

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

# Tactical enacting: A grounded theory

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Education

at Massey University, Manawatū, New Zealand.

Catherine Ross

2016

# Abstract

This research uses classic grounded theory methodology to produce a grounded theory of **tactical enacting**. Forty two participants were drawn from the population of learning advisors working in a variety of tertiary education organisations in New Zealand. Data consisted of field notes and transcripts from observations, interviews and a group workshop/discussion and were analysed using all procedures that comprise classic grounded theory methodology.

The thesis of this thesis is that learning advisors express a concern for role performance and continually resolve that concern through **tactical enacting**. In **tactical enacting**, learning advisors are working tactically towards a variety of ends. These ends include a performance identity and a role critical to organisational agendas. A role critical to organisational agendas is one which makes a significant contribution to student success outcomes and organisational performance. Making a strong contribution to student success and organisational performance helps learning advisors construct the desired professional identity for themselves and establish their role as valuable in the eyes of others and the organisation. **Tactical enacting** means advisors perform their role tactically in order to meet their own professional standards as well as the needs and expectations of students and the organisation and to help secure their place within tertiary education. However, in **tactical enacting**, learning advisors constitute themselves as the performing subject, subject to and subjecting themselves to the performativity discourse of the contemporary tertiary education organisation. At the same time, in **tactical enacting**, learning advisors constitute themselves as the ethical subject in an effort not to be governed by performativity alone and to enable them to meet organisational, student and their own expectations of how they should behave.

This research contributes to knowledge in three main areas. Firstly, to knowledge and practice in relation to professional roles and organisations; specifically, the learning advisor role in the contemporary tertiary education organisation in New Zealand. Secondly, to research; specifically, to the scholarship of learning advising, and, lastly, to research method; specifically, to classic grounded theory methodology, and to an

approach that applies a Foucauldian analytical framework to a discussion of an emergent grounded theory.

# Acknowledgements

My thanks and appreciation go to my principal supervisor Nick Zepke who has supported and challenged me from the beginning to the end of this research and to my other supervisors, Seth Brown, Linda Leach and Clare Mariskind, who have done so for various stages of it. Collectively, their enabling approach to the supervision process and their care, critique, questioning, and always thoughtful and thought-provoking responses to my writing, has helped me complete the research and writing with the rigour expected of doctoral researchers.

To all the learning advisors who so willingly gave their time to speak and write to me about their experiences. Their interest in and commitment to this project made it possible.

To my family, friends and colleagues who maintained enthusiastic interest in my progress and cheered me along.

To Massey University for awarding me a Doctoral Completion Bursary which allowed me to take leave from my job and work full-time on putting the final touches to the thesis.

# Table of contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of contents .....	iv
List of figures .....	viii
List of tables .....	viii
Chapter one.....	1
Introduction to the research .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Background to the research .....	1
The learning advisor role .....	2
The research problem .....	5
Aim and purpose of the research.....	5
Justification for the research .....	6
Potential significance of the research .....	6
The research approach .....	7
Structure of the thesis .....	7
Conclusion .....	9
Chapter two .....	10
The learning advisor and their workplace: A contextual overview .....	10
Introduction .....	10
The contemporary workplace .....	11
The contemporary workplace: The New Zealand tertiary education system.....	11
The contemporary workplace: The tertiary education environment .....	14
The learning advisor in the workplace .....	21
The performativity culture .....	22
Professional identity .....	27
An insecure workplace.....	32
Conclusion .....	34
Chapter three .....	35
Methodology.....	35

Introduction .....	35
Philosophical position .....	35
Positioning critical realism.....	36
Positioning pragmatism .....	37
Positioning grounded theory .....	38
Choosing classic grounded theory methodology.....	40
Overview of the classic grounded theory process.....	42
Data collection .....	42
Open coding.....	42
Selective coding and theoretical sampling .....	43
Memo writing.....	43
Theoretical coding, sorting and writing up.....	44
Overview of research aim and purpose.....	44
Data sources.....	45
Data collection .....	47
Methodological limitations.....	51
Ethical considerations in data collection.....	54
Approach to data analysis .....	56
Data analysis.....	56
Open coding.....	57
Conceptual memos .....	59
Theoretical sampling and selective coding .....	60
Conceptual memo .....	61
Raising the level of conceptualisation.....	63
Conceptual memo .....	64
Conceptual memo .....	65
Generating the theoretical framework.....	66
Conceptual memo .....	67
Conclusion .....	72
Chapter four.....	73
The grounded theory of tactical enacting.....	73
Introduction .....	73

Tactical enacting.....	74
Overview .....	74
Cultivating .....	76
Building .....	77
Projecting.....	81
Influencing .....	87
Promoting.....	88
Persuading .....	93
Conclusion .....	99
Chapter five .....	100
Discussion of the grounded theory .....	100
Introduction .....	100
Discourse, governmentality and ethics.....	103
Discourse .....	103
Governmentality .....	104
Ethics.....	105
Tactical enacting: The performing subject.....	108
Tactical enacting: The ethical subject .....	116
Conclusion .....	126
Chapter six .....	128
Conclusions.....	128
Introduction .....	128
Overview of the research findings.....	129
Contribution to knowledge .....	130
Contribution to practice .....	131
Recommendation one .....	134
Recommendation two.....	135
Recommendation three .....	135
Recommendation four.....	135
Contribution to research .....	135
Potential area for future research one .....	137
Potential area for future research two.....	137



Potential area for future research three.....	138
Contribution to research method.....	138
Summary of contribution to practice, research and method .....	139
Achievement of research aims .....	140
Evaluation of research findings .....	141
Limitations .....	145
Concluding statement .....	148
References .....	150
Appendices .....	190

## List of figures

Figure 1. Adapted from the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) diagram outlining the structure of the TEO network in the New Zealand tertiary education system (TEC, 2014, p. 31). ITPs = institutes of technology and polytechnics; PTEs = private training establishments; TEOs = tertiary education organisations. ....	12
Figure 2. The theory of tactical enacting.....	71
Figure 3. The theory of tactical enacting.....	74
Figure 4. The sub-process cultivating and its concepts and properties. ....	76
Figure 5. The sub-process influencing and its concepts and properties. ....	87

## List of tables

Table 1. Data Sources.....	46
----------------------------	----