum Theatre to a range of work-based learning problems. Whilst workplace Forum Theatre is similar to Boal's in that it is produced for a defined group that wants to take action on a defined issue, the work issues vary in the common ground they will share with Boal's politics. Some of these work-based performances seek to challenge oppression as the central theme, for example programmes seeking to promote dignity at work. Other programmes use the model of Forum Theatre in a different way, stripping out the drama

of the power dialectic of oppressor and oppressed, replacing it with the sometimes subtle problems of collaborating with several individuals at the same time at work. The main elements that work-based Forum Theatre draws upon from Boal's model is the performance of an 'anti model', the first run of the play which is then opened up to the forum of the audience to rehearse a better outcome, which Boal sometimes referred to as the 'model' (Boal, 2002, p.260). For the homogenous workplace audience, focussing on their daily frustrations and challenges can provide a rare forum for peer support and learning on aspects of work that are widespread but difficult to articulate meaningfully without the concrete example provided by the theatre. What follows are two examples of Forum Theatre in the workplace. These examples illustrate the variations in form, focus and underlying purpose to which Forum Theatre is applied in this context.

Forum Theatre Example 1: Association of Colleges Training Days for Work-Based Assessors

This case example describes the background, development and delivery of a Forum Theatre based training day delivered to work-based assessors. Assessors are employed by Further Education Colleges or providers in the private sector and their role is to assess National Vocational Qualification portfolios in the workplace. The data for this case example is drawn from an interview with Rod Brookes who developed the programme, secured funding and Project Managed the initiative on behalf of the Association of Colleges. He also facilitated the Forum Theatre. Further information was obtained from documentary evidence in the form of forum scripts, evaluation reports, video recordings of the Forum Theatre and contemporaneous video interviews with a sample of Work-based Assessors who attended one of the training days.

Lord Leitch published his report entitled *Prosperity For All In The Global Economy* in 2006. A key recommendation of this report was to raise the numbers of adults in the workforce with National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) level 2 or equivalent. In order to achieve an increase in NVQ pass rates a range of initiatives were put into operation at a national, regional and local level. The issue for the South West was the NVQ pass rates were low compared to the rest of England. In a Learning and Skills Council league table, the South West was bottom. The main area where the SW was failing was in pass rates for the literacy and numeracy component of NVQs. Employees were failing to complete the literacy and numeracy assessments and therefore either failing to complete their NVQ's or taking far longer than was necessary. It is not difficult to imagine that for the individual trying to gain a qualification, but failing, this was a damaging position in which to be. Further Education Colleges do provide literacy and numeracy support with learning mentors attached to in house learning libraries. The intention was that an employee could access additional support for their literacy and numeracy skills from the learning library and then go onto complete their NVQ. This presented a problem for many students, as they were required to attend the college to access these support and mentoring services. Some of these students had had poor experiences of college and institutionalised education and therefore would not wish to return to college. For others, perhaps working nights or with caring commitments, attending a college was not practically possible. So whilst support services were available in the colleges, they weren't reaching out to where people worked, and many of those in most need of support were not getting it.

A multi-agency partnership was drawn together to explore how to resolve this problem. Rod and a colleague from the independent sector met together with Actor Factor, a consultancy experienced in using actors for training. After a period of debate and strong advocacy for using actor-based theatre for peer based learning from Rod and Actor Factor, the Learning and Skills Council agreed to pilot a Forum Theatre programme for work-based assessors. Two specialist Literacy and Numeracy advisers joined the development team for input on script

development. Their input produced useful knowledge for the sensitive identification of literacy and numeracy issues, for example if an individual says "I forgot my portfolio today", this may be a flag that there are literacy and numeracy issues. This meeting brought together expertise in delivering peer-based learning through theatre methods and tacit knowledge of the problems of addressing the challenges of literacy and numeracy. The partnership devised a Forum Theatre based training programme that would explore existing problems with the delivery of in-work assessment of NVQ's and provide a forum for peer learning through work-based assessors sharing best practice based on their own experience. This peer learning was supported by as short session in the afternoon consisting of a presentation by a recognised expert in the field followed by a question and answer session. Rod stated that such a session was necessary for pragmatic reasons; whilst he was committed to peer based learning he was not a purist; "90% of the time the answer will be in the room" (interview comment) but 10% of the time an expert is needed. Hence this session was included in the programme to provide solutions to problems that the peer learning had not resolved and required an outside expert.

The aims of the programme were established as:

1 To help improve the self-esteem and productivity of work-based training assessors

2 To establish collaboration between erstwhile competitors[33]

3 To share operational problems and explore resolutions

4 To share best practice

5 To encourage a culture of positive professional development

Three pilot sessions ran in February 2008. These were deemed to be a success and the programme was then rolled out as a regional programme. The training day was attended by

[33] Some work-based assessors were based in the public sector within FE Colleges, and some in the private sector, in organisations such as Train to Gain. Individuals from both sectors attended the days which contributed to building communication links between the two sectors.

groups of approximately forty work-based assessors. These days were run throughout the region over a period of four months from January to April 2009. After an initial cohort of 600 assessors, additional funding was obtained in response to the positive feedback to ultimately deliver the programme to over 1000 assessors. The cost of delivering the programme to the 1000 individuals was approximately £100,000. The programme was funded by The Learning and Skills Council.

The research and script development phases sought to identify typical problems which Assessors tackle in their job roles. The actors and facilitator used these researched scenarios as a basis for developing the improvised scene during a short rehearsal period. In my experience, a day of rehearsal, or less, is typical for this form of work. This short rehearsal time can be adequate providing the actor understands their objective, the issues that the 'anti model' is seeking to present and, in performance, they are able to listen and react during the improvised performance. The only staging used was an empty space (Brook, 1990) in a circle of an audience of about forty. There was no costume, lighting, sound, amplification or any of the other trappings of conventional theatre. This was not a refined aesthetic, nor was it seeking to be; its primary purpose was to provide a forum for peer learning. Those aspects of the theatre arts were drawn on only in so far as they support the facilitation of this learning space. Any aesthetic response from the audience would have to be generated solely by the actors' performances of the researched scenarios. (I discuss the aesthetics of work-place theatre in more depth later in this chapter).

Boal states that "Forum Theatre demands a different style of acting" (Boal, 2002, p.265). He states that 'selective realism' is the style in which the majority of Forum Theatre performances are produced, but this is not obligatory (ibid, p.256). For this training session the actors appeared to repeatedly shift mode of performance in order to signal a point for potential discussion or flag how their character was reacting. At times the mode was realism, at other

points playful pantomime. The performance appeared to dynamically shift between a piece of closed theatre (the term fourth wall is inappropriate as this Forum Theatre was performed in the round) to a theatre where the actors acknowledged the presence of the audience whilst also maintaining the fiction of the scenario. In places, the actor performed their role as if they were the advocate for the audience, dancing between the reality of the training session and the reality of the scenario set in a restaurant. Boal recounts how the talents of singers in certain African countries is measured by how much they can "seduce their audiences into singing along with them" and that this "should happen with good Forum Theatre actors" (ibid, p.265). The actors here appear to have seduced their audience who seem activated and engaged, at times laughing and clapping as their protagonist enacts their advice with varying degrees of success.

The one day event programme used two pre-devised forum scenarios. In the afternoon, a third forum scene would be worked with. This scene was generated from suggestions provided by the participants just prior to the lunch break. The actors would have a short period after lunch to work up an 'anti model' which would then be open to the forum.

Here is the forum script used for the first scenario:

1 The Choux pastry scenario:

Characters: *Chef: Jo*

Deputy Restaurant Manager: Sarah

Assessor: Hilary

Jo (Chef) and Sarah (Restaurant Manager) are in the kitchens of a busy restaurant preparing lunch. There's some tension between them. Jo, a good chef, is fairly new in post and intends to make the restaurant a success. Sarah's an experienced deputy manager and was involved, with the previous chef, in the arrangements for the Train to Gain scheme with the local college. She likes to get along with everyone.

There are three trainees here, one of whom, Jane, is being assessed today for her choux pastry skills. The other two, not scheduled for assessment today, are busy doing the silver service.

While Jo and Sarah are doing their lunch preparation checks, Sarah reminds Jo that the college assessor, Hilary, is due to arrive any minute… (run this)…

Hilary arrives, greets Jo: There's been problems with a parking permit (again) and she's had to walk some way, but she's keen to get started with Jane. Problems: Jo says he wasn't aware of this, that Jane is very busy, can't be spared and in any case, choux pastry is not on the menu this week. We do menus here two weeks ahead, not the day before. Who is this person anyway? Sarah is apologetic but reminds Jo that he knew about this. Jo disagrees. Hilary quickly introduces herself to Jo and then reminds both of them that Jane wasn't available last week, or the week before. A heated exchange develops. Hilary might add that she is freelance, paid on results, that it's also a 25 mile round trip to the college. Sarah is conciliatory, wants to agree with everyone, gives vague assurances that it will all be alright somehow. Hilary is uncomfortable with lack of clarity. Jo asserts that this is a real-life restaurant, a business, with customers arriving shortly and a reputation to make. Hilary might add the interests of Jane: How is she supposed to progress if she's not made available? Jo might agree but doesn't have time for all this and adds that it's Sarah's fault for not informing him properly. Sarah objects. Hilary might remind both of them that the agreement to train and the availability of the trainees was a central part of the Employer Agreement, which the (previous) chef had signed, along with the restaurant manager.

Rod stops the action: Anything familiar here? Does anyone have any similar experiences from the same or different industry sectors? Brings examples from audience: How can this situation be best moved forward? Outlines the ways which they can intervene and take part (PowerPoint slide here: Re-wind, Re-play, Heads, Hearts, propose lines or words)

Short discussion break 1 (5 minutes): in small table groups, delegates discuss and write down their three top best practice solutions as to how the situation can be resolved. A table rep feeds back one of their three, which get written on notice board.

Action now resumes, with Rod mediating proposals between audience and cast. Depending on discussion notes these could include looking into the heads of characters for their rationale, or their hearts for how they feel, or re-running particular sections, or deliberately letting negative proposals run their course but concluding with a positive resolution (Also some blurred edges here, with cast taking input direct from audience if appropriate).

Short discussion break 2: Table groups now make very brief 'headline' notes on what the underlying issues were and what actions they needed: E.g.: Ineffective advance communication re particular visits, keeping in touch with the business in general, unrealistic expectations of the company, etc. Notes to be headed "Choux pastry". Collect notes for pasting on board.

Image 1: 'The Choux pastry scenario'. Hannah Reynolds and Rick Westhorpe perform at an event in Swindon.

The following transcribed comments were captured on video during a coffee break after the first forum session during an event in Swindon:

Rod Brookes: *You've just had the first session – what's it like so far?*
Participant 1: *Excellent*
Participant 2: *Yes. I'm very impressed. The scenarios are very life-like and they make you think about your approach to assessing and meeting up with your candidates.*
Participant 3: *Possibly being over-acted brings out things a little bit more as to how things can happen and how they can be perceived by other people*
Rod Brookes: *In terms of this style of training, what's your impressions so far?*
Participant 4: *Fantastic. I'm really enjoying it. And I was just saying to someone – you can't explain to somebody else why it's good, because you have to be here to realise how good it is.*

The comments suggest how the event was well received, that the scenarios reflected the concerns of the audience, and also how 'over-acting' helped to bring out and focus on some issues. This comment resonates with Boal's argument that a quality of theatre is *telemicroscopic,* that "brought closer and made larger, human actions can be better observed" (Boal, 1995, p.27). The actor was magnifying selected behaviours in order to spotlight a particular point. Participant 4 states 'you can't explain to somebody else why it's good'. This comment resonates with a comment made in a different context explored in the *Friends*

Provident case study Chapter 3, when a participant stated that they struggled to articulate what they had experienced after their first experience of actor-based learning. I suggest that this is due a lack of familiarity with aesthetic learning processes, and also to the potential of a well-designed forum intervention to explore aspects of professional competence, an aspect of learning which is overlooked through a prevailing culture of learning that focuses on professional knowledge. Moon states how "few writers seem to address the apparent difference between skills and knowledge" (Moon, 2004, p.15), suggesting that there is insufficient understanding of the different processes through which knowledge and skills are developed. Theatre can have a unique role in developing professional skills and competence it is therefore perhaps surprising that in the field of theatre and drama this potential contribution is comparatively under researched.

Rod facilitated the training day and the Forum Theatre sessions which gave him first-hand experience of the issues raised by participants and the solutions generated through the peer learning process. For example, Rod observed a common issue of low self-confidence and self-esteem amongst assessors. The forum provided a space for some Assessors to air how they felt intimidated by the learning library staff and procedures, and rather than tackle the problems of access would skip over the literacy and numeracy assessment. As a consequence the student would not complete their NVQ. Through the sharing of peer experiences, new ways were found to get the learning mentors out of the library and to visit people who needed literacy and numeracy help in the workplace. Part of the forum looked at developing the skills for assessors to negotiate with the learning mentors and with their managers to serve the needs to the students. The forum also provided a space to empower the Learning Assessors themselves to support literacy and numeracy by drawing on their own skills to support the student.

At the end of the training session participants completed an evaluation form. The event was very positively received; aggregated results for the programme between January and April 2009 revealed that 84% rated the training session as Excellent, with 16% rating the session as Good. From the many hundreds of evaluation forms completed, the following comments were selected by Rod as a representative sample of the written feedback provided by participants:

1 *"This was an excellent day, one of the best training sessions I've ever attended. It was amazing to see how quickly the audience transformed into participants"*

2 *"This has been the best event I've ever been on, well done – more of the same please!"*

3 *"This was by far the best training session I've ever attended; enjoyable, stimulating and informative, made all the better as there was no 'death by PowerPoint'! More sessions like this would be great"*

4 *"A great and innovative way of training – I really enjoyed the day and can't think of any negatives or ways of improving it"*

5 *"Using actors for me was a new experience of learning and I found it particularly useful, especially to talk to them in character at the table"*

6 *"This training was quite unique and extremely refreshing: Thank you for a very pleasant experience"*

7 *"Really good training session; very much enjoyed the interaction of the group and the trainers. Very worthwhile – has restored my faith in training days, thank you!"*

8 *"This was a very well organised and appropriately set (levels) training day. The use of actors was very refreshing and was a good learning experience. Thank you to Rod and ActorFactor"*

These comments provide strong evidence that the work-based assessors enjoyed the session. The participants' strongly positive remarks about the Forum Theatre contrast sharply with allusions that not all training days are as useful. This suggest that the engaging qualities Forum Theatre and democratic politics that underpin peer based learning may regrettably not be a common experience of learning.

In terms of impact, Rod reports a startling result. Prior to the programme the SW Region was bottom of the league for NVQs due to poor literacy and numeracy pass rates. When pass rates

were analysed subsequent to the programme the SW had jumped to second from the top of the national league tables. Rod argues that the Forum Theatre event was not the only initiative tackling the regions literacy and numeracy NVQ problem, but his conviction is that the power of engagement in the peer learning, created by the Forum Theatre, helped identify and solve some of the hidden problems the work-based assessors face. With such compelling evidence, it is perhaps surprising to report that the programme did not continue beyond the 1000 assessors who experienced the Forum Theatre programme. Regrettably the programme was overtaken by political events. Due to tightening budgets and reform in the public sector and reduced private sector contracts, the landscape changed. The funding body, The Learning and Skills Council has been abolished and the programme of work-based training was reduced. Despite these events, this example serves to reinforce the efficacy of well-executed Forum Theatre as a powerful space for peer learning and a springboard for action.

This example demonstrates how the work-place can use drama in order to empower[34] workers in specific ways. The workers experience on the ground presented novel problems which were not factored into the rational design of work flow and job design. As a consequence, the system was dysfunctional. This dysfunction damaged the self-esteem of the assessors who felt they were failing at their jobs and the ability of the system itself to achieve its objective of increasing literacy and numeracy pass rates. In Schön's terms, the theory-in-action of their job roles was dissonant with the espoused theory of their function. The Forum Theatre provided the space to explore this tension. The theatre served as a place of compromise and debate between the requirements of the system and the practical challenges that the workers face. This facilitated a powerful experience for participants as the frustrations and challenges of their work could be recognised, valued and resolved, instead of being dismissed as' moaning' or 'being negative' as can so often be the response of management. The peer learning approach tacitly acknowledges the expertise of the participants and the plastic medium of the

[34] Empowerment in the context of the workplace is analysed in Chapter 6.

Forum Theatre explicitly reinforces the potential for change within an agenda of reform in how their work roles are performed.

Forum Theatre Example 2: 3M, Forum Theatre and Performance Management.

In June 2011 I visited Bracknell and the UK and Ireland Head Office of 3M to interview 3M Learning and Development Manager Ian Beer[35]. He had recently used Forum Theatre for a training programme designed to make their Performance Management system more consistent, and he had kindly agreed to share his time for an interview, as well as scripts and level 1 response evaluation data on the event.

3M celebrates its global reach in the reception atrium and in its own museum dedicated to its history of which Ian gave me a tour of prior to our interview. Large letters in the reception atrium display the striking fact that the average person comes into contact with a 3M product 17 times a day. The corporation was established in 1902 in Minnesota and has grown into a multinational with, in 2010, a $26 billion turnover. This is how the company describes itself on its corporate website:

> *3M is fundamentally a science-based company. We produce thousands of imaginative products, and we're a leader in scores of markets - from health care and highway safety to office products and abrasives and adhesives. Our success begins with our ability to apply our technologies - often in combination - to an endless array of real-world customer needs. Of course, all of this is made possible by the people of 3M and their singular commitment to make life easier and better for people around the world.*

[35] Prior to agreeing to the interview, Ian stressed to me that his responsibility towards due diligence and protection of the 3M brand meant that he wanted to be reassured that I was not seeking to damage the brand. As the Forum Theatre was used here to focus on an aspect of their operation that was deemed to need improvement, Ian was keen to establish that whilst the performance management system needed improvement, overall it was working well. He stressed his comments were from a personal perspective and 'not a press release'. I explained that my focus was the use of actors in work-based training, and that from speaking to a contact at the actors-in business provider Dramatic Improvement who provided the actors for the programme I believed the 3M example provided an innovative example of Forum Theatre being used for calibrating its performance management processes.

It produces over 55,000 products and employs 75,000 people around the world. 4,000 of these people are employed in the UK and Ireland[36]. Since the very beginning the company has had to innovate. Its first action early in the 20th century was to buy mineral rights only to discover that the minerals were of a disappointingly poor quality. Out of this problem came the solution to create a new product from the poor quality minerals. They produced sand paper, a product which is now used throughout the world. 3M's history is peppered with innovations where uses were found for what initially seemed useless. A famous example is the formulation of a glue that was not particularly sticky. When applied to the back of little squares of paper, the glue was just tacky enough to stick the notes to notice boards, computer screens and in books and could be removed without leaving a mark. These notes were marketed as Post it Notes and can now be found in offices everywhere. I use post it notes. It seems everywhere one turns once can find 3M has produced a product to meet a need.

Forum Theatre was used here to address didactically an identified problem of inconsistent scoring as part of the Employee Performance Management System. At an annual appraisal 3M Managers meet individually with their team to assess whether previously agreed objectives have been met. 3M use a numerical rating of overall performance which is common in 'traditional' appraisal systems (Armstrong & Baron, 2005, p.36). An outcome of this appraisal process is a score ranging from 5, where objectives were achieved and consistently far achieved expectations, down to 1, for results that did not meet expectations. A score of 2 or below could lead to a formal *Performance Improvement Plan* which ultimately could lead to dismissal if performance continues to be assessed as poor. Higher scores could have implications for remuneration and career advancement. Despite their widespread use, Performance Management scoring systems are often problematic. Armstrong and Baron state that despite arguments for the numerical rating of performance, there are also powerful

[36] Source: http://solutions.3m.co.uk/wps/portal/3M/en_GB/about-3M/information/about/us/ accessed 12/10/11

counter arguments (ibid). Arguments for rating include the benefit of being able to rate employees and identify both top and under performers. Problems with rating include the difficulty in achieving consistency between managers, and the devastating effect of being rated as below average which "is both demeaning and demotivating" (ibid, p.37). Bacal raises a further problem due to the pervading culture of individualism; "In an individualistic culture, we place responsibility for success or failure on the individual" (Bacal, 1999, p.93). Whilst the individual can take responsibility for some aspects, such as skill and effort (ibid, p.94), performance is also affected by factors outside an individual's direct control. As a public listed company, generating shareholder value is the primary goal and external economic factors unrelated to an individual's skill or effort impact on their rating score, a point underlined by Ian Beer when he stated: "You know it's misaligned if everyone's getting high performance scores and we're not making money." As a consequence of these factors, performance management scoring systems are frequently a cause of conflict and stress in the workplace. Higher Education faces similar problems in the assessment of student work, and aspects of the literature on assessment are applicable to this discussion of performance management scores. Here the research states that the key principles of effective assessment have been identified as validity, reliability and fairness (Fry et al, 2003 p.44; Morss & Murray, 2005, p116). Controlling variability between examiners is identified as an important need (Fry et al, 2003, p.52). Fry et al suggest that discussion and examination of assessment procedures is necessary to achieve a valid, reliable and fair system (ibid, p59). Training and calibration are identified by Armstrong and Baron as two methods which can assist with achieving consistency (2005, p.38). Whilst at 3M the Forum Theatre was not used to question the fundamental validity of the performance management system, the theatre was used as a forum for discussion regarding the problems of working within the system and to reduce variability and increase fairness.

With evidence within 3M that the scoring system was being used by individual managers inconsistently, the goal of designing and delivering a training event to support more consistent

scoring was set. Ian engaged the services of actors-in business consultancy *Dramatic Improvement*[37] for support on the devising and delivery of the programme. He developed a one hour Forum Theatre event using two actors which he would facilitate. The programme was described to 3M managers as "A live, interactive 55 minute session where our supervisors can define, explore and experience best practice in performance management." (3M Facilitators Guide). Despite 3M being a business grounded on innovation, Ian reports its training methods tend to be conventional and the use of theatre innovative in this context; "There is an element of using actors that is counter cultural for this kind of organisation". Ian reports that the Forum Theatre was broadly well received, much to his relief: "It didn't fail anywhere- which I was terrified it would" and that some people responded more positively than others to this method of training:

> *Our brand says one thing, but we're actually, cautious and risk averse. So some people like the notion of using actors – it took some of them ¾ of an hour to realise that it was OK. Some people were in from minute 1, rolling their sleeves up and loving it. And some people just argued the case that it was inappropriate, what are we wasting money on this for?*

The programme was attended by several hundred 3M managers. It was run throughout the UK for groups of between 15 and 80 managers in 'five or six' locations running up to three times in each location. The objectives desired outcomes for the session were defined as:

- *Moving our managers from operationally managing tasks to adding value to our (Performance Management) system*
- *To have our managers consider their position in adding value to 3M UK&I Performance Management*
- *To jolt into action our less professional and/or lapsed supervisors*
- *To protect the corporation (from the longer term effects of mismanagement)*
- *To improve the brand of Human Resources & (Performance Management)*
- *To have a little fun along the way*

(3M Facilitators Guide)

[37] Ian commissioned Wendy Harbutt, Director of Dramatic Improvement to provide the actors for this project after observing Wendy and her team's actor-based methods at an Assessment and Development centre at the BMW Academy in Reading. Ian reports that observing Wendy and her team in action was an important and necessary step in order to see beyond a vendors marketing and to gain confidence in the quality of their work. Wendy contributes to the Chapter 3 case study *Spotlight on the Actor.*

Ian decided to set the Forum Theatre outside the 3M culture to facilitate a focus on behaviours rather than technical aspects of the 3M culture. Two 'anti-models' were presented, both set in an airport. The first was an encounter between a customer and a check-in attendant, and the second an appraisal between the check-in attendant and their manager. The first scene presented the audience with the challenge of scoring the check-in-attendant on both process and service objectives. The short play was designed so that the check-in attendant can score top marks for process, but due to her poor customer service should score lower marks for service. Ian recalls the response of the audience:

> *We have a five point score here, and I would ask a group (of between 15 and 80 people), OK, so what do you think the score was. And there's the criterion in front of them. And someone would say – that was dreadful it was a 2 – and someone says – no actually they did everything we thought it was a 3. Some people said no, I thought they were particular firm – they're a 4 – 5 being excellent – 1 being terrible. So we had an enormous argument. And the point was made – how can you all disagree on something that you all saw at the same time. So that got people thinking about what does consistency mean. Is it consistency of what you saw, or consistency of your approach, so got the whole notion of consistency out in the open.*

The performance provided the audience with live evidence of the variability of their assessments, vividly defining the problem. This evidence could be similarly achieved through grading a pre-recorded video recording, but the use of live actors enabled the audience to test the impact of behaviours during the forum phase of the event[38]. Here is an excerpt from the forum script illustrating the problematic interaction of the characters:

Customer	: ....I need to get on the 2PM to Edinbur....
Attendant:	*[No eye contact]* Behind the line
C:	What? Sorry?
A:	*[Still does not look up from the screen and without emotion]* Behind the line please.
C:	Eh?
A:	*[Points to the (imagined) yellow "please queue behind this line" stripe on the floor a metre or so away from the 'desk]*
C:	*[Steps back behind the line.]*
	[Seconds tick by in silence.]

[38] A comment of written feedback completed immediately after the event by participant reinforced the value of live performance compared to video: "Much better with actors - will remember it better than a video".

A: *[As if the above never happened has finished what they are doing. A corporate smile is painted on in an instant. First eye contact is made. Semi-polite.]* Can I help you?

C: *[On verge of breakdown through stress, rushing her words]* Please help me, I have to get on the Edinburgh flight.

A: Booking reference?

C: *[Startled, has clearly overlooked having this to hand. Starts to look through their bags.]*

A: *[Without offering a pause]* Booking reference?

C: *[Presents slip of paper that is all screwed up, probably printed from email]*

A: *[Holds paper like it is filthy, straightens it out in the manner of someone scraping something unpleasant from a shoe. Now as if C is not there. Finds reference then looks at screen. Zero eye contact. No emotion.]* ID?

C: [More rummaging. Hands over passport.]

A: *[Wordlessly goes to the back of the passport and makes an overly thorough check of the data. Then looks to the picture, at **C**, at the picture, at C and at the picture again. Wordlessly hands back the passport.]* The gate closed 2 minutes ago.

After the evidence from the first scene, a second, appraisal scene was played out, and this second scene opened up an interactive forum element where the audience were invited to imagine they were the check-in attendant's manager and give both a rating of performance and constructive feedback to guide the character to improve. On this Ian says:

> *We get to see what works and what doesn't. We get to see people experimenting. And so again the quality of actors here is paramount.*

Ian suggests that focusing on interpersonal communication would have been novel for some managers:

> *Where the system interfaces with the fleshy bits – that's where it kind of all goes a bit weird. So it is about saying –yes – it's a system, but I suppose the phrase I was using was 'what's the tail and what's the dog here?*

Ian stated that the culture of 3M emphasises the role of management as solving technical problems, with comparatively little attention routinely given to training on the impact of interpersonal behaviours. A key function for the actors was to demonstrate the different impact of more or less collaborative management styles. The actors were briefed to be 'fighty

and bitey' unless they were put at ease and involved in the process. Ian acknowledged the sensitivity of the actors in picking up the intentions of the audience and using their judgment and intuition to respond appropriately. To humorous interjections the actor may respond in a similar jocular fashion, whilst to a well-intentioned but misjudged interjection the actor may respond positively even if the delivery was lacking.

This Forum Theatre did not seek to question the underlying assumptions of the performance management system; such a change was beyond the remit of this programme. The change sought was to improve the fairness of the system through greater consistency and to promote the benefits of dialogue and managing by consent[39]. A recognised weakness with performance management rating systems is when the there is too much focus on completing the administrative process and too little on dialogue with the employee (Bacal, 1999, p.98). In a process dominated workplace the human element can be marginalised, an issue this Forum Theatre sought to address by placing the human at the centre of the system, rather than the other way round. The forum sought to provide a social space in which to explore strategies to manage the tensions and make connections between the contradictory discourses of standardised systems and human subjectivity. This aim shares little common ground with Boal's vision for Forum Theatre as a catalyst for social change.

The use of Forum Theatre by AOC and 3M provide examples of how Forum Theatre is used in the workplace stripped of its claims of radical potential to serve instead an agenda of reform. In both these examples, the underlying systems were not questioned; this was not revolutionary theatre, instead seeking to facilitate processes of individual change within the status quo. Nicholson describes the use of dramatic strategies from the Marxist Boal as 'intriguing' in corporate contexts (Nicholson, 2005, p.49), and their use within the workplace reinforces the notion that Applied Theatre techniques are flexible forms that can be employed

[39] In chapter 6 I analyse the forms of leadership and management that these forms of interaction seek to promote.

to different ends. It is interesting to bring in here the work of Carmel O'Sullivan who questions Boal's revolutionary claims for Forum Theatre due to its focus on the actions of the individual and an individualistic attitude towards empowerment. She argues:

> Thus, the dominant ideology reflected in the practice of Theatre of the Oppressed encourages 'minor adjustments', 'little tweakings' in individual cases of oppression, that allow for the oppressed to be able to live with or bear the oppression more easily but have no connection whatsoever with the underlying reality inherent in social relations of production. The status quo remains intact, if not strengthened. (O'Sullivan, 2001, p.93)

O'Sullivan's reading of Forum Theatre is that it never was a tool for the revolution. Its individualistic focus on empowerment within the status quo suggests why the form has been colonized by the workplace as here, whilst 'minor adjustments' and 'little tweakings' are encouraged, a fundamental questioning of the structure of the workplace is typically off limits. The qualities of the form as a tool for dialogue and peer learning are used for individual and social reflection, adaption and adjustment within the status quo and it is within this frame that the efficacy of Forum Theatre within the work-place resides.

Simulation Exercises

War Games: Outward Bound Exercises Take a Dramatic Turn.

Outward bound exercises are a popular form of staff training. Executives are taken on long hikes in remote locations, abseil down mountains, canoe through rapids, all experienced through a haze of tiredness brought on by a lack of sleep and exhaustion from spending the morning rock climbing after a late night hike the previous evening. The intention is that these experiences help work based teams to develop a shared history of successful completion of a variety of outdoor challenges. Wallace (in Moon, 2004, p.118) is sceptical of the learning that transfers back to the workplace from a series of outward bound exercises, arguing that the experiences, whilst they may be memorable, lack a direct relevance to the workplace and may

therefore have little impact on in work performance. Wallace's analysis may perhaps be addressed somewhat by variations in the format of outward bound exercises that more explicitly draw the links between the exercises and in work skills. These include providing delegates with the opportunity to take on specific leadership roles and exercising, within the boundaries of safety and the framework of the exercise, an opportunity to make judgements and decisions and then in a debrief for these decisions to be analysed and transferable learning defined. A narrative layer can be added into the mix and supported by actors, providing a frame for the various physical exercises. These exercises are often be based on a military training exercises adapted for civilian use. Using simulation to assess the performance was first developed and applied to Military Officer and intelligence training in the 1940's (Gluck & Rubenstein, 2007, p.130). This military provenance can influence the management philosophy that informs the hierarchical structures and participant behaviours when these exercises are run in business settings, for example through a command centre and a defined chain of command that directs the various activities. Delegates will be allocated roles and typically delegates will take it in turns to take on the role of leader. Participants can be encouraged to adopt military command and control management approach for the successful completion of tasks.

Such exercises can involve a large cast of actors. The largest cast I have been part of has been fifteen actors, in addition to individuals providing logistical support, health and safety support and instruction in canoeing, climbing and other physical activities which may be woven into the narrative. The size of such exercises means that they are expensive to run. In light of this the question is why go to the expense of actors to weave a narrative around a series of outward bound exercises? After all, couldn't the participants just go canoeing, or mountain climbing without the narrative and interaction provided by the cast of actors? To explore the

question as to what value the actor brings to these exercises, I will draw upon an exercise in which I have played a role of a Nuclear Incident Specialist.

Making a Drama Out of a Crisis

It is 8.40 pm, and Course delegates finish their first meal, expecting to spend the evening chatting with peers before the training course begins tomorrow in earnest. This expectation is shattered as a fireman enters the room and says:

> *"Ladies and gentlemen, we have an emergency situation which requires your help. I thought my people had it under control, but the situation has now changed and they are deployed on other duties.*
>
> *I am therefore calling on your help. You have been mobilised. I need you to dress in outdoor clothes and suitable outdoor footwear. Meet me in the training room in ten minutes where I will give you a full briefing. The time is now 20.42, so we will meet at 20.52."*

Pilot Down is an exercise run by business consultancy Training in Action[40] that puts course delegates in a challenging situation where decisions must be made in a constantly shifting environment. Course delegates quickly have to grasp an unfamiliar situation and work to achieve a series of mission objectives. They are tasked to rescue a crashed pilot, get medical help for civilians, collect a radioactive data recorder and evacuate before a radioactive cloud reaches their destination. In addition to the team of trainers who moderate the exercise, the scenario uses three actors. Two actors play casualties, who slip in and out of consciousness throughout the entire exercise. The exercise requires that they are located and taken to safety. One actor plays the role of the Fireman who is a nuclear incident specialist (a role I have played on numerous occasions).

[40] www.tia.co.uk

The function of this role is to deliver the briefing to the delegates and generate an atmosphere of credibility for the exercise. Michael Chekhov wrote of the power of atmosphere to draw in spectators. He said “being enveloped by (the atmosphere) too, the spectator himself begins to ‘act’ along with the actors” (Chekhov, 2002 p.48) The actors’ commitment to the make believe of the scenario seeks to facilitate the participants’ engagement in the fiction of the scenario. Yardley-Matwiejczuk stresses the importance of credibility of the situation for the simulation to work, stating that “role-play inductors must bear credibility in mind, not only at the general level but also at the particular level of each interactant” (Yardley-Matwiejczuk, 1997, p.134). This credibility is supported by language use and costume. The fireman delivers a briefing to the delegates of around fifteen minutes in length and the language chosen is designed to deliver aural cues that reinforce credibility of the character. The briefing is delivered in a clam and efficient manner, using phrases incorporating precise use of detail intended to reinforce engagement in the fiction of the exercise, such as "at this stage we know the aircraft was at 5,000ft, going at 150 knots on a course of 230 degrees". The character is dressed in a full fireman outfit, including helmet with visor and carrying a short wave radio. This image is designed to tap into the imagination of the participants and the likelihood of strong associations with the notion of *crisis* and as a trusted form of authority. The selection of a fireman for this role and dressing the character accordingly taps into these cultural signifiers and facilitates the entrance of the delegates into the play world of the exercise. The briefing concludes with the fireman putting two of the delegates in charge and then giving them twenty minutes to prepare a plan as to how they are to complete the tasks of pilot rescue and recovery of the data recorder.

The ‘as if’ world drawn by the scenario is designed to engage the participants imagination and to provide a testing, shared, experience for the group. The exercise is often delivered to the group on their first evening of a week long course, and therefore supports a rapid group

forming process[41]. The intensity of the participatory drama can facilitate movement through the group forming process, as participants are placed in a world where cooperation is necessary for the task to be achieved within a fixed time limit. The drama provides the necessary jeopardy, in this case in the form of an advancing radiation cloud and casualties in need of evacuation, for the participants to feel compelled to act to engage in the exercise. After the exercise is completed, I am fascinated to hear participants describe how real the exercise felt. With the entire exercise running against the clock and a continually shifting scenario perhaps there is little time to question too closely the fictional boundaries of the exercise. The tension does not let up till the end, and the exercise concludes with a climatic preparation for evacuation. The participants gather outside during its closing moments with the lethal 'red zone' of the radiation cloud nearly upon them. They have laid out bright torches to form a NATO 'T' as a helicopter landing site and two participants hold aloft red flares ignited to guide the rescue Helicopter to land. On the short wave radio the voice of a helicopter pilot updates on course and arrival time as the noise of an incoming CH53 Helicopter shatters the evening calm. The intention is to create an atmosphere laden with drama. The sense of event is economically drawn, but, based on the anecdotal evidence from participants, with sufficient fidelity to successfully engage in the fiction of the drama[42].

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[41] Tuckman (Tuckman, 1965) identifies four stages of group development as forming, storming, norming and performing.

[42] I have delivered the nuclear incident scenario in a variety of locations, and after an engagement in the North of New York state, I stopped off in Manhattan for a few days. I met a New Yorker who shared an example of such work that a friend of hers experienced at the end of a two day course for international business executives. The purpose of the course was to equip people with the skills to minimise the physical risk whilst working in unstable parts of the world where the risk of attacks, kidnapping and threats to foreign business people was high. She told me how, one night over dinner, just as with the fireman exercise, there was a surprise interruption, although in this case the stakes were somewhat different. Masked gunmen burst into the dining room and kidnapped some of the delegates (not actors) and then proceeded to interrogate them with the intention of testing how they could stand up under pressure. Those lucky delegates who were not kidnapped watched the interrogation on the other side of a one way mirror. My source didn't know what the debrief was for such an exercise, but such a scenario presents significant issues in terms of the ethics of surprise kidnapping and questions as to whether there was adequate debrief and support for the delegates after the potential trauma of the kidnap. I can assume with a reasonable level of confidence that, particularly bearing in mind the litigious nature of the United States, that all course delegates had signed the necessary legal paperwork protecting the training company from any claims for damages prior to the course commencement.

Theatrically these work-based simulations can share a family resemblance in form with site-generic performances, which "require a specific category of space but are not tied to one place" (Wilkie, 2002 in Balme, 2008, p.61). The common factors will be their use of theatre techniques to create a temporary liminal world but similarities break down when examining intention. The level of challenge and anxiety that these exercises can generate for participants is beyond what an accidental audience would accept. The work-place uses these techniques instrumentally and didactically to generate a pressurised experience for the achievement of specific learning objectives.

Business simulations provide more mundane settings for the fictional world of these multi-participant exercises. This form of simulation can be set in business office environment and will draw on participant's professional knowledge and skills more directly than in the outdoor experiential exercises described above. Participants together collaborate within a role-play, with actors providing specific roles designed to maintain the fiction of the world and to generate specific challenges for the participants. Participants typically take on key roles and act as protagonists able to affect the outcome of the encounter. Actors provide the subsidiary roles that support or challenge the key roles in some way.

In common with all actor-based experiential learning methods, these simulations provide an embodied and social experience which may generate new knowledge for the participants. Where these simulations differ from role-play and Forum Theatre is that they facilitate a different form of leaning to other forms of actor-based training. The purpose of these simulations is to provide a stretching experience which provides evidence of how people behave under pressure from which learning can be extracted during a debrief phase. In role-play and Forum Theatre reflection is embedded within the process, and the participants will shift between reflection-in and on-action (Schön, 1991). Simulations tend to run to their conclusion without a break and an extensive debrief is necessary after the simulation phase

has finished for participants to process the experience. This approach to learning is theoretically based in Kolb's cycle of experiential learning, which is discussed in Chapter 3. Simulations can also provide a novel shared experience for participants that can break down social barriers and encourage stronger social connections as well as deeper engagement in subsequent learning activities. What actor based simulations have in common with role-play and some iterations of Forum Theatre is the function of the actor in generating an unfamiliar challenge from which new learning may emerge. The actor is generating the liminal space in which participants may experience feelings of anxiety as they confront novel challenges in a state of *not knowing*.

Aesthetics

> *Human history has been characterized by the fundamental struggle between the forces of abstract order and embodied, sensual experience. Yet modernity has witnessed, in large part, the triumph of the former, ushering in an age of reason, of systems and ultimately the dominion of production*
>
> (Carr and Hancock, 2003, p.192).

Work-based Applied Theatre selectively draws on various theatrical aesthetic techniques developed with very different intentions to their applications in work training. Aesthetic experiences are not traditionally built into work-based training, and in this regard the practice is innovatory and facilitates a space for the aesthetic which is not possible through other training methods. A discussion of aesthetics presents the problem of the meaning of words, as multiple definitions for aesthetics can be found. The etymology of 'aesthetics' lies in the Greek word aesthesis for sensation or perception, and its connection with the artistic is credited to Alexander Baumgarten who first used the term in the 18th century (Freeland, 2003, p.6). Jackson states that "precise and robust definitions of what constitutes 'aesthetic' are virtually impossible to find" (Jackson, 2007, p.32). He identifies Wolfgang Isher's phenomenological

account of reader response as helpful by stating "Whilst the 'artistic' refers to the text created by the author, the 'aesthetic' refers to the realisation created by the reader" (Jackson, 2007, p.37). Conceived in this way, the aesthetic is the experience of the creation of meaning. Carr explores the work of Frankfurt School scholars and their notion of art as a form of knowledge. He writes how a number of the schools scholars were drawn to "art and aesthetics as arenas in which alternate ways of thinking and 'seeing' were possible" (Carr and Hancock, 2003). So conceived the aesthetic is an embodied and sensual experience that conventional spoken and written language may struggle to articulate, but which is nonetheless integral to human experience. This is taken as the meaning of aesthetics here.

Theatre methods in the work-place can provide a rare space of resistance against the forces of abstract order, providing an aesthetic learning experience that produces distinct forms of knowledge. Theatre techniques provide a unique space for the exploration of ideas and concepts. "Theatre affords the opportunity to try out the ideal and to explore what might be necessary in order to achieve it in the world of reality" (Prentki and Selam, 2000, p.1). The use of theatre techniques provides a liminal space, where the apparent paradox of the real and unreal coexist, providing a temporal challenge to Sartre's notion that "The real and the imaginary cannot coexist by their very nature" (Sartre in Cole, 1975, p.5). Turner states about theatre that:

> Its chief characteristic is that it allows the spectator to accept that the events in the production are both real and not real. Hence it is a ludic role (or frame of mind) in the sense that it enables the spectator to participate in playing around with the norms, customs, regulations, laws which govern her life in society. (Turner, 1982, p.11)

Jackson says about the qualities of theatre that "the fact that we also know it's a fiction...enables us to see, reflect, perhaps understand more clearly than we normally might, beyond the noise and flux of everyday life" (2007, p.140). This knowledge that the experience

isn't real serves both as a protective function, for example usually preventing an audience from intervening when they witness violence on stage, and also opens up a space for reflection in which new insights may be gleaned. With such powerful potential, it is perhaps not surprising that the workplace has sought to exploit theatre and drama techniques.

Nissley et al identify that theatre in organisations "is generally based on an aesthetic derived in some way from Brecht" (Nissley et al, 2004). Brecht argued against realism and the impulse to empathise with character and to follow a plot as reinforcing the status quo as opposed to questioning the wider forces in society concealed by the empathic response. The Brechtian technique of distancing is the most frequently used technique in work-place Applied Theatre. Whilst this theatre may make use of Brecht's techniques, they are severed from their ideological roots, and used as focussing and framing devices in service of learning aims and objectives. The training and development context of work-based Applied Theatre serves as a form of distancing, as implicit in the learning context is the intention that the audience/participants look beyond the performed narrative to the learning which may be gleaned. In addition to this contextual distancing, theatrical techniques to make strange are also employed. Distancing as a theatrical technique is strongly associated with Brecht's term *Vermfremdung,* a technique he developed in his *Lehrstück* learning plays (Eriksson, 2011, p.103). Overfamiliarity with a phenomenon can dull the senses and the technique seeks to make strange something familiar that is accepted unquestioningly as reality so that it may be de-familiarised and seen afresh. This de-familiarisation can generate insight, and is explored further in Chapter 5. In practice, distancing includes devices such as breaking of the fourth wall and the lack of the theatrical illusion of character by the actor creating their role in-front of the audience/participants. For example, in a role-play the 'as if' of the simulation can frequently be suspended for the actor to step out of role to discuss how she is feeling. This device shifts the frame from engagement to a more distanced space of reflection. In the

Chapter 3 case studies I revisit the forms of theatrical devices and their power to create impact. As part of the discussion of case examples I reference the work of Alraek & Baierheim and their analysis of the theatrical devices of manipulating time and an unstable fourth wall used in an actor-based role-play session.

Whilst in his work Boal sought to avoid labels and categorisations of his practice as Brechtian (Jackson in Boal, 2002, p.xxv), his work is "unquestionably associated" with Brecht (and Marx) for many supporters and commentators (O'Sullivan, 2001, p.86). More than any other practitioner, his theatre methods are drawn upon by workplace Applied Theatre. Boal defines the aesthetic qualities of participatory theatre that lead to special forms of knowledge that is "acquired here via the senses and not solely via the mind" (Boal, 1995, p.28). Boal identifies three essential properties for what he terms the gnoseological (knowledge enhancing) power of theatre. These are:

1. *Plasticity, which allows and induces the unfettered exercise of memory and imagination, the free play of past and future.*
2. *The division or doubling of self which occurs in the subject who comes on stage, the fruit of the dichotomic and 'dichotomising' character of the 'platform', which allows – and enables- self-observation.*
3. *That telemicroscopic property which magnifies everything and makes everything present, allowing us to see things which, without it, in smaller or more distant form, would escape our gaze.*

   (Boal, 1995, p.28)

In the AOC Forum Theatre example, described above, Boal's three properties for knowledge enhancing theatre can be found. Based on the audience/participant feedback the Forum Theatre seems to have generated a strong aesthetic response. Despite this response, it is unlikely that such responses would be expressed by the same performance in a mainstream theatre. To a casual audience this Forum Theatre might hardly qualify 'theatre' at all, lacking staging, lighting, costume, music and so on. The actors' performances were improvised,

lacking refinement and polish. Yet somehow the experience seemed to provide the potential conditions for an affective and cognitive experience for these participants. Prendergast and Saxton examine the dichotomy of why for an accidental audience there may be no 'aesthetic', but for an integral audience the same performance can generate a deep cognitive and affective response (2009, p.192). They suggest that a traditional theatre performance follows the Taxonomy of Engagement (Morgan & Saxton, 1987), and that before audiences can begin to interpret the intended message, they must progress through stages of initial interest, engagement and commitment to the content. They suggest that in Applied Theatre, working for an integral audience, the first three parts of the taxonomy are almost always already in place, so "the messages begin to arrive almost at once" (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009, p.192). This argument suggests that the theatrical devices of staging, lights, music and so on, necessary for engagement in mainstream theatre may not be prerequisites for the aesthetic response to relevant content for an integral audience. Acting in the work-place typically dispenses with these theatrical signifiers, although the actors may wear attire that is normal for the context, typically a business suit. Whilst the trappings of theatre may be missing, I suggest that actor-based work is still theatrical, stripping back to the essence of what theatre can be as a human interaction. The work is therefore still theatre and thus Lope de Vega's definition of theatre as the "passionate combat of two human beings on a platform" (Boal, 1995, p.16) can serve equally well as a definition of role-play.

The workplace has its own language and conventions and whilst other forms of Applied Theatre may embrace the language of art and aesthetics, in the work-place training the language of 'art' is consciously stripped away, perhaps due to notions that art has little utility and is distanced from the concerns of everyday life. Despite the severing of associations between work-based acting and associations with the art of theatre I suggest that it is only the language may be absent; rich aesthetic experiences may be generated that seek to engage

holistically with the lived experience in the workplace. It is consistent with the work-place efficiency agenda that the context uses only those aspects of theatre necessary to achieve the task. With the performance space often no more than an empty space; no special lighting and perhaps just a suggestion of costume, it is the skill of the actor and their ability to conjure a liminal space which is called upon to create the participatory theatre.

Chapter 5

The Act of Work-Based Learning

Connections Between Participatory, Actor-Based Theatre and Learning Theory in the Context of the Workplace

In Chapter 1 I positioned actor-based Applied Theatre in the context of work as a contribution to lifelong learning, a topic which is explored in greater depth here. In this Chapter I scope the field of learning theory and identify connections between learning theory and the actor-based Applied Theatre techniques defined in Chapter 4.

Here I seek to answer the question as to how actor-based techniques can support learning and to identify the theoretical arguments for the efficacy of the practice. First I will identify why actor-based, experiential learning methods are increasingly used for workforce development. Next I identify relevant learning theories and draw connections between these theories and actor-based theatre. Within this exploration I define what is learning, what types of learning are occurring and the likelihood of this knowledge transferring from the training room to changed behaviour in the workplace. This discussion lays the ground work for Chapter 6 where I develop my argument into the impact of participatory actor-based learning.

Drama at Work: Learning in the Knowledge Economy and a World of Accelerating Change

Approaches to education and learning are adapting to a rapidly changing world[43]. The purpose of education in the industrial and early post-industrial age of Western Europe was to prepare a workforce and to establish shared values of ethics, culture and society. In the UK from 1870 and with the introduction of compulsory schooling (Jarvis, 2003, p.2), formal education was predominantly an activity that took place to prepare individuals for their place in society and work, and was typically finished as an activity by the time of an individual's teenage years, save for the minority who progressed to Higher Education. In a modern education "everyone got to 'know their place' in a relatively stable and ordered society based on a confident belief in continuity and progress" (Jarvis, 2003, p.17). It is this model of education that is being revised in light of far reaching and rapid changes to social structures, technological innovation and forces of globalisation. In the UK, particularly from the 1960's, questions of the validity and basis of this ideology gained traction, stimulating a process of change in the goals and methods of education to adapt to this new world. As the world changes, education seeks to adapt to meet those challenges, as Jarvis states: "Education has always reflected the forces that shape society" (Jarvis, 2003, p.13). The forces of rapid change remove some of the perceived certainties of the old modern education system. Education systems are socially, culturally and historically located, seeking to meet the demands of their context, as Jarvis states: "Education therefore reproduces the workforce necessary to an industrial or post-industrial society, with its various divisions of labour, skills, careers and so on" (Jarvis, 2003, p.18). In practical work-based terms, the notion of the job for life has been replaced by the flexible labour force, as a

[43] Richard Pettinger (Pettinger, 1994, p.29) summarises the changes which have in general impinged on society since the end of the second world war and have accelerated since the 1960's. He summarises these changes under four headings: **Technological**; Technology has impacted on every sphere of social, business and economic activity. Due to these changes new occupations are created, whilst others are rendered obsolete. **Social** changes include increased life expectancy, lifestyle choice and the ability to travel, to be educated, to receive health care, welfare provision, rises in spending power and consumerism. **Eco-political** changes include the formation of the EU, the collapse of the USSR, the emergence of the Asian Tigers. **Expectational** shifts mean that stability is no longer expected and is replaced by an expectation of a state of flux.

response to the complexities of globalisation and our social and economic system. An implication of this continual change is for learning to become a lifelong process[44]. Whilst the concept of adult education is not new, the continual change that characterises this period requires frequent updating of knowledge and skills. "The world is awash with new discoveries – this means there is a greater need for the knowledge-based occupations to keep up with the new developments in knowledge. Hence we have seen the growth in continuing professional education" (Jarvis, 2003, p.9). Industrialised countries have defined a generic workplace skills curriculum designed to equip workers with the necessary skills demanded by the changing workplace. Communication and interpersonal skills are a core element running through the curriculum. Burns (2002) summarises these major generic skills as follows:

1. Knowing how to learn
2. Reading, writing and comprehension
3. Communication skills: speaking and listening effectively
4. Adaptability skills: solving problems and thinking creatively.
5. Developmental skills: managing personal and professional growth.
6. Group effectiveness: interpersonal skills, teamwork and negotiation skills.
7. Influencing skills: organised effectiveness and leadership

(Burns, 2002, p.25-27)

It is due to the potential of theatre-based pedagogies to support six out of these seven generic skills that such techniques are used in workplaces throughout the world. All but the second skill - reading, writing and comprehension- can be developed in some way through actor-based participatory performance. For the six remaining competencies, interpersonal communication is either the main or supporting channel by which these generic skills are exercised in the

[44] Other terms include *lifewide* and *lifedeep* learning (Illeris, 2011, p.4)

workplace. The skills that actor-based methods aim to develop are investigated further in Chapter 6.

Workers and organisations are under pressure to learn through formal and informal channels in order to be able to continue to perform their current role and to innovate and adapt to new roles in a continually shifting landscape. "Everyone must be prepared for their working functions to change constantly and radically throughout the whole of their working lives" (Illeris, 2011, p.4). This unstable context provides the stimulus for evolutionary change and the ability to adapt and learn in response to a hostile environment is a strong predictor of survival. This fight for individual and organisational survival shapes training and learning policies aiming to equip teams with the skills so that they are fit for purpose and can gain an organisational competitive advantage. For the worker, the drive for learning can be so that they can maintain their value in a competitive market for work-based skills. For their organisation, the driver is to remain competitive on the wider, potentially global, stage. These change factors converge with developments in learning theory to identify forms of learning that satisfy the imperative for person-centred, reflexive, contextual learning and are also effective in the development of skills and knowledge.

Flatter and more flexible management structures increasingly require employees to collaborate in cross-functional teams formed for specific projects and to work through others in order to achieve objectives. Therefore the value of interpersonal skills has increased and become a focus for skills development, and the workplace has looked to the world of theatre to aid the development of the necessary communication skills, such as active listening, influencing and conflict resolution.

Postmodernism questions the old certainties of knowledge, and replaces them with provisional ideas, with fragmented dissonant views. A pedagogical implication is that the role of teacher shifts from the 'source' of knowledge to the 'facilitator', with the implication that more reflexive, experiential, learning centred approaches are adopted (Jarvis, 2003).

Applied Theatre methods provide a learning space where abstract, conceptual knowledge in relation to human communication and interaction is put into practice as skills. Conceptual models of communication skills are inevitably a reduction of a more complex phenomenon and interactions in the real world can present more complex messy challenges than a model may initially suggest. Moon highlights the value of representing ideas to develop understanding (Moon, 2004, p.85), supporting the value of theatre to provide a frame within which otherwise abstract notions can be analysed. The complexity of human communication, of choosing appropriate words, of managing emotion and listening provides a sphere of inquiry that presents a unique challenge for each individual and context. Heuristic theatre methods can provide the tools for engagement with such learning challenges. Participatory theatre can present the learner with the opportunity to experience and experiment with communication strategies, of exploring alternative possible realities, learning that outcomes are not fixed but can be influenced and shaped. This leads to the questions of how participatory actor-based theatre supports learning, which I turn to next, firstly exploring what is 'learning'.

What is Learning?

Learning can take many forms, and there is no single definition. Gross identifies how the common usage of learning refers to 'what is learned', whilst psychologists use the term to explore the process of learning (Gross, 1992, p.164). Burns identifies how a simple definition is

illusive due to the wide range of activities and processes that are involved. He proposes to "conceive of learning as a relatively permanent change in behaviour, with behaviour including both observable activity and internal processes such as thinking, attitudes and emotions" (2002, p.114). Whilst the debate over definitions continues, Burns' proposal provides a suitable entry point for this analysis. Whilst there are many learning theories operating from different frames of reference and evidence basis, many provide consistent theoretical evidence for the value of participatory actor-based theatre forms as a tool for learning. Bradley and Postlethwaithe, writing about the use of actors and experiential learning (in a medical context) state "…simulation offers tremendous opportunities for the advancement of our understanding of learning because it is consistent with very different ways of conceptualising learning, and because research in very different paradigms can be accommodated" (Bradley & Postlethwaite, 2003, p.2). Taking my cue from Bradley and Postlethwaite, here I'll provide an overview of learning theory and seek to propose why actor-based theatre can be an effective learning tool, and analyse why, specifically, the use of actors increases the likelihood of the learning objectives being achieved and transferred to the workplace.

To begin this exploration, I'll explore three theoretical paradigms of learning. Whilst there is considerable overlap between these theories, they provide an insight into how different types of learning may be supported in different ways, and also track our evolving knowledge of the complex processes that contribute to learning. Theatre is a flexible learning tool and the practice may, in some contexts, be informed by any or all of these theories of learning. The three theoretical categories are:

- **Behaviourist** theories that posit an external reality in which the learner interacts, focusing on observable behaviour.

- **Cognitivist** theories that investigate the role of the brain in learning.

- **Constructivist** theories that propose that the learner constructs their own interpretation of reality through experience. Social constructivism, placing learning in a social context is also explored here.

The value of this overview is that learning is a complex process and that learning may be supported by theory from one or more of these theoretical categories. For Illeris a robust understanding of learning requires recognition of both individual cognitive processes combined with the social aspects of learning:

> …both the traditional view that learning is an inner psychological process within the individual, as maintained by classical learning psychology, and the view that learning is exclusively a social process, as maintained by the social constructionists, lead to erroneous conclusions. On the contrary, the point is that human learning always involves elements of both at once: through the social interaction between the individual and his or her environment, the individual receives influences or impulses which he or she may absorb through inner psychological elaboration and acquisition processes. (Illeris, 2011, p.11)

Hence none of the learning theories explored here constitutes a complete theory of learning. It is therefore in a fusion of these theoretical notions that the question 'what is learning' is most comprehensively answered. This exploration is then followed by an investigation of experiential learning, types of learning, transfer of learning, learning and intelligence and organisational learning.

Behaviourism

Behaviourism is a product of the Enlightenment and the age of science (Jarvis, 2003, p.24). It is perhaps the most well-known learning theory, and as such has been highly influential in shaping education and the workplace. "Its focus is on the measurable behavioural outcomes of learning, rather than with knowledge, attitudes and beliefs and so forth" (ibid, p.25). It claims to be scientific in that it focuses totally on empirically measurable behaviour, ignoring that which cannot be monitored. This scientific claim has provided behaviourism with a legitimacy and authority that can perhaps explain its popularity and influence. However science is not limited to what can be simply measured, revealing a limitation of this approach to learning (ibid, p.24). Frederick Winslow-Taylor's Scientific Management, and the human problems the adoption of his ideas created, is a product of behaviourism and is discussed in chapter 1. Behaviourism seeks to develop desired behaviours in response to specific stimuli, viewing human behaviour in terms of cause and effect (Burns, 2002, p.117). Within behaviourism, two theories can be identified. These are classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Classical conditioning is most famously associated with the Russian Ivan Pavlov's experiments with dogs. He also, horrifically, operated on and experimented on children. Pavlov demonstrated how responses could be conditioned and that behaviours could be triggered by stimuli that initially had no relation to the response. Skinner is regarded as the founder of Operant conditioning which functions through reinforcement to generate desired behaviours. His experiments were also animal based, using rats, and later pigeons to establish that a response followed by a reinforcing stimulus increases the likelihood of the behaviour being repeated.

Starting with Pavlov's experiments with dogs, animal based research has been generalised and developed to apply to humans. Save for Pavlov's experiments on children, almost all

behavioural research has been conducted on animals, with the results taken as legitimate predictors of behaviour in humans (Jarvis, 2003, p.27). Whilst there is extensive evidence that behaviourist approaches work with humans, a major limitation is that it works by extrinsic reinforcement. By ignoring the affective domain intrinsic powerful human motivators are ignored and consequently behaviourism is limited. Behaviourism is therefore not a complete theory of learning. It is perhaps best suited to low level, mechanical learning, and is likely to be less effective in complex learning situations requiring high level cognitive processing (Ertmer, 1993). Despite these reservations, behaviourism continues to be an influential learning theory that shapes the workplace. Examples include; commission and on target earnings for employees working in sales or the offer of a positive appraisal from a manager in return for working overtime. Behavioural competency frameworks are frequently used by the workplace to define and benchmark desired in work behaviours. Critics of such frameworks identify such frameworks as behaviourism in disguise (Burns, 2002, p.53). Further problems with behaviouralist approaches are that they do not encourage learners to think for themselves, instead aiming to reproduce desired conformist behaviours (Jarvis, 2003), which can run counter to the needs of a knowledge based economy and the drive for innovation.

Behaviourism is a learning strategy that may be employed to varying degrees in actor-based learning. An example is the mechanised training in semi-scripted performance required by some employees, particularly those in service industries (e.g. Höpfl, 2002), where the employee is required to provide emotional labour in the form of scripted responses, delivered in a particular manner, in response to a question from a customer. Legal, policy and ethical concerns may also define what is the 'correct' response in given circumstances, such as when conducting a disciplinary hearing or what is acceptable language and behaviour in a culture of equal opportunity, and behaviouralist techniques can be effective in learning these processes. Perhaps for economic reasons the expense of actors does not appear to be as widely used for

such behavioural training as it is for the development of deeper learning for communication skills, although theatre methods are used for this form of learning. Whilst skills learning is behavioural (Jarvis, 2003, p.30), learning about behaviours is not necessarily behaviourism. Actor-based learning is more typically used in a more open learner-centric manner, where trial and error are important elements of the process of learning. Whilst it utilises elements of behaviourism, for example, reinforcing desired behaviours through the mechanism of feedback shared with the learner on the impact of their behaviours, the tool can be used to develop the higher level interpersonal communication skills and thought processes required by the contemporary workplace. This higher level work is not divorced from implications informed by behaviourism. For example the principles of stimulus and response inform that a successful encounter positively influences the learning of new behaviours. Starbuck and Helberg state "Pleasant outcomes (successes) reinforce Stimulus-Response links whereas unpleasant outcomes (failures) break Stimulus-Response links. As a result, pleasant outcomes are much more effective at teaching new behaviours" (Starbuck, 2003, p.331). This presents a pedagogical challenge for the actor/facilitator, and may require the actor to use their judgement as to when to reward a learner's shift towards desired behaviours with a positive response. Should the actor misjudge the need for 'reward' then potential learning from the encounter may be unrealised. This educational function of the actor lies beyond the conventional role of the actor, a theme I explored in depth in Chapter 3.

Cognitivism

Classical behaviourism is only concerned with observable behaviour and the next step in the development of learning theory was to focus on the cognitive. These theories are not separate from behaviourism, but can rather be seen as existing on a connected continuum of learning theory, investigating the interior aspects of learning ignored by behaviourism. Cognitive theories developed through recognition that learning can take place without

reinforcement (Gross, 1992, p.186). This theory emphasises the role of experience, the making of meaning and problem solving and insight as source of learning (Burns, 2002, p.124). Jarvis identifies key theorists here as Piaget, Kohlberg, Fowler, Vygotsky and Mezirow (Jarvis, 2003, p.32-41). Cognitivist theories are concerned with how learning is related to stages of cognitive development. A child develops through stages of learning, and as a consequence teaching methods should be matched to the cognitive development of the child.

The concept of meaningfulness is central to cognitivism. People structure experiences and information into meaningful patterns which will be unique for each individual, based on their own existing cognitive structure and the current context. Burns highlights a work-based example; "To be told one must learn a new skill by the boss may be interpreted by one individual as 'if I don't I'll be sacked', by another as 'what a great opportunity' and by a third as 'Another situation in which I'm going to make a fool of myself and fail'" (Burns, 2002 p.126). These are typical perspectives encountered by the actor in the workplace, who may flex to the individual's needs, for example a learner expressing a fear of failure can be supported to tackle a role-play encounter in manageable steps and to experience a successful outcome.

Insightful learning is another key component of cognitivism. Cognitivists argue that by restructuring our cognitive framework insight can be gained through the creation of new perspectives on problems. This can lead to a 'eureka' moment where the solution is suddenly realised, or a series of tentative possible alternatives are explored. Wertheimer's research into insight, suggests that "insight and restructuring will only occur if we make an active attempt to look at a problem in a variety of ways" (Burns, 2002, p.127). The format of Actor-based role-play can support insight learning in a variety of ways; through the dynamic flexing of the actor and the scenario, with the actor responding to alternative versions of an encounter in which

the learner can experiment with a variety of strategies. The actor is typically a stranger to the learner, therefore the encounter itself, whilst typically placed in the context of the workplace is de-familiarised. This can present the problem from a new perspective, supporting the possibility of insight and learning. Luft & Ingham's model (Luft, 1955) of Johari's window provides a model to illustrate how insight into the unknown may be scaffolded. This model is reproduced below:

	Known to self	**Not known to self**
Known to others	*ARENA*	*BLIND SPOT*
Not known to others	*FAÇADE*	*UNKNOWN*

Fig. 4 Johari's window (Luft and Ingham, 1955)

Participatory theatre can be a powerful tool for encouraging insight into previously blind areas. This insight can be gained through learning the impact of their behaviours through reflection, feedback from the actor, facilitator and peer observers. These hidden aspects may be a deficit attribute, such as not empathising, or a visible attribute, such as an unconscious distracting behaviour such as fidgeting with a pen, or a verbal tick. Both deficit and visible attributes can potentially shatter fragile rapport and a well-managed actor-based encounter provides a safe space for the learner to investigate these hidden aspects. In this way insight can be gained,

and new behaviours rehearsed which can build emotional literacy. Judgement must be used to decide the most appropriate language and depth to which feedback will be given so that the learner is able to process the feedback. As the feedback is focussed on a learner's blind spots it is necessary to employ tact and judgement in the manner by which feedback is shared. Defensiveness is a key inhibitor to change in behaviour and unless feedback is shared effectively the learner may feel unfairly criticised and/or threatened and reject hearing something uncomfortable that may have value for them. Constructivism, explored next, tells us that learners may be experiencing cognitive dissonance in response to this new information, and rejection, rather than accommodation can occur when the simulation and feedback is not delivered in a supportive, sensitive and developmental manner.

Constructivism

Constructivism is currently the most prominent theory as to how human beings learn. "Most contemporary psychologists use constructivist theories of one type or another to explain how human beings learn" (Fry et al, 2003, p.10). Morrs & Murray define constructivism as: "the process of building up your own knowledge by connecting new information with what you already know and forming concepts that are models of reality." (2005, p.14) As an evolutionary theory Constructivism has its roots in 20th century learning theory, and from the above definition can be seen to share common territory with cognitivism. Constructivist theories are drawn from Piaget's work published in 1950 (Bradley, 2003), although Fry et al (2003) identify the roots of constructivist ideas in the work of Kant more than 200 years ago who argued that "experience leads to the formation of general conceptions or constructs that are models of reality. Unless schemata are amended, learning will not occur" (Fry et al, 2003, p.10). The differentiation arises from constructivism questioning the objectivistic philosophy that underlies behaviourism and cognitivism. "Most cognitive psychologists think of the mind as a reference tool to the real world; constructivists believe that the mind filters input from the

world to produce its own unique reality" (Jonassen in Ertmer, 1993, p.62). The implication is that "humans create meaning as opposed to acquiring it" (Ertmer, 1993, p.62).

Constructivism is a response to the view of learning whereby learning is built up sequentially, like a brick wall, where new knowledge is 'absorbed' by the learner and failing some inability to memorise, the knowledge can then be regurgitated in a more or less recognisable form (Moon, 2004, p.16). Moon argues that such a model is inadequate, as it doesn't take account of the majority of learning situations which often take place away from formal learning situations. The manner in which new ideas are joined to the network is described as assimilation in learning (Piaget in Moon, 2004, p.17; Illeris, 2011, p.16). When encountering the unfamiliar our assimilative learning may not apply and our existing learning therefore needs to be adapted, as opposed to added to, in order to learn. This further stage to learning is the process of accommodation, where by the new information influences or changes what is already known, or this new knowledge is itself challenged by existing knowledge (Carey, 1998; Illeris, 2011; Wilkes, 1997 in Moon, 2004). Bradley and Postlethwaite (2003) describe how assimilation suggests a richer understanding will come from exposure to a wide range of examples, and accommodation is the notion describing how learning is enriched when the learner encounters new material or unexpected experiences leading to cognitive conflicts that reveal the limitations of current knowledge. They identify the risk of disengagement as a risk for when a learner experiences cognitive conflicts: "It is of course possible to imagine another reaction to cognitive conflict: disengagement, dismissal of the unexpected experience as flawed in some way, and re-trenchment into the old position" (Bradley and Postlethwaite, 2003, p.1). Accommodative learning is therefore considerably more psychologically demanding than assimilative learning (Illeris, 2011, p.17). It is a form of learning that can be supported through Applied Theatre methods and the skills of the actor and facilitator are therefore paramount in supporting learning and mitigating against disengagement.

Constructivism states that for learning to occur existing knowledge must be added to or changed. "The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly" (Ausubel, 1968, p.127). The dialogic nature of participatory actor-based learning lays bares the learner's competence in tackling the simulation. In this way the encounter is heuristic, placing the learner central to the process. In the interaction of the simulation the learner experiences for themselves the current state of development of their own communication skills and the actor can work to establish the threshold of what is known in order to stretch the learner's skills into new areas. This stretch can be achieved by the actor dynamically adjusting the level of challenge, seeking out the threshold of unfamiliar territory to provide the learner with new knowledge. This process was described by the cognitivist Vygotsky and his work on the zone of proximal development; "often characterised as the distance between problem-solving abilities exhibited by a learner working alone and that learner's problem solving abilities when assisted by or collaborating with more experienced people" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.48). Actor-based learning can support the development of new knowledge through this supportive learning process known as scaffolding, with the aim that the learner is able to exercise the skill/knowledge later without support in the real world. The notion of the actor flexing their performance to support learning was explored further in Chapter 3.

Constructivism views the learner holistically, incorporating the emotions as part of the cognitive framework. Moon provides a definition of constructivism that incorporates the emotions:

> A vast but flexible network of ideas and feelings with groups of more tightly associated linked ideas/feelings. In the network some groups are far apart and some are near to each other and there are some relatively isolated ideas that have very few links to the network while others are well interconnected (Moon, 2004, p.16).

Moon is explicit in her identification of the role of the emotions and feelings in learning. This is a judgement made by the learner as to the value of what is learnt, and leads to variation in the learner's accommodation in their cognitive structures as to what is learnt (Moon, 2004, p.19). Moon provides a workplace example: "A highly motivated learner on a short course that is interesting to her, where she trusts the teacher and knows that the new material of learning can improve the way in which she operates in the workplace, is likely to allow considerable accommodation into her cognitive structure" (Moon, 2004, p.19). Moon also identifies the converse situation, of a learner who has little confidence in the process or the teacher or who doesn't want to be there is unlikely to accommodate the new information; "She may not pay attention, or she may use other areas of cognitive structure to justify rejection of the course materials by developing arguments against its content" (ibid). Moon's example identifies the complex interactions which can impact on the learning objectives being achieved. The emotional side, which is ignored by behaviourism, and individuality of meaning, which complexifies cognitivism, provides an explanation as to why constructivism is currently our most supported and developed theory of learning. Despite this theoretical support, learning in schools, education programmes and workplace learning typically ignores the emotional and focuses on content; "how workers and employees feel about it is regarded as a private matter" (Illeris, 2011, p.21). The capacity of Applied Theatre to engage with these emotional aspects of learning can therefore provide a novel and effective learning experience for participants.

Social constructivism, which is explored next, theorises the role of social interaction and its role in learning.

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism acknowledges the social aspects of learning; "social constructivism stresses the role of social interaction in helping learners construct their own understanding"

(Bradley and Postlethwaite, 2003 p.2). A consequence of this is that the facilitator or teacher must provide support or 'scaffold' (Bradley) the learning, until the learning can be employed independently. As discussed above, this scaffolding can be thought of as the mechanism by which the potential learning of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is realised. Social constructivist theories can be used to inform the design of structures to facilitate learning as well as proposing how learning can happen in unmediated, informal learning situations.

An example of social constructivism in a formal learning setting is the Action Learning Set. Due to the similarity in format between Action Learning and Actor based role-play, these connections are explored here. Indeed, it is credible that actor-based role-play evolved from the Action Learning Set, drawing on the strength of the format and focusing it on communication skills. An Action Learning Set is a format for a small group to take turn to focus their attention on a problem an individual group member presents for which there is no simple answer. The format was devised by Revans in the 1950's (Jarvis, 2003, p.138). Revans states "It is recognised ignorance not programmed knowledge that is the key to action learning: men start to learn with and from each other only when they discover that no one knows the answer but all are obliged to find it" (Revans, 1983, p.11 in Jarvis, 2003, p.138). Whilst small group work with an actor shares common ground with Revans' work and shares a similar format and a purpose, there are some key distinctions. The problems and challenges that a learner may bring to Action Learning are not limited to interpersonal encounters. In the Action Learning format broader strategic questions, abstract notions and technical problems can be explored which are not suited to modelling through a single dialogue as in role-play simulations. The focus of the actor-based set is restricted to interpersonal communication, but with the advantage of switching between the analysis and reflection present in an Action Learning Set with the additional element of experiential learning. Action Learning Sets facilitate a process of reflection-on-action, whereas the actor-based set also generates a simulated space for what

Schön termed reflection-in-action. A variation on this notion is *learning-in-experience* (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004, p.31).

Having scoped behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism, I will now move onto address situated learning before discussing adult learners and the impact of identity in learning. This is followed by an exploration of experiential learning.

Situated Learning

Patently much learning happens outside formal learning and training contexts. Lave & Wenger (1991) investigate an aspect of this learning and propose that learning is situated as a function of activity, culture or context. They argue that over time an individual acquires more knowledge and skill as part of a community of practice and eventually becomes an expert. They are describing the deep learning that takes place within a community of practice. This begins when a new member joins the community at the periphery. As they learn the activities and culture, they move from the periphery to the centre eventually becoming an expert. Situated Learning questions constructivism, viewing learning as relational and "rejects, or at least downplays the importance of the continuous reformation and transformation of the schemata of individuals" (Fry et al, 2003, p.12). Of importance here is the conclusion of both social constructivism and situated learning that learning and knowledge can be generated through social interaction and practice. A problem in terms of praxis is that Lave and Wenger state their theory is a way of understanding learning, as opposed to a pedagogical strategy (1991, p.40). However, as Bradley & Postlethwaite recognise (2003), role-play and simulation, by replicating real interactions and observations through which situated learning occurs, with the additions of the reflective/coaching element and peer feedback, provides a mediated simulation in which situated learning can occur. By artificially recreating the workplace

context in which learning has to be applied, and by anchoring the learning needs on the current state of the learner's knowledge, the conditions of Lave and Wenger's legitimate peripheral participation can be created with the actor-based simulation. In some respects the simulation of the situated learning context can provide learning spaces that may be inaccessible in the real community of practice, for example, the simulation of a confidential and contentious one to one meeting. Such challenging conversations would not take place in the presence of others in the real world, but can be simulated by the learner and actor and supported by the peer observers. The participatory theatre enables observation and consideration by peer observers of strategies to tackle these conversations that would otherwise take place behind closed doors. In this way, situated learning, which typically takes place in an unmediated context, is brought into a mediated environment, and as a consequence can function not only to replicate current culture and practice, but can also, through facilitated intervention, be used to model new behaviours which may not be part of the current organisational norms of behaviour.

Adult Learning Theories

Some theorists have looked specifically at the question of adult learning, and questioned whether adults learn in a different way to children. Knowles, an American Adult Educator, focuses his work on the way in which adults learn. He proposes a theory of 'andragogy', the science of teaching adults (Burns, 2002, p.229), to differentiate his approach from pedagogy, the art and science of teaching children (Burns, 2002 p.228). The term 'andragogy' is attributed to Kapp who devised the term in 1833 to describe elements of Plato's teaching methodology (Burns, 2002, p.229). Knowles argued that adults learn differently from children, and through his research over more than 30 years defined the principles that differentiate andragogy from pedagogy. These are (from Fry et al, 2003):

- As a person matures they become more self-directed.
- Adults have accumulated experiences which can be a rich source of learning.
- Adults become ready to learn when they experience a need to know something.
- Adults tend to be less subject-centred than children; they are increasingly problem centred.
- For adults the most potent motivators are internal.

Whilst Knowles' work has been questioned for being less of a theory of learning and more of a philosophy and prescription of best practice for adult learning (Burns, 2002, p.239; Fry et al, 2003), his work has been highly influential (Fry et al, 2003, p.13). Some forms of actor-based training embrace Knowles principles of practice; bespoke role-plays that invite the learner to select a real problematic conversation are an example of a relevant and personalised encounter focussed on a specific problem.

Connections Between Identity, Habitus and Learning

The notion of an individual's identity is an important factor in the potential for behavioural change[45]. For Illeris "identity is always an individual biological identity, an experience of a

[45] Habitus is also an important notion for the actor and the ability to read their character's habitus and to perform appropriate verbal and body language is an important component of creating a credible 'as if' space of experiential learning. Failure to correctly read and perform the habitus of a given character leads to an unconvincing performance. For example, I witnessed a male drama student perform a role-play with clinical skills assessors for the purposes of calibration prior to performing the role with candidates in an assessment centre. The brief did not specifically specify the social class of the character, instead relying on the signifiers implicit in the description of lifestyle to convey this information. In the role-play, the actor appeared to have failed to read these signifiers, and performed the role as a bright, articulate young man. The mismatch between the working class character implied by the brief and his performance as a privileged middle class patient led to performance that did not convince as real. In simple terms we could call this bad acting, but the notion of habitus helpfully explains why it was a poor performance. By failing to recognise the habitus of his character, his language and the details of his characters social context which he improvised were at odds with the signifiers that the role required. The implication here is that actors undertaking this form of work need to be able to read the habitus of their characters. Stanislavski's given circumstances can be a tool to achieve, amongst other aspects of building a character, the identification of a characters habitus. Experienced actors may not consciously use such approaches, as they may have internalised such

coherent individuality and life course, at the same time as being a social, societal identity, an experience of a certain position in the social community" (Illeris, 2011, p.27). Workplace identity is a partial identity, concerned with the individual at work in the working community (p.27). Illeris notes how Bourdieu's term 'habitus' is commonly used when discussing questions of identity, whilst he prefers the psychological term 'identity' as it stresses the individual's self-perception and reception by others, whilst habitus is a sociological concept which is concerned with the cultural and social 'deposits' on the individual (ibid, p.28). I will shortly come to the potential of theatre to influence or change an individual's identity or habitus and first I will provide a definition of habitus. Bourdieu's notion of habitus (1997, 1998) is complex and densely packed with meaning[46], which has led to much debate over this somewhat difficult to define concept (Grenfell, 2008, p.49). Grenfell provides a straightforward definition avoiding some of the abstract language frequently favoured by Bourdieu:

> Habitus focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances, and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others. This is an on-going active process - we are engaged in a continuous process of making history, but not under conditions entirely of our own making (ibid, p.52).

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methodologies and instinctively tune into the performative implications of their character's habitus. As actors in the workplace often have to rapidly generate and improvise roles, the ability to swiftly identify and perform the habitus of their character is a necessity.

[46] Bourdieu developed the concept in an attempt to reconcile our experience of a sense of personal agency whilst at the same time our behaviours, character and attitudes are predictable. Bourdieu sought to identify the mechanisms by which social practices, for which there are no explicit rules, are transmitted. He identified upbringing and education as key influences in the structuring of Habitus and it is this structure that provides dispositions, tendencies or inclinations to act in specific ways in given circumstances. Bourdieu argues that these behaviours are durable and deeply rooted and that their practice shaped through interacting with the social arena. "The habitus is thus structured both by conditions of existence and generates practices, beliefs, perceptions, feelings and so on in accordance with its own structure" (ibid, p.51). Bourdieu provides a formula for expressing the relationship between habitus and practice as follows:

[(habitus)+(capital)]+field = practice

Capital is defined as one's position in a field, habitus as one's disposition. These factors combine with the current social arena (field) and influences practice (ibid, p.51).

Behaviour is therefore a consequence of the dialectic between habitus and current circumstances. Research has been undertaken specifically exploring Applied Theatre methodologies and how the notion of habitus interacts with the potential for change. Eva Österlind explores Bourdieu's notion of Habitus in relation to Theatre of the Oppressed methods, posing the question as to whether Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) can promote change. She champions the value of Boal's methods, in particular his Rainbow of Desire (Boal, 2004) which works to dissolve inner oppression, going further than attempting to normalise participants so that they may be better adjusted to society. She sees working on internal structures as an absolute condition for external change; "inner structures often maintain social structures, for better or for worse" (Österlind, 2008, p.4). She questions the origin of these internal structures which can be so "enduring and sustaining", and this line of enquiry takes her to Bourdieu's notion of habitus and the problems of change for inherited social patterns which we experience as "natural, necessary and self-evident because they determine how we see and interpret the world around us" (ibid, p.5). Any methodology for behavioural change must navigate through the self-protective mechanism of the habitus. The habitus works to ensure its constancy and avoids and rejects exposure to new information. As an example Österlind identifies how we may favour political discussions with those who share similar opinions. The habitus tends to avoid critical challenges, and these avoidance strategies are, for Bourdieu, mainly non-conscious (ibid, p.5). For Österlind TO techniques, when used skilfully, can enable participants to work on many levels, from "personal, emotional problems to sociocultural patterns and political problems in one 'organic' process" (ibid, p.8). This change is driven through the Joker's use of their main tool of dialogue, both supporting and provoking; since the habitus is unreflexively and performatively replicated the provocation of the joker can support the development of insight into the otherwise invisible habitus, and this insight may subsequently be a catalyst for the individual to change. With adequate support, exploration into this potentially difficult territory can be made safe for the individual. The space to explore the notions habitus and identity is found in some forms of work-based

theatre. Forum Theatre and bespoke role-plays can provide a space for revealing, exploring, stretching the limits of and redefining the habitus. Working with interpersonal communication and its impact can support an individual to experiment and explore their potential power and influence in new and unfamiliar ways. The participant's exploration in the theatre simulation can contribute to a reflective process whereby an individual can redefine aspects of their identity. These shifts may be small, for example, from a self-view of avoiding difficult conversations to a self-view that it is better to have them, but for the individual this increase in personal agency can feel significant. In the *Friends Provident* case study in Chapter 3 participants provide their own examples of this type of change and its impact. For Bourdieu, any change in the habitus is difficult, but may potentially occur in exceptional circumstances[47]. The desired shifts in behaviour in work-based training are typically of a much lower order than those required in some other Applied Theatre contexts, such as the behavioural change to reduce recidivism as tackled by Geese theatre and their work in prisons. Reforming deeply rooted behaviours and attitudes can require significant behavioural modification and is beyond the scope and intention of work-based theatre. Exercising new interpersonal skills in the work-place can present a more achievable goal than the reform of criminals.

Habitus and identify are important notions in relation to actor based pedagogies and are integral to the efficacy of the practice. The resilience of identity/habitus means that change is difficult to achieve and to be successful learning methods must work with these notions. It may be that forms of experiential learning under discussion here provide the liminal space in which the barriers to change can be exposed and, briefly held within the spell of the simulation, future possibilities made present. Within the supportive framework of the theatre session, the learner experiences their own potential to change; here the boundaries of the

[47] This potential for change is anecdotally supported by the work of Geese theatre and their work with offenders whose behavioural patterns may be deeply ingrained; whilst anecdotal evidence exists for the immediate significant impact of the work (see http://www.geese.co.uk/HTML/index.html accessed 21/2/2011), the longer term impact of the work is difficult to assess.

habitus may be transgressed and new possibilities explored. Such moments of 'transformation' may perhaps be commonly witnessed by applied dramatists. However, the potential for action may rapidly crumble once the scaffolding of the training session has ended. Without a context that nurtures the emergent potential it is likely that there will be little change as the forces of the status quo will be overwhelming. The creation of identity is also political, as these constructed workplace identities are historically located with a specific purpose and context in order to achieve specific objectives. Nicholson questions whether work-based Applied Theatre is producing "Designer employees or active, participant employees" (Nicholson, 2005, p.49). I suggest that practitioners, organisations and individuals will respond to this important question in different ways and in Chapter 6 I will revisit the topic of identity and provide an overview of what form of workplace identity Applied Theatre is seeking to create and why.

Experiential Learning Theory

What we have to learn to do, we learn by doing
Aristotle (384-322 B.C.)

Experiential learning occurs through reflection on the experience of doing. Experiential Learning theories fall within the wide ambit of constructivism, and within this experiential domain the literature is broad and complex (e.g. Illeris, 2009, 2011; Jarvis, 2003; Kolb 1984; Moon 2004). There are two types of experiential learning. These are unmediated experiential learning, which occurs outside a formal learning setting, and mediated experiential learning that takes place in a formal learning environment. As the concern here is with participatory actor-based role theatre, the main focus is on mediated experiential learning. However, since the transfer of learning to the real work context is the primary purpose, I will later explore the question of transfer and the potential of actor-based learning to support on-going unmediated

experiential learning. The intention in this section is to identify the main qualities and theories of experiential learning and to relate these to the use of actors in the workplace.

Kolb's experiential learning cycle attempts to capture the process of learning based on experience. The model proposes a continual spiral process of experiential learning and is reproduced below:

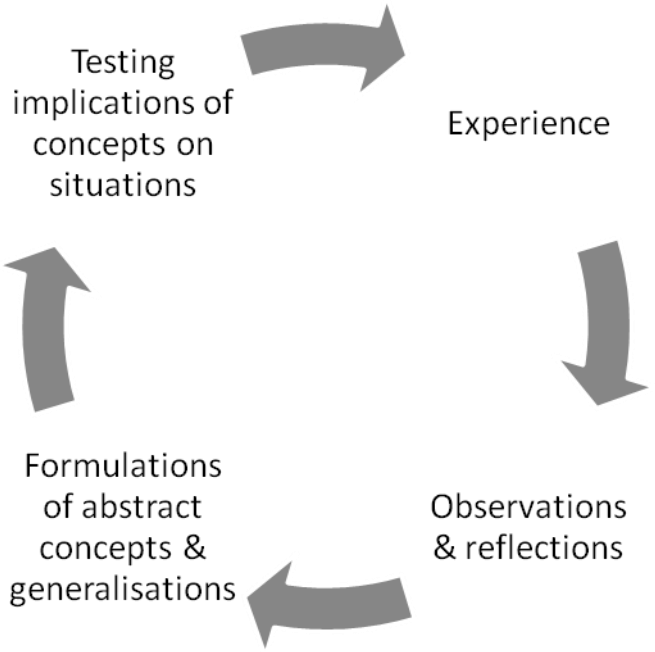

Fig. 5 Kolb's experiential learning cycle (in Jarvis, 2003, p58)

Like any model it is a reduction, a summary, of a more complex real world social process of human learning (Jarvis, 2009, p.23). Moon notes how, in 1984 when Kolb's work was published: "it is likely that (the model) would have been seen as quite distinct from the then current views of learning. One incidental characteristic of experiential learning, therefore, is that it is based in theoretical principles that have often been ahead of their time" (Moon,

2004, p.112). The structure of an actor-based role-play is heavily influenced by Kolb's model, as can be seen from the analysis of a typical actor-based role-play session in Chapter 4.

Miller and Boud (Miller and Boud, 1996, p.8, in Jarvis 2003, p.56) identify five 'propositions' of experiential learning. These are:

- Experience is the foundation of, and stimulus for learning.
- Learners actively construct their own experience.
- Learning is holistic.
- Learning is socially and culturally constructed.
- Learning is influenced by the socio-economic context within which it occurs

Actor-based learning can be defined in terms of Miller and Boud's propositions in the following ways:

Experience is the foundation of, and stimulus for learning

Participatory actor-based theatre involves the learner in an experience that seeks to provide the catalyst for reflection and insight into new paradigms. The participatory theatre is used to frame and focus on a problematic aspect of work which can then be worked and interacted with. Theatre can defamiliarise the workplace and provide a lens through which problems can be understood from fresh perspectives (The aesthetics of actor-based learning are analysed in Chapter 4). These new way of looking at a problem can stimulate insight and new learning into possible approaches and/or solutions.

Learners actively construct their own experience

Here Miller & Boud place experiential learning within the paradigm of constructivism. An implication is that the learning objectives set by an employer may be coterminous or may

differ from the knowledge gained by the employee learner. As an example of divergence of the employer's objectives and the learning outcome, we can consider an experiential training event designed to positively embed a new working practice may be read by the learner as an erosion of terms and conditions. Participatory methods work in dialogue, and therefore can be effective in supporting the construction of learning from the point of learners' current state of understanding. I addressed the flexibility of actor pedagogies and the notion of calibration to the needs of the learner in Chapter 3.

Learning is holistic

Experiential learning doesn't separate the cognitive from the physical, as usually happens, for example, in lecture based learning. Actor-based learning is often used to explore high stakes work-based encounters where the learner's management of their own fight or flight response to a stressful encounter is a significant part of the challenge. Abstract, theoretical discussion of such problems does not enable the learner to practice strategies for the management of physical and mental stress in the way that actor-based participatory simulations can enable. Chris Cotton, Director of *Training in Action* reinforces this point when he stated "An intellectual appreciation of the need to change is the first step, but for this to convert into a change in habit people need to FEEL the difference for themselves, so that the new behaviour can be anchored in emotion not intellect" (Personal email, 29/12/11). In the 'as if' reality of the theatre the learner's experience is holistic in that it involves both the mind and body. Jarvis provides further support for the proposition of holistic learning:

> One of the major strengths of this approach to teaching and learning….is that the whole person does the experience rather than just the individual's mind or body. By the whole person we mean the cognitive, the physical, the emotional and the spiritual: that is, the individual's knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, emotions and senses. We learn from all these dimensions of the person's episodic experience" (Jarvis, 2003, p.55)

These holistic qualities of experiential learning can be exploited in actor-based learning to develop the skills and understanding to handle emotionally problematic work-based challenges. Through the actor's ability to present a credible characterisation, and a facilitated, supportive and safe framework for learning, the emotions can be explored and within this frame of safety powerful encounters can be held and explored. It is this 'as if' version of reality that can trigger psycho-physical responses where adrenalin is released into the body and the heart rate increases, similar to how the learner experiences similar real experiences. In constructivist terms, the proximity of the actor-based simulation to the real provides a meaningful encounter that aids accommodation of learning into the cognitive schemata. The use of simulation can build the learner's self-efficacy to tackle similar problems in the real world due to the participation with the actor serving as a credible proxy for a real encounter. I addressed the embodied and social qualities of this form of learning in *General Points of Theory Arising from the Case Studies* in Chapter 3.

Learning is socially and culturally constructed.

As I said above, education is used to transmit shared cultural values and ethics as well as to prepare and maintain the skills of the workforce. The values, ethics and skills transmitted through education are part of a wider socio-economic discourse and what is learnt, and the structures within which learning takes place, are determined by this discourse. This is known as Social Constructionism (distinct from social *constructivism*), and is a notion discussed further in Chapter 6.

Learning is influenced by the socio-economic context within which it occurs.

Work-place Applied Theatre is, inevitably, situated within the context of work and operates in the socio-economic conditions of capitalist philosophy. Applied theatre is used for learning

and development in order to support individuals and organisations to be more effective within this philosophy. The overarching aim will be to improve the effectiveness of the workforce and the organisation, and effective in this context means efficient and productive. However, a more efficient and productive workplace is not just one where the staff are required to work harder. It may be one less riddled by conflict and division, or an organisation with a lower staff turnover.

Social Cognitive and Self-Efficacy Theory

Albert Bandura is frequently cited for his theories on how we learn new behaviours and his work on Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy are central to understanding why simulation and theatre can be effective experiential learning processes. His Social Cognitive Theory defines a series of interactive steps through which new behaviours can be acquired through exploration and testing. His theories support the notion that correctly facilitated rehearsal of behaviours in a group setting can build self-efficacy and also support vicarious learning through peer observation. Baim, Brookes and Mountford, of Geese theatre, identify Bandura's work as an "important conceptual framework for helping participants to develop new skills in a conscious and structured way." (2002, p.19). Bandura (1986) identified the interrelationship between environmental, behavioural and personal factors. He named this interrelationship a triadic reciprocality. These factors together influence self-efficacy beliefs, which can be defined as "people's judgements of their capabilities to execute and organise courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is not concerned with the skills one has but with the judgements of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses" (Bandura, 1986, p.94). Central steps in Bandura's model for building self-efficacy are rehearsal, incremental challenge, reflection and vicarious learning. These stages and attributes to build self-efficacy can be present during a well-designed actor-based learning, and are explored below.

The link between rehearsal and the continued replication of behaviours in real encounters is not straightforward. Applied Theatre provides a space to learn new skills and for these skills to continue to grow outside the training room requires the participant to be sufficiently motivated to continue to develop their use. It may be that, away from the support of the training room, the participant may not have the courage for such encounters in the real world. This is not to suggest that the encounter has not been worthwhile. It may be that the participant requires more support and is not yet ready to have such a potentially difficult conversation in the real world. The participant may also experience the benefit of a temporary catharsis through witnessing and experiencing their concerns reflected in the theatre. Catharsis and the extent to which learning transferred to the work-place are addressed in the *Friends Provident* case study in Chapter 3. Whilst the performance of rehearsed skills in the real world may be problematic, there is evidence which demonstrates that experiential learning is more memorable than other learning methods. Edgar Dale's research (2001, p.108) finds that active, experiential methods lead to greater recall of what was learnt, with the simulation of real events being rated as almost as effective a method of learning as actual experience. Passive forms of learning, such as reading, listening and looking at pictures score much lower, with less than 10% recall after two weeks, compared to 90% recall for active, experiential forms of learning.

Actor-based role-play can provide learners with the required incremental challenge to build self-efficacy so that they are not overwhelmed, but instead steadily build confidence in using new skills. In practice this may mean that the actor will adjust dynamically the level of challenge provided by their characterisation to provide an acceptable level of difficulty. For the actor to do this they need to be adequately briefed before the role-play, and then use active listening skills during the simulation to judge what is needed from them to serve the

learning. I explored the actor's process in providing this incremental challenge in the discussion of calibration in chapter 3.

Self-reflection enables individuals to explore their own thinking and potentially to alter their thinking and behaviour. Reflection is a vital part of the learning process: "The extent to which the learner processes the information to be acquired is the extent to which it is acquired." (Wigginton, 1986, p.157) This reflection can happen embedded within the encounter as reflection-in-action, and may continue for some time afterwards as reflection-on-action. Role-play can provide an individual with new perspectives on which to reflect, which may in turn lead to action. This process of reflection in and on action is not automatic, as many factors may prevent a skill, successfully practised in the training room, from being replicated effectively in the real world. A competently facilitated actor-based session seeks to maximise opportunities for participants to reflect. For Moon, "'Reflective Practice' emphasises the use of reflection in professional or other complex activities as a means of coping with situations that are ill-structured and/or unpredictable" (Moon, 2004, p.80). With increasing workplace change reflective practice can be seen as a core competence to enable employees to cope and adapt to change.

Forum Theatre and role-play enables vicarious learning through peer observation. Witnessing a peer succeed can provide evidence that a task is achievable and consequently can contribute positively to self-efficacy. Observation enables learners to witness models of best practice, to learn from mistakes and reflect on their own practice. Simulation enables learning from situations to which the vicarious learner may not otherwise have access, such as a high stakes, confidential one-to-one dialogue. Bandura's theory informs us that the behaviour is likely to only be replicated when it produces valued results. For example, an individual may know that

smoking can damage health, but the value of this knowledge may be overridden by the need to be accepted by a group of smokers. Applied Theatre must exploit vicarious learning in a sophisticated way to counteract the complex and perhaps deeply engrained negative influences potentially at work on the target audience. For example, a role-play session can provide a space for efficacious vicarious learning by witnessing their work colleagues successfully conduct an interaction, which may be more successful than observing someone from outside the social group.

Despite the frequent citation of Bandura's theories and widespread evidence in support of his work, it is not without its critics. Thompson argues that "we do not simplistically store total interactions for later display" (2006, p.47). Perhaps it is simply not credible that a lifetime of behaviours can be altered through a few workshops. I have discussed above the powerful notion of identify and how this may facilitate or inhibit learning and adaption. Whilst the evidence for Bandura's principles as a model of social development may be sound, it is questionable that an intervention can generate lasting change when it has limited time in which to achieve its results. We don't expect an actor to perform a role on stage without adequate rehearsal, but do we really imagine people can learn to perform a new behaviour with just a few hours practice? Typically, work-based interventions are of too short a duration, and may not provide enough practice for the participants to master a new skill. The learners experience may, however, provide a valuable contribution to the process of knowledge creation as a tool for modelling behaviours and a diagnosis of their learning needs. Through the theatre, participants can gain new insights into the impact of their behaviour and their own potential. The diagnosis provides a starting point for further reflection and experimentation, which the learner may undertake if the work environment is supportive and they are sufficiently motivated. Applied Theatre can therefore have a significant role in work

skills development, but many other factors, outside the control of the learner and the actors, contributes to the replication, or not, of learning in the workplace.

Mind the Gap: Exposing dissonance between theory and practice

Participatory theatre can be exposing for the learner. Argyris and Schön provide a model of two types of theory; theory in action and espoused theory, which provides insight into why participatory theatre can potentially be so challenging. They state:

> When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, they answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible with his espoused theory; furthermore, the individual may or may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two theories. (Argyris and Schön, 1978, p.10)

This notion neatly summarises the problem of praxis, identifying the gap between what actually happens and what is proposed. Argyris & Schön's model can apply to different levels of organisational operation. It can help articulate a culture gap between the stated company values, for example, claims of valuing employees and actual practice, such as a poorly handled redundancy programme. It can also be a useful notion on the level of the individual employee. Actor-based theatre can be an effective tool to refine theory-in-use and to expose any dissonance with espoused theory on both an organisational and individual level. The 3M Forum Theatre case study in Chapter 4 is an example of the dissonance of their performance management system in actual use compared to the claims of objectivity and fairness for the system. On an individual level, here are two examples from my practice of the problems learners brought to an actor-based role-play:

> *Prior to the simulation the learner expresses that they 'can't deal with conflict'. The role-play provided empirical evidence that their espoused theory was too simplistic; the*

evidence in action was that they were able to tackle a work-based interpersonal conflict. Although they found the dialogue challenging, they felt pleased that they were able to reach a satisfactory conclusion. In this way the role-play provides new insights into hidden capabilities.

A learner presents their preferred management style as operating in a friendly, cooperative style. Their espoused theory was that this was how they and their team operated. In action, they present as unassertive and unclear due to their fear of not wishing to damage the friendly working relationship. The actor revealed to the learner that their experience of the interaction was confusing and frustrating due to a lack of clarity over the purpose and of the conversation. In light of this feedback the learner adjusted their approach and experienced a more satisfactory outcome where they were able to act more assertively with greater clarity without jeopardising the rapport with their colleague.

Argyris & Schön's model provides a language for exploring a central aspect of work-based learning that may take place through the flexible learning methods of Applied Theatre.

Learning and Intelligence

The journey is often one from IQ to EQ

Chris Cotton, Director
Training in Action
email correspondence

A further variable in learning is intelligence, and whether learning strategies can increase it. The definition of intelligence is a subject of debate. Central are questions of whether the cognitive abilities measured by Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests translate into every day performance (Burns, 2002, p.146) and also whether intelligence is a single ability of a suite of attributes that individuals possess to a varying degree.

The debate over intelligence can be summarised as an evolution from a two factor theory composed of a predominant general intelligence, which provides an indicator of general abilities, refined by secondary specific abilities, e.g. verbal or spatial abilities, to theories arguing for the contextual nature of intelligence which have been refined by Howard Gardner and his theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner identified a multiplicity of intelligences to recognise that specific contexts and societies regard different abilities and skills as intelligent. He therefore defined intelligence as "the capacity to do something useful in a society in which you live" (Gardner, 1993). Gardner's work is popular with educators due to its egalitarian perspective that identifies that whilst an individual may have limitations, they may have strengths in other areas (Burns, 2002, p.156). One of Gardner's multiple intelligences is 'Personal', related to self-knowledge and empathy, which is related to the concept of Emotional Intelligence. Emotional Intelligence, or EQ, was popularised by the work of Daniel Goleman (1996, 1998). He defines Emotional Intelligence as having five components. These are General Mood, Adaptability, Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Stress Management. The concept of EQ is an influential concept in the modern workplace (Goleman, 1998).

Whilst there is debate over the definition, measurability, and whether EQ is a form of intelligence or actually a skill (Locke, 2005), I do not need to investigate further these problems and distinctions here; my concern is with the connections between EQ, work-based learning and actor-based participatory theatre. The two main questions are:

- Why might EQ be relevant to the workplace?

and

- To what extent can actor-based training methods develop intrapersonal and interpersonal skills?

Goleman places EQ as a core competency for the workplace, stating "Effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: they all have a high degree of emotional intelligence" (Goleman, 1998, p.94). EQ is seen as a complement to IQ and technical skills, and as such is as important as part of the workplace agenda. The reason for this is that people have to communicate and collaborate with each other at work, as Burns states: "most workers from managerial level downwards to the shop floor agree that most business or work problems are people-related" (Burns, 2002, p.157). Perhaps the real value here of Goleman's work was to build recognition of the role of emotions in the workplace. The branding of the ideas as Emotional Intelligence provided a seeming scientific basis for softer skills for which previously there was no popular vocabulary. The core concept, that high EQ matters in the knowledge economy, has reached high penetration. Burns further reinforces the pull factors for EQ, stating "A high EQ for workers is necessary because of the increasing demands placed on them in the twenty-first century, such as managing their own careers, recognising opportunities, being prepared to change and upgrading themselves in multiskills" (Burns, 2002, p.158). A high degree of interpersonal skills enables better relationship management, cooperation and conflict resolution. Personal insight may help individuals recognise when they need to take remedial action when workloads and stress levels are too high. For organisations, emotionally literate employees can be better at building relationships with team members and stakeholders, which can lead to a more productive workplace. Importantly, whilst IQ is essentially static, EQ can be developed (Burns, 2002).

The prize of increased productivity provides the motivation for the workplace to invest in developing Emotional Intelligence to gain competitive advantage. Within the work-based training sessions I have observed it is typical for the utility of Emotional Intelligence to be stressed in terms of business efficiency and advantage, whilst the benefits for the individual of working within a more harmonious and empathic workplace are not typically highlighted.

Despite the presentation of the concept in terms of competitive advantage, this does not preclude an impact for the individual in terms of working within teams skilled in collaborative working methods. With emotional literacy recognised as a core skill for the modern workplace, actor-based methods are used in an attempt to develop the insight, empathy and reflective skills which constitute the 'soft skills' grouped under the label Emotional Intelligence. Luft and Ingham's model of Johari's window, introduced above during the discussion of cognitivism, provides a model by which the learner can gain insight into the unknown. An example is for the actor, out of role, to explain the impact of the interaction on their feelings, supporting the development of the participant's understanding of the impact of their behaviours and which can build the learner's empathic ability. In role, the actor can scaffold the development of emotional literacy through prioritising the participant's learning needs over their own characterisation. The actor can support the conditions for learner insight by reflecting in role the impact of what the learner says and does. Realism can be sacrificed in order to serve the learning encounter. Here are two examples:

> *The actor chooses to respond only to the explicit question and not the implicit question, by responding to a series of closed questions with closed responses when open questions would be more appropriate. By heightening the impact of closed questions the learner can reflect on alternative communication strategies, such as using more open questions that may be more effective.*
>
> *The actor can give clues as to the internal state of their character by heightening behaviours that signal their character's emotional state. By signalling the impact the learner is having on the character the learner can gain insight into the effect their interaction is having and develop empathy. The learner may be encouraged to find an appropriate form of words to empathise verbally, to which the actor in character can respond positively, thereby reinforcing the value of recognising feelings*

The actor can support the learner to connect with their emotional landscape, and to explore and reflect upon the forms of expression where the emotional can be brought into the work domain in a constructive manner. I suggest that this form of acting differs from conventional notions of acting and I name this hybrid role *pedagogical acting,* a notion which I developed further in Chapter 3 through the case studies and the general points of theory arising from the

case studies. Theatre based methods situate learning in the social arena and holistically involve the body and the mind, and I suggest that it is these qualities of operating with both the emotional and the cognitive which support the development of the skills which can be defined as evidence of Emotional Intelligence.

What Type of Learning is Taking Place?

Having explored the processes by which learning and knowledge is acquired through actor-based Applied Theatre, I now move onto explore the question as to what type of learning is taking place. To explore this question I will draw upon Magdola's work into the structure of knowledge and Jarvis' analysis of types of learning that either supports the status quo or supports change.

Magdola's research investigated student conceptions of knowledge. She identified different conceptions of knowledge, the outcome of which was a system that categorised knowledge into a hierarchy of four domains. Whilst other more complex models exist (see Moon, 2004), the clarity of Magdola's model is helpful to this discussion of learning through Applied Theatre and the forms of knowing these participatory processes may produce. Here is a summary of the four domains, taken from Moon (2004):

1. **Absolutist** – knowledge is certain and absolute.
2. **Transitional stage** – there is partial certainty and partial uncertainty.
3. **Independent knowing** – learning is uncertain – everyone has their own beliefs.
4. **Contextual knowing** – knowledge is constructed and any judgements must be made on the evidence of the evidence in that context.

From the model it can be seen that the higher levels of knowledge require the learner to be able to work with cognitive dissonance, where the 'messiness' and uncertainty of the real

world must be engaged. At higher levels of knowing individuals may hold alternative and also equally valid views. Magdola observed that learners may be at different stages of knowledge for different subjects, noting that knowledge is contextual. I will use Magdola's four domains as a framework for identifying the types of knowledge that can occur through actor-based Applied Theatre.

Actor-based methods can be used for lower levels of knowing, such as forms of absolutist knowledge; However, theatre is an expensive solution and it is likely that typically other more economic and effective methods would be used[48]. Deborah Cameron's *Good to Talk?* (2000) critiques the philosophy and approach that is driving much contemporary thinking and practice on the topic of communication, in particular the ways in which Talk has become commoditised. Cameron explores the notion of the environment of a modern call centre as a 'communication factory' where standardised interaction is required (Cameron, 2000, p.91-124). Drawing distinctions between skilling and styling, Cameron argues, particularly for service industries, that training presented as communication skills falls short of this and is more of an exercise in communication styling. Cameron explores the notion of styling as possessing "little engagement with the underlying purposes and principals of interaction, but rather an intense concern to manage what might be called its *aesthetics*" (Cameron, 2000, p.87). Styled communication in a service role may require being, or appearing to be, warm, friendly or enthusiastic. Whilst social groups may develop their own styling, drawing on the 'broad sociolinguistic landscape' (Eckert, 1996 in Cameron, 2000, p.88), Cameron's issue with a defined communication style in the workplace is that "the preferred style is designed by people who will not have to use it themselves, and imposed on those lower down the hierarchy" (ibid, p.88). Actor-based learning could be used for training in the restricted form of

[48] Assessment contexts can test absolutist knowledge, for example, In Chapter 4 I provide the example of the Police recruitment process where candidates could learn the desired responses to successfully pass an actor-based assessment; providing the candidate said the correct response they would pass the assessment.

communication training which is the target of Cameron's critique, although I suggest doing so is to underutilise the resource of the actor. In practice actors are more typically used for highly contextual learning where there are many legitimate possible approaches and a judgement call must be made based on incomplete information. These demanding interactions require the creative use of high level communication skills; this is not a space of simplistic, styled and scripted dialogue. Shah and Kruglanski (2000) provide two concepts to articulate the creative aspect of these high level skills, proposing the concept of *multi-finality* to describe where achieving a goal can serve more than one purpose (Hargie and Dickson, 2004, p.440) and the notion of *equifinality*, whereby the goal may be achieved in a variety of equally effective ways (ibid). "Thus there are alternative approaches that can be employed in any particular interactive episode to achieve a desired outcome, and it is up to the individual to select what is deemed to be the most appropriate mix" (ibid). Applied Theatre that works with the flexible implications of multifinality and equfinality can be seen to increase the relative autonomy of employees when compared to more restrictive forms of communication, such as the styled communication which is the target of Deborah Cameron's *Good to Talk*. Actor-based theatre is typically used to support the development of higher levels of knowledge in order to equip workers with the skills to operate in an increasingly uncertain and changing landscape. Actors are employed to provide an encounter with the uncertain, where the learner must use their skill and judgement to navigate a complex interaction where typically the stakes are high. Communication skills must be deployed dynamically; a fixed, pre-planned strategy is likely to fail if it doesn't flex in response to new information presented by the dialogue. The impact of these discursive communication skills is explored in Chapter 6. Magdola's research found that a key to faster progression to contextual knowing was the opportunity to make significant independent decisions (Moon, 2004, p.39). Actor-based methods can provide, within the framework and boundaries of the workplace, an empowered form of learning where the learner is placed central to the process and through the experience gain ownership of the skills

they have exercised. In this way the experiential learning gained through actor-based methods can aid the construction of a higher order of knowledge in the domain of contextual knowing.

Learning to Reinforce or Change the Status Quo

I will now explore the question of whether work-based Applied Theatre supports the maintenance of the status quo or supports processes of change. Jarvis identifies that whilst there is no standard terminology to discuss similar learning processes, processes can be grouped into headings of either learning that changes or reinforces the status quo (Jarvis, 2003, p.72-75). I'll explore these two categories in turn.

Learning and the Status Quo

Jarvis describes this type of learning as follows: "It is as if the learner treats the external world as objective and that the sole task of learning is to be able to recall accurately the external reality" (ibid, p.73). Learning to support the status quo can be limited to absolutist, unquestioning learning, where what is taught is presented as truth. Friere named this form of learning where fixed ideas are uncritically 'downloaded' as 'banking' (Freire, 2000). Argyris & Schön name this form of uncritical learning as *Single Loop learning* (Schön, 1991). Despite the intentions of a single loop learning process, constructivism suggests that due to the learner constructing their own knowledge their learning may differ from the desired intention of learning, and the outcome may be to challenge the status quo. Change beyond the stated single loop learning objectives may therefore result. For the organisations using actor-based methods as part of a development programme in response to the increasing pace of change and globalisation, change, and not replication of the status quo, typically is the desired learning outcome. For management, this change will ultimately be in service of competitive

advantage and organisational efficiency. Employees may also support this agenda as organisational survival means that they can continue to benefit from the income and relative security of their work.

Learning and Change

Here scholars use a variety of terms to describe learning that leads to change. Jarvis identifies three types of 'change' learning; "Firstly the learners may be changed. Secondly, they may agree or disagree with the information that they receive and so change its meaning or, thirdly the learners may act in order to change the situation within which they function" (Jarvis P, 2003, p.74). Change can be threatening for people in organisations, as "it is difficult to introduce change without suggesting a criticism of previous styles and methods" (Hannagan, 2008, p.33). Implicit in the drive to change is the suggestion that the current ways of doing things are inadequate, which can threaten employee's self-image. Change is a complex topic with a central role in contemporary organisational life. "The purpose of change is to move an organisation from its present point to a different one which is more desirable in meeting its objectives" (Hannagan, 2008, p.31). Without careful implementation, change can lead to destructive conflict. Faced with the imperative to change, leaders in the workplace are faced with a dilemma, as in order for their organisations to thrive within leaner management structures they must surrender some of their power to employees. Empowered individuals equipped with the skills to enact change may use their skills in which their leaders did not intend and tensions can arise through the redistribution of power through this process of transformation. This change process may lead to questioning the underlying organisational objectives and the status quo may be challenged. This form of learning is named *double loop learning* by Argyris and Schön. Jarvis states "since the outcome of this second type of learning might be a changed situation, it is easy to understand why learning has a political dimension" (Jarvis, 2003, p.74). Whilst managers may desire change, they may also want a high degree of

control over the pace and type of change. Theatre methods can provide a valuable forum for dialogue to explore these tensions and negotiate a way forward. Organisations striving towards the goal of an empowered workforce may find this aspiration falls away in the face of resistance to change and fall back onto command and control methods to enforce the change. Individuals may be left feeling confused and demotivated by the forces of change that mean that the goals in which they were told to target their energy, passion and skill have now shifted, and they are now expected to realign their commitment to the new vision. Theatre methods can de-familiarise the status quo, as discussed in Aesthetics in Chapter 4 and can provide a valuable space in which to name these tensions and examine conflicting meanings of 'empowerment'. I will return to the meaning of 'empowerment' in the context of work in Chapter 6. The drive to develop the skills to implement and thrive in a change culture is a primary motivation for organisations using actor-pedagogies. These participatory techniques can be used to explore tensions associated with change in a meaningful way and to support a process of negotiation into new approaches to work. The *Friends Provident* case study in Chapter 3 provides an example of actor-based methods used for such a purpose. In Chapter 6 I theorise the overarching purpose of actor-based learning used for leadership development as part of a process of organisational structural change in order to gain competitive advantage.

The Problem of Transfer of Learning

The connection between the learning encounter, knowledge creation and practice is not automatic. Experiences presented as learning may not lead to the desired behavioural change due to the interaction of complex factors and whilst learning can never be guaranteed steps can be taken to increase the likelihood of learning transfer. To learn a skill it is necessary to practise and therefore experiential learning techniques can be particularly effective at skills development. For Borzak, experiential learning involves a "direct encounter with the phenomena being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter, or only

considering the possibility of doing something about it" (Borzak, 1981, p.9). A well designed experience based programme can increase the likelihood of transfer of learning to actual practice, but it would be a mistake to consider experiential learning in general as likely to lead to transfer. For example, Wallace's (1996) essay "When is Experiential Learning not Experiential Learning" describes an outward bound management development course. Wallace describes how little of the learning transferred back into the workplace, stating that this transfer problem was "rooted in the way that the team tasks and the setting were far removed by design from…routine managerial work and its context" (Wallace, 1996, p.18 in Moon, 2004, p.118). Wallace concluded that there was a correlation between the need for additional learning support and the distance of the learning from the context. Moon records similar problems, and suggests a sequence of four steps to better integrate experiential learning into workplace practice. These steps are listed below (Moon, 2004, p.119), mapped to actor-based Applied Theatre methods.

- ***The development of awareness of current workplace practice;***

Actor-based learning is typically situated in the workplace context with actors briefed as to the issues which the training is designed to address. The theatre therefore has a high degree of relevance and personalisation to the specifics of the workplace. I described the process by which actor-based interventions are designed in Chapter 4. The most relevant and personalised form of actor based learning is with bespoke role-plays, where the actor plays whoever the learner requests providing a mediated form of Situated Learning grounded in the work context.

- ***The clarification of the new learning and how it relates to current understanding of current practice***

A well-researched actor-based intervention will be designed to reflect aspects of current practice and build skills from this position. In Chapter 4 I provided two examples of Forum Theatre, both were explicit in how the learning related to current practice. With bespoke role-plays participants are invited to devise their own learning objective and design their own scenario. When the theatre is credibly situated within the workplace there might only be a small bridge between the simulation and the real, aiding the likelihood of transfer. Actor-based scenarios are not always set in the work context. Distancing from the work context can help to strip away technical knowledge and focus the learning encounter on interpersonal skills. For these 'distanced' scenarios, Moon's model informs us that the reflection and feedback needs to be handled with particular care otherwise the distance between the learning and the workplace may be too wide to enable transfer.

- ***The integration of new learning and current practice***

The *Friends Provident* case study in Chapter 3 is an example of an attempt to integrate the learning of new behaviours into practice through multiple actor-based bespoke role-plays. The AOC Forum Theatre example in Chapter 4 provides evidence that the peer learning the Forum Theatre facilitated was successfully integrated into practice. Integrating the learning into current practice requires the learner to be sufficiently motivated and for the workplace culture to support the change.

- ***The anticipation or imagination of the nature of improved practice***

Moon identified the use of the imagination as most important of the four components of transfer. Theatre can be particularly effective in aiding the imaginative engagement of the learner. Actors can achieve this in several ways. Forum Theatre can provide an engaging reflection of the learner's world which provides the liminal space in which alternative futures can be imagined. The actor's ability to generate a credible characterisation can aid the learner's transition into the 'as if' world of a role-play. Furthermore, particularly with bespoke role-play, the experience is grounded around the learner's frame of reference; therefore the imaginative gap between the simulation to the real is small. The additional thought and reflection needed for the learner to apply the learning in the real situation is minimal. Compare this to Wallace's outward bound management experience, where the gap between the learning experience and workplace context was much greater. Whilst both experiences might engage the imagination, with the outward bound experience the learner's imagination may be fired in many directions only some of which would be focused on work. Through well-constructed role-play and Forum Theatre, learners can witness and experience for themselves the impact of improved practice. It is then a small imaginative step to conceive how this learning may then be replicated in the real workplace.

Conclusion – The Act of Learning

I have explored a range of learning theories to support the efficacy of actor-based Applied Theatre. Learning is a broad and complex topic and multiple factors influence what is learned. Factors such as the learner's current knowledge, sympathy with the objectives, the learner's and the groups emotional state, the skill of the learning facilitators and the actors, the environment, the physical alertness of the learner, even the weather outside all impact on the nature of the learning that takes place. These are some of the multiple individual and

organisational forces which may mitigate against behavioural change. Some of these variable factors can be controlled with relative ease, for example by creating a safe and comfortable space for the learning and ensuring that appropriately skilled facilitators and actors are engaged to undertake this work. I suggest the actor's conception of their function is a significant factor in the efficacy of the practice. Actors who understand the pedagogical aspects of their hybrid role can use this knowledge to support learning in ways beyond what is possible should they conceive of their role as acting and ignore the educational implications for their role. There are work-based actors who understand their pedagogical role and also actors with little insight into the learning processes to which they are contributing. A fine actor in one setting may be a poor actor in another.

It would be a mistake to think that all learning is, of itself, a good thing. Jarvis states that learning is amoral but that the outcome of learning may have moral consequences (1997 in Jarvis, 2003). Nicholson explores this point from an Applied Theatre perspective when she states "what is learnt depends on how drama is used, on the educational aims of particular projects, the narratives of the participants and the specific social locations and cultural contexts in which the work takes place" (Nicholson, 2005, p.50). Learning can be a tool to challenge and eradicate social inequalities (e.g. Burns 2002, Friere 2000, Boal 2000), and also a tool of control and oppression. Actor-based learning for the workplace can be used as part of a process of organisational and individual change as part of a skills agenda designed to achieve a competitive advantage in a complex, uncertain, globalised economy. The practice seeks to create identities that are collegiate, emotionally intelligent and productive within a globalised world in a period of accelerated change which produces winners and losers. For some this world of flexible working, short term contracts, new jobs and innovative ways of working has provided a new level of freedom and opportunity. For others, the impact of change has been uncertainty, confusion and exploitation. Applied theatre methods are often used in

community settings to empower individuals to claim the locus of control over their lives; in the context of the workplace these same methods can be applied to enhance skills and knowledge, with the potential to enable an individual to claim power over their own working life and navigate a course through a work-life of change and uncertainty. In this way I argue that the heuristic knowledge potentially facilitated through actor-based theatre can be progressive as it supports individuals to claim the locus of control in order to negotiate the complexities of their working lives whilst at the same time supporting the aims of the organisation in terms of efficiency and competitive advantage. This is not an intrinsic quality of participative actor-based learning, but rather the consequence of a theory-in-action of *pedagogical acting.*

In the next Chapter I explore what is learned through actor-based training, develop my argument as to why these skills are in demand and consider the potential individual and social/organisational impact of these embodied and social forms of learning.

Chapter 6

The Impact of Actor-Based Applied Theatre: Lessons in the Evolving Language of Work and the Expansion of Work-Based Literacy

Introduction

In Chapter 4 I explored the forms and aesthetics of workplace actor-based training methodologies and in Chapter 5 I investigated learning theories to establish *how* and *why* such pedagogical approaches can be an effective form of workplace learning. In this next chapter I explore the content of *what* may be learned using actor-based Applied Theatre. This analysis begins with communication skills and then extends into theories of discourse, culture and social constructionism to theorise the deeper impact of the practice. I will argue that the practice seeks to promote a social model of leadership that challenges pervasive mechanistic thinking and marks a shift from rigid, hierarchical and authoritarian structures towards more flexible, collegiate and collaborative work cultures.

Actor-based learning is flexibly applied to training when an aspect of the curriculum is interpersonal communication. These skills are highly contextual; the practice may examine communications skills in relation to a particular work policy, event or job role and these particulars provide a forum within which values, attitudes and behaviours can be examined and reflected upon. These values, attitudes and behaviours are typically explored under the broad heading of leadership skills. This leads to the question as to what theory of leadership are actor-based methods promoting. I will come to this question of leadership after first scoping the topic of communication.

Organisations and Interpersonal Communication

Communication is the central, binding force which permits coordination among people and thus allows for organized behaviour (Myers and Myers, 1980, p.xv).

Organisations cannot function without communication: "in any exhaustive theory of organisation, communication would occupy a central place, because the structure, extensiveness, and scope of organisations are almost entirely determined by communication techniques" (Barnard in Myers & Myers, 1980, p.8). With such a pivotal role in organisational life, communication can be seen as the keystone which supports the functions of the organisation. Despite being a "dominant force in organisational life" (Myers & Myers, 1980, p.8) communication is problematic to define due to the vast range of channels used (Fiske, 1990, p.1). Holli and Calabrese (1998) reported that the *Journal of Communication* has published fifteen different definitions of human communication (Holli and Calabrese in Hargie and Dickson, 2004, p.12). Hargie and Dickson summarise the notoriously difficult problem of pinning down precisely what communication is: "It represents a phenomenon that is at one and the same time ubiquitous yet elusive, prosaic yet mysterious, straightforward yet frustratingly prone to failure" (Hargie and Dickson, 2004, p.12). Early models of communication tended to oversimplify the process of communication, with one designated the *Source* and the other the *Receiver* (Shannon and Weaver, 1949 in Hargie and Dickson, 2004, p 14). More recently these models have been developed to recognise that communication is a process of sending and receiving at the same time. "The notion of the 'source-receiver' is therefore a more accurate representation of the role of each participant" (Devito, 1998 in Hargie and Dickson, 2004, p.14). The literature on communication techniques has expanded in recent decades, in part as "It was not until 1960 that the notion of communication as a form of skilled activity was first suggested" (Hargie and Dickson, 2004, p.3). The view that communication can be learned has gained momentum since then, with the view shifting from good communication skills being a quality one either possessed or did not

towards the notion that "communication is not a personality trait but a series of learned skills" (Kurtz et al, 2005, p.2). It is due to the endeavour to build communication skills that actor-based pedagogies are incorporated into work-based training, providing a space in which to develop knowledge and practice into the contingent, contextualised impact of interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal Skills

Of all the forms of communication used in the workplace, face to face communication provides more channels of communication than any other, therefore providing potentially richer communication than any other form. Hargie and Dickson draw on Hartley (1999) to define interpersonal communication as a sub-type of communication. They define its characteristics: It is essentially non-mediated (face to face); it takes place in a dyadic (one-to-one) or small group setting; In form and content is shaped by, and conveys something of, the personal qualities of the interactors as well as their social roles and relationships. (Hargie and Dickson, 2004, p.13). Dyadic communication is the form for which actor pedagogies are most frequently used. Words cannot be unsaid once spoken and often we do not achieve the desired objective and misunderstandings are common, a position summarised by Stanton when he says "human communication is fraught with problems and difficulties" (Stanton, 1990, p.1). Adler stresses the power of words due to the “irreplaceability of the relationship that results” from interpersonal communication (Adler et al in Hargie and Dickson, 1998, p.13). Whilst some workplace conversations are mundane and non-contentious, for others the stakes are very high. A market has developed for popular books providing advice and guidance for these problematic conversations. For example, for Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler these high stakes conversations are *Crucial Conversations* which take place between two people where the stakes are high, opinions vary and emotions run strong (Patterson et al, 2002, p.3). For Susan Scott these problematic dialogues are *Fierce Conversations* (2002) for which she

defines seven principles for those seeking advice. Whilst such texts may be useful, they cannot on their own provide the personalised, embodied and social learning that actor-based training can. Actor-based Applied Theatre can be used to model and interactively simulate these vexing, high stakes conversations and aims to equip employees with the necessary skills to influence the outcomes of such high stakes dialogues[49].

The potential impact of interpersonal communication is contingent on the variables of the specific context, and a dialogue may be unpredictable, as the other party may not always behave as anticipated. However, an appropriately skilled communicator will be more able to manage the predictable and react to the unpredictable and therefore will be more likely to arrive at a satisfactory outcome; "The outcome of any situation can be very different according to how it is handled" (Back and Back, 1999, p.xi). Recognition of the importance of skilled communication for effective team working and to enable managers and leaders to accomplish their work through others has led to effective interpersonal communication being valued as a core competence and a central attribute of individual and organisational effectiveness[50].

Information in a face to face dialogue is communicated using multiple channels[51]. Imagining the interrelationship of these channels in the abstract can be taxing, whereas the effect of these channels working together can be quickly grasped through a practical demonstration,

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[49] For example, Medical Doctors can practice models of breaking bad news, such as delivering the message that a patient has a terminal diagnosis, by rehearsing with an actor simulating the patient.

[50] For some professions a convincing case for the central importance of communication skills can be made simply and persuasively. For example, in clinical practice, Kurtz et al place the medical interview as central to clinical practice, stating "it is estimated that doctors perform 200,000 consultations in a professional lifetime, so it is worth struggling to get it right", also noting that "how we communicate is just as important as what we say. Communication bridges the gap between evidence based medicine and working with individual patients" (Kurtz et al, 2005, p.14). Furthermore, "Comprehensive theoretical and research evidence now exists to guide our approach to communication skills teaching and learning" (ibid p4). This need and evidence base has led to the widespread use of actors as simulated patients for clinical skills training at every stage of a medical practitioners career.

[51] DeVito (1998 in Hargie & Dickson, 2004, p.15) writes of the different channels which are typically used during face to face communication. He identifies the following channels: *Vocal-auditory* channel which carries speech; *Gestural-visual* channel which facilitates much nonverbal communication; *Chemical-olfactory* channel accommodating smell; *Cutaneous-tactile* channel which enables us to make interpersonal use of touch.

reinforcing the potential value of being able to simulate and control these channels on demand using actors in a training context. Spoken language is only one channel of interpersonal communication and skilled communication requires mastery of all the interpersonal channels. Tietze, Cohen & Musson scope the research into the non-verbal aspects of communication, noting that Singelis (1994, p.11) claims that non-verbal communication caries 93% of the social meaning of a message (Tietze et al, 2003, p.105). Whilst I am sceptical of the specificity of Singelis' percentage rating, the recognition that communication is much more than a text of what is spoken is crucial to understanding how meaning is made. A skilled actor in the workplace will have mastery over these multiple channels to generate characters rich with meaning. The actor's ability to reproduce non-verbal behaviours provides a significant contribution to the credibility of the simulation and therefore to the efficacy of actor based pedagogies. Without experiential concrete examples it can be difficult for the impact of non-verbal communication to be meaningfully explored. Through the actor's modelling of non-verbal behaviour, live, flexible and repeatable examples are presented for examination and analysis. Understanding into the meanings generated by non-verbal communication can be built and consequently awareness and insight into the impact of non-verbal behaviours can be raised[52]. The practice can develop congruence as meanings are unpacked and analysed in action, and incongruent behaviour where there is a mismatch between the words and behaviours can be brought to attention, opening a space to discuss the generation of meaning that goes beyond just the spoken word.

In the workplace these high level workplace communication skills are often grouped under the broad umbrella term of *leadership skills*. The concept of leadership has become central to organisational discourse and it is to an exploration of leadership, and the theory of leadership that participatory actor-based methods promote to which I turn next.

[52] See p.116 for discussion of the model of Johari's window and how learner self-insight can be generated through actor-based interactions.

The Act of Leadership

Whilst the term leadership is no more than 200 years old (Takala, 1998, p.786), discussion of the concept can be traced back to Plato and his discussions on ideal political governance (ibid, p.785). A great deal has been written about leadership but despite this work, "there is very little agreement on precisely what leadership is, how or whether it can be learnt by people, or even whether or not it is important" (Tietze et al, 2003, p.132). However, some consensus has emerged. Theories of leadership broadly fit into three categories: trait theories, behavioural/style theories and contingency theories (Hannagan, 2008, p.42-47). Common to these theories is the notion that leadership is a particular form of influencing process and that this influence is exercised in order to achieve change through others (Tietze et al, 2003, p.132).

The question as to whether leadership skills can be learnt or are traits one is either born with or formed very early in life is also a subject of debate. Whilst some individuals in certain contexts have been described as a 'born leader' (Hannagan, 2008, p.40), there is also widespread recognition that leadership skills can, within limits, be learned. As Hannagan states: "If leadership is seen as a process which can be analysed, and a series of actions which can be identified, then it can be learned, at least to some extent" (ibid, p.40). An industry of trainers, management consultants and work-based actors has arisen to address the demand for leadership training. Structural changes in organisations moving towards less hierarchical and more flexible modes of operation have increased the number of employees put through leadership training, as "The delegation of decision making in organisations means that it is essential for many people at all levels of management to have and to develop some potential for leadership" (ibid, p.40). Leadership training is therefore no longer just for those who will reach the top of the management hierarchy, but has become a component of a wide range of work roles.

Leadership as a Social Process

The use of participatory actor-based methods for leadership development poses the question as to what theory and form of leadership behaviour the practice is promoting. It is to this question I turn next.

For Tietze, Cohen & Gill, leadership is a social influence and linguistic processes (Tietze et al, 2003, p.131), a view which can be seen as contrary to most leadership principals:

> Most leadership principles start from the essentialist premise that leaders, whether born or taught, embody qualities within themselves that can predominate in a given situation (Grint, 1997). The inevitable effect of this approach is to presume that leadership only resides in the domain of the leader, and not the follower, or the interaction between the two. From this perspective followers don't matter - what matters is choosing the right person with the right leadership qualities for a given situation. We take issue with this. **We see leadership not as an individual activity but as a social or collective phenomenon.** (Tietze et al, 2003, p.134)

Tietze et all propose that the reason why the dynamics of leadership are a puzzle is that the discursive aspects of leadership are not typically discussed; "even though some theories **imply** that language is important in leadership activity...few writers explore how language functions in this process" (ibid, p.133). This analysis, of leadership as a social linguistic process of influence, suggests why actor based pedagogies are used for the development of leadership behaviours. Actor pedagogies provide an interactive social space where the subtleties of the language and the impact of behaviours in action may be understood, reflected upon and developed, qualities that for Tietze et al are seen as integral to effective leadership:

> Leadership functions can only be operationalized through discursive activity….Whether in formal or informal positions in organisations, those who act as leaders are the meaning makers in organisations, framing the future and making it meaningful for others (ibid, p.143).

The social and collective aspects of leadership are reinforced through participatory actor-based theatre due to the social interactive structure within which the pedagogy operates, placing active listening and dialogue central to the process. Here is an example of a facilitated

bespoke role-play that took place with a public sector manager in November 2009. The example seeks to illustrate how the practice promotes a social model of leadership:

> *The employee had been identified as a high potential individual with a reputation for getting the job done. However, he had received feedback that his management style was highly directive and they therefore wished to use the role-play to explore less directive approaches. He defined a context where there was a business problem which required action. The role-play began, and even though he was trying to moderate his style, his habitual directive approach predominated. This first 'take' left me, in my role, feeling coerced and demotivated. A further consequence of his directive style was that he didn't inspire any sense of ownership of the solutions which he suggested to me. I responded in role as demotivated and with a hint of passive aggression. When the role-play was paused by the facilitator, I shared this feedback and that I felt I was being told what to do, and didn't feel I was being given space to contribute my own ideas. We discussed and role-played potential alternative approaches. Between subsequent takes the facilitator guided the employee to try more collaborative approaches. The employee was coached to develop listening skills and involve his team member more collaboratively. I was able to reinforce the impact of less directive and facilitative approach by reporting on the contrast of how much more positively I felt when listened to and when I had a stake in the decision making process.*

This case provides a representative illustration how the pedagogy provides a highly personalised space to explore the exercise of power and influence in the workplace. In this example, whilst this employee's highly directive style had historically got results, the reflection-in-action facilitated by the pedagogy provided evidence that this approach left the actor's character feeling frustrated and demotivated. This feedback provided the impetus for the search for less authoritarian, more collaborative approaches grounded in listening and understanding of the other's position. The format privileged this collaborative, as opposed to authoritarian, approach to leadership. A social and collaborative model of leadership is facilitated by the structure of the interaction which generates feedback from the various perspectives of learner, facilitator, actor and peer observers. These multiple perspectives reinforce awareness of the multiple social aspects of leadership and contribute to reflective learning processes for the learner and peer observers. The actor, as the other party in the simulated dialogue with the learner, can provide a significant and impactful voice in the feedback process, and their feedback can provide powerful evidence of the impact of behaviours. This impact is due to the two distinct voices that the actor may use in giving

feedback. The first voice is the actor within the role-play, reacting and responding in character. This can be more than the actor 'acting' a credible role, as the actor can adjust their performance to serve the learning objectives. In Chapter 3 I theorised how the actor balances the credibility of their role with a calibrated performance in relation to the learner's abilities and the objectives of the session. The second voice is used when the role-play is suspended. Here the actor can voice their feedback from behind the character, sharing the hidden impact of the dialogue and revealing their inner thoughts and feelings. Whilst in real life, an employee may censor such feedback due to fears of what the consequences might be for speaking so freely, the actor is free from the on-going politics of the relationship and has the agency to name the impact of behaviours. Feedback skills are an important aspect of the hybrid role of the pedagogical actor and were analysed in Chapter 3. This combination of feedback from the distinct voices from the multiple perspectives of learner, facilitator, peer observers and actor reinforces a conception of leadership as a collaborative and social process. As I discussed in Chapter 5, this pedagogical process can also build emotional intelligence. Insight into the impact of behaviours is developed and a contingent style of leadership is promoted which aims to maximise autonomy appropriate to the demands of the situation. This marks a shift from Command and control conceptions of leadership and management towards notions of working with an empowered workforce. Research into contingent approaches to leadership and management has featured in the leadership syllabus for more than forty years, for example Tannenbaum & Schmidt's (1973) *Continuum of Leadership Behaviours* provides a model of how the relative freedom of the team is increased as the leader delegates more power and autonomy to the team. The model proposes that the ideal style of leadership is contingent on the requirements of the context. Tannenbaum and Schmidt's model, and subsequent variations, is popularly used in leadership training. Working with actors provides the practical opportunity for exploring the challenge of contingent leadership that enacting the model in action requires. For example, for a Health and Safety problem, a highly directive leadership approach may be necessary to avoid injury or death, whilst for a complex team based problem

the same directive approach could stifle creativity and innovation which may be the very qualities needed from the team. Despite the notion of leadership as a social and collaborative process, the residual notion of the strong, command and control leader is still influential; actor-based methods can provide the liminal space in which the complexities of flexible and contingent leadership can be modelled and experimented with, as a step towards realising social models of leadership in practice.

Leadership, Empowerment and Hegemony

The shift from command and control notions of leadership, leaner management structures and the need for innovation has driven a process of change towards the notion of the empowered employee: "Today's workplace needs employees who can make decisions, invent solutions to problems, take the initiative and who are accountable for results" (Scott and Jaffe, 1991, p.14). Organisations face the problem of balancing control over quality and resources whilst also enhancing "individual creativity, make people responsible for results, and invite them to develop high commitment to their work" (ibid, p.17). Systems theorist and Management Consultant John Seddon states that the logic at the heart of command and control management is the separation of decision making from work which leads to poor quality decisions, poor service and waste (Seddon, 2005, p.10). Organisations that embrace the notion of empowerment are seeking new ways of thinking that avoid these problems. The meaning of *empowerment* in the workplace is highly contextual, and will have a different meaning for different organisations and at various points within the hierarchy. Organisations may claim a culture of empowerment, but this may not extend to aspects of their supply chain where employees work under tightly controlled, Taylorist conditions. For example, the technology company Apple says on its staff recruitment website that working for them is “less of a job, more of a calling” and “You’ve got talents. We’ve got some great ways for you to use

them, including some you probably never thought of before…. search for your dream job" (http://www.apple.com/jobs/us/welcome.html accessed 29/03/2011). Employment with Apple in Europe and the US operates in radically different conditions from those at the manufacturing plants of its suppliers in the developing economies of the Far East, such as the Taiwanese Foxconn (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10252344 accessed 29/03/2011) who assemble mobile phones and tablet computers for Apple as well as manufacturing products for other high technology corporations. Foxconn runs Chinese factories the size of cities on production lines that would likely be recognisable to Marx and Engels as another form of the alienating weaving mill. It is likely that the notions of workplace empowerment will be entirely unfamiliar to workers at Foxconn. As another example closer to home, it is questionable how empowered are the call centre workers who provide telephone customer support here in the UK in conditions Deborah Cameron describes as a 'communication factory' where standardised interaction is required (Cameron, 2000). Any discussion of workplace empowerment is therefore problematic and highly contextual, and there have been winners and losers in the changing culture of the workplace.

Burns explores the notion of empowerment in the workplace as the "the freedom to operate within an agreed framework" (Burns, 2002, p.91). This agreed framework and freedom will be restricted to achieving outcomes which are to the organisations benefit and to preserve some aspects of the status quo. Management will define those aspects of the workplace outside of this framework and beyond employee influence as "genuinely empowered employees could, presumably, encroach on managerial territory" (Dovey in Jarvis, 2003, p.153), which is a possibility Management would most likely wish to avoid. In practice, organisations are typically somewhere on a continuum between command and control thinking and empowerment. Actor-based methods can be the training tool at the front line of this tension, facilitating the space to explore what 'empowerment' means for an individual and an

organisation in actual practice, identifying the limits, and perhaps expanding the boundaries between freedom and control. As stated in Chapter 1, the aims of management and employees are not always divergent, and a high degree of cooperation can exist. However, where there is conflict, Applied Theatre can contribute to a process of reflection and conflict resolution working within the politics of the context. The theatre can provide the forum to negotiate problems without the individual making their position untenable and jeopardising employment or damaging future working relationships. Some forms of opposition can be a high risk strategy of influence as "renegades face the prospect, at the very least, of marginalization" (Tietze et al, 2003, p.83). Actor-based methods can be used to explore alternative strategies of influence that seek to avoid such problems. Whilst these alternatives may involve some form of compromise to an individual's agency they can also reduce the risk of marginalization. Faber argues that strong claims of agency and resistance in the context of the workplace have an inherent weakness, as "People cannot act exclusively outside of the organisational structures and still hope to benefit from those same structures" (Faber, 2002, p.103). A role for Applied Theatre is to provide a participatory experience where meanings of empowerment in practice can be explored, and in the 'as if' space of simulation, the boundaries of freedom within the framework of specific work roles can be negotiated.

The empowered employee raises the question as to how can management maintain power and for the organisation to remain cohesive in the absence of rigid control. Gramsci's notion of Hegemony (Gramsci in Forgacs, 1999) can be used to articulate how organisations presenting claims of an empowered workforce are able to maintain power and control despite a shift from authoritarian command and control models of management and leadership. Hegemonic processes describe how people with greater cultural or economic capital are able to convince others that their interests are best served by willingly adopting particular attitudes and behaviours. The word is closely related to the activities of leadership, which through

hegemonic processes strive to persuade others to willingly act in specific ways (The etymology of Hegemony lies in the Greek word *hegemon* meaning *leader*). Hegemonic processes have become increasingly important as a method of organisational control due to the leaner management structures increasingly adopted by organisations due to the forces of competition and the drive for efficiency. Tietze et al propose that organisations may

> …have to rely more heavily on hegemonic processes because of the process of empowerment… If leaders have lost some of the material controls that used to prevail in organisations (because of the cuts in middle management as a result of down-sizing, for example), then these more subtle forms of control, embodied in hegemonic talk, might be even more central to the leader's ability to maintain power, and, ultimately, control (Tietze et al, 2003, p.150).

The skills of negotiation and influence are central to the enactment of these workplace hegemonic processes, identified as core skills in the generic work-based curriculum discussed at the start of Chapter 5. Actor-based methods can be effective in equipping individuals with the skills to maintain control through persuasion and consensus. Actor pedagogies support these hegemonic processes of consensual power through the exploration and modelling of the consequences of behaviours within the organisation's power structure. By equipping employees with the leadership skills required to enact hegemonic processes the practice contributes to the realisation of an operating culture where closely managed systems of control are no longer required. Whilst this marks a limited redistribution of power from management to newly empowered employees, power is still maintained by management through less visible and subtle hegemonic methods of control, but which can nonetheless be effective in achieving specific outcomes. I argue that despite the problems of these hegemonic processes they are preferable to the authoritarian command and control systems of power that they replace, and can be progressive.

Language is the medium through which power and control is exercised and negotiated and it is to a discussion of language and its role in constructing culture, and the agency of the individual within this discursive field to which I turn next. This discussion leads into an analysis of the potential of actor-based Applied Theatre to develop individual agency within the available organisational discourse.

Social Constructionism and the Role of Discourse in Change Processes

With its roots in the work of linguistic philosophers such as Wittgenstein and Winch, rather than seeing language as a reflection of reality, the role of language and its role in constituting social reality has become commonly accepted over the past forty years (Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2009; Searle, 2010; Berger and Luckman, 1967; Searle, 1995). For Social constructionists, language is inseparable from, and provides the basis for all thought (Burr, 2003, p.62). Language is seen as fundamentally a social phenomenon (ibid, p.53), with the process of social construction achieved not by an individual, but through social interaction[53];"It is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated" (ibid, p.4). The implications of social constructionism have swept through the social sciences and humanities and these disciplines continue to debate the consequences of the recognition of the role of language in the construction of social reality. Social constructionists argue that our knowledge of the world is not derived from the nature of the world as it really is, but that it is constructed through dialogue. "The ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific" (ibid p.4). Social constructionism is in

[53] Sausssure's work on linguistics sees language as a social phenomenon as opposed to an objective, unmediated tool for describing reality. Saussure realised that the connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. "When Saussure talks of the arbitrary linking of signified to signifier, he is saying that, with the aid of language, we have divided up our world into arbitrary categories" (Burr, 2003, p.51). Saussurian structuralism saw that once the signifier became attached to the signified it became fixed, a disputed position articulated by the poststructuralists who extended Saussure's research by their work into the changing nature of language through discourse.

opposition to positivism and empiricism, proposing that the divisions and descriptions of the nature of the world are themselves social constructions. "It invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its nature to us, to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world" (ibid, p.3). For Social Constructionists, “The person you are, your experience, your identity, your personality, are all effects of language" (ibid, p.53). Social Constructionism therefore rejects an essentialist humanist position, proposing instead that our identities are temporary and shifting. Seen in this way, "language is the crucible of change" (ibid, p.56). By implication, it means that "what we say, the way we represent things to each other, matters crucially" (ibid, p.56).

The implications of social constructionism have been discussed comparatively late in the work of Organisation and Management theorists (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p.12), that said, “the idea that organisations are socially constructed and exist primarily in language (broadly defined) is becoming widely accepted” (ibid, p.13). Mumby and Clair describe the relationship between discourse and the social reality as experienced by members of the organisation:

> Organisations exist only so far as their members create them through discourse. This is not to claim that 'organisations are nothing but discourse' but rather that discourse is the principal means by which organisation members create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are (Mumby & Clair, 1997, p.181 in Grant el al, 2004, p.3).

An implication of the central role of language in organisational culture is that methodologies, such as Applied Theatre, that work with and develop language skills can equip individuals with the skills to influence organisational discourse which, in turn, shapes organisational culture. The notion that organisational culture is discursively produced provides the potential for emancipation, as individuals can speak out in regards of their concerns if they want to influence and change the discourse. Applied Theatre methods working to develop assertiveness and influencing skills can therefore have efficacy within a process of

organisational cultural change. This cultural change process is however not straightforward due to the complex interaction of competing forces, many of which are outside of direct control, for example economic conditions, regulatory requirements, or the behaviour of competitor organisations.

Culture[54] can be a deeply rooted and powerful force in organisations, helping to "define not only individual attitudes and behaviours...but also business norms" (Hannagan, 2008, p.600). Geertz (1973) provides the notion that the essence of culture as being *webs of meaning* (Tietze et al, 2003, p.92). These webs of meaning provide the operating parameters of organisations, defining what can and cannot be enacted, and to some extent, thought:

> …everyday attitudes and behaviour of an organisation's members, along with their perceptions of what they believe to be reality, are shaped and influenced by the discursive practices in which they are engaged and to which they are exposed or subjected (Grant et al, 2004, p.3).

A discursive view suggests that culture defines the rules that inform the ways in which we "think, talk and act in and around work contexts" (ibid, p.79). Discourse is therefore intimately connected with knowledge and power, and the ability to influence the discourse is to exercise power. Tietze et al identify a space for human agency within these cultural 'webs of meaning' arguing that "the webs of meaning are spun by human agents and thus meaning can be changed" (Tietze et al, 2003, p.96). As an example of working with discourse to effect change, Faber's *Community Action and Organizational Change* (2002) records how he had some success employing a Foucauldian analysis of an organisation's discourse to diagnose failings and suggest new discursive strategies to affect organisational change. Michel Foucault's study

[54] Watson defines culture as "The systems of meaning which is shared by members of a human grouping and which defines what is good and what is bad, right or wrong, and what are the appropriate ways of members of that group to think & behave" (Watson, 1995 p.12 in Tietze et al, 2003, p.92). Mole (1990) provides a colloquial definition of culture as "The way we do things round here", whilst Wilson and Rosenfeld define business culture as "The basic values, ideologies and assumptions…which guide and fashion individual and business behaviour. These values are evident in more tangible factors such as stories, ritual, language and jargon, office decoration and layout and prevailing modes of dress among the staff"(Wilson & Rosenfeld, 1990, p.229).

of change and transformation from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 2002) has been influential in the development of understanding the role of discourse in social construction (Faber, 2002; Fairclough, 1992). Analysis of discourse can "describe the connections between discourse and knowledge and show how this connection ultimately informs beliefs and practices" (Faber, 2002 p.87). For Foucault, "change occurs as a process of discursive struggle." (ibid, p.88). New discourses evolve, over time replicating throughout the system and pushing out old discourses and the systems attached to that discourse (ibid, p.88). Faber makes the connection between discourse, meaning, language in use, and change. Through his work with failing organisations he attempts to create new discourses by reading the existing discourses and then working to supplant new discourses. Whilst Faber found that changing discourse was challenging and that it took time for the new discourse to supplant the old, he found that some positive changes were achieved by his discursive methodology. I suggest that Applied Theatre techniques can be particularly effective as a tool for discursive change as participative theatre provides a foundry within which alternative ways of being and interacting can be forged within the liminal space of the theatre.

Individuals within the organisation will have varying degrees of power to influence and shape the discourse. Whilst those in senior positions will typically hold more influence, this distribution of power may not map neatly across to diagrams of an organisational hierarchy, as, for example, a Union rep may be able to exercise power at times more readily than a senior manager. In a bespoke role-play, I have played a tough talking secretary for a Chief Executive who was vexed by some of her behaviours which negatively influenced the working atmosphere of the office. During the role-play it was clear that despite the secretary's apparent lowly position in the hierarchy, in some respects she held a great deal of power. These examples challenge traditional hierarchical readings of how power operates in organisations. Phillips and Hardy state how a discursive view of power challenges the traditional view of power as derived from resource dependencies or formal authority,

proposing that a discursive view “reveals power can be exercised by creating meaning for social objects and that certain identities are able to have an influence” (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p.47). So conceived, power is the ability to create meaning within a discourse. Tietze el al draw upon the work of Jackson and Carter in relation to this point, stating "discourses define who can speak, about what issues, in which contexts and styles and for what reasons" (2000 p.66 in Tietze et al, 2003, p.82). These discourses exist in a state of struggle over the control of meaning, and are “constrained and enabled by discourses that exist outside the specific field” (Lawrence & Phillips, 1997 in Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.47). Actor pedagogies provide a space in which to explore the forms and boundaries of organisational discourse and an individual’s agency within these discursive channels. Whatever their work role, an individual may feel they do not have the confidence, status or power to enact some aspects of the discourse. Actor pedagogies seek to expand an individual’s behavioural repertoire through a process of exploration and the challenging of an individual’s perceived limits. Through this activity, some boundaries may be found to be permeable and access to previously unavailable channels of the discourse can be worked with and acquired. Conversely, the practice also works to close access to the old discourse which is blocking organisational effectiveness. Through a process of identifying and questioning the local discursive ‘rules of the game’ (Skelton, 2008), actor pedagogies can enable people to exercise their voice which was previously silent and/or open access to aspects of the organisational discourse from which they have so far been excluded. Therefore actor-based methods used in this way can be conceived of as colloquial language skills training where contextual, high level literacy skills are developed. Once equipped with these discursive influencing skills individuals may use them flexibly, which may or may not conform to the intentions of management and may therefore have an unpredictable impact on the organisation.

Gaining access to new discursive channels is not as simple as introducing some new idea which is then rapidly reproduced on demand; as I explored in Chapter 5 through my review and

analysis of learning theory, the transfer of learning from the training room to actual practice is not automatic. However, it is likely that a well-designed actor-based learning programme can increase the likelihood of learning transfer, due to the powerful pedagogical qualities of participative theatre.

In part this pedagogical power lies in the ability of theatre to create meaning, and central to this process of meaning making is the use of metaphor. Actor-based methods work with metaphor on several levels. In chapter 4 I drew upon Dan Rebellato's work to analyse how actors can credibly signify someone despite looking, sounding and speaking differently to the person they are representing, concluding that the actor is providing a metaphorical representation which enables the seeing of one thing in terms of another. I will argue here that actor-based Applied Theatre can also work with metaphor on a deeper conceptual level, and can support a process of generating new meanings that facilitate new conceptions of organisations. These new metaphorical readings of organisations can shape what it means to be part of an organisation and in turn powerfully drive behaviour.

Metaphors as Ways of Seeing

Within organisational discourse, metaphor has an important role in sustaining and creating meaning. Metaphors powerfully influence how we see organisations: "They are central to the process of *imagination* through which people enact or 'write' the character of organisational life" (Morgan, 1997, p.344). An intrinsic quality of metaphors is that they both highlight and obscure (Tietze et al, 2003, p.34). Morgan argues, this "partiality of insight is inherent in the nature of metaphor and the theories and ideas it generates" (Morgan, 1997, p.348). For Morgan, this is why management theories swing from fad to fad, as the insights of a new metaphor prove initially attractive, whilst ignoring the "limitations and distortions it creates" (ibid). Morgan proposes that most of these management theories contain 'truth', but as it is

limited and partial it inevitably disappoints when applied in the complex domain of the real world. Over time the meanings suppressed by the partial insight of the metaphor can emerge and the metaphor breaks down and loses its generative function. Morgan challenges his reader "to recognise and cope with the idea that all theories of organisation and management are based on implicit images or metaphors that persuade us to see, understand and imagine situations in partial ways" (ibid, p.348). He summarises the potential and problems of metaphor as:

- Metaphors create insight
- But they also distort
- They have strengths
- But they also have limitations
- In creating ways of seeing they tend to create ways of *not* seeing

(Morgan, 1997, p.348)

Metaphors can powerfully engage the imagination and articulate the challenges organisations face and can provide powerful drivers for seeing problems in new ways[55]. These figures of speech "create new conceptual bridges and entail the possibility of seeing the world anew. Thus they carry a generative function" (Tietze et al, 2003, p.47). However, the function of the metaphor is not limited to the poetic aspects of the language of leadership, but "form our conceptual system and thus play a central role in defining our everyday realities" (ibid, p.37). For example, Tietze et all ponder the potential difference of conceiving of business strategy in terms of a dance as opposed to the language of the military and warfare (ibid, p.37). The key terms in the generic workplace lexicon are rooted in military terms such as *mission, strategy, leadership, plan, command and control.* It is therefore perhaps inevitable that the use of such metaphors drives behaviour which leads to conflict.

In *Metaphors We Live By,* Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argue that our conceptual system of thought and action is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. They found that metaphors inform the structure of perception, thought and action. They state that "The essence of

[55] For example "We can no longer wait for the storm to pass. We must learn to work in the rain" (Peter Silas in Tietze et al, 2003, p.136).

metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (ibid, p.5). They identify and analyse the powerful metaphors that can be so persuasive they are no longer seen as poetic metaphors, but instead as descriptions of reality. As an example, they identify 'time is money' as one of the most powerful metaphors operating in capitalist industrialised societies. The implications of the pervasive nature of this metaphor informs how we experience time as "a kind of thing that can be spent, wasted, budgeted, invested wisely, poorly, saved or squandered" (ibid, p.8). These pervasive metaphors therefore drive behaviour. In the context of the workplace the metaphor of 'organisation as machine' is pervasive and drives organisational operating practices (Capra 2003; Morgan 1997; Senge 1994). I will argue how the social and embodied methods of actor-based learning supports a paradigm shift away from the metaphorical conception of organisation as machine, which alienates and excludes the human element, towards more adaptable and organic conceptions of organisation.

The Paradigm Shift From Machine to Organic Network

During the past 25 years, a new conception of life has emerged at the forefront of science that is radically different from the mechanistic world view of Descartes and Newton
(Capra in Diamond, 2007, p.14)

I suggest actor-based Applied Theatre is supporting a shift in the conception of organisations, from thinking of organisations as machines as their formal structures might suggest towards conceptions of organisations as an organic network, with a concomitant shift in mode of operation. Whilst this new mode of operation provides its own problems, it does factor in the informal, human, social elements of organisations, which have struggled to find a voice in the mechanistic model. To establish this argument, it is first necessary to uncover the foundations of mechanistic thought and the emergence of organic thinking as described in Systems theory.

Whilst I am cautious and seek to avoid bold claims of social transformation, It may be that this shift in thinking will have far reaching implications, due to mechanistic thinking having driven particular behaviours, and the potential of organic networked thinking to provide new ways of seeing and interacting. Shifts away from mechanistic thinking are not confined to organisational theory. Evidence of an influential shift in thinking towards more organic networked systems of thought can be found in a many disciplines: "physics, mathematics, biology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, ecology, cognitive science, economics and even business administration, are incorporating systems theory into analysis of how all aspects of life and the world around us are interconnected" (Diamond, 2007, p.22). The Applied Dramatist David Diamond finds the new paradigm of systems theory provides opportunities for thinking and being that have been constrained for centuries due to the powerful influence of the philosophy of the enlightenment. He draws on the work of Physicist Fritjof Capra to explore the changes taking place in thinking. Diamond tracks the roots of the mechanistic paradigm in the work of Descartes and the idea of "an artificial separation of mind (consciousness) and matter (the physical body)" (ibid, p.22). This influential notion evolved from the work of Rene Descartes in the 1600. "Not wanting to follow in his predecessor Galileo's footsteps and be threatened with execution for heresy, Descartes agreed to base his views of nature on the fundamental division between two realms - mind and matter" (ibid, p.21). This notion of the universe as a machine has been widely influential in the development of European thought, and through colonialisation and globalisation spread throughout the world. Mechanistic thinking enables compartmentalisation and artificial distinctions with negative consequences for the planet[56]. Cartesian mechanistic theory is being challenged by Systems Theory: "Systems Theory abandons the Cartesian view of mind being separated from matter and, instead, recognises mind and matter as complementary aspects of the

[56] Diamond specifies some of these negative impacts that the mechanistic system of thought, such as turning our backs on or criminalising poverty; "The idea that society is a machine made up of disconnected individuals and that the person dying of hunger in a seemingly remote part of the world, or begging for small change on the street corner, was disconnected from you and me" (ibid, p.22).

phenomenon of life." (ibid, p.22)[57]. In his forward to David Diamond's *Theatre for Living,* Physicist Fritjof Capra identifies the fundamental shift in the central metaphors used to express these world views; "For Descartes and Newton, the universe worked like a clock, and the clock became the central metaphor of the mechanistic paradigm. In the new ecological view, by contrast, the central metaphor is the network" (ibid, p.14). I suggest that this notion of a shift in thinking is explicitly and implicitly reinforced by participatory actor-based learning operating on the level of fluid interpersonal relations where the informal human interactive processes are given primacy over the organisation's formal, mechanistic and bureaucratic processes.

Metaphorical Images of Organisations and Their Impact on Behaviour.

Morgan's influential work *Images of Organisations* expanded on his earlier research where he identified the machine and the organism as the two most frequently invoked metaphors in organisation theory (Tietze et al, 2003 p.38; Morgan, 1997). The shift from thinking of organisations as machines to conceiving of organisations as living organisms, operating as an interconnected and interdependent network, has far reaching implications for the culture of organisations. The ways in which organisations conceive of themselves informs the operating structures and the practices and behaviours of individuals within the organisation. Morgan explores how the metaphor of organisation as machine provides a conceptual framework of a closed, bureaucratic organisation that is resistant to change. Classical management theories such as the scientific management of Taylorism and the command and control approach of Fayol inform the structures of such organisations. Frederick Winslow Taylor's principles of scientific management provided principals of management that were highly influential in the early twentieth century and continue to be highly influential today (Pahl, 1988; Capra, 2003). Capra states that "the principals of classical management theory have become so deeply

[57] In Chapter 3 I first examined the notion that whilst Cartesian duality is no longer accepted as a credible precept, it is still an implicit and influential notion in many learning processes.

ingrained in the ways we think about organisations that for most managers the design of formal structures, linked to clear lines of communication, co-ordination and control, has become second nature." He argues that "this largely unconscious embrace of the mechanistic approach to management is one of the main obstacles to organisational change today" (ibid, p.90). A significant weakness of the mechanistic model is that it marginalises the human aspects of organisations. Organisation development theorist Peter Senge states that "the machine metaphor is so powerful that it shapes the character of most organisations. They become more like machines than living beings because their members *think* of them that way" (Senge in Capra, 2003, p.91). Capra states how the organisation as machine management has resulted in widespread animosity; "The reason for that is obvious. Most people resent being treated like cogs in a machine" (Capra, 2003, p.91). The organisation as machine finds adaptation difficult, as change must be designed and then enforced consistently throughout the bureaucracy. Local innovation and excellence is compromised by the drive for the illusion of an elegant standardised form of operation. "There is no room for flexible adaptations, learning and evolution in the machine metaphor, and it is clear that organisations managed in strictly mechanistic ways cannot survive in today's complex, knowledge-orientated and rapidly changing business environment" (ibid, p.91). These limitations of the machine metaphor have led to the search for new ways of metaphorically conceptualising organisations, and the emergence of the metaphor of organisation as organic network. For Morgan, the strength of the metaphor of *organisations as organism* is due to the emphasis on understanding the "relations between organisations and their environments" (Morgan, 1997, p.67), and that "The management of organisations can often be improved through systematic attention to the 'needs' which must be satisfied if the organisation is to survive." (ibid, p.67) Morgan identifies these needs as "strategy, structure, technology, and the human and managerial dimensions of organisations as subsystems with living needs which much be satisfied in mutually acceptable ways" (ibid, p.67). As the human dimension is one of the needs to be balanced in a healthy organisation, a space is opened for dialogue on the human aspects of organisational life,

notably absent from early writings on the technical design of job roles, such as the methods championed by the work of Frederick Winslow Taylor.

Metaphors work by foregrounding certain meanings whilst concealing others. For example, the organisation as efficient machine concealed the consequent human alienation. The metaphor of organisation as organism may promote fluidity, networked team working, the ability to adapt and evolve in response to the environment whilst concealing other aspects of organisms concealed by the metaphor, for example, organisms get sick. They die. Organisms must fight bacteria and viruses which can kill and so on. Therefore we must be cautious of the claims of those champions of systems theory as to its emancipatory effect, and perhaps Applied Dramatist David Diamond is overly optimistic as to the implications of the new paradigm. Realising the foregrounded vision of the metaphor of the benefits of the network whilst mitigating against the concealed problems is not automatic and requires work.

Some writers go further than the notion of organisation as networked organism as being a metaphor, proposing the notion that organisations are not metaphorically organisms, but are literally a form of life. Fritjof Capra theorises that the informal human aspects of organisations can literally be thought of as living things, displaying distinct characteristics which can be thought of as a form of life, with consequent far reaching implications for how organisations, and the people within them, are managed. Capra defines the notion of the living organisation by the following. He identifies "living social systems are self-generating networks of communications" (Capra, 2003, p.93). Capra draws on the notion of autopoiesis, stemming from the field of biology which has consequently been adapted and applied to other fields of study to describe self-replicating living systems. An organisation's culture can be conceived of as an autopoietic system; "Since social systems not only involve living human beings, but also language, consciousness and culture, they are evidently cognitive systems - it seems rather strange to consider them as not being alive" (ibid, p.72). Capra's work draws upon the

research of Niklas Luhmann and his theory of 'social autopoiesis'. Luhmann states "social systems use communication as their particular mode of autopoietic reproduction. Their elements are communications that are recursively produced and reproduced by a network of communications…that cannot exist outside of such a network" (Luhmann in Capra, 2003, p.72). The notion of autopoietic reproduction of culture through communication provides an articulation of how the behaviours modelled through actor pedagogies can replicate through the organisation. Communication and behaviours modelled and practised in the simulation which are subsequently reproduced within the organisation will, to some extent, shape the organisational discourse. In time, through continued replication and feedback, these new modes of communication become embedded in the discourse and hence lead to a change in culture. Autopoietic systems can only change from within; whilst they may be disturbed from outside, the response is a characteristic of itself and change comes from within (Capra, 2003; Meadows, 2009). An important implication here is that the social model of leadership that I suggest is promoted through participatory actor-based methods cannot be imposed from the outside but must come from working within the organisation.

Whether a metaphor or literally a form of life, the notion of organisation as networked organism provides the potential benefit of more efficient, adaptable and effective operation that mitigates against the machine organisations tendency to marginalise and alienate the humans who work within them. Morgan states that whilst there is a high degree of consensus over this basic trend, there is division between researchers as to how the vision may be achieved in practice. Actor-based Applied Theatre is one approach used in the endeavour to change behaviours from those required by the mechanistic model towards those needed to realise the networked structure. Most organisations will operate somewhere on a continuum between machine and organic network. For John Seddon, a revolution in how organisations operate is necessary to escape from the problems of command and control management in order to gain the full benefits of systems thinking (2005). For some organisations this

revolution in thinking is too great a conceptual leap, and more typically organisations are offering palliative solutions such as coaching (Seddon, 2005, p.8) or Applied Theatre-based training to cope with the problems of working within organisations that are struggling with change, whilst they are still, fundamentally, mechanistic command and control organisations. I suggest the 3M Forum Theatre case study in Chapter 4 is an example of an organisation working with the informal human element within a formal structure of a mechanistic system. The process of change as organisations adapt to more flexible models of operation is usually challenging, and may generate human consequences of inertia, self-doubt, anger or chaos (Scott and Jaffe, 1991, p.28). Actor-based methods can be usefully deployed to represent and process these challenges. In Chapter 3 actor Dan Long argued that actor-based methods can provide a 'significant contribution' towards processing these feelings associated with change. The hierarchical mechanistic structure and the organic networked organisation can be visualised diagrammatically as follows:

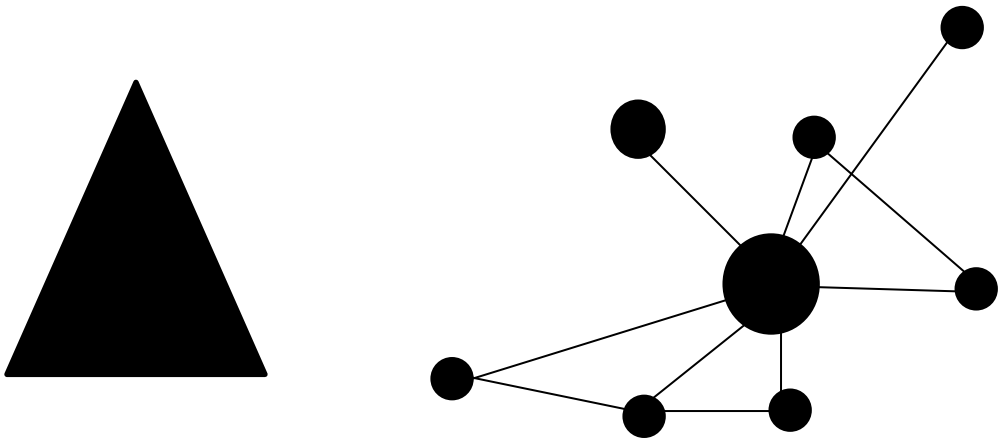

Fig. 6. Images of organisation: Hierarchical, mechanistic organisations as a pyramid, and organic networked organisations as interconnected cells.

Whilst some of the human problems generated by mechanistic, command and control structures are resolved in networked organisations, this new structure presents its own

problems for the people working within it. Whilst the networked organisation will increase its survival prospects in the competitive global economy expedited by its flexible and adaptive structure, operating in conditions of uncertainty can be stressful for individuals and cause conflict within teams. These conditions require high levels of interpersonal skills in order for these pressures not to overheat into conflict. Tackling the challenge of managing conflict in order to work productively within a networked organisation is a common theme of the work-based Forum Theatre I have performed in. Whilst the notion of such 'matrix structures' (Hannagan, 2008, p.19) can facilitate greater expertise and adaptability they lack the certainties of pyramidical, hierarchical structures and can lead to divided loyalties and conflict. Morgan summarises the problem for organisations that have adapted from command and control to more flexible, contingent, systems of organisation:

> In organisations, however, the degree of internal harmony and fit with the environment is a product of human decision, action, and inaction so that incongruence and conflict are often the rule. As a result, there are usually many problems to keep managers and organisational consultants favouring the contingency approach very busy (Morgan, 1997, p.60).

This human incongruence and conflict provides the need which inspires organisations to commission consultants and actors to develop the behaviours required in order to achieve the vision of an empowered workforce and an organic, flexible and adaptable organisation. This organic, networked vision is, in practice, difficult to achieve, as the high levels of flexible cross departmental team working can generate conflicts of interest and divided loyalties. "In terms of effective management, close attention has to be paid to the conflicts that inevitably develop, and team members need to possess a high degree of collegiality and interpersonal skill" (ibid, p.54). It is due to these conflicts, and the skills needed to either avoid or manage them for which actor pedagogies are used in an attempt to create the collegiate identities required. This is the central driver for the high level communication skills and social model of leadership discussed earlier in this chapter. The networked organisation requires the individuals working within it to possess a high level of communication and collaborative skills

to function and actor-based Applied Theatre provides the participatory space where these behavioural skills can be modelled, practised, and reflected upon. The lack of rigid structure and control in the organic networked organisation, that was so stifling of innovation and potentially alienating in the command and control bureaucratic organisation may, without the high level interpersonal skills and collegiate attitude necessary to negotiate a space of flexibility and creativity, manifest instead a space of uncertainty, conflict, division and collapse. Actor pedagogies can provide an embodied, social and liminal space of praxis in which participants can experiment and explore new ways of being and wrestle with the tensions, choices and challenges of working in new ways. These collegiate skills are grounded in a western epistemology of interpersonal communication, which raises questions of cultural imperialism as increasingly western training is exported around the globe within transnational corporations, a notion I will return to in my conclusion at the end of this thesis.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the changing nature of the contemporary workplace and the increasing importance of high levels of communication skills. I have identified the impact of actor pedagogies in the development of these necessary communication skills, analysing the impact of the practice on language use and discourse in the workplace. As the practice is contingent on a range of variables, including the skills of the pedagogic actor, the training consultants using the method, the objectives of the specific training course, the organisational culture, the specifics of the course attenders, factors in the external environment and so on, any summary of the impact of the practice is necessarily high level; the actual form and impact of the practice applied locally may vary considerably. However, this caveat aside, it is possible to draw out general themes as to the impact of this work. I have explored how the practice

aims to support the development of a form of work-based literacy, which seeks to generate changes in behaviour and construct 'empowered' identities. These identities are intended to enable organisations to function as they rely less on formal processes of control and more on hegemonic processes.

The impact of this literacy project can be summarised under three interconnected headings. These are:

- The promotion of social models of leadership.
- Facilitating access to previously inaccessible channels of the available discourse.
- Contributing to a structural organisational change process.

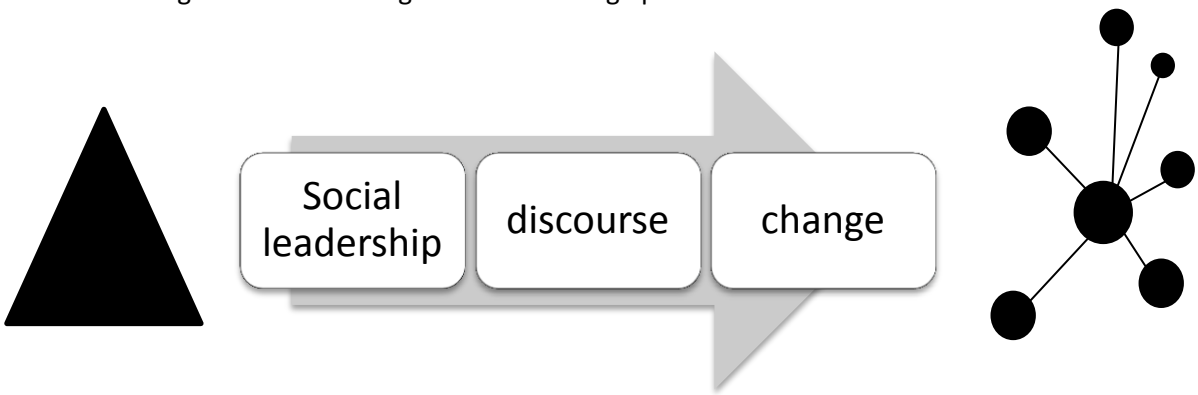

Fig. 7. The interconnected impact of actor pedagogies

These three aspects are summarised here:

A Social Model of Leadership

The new work paradigm requires an 'empowered' workforce, with increased autonomy in comparison with more bureaucratic and hierarchical forms of management control, with control maintained through performance management and increasingly through hegemonic processes. Participatory actor-based learning challenges concepts of leadership as a set of

traits embodied in one person, instead promoting leadership as a collaborative process. The social processes of actor-based theatre, which augments the learners own experience with feedback from the facilitator, actor and peer learners serves to promote this social model of leadership by foregrounding the ethics of dialogue through analysing the impact of behaviours on others. The practice therefore challenges a default, directive, command and control approach to management, nurturing more flexible, contextual models of workforce management. Actor pedagogies typically work with organisations at this point of struggle between the residual and emergent culture, who are struggling to adapt both their internal structures and products or services in order to survive in unprecedented competitive operating conditions. The practice therefore has a privileged position to use its impactful methods to influence and shape an organisation's culture towards social models which strive to achieve a balance between human needs and the drive for organisational survival. This potential impact is however contingent on many factors, some of which are outside of the control of the Applied Theatre, the participants and the organisation.

Access to Discursive Channels

Actor pedagogies work to enable individuals to access previously inaccessible channels of the available organisational discourse. For example, it is common for employees to find it difficult to 'manage upwards' in order to influence their managers, or tackle conversations where there is the potential for triggering strong emotions and conflict. These discursive acts are potentially available, but may not be accessible to an employee without training and support. A common response to potentially stressful encounters is for postponement or avoidance, although this strategy can itself be stressful for the individual, leaving them with feelings of inadequacy and/or resentment. Actor pedagogies provide the space for individuals to explore their own potential for tackling such conversations. In the short term the learner may experience catharsis as they have confronted in the liminal space of the drama their work-

based problem. In terms of the participant's discursive agency, he or she can have acquired knowledge of new ways of creating meaning, along with experiential evidence of the efficacy of their new ability. Taken back into the workplace, the exercise of these new skills will feed into, and impact on, the organisation's discourse. In Chapter 3 I included analysis and remarks in relation to participant comments as to the cathartic effect of working with actors and also their perceptions of the benefits of ultimately tackling the challenging encounters in the real world which were rehearsed in the training room.

Organisational Change

By developing collegiate, empowered workplace identities, the practice supports the implementation of a process of change in the structure of organisations towards more flexible and adaptive models with an empowered workforce. This shift is driven as a consequence of globalisation, which drives a demand for efficient organisations that are adaptable and innovative, qualities which mechanistic structures mitigate against due to their bureaucratic, hierarchical nature where rapid decision making is difficult and innovation is stifled. This change process can be metaphorically conceived as shifting from a residual metaphor of organisation as machine into the emergent metaphor of organisation as networked organism. As how we think of things affects how we behave, the metaphor is a powerful tool for the creation of meanings and consequently behaviour. Working within the networked organisation requires a high degree of communication flowing between employees, as the fluid structure generates greater instability for which interpersonal communication serves as binding force. Actor pedagogies provide the space where the high level communication skills and behaviours required by the new operating paradigm can be practically explored and experienced. I suggest the foregrounding of the informal human elements of organisation are a consequence of the holistic and social attributes of participatory theatre. Whilst the actors themselves may not articulate the impact of their work in this way, nonetheless, I believe

there is a convincing case that the theatre-based forms described in Chapter 4 contributes to this process of culture change of moving from the conception of the organisation as machine towards the notion of organisation as adaptable network.

Summary and Conclusion

For a practice that is so widely used in the workplace it is perhaps surprising that theatre at work has been overlooked by the field of Applied Theatre. I have questioned the exclusive assumptions of the field, joining a growing body of scholars who are challenging the 'exclusionary discourse' of Applied Theatre. I suggest there is much to be gained from further research into Applied Theatre in the context of work. I suspect this lack of academic engagement stems from a distaste for the practice because of a notion of inappropriate application and collusion with power. The practice is identified as contaminated with capitalism. Judith Ackroyd argued in 2007 that the field of Applied Theatre excluded forms of practice that were not, ironically, somehow 'pure'. I suggest that this ideological purity comes at a heavy price, as through a lack of engagement academics are surrendering the possibility of influence. The potential for transformative experiences facilitated by Applied Theatre techniques does not simply vanish due to the problems of the context of work. Whilst there are many tensions that must be negotiated, the participative, embodied and dialogic qualities of Applied Theatre at work can enable a space for catharsis, expression and learning not possible through other methods. I have argued that the practice challenges the alienation caused by mechanistic work practices that marginalise the human element. The case studies support my argument that the practice has the potential to be progressive, challenging essentialist notions of leadership and pervasive, outdated conceptions of leadership as command and control, instead exploring leadership as a linguistic and social process. Participants have provided testimony to the cathartic and developmental potential of the practice, suggesting that the practice can successfully navigate the tensions between a drive

for efficiency and individual efficacy. Those interventions with heuristic and freeform qualities were found to be most likely to have this efficacy and impact and further research could exercise a developmental influence to encourage good practice in the use of these powerful pedagogical tools. I suggest that the omission of work-based adult education from the canon of Applied Theatre is not coherent when such a broad range of theatre-based learning activities are included within the academic discourse. There may also be ancillary benefits for the field through deeper engagement. As the humanities struggle within savage funding conditions there may be much to be gained through a focus on the practical support that the arts can contribute to the economy.

In this conclusion I will summarise the themes examined in each Chapter and then revisit my research questions. I will then review the findings of this research, identify my original contribution to knowledge, examine the problems and possibilities and specify potential audiences for this research.

This thesis has investigated the characteristics, efficacy and impact of actor-based Applied Theatre methods used in the workplace. In Chapter 1 I sought to locate the practice of actor-based learning methods within the field of Applied Theatre. Chapter 2 described and analysed the use of case studies and mixed methods as the methodology for this research. In Chapter 3 two case studies were then presented followed by general points of theory that arose from the case studies. In Chapter 4 I defined the forms of actor-based Applied Theatre most commonly used in the workplace as variations on Role-Play, Forum Theatre and Simulation. This led to the examination in Chapter 5 of the learning theories that underpin these experiential forms, their efficacy and the likelihood of transfer of learning to changed behaviour in the workplace. In Chapter 6 I analyse what is learned through these embodied and social forms. This Chapter

argued that the practice promotes a collaborative and social model of leadership in contrast to authoritarian notions of leadership. Drawing on Social Constructionism, the role of language in constructing organisations was examined. I argued that actor-based learning methods can effectively assist learners to access channels of the available discourse. I then examined how this social and embodied learning practice is used to form the collegiate and 'empowered' identities required by the changing workplace as it moves towards the more flexible structures. Two central questions emerged during the research process:

- What are the defining characteristics of workplace acting?
- What is the potential efficacy and impact of these actor-based techniques on individuals and organisations?

I addressed these questions on three levels. On the level of the workplace actor I have analysed and defined the key characteristics of the role and the qualities that contribute to efficacy. I examined the impact of these processes on participants. At the highest level and I theorised the wider organisational impact. Below I will summarise my findings for each of these three interconnected levels of actor, participant and organisation in turn.

The Actor

Actors in the workplace are rarely just acting.

Acting in this context has a particular meaning, as in addition to the skills of generating a credible performance, actors may also need skills in facilitation and coaching. They will also need to have a thorough grounding in the language and processes pertinent to the context in which they are working. The aim of actor-based Applied Theatre is to develop the behaviours and skills of professional competence, an aspect of work that is often overlooked by traditional teaching strategies which predominantly focus on professional knowledge. The role of the

actor in the workplace has evolved beyond delivering a performance and into innovative approaches that aim to increase the actor's contribution to learning. I have defined this emerging hybrid role as the 'pedagogical actor', drawing on skills of calibration, feedback and facilitation in addition to delivering a credible performance. These dimensions are explored and defined in Chapter 3.

Creating the space of 'not knowing' was found to be an important element as to the efficacy of the practice. The embodied, social and dialogical aspects of the practice create the conditions in which 'not knowing' can be productively explored. The pedagogy supports the emergence of knowledge by providing a frame that creates and holds a space of anxiety for the learner. Anxiety can arise from confronting the uncertainty associated with learning something new. This frame provides an apparent paradox by holding both a place of safety and a place of uncertainty. The simulated experience within the frame generates real time feedback which can be immediately tested through exploring the impact of new behaviours. Through a cycle of experience and reflection in-and-on action, new knowledge can emerge from the multiple feedback loops integral to the pedagogy.

Reflection is an important aspect of experiential learning where general principles are extracted from specific encounters. A non-reflective response to an experience does not produce new knowledge. Reflection is a thinking skill which can be learned, although traditional models of professional education based on an epistemology of Technical Rationality inhibit the development of this form of thinking. Actor-based learning can provide a forum for the learners to exercise their reflective skills, where the internal and mysterious process of reflection-in-action can be experienced and to some extent observed. The practice therefore provides a useful contribution to the body of knowledge concerned with the development of

reflexive learning, an aspect of learning with which traditional teaching methodologies struggle.

As an emerging and hybrid role there is no common theory of practice and training for workplace acting. The actors who undertake this work come to it via eclectic routes with different levels of skill and may have different conceptions of their role and function. This suggests that the actor's recognition and engagement with the educational aspects of their work will be variable. This diversity of practice can generate innovation and new ways of working with simulation and learning, but there can also be problems. What can be a powerful tool for generating the conditions in which emergent knowledge can be produced can be in less capable hands a wasted opportunity. At worst, poor practice could even be damaging, due to the powerful emotions that the potent combination of biographical material and the anxieties generated by working with the unknown can stimulate. Therefore my examination of the pedagogical actor is a distillation of those aspects identified as supporting its efficacy as a learning method. The research findings that define the hybrid role of the pedagogical actor in the workplace constitutes an original contribution to knowledge.

The Participant

The move away from multiple levels of management towards the notion of the empowered employee has led to a wide variety of work roles requiring some potential for leadership. Whilst there is no fixed definition of leadership, there is a broad consensus that leadership is an influencing process that seeks to achieve change in the organisation. Due to the use of actor-based Applied Theatre for leadership development, the question arises as to what theory of leadership the practice is seeking to promote. As these actor-based methods explore

notions of leadership through participatory, social and embodied theatre methods, I have argued that the practice implicitly supports the notion of leadership not as an individual activity, but as a social, collective and linguistic process of influence. This mode of leadership is progressive when compared to traditional but still influential notions of leadership such as command and control.

A discursive view conceives of power as the ability to create meaning, which challenges a traditional view of power as based on resource dependencies or formal authority. Applied Theatre can provide the space to refine the skills for making meaning. Hence actor-based learning can be conceived of as a tool for developing high level literacy skills. It can enable participants to exercise their voice on issues on which they were previously silent. Once acquired, these skills can be used in predictable and unpredictable ways.

The notion of emotional intelligence has gained credibility within the workplace and the use of actors and theatre methods provides the forum where the capacity for empathy and personal insight can be developed. An advantage of experiential learning methods is that they do not separate the cognitive and the physical from the emotional; these elements are explored together in a social space. As a consequence theatre was found to provide the embodied form to articulate and work through emotion laden issues which may be difficult to grasp in the abstract.

I also examined the therapeutic potential of these methods. Theatre can provide a psychodramatic space where problematic encounters can be (re)enacted and reviewed to achieve a positive outcome. Participants reported the 'visible change' that working through such problematic dialogues inspired and it seems that, when used with empathy and

judgement, theatre techniques can provide a supportive structure to explore emotionally-charged encounters which otherwise may not be resolved. However, entering this therapeutic territory raises ethical concerns which I have addressed in Chapter 4.

The Organisation

The forces of globalisation and technology have driven a period of unprecedented change in the work-place. These changes generate new ways for people to be at work. Whilst I have acknowledged the dangers of over generalisation, I have identified a broad theme which can be addressed by actor-based Applied Theatre in the workplace. By working with the human, informal aspects of organisation, I suggest that these methods support a move away from the mechanistic towards more organic conceptions of organisation as an interconnected network. Whilst the networked organisation can reduce the problem of marginalising the human element, which can be seen as a problem with the inflexible bureaucratic mechanistic organisation, networked iterations bring their own problems due to operating in unprecedented conditions of change. The catalyst of globalisation drives organisations to seek more flexible structures in an attempt to gain competitive advantage and the network structure enables greater flexibility and innovation than is possible within hierarchical and mechanistic structures. A problem is that these networked structures require adaptable employees able to work in flexible cross-departmental teams which can generate conflicts of interest and divided loyalties. The networked structure is less stable than the hierarchical bureaucracy, and requires collegiate, empowered employees with high levels of interpersonal communication skills in order to manage the uncertainties and conflicts that inevitably develop. Actor-based methods are used to promote these skills so that the organisation can survive in conditions of flux and uncertainty. In these new models of operating, communication skills are not seen as optional 'soft' skills, but as essential to the success and survival of the organisation.

Applied Theatre techniques are flexible methods and they could be used, in a worst case scenario, to rehearse oppressive and authoritarian practices. However, in my practical experience and from the evidence of the field research conducted for this thesis, these actor-based forms are predominantly used to promote co-operative and progressive practices to enable employees to manage the complex and often competing demands which are a common feature of the 21st Century workplace.

Problems and Possibilities

The interdisciplinary nature of this research has drawn upon a diverse mix of theories. I suggest that in order to understand the impact of the practice it has been necessary to examine the connections between theories from Applied Theatre, Acting, Organisational and Leadership theory, Social Constructionism and Learning Theory. Judgements have been made as to how deeply I needed to engage in the relationship and interconnections between these fields and actor-based Applied Theatre. My intention has been to draw upon these theories as far as is necessary, whilst still grounding my research within Applied Theatre. I believe that this interdisciplinary approach has been necessary to avoid the problem of decontextualizing the practice from the influences which shape it. However, it could be said that this approach opens multiple new fronts of debate which are difficult to deal with adequately within the limitations of time and word limit. Despite these problems, I believe that the breadth of this thesis was necessary as this is an under-researched area which has been overlooked by the field of Applied Theatre.

This research has generated further questions beyond the scope of this thesis. Questions of the impact of theatre-based methods on employee well-being were posed to participants, and their responses are recorded within the case studies. However, I suggest the question of the connections between theatre and well-being at work warrants further empirical research beyond the qualitative methods used for this thesis.

Further research could also address the questions raised by intercultural practice. Increasingly, actors are working cross-culturally and internationally within global corporations. They may be working from a Eurocentric theory of practice, implicitly promoting Eurocentric values and codes of behaviour which may be dissonant with the cultural norms and ethics of those they are working with. Questions of cultural imperialism and corporate mono culture are raised which I suggest could be a fruitful topic for further study.

Potential audiences for this study are academics within the field of Applied Theatre, scholars interested in the use of experiential learning methods in organisations, and also work-based actors and training consultancies who use actor-based methods with an interest in academic study of this under-researched area. Employers seeking to develop the behavioural skills of their staff may also be interested in the methods and analysis contained in this thesis.

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