

Frameworks For Effective Improvised Facilitation

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

LICA, Lancaster University

July 2015

Abstract

The starting point for this study is the facilitation of groups engaged in knowledge exchange and the ways in which facilitation in that context can be more flexible, more responsive, more creative and more effective.

Only anecdotal evidence exists relating to what this study calls Improvised Facilitation and defines as the generation of a series of in-situ, micro-designs at each step and turn, independent of established formats and processes. The study attempts to understand better what those micro-designs might involve, by interrogating the practice dimensions of this emergent and poorly articulated form.

Key assumptions underpinning both facilitation and improvisation were explored through a systematic review of the literature. The major works of theorists from group and team theory and those associated with the measurement of creativity were interrogated to construct and test emerging ways of working.

Action Research was used to explore the aptitude, skills, techniques, competences and confidence required to perform the role of a facilitator who improvises as s/he flexes and turns in response to group needs and challenges as they emerge. Practice dimensions were explored through reflections on practice and with a cohort of professional facilitators contributing their experience through structured interviews.

The theoretical approach shed light on the role and impact played by other factors in the facilitation process, almost as co-facilitators in the process itself. These factors include the facilitation environment, spatial configurations within that environment, restraints of time, levels of preparedness and the materials and resources deployed in the moment.

This has enabled the synthesis of a streamlined competence framework for facilitation and the design of an entirely novel *confidence* frame for Improvised Facilitation. These products of the research formed the basis of

the construction of an innovative two-stage approach to the evaluation of Improvised Facilitation that was then tested in dynamic, real-life group events.

Driven by practice, experience-capture, passion and reflection, this study has addressed a significant knowledge gap through the design of these frameworks. In so doing, the research offers insights into what this might mean for facilitation, for facilitators and for the development of knowledge exchange processes more broadly.

Acknowledgements

It was my immense good fortune to have met the inspirational Professor Rachel Cooper when I facilitated EPSRC Sandpits she supported as mentor, and then for her to agree to become one of my supervisors for this research. Her unique combination of insight and clarity has made supervisions an absolute pleasure.

Professor Leon Cruickshank has supported and challenged me in equally exhilarating measure since I arrived at LICA, and may just have turned me into a researcher as a result. To both Rachel and Leon I offer my sincere gratitude.

I am completing this thesis exactly thirty years after last studying in Lancaster and have once again met some extraordinarily supportive people here - both staff and students. In addition to my fantastic supervisors, I particularly want to thank Professor Gordon Blair for his pragmatic good-sense; the wonderful Joanne Wood; Dr Mark Rushforth for his bravery and trust, and who it was an absolute pleasure to work with on the EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account events; Andy Darby for the storyboarding workshop; Dr Katy Mason whose conversations as I approached those terrifying final weeks were immensely focusing; and Loura Conerney, whose calm reassurance got me through the final days. Thank you all.

To the professional facilitators who shared so openly the detail of their practice highs and lows, thank you so much. Particular thanks go to Matthew Haggis, my colleague, business partner and friend for his twenty years of flexibility, creativity and focus.

Thanks also go to the invaluable contributions of Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders, Founder of MakeTools and Associate Professor in Design at The Ohio State University; and Delft University of Technology's Marc Tassoul, author of *Creative Facilitation*, who gave their time so generously at the validation stage. I sincerely hope this research will indeed prove to be useful to you. And also to Madeline Smith from the Institute of Design Innovation of the Glasgow School of Art for her informed guidance. And to my examiners Professor Tom Inns, Director of Glasgow School of Art and Professor Nick Dunn of Lancaster University for their insights, support and reassurance.

But undertaking this research has also absorbed my time and my attention in ways that have not always been helpful, so special thanks go to my wonderful family who have supported me at every step and sometimes complicated, miserable turn of this adventure. But it has been the absolutely essential John Chell who has given up more and made the most compromises to support me, as he has done so many times before. I cannot begin to thank you for your selflessness John Chell, although one day I promise to at least try.

Finally, this is dedicated to Dinny. When I was 9 years old he told me the story of his conversation with another docker who'd met a stevedore that day whose daughter had just got a degree from a university.

Thank you Dinny.

Motivation for the Study

How long does it take to prepare for a facilitated workshop?

Answer 1: *Your whole life.* **Answer 2:** *It depends*

McWaters, V (2006)

This research came about following many years' professional facilitation practice using an 'unplanned' and responsive method that evolved when circumstances conspired to create the opportunity. I have come to call this *Improvised Facilitation*.

That opportunity arose in the month that an ex-colleague and I were setting up our creative facilitation partnership. Our very first commission was when we were invited by the Scottish Executive to facilitate a 24-hour event attended by each of the medical directors and nursing directors from all of the NHS Boards across Scotland. Our only brief was to '*do something interesting and useful*'.¹ If we had been more established, or more experienced, we would have been intimidated by this request, but we were neither established nor experienced, so we took risks we didn't even know were risky. And thankfully, according to the Scottish Executive, it was both interesting *and* useful.

My idea of Improvised Facilitation was born then, in the Dunblane Hydro, in the autumn of 2000, when we greeted the participants and neither they nor we were aware of what would be said or done over the next 24 hours. This study reflects upon what might now be understood by Improvised Facilitation and considers what might be possible next.

1. Creative Exchange/Scottish Executive, Department of Health, event planning meeting notes. November 2000.

Declaration

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere. To the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

D.P. Hennessy

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SECTION ONE

Background and Starting Points

Chapter 1: Overview

1.1 The Research Questions

The key aim of this work is to define what distinguishes the emerging practice of *improvised* group facilitation² from group facilitation, within the context of knowledge exchange. Group facilitation is more widely used and supported by methods, tools, formats and practices that might be more familiar – indeed, more reassuring – to a participant, because these often signalled processes can be tracked as they move through their attributed time slots. In order to achieve this aim, and to enable the practice of Improvised Facilitation to be identified, interpreted, commissioned and valued, the research seeks to identify what might make up the dimensions of improvised facilitation³ – what it is, whether and how it is different and how it is practised – and to explore the design of a framework for its use and its evaluation. The research questions the study seeks to address are therefore:

- 1. What is improvised facilitation?**
- 2. How can a framework be designed to support its practice?**

The improvised facilitation focus of this study relates to the type of practice in which the facilitator has constantly to manage a fluid process by responding with exercises, interventions and process solutions in-the-moment, and at precise and critical stages the group has reached during an event.

Building from the perspective of a professional facilitator, the study

² The phrase improvised group facilitation or improvised facilitation is used without inverted commas throughout the dissertation to define it clearly as the author's definition. When appearing within inverted commas it indicates others' definitions of the term.

³ It is at this point that the term improvised facilitation replace the establishing term of Improvised Facilitation. It will be in Chapter 12 when the findings and recommendations are considered that the capitalised Improvised Facilitation will be re-introduced as a proper noun for emphasis.

imports research from disciplines ranging from design to social psychology, and embraces discourse analysis, thematic analysis, situational analysis, systematic literature review and content analysis. Some techniques have been adapted, for example, evaluation theories, and in some instances entirely new techniques have been developed, for example the approach to the design of focus groups as discussed in 9.8 which in itself represents a research contribution. This methodological approach will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2 Methodological Approach.

This practice-led approach will provide a valuable basis upon which to explore the issues. No such research has been undertaken before and therefore it is expected that this study will contribute to significant new thinking in this area.

1.2 Definitions

The focus for this study is the facilitation that takes place within knowledge exchange settings, although it needs to be made explicit that not all knowledge exchange requires facilitation.

The following definitions will be helpful when considering the three key areas of facilitation, improvisation and knowledge exchange:

Facilitation

Facilitation has many different applications within a broad range of contexts. The word derives from the Latin word ‘facilis’, meaning easy or easily done (from *facere*, to do or make; Swinton, 2006). Within groups, the practice of facilitation retains the association of making things easy; making things possible by making them easy enough *to be* possible perhaps. Blair (1996) refers to making the work of the group easier and of overcoming obstacles to group performance. According to Hogan (2002), a facilitator is

‘... a self-reflective, process-person who has a variety of human, process, technical skills and knowledge, together with a variety of experiences to assist groups of people to journey together to reach their goals’. (Hogan, 2002)

While a variety of definitions of the term facilitation have been suggested, this study will use the succinct definition first suggested by Schuman (2005) who saw the focus of facilitation as '*helping groups do better*'. In helping groups do better, facilitators need to understand group processes and be able to support a group as it works through problems and challenges.

For a group of people coming together for the generation of new ideas, to deal with challenging issues, to find alternative ways forward or to create unexpected collaborations, it is facilitation and facilitators who make it easier for them to achieve these objectives.

Golembiewski and Blumberg (1977) highlight the way in which a facilitator needs to operate as an objective expert, to function both as an '*outsider but also as an insider*' in order to engage fully and constructively in a group, at the same time as maintaining a central role in helping the group to trust and to rely on its own resources. For Golembiewski and Blumberg the ability to reconcile these factors determines the style and quality of the facilitator.

Improvisation

Methods and practices considered within this research differ significantly from other interpretations of improvisation operating within group settings. It is important here to distinguish between improvised facilitation and the use of what are described by Keith Johnstone (1981) as the 'Improv' techniques, frequently used within groups, for team building and to animate events. Improvisation in the 'Improv' context typically involves professional actors or 'Improv' trainers working with individuals and teams to build skills and competence in improvisation techniques. This use of improvisation as session content is not the subject of this research. It should be noted however, that key practitioners of creative facilitation, including some in interviews conducted for this study, *do* attribute their confidence in working with groups, in part, to training they have undertaken in 'Improv' techniques. This aspect of what is referred to by AIN, The Applied Improvisation Network, as 'applied improvisation' will be discussed further in the section 8.3 Applied Improvisation.

Knowledge Exchange

Knowledge exchange, the two-way process where learning, ideas and experiences are shared has been defined as,

the iterative cycle of sharing ideas, research results, expertise or skills between interested parties that enables the creation, transfer, adoption and exploitation of new knowledge in order to develop new products, processes or services and influence public policy (Lockett et al, 2008)

Abreu et al (2008) affirm the *relational* rather than the *transactional* aspects of knowledge exchange, making a plea for knowledge exchange to reflect the breadth of interactions and the ways in which they evolve, are formulated, implemented and assessed, through the encouragement of what they describe as the development of '*public space*' activities in creating and developing relationships.

In a reaction to traditional knowledge exchange transfer and consultation based design, Leon Cruickshank et al., (2010) differentiate between first and second order knowledge exchange tools and mechanisms. Within first order knowledge exchange tools – where the design and delivery of events is seen to maximise and to capture the imaginative and intellectual potential of a diverse group of event participants – the scales of design intervention are defined as tools. Cruickshank et al. see these fundamental actions and techniques as serving functions relating to, for example, '*exposing the assumptions participants have brought with them, moving participants around a space or documenting ideas*' and define mechanisms as collections of tools that provide the platform through which an aim is achieved, for example, a workshop or a linked events sequence. The notion of second order knowledge exchange design is introduced by the authors as the means through which participants can be facilitated in the design of their own knowledge exchange tools and mechanisms.

For purposes of this study the focus is on first-order knowledge exchange and specifically the fundamental actions and techniques that depend upon facilitated interventions and responses.

1.3 Thesis Objectives and Approach

By balancing creative action and critical reflection this study will interrogate two key research questions:

1. **What is improvised facilitation?**
2. **How can a framework be designed to support its practice?**

The following table identifies the broad research objectives and outlines the approach to achieving these. A detailed study design appears at 2.5.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	APPROACH TO ACHIEVING RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
<p>1. To understand the function and practice of facilitation and creativity in facilitation as it relates to groups and group process objectives.</p>	<p>1a. Reflections on a series of facilitated events undertaken at the start of the research from which assumptions will be extracted and tested against the emerging research.</p>
	<p>1b. The completion of a comprehensive literature review and analysis of discourse on facilitation, group process dynamics and creativity.</p>
	<p>1c. The observation of a range of specific facilitated processes that use particular tools to support group processes.</p>
<p>2. To explore what is meant by improvisation generally, and specifically what is meant by the term when it is applied to the practise of facilitation.</p>	<p>2a. The completion of a comprehensive literature review and analysis of discourse on improvisation to identify gaps in research related to interpretations and understanding of improvised facilitation.</p>
	<p>2b. The completion of a comprehensive literature review of those aspects of social psychology research that contribute insight when applied to the field of improvised facilitation.</p>
	<p>2c. Discussion of the differences between facilitation and improvised facilitation, in order to develop a contemporary understanding of the latter term.</p>
	<p>2d. The identification of the dimensions of facilitation and improvised facilitation.</p>

	<p>2e. The capture of the practice experience and reflections of a cohort of professional facilitators whose skills and reputation have been developed to a similar level of expertise.⁴</p>
<p>3. To construct competence frameworks for facilitation and for improvised facilitation.</p>	<p>3a. Distinguishing what differentiates facilitation from improvised facilitation.</p>
	<p>3b. Through the analysis and synthesis of existing theories and practice in this area, defining two new models for the practice of facilitation and improvised facilitation.</p>
	<p>4c. The interpretation of existing techniques from alternative group disciplines to evaluate the opportunities and limitations for the evaluation of improvised facilitation.</p>
	<p>4d. The design of an evaluation framework for improvised facilitation.</p>
	<p>4e. The testing of this evaluation framework in ‘live’ group encounters.</p>
	<p>4f. Demonstrating the need for this research, on the basis that it is likely to make an impact on the development of theories and practices of knowledge exchange.</p>

Figure 1 Approach to achieving the research objectives.

1.4 Structure of Thesis

The rationale for the structure of this thesis is described in detail at 2.5. The research falls into four related areas of investigation as follows:

Section One: Background and Starting Points

Section Two: Review of the Literature

Section Three: Establishing the Context

Section Four: Designing the Frameworks

Section One: Background and Starting Points follows an introduction to the methodology with the deconstruction of a series of facilitated events

4. This expertise level determined by who commissions the facilitation and how regularly they work with national organisations and governments.

commissioned by a UK university at the beginning of this process. These were recorded at that time and are considered here in order to establish a benchmark for the study. Approaches to improvised facilitation are both described and commented on by the research facilitator and, where appropriate, are subsequently referred to within the wider study.

The methodology chapter outlines the most effective approach to answer the research questions. It considers the benefits and drawbacks of both Grounded Theory and Action Research before going on to examine models of Action Research in greater detail. The way in which this study might relate to the criteria for action research, as proposed by the Action Research Journal through the manifesto⁵ created by its 60 editors, is also identified. Ethnography is referred to only in as much as it can be seen to have a value to this study in relation to the *Nine Observational Dimensions* proposed by Scott Reeves. (2008)

The work of Donald Schön and his focus on the development of reflective practice and learning systems will be reviewed to support this research. It is perhaps also of interest within the context of this topic, to note that Schön was an accomplished jazz pianist and clarinetist. This interest of his in improvisation and structure can be heard echoed in his academic writing, most notably in his exploration of the ways in which professionals '*think on their feet*'. Schön (1983)

The theories of John Dewey (1859-1952), the leading proponent of the American school of pragmatism, will also feature, particularly in relation to the perspective held that the meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it, and that unpractical ideas are to be rejected.

The consideration of methodology draws to a close by exploring how interviews, surveys and coding will be employed in this study to ensure a robust, mixed-methods approach.

5. Bradbury Huang, H. (2009). ARJ manifesto – Action research: Transforming the generation and application of knowledge. Retrieved from <http://www.sagepub.com/journals>

Section Two: Review of the Literature is informed by the practice starting points of Chapter 3, as it deconstructs the research question of **What is improvised facilitation?**

The wider socio-psychological context for group interactions is considered, in particular the work of the social psychologists Kurt Lewin and Erving Goffman. Lewin who is responsible for introducing the world to concepts that include experimental learning, change theory, field theory, action research and group dynamics, could perhaps be described as the father of social-psychology, and Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (1959) offers a mechanism through which to explore the application of these theories to group interactions within a facilitated space. Benne and Sheats and their collaborations with Lewin to establish the T-groups of the mid 20th century will also be discussed. Other significant research to be referenced is exemplified in the work undertaken by Grace Coyle (1930) revealing a comprehensive understanding of group models, and Charles Horton Cooley's *Looking-Glass Self* model. (1902)

Role Theory will be discussed in detail and will conclude with an exposition of the more up-to-date theories of Meredith Belbin's (1981) team roles and the reflections of Tom Kelley in his *Ten Faces Of Innovation*. (2005)

Literature will also be explored relating to facilitation; the key theories and theorists associated with facilitation; creative facilitation; creative problem solving methods; and the design context for facilitation.

Improvisation is interrogated through the literature in relation to both the landscape and the models of its practice, through an exploration of the themes that have emerged from the previous chapters.

The research recognises the challenge of quantifying knowledge which has been transferred from one person to another, particularly in the case of tacit knowledge, which almost by definition may be intangible and not within the consciousness of the person possessing it. (Tsoukas, 2005).

Literature specifically relating to Evaluation will be considered separately in Chapter 10, The Evaluation Context, since its consideration at that stage

enables a more iterative and coherent development of the research output – the framework for improvised facilitation.

Section Three: Establishing the Context develops a definition of the critical aptitudes and confidences required for both facilitation and improvised facilitation to take place. The section begins with a comprehensive audit of what is understood by facilitator competence and reflects upon the synthesis of these competences through an analysis of the findings from both the interviews with professional facilitators, and the focus group outputs.

A similar interrogation of evaluation is then undertaken in order to establish the most appropriate evaluation framework to propose. To enable this, models, practices, and evaluation precedents will be imported from domains relating to the world of facilitated groups, to include, learning environments; groupwork; participation and consultation. Lessons from evaluating service quality will also offer a key mechanism through which to examine particular processes of evaluation, since it can be seen that the delivery of facilitation services defines the interaction between clients, providers and participants through which the commissioner either finds value or loses value as a result.

Section Four: Designing the Frameworks describes the process of synthesising the new competence framework for facilitation; the design of the confidence frame for improvised facilitation; and the construction of the evaluation framework for its practice. This suite of tools establishes a mechanism through which participants can input their direct experiences of effectiveness; and critically, facilitators who are engaged in the practice of improvised facilitation can improve and develop their work.

Findings and Recommendations draws the study to a close by identifying both the implications and limitations of this work and signaling future research opportunities that might result from the study.

1.5 Summary

This thesis uses Action Research to explore the aptitude, skills, techniques, competences and confidence required to perform the role of a facilitator as s/he flexes and turns in response to group need and challenge as they emerge. Further, the study will consider the role other factors play in the facilitation process, almost as co-facilitators in the process itself; factors such as the facilitation environment and other spatial configurations, the restraints of time, levels of preparedness and materials used. Exploring these other factors considers their impact in enabling such improvised group processes to be more effective.

There is increasing interest developing in this field of research with research on knowledge exchange and creative facilitation being conducted by leading researchers including the assembly of innovative projects led by Professor Leon Cruickshank in Lancaster. In September 2015 Leeds Beckett University will run the first postgraduate facilitation programme in the UK, designed to develop the ability to help groups of people work together more effectively to achieve their mutual goals. The course marketing claims that this

*will enhance your people awareness skills as you learn to dig deeper into team-working and become effective at facilitating and directing groups to achieve meaningful change, improve effectiveness and boost productivity within an organization.*⁶

What is interesting here is the focus on ‘*people awareness skills*’ and how these might be quantified. Deconstructing such nebulous concepts is precisely what this study will aim to do as it explores the literature and practice of facilitation.

This emerging landscape provides an opportunity to anchor firmly the emerging specialism of improvised facilitation in evidence. The following chapter will outline the methodological approach to the challenge of defining and capturing that evidence.

6. <http://courses.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/actionlearningfacilitation>

SECTION ONE

Background and Starting Points

Chapter 2: Methodological Approach

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach needed to interrogate the assumption that improvised facilitation is materially different from other types of facilitation participants of groups might be more familiar with, and that this difference constitutes a new form and practice. The chapter begins with a discussion of why Grounded Theory was initially considered as an overarching methodology, before the more appropriate application of Action Research was settled upon. Action Research models are then discussed in greater depth to establish the best possible method to answer the research questions of:

What is improvised facilitation?

How can frameworks be designed to support its practice?

The chapter concludes with a Study Design for this dissertation in which the specifics of the process are outlined.

2.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory's essentially bottom-up approach to conceptual analysis places great emphasis on the detailed examination and cataloguing (categorisation, classification and labeling) of qualitative data at the initial analytic stage to develop rich conceptual models that accurately describe the findings and are firmly grounded in the data itself. The purpose is to generate '*a meaningful account*' that reflects the complexity and variability of the participants' world (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

This inductive approach to research in which hypotheses and theories are generated from systematically analysed data, was initially considered as the

overarching methodology for this research. First coined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Grounded Theory was described by Gray (2004) as one of the most influential qualitative approaches, further endorsed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as a theory that is '*discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon*'.

There is no doubt that Grounded Theory provides useful tools when undertaking a study relating to individuals' perceptions and feelings regarding a particular subject area. The challenge in relation to this study however, was whether that was the most appropriate method to support the particular research questions that had been identified.

A study guided by Grounded Theory methodology would aim to explain and sometimes predict phenomena based on empirical data. The data collection typically encompasses in-depth interviews but can also include other sources of data such as existing research literature and quantitative data.

Data collection and analysis take place in alternating, iterative cycles of induction and deduction, consisting of collection of data and constant comparison between results and new findings, in order to guide further data collections. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Strauss's symbolic interactionist perspective had as its focus the observation of face-to-face interactions. It was Glaser and Strauss's challenge to the positivist research tradition that led to their belief that Grounded Theory would enable the reliable emergence of theory informed by the data, as opposed to using the data to test an existing theory. Identifying patterns (and deviations from patterns) emerging from the data is the focus of this analytic process. Adaptations of the original Grounded Theory model, most notably from Strauss and Corbin (1990), reveal a tension between the presentation of data and its interpretation. While the role of interpretation varies with different approaches, some interpretation will always be present, even if confined to the selection of relevant events and details, and the ways in which a narrative account is presented. (Poirer and Ayres, 1997)

Although Strauss and Corbin suggested that a research question should take the form of the identification of the phenomenon to be studied, and what is known about the subject, there is a caution to the researcher that if they *specify* what they want to know about the phenomenon, it could result in their own interests and preconceptions shaping the research. This perspective would initially appear to disregard the value to be brought to the study from an informed practice-led perspective, through which the researcher breaks down the complex data from both the literature and exemplar practice experience.

Glaser and Strauss *do* acknowledge that the researcher will not enter the field free from ideas, but they differ substantially in the function they see for the literature. For Glaser (1978) prior understandings should be based on the general problem domain coupled with extensive reading to inform the researcher of a wide range of possibilities; claiming that learning *not to know* is crucial to maintaining sensitivity to data. For Strauss (1987) both the use of self and the literature exist as early influences that recognise the value of insight from past experience and literature that '*may be used to stimulate theoretical sensitivity and generate hypotheses*'.

Following a rift between the two authors in the 1980s, Glaser's assertion that theory is already contained in data, and only needs to be revealed through the process, assuming that every individual will see and understand the objective data set from the same point of view, make the same observations and therefore arrive at similar conclusions as the data emerges, irrespective of the researcher who unearths it. Strauss' contrasting view was that the researcher needed actively to extract the theory from the data, accepting that subjective interpretations would depend upon the background, beliefs and values of each researcher in turn.

A limiting factor of the Grounded Theory approach is that the use of the methodology to build a theory is a very subjective process, heavily dependent on a researcher's abilities. Although there is flexibility in the method, Bryant (2002) points out that this very flexibility can be used to provide a justification for studies lacking in methodological rigour. So, while Grounded Theory would

enable the researcher actively to construct the data through engagement with the participants in this study, the author is mindful of Bryman (1988), who cautions that while Grounded Theory *could* contribute to the identification of concepts, the premise that it can produce theory in itself is challenged.

It is for these reasons that Grounded Theory methodology would not in itself best support the inquiry into the key research questions of this study. However the application of the rigour advocated by the methodology was of considerable value when informing the systematic approach to the coding of data.

2.3 Action Research

Action Research in comparison to Grounded Research, emphatically and unequivocally places the emphasis on bringing about change, by providing the researcher with a reflective framework through which the research can be reviewed, evaluated and improved. Hilary Bradbury-Huang (2009) Editor-in-Chief of the Action Research Journal captures this effectively when in a journal article she writes:

Action researchers do not readily separate understanding and action, rather we argue that only through action is legitimate understanding possible; theory without practice is not theory but speculation.

This clearly fuels the Action Research claim that it is the best methodological approach for a practice-led study that sets out from first principles to bring about change; in this case the design of a new framework for supporting practice.

Building on the work of Lewin and Dewey, and specifically by appropriating scientific methods for social practice, Argyris (1985), developed the notion of Action Science through which practical problems are brought into alignment with both the formulation and the testing of theory. This is of particular relevance to this study as one of the bases of action science is that the researcher is the change-agent through their design of experiments and interventions.

The term Action Research was first introduced to research methodology by Kurt Lewin, (1951) as a way of combining practical explorations with the generation of theories and knowledge to describe research *with* rather than *on* people. Action research is not rooted in objective fact and the challenge of hypotheses, instead its territory is the open-ended exploration of emergence within the landscape of more subjective observations and encounters. Data collection methods focus much more on qualitative evidence to enable a form of reflective enquiry to equip practitioners to step back and evaluate their practice.

Action Research has become increasingly popular as a mode of research among practitioners since its main application is to support professionals to study aspects of their practice. This notion of enhancing the quality of practice through professional reflective development has long been recognised both in the UK and beyond. Hargreaves (1996) points out that research-based practice is both more effective, and more satisfying, when employed by practitioners. Valsa Koshy (2005) in her practical guide *Action Research for Improving Practice*, encapsulates the phases by asserting that action research develops the act of knowing, with the new knowledge, informing the researcher's future direction and influencing action. Koshy defines Action Research as needing to be undertaken with rigour and understanding as the enquiry is emergent, participatory and situation-based. In their introduction to the *Handbook of Action Research*, Reason and Bradbury (2001) outline the purpose of action research as the production of practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday context of their lives. According to the authors:

Action research is about working towards practical outcomes, and also about creating new forms of understanding, since action without understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless.

The work of Lewin, a leading pioneer of Action Research is key to this research study in that he additionally made a major contribution to the understanding of what happens in groups and the ways in which facilitators can work with groups. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Lewin demonstrated that complex social phenomenon could be explored using controlled experiments. Positioning social psychology as a key discipline, David A. Kolb (1984), sees the consistent theme in all Kurt Lewin's work as his concern for the integration of theory and practice. This is evident from Lewin's perhaps most widely recognised quotation: '*There is nothing so practical as a good theory*'. (1951)

This mesh of relevant contributions from Kurt Lewin and other social psychology proponents, has considerable potential to add a new theoretical underpinning to this study. As a result Action Research emerges as the best theoretical, as well as the best ideological and practical fit, for this research into a creative departure for the support of effectiveness in group interactions.

2.4 Action Research Models

In relation to the research questions of this study, Action research can support the creation of new knowledge based on enquiries conducted within specific and often practical contexts. It is inherently participatory in nature, leading Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) to describe it as '*participatory research*' and to identify the self-reflective spirals of Action Research as:

- planning a change
- acting and observing the process and consequences of the change
- reflecting on these processes and consequences
- re-planning; acting and observing; reflecting; with the spiral resuming again. And again.

This spiral of reflection is constructed upon iterative opportunities to deepen understanding, by enabling return to an issue at a different point or stage, or with a different perspective, at each time of return.

Other models of action research are abundant and it is worth outlining them briefly here. A word of caution from Koshy (2005) that is noteworthy when introducing these models, is that excessive reliance on any particular model, or an adherence strictly to the stages or cycles of a particular model, could negatively and significantly affect the fundamentally emergent and

responsive nature of what characterises Action Research. With that in view, the following are offered merely as an indicative portfolio of theories:

The model suggested by Elliot (1991) includes reconnaissance – fact-finding and analysis – within each stage of the action research. Elliott believed that Lewin’s basic model allowed users to assume that the ‘general idea’ can be fixed in advance and that ‘reconnaissance’ *is* fact-finding.

For O’Leary (2004) cycles of action research represent action research as a cyclical process forming its shape only as knowledge emerges and when

‘cycles converge towards better situation understanding and improved action implementation; and are based in evaluative practice that alters between action and critical reflection.’

Cohen and Manion (1994) confirm the emergent nature of action research when they describe action research as largely an on-the-spot procedure designed to deal with a specific problem.

In Carr and Kemmis’s (1986) seminal work, *Becoming Critical*, they highlight action research to show that self-critical communities of action researchers enact a form of social organisation in which truth is determined by the way it relates to practice, to improve ‘*rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices*’, as well as their own understanding of these practices and the contexts in which these situations take place.

Huang again, quoting from the ‘Manifesto on Transformation of Knowledge Creation’ (2010) begins:

Action researchers see our work as providing models for increasing the relevance of conventional social research to wider society. What makes our work fundamental to the revitalization of social research more generally lies in its orientation towards taking action, its reflexivity, the significance of its impacts and that it evolves from partnership and participation.

This study has used the manifesto’s seven criteria for quality in Action Research and their descriptions as a practical checklist. In the following table the first two columns are populated by Huang with the third column relating specifically to the approach of this study into improvised facilitation:

CRITERIA ACTION RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AS DEFINED BY HUANG.	DESCRIPTION THE DETAIL AS DEFINED BY HUANG.	DESIGNING AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVISED FACILITATION ACTION RESEARCH APPROACH OF THIS STUDY AS ALIGNED TO HUANG'S DEFINITIONS.
ARTICULATION OF OBJECTIVES	<p>The extent to which authors explicitly address the objectives they believe relevant to their work and the choices they have made in meeting those.</p>	<p>This study aims to understand the skills and aptitudes needed to practice improvised facilitation and to construct a framework through which it can be evaluated.</p>
PARTNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION	<p>The extent to and means by which the project reflects or enacts participative values and concern for the relational component of research. By the extent of participation we are referring to a continuum from consultation with stakeholders to stakeholders as full co-researchers.</p>	<p>This study engages facilitation practitioners in reflective interviews about what characterises their work. It shares these insights through the construction of a framework of the dimensions of improvised facilitation. It invites practitioners to comment on these dimensions and the design of evaluation templates for facilitated events. It engages small cohorts of group participants in focus groups after they have attended an event and completed one of the evaluation forms.</p>
CONTRIBUTION TO ACTION RESEARCH THEORY/PRACTICE	<p>The extent to which the project builds on (creates explicit links with) or contributes to a wider body of practice knowledge and/ or theory, that contributes to the action research literature.</p>	<p>This study demonstrates how action research can contribute to knowledge of the study of the practice of facilitation and emerging theory of group interaction processes.</p>

METHODS AND PROCESS	The extent to which the action research methods and process are articulated and clarified.	This study uses written capture of the above processes to articulate the stages of action research to demonstrate the choices that were made to enhance the quality of the study.
ACTIONABILITY	The extent to which the project provides new ideas that guide action in response to need.	This study directly involves a practitioner of improvised facilitation as the researcher and change agent.
REFLEXIVITY	The extent to which the authors explicitly locate themselves as change agents.	This study achieves a high degree of reflexivity which delineates the differing scholarly <i>verses</i> practitioner agendas.
SIGNIFICANCE	The extent to which the insights in the manuscript are significant in content and process. By significant we mean having meaning and relevance beyond their immediate context in support of the flourishing of persons, communities, and the wider ecology.	This study has the action research agenda as the principal driver of this work.

Figure 2 Action research objectives as defined by Huang.

Huang's perspective asserts that action research resides in the space that can integrate truth and power with deeper engagement with practice, believing it to have the capacity to revitalise social science and to increase its relevance to challenging issues that most deserve the attention of researchers.

These perspectives consolidate the view that for the practice led research of this study, Action Research is the most appropriate methodology through which to address the research questions since it will enable a range of methods to be employed to support the design of the evaluation framework. This range of methods includes literature review, reflective journals, field notes, interviews, and the testing of the framework tools through surveys and

micro focus groups of participants of facilitated sessions. These multiple methods will be employed to enable the triangulation of data and will include a range of perspectives and reflections supported by observation documents, story-boards, scrapbooks, photographs and narratives.

2.5 Study Design

2.5.1 Purpose and Significance of the Study

I think metaphorically of qualitative research as an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material. This fabric is not explained easily or simply. Like the loom on which fabric is woven, general assumptions and interpretive frameworks hold qualitative research together. (Creswell 2007)

It has been suggested that the central role of research design is to minimise the chance of drawing incorrect causal inferences from data. For this study, perhaps particularly since it had initially emerged out of experience and practice, the above description was helpful in formulating the study design that follows.

The starting point for the research has been outlined at the beginning of the work in the section Motivation for the Study. That motivation fuelled the determination to embark on this research but it is the design of the study that has shaped it. This section follows the description of methodological approach with a more focussed and detailed account of how the issue to be studied was identified, the purpose of studying it, and the procedures that will be used to undertake the study and to ensure its robustness.

Morse and Richards (2002) advance the notion of ‘methodological congruence’ that resonates with Creswell’s fabric analogy, when they write about the purposes, questions and methods of research being inextricably linked, one to the other, to create a coherent whole. This idea of a mesh rather than a sequence is helpful when considering, for example, the function of and the approach to the Literature Review to:

- establish the landscape of groups, of role, of interaction and of facilitation and improvisation.
- challenge practice assumptions and theories that are emerging from practice
- position the research within its appropriate context.

This recognises and takes account of the fact that the researcher's own background, experience, orientation and beliefs inevitably situate them within the research and determine the lens through which these assumptions will be considered.

In their SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin and Lincoln's (1994, 2000, 2005, 2011) constantly revised definition indicates the movement of thinking that concludes with their final definition of qualitative research as:

a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self.

This is precisely what has characterised this study. To contextualise this position, such applied research requires a robust design framework to be effective to ensure that, as Creswell asserts, qualitative researchers engage in an emerging approach to inquiry, and that data collection and data analysis embraces both inductive and deductive modes of enquiry to establish patterns or themes with the final product of the research highlighting:

the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change. Creswell (1998)

This emphasis therefore is on the *process* of research through, in this case, the overarching framework of Action Research conducted for the most part in the natural settings in which the processes being observed take place. Achieved through detailed observation, watching how people behave and act and of valuing face-to-face interactions.

The chapter includes a discussion relating to the best application of interviews, questionnaires and surveys for the data collection phases with consideration given to how the coding of information extracted from these methods can provide a robust basis for the understanding of the dimensions of improvised facilitation to support the design of the evaluation framework.

The following sections will position the following key elements of the study design more securely within this work.

1. Purpose and significance of the study
2. Reflections on Practice
3. Problem Definition and Research Questions
4. Framework
5. Expected outcomes
6. Data gathering procedures
7. Data analysis processes
8. Ethics
9. Validation

2.5.2 Reflections on Practice

This study began with a period of reflection on facilitation practice that followed two events in 2011. The reflections attempted to capture the essence of a facilitation practice style in order to identify patterns supporting a practitioner perspective of work that for the most part seemed transitory and fleeting. The patterns that emerged from the contemporaneous capture at the events revealed a series of practice assumptions that it was hoped the research could interrogate.

It is more than a hundred years since John Dewey first introduced the idea of reflective thinking for problem-solving in *How we Think* (1910). As captured by Loughran (1996), reflection is clearly purposeful because it moves toward a conclusion and in so doing propels the need to work towards a better understanding of the problem and ways of solving it. Dewey, one of the great American philosophers of the last century, had taught for many years at the University of Michigan and while there he collaborated with Charles H. Cooley in laying the theoretical groundwork for symbolic interactionism and theories

such as Cooley's 1902 *Looking-Glass Self* which will be discussed in Chapter 4, Social Theories of Interaction.

Hillier (2005) draws attention to the uncomfortable truths uncovered by reflective practice when he describes practitioners who seek to challenge the established and consolidated behaviours and processes that have defined their professional selves. Compelling practitioners to be honest with themselves by interrogating such questions as *What did I do? Could I have done better? What did I not do that I possibly could have done?* exposes them to criticism from potentially the most challenging of critics – themselves. This has implications for any honest and truly robust capture of reflective experience and links to Huang again, who identifies a significant problem with participation from 'expert' researchers, describing the typical default position of the human ego to need to appear 'smart' and the significant difficulty faced by the researcher when attempting to balance 'expertise driven advocacy'. (Huang 2010) Reflective practice has the potential to provide the mechanism through which to avoid such research pitfalls.

These concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action were defined by Donald Schön (1987) in his definitive works on the use of reflection to prepare and develop professional practitioners by describing the ways in which manageable problems find solutions through the application of research-based theory and technique. Distinguishing two types of problem, Schön imports a terrain metaphor to describe the messy, confusing problems that defy technical solution and are of greatest human concern that exist in the swampy lowland, with the problems of the high ground being of greater technical interest, but of less concern to individuals or society at large. Schön writes about the need for the practitioner to make a fundamental choice – either to remain on the high ground and solve the easy problems while adhering to prevailing standards of rigour, or more bravely perhaps, to

'descend to the swamp of important problems and non-rigorous inquiry?'
Schön (1987)

Reflective practice provides a framework for thinking about practice

experience with a view to gaining an improved understanding of that experience, through a rigorously ordered, systematic and documented approach. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) suggest that it is by reflection and analysis that we try to understand an experience in order to improve performance. Other definitions of reflective practice concur with Boyd and Fales (1983) defining reflection as the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which results in a change in perspective.

Stephen Brookfield, exploring reflection within the education domain, introduced the idea of critical lenses through which practitioners can 'look' to discover and examine practice assumptions. Brookfield's four critical lenses are:

Self Lens: *Focussing on experiences in order to reveal aspects of their pedagogy that may need adjustment or strengthening.*

Learner Lens: *Engaging with learner views of the environment and experience.*

Peer Lens: *Peers can highlight hidden habits, and also provide innovative solutions to problems. Further, colleagues can be inspirational and provide support and solidarity.*

Literature Lens: *Theory provides the vocabulary for practice, and offers alternative ways to view and to understand work through critical reflection. Brookfield (1995)*

It is anticipated that this iterative process and the employment of the lens perspectives will prove advantageous within this research by encouraging more structured critical conversations about practice.

It is necessary, precisely because of the proximity of this study to developing facilitation practice, that *this* research design identifies a series of objective measures linked to established benchmarks within this area of practice. Inevitably, the professional experience of the researcher means that inferences will be drawn from observations, but this challenge is transparent and will be managed by maintaining and updating a series of reflective journals that can be interrogated further for external validity.

This particular research is also transparent in that it is not in search of

absolute truths, rather the narratives of experiences through which to construct a framework of the aptitude, skill and confidence requirements for such work. There is no existing standard against which improvised facilitation practice is evaluated and therefore a suite of key determinants will be identified in Chapter 11 against which practice can be considered.

2.5.3 Problem Definition and Research Questions

Open-ended starting point questions relating to the nature of facilitation, the challenges of improvised responses and issues relating to the balance of risk-taking and output success, evolved throughout the early stages of the study. It was only after the completion of the review of the literature that opportunities for sharper focus were identified enabling the final questions of **What is improvised facilitation?** and **How can frameworks be designed to support its practice?** to emerge following a reformulation of the earlier research focus. Through this process three products of the research will emerge:

1. A new competence framework for facilitation
2. A new confidence frame for improvised facilitation
3. A novel evaluation framework for improvised facilitation

These new questions needed to be sufficiently open to drive the data collection phases through the range of sources that will be described below, without anticipating or manipulating the findings.

2.5.4 Framework

Elden and Chisholm (1993) described action research '*both a mechanism for practical problem solving and generating and testing theory*'. Action Research therefore emphasises an open attitude to data collection and theory building when operating within a well-researched, related field. This reinforces the belief that this study provides the ideal scenario through which to employ

action research. Researching in this way can lead the researcher to become intimidated by pre-existing theory but the approach of this study is to embrace this pre-existing research and to use it as a launch pad for further investigation by thinking beyond the ambit of previous studies.

The cyclic nature of action research to achieve its twin outcomes of action (e.g. change) and research (e.g. understanding) is time-consuming and complex to conduct and this study design will construct a reflective cycle whereby an initial exploratory stance is adopted, where an understanding of a problem is developed and where strategies are identified for interventions to support theory building. To support this, Thomas (1993) describes the necessity of the researcher to 'play' with and 'massage' the data, sometimes in many different ways over prolonged periods of time, in order to '*reframe (the data) into something new*'.

2.5.5 Data Collection Procedures

The primary data collected included interviews, observations, questionnaires, evaluation forms and the outputs of focus groups.

Literature Review

The Literature Review examined existing work focussed on the topic of this research and embraced a general discussion of how that work supported, contested, proved or disproved the initial assumptions following the reflections on practice. This process has fuelled the approach to the research design in that it defined the territory, identified the gaps in knowledge and identified the need for further study. Secondary sources included previous research, government reports and web information.

Interviews

The interviews for this study were designed to be conducted in two phases.

Phase One: interviews with creative facilitators

Phase Two: interviews with validators.

Phase One Interviews

The first phase consisted of seven explorative interviews with professional facilitation practitioners to establish the nature and scope of their practice and to gather a sense of what skills and experience they felt they drew on when making in-situ decisions when working with groups. The interview questions also elicited responses to how they determined the success of sessions and their on-going professional development requirements. The interviews in this study were conducted with a standardised procedure requiring all interviewees to be provided with exactly the same set of questions in advance (Bryman & Cramer, 1997) to ensure greater consistency in the data gathered.

To qualitatively assess what this cohort of professional facilitators believed were the key elements of their approach and practice, considerable care was taken during the construction of the questions to ensure high face and content validity (Kline, 1999). These interviews were conducted with creative facilitators whose responses were anonymised for purposes of this study. They will be referred to as Interviewee FI 1; FI 2; FI 3; FI 4; FI 5; FI 6; FI7. The sequence relates to when they were interviewed: FI 1 being the first to be interviewed in September 2013, and F 17 interviewed last in August 2014.

It had been hoped to complete all of the interviews before May 2014 but this had not proved possible. As a result, the interviews, although identical in approach and format, were conducted in two phases: four conducted before the first pilot evaluation forms were used with participants, and three after. Although not deliberately planned in this way, this proved unexpectedly useful to the study as it enabled a period of reflection when considering the development of the evaluation questions, with the responses of the final three interviews serving to confirm or challenge what had emerged from the earlier

four.

The interviews were conducted where possible, following an observation of the facilitator's practice, and were analysed in order to contribute to a developing understanding of the dimensions of improvised facilitation. These interviews contribute insights to an understanding of the core skills, qualities, competences or aptitudes required to embark upon this specialist strand of practice. The open-ended interview questions in phase-one, were as follows:

1. How would you describe the sort of facilitation you practice?
2. What particular skills or qualities do you think you have as a facilitator?
3. How did you acquire/recognise these?
4. What core skills/qualities/competences or aptitudes do you feel people need in order to facilitate in the way you do?
5. Can you describe what you think these are?
6. Do you think it is possible to train or equip people with these?
7. How would you describe the function of your event design/ plan/agenda/programme?
8. If you begin to improvise around a schedule or plan, are you aware of what you are noticing at the time?
9. What informs your decision to improvise?
10. What do you think you draw on when making these decisions?
11. Can you give an example of when this kind of facilitation has worked particularly well for you?
12. Can you give an example of when it hasn't?
13. How does it feel to you if a co-facilitator is improvising during a session?
14. What does event success or event impact mean to you?
15. How do you monitor or measure the success or impact of an event?
16. How do you debrief after a session or event?
17. What do you do for ongoing professional development?
18. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your practice?

Each interview lasted for a minimum of sixty minutes. The longest interview took eighty minutes. Interviews such as these can provide insights that are not

available to researchers working with large survey samples and are known to be the most suitable approach when seeking rich data illuminating individuals' experiences and attitudes. The questions asked in interviews for this study were asked in as non-directive a manner as possible to capture the interviewees' own experience and perceptions. The interviews were transcribed immediately after they took place and copied to the interviewees within a day. Only one interviewee responded to the transcript with a comment, challenge or correction to what had been captured and that was Interviewee FI 7 who added additional comments to the transcript to clarify a particularly ambiguous form of words. This change appears in the transcript in italics. The interview transcripts were then coded at the earliest opportunity thereafter. The detailed approach to all the interview coding for this study is discussed in 2.5.vi of this section, Coding.

It is of course inevitably the case that face-to-face interviews can hamper honest exchanges between interviewers and interviewees. Gillham (2000), when considering the validity of interview data, directs that interviews need to be part of a multi-method approach, not unlike case studies. For Gillham, there is a caution to the researcher about the opinions expressed in interviews and the not always straightforward balance between what the interviewee says and what the interviewee means. This recognises the differences between avowed intentions to act in a particular situation, and actual behaviour.

This responsibility to move carefully between objective phenomena and an interviewee's inevitably subjective world, has been taken account of in both the design and the analysis of research interviews since, as Gillham points out again, voiced opinions are one thing and statements about behaviour something altogether different, cautioning the need for the researcher to be aware that:

The misunderstanding of the relationship between what we say, believe or know and what we do is pervasive – so pervasive, indeed, that it often goes unquestioned. (Gillham 2000)

Phase Two Interviews

Phase three of the interviews consisted of four interviews:

- two external validators who had not been part of the process at any previous stage.
- one with whom a focussed conversation took place in September 2014.
- one who was a Phase One interviewee in September 2013 as one of the group of experienced creative facilitators, and who was interviewed again in July 2015.

All of these interviews took place after the evaluation framework has been designed and tested. The interviews to validate the findings adopted a more open approach and comprised more collaborative encounters between the researcher and the validators in order together to probe the issues that had emerged. Interactive interviews are seen to be situated within the context of emerging relationships among participants and interviewers (Adams, 2008) and as such the emphasis in these research contexts is on what can be learned from interaction within the interview setting as well as on the stories that each person brings to the research encounter (Mey & Mruck, 2010).

2.5.6 Data analysis processes

A large quantity of data has emerged through this process – reflective commentaries, journal notes, scrapbooks, evaluation forms, interviews, focus group outputs, story-boards and recordings. The approach to the coding of this data will now be described.

Coding

The interview coding was used to capture the interview data and to extract meaning from how the interviewees made sense of their practice in the context of improvised facilitation. This supports the claim of (Charmaz, 2006) that coding is the first step of data analysis, as it moves away from particular statements to more abstract interpretations of the interview data. Open, line-by-line, coding, supported the identification of initial phenomena and enabled

the generation of a list of themes of importance to the interviewee. Conceptual labels were subsequently attached to almost every line in the interview transcript to capture what has been said. These labels correspond closely to the interview context and when taken from the interviewee's own words, are known as *in vivo* codes. From the interview transcripts codes initially emerged that related to the key responses of the interviewees. New codes were then added when new information emerged that could not be categorised within the existing codes. Codes were then assigned to words and statements to develop concepts, constituting the start of the analytic process. These interview codes appear as Appendix A.

The next coding phase was more abstract than open coding. Focussed coding or selective coding was applied to several lines or paragraphs in the transcript requiring the researcher to choose the most revealing codes to capture the interviewee's perspective to provide not only outsider perspectives, but also external data to confirm, complement, or dispute internal data generated from recollection and reflection.

Content analysis

The nature of this qualitative research meant that no system for pre-coding existed therefore a method of identifying and labelling data needed to be developed in order to highlight the important messages, features and findings. The content analysis within this study, used for the outputs of Interviews, Focus groups and Observations, was considered on the manifest level focusing on a descriptive account of what was said. What this content analysis did not embrace – due to a sense that it was not appropriate within these discussions – was the latent level of analysis where greater interpretive analysis is concerned not only with the response, but also what may have been inferred or implied.

These stages of sorting and analysis for sense-making involved the inductive work of processing the raw data and moving it through several layers of abstraction. This was followed by the deductive processes of considering patterns, codes, categories, themes and dimensions that can be attributed to

the emerging findings parallel to developing the narrative and exploring different ways in which to bring the data to life. The inductive-deductive logic process meant that the qualitative approach embraced this complex reasoning throughout the process of the research.

The process used to analyse the content of the data for this study followed the following series of abstractions to arrive at the codes:

1. Notating the typed transcripts in the margin when interesting or relevant information was identified
2. Using the 'margin' notes to extract the broad types of information captured
3. Categorising each item in a way that offered a description of what it might represent
4. Identifying whether or not the categories could be linked in any way by listing them as major categories (or themes) and / or minor categories (or themes)
5. Comparing and contrasting the various major and minor categories
6. Repeating the first five stages again for each transcript
7. Collecting all of the categories or themes and examining each in detail to consider both its fit and its relevance
8. Reviewing the sense of the minor and major categories/themes
9. Merging or sub-categorising appropriate categories
10. Returning to the original transcripts to check that all the relevant information had been incorporated.

With the literature review completed, four of the seven creative facilitator interviews and both of the commissioner interviews coded, the synthesis of these elements, produced the competence frameworks and the first draft of the evaluation framework. The first evaluation was piloted at an event in May 2014 where it was distributed to 33 participants of a facilitated process. After this event, the evaluation framework was reviewed and refined. The changes were to aid clarity of both language and purpose and to disaggregate

statements that it proved confusing for a participant to respond to precisely. For example, the statement *I felt the session was animated and I felt energised by the format*, became instead the two questions of *I felt the session was animated* and *I felt energised by the format*. The forms were subsequently presented to 136 participants at events delivered in the late spring and early summer of 2014.

2.5.7 Validation

For this study, there was an emphasis on the reliability, validity, trustworthiness, quality and rigour of the data collection, and methods of analysis were used to determine the purpose and function of improvised facilitation through academic scoping, industry bench marking, interviews, event response analysis and the design of a framework for assessing and testing the ways in which it might be possible to create scalable models for improvised facilitation.

Creswell & Miller (2000) suggest that validity is affected by the researcher's choice of paradigm assumption. This has led to a number of researchers constructing their own notions of validity that have often generated or adopted what they consider to be more appropriate terms. These terms will have resonance when considering the dimensions of improvised facilitation later in this study and are touched upon here. Seale asserts that quality considerations in qualitative research resulting from concerns about validity and reliability '*involved substituting new terms for words such as validity and reliability to reflect interpretivist [qualitative] conceptions*' Seale (1999) and Stenbacka (2001) argue that the idea of validity should be redefined for qualitative research and imports her notion of reliability as one of the quality concepts which needs '*to be solved in order to claim a study as part of proper research*' (Stenbacka 2001). For Davies and Dodd (2002) the application of rigour is quite different in qualitative research to that found in quantitative research as a result of the acknowledgement that a qualitative basis operates around rigour through the exploration of '*subjectivity, reflexivity,*

and the social interaction of interviewing'. Trustworthiness is introduced when Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the idea of discovering truth through measures of reliability and validity is replaced by the idea of trustworthiness. These alternative terms may be more applicable to this study and cover the almost subjective aspirations of quality, rigour and trustworthiness.

The practical process of validating the findings of this study and assessing their value to professional facilitators involved discussions with two internationally renowned academic research facilitators whose comments and observations are reflected in the final framework design.

2.6 Summary

It can be seen that the methodological approach chosen for this study is underpinned by the tenets of Action Research and borrows much from the world of reflective practice and the coding rigour of Grounded Theory. Feyerabend (1978) holds the view that there is no best way to undertake original research, and what is being striven for here, is rather *a best fit*. The methodological approach of this study will further be guided by Cattell's (1978) model of the Inductive-Hypothetico-Deductive spiral in which a variety of methodologies are critically evaluated at each of the following stages of the research:

- empirical observation and description
- generation of rough hypothesis
- experiment for testing the hypothesis
- resulting data generate more precise hypotheses
- new experiments designed to test these hypotheses, etc.

Cattell 1978

Using a variety of research methods in this way, the research has been rigorously triangulated to ensure the quality of what is proposed is robust and without bias in answering the research questions of **What is improvised facilitation?** and **How can a framework be designed to support its practice?**

It is now through an adherence to the study design outlined above that the research questions will be addressed and the research objectives achieved in the following chapters.

The next section will introduce and reflect upon the type of facilitation that characterised the approach of the researcher at the point of embarking on this study. This opening section provides a necessary starting point and a valuable resource for understanding the practice processes, successes, failures, and assumptions that encapsulated both the experience and the reflective capacity of the researcher at that early stage.

SECTION ONE

Background and Starting Points

Chapter 3: Initial Reflections on Practice

3.1 Introduction

The motivation page at the opening of this study captures the moment when our creative facilitation partnership began. Creative Exchange was founded in 2000 and has since built its reputation on the design and delivery of strategic and ideation processes and the design of creative support toolkits. This reflection on practice focuses on two two-day events that describe that facilitation approach at the point at which this study began. Even before formally embarking on this study, conscious of the potential value of such reflection, the processes and proceedings of these events were captured during the events by way of journal notes, scrapbooks, images and mood and facilitator voice recordings pulled together quickly in the breaks and at the end of each day. This was sometimes achieved without reference to anybody else, sometimes with the co-operation of the co-facilitator and, at Event 2, with the additional mechanism of the voluntary and anonymous self-managed, participant sound recordings⁷ captured in each of the breaks. Photographs were also taken with the consent of the group. Decisions about the taking of these photographs were determined, as far as it was reliable, when it was felt that the appearance of the camera would not result in a change in the dynamic of the group process at that moment. These images served as an aide-memoire when writing up the events and will not appear in this study.

7. A booth was set-up in the wide corridor that led from the space we were using to the rest of the building. Within this booth was an Edirol recording machine and a list of instructions positioned on the wall asking participants to comment on the process at various stages. A runner added a voice recording of the time of day in advance of each break to punctuate the chunks of recording. It would be fair to say that the self-selecting users of the booth might have been universally positive in their comments because they liked booths, or the sound recording mechanism maybe, so left only single words and phrases like 'Great', 'Interesting ideas', 'Need a coffee now', 'A lot to think about', 'Meeting really nice people', but as an insightful data-collecting process this turned out to be less valuable than it was hoped.

The few people who are mentioned have been anonymised. The only easily identifiable name is that of the co-facilitator, the other founder of Creative Exchange who has given his consent for these reflections to be included. The notes and scrapbooks were written up as text within a week of the completion of the event and only minor edits have taken place since to support clarity of meaning. The account of the events appears here in two parts:

- (i) **What actually happened** constitutes the third-person narrative thread and
- (ii) **How the facilitator felt about or interpreted what happened** is conveyed by way of corresponding first-person footnotes.

This approach conforms to the memory work principles of Haug (1987) and the accuracy definitions of Kippax (1990) which conclude that accuracy is less important than *'the process of construction, what is remembered and in what form'*.

In the pages that follow, sandwiched between Introduction and Summary, each event is presented through the chronological frame of ten elements. This provides a scaffold through which the relevance to the study of each element can be considered and compared between each of the two events. At the end of the discussions of both Ideas Exchange events, these findings can be seen to inform and to shape the subsequent review of the literature. The sequence of elements is as follows:

- (i) Background And Commissioning Process
- (ii) Event Outline
- (iii) First Contact With The Participants
- (iv) Making Connections Across The Group
- (v) Problem Definition
- (vi) Ideation
- (vii) Energy and Mood
- (viii) Outputs and Testing
- (ix) Peer Review
- (x) Close

While the narrative of the following events is written in the third-person observer mode, the footnote convention for the practice reflections will appear as a first-person colloquial commentary. Within this section footnotes appear in larger font in order to aid the integration of narrative and commentary.

3.2 Ideas Exchange 1

3.2.1 Background and Commissioning Process

This first event of what became a series of four was commissioned by a UK academic as part of an EPSRC funded programme of activities to take place over two, non-residential, days. Professor A had previously attended an intensive, five-day Sandpit⁸ facilitated by another facilitator team and in describing what had worked for her at her Sandpit experience, what had not worked and why she was talking to someone new about designing something for her own university, a clear indication emerged of key points of agreement, disagreement, and ways we might approach this new relationship and this new event. For Professor A, a speed-dating session had been a success at the Sandpit, but less successful for her had been what she saw as the repetitive and entirely predictable use of post-its.⁹ Also, she was concerned that the lack of pastoral support throughout her event had led to: *‘So many of them leaving at the end of that long week without any funding, on their knees with exhaustion, and honestly, I was concerned about them driving home’*. She was determined that any collaborative processes *she* was involved with

8. On their website, EPSRC state ‘Sandpits are residential interactive workshops over five days involving 20-30 participants; the director, a team of expert mentors, and a number of independent stakeholders. Sandpits have a highly multidisciplinary mix of participants, some active researchers and others potential users of research outcomes, to drive lateral thinking and radical approaches to address research challenges.’ At this stage Creative Exchange had designed and delivered six Sandpits.

9. This may not sound like much of an insight but as a facilitator who doesn’t use post-its, this was encouraging.

would better protect people from such fall-out.¹⁰ The Ideas Exchange as it was named at that first discussion, also needed to promote cross-disciplinary conversations and introduce methods of successful collaborating to generate new ideas, so the following objectives were agreed:

1. Find a common language
2. Encourage collaborative conversations
3. Come up with some innovative ideas
4. Test the ideas a bit

The next commissioner reassurance requirement involved identifying a through-line upon which to hang a raft of processes that could be developed or adapted during the Ideas Exchange to deliver something approximating to Professor A's idea of a successful Sandpit, but condensed into 2 days.

3.2.2 Event Outline

For this event, there were elements that could be borrowed from the Sandpit model but not many, and they would all it was clear, have to be adapted significantly to enable them to fit the restricted time frame. This resulted in the identification of the following sequence of six, essential, core threads that were agreed as the warp of the fabric of the event through which the weft could emerge:

10. Professor A also exhibited significant caution at this meeting and repeatedly asked what would happen at each stage of the event. So insistent was she on knowing some of the yet undefined detail that I suggested she might be better advised to work with the company that delivered the Sandpit she had attended. It is my experience that an anxious commissioner who wants to know in advance what will be happening at every single moment, guarantees that we are not going to produce something wonderful together. In fact the success of the outcome is probably inversely proportionate to the levels of trust it is possible to establish at the very earliest encounter, and trust has no chance if not rooted in absolute honesty. Professor A responded to my suggestion of working with someone else by revealing that although she was not comfortable with her lack of control of the process, she felt that Creative Exchange was nonetheless the right delivery fit for this project, stating that she knew she needed to be taken out of her areas of comfort and ease with this project. As is so often the case with commissioners, nurturing her confidence through this process was another facilitation task in itself.

- Fun
- Developing the group, the task teams and the ideas in parallel, to build research teams that will sustain each other beyond the Ideas Exchange.
- Managing the divergence/convergence tipping point.
- Integrating the Mentors into the process throughout through both the design and facilitation, to ensure the academic advisors add significant value to the proposals through objective assessment.
- Designing a peer review process.
- High levels of energy management and an inclusive process end-point.

Other commissioner expectations requiring negotiation were that the event would begin in the standard way with the rules of engagement – housekeeping, health and safety etc. – before any encounters took place, and that as participants arrived, they would be welcomed and reassured with a detailed information pack and a name badge.¹¹ Also at this stage there was an expectation that each and every encounter would begin and end with the group assembling in a seated circle configuration.¹²

A subsequent reassurance meeting was required at which the criteria for seed-funding the generated ideas, and the collaborative group composition rules were discussed. This meeting also enabled the issue of over-preparing the participants with packs and badges to be discussed at length before Professor A felt, reluctantly, able to embrace a different approach to the start-of-the-day.¹³ This discussion was uncomfortable since we had no theoretical

11. I work against reliance on name badges since I encourage participants to engage more meaningfully with each other by learning and using the names of their colleagues from the start. So while using badges where their use makes sense, I feel it is not helpful to introduce them until some work has been done to embed names, and only then if the introduction of the badges in turn reinforces people's knowledge of each other through a badge-exchanging interaction of some sort.

12. It is the case that people seem firmly wedded to notions of process and ways of working with little experience or understanding of their purpose or impact. This kind of circle has never felt like a good fit for the work I do for so many reasons. I don't sit when I work, so standing in a circle of seated people would feel very strange and its psychotherapeutic resonance would never feel appropriate for my participant engagement style. I do create opportunities for individual and group reflection but not in the 'share it with the group' sort of way, unless sharing it with the group is the very purpose of the process.

13. This is important because while the EPSRC funding rules say that research teams at these events have to be a balance of core EPSRC disciplines and life sciences, the practical implications of this mean that if that does not evolve in the natural scheme of things, this can involve a great deal of intensive late process social engineering.

underpinning to draw upon to add a more robust defence to that of hunches born out by experience. This uneasy and unsettling process did nonetheless enable the consolidation of the trust gains made at the initial meeting, when tiny incremental glimpses of how the two days might actually *feel*, were introduced. This served to overcome Professor A's need explicitly to hear descriptions of exactly how the days would *look* on paper. This distinction was key at this stage and relates to attempts to convey textural meaning that might resonate with her aspirations for the event. The final meeting, at the venue, was attended by the mentors when Professor A, was joined by Professors B, C and D and at which a facilitator-provided-overview of the role requirements of the mentors was welcomed by the team.¹⁴ The applications to the Ideas Exchange were discussed to create the best possible multi-disciplinary group of sixteen from the available pool.¹⁵ Catering and room-use logistics were

14. We work to ensure the design and facilitation integrates the mentors into the process throughout, so that they can significantly add value to the proposals, as well as offer objective assessment. The role of the mentors is somewhat different at an event like this to that of a Sandpit; there simply isn't the time either to build the mentor team or to allow for the same meaningful and nurturing levels of scientific input. There were to be four mentors at this event and that demanded effort to engage their interest, confidence, commitment and energy in advance of, and particularly during, the process as it unfolded.

15. As well as the appropriate balance of EPSy and Life Science participants, I hold that the addition of a rogue or maverick element to the group, by the inclusion of participants from wildly unrelated backgrounds, can prove enormously beneficial. This can be achieved with a participant who is not quite a peer but is inordinately keen and energetic, or someone who is from a completely unrelated field with the potential to animate the mix. At previous events we have convinced selection panels (and EPSRC's psychologist) to take risks at this selection stage and put video games designers in with physicists, airport managers in with GPs and bankers with nutritionists. The challenge is fully to integrate the good-looking-rebels-who-play-by-their-own-rules into the group by involving them at every stage so they are not isolated or risk appearing lightweight.

ironed out¹⁶ at the venue – a theatre rehearsal space with a restaurant and promising outside riverside break-out potential, and the team left reasonably content, but still with the trepidation of having only the following outline plan to reassure them.

Day One – Wednesday 4 May 2011		
9.00	Arrivals	
9.30	Welcome, Briefing and Orientation	Homework Review and Welcome
9.45	Introductions	Game designing
10.15	Conversations	Passion and experience colliding. Mentors eavesdropping as they move around the groups without contributing/steering
11.30	Pick up Coffee	
11.45	Mentor profiling and Sustainability Headlines	Carousel of Mentors with members of the group spending time with each of the Mentors in turn
12.15	The Problem	Identifying, sharing and comparing one-line problems
1.00	Lunch	
1.45	Ideas generation with a vengeance	IE/EPSRC Rules Update/Complaints Choir to embed the problems/ Generating Ideas Boards

16. A great deal of thought and effort is invested to ensure the context for facilitation work is as conducive and appropriate as it can be by finding the right space and the right food, to ensure the right ambient temperature and to get an absolute guarantee from the venue that all breaks will happen exactly when they are scheduled so that everyone can use this essential re-fuelling and re-energising time to the very best effect to manage their own energy. I never underestimate the role of the venue, or skimp on venue resources, and I believe it is always worth choosing a venue that can, within available resources, contribute actively towards event objectives. Space and spatial possibilities impact significantly on this work by determining whether I feel or don't feel optimistic about the task and how spontaneous I feel I can be. I know from experience that if the space is not right, and cannot easily be transformed or adapted, it can undermine facilitator confidence and therefore has the potential to bring about the self fulfilling prophecy of sub-prime work. Knowing the venue is planning. And knowing how you might feel in a venue is to me key preparation for working with groups. Inspiration comes from spaces and can inspire processes that fit within them. Often working within the uneasy gap between the known and the unknown requires that the space this work takes place in supports that risk encouraging behaviour from participants. And this venue had a grand piano in the event space so serendipity inspired the idea of the complaints choir.

3.15	Tea	Mentor review of Boards
3.30	Mentor 1:1	Quick sit-down chat for each participant
4.30	Close of day check in	
5.00	Participants Depart	Team debrief and planning update

Day Two – Thursday 5 May 2011		
9.00	Check In	Warm up and re-group
9.40	Re-focussing	Mentor feedback
10.00	The Question	Research Questions/ Clustering /Cross-check
11.15	Coffee	
11.30	Early Proposal Team Time	
12.15	Raw Pitches and Peer Review	Sketch pitches by emerging teams. Fast peer review
12.45	Lunch	
1.30	Team Time & Mentor Feedback	Game raising Mentors update followed by Mentors working with groups as they refine proposals. Idea breaks.
3.15	Presentations	Presentations and responses from the whole group
3.45	Tea	Mentors decision making
4.00	Mentors deliberations	Something to entertain and inform participants while Mentors huddle.
4.30	Results Announced	
4.40	Closing Process	Closing process leaving everyone feeling good and knowing what happens next.
5.00	Close	

This example of a reassuring outline within which processes could evolve in line with objectives and participant need was the event starting point. The following section will explore each stage of this outline plan describing what was expected, what actually happened and what was learned from it.

3.2.3 First Contact with Participants

The plan for this opening session was for the participants, who for the most part had not previously met each other, to begin to make contact in pairs, then different pairs, to build toward a seamless shared understanding of what was important to them, how their lives had led them to that point, and how their scientific specialism could contribute to the collaborative potential of this event. Participants were taken, Noah's Ark style in these initial pairs, from the theatre foyer where they were enjoying good coffee and good pastries,¹⁷ up two flights of stairs to where the first session would begin. The most unlikely pairs were carefully assembled, who, as they were walking upstairs, were already attempting to balance bags, laptops, coffee cups and clumsy handshakes.¹⁸ In the event space pairs were steered towards chairs carefully set¹⁹ away from other pair discussions. Each pair was briefed to share and discuss the homework image and article they had brought with them in response to the pre-event brief.²⁰ It was always the case that the new pair arrived at the door together, but were separated in order to keep creating new pairs from the disassembled existing ones. When the last pair had been absorbed into the

17. This is about evidencing quality standards at the first point of contact. By then, as well as all of the other elements of setting the space and moving the furniture, I had also checked the loos.

18. This pairing of people had involved eagle-eyed observations as they arrived – not just in the sense of who might know whom, and who clearly knew nobody – but also, who was obviously 'up for it' and who was hoping to find a back row they could sit on for two days, with their coat draped on the back of their chair as a barrier.

19. I think of space and the way it can be configured almost as a co-facilitator, using changes of seating configuration or direction not just for comfort, focus and emphasis, but, critically, to manage group energy.

20. Homework brief: Please spend no more than twenty minutes locating one image and one headline from recent media that you believe will make interdisciplinary working a particular challenge for you over the two days of the Sustainability Ideas Exchange. Please bring the image and the article with you and remember, 21 minutes would be too long for this task. Thank you.

room it was time to assemble the whole group and elicit one word from each of the pairs to sum up where they had arrived at in their discussions.²¹ Clearly, this introduction sequence had been agreed in advance, but as a format, it had emerged in the commissioner conversation as a way of challenging the start-in-a-circle proposal. It is described here as an example of an improvised format design at the pre-event stage.

3.2.4 Connections Across The Group

It is necessary on occasion to access materials or resources that can share the facilitation role or afford some facilitation thinking time. On this occasion, it has been discussed that the group might benefit from props, supplied to them in such a way as to be ill-defined and flexible in their application. What had been prepared in advance therefore was a set of sealed and differently composed bags of assorted objects sourced mostly from found, random but interesting objects as the starting point for the next process.

Fast Game Designing

Four teams were assembled²² and each team briefed to come back in five minutes having used any or all of the objects in the bag to invent a game that could be demonstrated to the other teams. The game needed to represent quick consensus within the team in response to the question of what they were finding interesting at that moment. This was a deliberately vague brief, designed to create enough space for either a personal or a professional interpretation of the word 'interesting'. After exactly five minutes (with a dramatic countdown towards the end to fuel the feedback) each group demonstrated their game. This was a fast, high-energy activity and one that created positive energy in the room. In the time available it had not been possible to create a thing of beauty or of immense insight so there was very

21. The words were predictably 'reassured', 'frustrated', 'intrigued' or 'interested' depending upon how far into the conversations the different pairs had managed to get with the last person they had spoken to.

22. I always try to think of ways to create groups and teams in a way that animates the process and makes it easier for people to leave the comfort of one grouping to move to the challenge of another.

little pressure on the groups. As a result of this limited risk there was a universal play-for-laughs as each team demonstrated²³ or played, or involved everyone in the playing of their games, to much facilitator orchestrated applause.²⁴ Finding out who everyone was followed the 'games' sharing and extended the goodwill across and around the group as it enabled the use of what had been 'designed' and demonstrated to extract and embed names.²⁵

Further connections were consolidated across the group as the naming led seamlessly to three-way focussed conversations. This pre-designed process was imported at this stage for two reasons: (i) it followed a changing pairs exercise and two high-energy full group encounters and it felt that at least some people would welcome an opportunity to recover their energy and (ii) because of a last minute non-appearance, the participant group was unexpectedly divisible by three and so this process offered a seamless arithmetical fit. This is an example of the importation and adaptation of a previously designed process since this format was invented in the moment, but not this particular moment. It emerged at an earlier event, but is easy to call into service when the challenge and the participant numbers are

23. The idea of making and demonstrating is of course a standard trick of group warm-ups. What is interesting is how it is delivered, what its demonstration purpose is and critically, what is then done with the energy and goodwill that is generated.

²⁴ On this occasion we had a football related game, one focusing on an innovative recycling scheme, one about managing multiple priorities (I remember coloured cotton reels representing some kind of academic LETS scheme) and something that was engaging enough to make us all laugh uproariously but I can't remember why because of course it was the laughing that mattered, not what we were laughing about.

25. There is something of a ceremony about naming I feel. I need to do it for my own purposes and so I attempt to do it in such a way as to embed at least some of the names for the participants as well. The names 'ceremony' has another key purpose of course; it provides real insight into how people are feeling just at that moment, and a sense of their preferred learning style in the way that they volunteer their name. This is invaluable intelligence, and the single most significant guide to how subsequently to engage with each person. Links are then made across and around the group to arrive at the point where they are either laughing, in which case I have somewhere to go with them next, or are visibly exhibiting levels of discomfort, in which case I have to re-lay the track and fill in some gaps before feeling confident that we can move forward together.

appropriate.²⁶ For successful Trialogues like this, each participant is asked to think about something they are passionate about or an issue that concerns them, or a question they want an answer to – whatever is appropriate for the particular group. After a few moments thinking time a word limit is introduced – 25 is focussing, 50 too loose a frame – and each person is given a card upon which to capture their 25 words or so. Two facilitators (or at least a supportive colleague) are necessary at this stage, because, once completed, these cards²⁷ need to be sorted very quickly into three sets. Mitigating duplication, the cards need to be displayed in three separate walls of the event space so that these card groups, once displayed, can more easily relate to discrete timeframes to signal what will happen next.

The briefing for this process needs to be clear and coherent²⁸ or chaos²⁹ will ensue. Participants are invited to sign their name on two of the cards or to add a name sticker to the cards if these have been prepared.³⁰ And these cards have to be in triologue sets that the card they wrote on does not appear in. People choose the triologue they will attend by reading the anonymous statements and adding their name to what engages them most at that moment.

Considerable opportunity exists for fun at this stage as the briefing is embedded in the theatre of getting each of the cards to contain no more than

26. For Trialogues to work seamlessly the group size has to be divisible by 3 and everyone must want to engage. And since they won't know what they are about to engage with, getting the first contact and the making of connections right is key. It is often possible to ascribe a provocateur role to a facilitator if the group number is one short, but mostly I would suggest that if you cannot divide the group equally into 3, do something else. This of course means that such an exercise can never be absolutely planned in advance but can comfortably languish within a repertoire of possible processes that can be imported or adapted.

27. These are referred to as passion cards because encouraging passion at this stage seems helpful.

28. There is something about this process briefing that means that some people do not listen or only half listen and it invariably produces some very positive energy in the room as people are eased into the three-person configurations. And since its shape and form have morphed substantially on each of the occasions it has been used, the facilitators need to remain on their toes.

29. Chaos can be a valuable resource within this context as it can be an energiser when managed in the interests of the participants, particularly as a focus for the un-facilitated discussions that need to be fuelled as part of the triologue process.

30 ... and they had not been on this occasion.

two names. Then, and it is only at that point, it is explained, that each of these sets represents a time frame and that each card will promote an intense three-way discussion driven by the person who wrote the card. As each triologue set begins, the card owner collects the passion card and the two people who have signed their names on it³¹ as they locate their trio somewhere comfortable for the agreed period of time. The card owners are strongly directed to drive these discussions to get the most out of the two people they are talking to. The discussions, propelled by what was written on the original passion card, use available time until an outcome or an insight emerges from all three. This is captured on new output cards.

There are always three iterations of the process; three opportunities for every participant to engage in an intensive three-way triologue with different people. With everyone having an opportunity to drive their own discussion. At the start of each iteration everyone is brought back together for the card owners to collect the cards in the new set, and to discover who they are going to spend time with next. This is a tightly held and satisfying participant experience³² that also enables facilitators to gather insights from the start about what really matters to each of the individuals present.³³

At the end of the dialogues it is necessary to check in with people's discussions and to check what the value of the exercise was for them, before moving on, which in this case involved carouselling groups around each of the

31. Often fascinatingly revealing in terms of the enthusiasm or disappointment that is displayed when people see who wrote the card that now has their own name on it, and who they have now unwittingly allied themselves to.

³² Providing something of an amnesty that guarantees that since each and every participant has the opportunity to focus on themselves and what really matters to them at the start, much less distraction from people pushing their pet projects later on is encountered.

33. This process is enormously revealing for both facilitators and mentors, as both parties wander around eavesdropping. It is also invaluable for participants who gain very quick insights into how it might be to imagine working with these people as part of a research team.

mentors who had been quickly positioned in separate areas of the venue.³⁴ This carouselling ensured that the morning had been productively spent focussing the participants on (i) checking out who was in the room (ii) what really mattered to them and (iii) how the experience and commitment of the people who were there to support them could contribute to the development of surprising new ideas. And critically, to keep the mentors happy and feeling like they knew what was happening.

3.2.5 Problem definition

For the problem definition phase of the event (which at a Sandpit can take a day and a half) a mechanism needed to be found through which participants could focus quickly on the issues they wanted to address within the broad Ideas Exchange topic of Sustainability. It was also necessary to continue and to accelerate the personal interactions necessary for the collaborative success of this event. At the venue visit the serendipitous physical presence of a grand piano inspired the idea of using a complaints choir format to animate this process.³⁵ Engaging participants in music, voice or sound-based work is a powerful participant experience requiring professional musical directors with sensitivity to people's anxieties.³⁶ A new MD was solicited for this purpose, new to the facilitators and new to this proposed way of working. And he needed to be persuaded to attempt this challenge.

34. Precisely who is moved around is an interesting decision that has to be intuited and people invariably see it as an exercise in logic. If there are 4 people to move, or 16 people to move, logic would suggest the former would be easier to achieve. This is not only about logic however, since the moving can also be used as a means of bringing some air into a situation. The larger group can benefit from the move, but on other occasions the individual mentor or contributor is more advantaged by changing their perspective through a changed location. And of course time and the proximity of spaces needs to be considered in the moment as well. On this occasion it felt like the mentors were in good shape, keen to contribute in their own right, so the participants were corralled around the space.

35. There are a number of complaints choirs around the world where form being matched by content brings about a deadpan delivery.

36. This is because the singers should sound the very best that they can. Of course the risk of engaging in a singing activity needs to be balanced by the payoff of not looking, sounding or feeling foolish so I would only work with an experienced MD or animateur who really understands this.

The task was discussed with the MD in one short phone call: the facilitator would spend 45 minutes working with the group to synthesise the morning's work. The 45 minutes would, it was hoped, produce a number of outline Sustainability research problems, each captured in one-line. It was anticipated that this would be challenging because at this stage the participants would not be ready to do this, but the timeframe determined that they must. Also, everyone would be cautious about committing to identifying problem statements unless those statements felt like real problems that they would want to leave the event having addressed. A careful balance was needed to capture a meaningful output at this stage that still had enough air left in it to propel the ideas forward after lunch.³⁷

After lunch the group appeared back in the room, were introduced to the MD and he immediately engaged them in twenty minutes of pop-up choir building magic, with scales, sound games, rounds, and jingles until he revealed the song lyrics to them; within which of course, each participant recognised something they had written. He then conducted them in three attempts at singing the song. In total he was with the group for thirty-five minutes. There was no time to introduce new music into the mix as well, so the MD conducted the singing to the European anthem, Beethoven's familiar *Ode to Joy*. Their delivery dead-pan, and full of complaint as they had been directed, the participants were now energised, exhilarated, a bit skittish some of them, but with a real interest in what might happen next.³⁸

37. And I didn't want the participants to know about what was going to happen to the one-liners because that I felt that would have adversely influenced their contributions being intimidated by the idea of writing lyrics. The participants went into lunch at just about the moment the MD arrived, just in time for a frenetic update and some swift choreography of the one-liner problem flash cards that had been written on by the participants. The MD then spent thirty minutes pulling the flash cards together to produce the lyric sequence punctuated with what looked like fridge poetry.

38. There is often a powerful cathartic eruption at the end of something like this. People are very focussed on the task – some concerned, some confident, some frankly terrified – but when it is over and they experience the collective high of having completed the task it is a triumph for all concerned.

3.2.6 Ideation

A significant gear change was necessary now, enabling the participants to draw on everything they had engaged in so far, to focus on achieving the critical divergence/convergence leap. These processes move so quickly and depend entirely on the rate of progress of the individuals and the ideas and the mood and energy of the group, that they really do have to evolve in the moment. This is design on the hoof; design improvisation. It is these spaces between what happens where the real facilitation takes place – where group texture and tone and mood inform what the facilitator says and does.

Such an example of this was inspired by the fact that there were equal numbers of core EPSRC people and life scientists in the group it felt like we could stage – literally stage – a dialogue between them. On their feet and corralled to stand in two close-proximity clumps – one containing the EPSRC disciplines and the other the life scientists, they found themselves facing each other across a gap of several metres with no idea what was about to happen next, or why. Explicitly establishing that they were prepared to take a risk, the context was provided for the risk-taking by encouraging each group of eight to huddle even closer to each other in each of their clumps.³⁹ They were directed⁴⁰ to all speak spontaneously, all at the same time, without consulting within their groups on what they would say. Questions were asked and answered about discipline perspectives producing slowly enunciated questions like ‘why-are-you-here?’ and ‘what-is-life-science-anyway?’ and answers like ‘because-the-coffee-is-better’ and ‘I-wish-I-knew’. This seemingly pointless distraction has the capacity to contribute to the layers and texture of what is generated when ideas are returned to, constantly refined and new opportunities are created for people to engage and reflect on what they are thinking about. The

39. Enforced physical proximity is notoriously risky which is why it needs to be made as safe as possible. I remain haunted by an exercise at a conference warm-up in 1991 when delegates were asked to smell the hands of a person we were paired with, were then blindfolded and had to find partners again by a process of hand-smelling elimination.

40. And in this exercise it really did feel like directing actors.

key was that by then the room was full of, largely,⁴¹ happy people and therefore they could be pushed much harder in the challenging next stage.⁴²

3.2.7 Energy and Mood

A consistent thread that had run through the day as a leitmotif was the creation of individual Ideas Boards. This meant that by the end of the afternoon the participants had been capturing their thoughts, questions, and diagrammatic representations of emerging problems and ideas. Each person then finished the day by taking their boards into a mentor 1:1 in which they jointly reviewed what was emerging in terms of issues and ideas. The Ideas Boards proved useful also, because they ensured the emerging outputs remained visual. This enabled an appropriate shared overnight reflective task to be crafted that would seem to them to be both relevant and useful.⁴³

3.3.8 Outputs and Testing

After encouraging participants to update their Boards as they arrived, Day 2 began with a promenade around the boards to see what had developed overnight in response to the reflective task. This was followed by mentors issuing a call to arms encouraging continued risk-taking and inventiveness on day two.

41. Of course things like this are never going to be everybody's cup of tea. What is important is to ensure that those people are not exposed in any way, that what is suggested will always offer them safe places to hide, or to take a step back, and that if enough people are engaged, their positive energy will influence the others even if the process itself left them quite cold. Also, timing is critical, as is the need for lightness of touch. Such a thing as described here should not take up more than a couple of minutes, so that the participants who enjoy it will be happy to be presented with more, and the ones who don't will know that, although unpleasant, it will not last long.

42. The starting point for the design of the interventions at this event that we hoped would replicate in some way the value of downtime activity at a Sandpit, was that there was no time at all. Everything had to be squeezed into and around fragments of time we were stealing from the essential sequence of processes we knew had to happen, in order to deliver the key objectives.

43. The brief was to think about what might be different if they thought about dramatically changing the scale of whatever was emerging for them so far.

Cross-checking

For the larger part of the rest of the day the group focussed on looking at their own and their colleagues' ideas boards, working in ever changing pairings and small groups to deconstruct these ideas and to locate the core, the essence or glimpse of something which might have the potential to become something significant. These key components elements of the shattered embryonic ideas were repeatedly reconfigured into new idea formations.⁴⁴

Throughout the event, although rushed, this mentor group excelled at observing where socio-scientific⁴⁵ engineering needed to take place. They kept the facilitators informed of these concerns so that through the continual use of the tactics of frustration brought about by extracting individuals from groups which were starting to feel like teams to them and sending them off to talk to someone they had very little interest in speaking to, could be seen to have real scientific benefit.⁴⁶ It was through all of these processes that emerging ideas were facilitated and encouraged into good enough shape for people to be confident to pitch them in outline form.

44. This is, I think, the hardest part of this facilitation work as it is entirely intuitive and can of course go terribly wrong and lead off in all sorts of unhelpful directions. There is a real risk that in breaking an embryonic idea down, some of its essential DNA gets lost and never returns. In an ideal process this wouldn't happen because good will always out, but this was never going to be an ideal process, simply because of the time available and because so much had to be forced in order to progress.

45. The skill of the facilitator is about people and processes but the success of idea building is frequently dependent upon a finely nuanced element of science, or access to kit, and that is simply not information that is available to facilitators. It is essential therefore that the custodians of the scientific possibilities keep their eyes and ears peeled for opportunities or gaps. Equally essential is that the facilitator remains the mediator of such matching as the holders of the space in which the encounters need to be nurtured and managed at the individual and group level, often by stealth.

46. A frustratingly quick process but we tell everybody that first. This is focussed on peer review and challenge. We give a final push to a team to absolutely finish what they are doing and then we make them stop. The stop is I think important. This cross-check shouldn't happen at an arbitrary moment but at the point when the emerging team feels as good as it can about what it is producing within the time available. We then identify someone or ask for a volunteer from each group depending on how they feel, and give that person the brief to move from their own team into another, to significantly change what is emerging in the other team by removing or adding something from the sum of the team's thinking at that stage. No ifs or buts. We leave them long enough quickly to grasp what is being developed in the new team, and just long enough to make their change, before sending them back to where they came from. Each team now employs the Accept/Reject option before we let them resume where they were before. We have never measured these accept/reject responses in any reliable way but we have a tacit rule of co-facilitation, which, if stated, would say something like 'If a process that feels that unwelcome does not produce enough occasional gems of real insight, don't put people through it'. On this occasion I cannot recall what changed but remember that something did.

3.2.9 Peer Review

Sketch Pitches

At this stage any pitching is necessarily raw, but it nonetheless needs to be focussed. Participant teams were given a rigid format: two people, no more than one flipchart sheet and they could only respond to questions to determine clarity of concept. This tight rein was to establish where the embryonic teams were in their thinking, not to provide an opportunity to contribute further to it, there simply was not time. A segue into a testing phase followed in which a fast but effective means of capturing responses to the ideas took place in order to give clear messages about what to invest time and effort into and what to jettison to make space for new ideas, or perhaps the re-emergence of earlier idea formations.

Fast Peer Review

Sandpit peer review is very much EPSRC dictated with little room for flexibility. EPSRC and the other research councils had always insisted, not unreasonably in view of the amount of funding they distribute at these events - somewhere in the region of £5million - that the process of reviewing each of the ideas as they emerged, was as comprehensive and robust as possible. This involved voting iterations and opportunities to identify 'concerns' and 'builds' in parallel to the plenary reviews. At this event there would be minutes rather than hours to achieve this and so a meaningful mechanism needed to be developed to achieve that. A fast voting system to add to the single flipchart sheets from the sketch pitches was the obvious solution, and so simple transparent sticker icons were printed in advance to create a suite of determinants with which to equip each participant quickly to contribute their responses to the emerging ideas in the categories of:

- Multidisciplinary
- Innovation
- Adventurousness
- Novelty
- Impact
- Wow factor

- Self interest

Although the stickers were designed in advance, on this occasion their use was customised with only five of the categories introduced, one of which was used more strategically as an exceptional limited vote, because in its use, it was seen that the sticker format could be adapted to better contribute to a clear visual story.

The final pitches were more formal presentations – twenty minutes for each team to pitch and to respond to questions invited from everyone in the room – mentors *and* participants.

3.2.10 Close

Reviewing, Entertaining, Distracting and Ending Well

The mentors retreated to make their funding decisions and until they returned the whole group were engaged in a review of the two days. With content generated by the group themselves, there was a whole group tableaux series capturing the highs and lows of the event, a *Learn something about my discipline* quiz, and an awards ceremony at which the participants, working in teams of three, identified a number of award categories, nominations and winners, and sourced suitable prizes from around the building. The awards ceremony was concluding with a great surge of energy just as the mentors returned to the rehearsal room to announce their thoughts and their funding decisions.

Ending well, and bringing efforts and experiences into land is a key requirement of any facilitated process. For this event it had also been an explicit requirement of the commissioner. This, she was relieved, had been achieved, and certainly the positive energy sustained as those receiving funding began making their plans to meet again to work on their projects and those who hadn't, were steered towards other sources of support through the

wider provisions of the funding initiative.⁴⁷

Participants scored the event, as they left, in terms of value for their time (VFT on a 1low/10high) scale with the aggregated score of the 16 participants being 8.4.⁴⁸

3.2.11 Summary

What the event reflection can offer this study is the opportunity to consider experience assumptions, insights, clues and behaviours that informed the decision-making throughout the event, particularly those which took place in the spaces between the described processes and which brought about their selection or adaptation. The most significant of these would appear to signal the need to:

- Invest time to build the trust necessary to reassure the commissioner and the other members of the delivery team.
- Be explicit with the group about the fluid nature of the event as it will unfold and to enlist their engagement on that basis.
- Engage with the group and the space in an early energy-building task and subsequently to use this energy as a resource.
- Respond flexibly and creatively to participant need and challenge.
- Demonstrate progress and test the robustness of what is emerging through establishing thresholds of understanding.
- Successfully and inclusively bringing everything and everyone to a satisfactory conclusion.

The second event will now be outlined in ways in which it will be possible to establish the extent to which these initial assumptions will be confirmed or challenged by the second iteration of this process.

47. One of the ideas we had come up with was the introduction of 'innovation currency'. This currency was distributed to participants who had attended, to be used after the event, to access time with any or all of the mentors present or to buy small units of project development time to take advantage of, for example, travel or shadowing opportunities.

48. The actual scores were 10/10/10/10/9.5/ 9/ 9/ 9/ 9/ 8.5/ 8.5/ 8/ 8/ 8/ 8/ 3 and 2. The 2 score may have been because they hated it or may have been because they inverted the scale. The scoring was anonymous by means of picking up numbered cards on leaving and dropping them in a box so we shall never know.

SECTION ONE

Background and Starting Points

Initial Reflections on Practice

3.3 Ideas Exchange 2

3.3.1 Background and Commissioning Process

The second event in what became a series of five, four months later and with a different, larger participant group, provided an opportunity once again to consider these practice assumptions. At the end of the second event it was clear that a greater emphasis was being placed on the elements of changing gear and pace, the reasons for which it is hoped the description that follows will evidence.

The second Ideas Exchange came about directly as a result of the success of the first. The seed-funded projects had proven to be successful, in terms of the quality of the ideas, the extent of cross-departmental interactions that resulted from them, and the fact or the likelihood of them leveraging more substantial funding. The topic of event 2 was Systems and Life⁴⁹ and in our pre-event planning discussion my co-facilitator and I had decided to play more of a joint delivery role than had been the case at the first Ideas Exchange. In fact we were going against eleven years of playing to our strengths in a

49. From the flyer: 'Life systems can be investigated and modelled at radically different scales, from the ecosystem of the whole planet, down to the systems biology of individual proteins within cells. The Systems and Life theme incorporates research into each element of life as well as its interconnected systems. The programme aims to support interdisciplinary research collaborations with an emphasis on mathematics and modeling'.

deliberate decision to move each of us out of our respective comfort zones⁵⁰ to bring about what we hoped would be productive creative discomfort on both sides of the room⁵¹. It was planned that M would deliver more of the interactive sessions and I would play more of the reflective role.⁵² This has been tried before and had proved effective at different stages of an event, but early on day one we both knew that it was not working. The energy in the room was not dynamic and so, at the earliest possible opportunity, we reverted to our normal facilitation roles for the rest of the event.⁵³

3.3.2 Event Outline

This event had a completely different set of mentors to the ones with whom relationships had been built previously and Professor A was not able to attend. Such were the trust gains of the first event however that much less was required to convince this new group how the Ideas Exchange might work; nobody was asking for a moment-by-moment account anymore, so it was possible to produce a very loose frame that felt more possible, freely to improvise within. This *very* outline plan produced for the mentors appeared as follows:

50. We have built our facilitation partnership quite literally on the differences between us. M is a serious Scot whose trajectory to facilitation moved through scientific publishing and business. He is thoughtful, intelligent, inventive and clear, and he prefers things to be planned, considered and ordered; inventiveness and creative risk taking when it is rooted in robust theoretical underpinning. I have emerged from theatre, the arts and the maverick encouraging environment of 1980s and 90s local government arts and cultural industries and am energised when lurking on creative precipices; inventing in the moment. Also, because I feel confident working in this way, I believe (in that moment at least) that there are always other ways to work with a group that can spontaneously be generated to overcome any shortcomings of the last idea. It is because, rather than despite these differences of approach, that M and I work together; we respect each other enormously and we are honest about how we feel at every stage.

51 This is one of those risky strategies but which is frequently required in order to avoid slumping into complacency.

52. This idea of gravitas is best described by the 'Dimpleby' shorthand we have developed for those moments.

53. This is another one of those intangible responses in which we 'read' the energy in some way. There are obvious signs of course - levels of engagement is perhaps an obvious one - but there is also a sound, a hum or a texture which changes the balance of the air in the room somehow.

	DAY ONE		DAY TWO
8.30	Arrivals		
	Welcome, Briefing and Orientation		Check in, refocusing, the questions
	Introductions		
	The connections		
11.30	Coffee		
11.45	Mentor positioning		The teams
	Machine interactions		The early pitch
1.00	Lunch		
1.45	The context		Team time/ Mentor feedback
	The ideas		Presentations
3.15	Tea/ Mentor review of progress so far		
3.30	Mentor 1:1 Focus on their inputs and outcomes		Mentor decision making/ Distraction
	Check out		The results
5.00	Close		The end

3.3.3 First Contact with the Participants

Objects of reference

For this event we did not plan a pre-event task and instead in-situ invited participants, when they had arrived and before the start of the formal sessions, to source objects from the vicinity of the venue and to bring the object with them into the room as we started the day. The brief for the search

was to find an object that would reflect or symbolise the worst thing that could happen in the two days. What followed was a very fast ‘show and tell’ in which each participant introduced their object in relation to the catastrophe they wanted to avoid. We had an empty glass signaling the absence of conviviality, a banana – the concern that there would be no food or the wrong food and a hat reinforcing their unwillingness to engage in any role-play. One person stood next to a fire extinguisher for obvious reasons, and another used a clock to animate concern at being bored. M delivered this session and it is discussed here because of decisions that were subsequently made. Any opening session is an essential way in which, at the start of the event, the facilitators gain some insight into the individuals and how they like to work.⁵⁴ This way of establishing expectations and conventions felt like a more energising way of engaging with what is frequently perceived as a turgid task participants have done so many times before.

It was clear that something wasn’t working – the texture⁵⁵ just was not right. There is something about the physics of space in these situations that is tangible but impossible to describe so the notion of ‘energy’⁵⁶ serves as a shorthand communication. As a result of the normal facilitation roles being reverted to for the next stage, a very quick means of creating some of the

54. This is entirely intuitive but it is of course supported by many examples of such intuitive responses and the everyday noticing of body language means that it is relatively easy, quickly to assess how people are feeling. This is further informed by an understanding of status and space that comes from working with actors. On this occasion what was interesting was that M was running the first two sessions and I was really surprised by how this disconnect from direct involvement in the process had impacted on my ability to make those judgements. M was taking responsibility for moving the group through the different show-and-tells, leaving me free to observe, and yet I felt I knew very much less about them at the end of it. It confirmed to me that there is a real difference between observing these processes and intervening in and choreographing them. M and I decided to revert to the normal facilitator roles we play, largely because while I felt I knew very much less about the participants as an observer, M felt *he* knew about the same as he would have done as an observer. We further discussed the fact that this sense of connectedness was much more necessary (I would argue, essential) to me than he felt it was to him. This clearly links directly into our learning preferences.

55. Texture is perhaps a strange word here but it is more than tone or mood. It is almost to do with a kind of surface tension that changes the way the air settles on the group.

56. And certainly not at the ‘lift-off’ level we would want at the start of the day. If I were to draw an energy-line running through the day I would want it to build slowly from the moment people arrived for the first forty-five minutes or so, and then to level out. That way I would feel that there was enough ‘fuel’ to set the participants off on their own without losing them.

absent start-up energy was required. What followed was the fastest possible get-to-know-everybody encounter that could be grasped at to achieve that purpose. And it emerged in that moment, although clearly contains elements – in format if not delivery – of established warm-up activities.

3.3.4 Connections Across The Group

Common speed

Participants were briefed to create pairs to identify something they had in common, and then after a minute, or seconds, new pairs were formed until enough iterations had enabled everyone to have spoken to everybody else until what they had in common had been heard without any topic repeats being allowed.⁵⁷ To enable 20 people to engage in these pairings with everyone else in the room took about 14 frenetic minutes.⁵⁸ It was the pairings that were the mechanism for this activity but it was the facilitator/group interactions that provided the insights and the energy.

3.3.5 Problem Definition

Connections map

Instead of the dialogues of the first event a looser consultation model seemed the best way to proceed with this group. And instead of identifying their passion in 25 words and the anonymity of the dialogue sign ups, each participant pitched the equivalent of their passion statements hustings style, in order to attract people to their topic. This produced quite different outcomes

57. Which inevitably provided much resource material for the rest of the event.

58. This was really duplicating the get-to-know-you elements of the objects of reference exercise and this seems essential before I feel that I 'know' the participants enough, or have enough of a working sense of them to build the rest of the processes around. And that is the key I think – building around them. I have to feel some sense of who I am putting with whom, and who, until later maybe, I need to keep separate from whom. The only thing I think I can equate this to, is perhaps bread making. To make good bread it is essential to feel – not just see – the texture of the dough before being sure that the balance of ingredients, fermentation and kneading will work. And the temperature of ingredients, like the temperature and mood of participants is key.

from the anonymised triologue pitching; people knew who they would be spending time with, and in many ways that is not helpful so early in the process.⁵⁹ It is advantageous however, in the sense that it was possible, early and quickly, to observe what people found engaging. As a result of this transparency it was possible to construct four different constellations of related connectedness by ‘sorting’⁶⁰ the passion cards into four discrete piles. And then it made sense that four separated areas of the space provided the orientation points of a connections map then referred to as north, south, east and west. This compass context was helpful both for providing clarity and animation during that particular exercise, but also because repeating the convention enabled the seamless movement of people during the next ninety minutes to engage with new constellations through instructions like ‘someone from the west move north’. Because these iterations worked well, and people were fully engaged in the moving and re-starting of these conversations and negotiations,⁶¹ the spatial coordinates were pushed still further with the session ending with differently configured groupings of their original passions, physically located in the room at NE, SE, SW and NW.⁶²

59. Because they make status driven choices, it would seem that peers are drawn to what they know or know they want to know. This means that in practice, peers and disciplines are drawn to their own or highly compatible disciplines. Even those initial assumptions that people make about the personality and style of their new collaborators, play a part here, with people attracted to their own tribe or to members of aspirational tribes. This is manageable when dealing with a group of peers, but very challenging when attempting to integrate more outlier elements, like the young post-doc who has a great deal to contribute but looks very young, or the character who just doesn’t seem cool within a self regarding group of people who are sure they are. That maybe has something a little of the first day of school about it, with people sizing up not trainers or smartphones, but research institutions and publications in a similar way.

60. Hurling across the room in some very loosely connected order really.

61. By assessing how focussed they were on the task.

62. This proved useful in the double valuing of process outcomes as the day went on and this shorthand emerged to encourage people to embrace new possibilities. We were able to reference thinking to a particular location and encourage, for example, ‘all of this morning’s south west people find someone from the north east to spend a few minutes with’. For some people this works and is helpful, and for some others it is of course their worst nightmare. The watchword is always to use such transition prompts with a very light touch in order not to alienate the people for whom this sort of thing it is just one step too far.

Machine building

In the way we had brought an pre-designed element into the first event with the complaints choir, because the topic of the event was Systems and Life, the idea of building a Rube Goldberg machine⁶³ seemed like a collaborative, systems focussed, practical task that would also be fun before lunch on Day one. Small task teams had to build component sections of the machine that needed to be brought together before the machine could work. A start task was briefed (rolling an egg) and an end task (breaking an egg). The point of the exercise was that all the sections in between needed to be designed and executed in the most complicated, convoluted way imaginable from the point when the first egg was rolled, to the point when the second, was hopefully broken.

For this session forty minutes was allocated although in the end it ran over for reasons that will become obvious. A range of pulleys, tubing, tracks, tools, boards, rope, candles, hose, toy vehicles and random junk was placed in a pile and everyone was left for just less than 30 minutes to negotiate what each small team was going to build within their section of the machine. It was also hoped, but not explicitly briefed,⁶⁴ that communication between the small teams would establish where the points of connection, and therefore the handover of responsibility would be. There were several engineers in the group so within seconds they were on the floor shaping lengths of board and pipe and bending wire to guarantee the success of the machine's first run. They also decided they wanted to video-record the first run. 'First' run is used here because although only one run of the machine had been anticipated and allocated time for, the group had very different ideas when they became involved in the building task.⁶⁵ Like the complaints choir of the first event, after

63. <http://www.rubegoldberg.com>

64. This is always fascinating to observe – the individual or small team focus versus the collaborative big picture approach.

65. I was particularly interested in observing this and so relaxed my usual adherence to facilitator timings to observe this as it unfolded.

the first run of the machine, the machine builders wanted to re-build it to improve its chances of breaking the egg.⁶⁶ Which it then did.

3.3.6 Ideation

This section required an amalgam of many different processes that come together in different ways at different times and on this occasion became a challenge-and-test sequence to put each of the emerging ideas goes through a systematic sequence of contortions. Participants engaged in answering an iterative series of questions about the emerging ideas with their answers timed and weighted. The ten questions on this occasion were:

What is this a bit like?

What is it the opposite of?

How could you change its scale to improve it – make it bigger?
smaller?

What could be an alternative application if you dramatically altered the scale?

If you started this process now what is the first and most obvious thing that would be different?

What might the gains be?

What about the aesthetic of what you're considering? Could it look or feel better

How would you explain this to an inquisitive eleven-year-old?

What is the glaring omission/the missing trick?

What would help you be even ambitious with this right now?

66. It is extraordinary that this consumed only thirty minutes of people's time and yet it mattered to them enormously. This made me think about playfulness when a few weeks later, I was a participant member of a similar group. We were tasked, within a tight time-frame, to construct a beautiful boat to sail on the moat outside the building. I was fascinated by the very serious way my group approached the task and I assumed, in the moment, that this was as a result of our cultural differences. Even with a relatively short time for the task, my group wanted properly to design our boat and to incorporate recognisable elements of nautical engineering into it – there was talk of a rudder and of a tiller – with the task approached by drawing these features on paper. We were, I noted, one of the last groups actually to touch the materials. This was a rare participant insight for me, and even when we did start handling the materials, the focus was – until there was very little time left for the task – laboriously to carve the end of a large piece of polystyrene into the reassuring shape of a boat's prow with a very small craft knife. The precision of this shape really mattered to the group in a way that felt like it was inextricably linked in some way to notions of honour and serious endeavour and maybe even to a sense of their own worth. The Rube Goldberg machine fall-out was like this but in reverse. The Ideas Exchange participants played quite easily with the materials but they wanted to continue to refine and improve the system. Unfortunately for them though, while the previous group's singing and delivery had improved in further iterations of the complaints choir, the group's Rube Goldberg machine got progressively disjointed as they attempted to dismantle, fix and re-set it for a final take, which was never filmed as it quite literally fell apart. And so did they a little.

Such a process provides another built-in frustration that can sometimes produce no discernable gain, but which can on other occasions produce the single most significant transformation of all. On this occasion the exercise was not well received at all⁶⁷ and so the light touch with which it was being applied became even lighter until it segued seamlessly into something people were more receptive to, and which felt to them to be more rooted in purpose and proof of concept.⁶⁸

Because of this there was a deliberate change of gear⁶⁹ and the group were left to look after themselves⁷⁰ while the facilitators withdrew to reflect.

67. The participants just looked puzzled really. They could not comprehend what was being asked of them and more than anything they just wanted and needed a rest from all of these shenanigans.

68. On these occasions one has two choices; to admit defeat and move quickly on or to stick with it for a little while and then introduce a friendlier version of what you are attempting to achieve, this time by stealth, thus making the failing process seem like a prelude to the next. This sounds disingenuous but everything is inevitably a prelude to something else. The judgement to make at those moments is whether it is in the interests of the group to say 'OK let's not do this, this is going nowhere and everyone looks really miserable or bored and I feel really uncomfortable so let's try something else' or to say 'That's a reaction I could reasonably have anticipated here and that leads us right into this....' Both have their value at different times and those decisions are informed by the critical timing of the event. A loss, or a perceived loss of facilitator face can be embraced and managed if that decision, and the subsequent fallout, relates to the group and its needs, and is not just pandering to a bruised ego at the time. This was very late in the day and so loss of face was in danger of becoming entwined with the effects of loss of heart, loss of energy and loss of belief, a negative spiral of reactions definitely to avoid. It seems that this is about maintaining the tautness of the process since it is that tautness of belief that holds everyone together in some sort of trust net. It is not helpful or productive for the net to sag, because then people might start questioning process and seeing the workings out and then it is much more difficult to move people forward as they, at a very visceral level, have a lower expectation of success than they had before. I have made the wrong call before now, and have then struggled to get the group back on track as the self-fulfilling prophecy of awfulness unfolds before my very eyes. I try to avoid that now.

This is I think quite different to an individual within a group not engaging, or the bored individual contaminating all around them in a mexican wave of antipathy towards a facilitator. These states are familiar to facilitators, but the first and most important thing the facilitator should ask in those situations is what is their boredom or loss of interest saying? And what can be done differently as a result of it? Every individual in a group is a litmus paper we should be testing at all times.

69. Changes of gear and pace are essential dimensions of general facilitation practice.

70. There had been many opportunities for them to do this before then of course, but this was us *really* stepping back and providing some critical team time space when it really mattered. Again, this is an important judgement call. It was obvious on this occasion but is not always so clear, that teams, or enough teams, were ready to start focussing on outputs. It is what is frequently referred to as the divergence/convergence tipping point. Managing that tipping point involves holding nerve when all about you want to get on with what they think they are there for. For many people though, their getting-on-with-it preferable would kick in as soon as they had arrived, had a cup of coffee and spoken to the first person they recognise or like the look of. It is often uncomfortable for the facilitator and frustrating for the participants to stop this happening. It is essential though, to get the timing as right as you believe you can get it. And this really is based upon hunches because it is never possible to know anything about the science or the topic and it is quite unusual to have mentors, or the equivalent, at events other than sandpits and events such as this one.

3.3.7 Energy and Mood

Returning to the participants at the point when they were struggling to make sense of the material they had generated up until that moment, it was on that basis that it was possible successfully to re-connect with them. It was also at that stage that the advantage of the intelligence we were receiving from the mentors, enabled the mentors to see, and the facilitators to make explicit, the fact that within their research-idea-teams the participants were struggling because they were focusing on smaller parts of a greater whole. It became clear that everything would make a great deal more sense to them if all of the ideas were aligned and they could see the whole picture more clearly. This was a gift to facilitation process as it meant that after all of the deconstruction and disaggregation of the two days, it was possible, in something of a coup de theatre, to bring all of the characters and all of the narrative back together in time for the final act. That particular process timing, (not the outcome which I feel confident would have been arrived at somehow, just not then) was completely fortuitous – and was as likely to end in tears as it was in triumph at that stage.⁷¹

3.3.8 Outputs and Testing

Whiteboard sheets have been flexibly used at these events in many different guises – in the standard way to create white board walls, windows, floors and tables and also to cover and to write on pillars, columns and other fixed points in a space – on one memorable occasion, trees. For this event we used the sheets to capture emerging individual perspectives, with the added advantage of being able to link the sheets together in a number of configurations when a sequence of problems or ideas was emerging as a representation of a system

71. And if that respite had not provided such helpful clarity it would have been necessary to generate something that would have tried to move us forward optimistically from that point. I have no idea what that might have been – it would have depended so much on the characters in the group, what they had developed so far, what the obstructions and barriers appeared to be, the venue, the weather, what had been served in the last break and critically, how all of that was affecting everyone's sense of optimism, belief and receptiveness to another process.

of some sort. Indeed it was the case that by the end of the event, such a suite of related ideas was pitched collectively and subsequently invested in, in its entirety.⁷²

Cross Check

Each facilitator took a random half of the whole group, irrespective of where their team allegiances might be developing at that time, and worked separately with them facilitating intensively. This was unusually concentrated but this focussed facilitation generated a new series of research ideas that had not yet emerged. What was being elicited in these encounters was a research idea with an associated dream outcome, with no time for discussion and no attempt at arriving at a consensus. The purpose was to introduce freshness and to ensure nothing was being overlooked. The groups switched and the relentless driving facilitation continued as participants interrogated and challenged the ideas and reassessed the dream outcomes of the other group. After switching back again each group received back their fast and furious research ideas with value. A new raft of possibilities was generated through another idea generating threshold.

This new set of ideas was added to the outputs, the evidence of which was laid out on the floor as participants wandered around and wound down to a more reflective state to begin to assimilate the possibilities.

It was after this that groups were encouraged to vote with their feet by positioning themselves alongside the idea or ideas that interested them most, or to reposition the outputs until there was a sense that this new configuration represented a more compelling starting point from which to commit to the next stage of the process, that of working up the ideas.

72. This is interesting now in terms of questions about whether the form drove the content or the content emerged, irrespective of the form. Or indeed, whether that was somehow what I was trying to do.

3.3.9 Peer review

When the ideas were in good enough shape it was time to review them. On this occasion stickers were produced at the venue with only words typed on them. And as is so often the case with these things, they were not over-thought and they were not smart and they worked just fine, by offering participants a means to comment on what was emerging in the categories of Adventurous, Massive Potential, Not Convinced, Real Benefit To Me, Early Quick Win, Novel and Inter-disciplinary.

The direct nature of the sticker text speeded up the process significantly, achieving more effectively the requirement that people focussed on affixing their stickers, and not on talking to each other about what the sticker icons might or might not represent.⁷³

3.3.10 Close

After that, everything was on course to get the group to where they needed to be, in good shape, in good humour, with good ideas. The final afternoon progressed with animated presentations and a particularly collaborative conclusion when all of the ideas presented to the mentors received funding.

3.3.11 Summary

The experience of facilitating these first two Ideas Exchanges of this series proved invaluable for the following reasons:

- to capture experience at the at the very beginning of this research.
- to exploit the fact of the proximity of the two events to test the expectations of the same commissioner before, during and after each stage.

73. The stickers remain a good idea, notwithstanding the need to balance their direct simplicity with a considerably improved aesthetic.

- to construct an initial set of assumptions from the reflections, in the form of the facilitator dimensions.
- to use this starting point to propel an approach to the literature review.
- to ensure all of the experience-based assumptions could be tested through an exploration of theory and discourse.

Dealing with a commissioner when offering facilitation services can perhaps be seen to occupy two ends of a well-populated continuum. At one end the offer of blanket reassurance to the commissioner that at each stage of an event, they will know exactly what is to happen, and will recognise the names of proven processes and exercises that have a robust methodological evidence base of success. And at the other, the we'll-make-it-up-as-we-go-along approach offering no such reassurances, and as a result struggling to inspire confidence. The Ideas Exchange commissioner moved from anxiety to embrace risk, but navigating these uncertainties to build trust was both fraught and essential. What was possible however was the identification of reassuring thresholds through which participants would pass – thresholds which matched the objectives of the commissioner and which could serve to track each stage. This finely balanced stage of negotiation required the sensitive matching of commissioner need, facilitator preference and participant goodwill, but this came at considerable cost.

This need for concrete processes to be pinned down in advance changed substantially in the second event when it became possible much more flexibly to respond to perceived participant need. Clarity as a commissioning requirement became less important than the establishment of trust and it is clear that investing in this trust is of considerable value for a process that can offer very little intrinsic reassurance.

The set-up of the event is also key, as is making early connections with the group. This is a fifteen-minute opportunity to assess the possibilities, identify the challenges within the group; bridge gaps in understanding and expectation across different disciplines and experience, while demonstrating the delivery and energy management style that will take the group forward.

The animation of space plays a key role in the determination of the activities that can take place within it; the complaints choir came about as a result of the grand piano, the discipline conversations happened across a large empty space and 'compass points' enabled an idea focusing shorthand when the light coming into the room suggested it.

Some prepared or pre-designed processes were imported into the first event, largely to reassure the commissioner. Very much more of the content was designed or adapted in-situ in the second event because of the investment in the establishment of trust. What was also clear was that preparation took place at different stages and took different forms both before and during the event, and that such preparation also related to the processes required by facilitators to create circumstances of readiness to facilitate.

This practice starting point has proved invaluable in establishing a baseline and a targeted approach to the study of the literature. While the dimensions exercising the facilitator/researcher at this stage included trust; confidence; risk; space; preparation and planning; preparation versus judgement; emotionally connecting and readiness, the reflections were clearly unable to access anything other than intuitive responses. An understanding of group role was necessary to contextualise these embedded common sense assumptions. The construction of a span of theoretical underpinning of both facilitation and improvisation discourses was also be targeted at this early stage. What was not anticipated however, but subsequently evolved, was the productive detour towards the design and creativity context for facilitation and building from that, an understanding of the tools, formats and resources known and imagined within the domain of knowledge exchange. The following chapter will now go on to outline this rationale in greater detail.

SECTION TWO

Review of the Literature

Chapter 4: Social Theories of Interaction

4.1 Literature Review Rationale

Reflection upon the roles played within facilitated groups, how trust is established with commissioners and how connections are made with participants to determine different levels of preparedness and different spatial configurations, has brought into focus the choice of literature to review. Also key to a considered discussion of these issues is an examination of the discourses around creativity, creative problem solving and the measurement of the creative output of individuals.

It is beyond the remit of this study precisely to measure the extent and impact of the creative gains made by groups during the variety of facilitated events considered for this study, since the quality of the ideas generated is inextricably linked to scientific or business innovation or opportunity; that is to say, the novelty or otherwise, only determined from the perspective of the expertise of thought, discipline, theme or topic leaders in those specialist areas.

The focus of this research is specifically to establish whether this emergent method of facilitating groups in an improvised way can be defined and understood. And while a significant body of research exists on the topic of facilitation, no research has been found that has identified or surveyed any aspect of improvised facilitation. This might be seen as due to the emergent nature of the practice, or perhaps due to different terms being used to describe it. In order to capture as much of the thinking as is possible, literature searches have embraced facilitation in all of its possible incarnations to include approaches to facilitation such as those that might be described as creative, imaginative, spontaneous, on-the-fly, on-the-hoof, on-the-spot,

devised, ad-lib, off-the-cuff, intuitive and extemporaneous.

It has also become apparent when researching this area that a significant body of work has emerged from the Netherlands. This is in part due to the development of the key design centres at Eindhoven and Delft, and also takes account of the serendipity of contemporaneous research emerging from the Netherlands in the fields of creative problem solving and creative facilitation.

References to a 'group' in this review will be restricted to refer to a group of *people* – from two to two hundred – who are brought together to consider an issue, solve a problem, develop a strategy or to invent a new solution to a problem that has been defined already, or that is defined as part of the facilitated process itself. Within such studies of groups, literature will be reviewed where references have been made to the creative or improvised facilitation of those groups. Tools and formats considered in this review are totems and artefacts that are the enablers of interactions within groups, and will therefore embrace a range of tools and formats designed or adapted for use within a facilitated group setting. These will include templates, kits, prompts and prototypes.

In order to harness and to challenge the researcher's practice assumptions and comprehensively to interrogate the accumulated thinking and writing that has informed group and team work, attention must first be paid to the critical theorists of the early 20th century who defined what was meant by 'group' and 'role'. The data that has informed the function and processes of facilitation that exerts an influence on these group situations will also be considered. In this section the emerging practice of distributed group facilitation will be touched upon only in as much as it acknowledges the obvious in this area. The Review of Literature is therefore categorised into the following thematic sections:

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4.2 Introduction

Facilitation and improvised facilitation takes place within groups where individuals perform roles and take on individual and group responsibilities. To enable a more in-depth understanding of these roles and the impact group membership and expectation has on individual participants, it is in this chapter that key aspects of the landscape of social psychology will be mapped. This focus on the scientific study of how people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others, will unfold in order to capture precisely what facilitation practice can learn from these tested theories and constructs.

The theories of Social Psychology lend themselves to this topic as they relate directly to behaviours within groups, social perception, interaction, leadership, non-verbal indicators of intention, prejudice, conformity and aggression. This raft of interpretative methods can therefore offer insight into how

to understand and explain how the thought, feeling and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other human beings. Allport, G (1985)

This focus on situations and the impact that the social environment and group interactions have on attitudes and behaviours offers a rich landscape through which to further explore group interactions. It is also the case that in considering in some detail the science and choreography of role interactions, greater insight will inform the consideration of the theories of group processes that follows.

These initiatives include the development of T-group theory, the emergence of role theory and applications of contemporary models of role interaction, for example, Belbin Team Roles.

4.2.1 Lewin, Coyle and T- group Theory

Kurt Lewin's 1944 research centre at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) contributed significantly to the developing body of knowledge relating to

experiential learning, group dynamics and action research.

Lewin drew on and expanded Gestalt theories and applied them to become one of the first psychologists systematically to test human behaviour. This influence on experimental psychology, social psychology and personality psychology resulted in the prolific experimentation continued by his colleagues after his sudden death at the age of 56.

For Lewin, behaviour was determined by the totality of an individual's situation; individuals were seen to behave differently according to the way in which tensions between perceptions of the self and of the environment were assimilated. Lewin also looked to the power of underlying forces (needs) to determine behaviour, and expressed a preference for psychological analysis rather than what he described as the '*physical or physiological descriptions of the field*' Lewin (1935).

Kenneth D. Benne and Paul Sheats were key collaborators with Lewin and others in the early development of the 'T (training) – Group. Both professors of adult education – Sheats at the University of California and Benne at Boston University – they worked on the early development of the 'T-Group' and played a key role in founding the U.S. National Training Laboratory, now the NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science. Benne and his colleagues were committed to the discovery of an ideal goal of democratic cooperation and consensus in groups; a consensus based on, and sustained by the deliberation of the group in the planning, execution, and evaluation of the common action of the group as a whole.

T-Groups introduced the idea of the change agent when Reid, (1981) described what happened at the first T-group laboratory session in 1948 as:

the skills to be achieved were intended to help an individual function in the role of change agent. (Reid 1981)

A change agent was believed to be multi skilled in facilitating communication and useful feedback among participants. The change agent could be seen as a more dynamic term for a facilitator perhaps, since a change agent needed to be aware of the need for change, could diagnose the problems as they

emerged, and could plan for change, implement the plans, and evaluate the results. To become an effective change agent, an understanding of the dynamics of groups was believed to be essential which encapsulates the laboratory method of T-group theory.

T-group theory was not without its critics – perhaps in part because of what was perceived as its Gestalt base. Gestalt theory attempts to describe how humans make sense of their perceptions and cognition (Wertheimer 1944). A fundamental Gestalt principle is the Law of Pragnanz, described as ‘when people are presented with a set of ambiguous elements, they interpret the elements in the simplest way.’ (Lidwell et al 2003)

The phrase *The whole is other than the sum of the parts* is often used when explaining gestalt theory though there is a common mistranslation of Kurt Koffka's (1922) original phrase to ‘The whole is *greater* than the sum of the parts’. Gestalt principles have guided research in many fields of study including education, visual communication, business management (Korthagen et al 1999; Arnheim 1969 and 1988; Ofer 2004) with the key word in Koffka's statement being *other*, rather than *greater*.

T-group participants were considered students, and the primary task of the T-group was to facilitate learning for its members. These participants worked in groups of between 6 and 12 to learn and to practice new and immediately transferable skills and behaviours. Key to the success of such groups was interdependence of fate, and task interdependence. Rupert Brown, Professor of Social Psychology, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, holds that groups emerge in a psychological sense ‘*not because their members necessarily are similar to one another (although they may be); rather, a group exists when people in it realize their fate depends on the fate of the group as a whole*’. (Brown 1988)

Lewin argued that interdependence of fate can present a weak form of interdependence in many groups, claiming that a more dynamic factor exists where there is interdependence in the goals of group members. This is not surprising of course, and is apparent, in facilitated group-task effectiveness

with tasks ranging from the seemingly insignificant to those that have the potential to be of global benefit. Lewin had sought an understanding of group tasks in an attempt to understand the uniformity of the behaviours within some groups. His research focussed upon the assertion that people may come to a group with very different dispositions, but if they share a common objective, they are likely to act together to achieve that objective. This echoes what is generally described as Lewin's Field theory.

4.2.2 Field Theory

Field Theory, also influenced by Gestalt psychology, defines behaviour as determined by the totality of an individual's situation. A 'field' is defined as '*the totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent*' (Lewin 1951). Individuals were seen to behave differently according to the way in which tensions between perceptions of the self, and of the environment, were worked through. The entire psychological field, or 'lifespace', within which people operated had to be viewed, in order to understand behaviour. Within this, individuals and groups could be seen in topological terms, using map-like representations, with individuals engaged in a range of life spaces, such as the family, work, school and church, and these constructed under the influence of what Lewin called force vectors (Lewin 1952). This theory had a major impact on social psychology, supporting the notion that our individual traits and the environment interact to cause behaviour.

4.2.3 Change Theory

Lewin's 3-stage Change theory employs the accessible analogy of changing the shape of a block of ice through the stages of Unfreeze, Change and Refreeze. The status quo is considered to be the equilibrium state and Unfreezing seen as necessary to motivate people for change by overcoming the strains of individual resistance and group conformity. Robbins (2003) describes the practical applications of the unfreezing stage as motivating participants by preparing them for change, building trust, recognising the need

to change, and encouraging active participation in recognising problems and potential solutions within a group. The change occurs and the process ends with a return to a sense of stability (refreeze) when the benefits of the change are realised, a necessary component for creating the confidence from which to embark on the next, inevitable, period of change. This resonates with the practice of establishing iterative thresholds of understanding at which a facilitator engaged in the practice of improvised facilitation can enable participants to recognise progress in order to move on to an, as yet, undisclosed process challenge.

Torrington et al (1985) have suggested that to ensure team effectiveness, focus needs to be balanced between task-oriented and social/emotional oriented behaviours, defining task-oriented behaviours as those concentrating on getting things done, seeking information or proposing solutions. Social/emotional-oriented behaviours on the other hand are identified as essential to maintain team processes; building on and supporting other people's views or releasing tension at critical points in the process. Torrington also defines a further category of disruptive behaviours that adversely affect the ability to complete tasks or to maintain a positive social/emotional environment, giving examples of these as shutting others out, or blocking suggestions.

In a now famous research project known as the Lewin, Lippitt, and White Study (1939), Lewin worked with Ron Lippitt and Robert White to identify different styles of group leadership. While further research has identified more specific types of leadership, this early study was influential in establishing three major leadership styles. In the study, schoolchildren were assigned to one of three groups with an authoritarian, democratic or laissez-fair leader. The children were then led in an arts and crafts project while researchers observed their behaviour in response to the different styles of leadership. Perhaps because of the timing of the study, in 1938, with uncertainty in Europe and nervousness about totalitarian governments, it is unsurprising that the superior and more productive style of leadership was found to be democratic.

An application of the findings of the the Lewin, Lippitt, and White Study for purposes of this study suggests that group conditions necessary to elicit aggression include a narrow space of free movement. These findings, although relating to groups in the much broader sense, are nonetheless of value in the context of this research as they demonstrate that group processes influence aggressive responses. Reid (1981) describes how prior to their study, research focussed upon the differences between individuals as the primary cause of aggression within groups.

Deutch (1949) supported the results of the Lewin, Lippitt, and White Study by providing an exploration of the relationship of task to process, concluding that groups under conditions of positive interdependence were generally more co-operative. Task interdependence in this context can be seen to relate to the fact that if the group's task is such that members of the group are dependent on each other for achieving it, then a powerful dynamic is created.

These implications for both participant and facilitator can be positive or negative. In the former case, one person's success inevitably impacts upon the success of others; as in negative interdependence, one person's success can bring about another's failure. (Brown (1989)

Yalom (1995) credited Lewin with influencing the four key, sustaining elements of T-group practice. Feedback, Unfreezing, Participant Observation and Cognitive Aids. Lewin had borrowed the term feedback from electrical engineering and applied it to the behavioural sciences. Here he used it to describe the change in process informed by its outcome or effects. **Feedback** became a key element of T-group theory and practice and was found to be most effective when it dealt with situations as they emerged, avoiding the perceptual distortion that can occur with retrospective analysis in the absence of other group members.

The idea of **Unfreezing**, adopted from Kurt Lewin's change theory, describes the process of reframing a person's former belief system. For Lewin, motivation for change must be generated before change can occur. One must be helped to re-examine many cherished assumptions about

oneself and one's relations to others. Part of the process of the group, then, was to address this, so trainers explicitly sought to create an environment in which values and beliefs could be challenged.

Participant Observation described the way in which T-group members were required to participate emotionally in the group as well as to observe themselves and the group objectively. This ability to link these concrete emotional experiences with a more analytical detachment was recognised as difficult for group members, but it was seen as essential if people were to learn and develop.

1 Known Self Things we know about ourselves and others know about us	2 Hidden Self Things we know about ourselves that others do not know
3 Blind Self Things others know about us that we do not know	4 Unknown Self Things neither we nor others know about us

The notion of **Cognitive Aids** was extracted from the practice of cognitive-behavioural group therapy involving organising ideas through the medium of brief lectures and handouts, and subsequently film clips or video. Perhaps the best known of these was the *Johari Window*,

illustrated above,⁷⁴ a communication model used to improve understanding between individuals. A simple and useful tool for illustrating and improving self-awareness, and mutual understanding. The Johari Window model (taken from the names of Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, who developed the model in 1955) offers a four-square grid containing two key ideas, both of which have contemporary relevance in groups, with or without the tool:

- That trust can be built with others by disclosing information about oneself.
- That, with the help of feedback from others, one can learn about oneself and come to terms with issues to be addressed.

The use of the Johari Window in a group context, was to help team T-group

⁷⁴ **Figure 3** Johari window example constructed for this research.

members to understand the value of self-disclosure and encourage the giving and accepting of constructive feedback in order to work more effectively as a team.

With reference to training groups again, Reid (1981), for example, reports that Grace Coyle, a leading figure in the understanding of group process, was challenged by what she saw as certain restrictions inherent in the emergence of T-group theory. Coyle (1930) felt that many of the training groups handled group situations badly; and that the leaders were starting to believe that they had '*discovered everything there was to know about group relations and were unaware of the inquiry and work of others*'.

Coyle's (1930) seminal work *Social Process in Organized Groups*, focussed on the associations 'of every variety' that '*arise and gather together individuals from the milieu that comes within the range of their activity*'. Such associations, she suggested, '*form themselves into a more or less stable pattern of relationships with certain processes and functions in time, perhaps, dissolve again into the surrounding sea of the community*' (Coyle 1930) as she explored:

- the process of group formation;
- the determination of membership;
- the evolution of structure;
- the functions of leadership;
- the process of communication;
- the development of esprit de corps;
- the process of collective thinking; Her focus was on organized life – the associations

Grace Coyle's book set the scene for the examination and development of group work in the United States during the 1930s, highlighting some of the key points at which interventions could be made in groups to improve their functioning and to make processes and outcomes more rewarding to participants. Most significantly, Coyle made links between the distinct relational constituencies within a group: between group and leader; the leader

to individuals; the social interactions; group control; group feeling; and the relationship of the group to the community beyond. Grace Coyle's Pugsley prize winning paper *Group Work and Social Change* (1935) presented a compelling case for social action holding that group workers have a social responsibility for *'the making of citizens.'* For Coyle, and a number of those who followed in her wake, what is possible to achieve in groups is fundamental in collective living and has the responsibility to be a powerful vehicle for social change.

4.2.4 Robert Freed Bales

Robert Freed Bales (1916-2004) was the Professor of Social Relations and Director of the Laboratory of Social Relations at the University of Harvard. His main research was focussed on interpersonal interaction in small groups. His work was influenced by the work of Lewin and undertook to document recurring patterns that could be used when forming and facilitating problem-solving groups. Bales pioneered the development of systematic methods of group observation and measurement of interaction processes and his first coding system Interactive Process Analysis (IPA) (Bales 1950) was used to classify group behaviour into the two domains of task-oriented and relationship-oriented. This somewhat arcane notation involved scoring interactions based on 'units' of interaction or communication, the scores were then applied to a predetermined set of categories, and an analysis made based on the scores of each category. Put simply, units are most usually made up from a simple sentence expressing a single idea. A sentence involving more than one idea is scored based on the number of independent clauses within it. Interpretation of single words – the communication – proved difficult for Bales when he described the ways in which an interpretation of *'What?'* can span the seeking of clarification to the expression of disbelief, concluding:

... simple sounds like grunts or sighs can typically be categorized and even facial expressions if the observer feels they convey enough meaning to be categorized. (Bales 1950)

The system was revised in 1970 in the SYMLOG system (Systematic Multiple Level Observation of Groups). This system was based on the assumption that there are three fundamental dimensions that structure interactions in groups: Dominance/submission, Friendliness/unfriendliness and Acceptance of authority/non-acceptance of authority. (Forsyth (2009)

4.2.5 Role Theory

Role theory is a perspective in social psychology that classifies most activity as socially defined. Social roles are seen to confer the fulfillment of a set of rights, duties, expectations, norms and behaviours upon a person. This model is based on the observation that people behave in a predictable way, and that individual behaviour is context-specific, and is guided by commonly understood social norms. Bates & Harvey (1975) view social structures as *'collections of designated social positions, the shared norms of which govern differentiated behaviors'*. Unlike most role theorists, Biddle assumes that role expectations appear simultaneously in at least three modes of thought: norms, preferences, and beliefs, describing this as *'... each may (or may not) be shared with others in a given context, each can affect behaviour, and all may be involved in generating a role'*. Biddle (1979)

Role theory is claimed by some as the leading vehicle available to integrate the three core social sciences of anthropology, sociology and psychology. This was defined by Rommetveit (1954) as *'the theoretical point of articulation between psychology and sociology'* with Sarbin proffering the view that role theory is *'an interdisciplinary theory in that its variables are drawn from studies of culture, society and personality'* (Sarbin 1954) since roles are performed within all interactions including group situations. For Biddle (1979) this idea of a group as *'...a set of two or more persons who are linked through interaction'*, assumes the interaction will impact on other group members as a behaviour. This idea that within a group there needs to be interaction across all intersections is both a challenge and an opportunity for a facilitator interested in maximising the impact of strategic interaction.

Disagreements exist among role theorists over the circumstances, conditions and expectations responsible for roles. For some, expectations *are* norms, that is to say prescriptive in nature. Others assume them to be beliefs, with yet others viewing them as preferences or attitudes. This inevitably leads to different versions of role theory being dependent upon the mode of expectation adopted. In attempting to define the impact of the roles that people inevitably perform in teams and groups, role theory does not take account of the significance of other, non-technical factors such as personality or behaviour.

The concept of 'role' remains prevalent in the social sciences but authors continue to differ over precisely what is understood by it. Assumptions about roles and the explanations for role phenomena and a range of perspectives have emerged within role theory. These five perspectives can be described briefly as follows:

1. functional
2. symbolic interactionist
3. structural
4. organisational
5. cognitive

The functionalist perspective focuses upon the characteristic behaviours and normative expectations operating within a stable social system. Functional role theory asserts that actors in the social system have become so immersed in the norms that, the systems themselves become normalised, in turn encouraging participant cohesion. For the social theorist Richard E Nisbet, who with Edward E Jones, coined the term *actor-observer bias*, defining the phenomenon where people acting and people observing use different explanations for why a behaviour occurs, the answer to the question, '*Why do human beings obey?*' is clear and unequivocal: they obey because, holding roles of one kind or other, they can hardly escape the normative demands of the roles. For Nisbet, status, rank or hierarchical position are embedded in

human consciousness itself. Roles, in the functionalist perspective, are relatively inflexible and are more-or-less universally agreed upon. Although it is recognised that different roles interact (*teacher* and *student*), and that roles are usually defined in relation to other roles (*doctor* and *patient* or *mother* and *child*), the functionalist approach appears not to account for variability and flexibility of roles, not acknowledging the extent of the differences in the way that individuals experience these different roles. In this way it might be seen that the functionalist approach results in *role* becoming a set of static, wide-ranging expectations rendering the *norm* or abiding *culture* impotent. This static understanding of roles has elicited critics of the functionalist approach but it still remains a fundamental concept, continues to be taught, and is still regarded as relevant to an understanding of role theory.

Symbolic interactionist role theory emerged from the work of the American philosopher and pragmatist George Herbert Mead who in 1934 emphasised the roles of individual 'actors', the evolution of these roles through social interaction, and the range of cognitive concepts determining how social actors understand and interpret their own and the behaviour of others.

Mead's weaving of the ideas of symbolic interactionism with sociology helped form the theory of identity development through social interaction which became a key plank of the Chicago School research methodology. Mead asserted that norms serve to define a set of broad imperatives within which the details of roles can be navigated. So roles are seen '*to reflect norms, attitudes, contextual demands, negotiation, and the evolving definition of the situation as understood by the actors.*' (Mead 1934)

To Mead, 'role-taking' – being able to put oneself in another's place – is an essential process in the development of the 'self' with the three stages in its development outlined as: the play stage – in which the child learns to take the attitude of others to themselves; the game stage – in which the child takes the role of everyone else involved in the game; and the stage of the generalised other – in which the child assumes the overall perspective of a community.

Mead poses two discrete phases which he calls the 'I' and the 'me.' The 'I'

is the immediate response of an individual to others. The 'me' is the '*organised set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes ... The 'me' is a conventional, habitual individual.*' (Mead 1934)

Mead does not advocate conformity to this notion of the generalised other, instead seeing the 'selves' as sharing a common structure. But since each self is different from all others, it is required to construct its own larger generalised other, and then respond to it.

Another symbolic interactionist theory, also emerging from the Chicago School, is the social psychological concept *Looking-Glass Self Theory* developed by Charles Horton Cooley (1902) The Looking-Glass Self theory held that a person's self grows out of society's interpersonal interactions and the perceptions of others. At its simplest:

We imagine how we appear to others

We imagine what their judgement of that appearance must be

We develop responses fuelled by, for example, pride or mortification, as we imagine others' judgement.

An illustration of the Looking-Glass Self concept can perhaps be seen as operating within computer technology, when avatars are employed to symbolise or represent the computer user – the avatar – in for example, Second Life⁷⁵ (or indeed a virtual facilitation environment as discussed later within LR 3.2.5 in relation to the EPSRC virtual sandpit) reflecting how the creator chooses to be perceived in the virtual world and how these symbols characterise the ways in which the avatar can influence the actions of others toward the computer-user.

As the term role suggests, this theory began its life as a theatrical

75. A virtual world designed by Linden Research, Inc., San Francisco, in which 'residents' create an identity, meet people, buy land and build their own environment or purchase an existing one.

Launched in 2003 by Philip Rosedale, alias Philip Linden in Second Life, first-time residents make up a first name, choose a last name from a list and choose a graphic identity (an avatar). The name cannot be changed, but the avatar can be. The Second Life world is made up of a group of islands in the tropics. www.secondlife.com

metaphor. It was felt that if performances in the theatre were differentiated and predictable because actors were constrained to perform 'parts' for which 'scripts' were written, then it seemed reasonable to proponents of role theory that social behaviors in other contexts were also associated with parts and scripts understood by social actors.

Erving Goffman, in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) whose theories will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, attributes the overcoming of this tension between what people expect us to do, and what we may want to do spontaneously, to the phenomena of *performing* for social audiences. For Goffman, who focuses on dramaturgy, or a view of social life as a series of 'dramatic' performances, the self is not a possession of the actor but rather a product of the dramatic interaction between actor and audience.

Following Mead and Goffman, Nisbet too holds that social life and the theatre are analogous with much of the social behaviour seen as role behaviour that might appear as the behaviour of actors on a stage. For Nisbet, It is not individuals that we see most often, but persons, with the concept of person inextricably linked to that of role, asserting that we never see roles unless they are personified.

Structural Role Theory was informed by Linton's (1936) early statement of role concepts and its influence on anthropologists and others interested in social structure (Levy 1952). This resulted in the development of a more axiomatic mathematically expressed theory of structured role relationships with attention focussed upon 'social structures,' conceived as stable organisations of sets of persons (called 'social positions' or 'statuses') who share the same, patterned behaviours ('roles') that are directed towards other sets of persons in the structure.

Organisational Role Theory is another version of role theory that in this case has been constructed on social systems that are preplanned, task-oriented, and hierarchical. Organisational role theory may be said to have begun with

the seminal books of Gross et al. in 1958 with their New York study of *Explorations in Role Analysis: Studies in the School Superintendency Role*. Since that time organisational role theory has had considerable impact in business schools and among industrial psychologists and sociologists.

Cognitive Role Theory has focussed on relationships between the expectations and behaviours of roles with a focus on the social conditions that give rise to expectations, to the techniques for measuring expectations, and to the impact of expectations on social conduct. Cognitive role theorists have also considered the ways in which an individual perceives the expectations of others and how those perceptions impact on behaviour.

Definitive definitions of role theory therefore appear to be in short supply and while there is evidence of lack of agreement, Bates & Harvey (1975) define a role as '*a particular set of norms that is organized about a function*' Turner (1979) describes role as a '*comprehensive pattern for behavior and attitude*' with Allen et al. (1984) proffering role as '*behavior referring to normative expectations associated with a position in a social system*'. These definitions interconnect, but with each adding one or more dimension not contained within the others, they present a challenge, not just when attempting to define the theory, but more significantly, when embracing its application. It is not clear precisely how to integrate these potentially limiting conditions for greater understanding. For example, are patterned behaviours then, not roles when they are *not* associated with a function, not tied to attitudes, or not associated with norms or social positions?

While role theorists often differ in the assumptions they build into basic concepts, they appear broadly in philosophical alignment, with most versions of role theory presuming that it is expectations that are the major generators of roles. Biddle (1979) suggests that expectations are learned through experience, and that we are aware of these expectations we hold, for example, the teacher and student role and those of the doctor and patient. But disagreements remain rife over the range of different expectations that determine specific roles, ranging from those that are prescriptive in nature to

others that could be described as belief based or built upon preferences and attitudes resulting in different role theory interpretations.

Benne and Sheats role dimensions identified twelve task and seven group maintenance roles evident in the performance of groups. Their research, conducted in 1948 engaged small discussion groups in the task of selecting, defining and solving common problems. Their framework identified three broad types of roles people play in small groups: task roles, building and maintenance roles, and self-centered roles. These task, personal, social, and dysfunctional/ individualistic role definitions range from Initiator/Contributor to Dominator.

It is notable that while Benne and Sheats' identified these roles they did not further suggest any application of their theory. When considering the emergence of such theories and indeed applications, as with most systems of analysis of what goes on within groups, Benne and Sheats acknowledge that the roles required can vary depending on both the stage of group development and the tasks in hand.

4.2.6 Belbin Team Roles

Further to Benne and Sheats team role theories, Meredith Belbin, an industrialist and academic, developed the team role model that is widely used in psychometric testing in a variety of settings today. Belbin's theories emerged out of a series of experiments during an intensive nine-year study of managers at what is now Henley Business School. Part of this course involved a business simulation where managers were put into competing teams exhibiting all of the variables that it was felt would typify the challenges at play in the business environment. Belbin's developing perspective, made a link between the team roles necessary for effective teams and their 'preferred behaviours.' (Belbin 1981)

Belbin asserted that while the range of behaviours people engage in is infinite, there is a finite number of what he refers to as 'useful behaviours' that make a significant contribution to team or group performance. Belbin's

classification – his inventory – utilises eight interacting clusters (and the additional, Specialist role) and further identifies five principles underlying the interaction between these roles: The five underlying principles state that:

- (i) Each team member contributes towards achieving the team's objectives by performing both a functional role (determined by their professional and/or technical knowledge), and a team role (determined by their characteristic pattern of team interaction).
- (ii) The team needs an optimal balance in both functional and team roles which is dependent on the goals and tasks that the team faces.
- (iii) The effectiveness of a team will be promoted by the extent to which members correctly recognise and adjust themselves to the relative strengths within the team, both in expertise and ability to engage in specific team roles.
- (iv) Personal qualities fit members for some team roles while limiting the likelihood that they can perform others.
- (v) A team can deploy its technical resources to best advantage only when it has the requisite range of team roles to ensure sufficient teamwork.

Names and descriptive adjectives for each of eight team roles were generated at this stage, and in 1993 some team roles were re-named and a ninth role added. The nine roles and descriptions of each role are given in the following table:

TEAM ROLE	DESCRIPTORS
Completer Finisher (CF)	Anxious, conscientious, introvert, self-controlled, self-disciplined, submissive and worrisome.
Implementer (IMP)	Conservative, controlled, disciplined, efficient, inflexible, methodical, sincere, stable and systematic.
Team Worker (TW)	Extrovert, likeable, loyal, stable, submissive, supportive, unassertive, and uncompetitive.
Specialist (SP)	Expert, defendant, not interested in others, serious, self-disciplined, efficient.
Monitor Evaluator (ME)	Dependable, fair-minded, introvert, low drive, open to change, serious, stable and unambitious.
Co-ordinator (CO)	Dominant, trusting, extrovert, mature, positive, self-controlled, self-disciplined and stable.

Plant (PL)	Dominant, imaginative, introvert, original, radical-minded, trustful and uninhibited.
Shaper (SH)	Abrasive, anxious, arrogant, competitive, dominant, edgy, emotional, extrovert, impatient, impulsive, outgoing and self- confident.
Resource Investigator (RI)	Diplomatic, dominant, enthusiastic, extrovert, flexible, inquisitive, optimistic, persuasive, positive, relaxed, social and stable.

Figure 4 Belbin team role descriptors, Meredith Belbin 1993

Belbin went on to defend the idea that high performing teams need a balanced representation of all team roles, although suggested that if all team roles *are* present in a team, then it will perform better than other teams without a similar balance. Belbin also considered that the team role concept - a preference to behave in a particular way with other team members while performing tasks - should be distinguished from functional roles when technical skills and operational knowledge are relevant to a particular job, function or process. Therefore, in Belbin's model several people may have the same functional role but vary greatly in their team role(s).

Belbin also established a link between the stages of a team's development and the need for different team roles to dominate at different stages. He proposed six different stages of development: 1) identifying needs, 2) finding ideas, 3) formulating plans, 4) making ideas, 5) establishing team organization and 6) following through, going on to explain how team roles like Shaper and Co-ordinator will be most needed whereas in the later stages Completer-Finishers and Implementers make greater contributions.

This notion of clearly delineated behaviours has been challenged by among others Broucek and Randell (1993) who doubt that Belbin's inventory model accurately identifies a style of Broucek and Randell go on to suggest that if individuals do not behave as predicted by Belbin's team-role classification, then the purpose of using this role to recruit them into teams and expecting them naturally to perform certain group maintenance or task functions, is invalid.

Belbin's inventory is not nuanced and flexible enough precisely to identify an individual's team role, however, this does not prove that such team roles do exist. Indeed Dulewicz, (1995) using self-reporting measures, lends some credence to the existence of these roles in teams and groups, arguing that much of the confusion about team role pairings is due to a lack of differentiation between the tasks and functions that a role holder performs, and the personality characteristics that define the role. In an expanded application of team roles, Dulewicz and Higgs (2000) correlated dimensions of a new questionnaire to measure emotional intelligence with measures of team roles. They found that Co-ordinator and Resource Investigator showed similar correlation patterns, displaying self-awareness, resilience, motivation and influence.

Suggesting that the *'team role theory is itself flawed'* in that Belbin did not adequately theoretical underpin his theory, Broucek and Randell have also been open to challenge. In a paper entitled *Team Roles: Psychometric Evidence, Construct Validity And Team Building*, Aritzeta et al (2005) assert that Broucek and Randell's belief that *'Belbin's study of team performance is supported by anecdote alone'* is not valid, citing nine years of studying team building and effectiveness using standardised personality questionnaires and observational methodology as representing more than just anecdotal evidence.

Hollingshead and McGrath proposed that effective performance depends on the 'richness' of information, such as emotions, attitudes, etc., transferred between individual group members. They consider the difference between simple unambiguous tasks, that require very little information beyond facts, and indeed

any evaluative or emotional information may be a hindrance to effective performance

to complex, ambiguous tasks

where there are conflicting interpretations about the situation, do require additional information in order to resolve disagreements through the exchange of subjective views. Hollingshead and McGrath (1994)

This links directly to the use of role theory in training and learning contexts that Pritchard (1999) describes as

its value in this environment may lie not in accurately identifying an individual's role profile, but rather as a transference facilitation technique.

4.2.7 Kelley's Innovation Personas

Looking specifically at the roles members of design development teams perform within organisations, Tom Kelley, the General Manager of IDEO, the innovation consultancy, in his book *The Ten Faces of Innovation* (2005) captures his observations on the roles he has observed in the process of encouraging innovation and the development of new ideas. For Kelley there are 3 role categories which can briefly be interpreted as:

LEARNING PERSONAS	The Anthropologist: the self explanatory role that is constantly looking at how people in the field interact with products, developments and experiences to reframe and to find inspiration in unusual places.
	The Experimenter: the modeler and celebrator who is constantly 'making it real', inviting others to collaborate, while retaining a focussed eye on time and budget.
	The Cross Pollinator: the breaker of new ground pulling together seemingly unrelated idea fragments or lessons from the outside world. Not hide bound by perceived restrictions, open minded enough to move beyond.
ORGANISING PERSONAS	The Hurdler: a solution based fixer with optimism and perseverance to challenge the status quo with big ideas and turn setbacks into great successes.
	The Collaborator: who values the team over the individual. Task focussed, coaxing people out of work silos into multidisciplinary teams. More of a confidence coach than a boss.
	The Director: has the bigger picture in view at all times. Talented at setting the stage, targeting opportunities, bringing out the best in their players, and getting things done.

BUILDING PERSONAS	The Experience Architect: focussed on creating individual experiences, facilitates positive encounters with products, services, digital interactions, spaces, or events to turn something ordinary into something distinctive.
	The Set Designer: promotes energetic, inspired cultures by creating work environments that celebrate the individual to stimulate creativity. Makes space itself one of an organisation's most flexible and potent tools.
	The Storyteller: shares compelling narratives of initiative, hard work, and innovation, working in whatever medium best fits their skills and message to spark emotion and action, transmit values and objectives, foster collaboration, create heroes, and lead.
	The Caregiver: is the foundation of human-powered innovation. Working through empathy, they work to understand each individual customer to create a relationship guiding the client through the process to provide them with a satisfying, human-centered experience.

Figure 5 Kelley's role categories. Kelley, T 2005.

A number of Kelley's role descriptors within the Building Personas category also echo a dramaturgical construct by borrowing terms from the theatre – The Director, The Experience Architect, The Set Designer and The Storyteller. Theatrical allusion is found in many role defining scenarios and what is perhaps more interesting here, is that Kelley places these descriptors within the Building Personas classification. For Kelley these roles are key in applying insights from the other roles to guarantee successful innovation occurs.

Considerations of how we perceive ourselves in relation to others in this context leads directly to the work of a major sociologist of the symbolic interaction perspective who devoted his career to precisely the study of these detailed interactions between individuals. Erving Goffman will be considered as his theories of the presentation of self are aligned to the domain of facilitated practice. This will be explored in relation to the role taken by the facilitator within the group setting when the group is both audience and 'audienced' in what Goffman refers to as the presentation of ourselves in everyday life.

4.2.8 Erving Goffman

As a product of the second Chicago School, Goffman writes from a symbolic interactionist perspective. In *The Presentation Of Self In Everyday Life* (1959) he dissects the minute details of everyday existence to consider individual identity, group relations, the impact of environment, and the movement and interactive meaning of information resulting in all interaction being viewed as a 'performance'. With the notion of performance existing regardless of the individual's awareness of it, it is worth considering the main tenet of dramaturgical social psychology, that of the self, presented as '*simply the meaning of the human organism....established by its activity and the activity of others with respect to it*' (Brisset and Edgley, 1975). For Brisset and Edgley '*what you do establishes who you are, not the other way round.*' The main concern of a dramaturgical analyst has also been described by (Messinger et al, 1975) as the focus on '*the impression the actor is making on others*'.

Goffman's work lends itself to a further understanding of groups and the individuals within them, particularly within the field of improvised facilitation. With reference to this context, the role of the facilitator, the facilitator's relationship with participants as audience and the necessary balance between preparation and judgement are key to considerations of group effectiveness.

Using Goffman's idea of the 'stage', the facilitator role can be considered in relation to a discussion of the role of the individual in the presence of others.

Resonant of the inevitable fact that when a facilitator takes up a position in front of a group of other individuals, s/he is immediately and inevitably subject to scrutiny. Goffman introduces the concept of 'sign-vehicles' as accessible carriers of information and also, invariably, as signallers of previous experience. This ascribing of stereotype, and the subsequent transfer from a real experience to that of a predicted one, an inductive inference perhaps, is just as likely to be a negative association as a positive one for both the participant and the facilitator.

For those present, many sources of information become accessible and many carriers (or 'sign-vehicles') become available for conveying this

information. If unacquainted with the individual, observers can glean clues from conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly similar to the one before them. Or, more damaging perhaps, to apply un-tested stereotypes to them. It is also the case, according to Goffman, that this '*assume from past experience*' frame makes people believe that particular settings can determine the types of individuals that will inhabit them. This of course furthers the potential for response by stereotype.

Goffman attributes the notion of 'performance' to all human interactions in all settings, and imports a wide range of examples relating to what he calls 'interaction order'. Status for Goffman is a pattern of appropriate conduct. For example, for Goffman, we are all actors, and most significantly for purposes of this study, teams of actors, who, he asserts are always both actor and audience so that we, in effect, audience each other.

Clark (2007) has applied Erving Goffman's concepts of frontstage and backstage, among other performative concepts, within co-design projects. Clark sees the 'backstage' as capturing what he refers to as the performance production, the planning and preparation space for interactions. For Clark, group-work is the 'backstage' preparation for the 'frontstage' whole-group interactions during the event. This is difficult to assimilate as the distinctions are not clearly enough drawn, although it could of course be said that the negotiations and decision-making that goes on in small groups is fundamental to the success of the whole group processes.

Halse (2008) also offers a perspective on this when referring to a 'design workshop' as a ritual in the sense that such events are about transformation or change. Halse finds similarities with performances, describing the characteristics of the ordering of time, importation of objects, adherence to rules and unfamiliar non-ordinary locations 'design rituals' in themselves. The implications of these theories for improvised facilitation are similar in that ritual and ordering forms part of preparedness for facilitation work, perhaps summed up best by Schechner (2006) who asserts that ritual and play is embedded in

all performance and performativity; with, Turner (1987), in *The Anthropology of Performance*, offering a description of a ritual as a ‘*performance of a complex sequence of symbolic acts*’.

4.2.9.i Goffman’s Theory of FACE

In his book *Interaction Ritual* Goffman introduces the idea of ‘face’ to describe the positive social value a person claims. He recognises that ‘face’ is an inadequate term to describe these small behaviours or gestures – ‘*the countless patterns and natural sequences of behaviour occurring whenever persons come into one another’s immediate presence*’. (Goffman 1967) This notion of face is clearly not literally taken to reflect what expresses through a person’s body, but exists in the flow of events in an encounter, only becoming ‘*manifest when these events are read and interpreted for the appraisals expressed in them*’. (Goffman 1967) Face-saving practices are described by Goffman as the actions undertaken by an individual to ensure actions are consistent with face.

Face needs to be maintained and can also be lost. Loss of face is a risk when the maintaining of face is linked to the status held and the significance of the influence one is able to exert over others. While it is always necessary to be honest with participants in a group, it is not the case that transparency always serves the needs of the group when it could be interpreted as a possible loss of face. It is the case, and is observed in Chapter 3 at footnote 68, that facilitator practitioners might not know what will happen next in an interaction or intervention, and this is clearly the case in improvised facilitation, but keeping the group aligned to the facilitator function might ensure a more satisfying journey than if trust in them was undermined by a perceived lack of insight or focus or confidence.⁷⁶

Goffman argues that we present ourselves in a certain manner in order to

76. In an interview for this study FI 2 did however discuss their absolute determination to share what is described as ‘the workings out’ with the group, whether they know what is going on or not. But this can be seen as a deliberate and strategic element of their facilitation approach.

make identity claims for ourselves. In making these claims we attempt to secure both material and social resources for ourselves. If we do something to invalidate our identity claim, we become embarrassed as a result of a 'failed performance'. Goffman describes two modes to explain this further: *Signs given* – things we do deliberately to make a specific impression in the minds of others, and *Signs given off* – things we do unintentionally which make impressions we do not intend to make. For Goffman, the individual intentionally conveys misinformation by means of both of these types of communication, describing the first as involving deceit, the second of feigning.

4.2.9.ii Goffman's Theory of FRAME

Since its introduction by Gregory Bateson in *A Theory of Play and Fantasy* (1954, 1972), the concept of framing and the word frame has influenced thinking about the language of interaction. Bateson demonstrated that no communicative move, verbal or nonverbal, could be understood without reference to what he referred to as a metamessage. These second messages or metacommunications may or may not be understood, or may or may not be listened to. But for Bateman both people and animals send metacommunication messages. Bateman imports the example that it is only by reference to the metamessage '*This is play*' that animals fight, but do not cause each other harm. Concluding that somehow they have sent the metacommunication message of the play fight to each other.

Bateson's work was taken up most directly by researchers in communication and psychology and within sociology it was Erving Goffman's Frame Analysis (1974), which appropriated the term 'frame' to provide a complex and subtly nuanced system of terms, concepts, and examples to outline the extensive levels and types of framing that comprise everyday interaction. Goffman writes that he encountered the term frame in Bateman's work in what he described as roughly the sense in which he wanted to employ it.

When considering the role of a facilitator and the way in which they position themselves in relation to the group, topic, challenge, process, space,

and delivery style, it is perhaps interesting to view this through the mechanism of frames of interaction. Goffman cited *impression management* as the tool through which individuals present an appropriate *character* in order to be accepted in each role that involves social interaction. This has echoes of Mead (1934) and Mead's rejection of the idea that an individual exists merely as a collection of roles, whilst accepting that in his view, all roles exist only in relation to others, and that in reflexive role taking one can see oneself through the attitudes of others by entering imaginatively into their roles to determine appropriate responses for any given situation.

There has been some criticism of Goffman's focus on the micro-issues of the everyday in *Frame Analysis* (1974) where he offers great detail about how we operate entirely in frames, at the same time as he has been praised for his timeless observations of recognisable human behaviour. Scheff believed that '*Goffman was an incredibly perceptive observer of the microworld*' (2006)

4.2.9.iii Goffman's Theory of FRONT

'Front' is defined by Goffman as the expressive equipment of a standard kind that is intentionally or unwittingly brought into service by individuals. Goffman's notion of front acting as a vehicle of standardisation allows others to understand the individual on the basis of projected character traits that have normative meanings. Front establishes proper 'setting,' 'appearance,' and 'manner' for the social role, assumed by the actor. In describing the setting – the physical layout in which the interaction takes place – Goffman sees a kind of armour of protection. This is distinct from personal front – appearance and manner – which more habitually embraces status, rank, clothing, sex, posture; what Goffman refers to as sign-vehicles.

The actor, in order to present a compelling front, is forced to both fill the duties of the social role and communicate the activities and characteristics of the role to other people in a consistent manner. The necessity of each individual to maintain this front in order to promote the team performance reduces the possibility of dissent – the individual actor feeling a strong

pressure to conform to the desired front in the presence of an audience, as not to do so would destroy the credibility and potency of the entire performance, or indeed the effectiveness of the group. This resonates with theories of task interdependence as discussed earlier in relation to T-groups and the work of Rupert Brown, but signals concern within facilitation, as notions of front in this context, however codified, might be seen to impact on the perception of authenticity of the roles required to determine successful flow of group processes.

Goffman further develops his dramaturgical frame when he considers the division between team performance and audience, in terms of the definition of 'region'. Extending the dramaturgical metaphor still further he divides region into 'front,' 'back,' and 'outside' the stage, contingent upon the relationship of the audience to the performance. While what he is describing is the 'official stance' of the team visible in their frontstage presentation, it is for Goffman, in the backstage, that *'the impression fostered by the presentation is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course,'* indicating a more 'truthful' type of performance.

Particularly relevant in the context of this research, is Goffman's assertion that 'front stage' is not an improvisation but instead is a carefully crafted representation of the self to others, and 'back stage' exists as the place where we retreat in order to practice the techniques of impression management. This is significant when we consider the challenge of visibility when delivering the micro-design of improvised facilitation with decisions and refinements made at every step and stage of the processes as they emerge. Goffman's analysis of people interacting in this way echoes the dynamic between a facilitator and a group, when he writes: *'The others are likely to find that they must accept the individual on faith, offering him a just return'*. Regardless of the particular objective or motive, Goffman asserts that it is always in the individual's interests to control the conduct, and the responsive treatment, of the others. Bringing about this control in a group situation, according to Goffman, is achieved precisely by defining the parameters of the situation in which people come together. In so doing, the facilitator can express herself in such a way as

to manage the impression and lead groups to act in a way that realises the facilitator's own objectives. Goffman refers to this as a kind of harmony and an optimistic ideal with each participant expected to conceal true feelings, to construct a surface of agreement.

This veneer of consensus, is facilitated by each participant concealing his own wants behind statements which assert values to which everyone present feels obliged to give lip service. (Goffman 1959)

This suggests, on Goffman's terms, that such behaviour is performative and is also accompanied by intraspection making us invariably and inescapably an observer to our own performance.

It should be noted that there have been many challenges to Goffman's perspective. Geoffrey Nunberg of Stanford University, reviewing Goffman's book, "Forms of Talk" in The New York Times Book Review in 1981 described the justification for Goffman's following as a result of him bringing "*a mordant irony to the pretensions and theatricality of everyday interaction*" and described him as having "*considerable gifts for rendering the everyday as bizarre and amusing.*" Nunberg goes further to undermine Goffman's thesis, playing back Goffman's own phrase for ironic emphasis when he describes it as the result of merely impression management. It is the case however that as a means of locating the individual as actor in the interactive process and the broader society, Goffman affirms Mead's argument that identity is constructed through an understanding of the projection of the self to others.

4.2.10 Summary

The theatre of every day life therefore is largely improvisational with some impression management thrown in for good measure; the self constantly emerging and re-forming - not as a noun, but as a verb perhaps. Describing one team as the audience or observers, and another as the performers, this analogy again links directly into the facilitation domain when Goffman asserts that it is usually the case that one of the teams has managed the setting and therefore has contributed more significantly to the 'show' of that setting or to

the pace driving the team. There is a sense here that if this idea of performance is to be effective, it requires the tacit collusion of all parties. Goffman describes this idea of a team in this context as having something of the character of a secret society, held together by a bond no member of the audience shares, concluding:

And since each team is engaged in maintaining the stability of some definitions of the situation, concealing or playing down certain facts in order to do this, we can expect the performer to live out his conspiratorial career in some furtiveness. (Goffman 1967)

The construct and the vocabulary of roles has noticeably crossed over from academic discourse into popular, everyday use. Within the everyday domain, both the vernacular and meaning associated with roles has suggested that roles operate in isolation, with roles regularly spoken of, and about, as though they were indeed fixed, understood by all, and uncontroversial. Roles confer upon them the assumption that a particular behaviour is appropriate and expected. This has implications for the facilitation role and the participant role in that individuals will arrive in groups with experience of one or both of these roles that they might have performed or observed, even if that has largely been informed by the differentiated status of the role relationships of teacher and pupil; parent and child or manager and employee.

For the world of the group then, it is composed of a team of actors who are also the audience of an actor-facilitator who is also audiencing the group. The group space, the physical environment and the way that it is set and prepared becomes the frame in this context - what Goffman would describe as 'The Furnished Frame', perhaps echoed by Gibson's (1966) idea of affordances, referring to the significance of an environment, relative to the capacities or needs of an agent working within it.

The work of the T-groups contributed to the belief that learning is best facilitated in an environment where there is dialectic tension and conflict between immediate, concrete experience and analytic detachment.

How the agent, in this case the facilitator, improves their sensitivity to

environmental relevance depends on what is significant for them in any given context or circumstance, detecting what seems relevant moment-to-moment. At its simplest then, the group ‘environment’ presents a possible action to an agent, relative to the capabilities of the agent. The abilities of the facilitator (the actor) and the idea of affordance, relate attributes of the environment to an interactive activity *by an agent*, who has some ability. This relationship between, and the relativity of affordances and abilities, is key to the link between the role and impact of a facilitator. The table below begins to pull out the emerging themes from this chapter as they may inform the next stage of the discussion.

THEME	CHAPTER	PAGE REFERENCE
Status	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Self (101) Change agent (75) Impression management (100) Process influencing responses (79) Authority (83) Gesture (97) Loss of face (97) Emotional group connections (106)
Trust	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Role theory (83) Reflexive roles (99) Perception (74) Performance (87) Preferences (83)
Space & Resources	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Design rituals (96) Environmental relevance (103)

Figure 6 Themes emerging from chapter 4 of the literature review.

Mapping the social frames of interaction through this appreciation of the work of the early social psychologists and the exploration of some of the theories of Erving Goffman within a facilitated group situation, leads on to the interrogation of the burgeoning theories and practices of facilitation that will be outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Facilitation Theories and Theorists

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will develop the discussions of the previous chapter to build on the broad range of thinking about precisely what happens in facilitated groups to consider group and facilitator experience from a range of perspectives to provide the context for broader considerations of facilitator impact and group response. It would not be possible to consider what is understood about the function of facilitation and the role of the facilitator without attention first being paid to the most prolific and well-profiled writer on the subject – John Heron – whose Facilitator’s Handbook has been responsible for, some might say guilty of, influencing the understanding of group processes and the ways that facilitators approach the role, since its first publication in 1989.

Spatial theories will also be touched upon in this section before outlining established group process models and the potential for group interventions.

5.2 John Heron

Heron (born 1928) was the founder and director of the Human Potential Research Project at the University of Surrey from 1970 to 1977, the first university-based centre for humanistic and transpersonal psychology and education in Europe. The author of many books and research papers including the above mentioned Facilitators Handbook, Heron introduced his methodology for facilitated group process by defining six dimensions of facilitation that he asserts are the ways in which the facilitator can influence the group in achieving its objectives. Heron described these dimensions as:

The Planning Dimension	the goal-oriented, ends and means aspect of facilitation
The Meaning Dimension	the cognitive aspect necessary for participants to know what is going on
The Confronting Dimension	to do with raising consciousness about the groups resistance to and avoidance of things it needs to face and deal with
The Feeling Dimension	to do with the management of feeling in the group
The Structuring Dimension	to do with methods of learning and how learning is shaped within the group
The Valuing Dimension	the integrity aspect of facilitation

Figure 7 Heron's facilitation dimensions. Heron, J | 1989.

Heron goes on to proffer very rigidly prescribed sets of frameworks and models for facilitation, with guidance extending to the precise detail of how to stand, breathe, and even how to position one's chin when working with a group. As a starting point for the consideration of facilitator flexibility, Heron's prescriptive guidance is useful only in terms of providing the context for an understanding of what could be described as 'trained' facilitator responses.

This is significant when considering that facilitated processes within groups fall somewhere on a continuum between two extremes, (A) those which are planned and designed in detail in advance, recorded, evaluated or published and which have the potential to be reproduced in different situations, and (B) the more transient, less reproducible, more intuitive responses, which, because of their very nature have rarely been captured in any significant way. While the two approaches are very different and reflect combinations of ideology, methodology, learning preference, style and commissioner demand, it is of course likely that one might find examples of unsuccessful group engagement and process outcomes, or ineffective facilitation, within both of these practice extremes.

5.3 Circle Theory and an Introduction to Spatial Theories

Another perspective on how the formal configurations of group members and facilitators can contribute to group process success, relates to what has become known as Circle Theory. Christine Baldwin (1998) describes her model of Circle group-working as an echo of Jungian⁷⁷ theories on the collective unconscious and the recurring imagery of the circle. The circle or sphere prevails as a universal symbol of self, completeness, or the whole; its associations of completeness resulting from the perception of a perfect circle having no beginning or end and therefore offering a potent metaphor for inclusiveness within a group context.

In Baldwin's model she advocates the circle configuration to, she claims, heighten both the emotional engagement of the group participants and the efficacy of the group process objectives. Baldwin describes a number of scenarios from the therapeutic to the mediation and strategic as she espouses the value of the symbolic construct of the group circle, believing that is that it is the very fact of being seated in a circle that can fundamentally and significantly contribute to the discovery of the group process outcome – her notion of the tacitly improvised response.

Contemplative silence also plays a role in Baldwin's notion of the group circle, as it does in many spiritual and ritual settings. The lack of sound as a trigger within Circle Theory is also advocated by Baldwin to overcome the status imbalances associated with the hierarchy and power-positioning that can operate within groups. Within the domain of improvised facilitation, bounded silence can provide time for participant assimilation and reflection and also to capture moments of facilitator thinking time.

Facilitation space and the configurations taken up within that space are

77. Jungian theory has had numerous critics, the work of the Swiss psychiatrist and founder of the school of analytical psychology. Carl (C.J.) Jung's (1875-1961) work has left an indelible impact on psychology. His concepts of the extroverted and introverted personality, archetypes, and the collective unconscious have contributed significantly to personality psychology and the work of many theories which have followed.

indeed key to the successful outcomes of groups, but critically, from a practice perspective, these emerging configurations need to be determined by the mood within, and the challenges exerted upon those groups. And as such they are constantly changing. This leads to a consideration of the implicit therapeutic – and potentially disempowering – expectations of group members who are ‘placed’ within a circle.⁷⁸

In Baldwin’s group model, her belief that members can more comfortably alternate between roles of leadership and acquiescence in order to allow more equitable decision-making and actions to emerge, is not clear in its justification. It is not difficult to see how group members can easily adopt more passive positions within the group when their direct engagement is not a conditional requirement within that group. But Baldwin claims further that the very fact of sitting within the physical circle configuration, enables group participants to take on key leadership roles without any additional facilitator input. This would however appear to be contingent on so many other factors exerting themselves upon a group at any given time, not to be a reliable or convincing claim in itself, and may indeed be a challenge worthy of practical study within future research.

In 7.5 in a discussion of knowledge exchange tools to support group effectiveness, the Ketso format is introduced. This is cited by its designers as a mechanism to replace a facilitator. In the tradition of non-directed, objective facilitation and explicit neutrality and transparency, Tassoul (2009) goes on to highlight this idea of almost invisible facilitation by confirming the need for group facilitator objectivity; for the facilitator not to be a problem owner or to experience any conflicts of interest. In Tassoul’s model, that tension of subjectivity, were it to exist, would significantly restrict the potential of the

78. This sense of passive expectation may be the result of our early ‘hard-wired’ emotional experiences, when as very young children we were settled on the floor in ‘story circles’ to be read to by our first school teachers. Adherence to this theory was precisely the reason, in the earlier discussed Ideas Exchange events, had been so determined to begin and end every group encounter in a circle configuration and why, in the absence of an alternative theoretical, rather than intuitive, justification, it had been so challenging to dissuade her.

group to arrive at effective new ideas or new approaches. This mantra of the need for subject, issue or topic objectivity is threaded through a great deal of the literature that attempts to define the facilitator role, and frequently cautions the consequences of not strictly maintaining these boundaries. The facilitator is therefore separate from and always outside the group in order for this role differentiation to be maintained. This tension would seem to be reconcilable through both approach and practice, but remains unresolved within Baldwin's approach, which does not recognise the significance of physical positioning in achieving visual manifestations of this separation. There is an interesting relationship here between explicit and implicit facilitation approaches where the former provides a carefully constructed route map for participant engagement and the latter handholds participants through each step of the journey.

5.4 Stage Theory

It is worth considering the wide range of theoretical models associated with group developmental processes, with most assuming that groups go through a number of phases or stages. It is accepted, for example, that when people become members of groups they tend to want to know something about the other people in the group; need to develop a degree of interdependence in order that the group can achieve its tasks; want it to feel like a good use of their time; and are prepared, at some level, to deal with conflict. The most influential model of this developmental process – certainly in terms of its impact upon texts aimed at and influencing most professional practitioners – has been that of Tuckman (1965) who created the model of the group journey that has four key and necessary phases. For Tuckman the phases are:

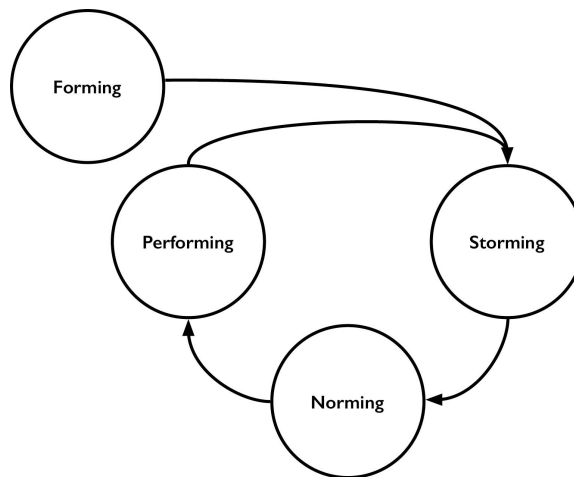


Figure 8 Tuckman's group journey model. Tuckman, 1965.

With its additional stage – adjourning – relating to the dissolution of the group. Tuckman's model is a stage theory in that it assumes that elements within systems move through a pattern of distinct stages over time, or describes a process where multiple phases lead to an outcome. Tuckman's model is therefore flexible to deviations from the path laid out, as these contexts and stages may not be rigidly defined. It is, as a result, possible within Tuckman's stage theory for individuals within the multi-stage process to revert to earlier stages or to skip some stages entirely.

So, if group development 'stages' may be missed out and other ways of naming a phase or experiences may be more appropriate, there is very likely to be overlap of the actual categories, since groups are made up of *people* and the relationships between group members and their behaviour cannot always be relied upon. According to Tuckman, this model of the developing phases takes account of that, and will therefore always find its own level within a group.

Marc Tassoul, a dutch academic and creative facilitation specialist, supports Tuckman's stage theory, describing these phases as not always exactly in line with the situation in practice. According to Tassoul, *Storming* can just as easily break out in the middle of a process when the facilitator is no longer expecting it.

... sometimes the differences in personalities and opinions are so large that the storming does not end and a good norming is never achieved. Tassoul (2009)

Tassoul, when describing the skills required by *creative facilitators*, cites this lack of predictable group behaviour at any given moment that requires:

a set of different talents than the standard one expects of a facilitator. Tassoul (2009)

Non-sequential models of group process are less prominent, suggesting that groups do not follow a prescribed sequence of developmental steps, but are instead shaped by a range of factors such as the task of decision making (Poole et al., 1985), deadlines and time restrictions (Gersick, 1988), and the external environment and internal group relations. (McCollom, 1990) This clearly has implications for improvised facilitation and the ways in which the critical interventions cannot be planned in advance.

5.5 Facilitator Interventions

This additional skill and technique requirement Tassoul refers to, relates to the advanced form of facilitation practice he knows as Creative Facilitation. This is notable in that it begins to make the distinction between facilitating *creatively* and facilitating *creativity*. To facilitate *creatively* refers to the creative skills and processes employed by the facilitator as they impact upon a group. Facilitating *creativity* refers more specifically to the process of eliciting creative responses from participants within a process. It is of course the case – but not always the case – that the two can work in tandem.

This distinction can perhaps be explained by the ways in which some facilitation delivery relies upon following a systematic series of steps proven as prompts to individual creativity, despite perhaps these prompts requiring very little creative skill, experience or flair from the facilitator themselves. Creative facilitation can therefore successfully be achieved through the use of off-the-shelf models and processes, while improvised facilitation could be seen to be

characterised by the design of processes and tools in the moment of delivery itself.

In discussing these advanced skills and techniques, Tassoul outlines the types of interventions facilitators need to make in order to maximise the potential of a group. It is interesting in the context of the distinctions outlined above, that Tassoul confines these to a set of categorised questions for the facilitator to ask in ways he describes as:

In the expert style e.g. What would that look like? How would you achieve that?

In the process style e.g. How could we best handle this?

In a pragmatic style e.g. What are the steps we need to take so we can?

In an emotional/ energetic style e.g. What does that feel like?

In the Shaman⁷⁹ or symbolic style e.g. Does anyone know of a story or example fitting this situation? Tassoul. (1999)

In supplying these examples, Tassoul recognises the inherent problem of showing group process participants ways to approach a challenge or a blockage, as opposed to creating the space for them to describe their own route forward. This has resonance with the different approaches of theatre directors and the way that Director Y might read the line themselves in the way they want the actor to mimic or reproduce it, compared to Director Z who in rehearsal is more likely to elicit the right meaning or intonation from a line by allowing the actor to explore different ways of delivering it themselves. This tension between leading versus prompting, in turn addresses the status differential within groups, which will be discussed later in 8.5, Status.

Tassoul draws our attention still further to this tension of responsibility within the group when he emphasises the need for responsibility always to be handed back to its members. This resonates with Heron's theories of moving through hierarchical and co-operative stages to autonomous facilitation. In the hierarchical mode the facilitator provides the structure through which the process is directed, exercises their power over it, and does things *for* the

79. The Shaman is referred to many times in the context of facilitation. In Chris Johnston's *House of Games* (1998) Nick Hern, in the chapter entitled *Facilitation*, the Shaman is described as a bridge to the spiritual realm. Although 'the Shaman always aims to remain in control of the visiting/inhabiting energies'.

group; leading from the front by thinking and acting on their behalf by interpreting, giving meaning and challenging resistances. In the co-operative mode, the facilitator shares authority over the learning process and guides the group toward becoming more self-directing by collaborating at every stage and by constantly negotiating outcomes. In the autonomous mode, the facilitator respects the total autonomy of the group, does not do things for them, or with them, but gives them freedom to find their own way and to then exercise their own judgment without any intervention on the part of the facilitator. There is clearly a value in incorporating all three modes at different stages in a group process journey. With perhaps that negotiation more advisedly achieved 'from the front', and only then when it is clear that such a mode is being adopted in the service of the group as a whole, for example, to further gain understanding or to make progress.

Tassoul suggests that in order to assist the group in achieving full understanding, to allow a silence to emerge in which the problem or confusion or lack of understanding is given the space in which to resolve itself. Whilst silence can be effective in the healing and sealing way described by Tassoul, his methodology does not suggest the tools through which such a silence might be supported or even guided. And it fails to consider the possible fallout from the outcomes of such silences, or offer interventions to deal with these potential challenges. This segue from hierarchical to autonomous mode needs to be facilitated carefully. The lack of a facilitator 'held' space can provide the opportunity for solutions, or new directions, or a transfer of authority to develop, but it can also create less productive circumstances in which negative reactions and disruptive behaviours emerge. Like Baldwin's idea of silence within the circle, this is notable in that it begins to identify the gaps in understanding around the impact of noise or silence on individual and group mood.

Group context impacts significantly on the successful processes of co-design and participative design, where non-designers have an equal input into the design of interactions, products and services. This was defined by Ehn (1988) as when designers and non-designers enter into a meeting of language

games with the prototyping of shared artefacts as a centerpiece of design dialogues. Sanders (2010) identifies some challenges to achieving this when she describes the problems of engaging people as a result of their perceived lack of specialist knowledge and the challenges associated with getting them, and keeping them on board, in order to achieve successful process outcomes.

Techniques of engaging people successfully in processes that recognise the different cognitive, creative and expertise level of participants will be considered in the next section where the various approaches to creative problem solving will be explored.

5.6 Virtual and Distributed Groups

Having defined the context of the group, it is perhaps briefly worth examining the challenges inherent in working with a distributed group structure, where participants are not in-sight of the facilitator and therefore require a greater dependence upon the methods of interaction – and of the facilitator responses and judgements that depend more upon hunches – generated from remote sensory data. It could perhaps be argued that this is entirely routed in improvised practice.

Increasingly researchers have come to the view that knowledge is essentially 'situated' and thus should not be detached from the situations in which it is constructed and actualised (Brown J.B & Collins, (1989). This growing interest in the idea of situated knowledge, or knowledge as it lives and grows in context, has compelled researchers to examine individual ways of knowing. Situated approaches to human learning and development are inevitably multiple and varied with different individuals maintaining their own ways of thinking irrespective of the situation they find themselves in. (Papert and Turkle, 1991)

Amin and Roberts (2008) segue into the world of distributed facilitation in their focus on virtual knowing. This chimed directly with the researcher's

experience of virtual facilitation at the first EPSRC⁸⁰ virtual Sandpit⁸¹ for which a 3D digital environment was created in order to facilitate distributed ideation processes for a group of sixteen selected participants. According to Amin and Roberts, it had only recently become the case that such virtual environments could be considered as sites of situated practice in themselves, stating:

Although, virtual interaction has been seen to enable information exchange, learning, and possibly situated knowing at the interface between face and screen, it has not been considered as an ecology of social knowing in its own right. Amin and Roberts (2008)

This supports the view that virtual communications, as they increase and generate new environments, will offer new opportunities to support the generation of knowledge. Ellis and Vasconelos (2004) call into question the need to understand that which is dependent upon social familiarity and direct engagement, to ensure the virtual environments afford greater levels of meaningful connectivity that presently exist, in for example, online databases. Amin and Roberts note that in virtual settings, learning outcomes, if any, tend to be the outcome of individual foraging rather than mutual engagement.⁸² For Amin and Roberts it is clear that this while idea of social proximity can be achieved in a virtual setting, its qualities are materially different to those of non-virtual situated knowing. To understand the way groups emerge in virtual networks is too expansive a research area for this study. However, what is clear is that in virtual networks there are clear spatial and relational limits

80. Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

81. EPSRC Creativity Greenhouse, July 2012

82. Other spaces in which virtual knowing and ideation take place (and which have huge implication for both design and designers) are the innovation-seeking crowd-sourcing websites where there is not just a readiness to share valuable knowledge and co-operate with other enthusiasts or designers, but also it would appear, an imperative to do so. Here prizes or awards are given to the the 'winning' design in websites such as www.99designs.com and www.designcrowd.co.uk at the same time as a very large number of designers are sharing their creative products in this way, for no reward at all.

which impact on the qualities of trust able to be established and developed. And this is not always a negative factor.⁸³

Amin and Roberts conclude their article with the assertion that space matters and that 'being there' draws on institutional, cultural, social, technological, cognitive, organisational, and geographical proximity when they write:

These heterogeneities of proximity should be grasped as an opportunity to rethink the nature and dynamic of space in situated knowing. Amin and Roberts (2008)

From a practice perspective, space matters enormously, as does *being there*. This notion of distributed facilitation has clear implications for the qualities of interaction between participants and facilitator, although the ways of 'being there' are surprisingly similar. This was exemplified in the virtual Sandpit when the facilitator researcher was called upon to deploy previously untapped skills and resources in order successfully to engage with and to motivate the avatars of the participants collaborating within the sensory deprived 3D environment. Initially reticent and guarded, it was a remarkably short adjustment period before, for the most part (technological glitches notwithstanding) facilitator practice emerged not discernably different from that which would have been evident in a 'face-to-face' environment.⁸⁴ The most notable difference however is the very tangible status difference that operates between facilitator and participant in the virtual environment; perhaps most easily explained since, in a 3D environment at least – and notwithstanding the possibility of the avatar specifically designed as a collection of such

83. This is illustrated by Josefsson's (2005) study of online patient groups in Sweden, which have become important forums of learning and new therapeutic knowledge, especially in relation to poorly understood illnesses. These groups, allowing dispersed patients, carers, and professionals to communicate freely and frequently with each other, have managed to influence medical policy and practice through their situated knowledge of symptoms, life circumstances, and curative support. Josefsson notes the ability of the discussions, when mediated by an experienced and sensitive manager (facilitator) and when framed by: 'a 'netiquette' of sensitive use of language, to develop a culture of engagement characterized by humour, empathy, kindness, tact, and support. This communicative culture both facilitates often painful and highly personal issues to be revealed, and lubricates learning and new knowledge formation.' Josefson (2005)

84. EPSRC Creativity Greenhouse, July 2012 Review notes September 2012

intelligences – it is only the facilitator who is ever *fully* aware of the whole group picture as it unfolds.

5.7 Summary

While a wealth of literature on facilitation exists, a great deal of it is written by practising facilitators (Bens, 2005; Ghais, 2005; Hogan, 2003; Hunter, 2007; Jenkins & Jenkins 2006; Schwarz, 2002) largely unsubstantiated by non-facilitators. Titles such as *The Art of Facilitation*, Hunter et al. (1995), *The Language of Facilitation*, Rixon (2006) and *The Biology of Facilitation*, Marcy (2013), suggest the terrain has been extensively mined, but still, there appears to be a dearth of research on the evaluation of facilitation or its effectiveness in the longer term. Studies of facilitation effectiveness appear directed at immediate ends by asking facilitators and participants at the end of interventions, what they thought made the facilitation effective. And, as will be discussed in Chapter 11, participants may not know how to respond to such a question.

Dorothy Wardale (2008) in a paper in the IAF journal of the International Association of Facilitators – *A Proposed Model for Effective Facilitation* – offers a model, limited in its vision perhaps, that used the results of interviews with 20 managers and 20 facilitators in Australia, to assert that effective facilitation is dependent upon sound planning, consideration of the context within which the facilitation takes place and the successful achievement of outcomes. Spatial considerations, setting and the context within which groups undertake process journeys continues to be of relevance to this study and the evaluation of process effectiveness will of course constitute the basis of the product of the research.

Relationship building through the establishment of trust is also key since it is recognised that individuals, clusters of individuals and groups in their entirety, are invariably reluctant to move out of the relative comfort of the territory they claim around the first seat they sit on when they enter a group process space. It takes a confident facilitator to challenge this resistance, to

get participants up on their feet and moving position in the space. An example of this was discussed in the Reflections on Practice section when the idea of risk-taking was explicitly negotiated precisely to achieve this. And Alexiou et al. (2010) introduce the notion of performance interfaces when art can assist design processes to break down such barriers and enable permission. They import an example from Mitleton - Kelly's 'Visual Dialogues' when the laughter of a senior manager in response to an image, paves the way for uncomfortable, but necessary things to be said. The next chapter will explore processes, formats and tools that contribute to creative output and through which such risk-taking can also be supported.

The table on the following page builds on the first table of themes emerging from the social theories of interaction to consider what may be extracted from theories of facilitation as they contribute to inform the next stage of the discussion.

THEME	CHAPTER	PAGE REFERENCE
Status	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Self (101) Change agent (75) Impression management (100) Process influencing responses (79) Authority (83) Gesture (97) Loss of face (97) Emotional group connections (106)
Trust	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Role theory (83) Reflexive roles (99) Perception (74) Performance (87) Preferences (83)
	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Equity (112) Relationship building (109)
Space & Resources	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Design rituals (96) Environmental relevance (103)
	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Hierarchy (106) Proximity (114)
Focus	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Inside/outside group (108) Planning (116)
Risk / Confidence	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Managing responsibility (111) Silence (112)

Figure 9 Themes emerging from chapter 5 of the literature review.

Chapter 6: Creative and Design Context for Facilitation

6.1 Introduction

At this stage of this study it will be useful to consider what is meant by creativity and to attempt to build some graspable notions of how creativity might be identified or quantified within the context of improvised facilitation.

This chapter will explore further definitions of creative interactions to consider creative intelligence, creative thinking, creative behaviours and creativity testing, before outlining a history of creative problem solving and practical applications of such methods in groups. Ways in which facilitator decisions might be informed are explored, including Mooney's 1963 four elements view of creativity, Torrance's definition, and the introduction of the 'hunch'. The chapter concludes with echoes of role theory as personality types within group settings are examined through an exploration of the Myers Briggs Personality Type Index.

Recognising the variation in definitions of creativity Kosslyn (1980) argued that *'it is not necessary to begin with a crisp definition of an entity in order to study it ... it is hard to define something one knows little about'*. The literature is peppered with references that include creativity in relation to *'intuition'* (Westcott & Ranzoni, 1963) and *'imaginative thinking'* (Cattell, 1971). Although references to creativity are often inextricably entwined with those of innovation, West and Farr (1990) offer a valuable differentiation when they assert that creativity refers to the new and novel while innovation is concerned with the application of that novelty. This distinction emphasises the notion that creativity can only be defined in relation to achievement criteria. A number of approaches will be adopted in this chapter to unpack this topic, including exploration of definitions and measurements of creativity and a range of approaches to what has become known as Creative Problem Solving.

While significant theories have been proffered in which creativity is seen

from a systems perspective, (Cziksentmihalyi 1998) a more heavily profiled model of creative interaction is Harvard Business School's Teresa Amabile's *Social Psychology of Creativity* (1983; 1988). Amabile focussed on the skills and motivations, which impact on the progress of the creativity process and held that creativity should not be interpreted as a personality trait or a generic competence but as an embedded behaviour born out of personal characteristics, cognitive abilities and social environments relating more to notions of role. Amabile's stages are bounded within a process model of creativity through which she describes three key components necessary for the creative process – domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills and task motivation – resulting in the stages of:

1. Task presentation
2. Preparation
3. Idea generation
4. Idea validation
5. Outcome assessment

This five-stage process ends at Stage 5 if the solution is accepted or rejected, but if the solution is seen to be incomplete, but demonstrating significant potential, then the process spirals back to Stage 1 when task relevant information is considered once again before moving forward.

This supports the view of approaches to creativity that present problem solving as an essentially linear process, in that in its prescribed route it is Stage 1 to which we return. This fails to take account of the more eclectic approaches to problem solving that, while always having the destination in view, may choose less consistent or predictable points of entry. This moves toward an exploration of models of creative problem solving which, through their formal sequencing of processes, offer a mechanism through which to consider the ways in which individuals move through imaginative and cognitive stages to add value within a problem solving challenge.

According to Theresa Amabile, creativity is viewed as the development of ideas that are unique or novel and that have useful applications where the ‘standard action’ is not appropriate. (Amabile, 1983). The terms creativity and innovation are frequently indistinguishable from each other in everyday discourse and are often used interchangeably, therefore definitions of creativity are extensive and diverse. A usefully accessible definition can perhaps be extracted from the educationalist and creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson’s most watched of all time ⁸⁵ TED talk, in which he defines creativity succinctly as *‘Having original ideas that have value’*.

Ken Robinson has contributed to the discourse on the creative individual for a number of decades, bemoaning the fate of naturally creative children as they enter the formal restrictions of mechanistic education systems. Bohm (1998) also observes that a child *‘spends his first year in a wonderful creative way’* before growing older and discovering that this creativity is no longer accessible to them. Schultz (2001) concurs when writing *‘unfortunately, the traditional Western, industrial-oriented education does not promote creativity. In fact, it irons most of the creative wrinkles out of our cerebra’*.

Davis & Scase, (2000) refer to a ‘constructive discontent’ describing the ways in which creative people can be perceived to embrace problem solving – to enjoy taking risks. Bohm characterises creativity as insightful perception, an attentive, alert and sensitive approach to the environment and to the seizing of problems and opportunities; concepts that will be explored in later chapters directly relating to the study of spatial implications of group encounters.

Thinking about this in the context of improvised facilitation, Malcolm Gladwell (2005) supports the view of Davis and Scase when he describes improvisation as making complex decisions in the moment. What is particularly challenging about improvisation, Gladwell suggests, is its apparent nature of randomness and chaos. This idea of improvised facilitation as fluid and difficult to define in ways that could be perceived as random or chaotic,

85. With more than 28 million views at the time of writing, June 2014
www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity?

appeared in relation to the researcher's own practice when a participant evaluation comment received after an intensive five-day improvised programme declared:

*What I loved was the slipping and sliding around the issues, parallel ideas were emerging at all times. It was hard. This isn't facilitation, what you do, it's about making folds and turns, occluding, stopping and shaping.*⁸⁶

Gladwell discussed this idea of thin-slicing and rapid cognition as:

the instantaneous capture of essential information in order to make sophisticated judgements; that moment when it is a body of intuitive knowledge that determines a decision. (Gladwell 2005)

6.2 Creative Intelligence or Creative Behaviour?

In the introduction to a major study entitled, *Designing for the 21st Century* (2007), Professor Tom Inns outlines a suite of six emergent roles for designers of the future. These roles clearly span notions, processes and practices of creativity when seen as a whole:

- Designer as negotiator of value
- Designer as facilitator of thinking
- Designer as visualizer of the intangible
- Designer as navigator of complexity
- Designer as mediator of stakeholders
- Designer as coordinator of exploration

But Inns' roles also speak directly to facilitators of creativity and ideation with their emphasis on confronting complexity within interdisciplinary contexts; mobilising and energising outputs; communicating and making easy; juggling ambiguity; managing relationships; and synthesising and corralling all contributions. All of which are addressed in some way through this study.

Creativity and the generation of new ideas has also been described in relation to various processes of thought and experience. This is summarised by Ryhammer & Brodin (1999) to include thinking in opposites, analogies and metaphors, inspiration, intelligence, various processes of mental

86. Highwire DTC Deepdive evaluation comment. February 2013

representation, intuition, specific perception processes, problem finding and problem solving. When considering the impact of improvised facilitation for knowledge exchange it is difficult to separate notions of creativity from that of intelligence and therefore a brief overview of studies of creativity and intelligence will be included here.

The study of intelligence research was launched by Guilford's (1950) examination of the limitations of intelligence tests and his investigation of 'divergent thinking'. A study of prominent creative people was also carried out which included the work of MacKinnon, 1975, Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976, and Simonton, 1984. This report studied much narrower personality traits or dispositions correlated either positively or negatively with creativity, such as dogmatism, conformism, narcissism, frustration, resilience and elation. From this particular strand of creativity research, the creative person can, it seems, be described as exhibiting characteristics, as summarised by Brolin (1992) as:

strong motivation	strong self-confidence
endurance	openness to impressions from within and without
intellectual curiosity	high sensitivity
deep commitment	attracted to complexity and obscurity
independence in thought and action	high capacity for emotional involvement in their investigation
strong desire for self-realisation	
strong sense of self	

Relating those characteristics to what might be seen as key to the practice of facilitation with a significant improvised component leads to three of the above characteristics being highlighted by the researcher:

- intellectual curiosity
- independence in thought and action
- strong self-confidence

The high capacity for emotional involvement is notable but only in as much as it might refer to the demonstration and execution of emotionally intelligent decisions within groups and again will be discussed later in relation to intuition and empathy.

It was Guilford who then developed a tool for measuring the extent of divergent thinking, which he later developed into the concept of 'divergent production' (Guilford, 1967). Variations of Guilford's work include the Torrance tests of creative thinking (1966, 1974), which have permeated school contexts, particularly in the United States where tests have been used to assess pupils' creative thinking. This approach was influenced heavily by Mooney's (1963) 'four elements' view of creativity, which defined it as encompassing specific aspects of the environment (place) of creation, the product as an outcome of creativity, the process of creation and the person doing the creating.

These tests have, however, come under harsh criticism for measuring intelligence-related factors rather than creativity itself, and for being affected too easily by external circumstances. Torrance, 1974 and Amabile, 1983 claim that creativity cannot be absolutely defined, because it is unknown and cannot be known, which suggests obvious problems regarding measurement as reflected in Mumford and Gustafson's (1988) *Creativity Syndrome*. Torrance (1974) further defined creativity as the process of sensing a problem, searching for possible solutions, drawing hypotheses, testing and evaluating, and communicating the results to others. Torrance added that the process includes original ideas, a different point of view, breaking out of the mould, re-combining ideas or seeing new relationships among ideas.

It has also been suggested that the test procedure purely measures 'creativity on request' as opposed to creativity in daily life. Others, however, consider the tests to have proved to be useful estimates of the potential for creative thought. (Bachelor & Michael, 1997)

6.3 Models of Creative Problem Solving (CPS)

Alex Osborn (1963, 1983) was the first to coin the phrase 'Creative Problem Solving' as a description of the process he outlined following his observations of how new ideas emerge. Osborn is the originator of brainstorming, founder of the Creative Education Foundation (CEF) and co-founder of a highly successful New York advertising agency.

Earlier, problem identification and problem definition were seen by Einstein & Infeld (1938) as fundamental to creative thinking when they asserted:

The formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution, which may be merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old questions from a new angle, require creative imagination and marks real advance in science.

Before both of these contributions to the debate, Wallas (1926) in his book *The Art of Thought* offered a four-stage model of creative thought, the stages of which were:

1. Preparation: where problems are addressed and goals clarified
2. Incubation: where fully conscious work on the problem is suspended
3. Illumination: the 'eureka' moment when the spark of the solution comes into focus
4. Verification: where the application of logical and rational ways of thinking convert the spark into a workable solution.

Although Wallas' model can be said to have influenced both literature and common sense assumptions of creativity and innovation, there has been significant consensus that the model is too rigid (Olton & Johnson, 1976 and King, 1990), and that its relevance to the study of creativity and innovation is limited as a result of its singular focus on the cognitive approach to problem solving.

Another 1980's study from Min Basadur et al., (1982) suggested a creative problem-solving model that dismantled the process into three rather more pragmatic stages of:

1. Problem Finding
2. Problem Solving
3. Solution Implementation.

Basadur (1982) proposed that at each of these three stages a two-way process of idea evaluation occurs, where ideation refers to the generation of all the ideas and evaluation describes the application of rational judgement to identify the *best* ideas. Although this can perhaps be seen as a more dynamic proposal than Wallas' model, the lack of theoretical underpinning of the concept has prompted little response from other researchers.

The CPS model is usually presented as five steps, but sometimes a preliminary step is added entitled Mess-Finding, which involves locating a challenge or problem to which to apply the model. The total six stages are:

1. Mess-finding (Objective Finding)
2. Fact-finding
3. Problem-Finding
4. Idea-finding
5. Solution finding (Idea evaluation)
6. Acceptance-finding (Idea implementation)

These steps guide the creative process in order eventually to produce one or more creative, workable solutions. A distinctive feature is that each step first involves a divergent thinking phase in which lots of ideas are generated, followed by a convergent phase in which only the most promising ideas are selected for further exploration. This echoes the Min Basadur (1982) perspective of identifying the *best ideas*.

For Bohm (1998) creativity comes from an act of perception where

one first becomes aware (generally non-verbally) of a new set of relevant differences and one begins to feel, or to notice, a new set of similarities,

which do not come merely from past knowledge, either in the same field or in a different field.

And, a link to creative bravery from Schön (1963) when he writes:

the formation of new concepts always requires us to break the settled ways of looking at things, to 'come apart' with respect to them, prior to the formation of a new concept.

Tassoul, leader of the Delft University of Technology programme in Creative Problem Solving, in his chapter on process facilitation in the book *Creative Facilitation (2009)*, discusses the role of the facilitator and the need for the facilitator to recognise what Tassoul refers to as '*certain social phenomena in order to make decisions about the right sort of interventions*'. He outlines four 'systems' to describe the nature of interactions within the group:

1. The group members and their mutual relation and interaction
2. The group members individually, and individually in relation to the group
3. The group and the facilitator as a joint unity in relation to the organisation by which all were invited
4. The group, the facilitator, and the organisation in relation to the outside world such as a market in which the session results need to be implemented. (Tassoul 2009)

In relation to these four systems Tassoul advocates an optimum group size of six to eight participants when such participants are the correct balance between diverse disciplines. This group size, according to Tassoul, provides the opportunity for a breadth of ideas and opinions to emerge, while retaining a sense of what he refers to as 'intimacy'. He goes on emphatically to state that effective facilitation operates within these group size parameters, and is clear in his view that it should be only be by exception, that a very experienced facilitator should consider working with '*slightly larger groups*'.⁸⁷

87. This is an interesting observation in relation to the researcher's facilitation practice experience as it is rarely that such work would take place in groups of less than say, sixteen, and much more likely that the group size would be closer to thirty.

Tassoul describes the implied vested authority of the facilitator, and refers to the need for trust to be generated within the group to enable the facilitator to fulfil this conferred role. Tassoul, in a creative facilitation training workshop in September 2013, offered an interesting perspective on the energy brought to bear upon groups by individuals, when he described the centre of gravity of energy. Compelling facilitators to forget about personality types and instead to embrace notions of introversion and extraversion as verbs, Tassoul urged: *‘Do it, it’ll cost you more energy, but go there’*.⁸⁸

Key in these approaches is the connection emerging between optimizing creativity and problem solving. Cruickshank and Evans (2012) refer to the description of facilitation in this context as that of maximising ‘process gains’ and of minimising the ‘process losses’ they attribute to dysfunctional behaviour necessary as part of the process of moving groups toward agreed aims. The facilitator description they use is a reassuring one, that of a neutral guiding hand willing to walk on uncertain ground, and as such is almost spiritual in its use of language and imagery. Cruickshank and Evans build on Osborn’s convergent and divergent CPS approach with their Designing Creative Frameworks (DCF) conceptual model of a series of iterative and interrelated activities with the four key stages outlined as Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver.

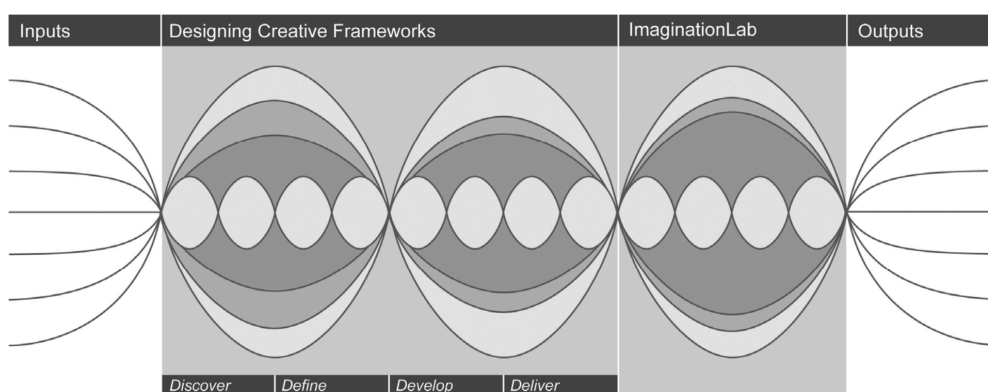


Figure 10 DCF conceptual model.

88. Delivered as part of the CX Knowledge Exchange Conference programme of events, LICA, Lancaster, 2013

In Clustering: An essential step from divergence to convergence, (Tassoul and Bujis 2007), the authors propose the view that clustering needs to be seen as a separate step in their previously endorsed CPS diamond. They claim that it is not enough for this process to be seen as merely a selection activity, but rather to be considered as key in expanding knowledge and in building shared understanding through creative and participative sense-making.

In Osborn's 1993 Creative Problem Solving CPS model, clustering was a component of the convergent stage, proposing clustering as a discrete but seamless bridge between the divergent and convergent stages. In what the authors refer to as 'CPS Revisited', Tassoul and Bujis's (2007) new model has three diamonds: problem statement, idea generation and concept development, with what they describe as 'the solution space' of the second diamond stretched even further to generate more possibilities.

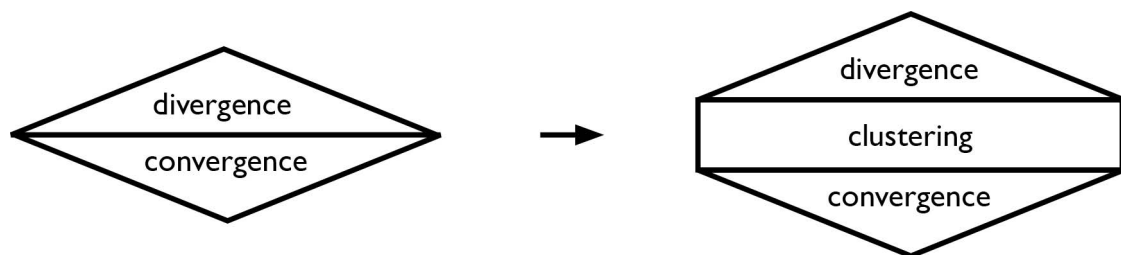


Figure 11 Tassoul and Bujis CPS revisited.

Clustering, like so many aspects of idea generating processes is about postponing judgement to allow the idea grouping to emerge intuitively, either with facilitation, by participant management, or a combination of both. Tassoul and Bujis describe this stage as:

a complicated social process, where it's difficult to define which part is based on content considerations and which part is based in group dynamics. (Tassoul and Bujis 2007)

The third diamond of the revisited 'CPS model' – Concept Development – is materially different from the other two in both ambition and outcome. This

stage is focussed on design and development, what Vanosmael and Be Rruyn (1990) categorised as ‘Form Creativity’ as opposed to ‘Vision Creativity’, that is to say, bringing the idea to life through refinement and through considerations of application. Distinction is made between three main subjects to develop the concept itself, acceptance finding, in other words the idea or concept in a social, political and business context, and implementation planning: the activities necessary to implement the idea in the real world.

Tassoul and Bujis (2007) advocate the use of metaphorical cluster names at this stage of the process by asking participants to cluster what they have generated, not in obvious groupings but in metaphorical ones. But the use of metaphor in this way clearly has important political and cultural significance and does not come risk-free, requiring as it does, a shared understanding of these values and embedded cultural assumptions in order to be effective. Tassoul concludes his thinking on process facilitation with his assertion that:

The basic rule for a facilitator is to be alert and figure out the right structure and guidelines on the spot. You will be able to select between existing techniques and the ones that come about due to the inspiration of the moment; learning to apply them fluently will give you the ease of a successful facilitator. Being alert also means that you develop a sixth sense of what goes on in a group so that you can deal with this adequately and select and introduce the right type of intervention. (Tassoul 2009)

Attempting to make this notion of ‘sixth sense’ more graspable, later in the study, following a discussion of knowledge, wisdom and insight, the key determinant of *Intuition* emerges.

Parallels can be drawn with McWaters (2006) who offers her set of facilitation techniques discussed in the Improvisation section of this Literature Review in 4.6.2.ii Spontaneity.

Chris Johnston’s (2006) diagrammatic representation of his improvisation methodology – The Fish – has echoes of the diverging and converging diamonds of Osborn’s CPS model, beginning as it does with a broad start, converging on a central idea, then developing that idea through a divergent

and convergent diamond, before finally editing it into a final piece.

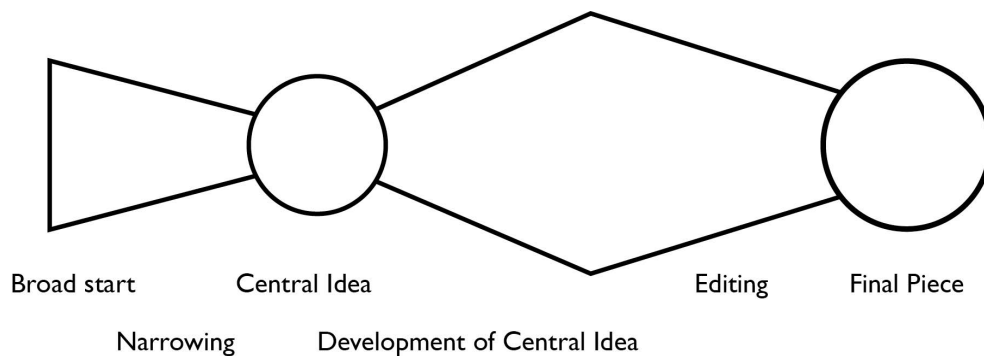


Figure 12 Chris Johnson's fish model. 2006.

Johnston's description of this unfolding process suggests the luxury of time and reflection. The same series of cognitive processes characterise *any* improvised response. It appears that it is the time frame that is contracted here into a tighter period of rapid decision-making and action. This is undoubtedly necessary in the facilitation of group ideation where it could be said to be 'the hunch' – a feeling or guess based on intuition rather than fact – that is the key decision-making driver.

6.4 Personalities Types and their Impact on Groups

Inevitably, personality type will influence group outcome – either through a more dominant participant taking control, or a more passive contributor not doing so. Notwithstanding the personality type of the facilitator, there is clearly a tangible advantage to the tools of facilitation being deployed to ensure all the personality types within the group are encouraged to engage fully in such a process ensuring decision-making is born out of consensus building.

When considering the impact that a range of personalities within a group might exert upon such decisions, it is worth reflecting on the evidence of personality testing. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator [MBTI] (Myers & MacCaulley, 1985) is an influential test of personality type that evolved from

Jung's distinctions between extraversion-introversion (E-I), thinking-feeling (T-F), and sensation-intuition (S-N) and is laid alongside Isabel Myers' distinction between judging and perceiving (J-P) where the J-P distinction measures an individual's orientation to the outside world and to what extent that is defined by the rational (judging) or the irrational (perceiving) orientation.

MBTI identifies 16 personality types supporting Jung's belief that we are all born with a predisposition for a particular type, and is used as a diagnostic and support tool in a number of applications including job recruitment, counselling, education and coaching. While researchers such as Thompson & Borrello (1986) capture evidence of the robustness and validity of the model, The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator can be challenged for the narrowness of the spectrum across the 16 groups that can inevitably result in broad-brush groupings of very different people, most apparent at the extremities of, for example, the introversion and extraversion continuum.

This acknowledgement of the impact of personality type is recognised by Tassoul and Bujis (2007) when they describe the most important consideration in achieving the objectives of the 'revisited CPS' model as:

...intervene, e.g. by inviting more introverted people to participate more and to propose reflection stages at regular intervals. Tassoul and Bujis (2007)

still however, at this stage, a reference to standard interventions that equate more closely to the more traditional skill-sets of traditional group facilitation.

6.5 Summary

These creative problem solving processes have been adopted and used by many practitioners since their emergence, and definitions of 'divergence' and 'convergence' have become the bread-and butter vocabulary of ideation in a raft of differently interpreted mechanisms and exercises. May (1975) suggested that an artist or a creative scientist usually feels no anxiety or fear, or even if afraid, does the work regardless – a risk taker who does not allow fears of failure to get in the way. This view that creative people have an

intense interest in problems and embrace a risk-embracing route to their solution, might be seen to relate to the improvised approach to facilitation through accessing, what Bohn describes as ‘feeling’ and what Tassoul refers to as sixth-sense.

Wallas’ four-stage model offers the process of suspension of conscious work to produce the illumination stage that ignites the spark that only then, after being subjected to rigour, can be converted into the solution, as determined by the goal-setting stage.

Much more flexibility exists within the CPS variants where maximising creativity for problem-solving is the primary driver. This pressure constantly to innovate has led to the development of a wide variety of design tools to support facilitated practice.

An understanding of the idea of creatively intuiting can be seen to be fundamental to a consideration of how facilitators might approach processes with a significant improvised component. The next chapter will look at a range of tools and formats that have been, and continue to be developed, through which to support this taking of creative and strategic risks that echo the intellectual curiosity, independence of thought and action, and the strong self-confidence identified through these studies.

And although Torrance’s definition has been influential and is still considered by some to have value, it can be seen to be tied to a psychometric approach that has been widely criticised and is largely considered outmoded now. However this sequence can nonetheless be seen directly to conform to the stages engaged in by an improvising facilitator working with a group, and is perhaps exemplified by the ideation stages discussed in the earlier reflections on practice.

The table below extracts the relevant themes from Chapter 6 to build a picture of what the literature is revealing to support the continued development of this study.

THEME	CHAPTER	PAGE REFERENCE
Status	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Self (101) Change agent (75) Impression management (100) Process influencing responses (79) Authority (83) Gesture (97) Loss of face (97) Emotional group connections (106)
	Chapter 6 Creative and design context for facilitation	Vested authority (131)
Trust	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Role theory (83) Reflexive roles (99) Perception (74) Performance (87) Preferences (83)
	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Equity (112) Relationship building (109)
Space & Resources	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Design rituals (96) Environmental relevance (103)
	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Hierarchy (106) Proximity (114)
Focus	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Inside/outside group (108) Planning (116)
	Chapter 6 Creative and design context for facilitation	Independence (123) Rational judgment (126) Solution finding (120) Form creativity (130) Non standard action (121)
Risk / Confidence	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Managing responsibility (111) Silence (112)
	Chapter 6 Creative and design context for facilitation	Constructive discomfort (122) Self confidence (127) Anxiety / fear (132)
Spontaneity / Play	Chapter 6 Creative and design context for facilitation	Divergent production (124) Embedded behaviours (120) Problem solving (119) Curiosity (123) Creative thought (125) Metaphor (122) The spark (133)
Knowledge Wisdom & Insight	Chapter 6 Creative and design context for facilitation	Creativity (119) Randomness and chaos (121) Interventions (127) Energy (128) Insightful perception (121) Design thinking (136)

Figure 13 Themes emerging from chapter 6 of the literature review.

Chapter 7: Knowledge Exchange Tools, Formats and Resources

7.1 Introduction and landscape scanning

Falling out of this design context there is a proliferation of models and approaches to the practical realisation of facilitated sessions through the introduction of tools – some configured in-the-moment, some bespoke, some adaptable and some lifted straight off shelves and called into use. This chapter will capture some illustrative approaches of these tools and will conclude with considerations of the impact of imagining and reflecting.

Within the domain of tools, formats, and elements for knowledge exchange, there is a relatively small amount of validated or peer reviewed data. As a result, it has been necessary to explore less conventional, ephemeral and sometimes maverick publications that have included websites, unpublished journals, tool-kits, card packs, company annual reports, theses, conference proceedings and official documents not published commercially.

The challenge of working with this ‘grey’ literature was addressed by Richard Huffine, the National Library Co-ordinator for the U.S. Geological Survey, who in a report in 2010 identified the implications of the digital age having undermined the notion of ‘published’. Huffine asserts that non-publishers can produce valid research while recognising the undisputed truth that publishers can release invalid research just as easily. For Huffine, every source should be considered in the comprehensive exploration of an issue; in some research domains the very best source of information may be grey, and reassuringly, that in Huffine’s experience, grey literature frequently goes through as stringent a review as commercially published content.

Just such an example of grey literature is the IDEO open source *Human-Centred Design Toolkit* which aims to provide NGOs and social enterprises with aids to human-centred design through processes for listening and

workshop design and techniques for bringing ideas to life. If design thinking can be described as *'a methodology that imbues the full spectrum of innovation activities with a human-centered design'* (Brown 2008) design tools can perhaps best be summed up as: *'indispensable tools for transforming designers' intuitions, hunches and small discoveries into something that stays – for instance, a prototype, product, or system'*. (Koskinen 2011) This study is interested in how hunches and intuitions can determine what such tools are and precisely what the purpose of such tools is.

Brown, the CEO of the design and innovation company IDEO writes about the power to be unleashed by pulling design out of the studio:

to unleash its disruptive, game-changing potential. Brown (2011)

Brown suggests the reason for this move toward design thinking is the changing focus from manufacturing to knowledge creation and service delivery and that *'innovation has become nothing less than a survival strategy'*. He is talking about innovation in terms of both the products and the processes of communication and collaboration. As far as Brown is concerned, this natural evolution from design to design thinking, is a recognition that design has become too important to be left to designers. In the article, Brown asserts that tools are needed by designers to move through three key stages he describes as:

the "three spaces of innovation": "inspiration," the problem or opportunity that motivates the search for solutions; "ideation," the process of generating, developing, and testing ideas; and "implementation," the path that leads from the project room to the market. Brown, T and Katz, B (2011)

Brown focuses on putting people first by advocating observing them in the different settings they inhabit *'as they improvise their way through their daily lives'*; to watch what people do, and more specifically, to connect with these people in a way Brown describes as requiring *'empathy'* to translate these improvisations into insights.

In 2009, Brown⁸⁹ claimed that the challenge with design is that although it has the potential to tackle a wide range of problems, it has also enshrined itself in a introspective position. In this interview Brown confidently asserts his two tenets of '*co-creating design solutions for people in need*' and '*intuition is an important part of design thinking*' both of which signal the value of improvised responses.

Facilitators employ a raft of resources in their approach to the job of facilitating. The space they operate within is a resource that affords them many possibilities for spatial configurations that can support, or indeed undermine, their objectives. Time is also a resource in that temporal considerations and restraints critically inform when and how processes unfold, and it could reasonably be asserted that it is this context of space and time within which it is possible to place all other potential resources.

7.2 Engaging with and Classifying the tools

In his book *Creative Facilitation*, Marc Tassoul outlines his case for the need to play in order better to engage in the serious business of generating ideas. Some resources clearly offer greater potential for play or for increasing or accelerating engagement. When making the decision of how to approach a facilitation task the facilitator will engage at some point on a spectrum of possibilities that might include:

- (i) script-supported delivery
- (ii) off-the-shelf models and processes
- (iii) generic and bespoke prompts
- (iv) familiar frames of reference
- (v) responding within the context of a process structure
- (vi) the design of all processes and tools in the moment of delivery itself

89. In an interview with Bruce Nussbaum from The New School (www.newschool.edu/parsons)

Examples of resources within these categories will be briefly outlined by their potential applications, benefits and restrictions. In all cases the researcher has had direct experience of the use of the tools as either an observer or practitioner in the situations and contexts the tools were designed for.

James Kern Feibleman, in 1967, in a paper entitled *The Philosophy of Tools* appropriated the word artifacts to describe material objects that have undergone change as a result of human agency, defining two kinds of artifacts: tools and signs. Tools are described as the material objects used to *alter* other material objects with signs relating to material objects employed to *refer* to other material objects.

Feibleman suggests that tools can also be employed to bring about change in oneself, offering the example of '*surgical instruments which alter his physiological mechanism to works of art which affect his aesthetic sensibilities*'. Thus Feibleman can be seen to be using the term tool synonymously to include apparatus, device, instrument, appliance, utensil, vehicle, machine, and engine.

Most interestingly Feibleman goes on to assert that not unlike genetic inheritance, there is a cultural inheritance relating to the design and use of tools:

The rhythm of succession and replacement, of destruction and substitution, takes place in an even flow of continuous development. In some cultures men have preserved the same tools and their use so that replacement is almost unrecognizable generation after generation for hundreds and even thousands of years. In other cultures the rate of advance has been so rapid at times that tools only serve as models for their improvement. In both cases there is an internal and an external inheritance. The internal inheritance transmits capacities. The external inheritance transmits the skills to make tools and to use them. Feibleman 1967.

For Feibleman tools are ideas that are externalised and materialised. This idea of tools suggesting that as with, the user of the tool, what is true of the tool also becomes to some extent true of its user.

Thus the more advanced the function the more the burden of it is lifted from the man and assumed by the tool. He has objectified his skill in the artifact which extends and accelerates it.

Learning is therefore seen to focus upon eliciting responses to tools. The capacity to respond selecting the desired responses, then tools designed to elicit those responses. Feibleman concludes that this process is most apparent in works of art when the artist, wanting to elicit a particular response, ‘*designs the work of art, a painting, say, which will produce this response*’ in turn producing similar responses in others who view the work.

7.3 Knowledge Exchange Context

This proliferation of category definitions relates to a range and breadth of toolkits that is constantly expanding. Cruickshank, Whitham and Morris (2012) in a paper for the 2012 International Design Management Conference describe a number of tools they have designed for knowledge exchange and list an impressive number of those designed by others. The authors consider the challenges inherent in designing second order tools and mechanisms to support the design of new approaches by people who are unfamiliar with this way of working. They describe the need for ‘fuzzy’ tools to be brought in to sharp focus by their imaginative uses and applications. They hold that a good Knowledge Exchange (KE) design toolkit should:

Include a useable prescribed (exemplar) KE process to allow toolkit users to try it out. Encourage departure from the prescribed structure and implementation by providing the rationale for the design decisions behind the exemplar require different degrees of departure from the prescribed structure at different stage. (Cruickshank, Whitham and Morris 2012)

The authors conclude that there is a real need to research this area in greater detail in order fully to exploit the potential of learning and collaboration across sectors and across disciplines.

Elizabeth Sanders (2010), an Associate Professor in the department of design at the Ohio State University and founder of MakeTools, a company that

'explores new spaces in the emerging design landscapes',⁹⁰ describes the way in which design tools can be brought together and further developed in their application in the sort of co-design laboratories first proposed by Binder and Brandt (2008) or the collaboratoriums advocated by Buur and Bødker (2000). In these encounters collaborative explorations of the everyday practices of people produce design dialogues as a result of the employment of forum theatre, various design games and mock-up and prototyping techniques. These techniques are employed to overcome the previously identified challenge of engaging non-designers who may suffer from a sense of inexperience or lack of relevant expertise, or even whose natural preferences create a barrier to this level of engagement.

A number of toolkits have been designed deliberately to engage such participants in the co-design process. Mattelmakki (2006) and Westerlund (2009) have built upon William W. Gaver's (1999) cultural probes tradition to combine probing and prototyping. In response to this proliferation of tools and toolkits Sanders proposes a framework to enable facilitators to decide what tool to deploy at key stages in the process. Sanders framework is also significant in that it provides insight into the gaps and omissions into which tools and processes need to be developed.

Before introducing this framework, Sanders offers some definitions that will prove helpful throughout the remainder of this study. For Sanders these definitions relate to Participatory Design (PD) and define tools as the material components of PD activities; a toolkit as a collection of tools that are used in combination to serve a specific purpose; a technique describing how the tools and toolkits are brought to life, for example, the sorting, categorising, prioritising, story/collage/conversation building uses of a deck of image cards to spark conversations. A method is described by Sanders as a strategic combination of tools, kits and techniques to address a particular purpose and

90. Taken from the description on the company website January 2015
<http://www.maketools.com/about.html>

an approach defines the unperpinning mindset e.g. one that is participatory and that assumes that all people are capable of making creative contributions. Sanders framework (Appendix C) has three dimensions:

- **form**: the action taking place between participants
- **purpose**: why the activities are taking place in 4 for probing/priming/to capture experience or ideation
- **context**: where and how and includes group size and venue.

Appendix C shows how the tools discussed in this section align on Sanders axes of both definition and dimension.

7.4 Materials

Eriksen (2009), in a reaction to the ubiquitous phrase ‘design materials’, uses the term ‘content materials’ to outline the role performed by design tools in knowledge exchange events. In the context of design anthropology, Joachim Halse’s (2008) use of the term ‘design materials’ broadly refers to the non-human agents engaged in co-designing. Eriksen cleaves a distinction with her content materials term, enabling a clearer motivation firmly to place diverse ‘content materials’ within the co-design situation as the medium through which participants are invited to play, to explore and to negotiate meaning with participants.

Content materials are the materials engaged in exploring the field, topics, problems and/or challenges of specific projects and Eriksen defines three categories of such content materials by introducing the idea of ‘delegated playmates’, ‘delegated advocates’, and ‘delegated handymen; holding that it is the *staging* for these different materials that is key to their effective use, and it is this staging that she refers to as *formats*.

Delegated Playmates are seen by Eriksen to enable exploration by being invited into events, a concept which justifies, for her, their definition as ‘delegated playmates’.

These tools are presented in help-yourself, all-you-can-use ‘buffets’ of useable and changeable materials e.g. fabrics, paper, card, wood, pipe cleaners, magazines, disposable cups, scrap, found objects, balloons and random board game components.

Within this category Eriksen includes selected printed images, artefacts, stories from current practice, access to selected video-clips etc. These can also be characterized as *field/topic/project specific*, if they have been chosen or created specifically within the project or if they relate to the overall topics and issues of the project and are ‘invited’ into the event by organisers or other participants, but without a specific pre-assigned idea about their meaning and use in the co-design situation.

Delegated Handymen

To manipulate and connect these content materials Eriksen defines as delegated handymen the tools for measuring, cutting, shaping, moulding, colouring and sticking.

Eriksen makes a distinction between these two categories and the pre-designed content materials brought along to a co-design situation, usually by a designer, with a clear sense of how they will be used. Recognising that these pre-designed materials might also be open-ended in their use, with a degree of flexibility both in their application and their potential adaptation by participants, she refers to these as delegated advocates. In making this distinction Eriksen identifies a relationship between skills; in that there is a different participant reaction to what is available or invited into the situation from what is collaboratively *materialised* and *rematerialised*.

This idea of the delegated role of content materials suggests that because of the varied expectations, interests and perspectives of participants, if the materials are not staged in the way Eriksen indicates, then the pre-designed proposal will inevitably be seen to have greater significance and will therefore result in a shift in the balance of status within what should be a deliberately

inclusive encounter.

The potential for the iterative cycle of the content materials is worth noting here in that, as with a range of co-design approaches, the materialised or re-materialised outputs from an event have the potential to become democratic content materials fuelling the next iteration.

7.5 Examples of facilitator support tools

The continuum of tools designed to support facilitator decision making ranges from the intensively scripted, highly prescribed and engineered ThinkLets model, Kolfschoten (2006) a collaboration pattern language to enable facilitators to '*perform rigorous quality analyses on the fly.*' through to core kits, adapted by facilitators to enable in-situ design of processes in the moment of delivery. The obvious uses and applications of the two-dimensional cards for fragment capture, ideation, feedback, signage, axes construction, process tracking, ticketing etc. is enhanced by these components being used as on-the-fly responses to creative opportunity, to create 'dance cards', origami flyers, fortune tellers, stand-up session menus, narrative cubes, boxes, fans, speaker-tents, costumes and story board books. What this immediacy of response lacks however, is anything beyond the basic serendipity of design, meaning that the absence of a bounded or framing aesthetic does not always position the content in the way that would serve it best for at least some of its consumers.

Leon Cruickshank writes extensively about the development of tools for knowledge exchange and with Martyn Evans (2012) defines, in one of the four stages of their approach to designing what they call an Imagination Lab, Deliver, the need to design materials they list as prompts, exemplars, proformas, examples etc. For Cruickshank and his team at Imagination Lancaster these prompts and proformas are design artefacts; items of painstaking consideration and execution, designed and realised to exacting quality standards.

Along this continuum, there are processes such as Ketso⁹¹ which evolved from a ESRC⁹² funded project⁹³ to become a workshop in a bag. These leaf and branch shaped reusable templates alongside felt mats and a set of voting icons use a growth metaphor to support a relentlessly folksy design aesthetic; coloured leaf shapes somewhat reminiscent of the children's making kit, Fuzzy Felt, can be built into 'thought-trees' that are supplied with free workshop plans. The inventor's claim for the kit is that it makes creative engagement available to more people without what they describe as '*the need for expensive facilitators*'. This is an interesting assertion if it can be proven, notwithstanding the association of the two concepts of facilitator and expensive revealing a worrying assumption or expectation.

A number of creativity tools are formatted as a deck of cards. Cards are relatively cheap to produce, are tactile and in most cases portable. Example card packs include:

- Roger von Oech's *Creative Whack Pack*, a pack of 64 cards, each featuring a different strategy. Some highlight places to find new information. Others provide techniques to generate new ideas.
- Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies*, originally released in 1975, this deck contains over one hundred cards presenting a question, dilemma, or new way of thinking.
- IDEO's 51-card pack of *Method Cards* to equip design teams better to understand the needs of the people they are designing for.

There are significant cultural influences and inferences associated with packs of playing cards and the cultural capital that draws on playing cards' myth and history, glamour and danger (Perry 1966). While retaining the

91. www.ketso.com

92. Economic and Social Research Council

93. After two decades of action research across the globe – their website claim is that has been used on every continent apart from Antarctica. The Ketso research was short-listed for the 2007 Michael Young Prize and the UK Sustainable Development Commission's Breakthrough Ideas for the 21st Century. Since 1995 it has been used internationally and for strategic development with UK local authorities, in over half of the UK's universities and with a wide range of companies.

coherence of the basic structure, card packs also have the ability to be shuffled and are therefore imbued with the alchemy of randomness.

Pragmatically, it is of course challenging to fit complex ideas onto a playing card sized space; the limited text and absence of graphics on the Playgen cards assumes a base understanding of what is being suggested, highlighting the challenge of their exclusive use, unsupported as they frequently are by skilled facilitation.

Ubiquitous objects of reference are a key element in the facilitation armoury. (Medin et al. 1994) documents that that such familiarity can reduce participant anxieties within group situations, perhaps exemplified by introducing, into a formal group situation, a ‘toy’ that it would have been difficult to have previously avoided contact with such as lego bricks. The LEGO Serious Play (LSP)⁹⁴ technique provides an experience in which participants combine kinesthetic and visual sense with verbal acuity in a facilitated workshop through the building of symbolic models that convert metaphor and insight into three-dimensional objects to create stories that contribute to the production, reproduction, transformation, and deconstruction of organisational values and beliefs.

An LSP workshop typically takes from half-a-day to two days and begins with an immersion in the practice of building the models. This, since most people will have played with the pieces at some time in their childhood, is surprisingly harder than it sounds; perhaps precisely *because* people have played with it as some time in their childhood. At an observed workshop there was a tangible, initial reluctance to touch the bricks, until this was overcome when each participant undertook the first modeling exercise with both hands and a clutch of bricks behind their back. This was a powerfully effective

94. In 1999, Robert Rasmussen, director of research and development for the educational division of LEGO, joined the separate subsidiary, Executive Discovery, and led the development of LSP methodology. The methodology was brought to market, in 2002 and in 2004, LEGO merged Executive Discovery into LEGO and the community-based, open-source business model for LSP was launched in 2010 and made available under a Creative Commons licence.

process and one that, in its ability to short-circuit acts of creative bravery and boldness, is one that can be reproduced in other, non LSP related settings. LSP could be seen to have emerged at the fulcrum of theories of constructionism, play, imagination and hand-mind connection. This resonates with Donald Schön (1971) who wrote about metaphor an important mechanism for storytelling to generate new ways of understanding, and thus play an active, constructive and creative role in human cognition.

Established in the early 1970s in Chicago, The Institute for Cultural Affairs⁹⁵ (ICA) through its Technology of Participation (TOP) training and resources, pioneered the idea of the portable facilitation kit of cards and adhesives. Following intensive residential training where participants endure sometimes monastic deprivations,⁹⁶ newly trained facilitators are equipped with a pack of simple white rectangular cards, a collection of coloured pens and what ICA believe to be their most valuable tool – lengths of 1.5m-wide sail cloth used to create an adhesive backdrop for the cards.

ICA methods are not sophisticated, but it is precisely these simple, adaptable and iterative formats of questioning, challenging and consensus building that that can be seen extensively in the facilitation practice of ICA ‘graduates’ worldwide.

In relation to the potential of bespoke tools to use bounded design elements to contextualise and profile eclectic participant contributions, another approach to creating a coherent and corporate identity within which opinions, issues or views are collected is seen exemplified in a tool from the Lancaster Ideas for Impact project,⁹⁷ Hexagons.

Funded through the UK’s Higher Education Innovation Fund, the New

95. Followed by the founding of the Cultural Affairs International (ICAI) in Brussels in 1977.

96. The researcher undertook this training in 1999 and literally slept in a cell.

97 http://imagination.lancs.ac.uk/activities/IDEAS_for_Impact

IDEAS project at Imagination Lancaster has developed a suite of innovative approaches to the design of tools for knowledge exchange that includes the eponymously shaped Hexagons. Providing at least as much writing/drawing space as a standard post-it but more flexible in application and more engaging in appearance, the design uses a complementary colour palette for the hexagons, signifying different process elements with blank hexagons and hub hexagons subtly but effectively differentiated to enable such emphasis.

The impact of the hexagons comes not from their ability to be put up on a wall, but rather from the imaginative spatial interpretations and connections of their uses and applications. Each one is cut in such a way that at its edges, a series of tabs and slots can easily and effectively connect the cards to each other. This adds visual value to meaning by forming clusters, chains, honeycombs, loops, three-dimensional structures and at a recent workshop, garments.

7.6 Summary

The ability to ‘image’ or ‘imagine’ something is characteristic of human beings with the term ‘imagination’ having three basic meanings: to describe something (descriptive imagination), to create something (creative imagination), to challenge something (challenging imagination). The visual representation of a product and the role of visualisation have recently become keenly debated in design research since much of design is concerned with tangible solutions. Lawson (1990) argued, that visual representations are less frequently used in processes in that in the traditional crafts, designs emerged as they were being constructed – thinking with the hands. However, visualising and imagining through sketching has become an integral part of, and a key thinking tool in, art, craft and design activities, (Eisentraut & Günther, 1997; Goel, 1995)

Goel (1995) describes the symbol systems used by designers and their relationship with thought processes and problem-solving phases. Designers

examine their designs in several overlapping ways, i.e., through differing types of the sketches, notes and models. Goldschmidt (1997) separates the most commonly used processes to express ideas into internal (e.g. imagination, silent thinking) and external (e.g. expressed in words, drawings, written).

Problem solvers typically use paper and pencil to make visual representations in the course of problem solving. In addition to drawings, diagrams, maps, models and collages evolve while ideas are still tentative and are made by designers in practically all disciplines (Cooper & Press, 1995). Schön (1983) described this design activity as a reflection-in-action, with designers engaged in a visual conversation with the design by sketching, inspecting and revising. Supporting this view, Lawson (1990), further emphasised this by introducing the idea that the designer has a ‘conversation’ with the design, thus recognising the internal process necessary to enable reflective evaluation, rapid modification and exploration of new ideas.

Schön asserts that a disruption to the prevailing order is necessary (inevitable, maybe⁹⁸) when constructing new ideas urging us to break the settled ways of looking at things, to *‘come apart with respect to them, prior to the formation of a new concept.’* This notion of new concepts invariably stemming from what has preceded them, with their innovation related to only incremental, or presentational differences, can perhaps be exemplified within the contemporary design context when considering technological convergence and the bringing together of existing technologies such as telephony and data communications into, for example, the smartphone. This idea of throwing everything ‘up in the air’ is seen by May (1975) as a courageous move away from what is known and what might be expected where from chaos a new order emerges. The interplay of these three kinds of imagination makes up so-called strategic imagination, which, LSP would claim, is the source of original strategies in companies.

98. Researcher’s phrase in parenthesis.

This chimes with Seymour Papert of MIT, who was a colleague of the Swiss cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and built upon Piaget's theory of constructivism in the fields of learning theory and education, stating that *'learning happens especially well when people are engaged in constructing a product, something external to themselves'*. For Papert (1980), the construction of objects is directly aligned to the construction of knowledge – thinking with our fingers. This offers insights when considered alongside the endorsement from Lawson (1997) of the basic tenets of cognitive psychology when Lawson argued that good design – and therefore the creative process of designing – is predicated upon thinking skills that can be taught, holding that the designer is required to combine logical and intuitive types of thinking, as advocated within design education (Lawson, 1997).

Newell and Simon (1962) see creative problem solving as a 'special class' as it is prescribed by the requirements of novelty and lack of convention. Developmental psychologists such as Feldman, (1986) have further linked such creative problem solving to Piagetian transformations. Both Piaget and Vygotsky appreciated the essence of building constructs and internalising the knowledge given, rather than accepting the information as presented through rote-memory. Constructivist learning environments encourage the learner to gather, filter, analyse, and reflect on what is provided and to convert this into individualised comprehension and personalised learning. Csikszentmihalyi describes such immersive processes as 'flow' suggesting: *'The flow state is an optimal state of intrinsic motivation, where the person is fully immersed in what he or she is doing'* Csikszentmihalyi M (1990)

The table that follows, combines all of the themes from each of the literature review chapters so far. It constructs a robust cross-referenced profile of the emerging themes. These themes will now be interrogated further in the following chapter, through the critical filter of improvisation.

Figure 14 Themes emerging from chapter 7 of the literature review combined with the other chapter themes.

THEME	CHAPTER	PAGE REFERENCE
Status	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Self (101) Change agent (75) Impression management (100) Process influencing responses (79) Authority (83) Gesture (97) Loss of face (97) Emotional group connections (106)
	Chapter 6 Creative and design context for facilitation	Vested authority (131)
Trust	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Role theory (83) Reflexive roles (99) Perception (74) Performance (87) Preferences (83)
	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Equity (112) Relationship building (109)
Space & Resources	Chapter 4 Social theories of interaction	Design rituals (96) Environmental relevance (103)
	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Hierarchy (106) Proximity (114)
	Chapter 7 Knowledge Exchange Tools, formats and resources	Communication and collaboration (136) Time (137) Materials (142)
Focus	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Inside/outside group (108) Planning (116)
	Chapter 6 Creative and design context for facilitation	Independence (123) Rational judgment (126) Solution finding (120) Form creativity (130) Non standard action (121)
Risk / Confidence	Chapter 5 Facilitation theories and theorists	Managing responsibility (111) Silence (112)
	Chapter 6 Creative and design context for facilitation	Constructive discomfort (122) Self confidence (127) Anxiety / fear (132)
Spontaneity / Play	Chapter 6 Creative and design context for facilitation	Divergent production (124) Embedded behaviours (120) Problem solving 119) Curiosity (123) Creative thought (125) Metaphor (122) The spark (133)
	Chapter 7 Knowledge Exchange Tools, formats and resources	Participation (146) Familiarity (145) Imagining (147) Reflection (148) Constructing (149) Flow (149)
Knowledge Wisdom & Insight	Chapter 6 Creative and design context for facilitation	Creativity (119) Randomness and chaos (121) Interventions (127) Energy (128) Insightful perception (121)
	Chapter 7 Knowledge Exchange Tools, formats and resources	Design thinking (136)

Chapter 8: Improvisation

8.1 Introduction

The following chapter takes the themes that have emerged from the literature so far and views them through the lens of improvisation and improvised facilitation to conclude the chapter with the filtering of the themes into what this study will propose as the key determinants of improvised facilitation. In mapping the landscape of improvisation, the chapter will begin with an overview of anthropological perspectives, introduce the form and practice known as Applied Improvisation and highlight the dearth of research on improvised facilitation. It is then that the themes emerging from the literature review are essentially seen through another lens of literature as another layer of meaning is added to this understanding. The chapter concludes by capturing what the research refers to as the key determinants of improvised facilitation which subsequently inform the construction of the framework.

To begin to map what is meant by improvisation it might be helpful to consider a range of improvisation definitions outlined by Johnston as follows:

As RESEARCH into ourselves to increase self-knowledge, perhaps sharing the results of this research with others as performance. For LEARNING better how to communicate with each other, manage emotions or improve life skills. To understand, manage or reconcile CONFLICT This work is sometimes associated with programmes for social change. To create ENTERTAINMENT without necessarily any recourse to a higher purpose, unless you see laughing as a higher purpose, which you might. Johnston (2006)

It is the intention of this research to disregard improvisation for entertainment purposes, focusing strategically on the more relevant aspects of improvisation that support research, learning and the management of conflict within groups.

8.2 Defining Improvisation

Ryhammer & Brolin (1999) point out that the development of new ideas and original products is a particularly human characteristic. The notion of 'inspiration' or 'getting an idea' is found in the Greek, Judaic, Christian and Muslim traditions and is founded on the belief that a higher power produces it. In the Romantic era in Europe, the source of inspiration and its artistic expression was seen as the human being. During this era, originality, insight, the creative genius and the subjectivity of feeling were highly valued, and from the end of the nineteenth century, people began to investigate the question of what fostered creativity.

The anthropologist Karin Barber (2007) draws a distinction between (i) traditional societies who value stability and conformity, where originality is absent and change exceptional, and when it comes about – not as a result of external factors – does so as the result of an individual's creativity or innovation and (ii) the model of a society where everything is new and unrepeatable. In this context she calls into question the chronology of the present emerging seamlessly from the past, by describing this sequence as 'a succession of interruptions' - the past being: '*as hypothetical as the future; the present, defined by the emergent, is constantly breaking new ground*'. (Barber 2007)

Introducing the idea of collaborative improvisation, Barber challenges the notion of innovation and creativity being invariably brought about through the focussed talents of an individual. Barber's view is that:

Improvisation is a matter of give and take; innovation can arise between people and not only from within people. In ensemble work the participants arrive at a kind of unanimity, an ability to function not as a collection of individuals but as something approaching an organism. Barber (2007)

To transpose Barber's thesis to the group context is a compelling idea eliciting questions about whether the energy, will and commitment of participants within a group, contribute equally to the improvising dynamic of the facilitator

actions? And if so, what would that mean for the emerging facilitator /participant relationship? This idea of the group as a powerful driver of improvisation is perhaps an obvious one echoing Goffman's notion of an audience being simultaneously audienced. It also connects to theories of Spontaneity discussed later in this chapter 8.5 when the reciprocal requirement of improvisation success is highlighted.

8.3 Applied Improvisation

The term improvisation is used within a number of contexts and applications and it is in this section that one of the most relevant applications to this study will be considered.

Established in 2002 AIN, The Applied Improvisation Network has created a global network of practitioners, 2,500 in May 2014, through which to promote the use of the techniques of applied improvisation in business and community settings to accelerate development and performance. It is AIN's claim that these skills are now being recognised as a critical requirement for organisational survival and success. Their emphasis is perhaps clear with the launch, in April 2014, of a multi-stage qualitative Delphi study about the topic that explored such questions as: What is Applied Improvisation? Is there a theoretical base for Applied Improvisation? What are the essential components of Applied Improvisation? What are the major goals when using Applied Improvisation?⁹⁹

99. The criteria for participating in the study states: 'In order to participate in this study participants must meet at least three (3) of the following four 'expert' criteria: 1) Written a book, published an article, conducted extensive research or completed a PhD or Master's thesis explicitly exploring/addressing the topic of Applied Improvisation 2) Presented a minimum of 10 Applied Improvisation trainings in organizational or public contexts, during the past 5 years. 3) Served on AIN Board OR Participated for a minimum of 5 years as a member of AIN and attended at least 3 world conferences. 4) Currently teach at least one AI class per year within a university setting or business school.' AIN 2014.

Central to the process of improvisation is learning, as improvisation requires continuous evaluation of activity and outcome in order to be alert to the need to modify as required.

Improvisation can be seen therefore as a circular process of learning through processing information, acting on that learning and as a result learning more. This reflects the process of learning said to consist of four stages:

- knowledge acquisition
- information distribution
- information interpretation
- organizational memory

Huber (1991)

If learning is a process involving the discovery, retention and exploitation of stored knowledge, improvisation learning is likely to be continuous and circular, occurring as improvisation occurs and being immediately used as part of the process. Fyol and Lyles (1985) define learning as the development of new knowledge that has the potential to influence behaviour. Also, Moorman and Miner (1998) suggest that learning can be a result of improvisation, when retention of knowledge and lessons drawn from an improvisation episode become a part of, in the case cited by Moorman and Miner, organisational memory. This sense of drawing upon, or drawing down, knowledge will be returned to in Chapter 11 when the framework construction is introduced.

Miner et al. (2001) define improvisation as occurring when the design and execution of novel action converge. Contrasting views on the significance and role of improvisation, in part arise from differing perspectives on the relationship of improvisation to planning and action. Lack of planning is associated with improvisation, e.g., seeing it as 'intuition guiding action in a spontaneous way' (Crossan and Sorrenti, 1997). While Weick (1999) argues that strategic planning and action are integral parts of each other and improvisation occurs '*where strategies are tied more closely to action*' and Mintzberg (1994) goes further, arguing that it may be action itself that drives

the composition of plans, that is to say that improvisation is part of planning as well as action.

8.4 Improvised Facilitation

There are surprisingly few expert practitioners in the field of improvised facilitation. Viv McWaters¹⁰⁰ in Australia is perhaps the leading exponent, with the landscape predominantly populated by a form of facilitation most often referred to as 'Creative Facilitation'. The leading exponent of Creative Facilitation is the Delft TU based academic Marc Tassoul. In the US, Roger Firestien of the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College and Suzanne Chamberlin of the Creative Education Foundation have been developing techniques and processes in this area since 1967.

The only other reference found to improvised facilitation in any literature searched is from a presentation entitled *Improvised Facilitation: A Third Leg on the Group Model Building Stool* by Anderson and Richardson delivered to the 2010 International System Dynamics research Conference in Seoul. Group Model Building (GMB) – a form of group decision support, involving engaging a group of stakeholders with a complex problem – was introduced through this three-legged stool analogy that defined the support provided by the three complementary legs of Teamwork, Scripts, and Improvised Facilitation. In a paper informing their presentation, Andersen and Richardson (2007) describe the improvisational principles and skills used to underpin their work by facilitating GMB activities with client groups that they claim '*organizes much of our thinking about improvisational facilitation*'.

Their model uses a raft of prompts including Listen and Report Back, Use exact words, concepts, and phrases, Faithfully record and display participants' thoughts and words, Edit with Transformations and somewhat at odds with the first – Unobtrusive Teaching. Anderson and Richardson go on to offer a

100. <http://vivmcwaters.com.au>

Taxonomy of Key Facilitator Improvisational Behaviors they define as:

On the Fly

- Select next key concept of variable to discuss
- Do not record on the board aspects of discussion
- Park aspects of discussion for future use
- Select words that create variables from verb phrases
- Be alert to and draw out feedback loops

Off Line

- Add insights, comments to small working groups
- Rehearse key variables and dynamic mechanisms from earlier boundary objects

There are few insights to be extracted from this approach. Anderson and Richardson's model concludes with three Improvised Conversations Rules that add very little more to the discourse:

- Rule 1: The person 'holding the chalk' calls the shots
- Rule 2: Always know who is 'holding the chalk'
- Rule 3: Always seek permission for improvised conversations.

This echoes in part the principles of Open Space Technology¹⁰¹ advocated by, among others, Marc Tassoul, of: 1. Whoever comes is the right people. (sic) 2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have. 3. Whenever it starts is the right time. 4. When it is over, it is over.

Improvisation in this interpretation requires the use of experiences, ideas and resources that are called in to use to resolve unforeseen circumstances. This could be seen to relate to the notion of Bricolage¹⁰² used to explain ways in which an individual develops novel solutions to problems by accessing previously unrelated knowledge or ideas they already possess.

¹⁰¹ http://www.openspaceworld.com/users_guide.htm

¹⁰² Bricolage was introduced by the cultural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss in 1962 to describe the ways in which societies create novel solutions by using resources that already exist in the collective social consciousness; the cognitive processes that enable individuals to retrieve and re-combine previously unrelated knowledge they already possess. Levi-Strauss describes the *bricoleur* in *The Savage Mind*, as someone who uses 'the means at hand,' Offering further explanation of what is meant by 'at hand' as: '*the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogenous*'. (Levi-Strauss, 1962)

Research that has considered the temporal aspects of improvisation, and the challenge of achieving complex tasks to a demanding or restricted timetable has included C. Moorman, A.S. Miner (1998) and S.L. Brown, K.M. Eisenhardt (1997). Improvisation has been defined in terms of the simultaneous generation and application of plans Solomon, (1986) or also from Moorman and Miner as occurring when composition and execution converge in time. This perception of a temporal convergence can be seen as a key factor differentiating improvisation from allied concepts such as creativity, intuition and adaptation that also involve problem solving but may also include advance planning.

Responding to and managing environmental challenges and resource constraints are also seen as key to improvisation, Weick, (1993). For Moorman and Miner's model of improvisation, it is of note that novelty, speed of response and internal and external coherence are also proposed as dimensions.

8.5 Key Themes Emerging from the Literature

The themes extracted from the literature that were highlighted at the end of Chapter 7 will appear in this section in the order in which they emerged from the literature:

Status	Risk/Confidence
Trust	Spontaneity
Space and Resources	Play
Focus	Knowledge, Wisdom and Insight

Each of these emerging themes will now be filtered further through the lens of improvisation and improvised facilitation, in order to extrapolate meaning for the next phase of the study.

To clarify, Status and Trust relate to the context of facilitation, the roles that inform and influence the encounters, and the challenges to establishing trust. This section draws together earlier references to 'status' and attempts to clarify understanding in order more effectively to both recognise and quantify

its impact within groups, and the ways in which status influences the dynamic interaction between facilitator and participant.

Space and Resources includes references to both time and energy within the context of group dynamics, and in particular, focuses on the circumstances of what is used or adapted by the facilitator to support the group in realising process objectives.

Focus relates to the context and the construct of facilitation and can be seen to relate to the beginning of a facilitated process for both the commissioner and group, and also to the conclusion of such processes through the achievement of objectives and the generation of outputs.

Risk and Confidence define the ways in which the facilitator engages with the group to embrace the elements of confidence and creative risk-taking that are evident within the warp and weft of the literature.

Spontaneity and Play are considered outwith, and through, the converse lens of preparation and planning. This approach, beginning with the Focus section, is designed to quantify what happens before, during and after an event, and also to consider levels and applications of flexibility and responsiveness to what Marc Tassoul (1999) refers to as '*a set of different talents than the standard one expects of a facilitator*' in order successfully and consistently to achieve creative outcomes through facilitation.

To reframe what is understood by planning in this way, it is perhaps helpful to return to Brolin's (1992) characteristics of the creative person, as they can be seen directly to relate to these emerging themes. The alignment of Brolin's characteristics to these themes, notwithstanding the concerns of space and resources, nonetheless produces a reassuring congruence of confidence that can be represented in the following table:

THEMES EMERGING FROM THE LITERATURE	BROLIN'S (1992) CHARACTERISTICS OF CREATIVE PEOPLE
RISK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strong motivation ▪ endurance
PLAY FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ intellectual curiosity
FOCUS SPONTANEITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ attracted to complexity and obscurity
STATUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strong sense of self ▪ strong self-confidence ▪ strong desire for self-realisation
KNOWLEDGE WISDOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ independence in thought and action
TRUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ deep commitment
INSIGHT TRUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ high capacity for emotional involvement in their investigation ▪ openness to impressions from within and without ▪ high sensitivity

Figure 15 Brolin's characteristics of creative people.

And finally, this chapter will conclude by engaging in a comprehensive consideration of what might be meant by Knowledge, Wisdom and Insight within this context.

8.5.1 Status

Robert K. Merton introduced the concept of role-set by which he suggested that each social status involves not a single role but a raft of associated roles. For Merton, these social relationships, in which persons are involved by virtue of them occupying a particular social status, are distinguished from 'multiple roles' which refer to '*the complex of roles associated not with a single social status, but with the various statuses (often, in differing institutional spheres) which individuals find themselves – the roles.*'

Merton (1966)

In sociological terms, status denotes a position enabling notions of 'higher' and 'lower.' Hierarchy, stratification, and rank are the very point of a status with descriptions of status and role therefore often interchangeable. There are however some key differences. While role is not imbued with a vertical sense of rank, the term status emphatically is. Both forms of behaviour can therefore be interpreted as *both* a role and status. The key distinction has been identified by the American sociologist Robert Alexander Nisbet, who asserts:

It is quite possible for an individual, through education or extraordinary personal ability to assume a role that is regarded as a high role but that does not materially affect his low status. (Nisbet 1970)

There are clearly implications in facilitated practice for the dynamic of *status* as it operates within all facilitator/participant and participant/participant interactions, with understanding of how people perceive and project their status sense, key to successful group working. Status in this context is a key element of Johnstone's (1981) methodology of generating spontaneity, and an element that shapes all interactions between performer and audience. An understanding of status, for Johnstone, begins with the potency of eye contact. He provides an engaging illustration with the making and breaking of eye-contact enabling people to manoeuvre themselves into their preferred status position of 'high' or 'low', perfectly summed up by his distinction of:

a person who plays high status is saying 'Don't come near me, I bite'. Someone who plays low status is saying 'don't bite me, I'm not worth the trouble.' (Johnstone 1981)

Status is also evidenced in Baldwin's (1998) observations of non-hierarchical circle formations and her belief in the intrinsic and implicit power of the circle to challenge established and emerging hierarchies as they operate within groups.

Identity is further negotiated within the group context, and this notion of 'identity negotiation', is referred to by Swann et al. (2005) as a way to describe

members of a group tacitly agreeing the roles they will adopt within that group. Swann describes group members being drawn to people who ‘*view them as they view themselves: they try to change the minds of others who view them differently*’. Swann outlines further ways in which people with a negative self-conception are drawn to people who have a similarly negative view of them. Such complexities of interaction mean that members of a group are constantly negotiating their positions, and their roles, and if these negotiations fail, according to Swann, the group becomes unstable and more likely to disband.

Status is also demonstrated territorially. And discussions of territory and space appear in many different aspects of the literature considered for this research. Marc Tassoul offered a compelling perspective on space when, in the 2013 workshop mentioned previously, he urged ‘*Make a space first – physical and psychological. Build a space in which you can go into the content.*’¹⁰³ Space and notions of territory are also fundamental to the way in which group interactions and improvised responses are approached through facilitated practice. Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) describe the ways in which power, communication, and learning are always present in any facilitation process and need to be reflected and articulated before, during and after the intervention, for facilitation to be seen as an art. They describe this alignment of factors as:

when a synergetic effect is achieved due to the constructive interaction between the rational and the irrational processes.

suggesting the result of this being that each participant subsequently plays a central role in a performance as directed by the facilitator.

In 5.3, lessons emerged regarding the status imbalance within groups as encompassed by Circle Theory when the facilitator is the only person in the room who might have any sense of what might happen next on page and

103. Delivered as part of the CX Knowledge Exchange Conference programme of events, LICA, Lancaster, 2013

within groups generally, which can be seen to link to the concept of *thresholds of understanding* introduced to provide key moments of focus within an improvised set of sequences as described in the reflections on practice.

8.5.2 Trust

Nisbet's (1970) assertion that status is embedded in human consciousness itself, supports the intrinsic role of the facilitator as seen through Schuman's (2005) definition of 'helping groups do better. Winship and Mandel's (1983) idea that social structure comprise statuses that share patterned behaviours directed towards other groups in the structure, is outlined by Goffman who also sees status in terms of patterns of appropriate conduct. Loss of face and its relationship to notions of integrity was explicitly identified through the literature, as were facilitator delivery styles than contribute to levels of comfort and discomfort, and to the consequent building of trust with Lincoln and Guba (1985) describing research trustworthiness and a great deal extracted from the implications of trust within T-Groups in 4.2.

Fox (2003) writes about encouraging intuition and inspiration in relation to the establishment of trust alongside playing and reality Winnicot (1971) and serious play Schrage (2000). Tassoul describes letting go to enable intuition to play a role affecting the quality and texture of group encounters. McWaters refers to trusting the wisdom of the group in the context of communities of practice.

Where the demonstration of particular personality traits or behaviours were seen to be necessary in order to engender trust in the absence of the natural authority that is derived from expert knowledge sharing, Creplet (2001) believes that certain personality traits such as charisma, authority, empathy, and logical capability need to be evidenced, without which the trust vested in facilitators to address complex tasks in collaborative networks, would inevitably waver.

8.5.3 Space and Resources

Resources appear within the literature as they relate to the dimensions or circumstances of time and of space and to the tools and techniques that support practice. Space is initially discussed to include Grabher's (2004) spatial theories for ideation and the idea of special and inspiring environments from Tassoul, before physical layout is considered, including Baldwin's Circle model and Amin and Roberts' assertion that, within the context of situated knowing, space matters. Virtual spaces are discussed, and 'territory' appears within both McWaters model of improvisation and from Gladwell's perspective. Kelley's role descriptors and Amin and Roberts spatial dynamics link to learning environments discussed by Brookfield. Situations and social environments and their impact on attitudes and behaviours are supported by Allport's (1985) work with Lewin, (1935) offering insight into self and the environment and the dialectic tension of T-groups. Torrington's evocative descriptions of emotional environments are considered before Gibson's affordances and the properties of environments appear.

Eriksen's 'delegated playmates' and 'delegated handymen' are seen against the role of materials outlined in the Reflections on Practice in relation to the build, the relationship with materials and risk-taking of LSP and fast game design overcoming model performance anxiety.

In recognising what it is the facilitator accesses in terms of confidence and experience when making decisions about such resources, the processes that distinguish different types of facilitation, and which, for example, explain the ways in which effective and creative facilitation delivery can perhaps be seen to fall somewhere on a broad continuum, or a cycle of non-exhaustive options, the following illustration may be helpful:

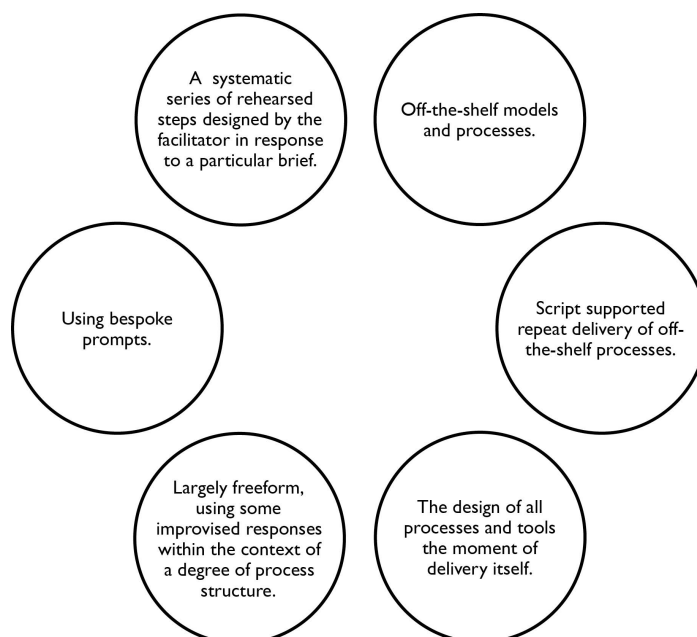


Figure 16 Indicative facilitation approach continuum.

The representation of these options is presented in this way since, notwithstanding the particular requirements of this study, it is not the intention to present these options as a maturity model or to confer status or greater value upon any particular mode of working. These are interchangeable and inter-connectable options that can be accessed in full, or in part, directly to match the need of commissioner, objective, group and facilitator within the context of available resources.

It may finally be worth viewing this developmental path as a reminder of where and how facilitators might approach the task of facilitation, and in turn to focus on the need constantly to reflect on the impact and efficacy of their intuitive hunches; motivated to do this in order to aspire to, and to replicate, improvised success and to avoid improvised failure.

8.5.4 Focus

The results of Dorothy Wardale's (2008) Australian research study into facilitation effectiveness, cites sound planning, consideration of the context within which the facilitation takes place, and the successful achievement of

outcomes as key to success. This provides a useful frame through which to consider a facilitated event as taking place within two separate, bookended stages of: (i) Context Setting and (ii) Objectives Achievement.

At the fulcrum of design and action, the definition of Miner et al (2001) of improvisation occurring when the design and execution of novel action converge, leads to a consideration of the role played by planning, and within that, where, and at what stages, the process of planning takes place. This idea of intuition guiding the action of facilitation as offered by Crossan and Sorrenti, (1997) is seen against Mintzberg's (1994) assertion that it may be action itself that is driving planning. Planning, it can be accepted, takes many forms, relating in part to pragmatic, temporal and expedient interpretations of planning as they relate to facilitator learning preferences. It is the case that some facilitator approaches to planning reveal a systematic and coherent process, frontloaded and costed within proposals as a matched or greater proportion of the participant contact time, while others will adopt a more ad hoc approach to determining what works in advance and what might not make a difference on the day.

Miner et al (2001) write about preparation, alongside extensive references to preparing, planning, preparedness and being prepared within the facilitation competence frameworks. Goffman, describes the relationship between preparation and judgement echoed by Clark's idea of back stage preparation. Preparation as part of Wallis' five-stage process is introduced and McWaters (2006) details the preparation involved in the ability to improvise.

What happens 'in advance' is seen through Elliot's 1991 model and Goffman's assertion about information. Johnstone's caution about the dangers of preparing in advance is juxtaposed by David Velleman's 'logical fallacy' of thoughts framed in advance appears and Vidal's intention.

And while for Fox, (2003) any form of advance decision is seen as an inhibitor to spontaneity, it was also evidenced in the researcher's reflections on practice that there were three key process interventions – Dialogues,

Complaints choir and Rube Goldberg build – that are examples of what can be imported into an event to be used precisely to create those thresholds of understanding that move both process and group forward to the next stage. These are key points in an improvised process that support, for example, clarification of precisely where the group has arrived in the process, and how members within it are feeling about their approach to the next stage. This provides the facilitator with a valuable process-tracking mechanism which also enables key intervention opportunities for further engagement and animation, within what could be otherwise be perceived as an unhelpfully ill-defined and evolving process. Tassoul writes about ‘custom made unique happenings’ that nonetheless remain within the context of a session plan and also, in relation to the commissioning and the closure of events, Tassoul references both ‘intake conversations’ and ‘landing’.

8.5.5 Risk /Confidence

Hunches and intuition and the challenge of properly quantifying what these might mean to a facilitator, and indeed how to identify them, continues to challenge thinking in this area. Insightful perception, as defined by Bohm (1998) characterises creativity as an attentive, alert and sensitive approach to the environment and to the seizing of problems and opportunities. This is echoed by Tassoul (2009) as he urges facilitators to be alert and to employ their ‘sixth sense’. The very core of this study is concerned with an understanding of how such responses might be experienced and interpreted by the facilitator in relation to how it actually *is*. Intuition in creativity is described in relation to rapid decision-making with the idea of intuition guiding action and as it relates to knowledge. Tassoul also supports Viv McWaters assertion to Just Do it! emphasising that the ability to just do something in this way is born out of acquired experience. Tassoul further describes intuition as not just about technique, but also by importing the notion of visual synectics for the incubation and simmering of intuition and the intuitive techniques he

describes that include working with art, silence, space and images. Agar (1896) sees intuition as '*a logical operation which happens subconsciously*' built on the basis of memory and experience.

Heron writes about genuine authority manifesting '*as the facilitative ability to empower*', with the further belief from Heron that '*presence, style and manner*' is defined in its ability to influence as '*charismatic authority.*' For Heron, the manifestation of this, is accessible through posture/gesture/facial expression, relative position, location, voice and facilitator senses.

The idea of nerve and 'holding one's nerve' as a facilitator has been introduced to embrace confidence and creative risk-taking that can be seen to be born out of intuitive hunches in relation to:

- occasions of conflict
- the group's need for something to be changed without direct intervention
- periods of productive silence
- a mechanism to enable the facilitator to step back, think and re-position themselves.

This manipulation by the facilitator, between hierarchical and autonomous modes, clearly requiring facilitator nerve, is outlined in detail through the work of Heron.

The implicit notion of 'nerve' is peppered throughout the literature. The competence frameworks for facilitation pinpoint a range of approaches to confidence: what facilitators ascribe theirs to, confidence as it appears within Lewin's Change model, the characteristics of confidence, confidence informing, and how confidence is accessed by facilitators, are all significant factors in influencing practice. In turn, this relates to mindfulness of the lightness of touch with which processes should land upon a group, in order to enable positive energy to expand in advance of negative energy inhabiting the vacuum. Timing is critical here as well, in order that autonomy does not descend into loss of facilitator authority, or 'face' as might be defined by

Goffman (1959); as is the impact and cost of such facilitator and participant risk-taking.

8.5.6 Spontaneity

Viola Spolin, the leading American exponent of improvisation, produced seven key principles of spontaneity more than half a century ago that still resonate with improvisation discourse today, identifying them, simply, as:

1. Play a game
2. Go beyond approval, disapproval or right/wrong thinking
3. Express as a group
4. Physicalise
5. Practice various techniques for direct, dynamic awareness and communication
6. Involve your audience
7. Carry the learning process into daily life.

Viola Spolin (1963)

believing that this pattern needs to be negotiated for creativity to flourish.

If, as Gladwell (2005) suggests, 'thin-slicing' is our way of recognising patterns in the moment, then play is perhaps the way we, as children, recognise, make sense of and thin-slice our way through key moments of knowledge transition.

Spolin's theories link directly to those of Johnstone (1981) a teacher, writer and director. Johnstone describes the necessity for spontaneity through '*not blocking yourself*' and of '*embracing failure*'. He also writes about the importance of a group strongly supporting its own members in order to be a more effective group to work within.

Johnstone cautions the dangers of anticipating problems and of trying to identify solutions in advance believing that any attempt to control the future or to attempt to 'win' must be discouraged for spontaneity to emerge. His avowed mantra is:

... see what happens. It's this decision not to try and control the future that which allows the students to be spontaneous. (Johnstone 1981)

This notion of control has significant implications for the understanding of how improvisation might work within groups, particularly in terms of the role of the facilitator as improviser, and where this occurs, of the introduction and use of tools, since the purpose of these tools may not be clear to participants before their use, and may in turn affect the improvised response of both facilitator and participants.

McWaters (2006) recalls a time when facilitating a group, that she realised she needed to import a process to move the group forward, but had no idea what that process should be. Her mind '*racing at warp speed*', drew upon remembered tenets of improvisation to:

Do something! Start anywhere! Be average! So I did – and it worked!
McWaters (2006)

McWaters' description of her facilitation practice is reassuring in this context. She asserts the potential to be ambushed by uncertainty or inertia or a complete derailment of process is precisely when the improvisation skills of the facilitator need to be called into use.

Drawing our attention to the preparation involved in this *ability* to improvise – 'practice, practice, practice', McWaters apparent contradiction is addressed by offering facilitation practice suggestions in her 'Principles for facilitators,' abridged here in the following table:

PRINCIPLE	MEANING	FACILITATION APPLICATION
SAY 'YES!'	Accept all offers Don't block Don't waste time Accept new offers	Consider everything as an offer: the data projector hasn't arrived; someone challenges the process you are using; someone else is cynical, or angry, or withdrawn. Try it and see how it changes your perspective and what opportunities open up.
BE PRESENT	With all senses. Attentive, alert, listening, Feeling. Don't think about what you should have done, or will be doing next, Practice listening to several people simultaneously while also taking in their surroundings and being aware of everyone, and every thing on stage.	Be fully and completely present for the group. It shows, and they will notice. Practice listening attentively while observing with your peripheral vision. Be aware of who and what is in the room. Use all of the available space.
DO SOMETHING	Improvisers often start an action without knowing what it is or where it will take them. Spontaneity is not about thinking quickly. The power of improvisation lies in the physical rather than verbal spontaneity. Solutions lie in actions, not words. Improvisers know to do something, anything; and to start anywhere – as long as it is active.	When in doubt, do something. Start anywhere, but do something. Stop thinking. Stop analysing. Use your body. Move around. Get a different perspective. Ask the group to stand and to move. Meaning emerges from action – and if it doesn't, be alert to offers.
BE AVERAGE	Keith Johnstone, the modern 'father' of improvisation, suggests that most people block themselves – they self censor. They think their first idea is not good/ clever /original enough.	Say yes to yourself, as well as others. Don't try and be clever, or funny, or anything – just do something and start anywhere with the first thing that comes to mind – then build on it. No-one will know that you didn't have a plan!

MAKE MISTAKES	Improvisation players celebrate failure. They acknowledge what didn't work and move on. This is one way of remaining present. If you are dwelling on something that didn't work in the last scene, you are not fully present for what is happening now.	Acknowledge and celebrate failure – to yourself and others. Take a bow. And do something else.
LET GO	Improv players trust themselves and the group, and let go of preconceived ideas of where something will end up.	Trust the wisdom of the group. Provide a process as a support for the group's content – and then let them get on with the work they have to do.

Figure 17 McWaters' principles for facilitation. 2006.

McWaters writes from a practice perspective as a group facilitator in Australia, and this table of transferred learning is self explanatory in its ambition. When she claims that this fleet-of-facilitator-foot comes about *only* as a result of extensive practice experience and of accepting anything and everything that happens within a group as an offer the facilitator should feel compelled to respond to, irrespective of knowing what it is or where it will take them, McWaters is drawing a distinction between thinking and doing, '*Spontaneity is not about thinking quickly*' she writes:

The power of improvisation lies in the physical rather than verbal spontaneity'. Solutions lie in actions, not words. Improvisers know to do something, anything; and to start anywhere – as long as it is active.
(McWaters 2006)

This idea of enabling the physical rather than the intellectual response to emerge, echoes the theories of Johnstone and Spolin with Gladwell (2005) who confirms the position of responding to all opportunities and challenges with an affirmative response when he describes how encounters and

interactions appear random and chaotic but are in fact governed by strict rules of saying yes and accepting all offers. He writes:

Spontaneity is fundamentally the result of the outcomes of choices made by saying 'Yes' and saying 'No'. The challenge tools of 'Yes and ...' and 'Yes let's ...' are the cornerstones of Improvisation practice where people build, and support, the development of dialogues and processes to equip people to move forward with a narrative or an idea. (Gladwell 2005)

In terms of facilitation practice and improvised responses, this idea remains the ideal, and perhaps assumes a single challenge or single process direction impacting on a single group situation at any given time. The reality however is often different and may explain why Heron (1989) offers such prescribed routes through group encounters, and why Tassoul (1999) suggests his question categories. These are clearly the safety-nets of risk-taking within groups. A question therefore emerges which could be addressed in subsequent research as to whether less structured and more fluid and responsive safety-nets for improvised facilitation can be developed and practiced through the design of new protocols and collaborative behaviours.

The worlds of theatre and jazz offer a number of spontaneity models including Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theatre practitioner and politician's definitions of a structured process for the improvisational responses of Forum Theatre (1992), where actors take on the role of protagonists in decision-making processes within facilitated groups. Another spontaneous form - Playback Theatre - explores issues, defines problems and imagines solutions. Established by Jonathan Fox in New York in 1975, Playback engages participants in the telling of stories which are then interpreted (played back) refined and revisited by actors, in order to increase the level of engagement between participant and 'actor' through an established rhythm and sequence. Fox contributes to established thinking in this area when he describes spontaneity as being associated with:

action and a definite type of non-thinking. (Fox 2003)

For Fox, spontaneity has four key features: Vitality, Appropriateness, Intuitiveness and Readiness for Change. Fox identifies the barriers to spontaneity as Knowledge, Planning and Analysis, with the desire to know, to plan or to decide ahead of time what should happen, acting as an impediment to spontaneity. Advocating improvisation as the means of interpreting, rather than of entering the problem, Fox endorses establishing a rhythm and sequence of responses in order:

to challenge the actors to listen, allow intuition and inspiration to arise, trust and support each other and to call upon their innate personal wisdom and experience. (Fox 2003)

These features echo other theorists notably Fischlin and Heble (2003, 2004) who draw on their collection of essays on jazz scholarship from the Guelph Festival. The authors focus on improvisational jazz and the tension between the intrinsic requirement of the jazz form constantly to reconfigure existing ways of engaging musically, while at the same time retaining adherence to the conventions of the jazz frame. This produces layers of interaction and iteration in order to promote equity of contribution, not just to promote the virtuosi performances.

Dvora Yanow (2001) supports the notion of improvisation as a democratic process when she writes:

Improv teaches us to see our employees, clients, research subjects, and students as our partners. It is, in the end, much more in keeping with democratic values. (Yanow 2001)

In the literature reviewed, there are many references to the idea of improvisation as 'letting go', and therefore of requiring both bravery and fearlessness – perhaps not always a helpful or effective combination. Lehrer (2012) defines *improvisation* as:

the letting go process, the relinquishing of the possibility of perfection. (Lehrer 2012)

This, Lehrer acknowledges is ‘frightening’ for the improviser, but nonetheless an invaluable source of creativity, linking back to Schön’s (1963) notion of the creative bravery required to ‘...*break the settled ways of looking at things...*’

8.5.7 Play

Childhood is perhaps when improvisation is at the forefront of our armoury of interaction tools; the time in our early lives when we are learning *through* play. Letting go and being creative are evident from very early ages when children construct imagined worlds to enable them to respond to situations from the adult world they might be attracted to, not understand or have concerns about. Rehearsing scenarios for navigating that world, children enable such situations, fears, threats and opportunities to happen on their terms, and up close enough for examination, by bringing them within their play domain.

For R. Keith Sawyer (1997) a significant improvisational activity is when 3 to 5 year-olds ‘pretend’ or ‘fantasy’ play which he recognises as a vital exercise toward ‘*developing complex and essential social, conversational and collaborative skills*’. Sawyer, spent a year intensively recording the conversations of children in a Chicago preschool classroom. Also a well regarded jazz pianist, Sawyer has studied improvisational theatre groups in the same city so not surprising that the parallels of these three pursuits combined in what he calls ‘improvisational performance’, a collective activity, without script but with loose outlines of structure guiding the action.

For Sawyer pretend play is collaborative creativity, and like theatre and jazz, its mechanism is that of an ensemble. Sawyer’s challenge to action within this ensemble holds that in order properly to participate:

A child must learn to be an ‘effective player.’ To be effective, a child has to be keenly attentive to what the other children are doing – knowing what role each is playing and where each is going with it. Then the child has to add something that both is within the context and pushes the scenario forward.
Sawyer (1997)

Play *is* improvisation. Play also has a role in all animated and successful group encounters and can provide a key function and purpose in establishing relationships between facilitators and group members. A useful definition of play comes from the psychologist Gray:

Play in our species serves many valuable purposes. It is a means by which children develop their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and moral capacities. It is a means of creating and preserving friendships. It also provides a state of mind that, in adults as well as children, is uniquely suited for high-level reasoning, insightful problem solving, and all sorts of creative endeavours. Gray (2008)

'Serious' play is also a feature of improvisation in that it can provide a basis for the building of trust and ease within a group. This is a fundamental requirement of the bonding and teamwork described by Brown and Vaughan (2009) as '*not a frivolous activity, but something that we should take very seriously*'.

It is these component elements of serious play: openness and abundance, the flexibility and fluency of changing approaches, and of constantly, yet informally, testing new and unusual or unexpected solutions, that can provide the context for incremental risk taking and the generation of trust within and between group members and group facilitators.

The Dutch essayist and historian Johan Huizinga wrote first about this in 1938, dismissing the notion of serious play, since according to Huizinga, play is a serious business in itself. In *Homo Ludens, A study of the play element in culture*, Huizinga declared play to be:

an activity which proceeds within certain limits of time and space, in a visible order, according to rules freely accepted, and outside the sphere of necessity or material utility. Huizinga (1938)

Huizinga believed play to be of value in almost every aspect of civilised human interaction and that the play-instinct was necessary for the successful exchange of knowledge.

In disregarding the psychological in favour of the cultural and historical

context of play, Huizinga positions the fun and enjoyment of playing in itself, resisting analysis and logical interpretation. And further, believes that the answer to a challenging or enigmatic question will always elude us if it is only to be considered within a matrix of logic and reason.

8.5.8 Knowledge, Wisdom and Insight

Absolute distinctions between embedded and explicit knowledge are not always easy to pin down. Traditionally, philosophers have divided knowledge into three categories: personal, procedural, and propositional. The first category of knowledge is personal knowledge or knowledge by acquaintance. This is the knowledge we are claiming to have when we say things like ‘I know.’ The second is procedural knowledge, or knowledge of how to do something, which in itself suggests the claim of possessing the skills required to do these things. Propositional knowledge describes the knowledge of facts, of asserting ‘I know that ...’

This tripartite theory of knowledge is a tradition that originates with Plato and maintains that three conditions must be satisfied in order for one to possess knowledge; if you believe something, with justification, and it is true, then you know it; otherwise, you do not. The first condition, belief, holds that even if something is undoubtedly true, and you have excellent reasons for believing that it is true, you cannot know it without believing it. The second condition for knowledge, according to the tripartite theory, is truth. If one knows a thing then it must be true. If belief is not true then it cannot constitute knowledge. So, what is false cannot be known; knowledge must be knowledge of the truth. The third condition, justification, means that even correctly believing something to be true; but without a good reason for believing that, it is not knowledge. This is interesting in the context of previous references to hunches and suggests that intuition in the tripartite theory context cannot be regarded as knowledge. The tripartite theory of knowledge is still widely used by philosophers as a working model, but since Edmund Gettier’s (1963)

critique of it through experiments referred to as Gettier cases, it has been generally rejected.

In *Science and Poetry*, the moral philosopher Mary Midgley (2000) challenges distinctions between feelings and reason. She quotes Epicurus warning against theoretical knowledge for its own sake with '*Set your sail, O happy youth and flee from every form of education*'. Midgley goes on to challenge what she describes as Descartes notorious simplification of the divide between mind and body, describing this separation as '*... a convenient arrangement for many purposes, allowing the different kinds of study to develop separately. But the lack of any intelligible relation between them made it impossible to fit them together*'. Midgley (2000)

For Midgley, this fitting together was required, since for her, the words 'mind' and 'body' are not the names of separate items, or objects in themselves, but rather are to be seen as referencing points of view – the inner and the outer – with 'mind' indicating the person as subject – '*... beings who mind about things*.' In Midgley's view, irrevocably entwined aspects of the whole person. This connection between mind and body is returned to later in this study, when the analysis of interviews with professional facilitators identifies an inescapable link, even at an almost visceral level.

Gibbons et al. in *The New Production of Knowledge* (1994) describe two modes of knowledge production as the homogeneous Mode 1: in which ideas, methods, values and norms continue to support the generation of a hierarchical web of established disciplinary practice across increasing fields of scientific knowledge, and Mode 2: the heterogeneous trans-disciplinary and more socially accountable and reflexive mode in which '*knowledge is carried out in a context of application*' and which includes more temporary collaborators focussed on a problem defined in a specific and localised context.

Michael Polanyi provided the definition of tacit knowledge as '*we can know more than we can tell*' (Polanyi 1966) and this definition resonates here,

as it does in its many reinterpreted forms. In Polanyi's definition of knowledge:

All knowledge falls into one of these two classes: it is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge. The ideal of a strictly explicit knowledge is indeed self-contradictory; deprived of their tacit coefficients, all spoken words, all formulae, all maps and graphs, are strictly meaningless. (Polanyi 1966)

Core to Polanyi's thinking was the belief that creative acts of discovery are permeated by strong personal feelings and commitments. This challenged the dominant assumption that science was value-free, with Polanyi seeking to bring reasoned and critical interrogation into alignment with other, more 'tacit', forms of knowing. Polanyi's assertion was that the intuitive guesses and hunches that emerge during exploratory acts, are motivated by what he describes as 'passions', believing that while these passions might well be aimed at discovering 'truth', they are not necessarily in a form that can be stated in propositional or formal terms.

Schmidt (2012) compares Polanyi's 'tacit' and 'explicit' knowledge to definitions from Gilbert Ryle, the British philosopher and one-time editor of the philosophical journal *Mind*, of 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'. Although Schmidt supports the fact that of course the notion of tacit knowledge originates with Polanyi, he claims that Polanyi contributed to a misreading of tacit knowledge by offering examples from everyday life which Schmidt feels do not hold up under scrutiny. Schmidt imports from Polanyi the example of recognising a known person's face but being unable to articulate how we know.

In Schmidt's view, the idea of tacit knowledge was not about ordinary skills and practices, but the very particular skills and ways of understanding of the pure scientist. Polanyi began his treatise on 'tacit knowledge' in his 'Personal Knowledge' (1958), by invoking what can be seen within this context as the improvisational frame:

the aim of a skilful performance is achieved by the observance of a set of rules which are not known as such to the person following them. (Polanyi 1958)

The notion of tacit knowledge is also imbued with an interpretation of clues. Sense data is mobilised as it is filtered through meaning to become our physical actions. And it could be said that none of this takes account of the cultural or political frames within which these actions emerge. Interestingly, notions of the tacit are frequently framed by a spatial metaphor, with discussions relating to ‘background’ versus ‘foreground’ for example.

Ryle distinguishes between *what* is said and *how* it is said when he considers the differences and the parallels between knowing *that* (something is the case) and knowing *how* (to, for example, make sense of a given situation) describing how we can wonder how, as well as wonder whether. Ryle goes further, linking intelligence with responsibility for one’s own actions when he writes:

To be intelligent is not merely to satisfy criteria, but to apply them; to regulate one’s actions and not merely to be well-regulated.

For Ryle, this is ‘*trying to get things right*’. (Ryle 1949)

The philosopher J David Velleman writes about the ‘agent’ in relation to what he describes as the ‘Logical Fallacy’, rejecting the ideas that thoughts just spill out of people or are framed in advance, suggesting instead that they come about as a result of an intrinsic and tacit self-awareness of how to both formulate and articulate concepts. For Velleman (2009) an agent may be aware and may articulate the advantages and disadvantages of various actions, as a way of the agent positioning themselves in relation to them. This, he claims, has no metric for measurement, as the agent is not being guided by a ‘*quantitative balance of reasons*’, rather by an understanding of self that is gained by knowing how he is thinking and feeling about the alternatives ‘*by consciously having thoughts and feelings about them, not about his own thoughts and feelings*’.

This distinction between thought and attention is key here in that even if we don’t attend to our thoughts, our awareness of them can be what connects them to our actions, summarised by Velleman as:

... our actions needn't follow from what we are attending to; it can follow from what we thereby become tacitly aware of. In fact, investing attention in our consciousness of thinking rather than in the thinking itself would tend to interfere with our ability to act accordingly. Velleman (2009)

Bradley's (1997) learning 'staircase' sequences the steps relating to the developmental stages of **unconscious incompetence** when the person is not aware of the existence or relevance of the skill area → **conscious incompetence** when the person becomes aware of the existence and relevance of the skill and knows they don't possess it → **conscious competence** when the person can perform the skill reliably at will → **unconscious competence** when the skill becomes 'second nature'.

Explicit knowledge can therefore be articulated and communicated to include formal language, statements, mathematical expressions, specifications and manuals. Tacit knowledge can remain intangible, embedded in individual experience, beliefs, values and perspectives and before tacit knowledge can be communicated, it must be converted into words, models, or numbers that can be understood.

In relation to implicit knowledge and intelligence, this challenges notions of thin-sliced spontaneous responses as outlined by Gladwell (2005) when he defines hunches and intuitive reactions to situations or people based on the unconscious, rapid rifling through and editing of our subconscious databases to find the one single response to any given situation. The fact that this response may be impossible to articulate or to quantify in any coherent way is a significant challenge; understanding how to make sense of those hunches and 'gut feelings' in order to replicate improvised success and avoid improvised failure. Thinking and doing is notable in this practice context as it both implies and requires an ongoing reflective process in order to be effective. Ryle again:

Indeed if they had to plan what to think before thinking it they would never think at all; for this planning would itself be unplanned. (Ryle 1953)

This would appear to support the notion of effective spontaneity through Ryle's assertion that '*efficient practice precedes the theory of it*'. We can, and according to Ryle, *should* act, without necessarily knowing *how* to act.

And in relation to differences – in organisation, spatial dynamics, innovation outcomes, and knowledge processes – Amin and Roberts (2008) define four modes: craft or task-based knowing; epistemic or high creativity knowing; professional knowing; and virtual knowing. Considering Epistemic/creative knowing the authors examine what they describe as: 'the dynamics of collaboration among experts brought together explicitly to experiment with new knowledge of a path-breaking nature'. (Amin and Roberts 2008)

These communities, specifically brought together to unleash creative energy, closely mirror ideation groups of scientists, designers, academics and visual and performing artists within the practice experience of the researcher. Such ideation groups conform to Amin and Robert's category of 'offsite' that describe scientific, artistic or academic collaborations formed around specific projects. In their paper they describe creative collaborations requiring both variety and the willingness to surrender oneself to an unknown process, to guarantee novelty. And the sharp contrast with the other forms of knowing in action, characterised by the difference in conditions of uncertainty. This distinction is summarised by Creplet as that between experts who apply acquired knowledge to new situations and those who: '*create new knowledge that was not existing before*' based on the mobilisation of variety, ambiguity, and uncertainty'. Creplet et al (2001) This is echoed by ideas of experimental collaborations in the visual and performing arts described by Yanow (2001) as organised for 'structured chaos.'

Building upon Polanyi's (1983) summation of tacit knowledge as knowing more than we can tell, Lindkvist (2005) has further suggested that the collaborations '*tell more than we can know*'. This has particular resonance when considering facilitated practice and the tension between practice

knowledge and content knowledge, and relates back to both Tassoul's (2006) call to objective arms, and the practical reality of, for the most part, facilitators not knowing anything (or perhaps anything useful) about the subject, topic or issue they are facilitating. This therefore demands the demonstration of particular personality traits or behaviours in order to engender trust, in the absence of the natural authority that is derived from expert knowledge sharing.

According to Creplet (2001) certain personality traits such as charisma, authority, empathy, and logical capability need to be in place, without which the trust placed on experts (facilitator)¹⁰⁴ to address complex tasks in collaborative networks (ideation groups) would unravel. This can be seen to explain how recombining existing know-how is dependent upon intense social ties, common work histories, and high levels of trust – much in the way of classic communities of practice.

High creativity collaborations are influenced by the scope for free thinking, imaginative play, visualisation of problems, and serendipity. Creplet et al. (2001)

And from Grabher, this notion of replicating the conditions of informality and play contexts provides the framework within which this can develop, through the potential for knowledge creativity based on the dynamics of situated practice:

They are the spark for improvisation, offering space for embodied expertise and material engagement to combine in open and experimental ways. Grabher, (2004)

It remains the challenge of engagement however, that the very existence of these frameworks and tools can themselves be perceived by some group members as inhibitors rather than as dis-inhibitors to their engagement. This of course relates both to individual learning preferences and previous knowledge and experience people have had within groups. Whatever the reason, the less than favourable responses of group participants to the

¹⁰⁴ Researcher's parenthesis

introduction of these methods of working, necessitates in-flight responses from facilitators in order to avoid the process and its desired outcomes being jettisoned at an early stage. It is a constant balancing act to determine just how far it is possible to move participants beyond the limits of their individual and group endurance, in order to introduce new ways of engaging them in creative, knowledge based processes.

8.6 Summary

This literature review has provided an opportunity to assess the breath of established knowledge and practice within the fields of facilitation, creative facilitation and improvisation and has produced a set of key themes.

The literature supports views that playfulness and spontaneity impact on group mood and creative risk-taking and that the considerations of the related issues of space and territory can perform a significant role in facilitator decision making. What the literature does not demonstrate however, is how facilitators *know* and *access* what they need in order to transform the quality of as-they-happen interactions through the choreography of their in-situ decision making. And there are no clues within the literature examined, about what makes improvised facilitation reliable or reproducible in order that it sustains, not as good planning perhaps, but as good judgment, reflecting Gladwell's (2005) theory of thin-slicing.

Where references do exist to improvised processes and exercises within facilitated practice, these references assert that the specific skills and confidences needed to generate these good judgments, are inextricably linked to extensive experience acquired as a result of sustained practice (Kolfshoten et al. 2011) or less tangibly, to the almost aura-like properties attributed to the person or the action or decision; charisma (Creplet 2001), for example, or what Marc Tassoul (2009) describes as the 'sixth sense' of being alert enough to come up with ways forward on the spot, appears unhelpful.

Using these almost mythical terms to describe characteristics suggests

they are impossible to pin-down or to acquire. While that is certainly challenging, it must nonetheless be possible to identify, deconstruct and to interrogate these dimensions of aptitude, experience and skill. What will be intriguing is how easily it might be possible to reproduce them. It is precisely the demystification of these behaviours for delivering success that be explored in the next chapter through the construction of a competency framework to define the characteristics and skills ascribed to creative and improvising facilitators.

The literature review themes which have informed the study so far, will now be redefined as six key determinants of facilitation. This redefinition has resulted from considering not what these themes *are*, but what they *enable* or *could represent* to the improvising facilitator. This adaptation of meaning therefore converts themes to determinants as follows:

Status and Trust become the separate determinants of **Status and Trust** - control (171¹⁰⁵) personality (164)

Space and Resources becomes the inclusive determinant of **Resources** - Building the space (166) Reconfiguring (165) Bricolage (158) Temporal convergence (159)

Focus becomes the determinant of **Focus** - tacit knowledge (180) Novel action (156) Attention (168) Plans (167)

Risk and Confidence become the single determinant of **Confidence** - Fearlessness (170) Creative bravery (169) Uncertainty (183) Disinhibitors (184) Attention (181) Passions (180) Accepting Offers (174) Negative self (163) Mind and body (179) Feelings and reason (179)

Spontaneity and Play become the determinant of **Energy** - Hunches (168) Flexibility and fluency (177) Logical fallacy (167) Constructing imagined worlds (176)

¹⁰⁵ Page numbers

Knowledge, Wisdom and Insight become the determinant of **Intuition** -
Knowledge (183) Knowing (180) Experience (175) Thin-slicing (170)
Effectiveness (166) Competence (182)

These key determinants will now propel the final stage of this study – that of further answering the research question: **What is improvised facilitation?** and moving on to consider **How can frameworks be designed to support its practice?** This begins in the following chapter with an audit of facilitator competence models in order to extract evidence from this data to build a robust synthesised model from which to proceed.

SECTION THREE

Establishing the context

Chapter 9: Synthesising Competence

9.1 Introduction

This chapter deconstructs the elements of facilitation that have been identified through the preceding research to identify patterns of competence and aptitude and to provide a basis upon which to construct a response to one of the research questions of this study: **What is improvised facilitation?**

The themes emerging from the literature will be considered in this chapter as they appear as the following key determinants of facilitation:

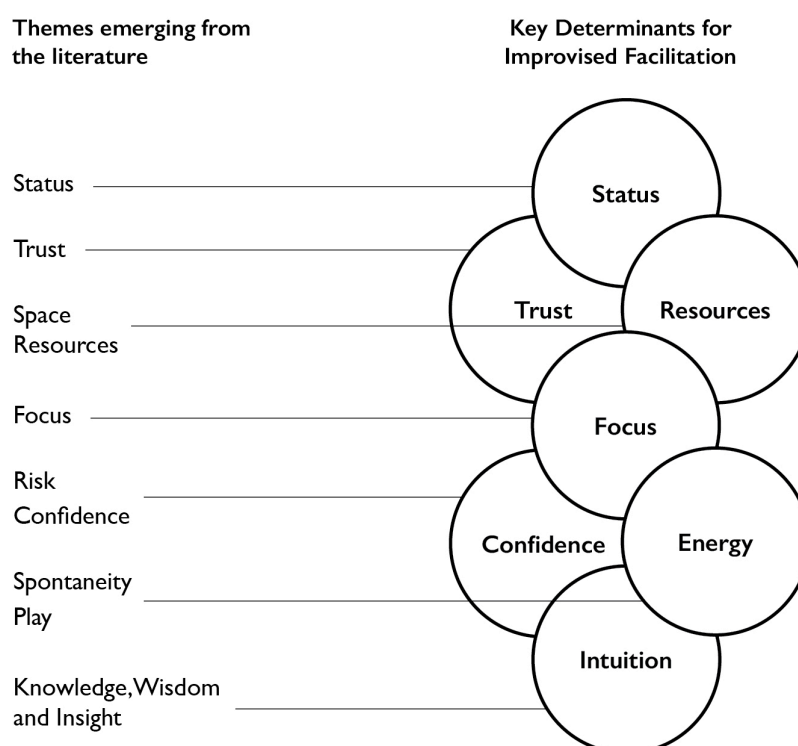


Figure 18 Converting themes to key determinants.

A comprehensive review of facilitator competences will now follow to launch a series of comparisons between the key determinants identified through this study, and the competences revealed through a review of this particular literature. An analysis of interviews with professional facilitators and focus group outputs will then propose the pragmatic and temporal separation of what happens before, during and after a facilitated process. It is through this robust and iterative set of cross-checks that this chapter prepares for the subsequent chapter in which theories and practices of evaluation are explored.

The increasing popularity of the function and value of facilitation across a range of disciplines is apparent through the proliferation of facilitation literature, training courses and accreditation programmes of varying respectability. A search using each of the terms ‘facilitation skills’ and ‘facilitation tools’ produced more than 5 million and more than 4 million responses respectively.¹⁰⁶ Significant responses within each category appear to be targeted at selling books, DVDs or training courses and toolkits than span the generic to the bespoke. An exploration of the most popular, revealed that there is considerable overlap between how the terms *skills* and *tools* are used and understood in this context, and evidence that the two are often indistinguishable from each other.

Within this proliferation of video seminars and guides it is also painfully apparent, that many exponents of facilitation have little awareness of the difference between training, education and facilitation. Within this, a raft of readily accessible self-evaluation processes exist that can be both initiated and controlled by facilitators themselves, with little value in these on-line offerings beyond that of confirming a facilitator’s existing opinion of their own performance. This reinforces the belief that anyone can facilitate a group process if they have time to read a book or to download a workshop script or

106. Google search conducted in November 2014.

some top tips. And this belief may indeed be the case, as this chapter will attempt to discover.

Hogan (2002) claims that this increased profile of facilitation can be attributed to the growth in participatory approaches to management, a move away from didactic teaching toward more experiential approaches in formal education and the increased use of community development and research-based groupwork. In a paper focusing on what is described as the ‘never-ers’ of workshop facilitation, Sharp (1992) provides a list of twenty practical tips for would-be facilitators where all but one of the suggestions focuses on specific actions to address the significance of the beliefs or attitudes of the facilitator. And seen within a management context, Parry (1995) maintains that facilitators, in addition to possessing certain attributes, need a combination of technical, behavioural, interpersonal and consultancy skills.

While further reinforcing the need to develop skills, Hackett and Martin (1993) go on to consider ideas and concepts. Justice and Jamieson (1999) focus primarily on skills, while also supporting the need to ‘*employ personal characteristics that are helpful to the facilitator role.*’ It is however the case that while significant literature reviewed conforms to what can be seen as a competency-based training approach, the literature offers little or no discussion about the theories upon which skills or actions are based, or about the values, attitudes and beliefs that are conducive to effective facilitation. An understanding of competence will now be used as the starting point for such considerations as this discussion moves forward.

9.2 Defining competence

Some key definitions are necessary here. In a 2014 factsheet entitled *What are competence and competency frameworks?* the CIPD,¹⁰⁷ the well-

107. Known as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development until 2015.

respected, century old professional body for HR and people development in the UK, offered the following:

'Competency' and 'competencies' may be defined as the behaviours (and, where appropriate, technical attributes) that individuals must have, or must acquire, to perform effectively at work – that is, the terms focus on the personal attributes or inputs of the individual.

'Competence' and 'competences' are broader concepts that encompass demonstrable performance outputs as well as behaviour inputs, and may relate to a system or set of minimum standards required for effective performance at work.

A 'competency framework' is a structure that sets out and defines each individual competency (such as problem-solving or people management) required by individuals working in an organisation or part of an organisation.

It was the case that a clear distinction previously existed between these; 'competence' referring to what people need to do to perform a job and 'competency' describing the behaviours to support a competent performance. There is an increasing recognition now however, and CIPD support this, that because job performance requires a combination of behaviour, attitude and action, the two terms are now more often used interchangeably.

David McClelland's influential 1973 paper, *Testing for competence rather than for intelligence* argues against aptitude and intelligence tests to offer a useful definition of competence that was taken up by the National College, an executive agency of the United Kingdom's Department for Education. The National College for Teaching and Leadership was established in 2000 to improve schools leadership through the professional development of head teachers and through providing strategic advice to government. Within the College's facilitator competency framework, McClelland's definition of a competency as *'a personal characteristic, evidenced in (patterns) of behaviours that differentiate levels of performance'* informs their strategy. Their facilitation competency framework is designed to support the development of both new and highly experienced facilitators with ten

competencies, three skills and four areas of knowledge and understanding. Supported by guidance concerning the observation and development of professional practice, this framework will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter at 9.6.

The following section examines a range of studies before going on to synthesise existing research relating to facilitator competence. Beginning with an overview of an extensive study into facilitation skills conducted in 2003 with 450 facilitators; the expansive professional model for facilitators as developed by the International Association of Facilitators (IAF) is then considered. The more focussed approach from Kiser's 1998 masterful stages is then highlighted, followed by the even more focussed *9 Disciplines Of A Facilitator* proposed by Jenkins and Jenkins in 2006. Lessons from the literature, supported on occasion by the starting-point review of facilitator practice, will be set against the other data sources of:

- Analysis of interviews with professional facilitators
- Outputs from Participant Focus Groups
- Insights from the 2008 Department of Health Facilitator Development Programme designed by the researcher.

9.3 Facilitation Skills Research

In 2003 The International Institute for Facilitation (IIF) conducted a research project 'Facilitation Skills Research Survey' (2003) to help define the knowledge, skills and experiences a facilitator should possess consistently to lead what they describe as 'outstanding facilitated sessions'. Over 450 facilitators and clients responded to the survey that presented respondents with a definition of an outstanding facilitated session. The survey invited the respondents to add to or to modify the definition, and to rate the importance of 57 facilitator dimensions based on a review of existing facilitator competency models. The resulting responses enabled the researchers to draw together the

6 competencies and 30 sub-competencies that make up their Master Facilitator Competencies. Their 6 main competencies are defined as:

- **Presence** demonstrating compassion, authority, confidence, energy and self-awareness, warmth and caring.
- **Assessment** accurately assessing client need and creating processes to respond.
- **Communication** actively listening, playing back and confirming.
- **Control** creating and maintaining a productive and safe environment.
- **Consistency** consistently applying best practice to start the session, focus the group, record information, and close the session.
- **Engagement** engaging and raising energy.

This can be seen to support the literature review findings and to be broadly in line with a thoughtful and methodical approach to the function of facilitation that employs a range of learned skills and acquired behaviours in order to undertake the role. Within the Master Facilitator Competencies model there is no mention of the facilitator who conforms to this model ever going ‘off-piste’ by responding flexibly and responsively to challenges or opportunities as they arise. *Presence* seems to combine three quite discrete elements: warmth, caring and compassion relating to notions of empathy; self awareness encompassing authority and the introduction of energy but not by way of building or managing it as referred to in the final, *Engagement* competence, but, the idea of energy as demonstrated by the facilitator.

9.4 The IAF professional skills model

Since 1990, the IAF, in conjunction with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), has coordinated discussion on facilitator competencies. This assessment of competencies is an integral part of IAF’s process of evaluating competence as a basis for registration and for the promotion of increased professionalism in the field. The following list of competences published by Virginia Pierce, Dennis Cheesebrow and Linda Mathews Braun in 2000, is the result of these

discussions. The model defines a typology of desirable skills, knowledge, and attitudes in relation to facilitation practice through a breadth and range of aptitudes and skills that includes the need to:

- Create collaborative client relationships
- Develop working partnerships
- Design and customize applications to meet client needs
- Manage multi-session events effectively
- Plan appropriate group processes
- Select clear methods and processes
- Prepare time and space to support group process
- Create and sustain a participatory environment
- Demonstrate effective participatory and interpersonal communication skills
- Honor and recognize diversity, ensuring inclusiveness
- Manage group conflict
- Evoke group creativity
- Guide group to appropriate and useful outcomes
- Guide the group with clear methods and processes
- Facilitate group self-awareness about its task
- Guide the group to consensus and desired outcomes
- Build and maintain professional knowledge
- Maintain a base of knowledge
- Know a range of facilitation methods
- Maintain professional standing
- Model positive professional attitude
- Practice self-assessment and self-awareness
- Act with integrity
- Trust group potential and model neutrality

These competences, and more particularly, the layers of detail under each, would however only be observable, through an intensive and ongoing assessment of developing skill by experienced evaluators. While this may be appropriate for a standards based, bar-to-entry organisation like the IAF, this method could not be used to any useful effect in the hands of a lay evaluator.

When these, somewhat ill-defined and sometimes banal statements are laid alongside the results of the IIF 2003 survey however, they make more sense within the classification as suggested by the researcher in the following table:

THE IIF FINDINGS FOR LEADING 'OUTSTANDING FACILITATED SESSIONS'.	IAF'S 2000 TYPOLOGY OF DESIRABLE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND ATTITUDES.
Presence demonstrating compassion, authority, confidence, energy and self-awareness, warmth and caring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and sustain a participatory environment • Honor and recognize diversity ensuring inclusiveness • Act with integrity • Maintain professional standing • Model positive professional attitude • Practice self-assessment and self-awareness
Assessment accurately assessing client need and creating processes to respond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create collaborative client relationships • Design and customize applications to meet client needs • Guide group to appropriate and useful outcomes
Communication actively listening, playing back and confirming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop working partnerships • Demonstrate effective participatory and interpersonal communication skills • Facilitate group awareness about its task
Control creating and maintaining a productive and safe environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan appropriate group processes • Prepare time and space to support group processes • Trust group potential and model neutrality • Manage group conflict
Consistency consistently applying best practice to start the session, focus the group. Record information, and close the session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide the group to consensus and desired outcomes • Build and maintain professional knowledge • Maintain a base of knowledge
Engagement engaging and raising energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage multi-session events effectively • Guide the group with clear methods and processes • Know a range of facilitation methods

Figure 19 IIF findings/ IAF typology.

Only one of the IAF professional skill competences has not found its way into the table, since *Evoke Group Creativity* would appear to be the output of all six. When cross-referenced to the themes emerging from the literature, the

results demonstrate that the elements that do not easily align, relate very particularly to a desire for the visible manifestation of the professionalism of the facilitator; *Act with integrity, Maintain professional standing and Model positive professional attitude*. These are not surprising as requirements of professional bodies and membership organisations with *Practice self-assessment and self-awareness* clearly advantageous whatever the affiliation of the facilitator and may indeed carry relevance across all of the themes. The following table, Figure 20, highlights the elements of both IIF and IAF's findings that align with the themes emerging from the literature as a whole:

THE IIF FINDINGS FOR LEADING 'OUTSTANDING FACILITATED SESSIONS'	IIF findings and IAF'S typology WHEN ALIGNED TO KEY DETERMINANTS EMERGING FROM THE LITERATURE	IAF'S 2000 TYPOLOGY OF DESIRABLE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND ATTITUDES
<p>Presence Demonstrating compassion, authority, confidence, energy and self-awareness, warmth and caring</p>	<p>FOCUS</p>	Create and sustain a participatory environment Honor and recognize diversity ensuring inclusiveness Act with integrity Maintain professional standing Model positive professional attitude Practice self-assessment and self-awareness
<p>Assessment Accurately assessing client needs and creating processes to respond</p>	<p>INTUITION</p>	Create collaborative client relationships Design and customize applications to meet client needs Guide group to appropriate and useful outcomes
<p>Communication Actively listening, playing back and confirming</p>	<p>ENERGY</p>	Develop working partnerships Demonstrate effective participatory and interpersonal communication skills facilitate group awareness about its task
<p>Control creating and maintaining a productive and safe environment</p>	<p>CONFIDENCE</p>	Plan appropriate group processes Prepare time and space to support group processes Trust group potential and model neutrality Manage group conflict

Consistency Consistently applying best practice to start the session, focus the group. Record information, and close the session	RESOURCES	Guide the group to consensus and desired outcomes Build and maintain professional knowledge Maintain a base of knowledge
Engagement Engaging and raising energy	STATUS	Manage multi-session event effectively Guide the group with clear methods and processes Know a range of facilitation methods
	TRUST	

Figure 20 IIF/IAF findings when aligned to determinants.

9.5 Kiser's 'masterful' 5 Phases

A more linear and time-framed model is introduced in A. Glenn Kiser's book 'Masterful Facilitation' (1998). This contrasting model of facilitation to the facilitative intervention. After the intervention, the *actual* outcomes are evaluated against the specific goals. Echoing action research models, there is a feedback loop directly built in to Kiser's phased process with results fed back to clarify objectives in a continuing evaluative and interrogative process.

Kiser's model draws attention to different functions allocated to different stages of the process, of which facilitating a group is but a part. Kiser's no-frills, five-phase typology includes references to both the commissioning and evaluating phases as follows:

Phase 1: Making initial contact

Phase 2: Clarifying desired objectives and contracting for results

Phase 3: Designing the intervention

Phase 4: Facilitating

Phase 5: Evaluating the results

Again, when importing the determinants, they seem less easily to fit Kiser's model, perhaps as a result of what could be seen as the heavy emphasis on the aspects of the work of facilitation that occur in advance or following the

interactions with participants. The addition of the determinants from the literature appear alongside as follows:

Phase 1: Making initial contact **FOCUS**

Phase 2: Clarifying desired objectives and contracting for results **FOCUS**

Phase 3: Designing the intervention **FOCUS**

Phase 4: Facilitating **FOCUS/ INTUITION/ ENERGY/ CONFIDENCE/ RESOURCES**

Phase 5: Evaluating the results **FOCUS**

Sitting within the Literature Review's FOCUS theme, Kiser's recognition that evaluation is integral, leads to the identification of a number of useful evaluation criteria, namely:

- the effectiveness of the activity through comparing outcomes and objectives
- the process of facilitation itself
- improved interpersonal relationships
- the extent to which the participants no longer depend on the facilitator
- professional facilitation skill.

Kiser further refers to the need to evaluate these criteria from the perspective of both the client's and the facilitator's own assessments, as will be the case in the evaluation model developed for improvised facilitation later in this study. Other benefits of this linear approach can be seen to be those of its explicit match of stated objective and outputs.

9.6 Facilitator Competence Frameworks

In the book *The Art of Facilitation*, Professor René Victor Valqui Vidal of the Technical University of Denmark offers a core set of essential conditions for successful facilitation. Measuring these competences and skills by the facilitator's ability to create and maintain these core conditions, Vidal describes the ways in which facilitators might move between the key roles of

educator, guide, coach, and leader by defining these roles as:

The educator: *teaches by showing how things are done for participants to learn for themselves using their own experience as a benchmark.*

The guide: *provides wise counsel and appropriate advice to enable the participants to become able to embrace the responsibility to guide themselves.*

The coach: *gives direct instruction to add value to the functioning of single individuals to set and to increase self-managing standards.*

The leader: *leads by example, exemplifying the values of good group practice to promote the circumstances for creativity and initiative to flourish.*
Vidal (1995)

For Vidal, the art of facilitation resides in choosing the most appropriate of these roles at any given time with the sign of a satisfactory facilitation process when, at the end of a workshop, the facilitator disappears and the group becomes autonomous. Considering Heron's three modes of authority and power: hierarchical, co-operative, and autonomous as discussed earlier (Heron, 1999), Vidal encapsulates the art of facilitation by insisting there is no 'right mode', instead, reinforcing the requirement that the facilitator must be clear about intention, choose the appropriate role, option and operating mode recognizing it is not possible always to plan in advance, describing the facilitator as an artist who has to improvise during the 'performance'.

Vidal positions this purposeful process as operating between two interacting processes of the logical and rational; and the intuitive and irrational:

provoked by each single participant, by the participants relations to each other, or by the participants relations to the facilitator. Vidal (1995)

Parallels can be drawn with (Rough, 2002) who introduced the concept of *dynamic facilitation* focussing more on self-organising change than the traditional facilitator. This links more directly into traditional descriptions of groupwork however, embracing as it does the tenets of:

- assure choice-creating rather than decision-making

- support people attend to the problem
- support the group assume ownership of the problem
- listen and reflect actively
- support the structuring of the conversations
- protect people from all forms of judgement
- go with the flow
- support divergent and convergent processes
- support group creativity
- create a positive atmosphere
- summarise progress.

Rough's dynamic facilitation directly operates within the space between the facilitator and the participants at the point at which the interventions are required, with Rough's succinct list creating an iterative building of energy, even in the reading of it. The direct references to the support of divergent and convergent processes and group creativity represent the first time in such frameworks that a focus on creative problem solving has emerged. Although more at the interface between facilitator and participant, this list nonetheless conforms to the six 2003 competence definitions of the IIF survey.

According to Roger Schwarz, the organisational psychologist and author of *The Skilled Facilitator*, the task of facilitation has three elements; leadership, referee, and neutral practice. Breaking these three elements down they are described by Schwarz (1994) as:

Leadership role activities:

FOCUS:	to provide a focus for the group.
STIMULATE:	to encourage constructive debate between the participants
SUPPORT:	to bring out information from introverted participants and to allow new ideas to be submitted.
PARTICIPATE:	when the group is interacting poorly or is going in the wrong direction, the facilitator must be willing to promote new discussions.

TEAM BUILDING:	to form a cohesive, interactive, dynamic and creative group.
	Referee role activities:
REGULATION:	to maintain order of the group discussion, discouraging participants from talking at the same time, or dominating the floor.
PROTECT PARTICIPANTS:	to ensure that all contributions to the discussion are treated equally and that no-one is rebuffed for their input.
DEAL WITH PROBLEMS:	to control problem participants allowing everyone to participate freely.
DEAL WITH CONFLICTS:	to identify conflicts and to create space for a fruitful discussion.
TIMEKEEPER:	to adhere to workshop timetable thus ensuring completion of the agenda.
	Neutral role activities:
PRAGMATIC:	to take detached look at the discussion viewing each issue on its merits.
ENCOURAGE FEEDBACK:	to promote discussion of each selected issue, by all members of the group.
IMPARTIAL:	to be neutral to the discussions, this frees the facilitator to focus on the process rather than the content of the discussion and hence asking pertinent and stimulating questions’.

FOCUS in this context could be assumed to refer to both the context for the group interactions themselves and /or the objective and expectation setting determined in negotiation with the commissioner of the process. Actions more reminiscent of the role of chair-person or moderator are evident in the headings of the elements of *Regulation*, *Deal with problems* and *Deal with Conflicts*, and the references to *promoting new discussions*, *maintaining order* and *identifying conflicts*. In Jenkins and Jenkins, *The 9 Disciplines of a Facilitator* (2006) they offer a conceptual framework, shown in Figure 22, that indicates three developmental paths each involving three of what the authors proffer as key facilitator disciplines. These paths focus on the facilitator’s internal relationships with others, relationships with self and internal relationships with life itself. The developmental paths appear as continuums with one discipline at either end in tension with one another. The middle

discipline is defined as encompassing ‘*the art of standing in tension between the other two.*’ (Jenkins and Jenkins 2006).


DEVELOPMENTAL PATH			
<i>Regarding Others</i>	Detachment	Focus	Engagement
<i>Regarding Myself</i>	Interior Council	Sense of Wonder	Intentionality
<i>Regarding Life</i>	Awareness	Presence	Action

Figure 21 Jenkins and Jenkins ‘9 Disciplines of facilitation’. 2006.

Returning to the National College leadership academy framework, facilitation is defined as a ‘*dynamic personalised process*’ that moves beyond the intentional application of skills and techniques. This echoes the approach described earlier in this study at 8.5.8 in which Bradley’s (1997) learning ‘staircase’ moves from unconscious incompetence → conscious incompetence → conscious competence → unconscious competence. The competence framework published by the college in 2012 defines illustrative competences for facilitation as:

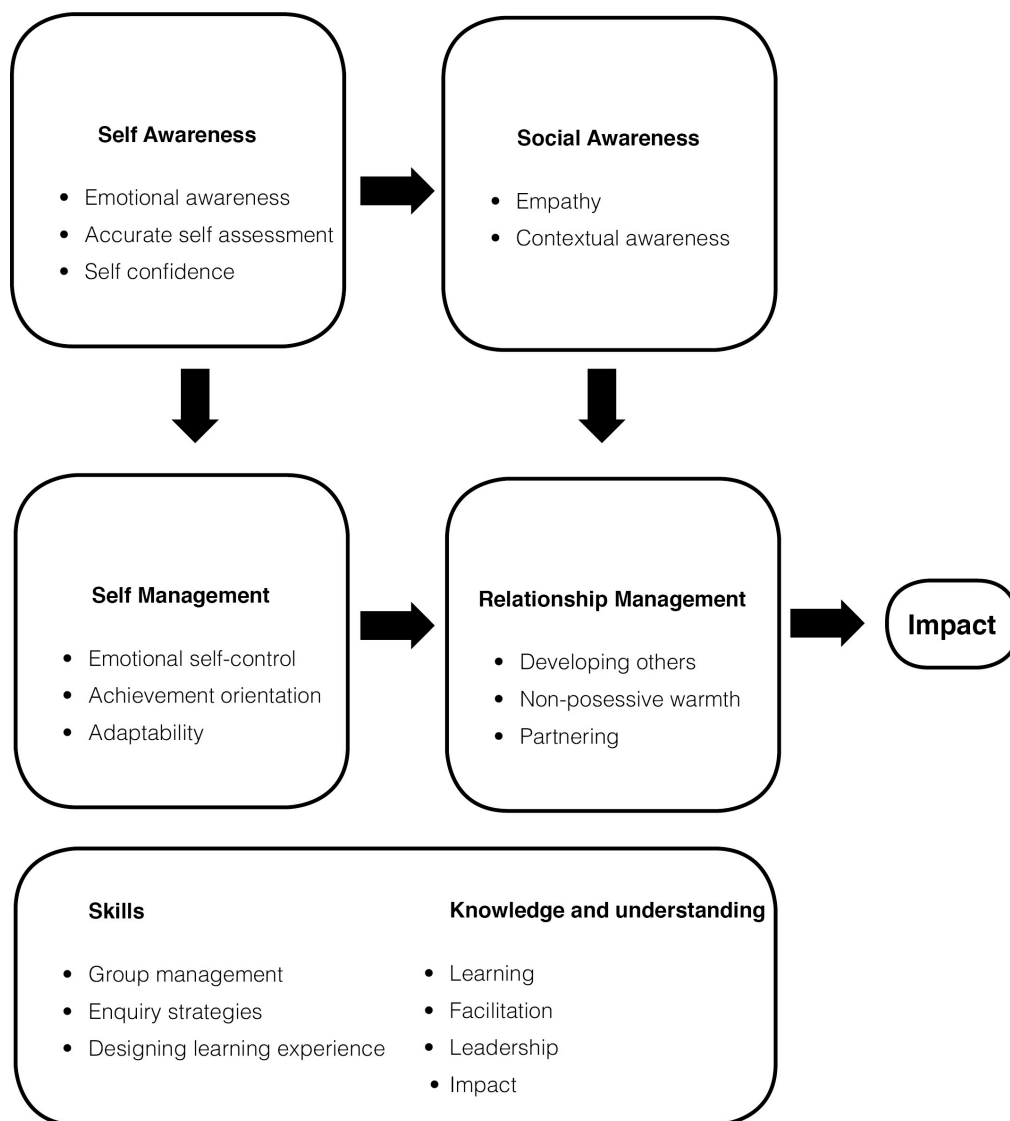


Figure 22 National College facilitation competency framework. 2010.

What is particularly of note with this model, is not perhaps the individual competences, but the carefully considered framework through which it would be possible to assess them using the behavioural descriptors the college offers for distinguishing between levels of performance. A focus on the *Adaptability* competence, for example, outlines the competence levels thus:

Adaptability is openness to new thinking and behaviour, and being able to respond to changing circumstance.

Level	Foundation	Effective	Highly Effective	Outstanding
Level descriptor	Is open to new perspectives and adapts ideas based on input from others.	Adapts to situation by applying standard procedures flexibly.	Adapts in the moment by smoothly juggling multiple demands. Can tolerate ambiguity and manage complexity.	Adapts overall strategy, goals and plans to fit the situation and to cope with unexpected events or occurrences.
Example of behaviour	Non-defensive and open to feedback/ ideas from others and adapts ideas accordingly.	Responds where possible to requests for variation in style and structure to suit the needs of learners.	Can devise on the spot tactics to help learners with differing learning habits and varied agendas for learning.	Can change plans for learning activities, objectives and strategies at short notice in the face of unforeseen difficulties or challenges while preserving the essential learning agenda and opportunities for participants .

Figure 23 National College level descriptors.

Within this context, and referenced by the National College, Boyatzsis et al (2004) distinguish outstanding performance from effective performance by talent, defined as *'being driven by a passion, values, philosophy, sense of calling or mission, unconscious motives and traits'*. The college employs an iceberg analogy to visualise these behaviours as they present themselves above, or remain below, the surface of the water-line level of consciousness with knowledge and skills appearing above to represent their ability to be acquired. Clearly this approach is propelled by powerful drivers of emotional intelligence, and it is interesting to note that even with one of the most nebulous and difficult to grasp concepts, for example, *Empathy*, the following systematic and sequenced criteria continuum is offered:

LEVEL	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE	OUTSTANDING
EMPATHY	Accurately reads moods and feelings, drawing on written, verbal and non-verbal cues to understand others' needs	Accords respect and relates well to people of diverse backgrounds, showing awareness of their uniqueness as individuals	Sees things from others' perspectives and uses different viewpoints to extend or deepen learning and understanding

In 2011 The Association of Facilitators (AOF) was established in the UK by an eclectic group of practitioners from business, police and health services. With an impressive board of reference composed of a number of distinguished academics and business leaders, the association now promotes, trains and accredits its FACETS competency model. The six facets in question relate to the personal skills and qualities that they believe combine to create a distinctive facilitation style. This is the first mention of style in any of the studies examined and brings into view the distinctiveness of the delivery of facilitated processes and the influence that facilitator personality has upon this. Claiming that their approach is informed by the founding work of John Heron, FACETS breaks down into:

Facilitation This facet covers the identifiable skills and the personal qualities that combine to form a facilitators' style

Awareness This facet is best described as the ability to 'tune into' the prevailing group dynamics

Contract This facet is about handling the agreed working relationships that form a boundary around any facilitated event; to this end contracting seeks to clarify and manage the expectations of all involved.

Ethics This facet honours the ethical framework within which practitioners operate, and points towards professional standards and good practice.

Theory This facet concerns the way facilitators handle the knowledge that underpins and informs their practice.

Support This facet attends to the area of supervision, personal maintenance, and wellbeing.

The Support facet is notable in that it introduces the somewhat passive notion of facilitation as a ‘helping’ profession and in this way aligns facilitations more with therapists in their need to off-load and be supported by supervisors after group encounters. This would seem to be at odds with the idea of objectivity, neutrality and self-reflection that has been apparent throughout the literature. When bringing once again comparing the key determinants, the FACETS model can be seen to align as indicated in the table below:

KEY DETERMINANTS EMERGING FROM A STUDY OF THE LITERATURE	THE AOF FACETS model 2011
FOCUS	Contract. The agreed working relationships that form a boundary around any facilitated event; to clarify and manage the expectations of all involved.
INTUITION	Awareness. The ability to “tune into” the prevailing group dynamics.
ENERGY	Support. Supervision, personal maintenance and wellbeing.
CONFIDENCE	
RESOURCES	
STATUS	Facilitation. Identifiable skills and personal qualities that combine to form a facilitator’s style. Theory. The knowledge that underpins and informs facilitation practice.
TRUST	Ethics. The ethical framework within which practitioners operate, and points towards professional standards and good practice.

Figure 24 Key determinants/FACETS comparison.

The Support FACET: Supervision, personal maintenance and wellbeing, has been incorporated into the frame at STATUS since it would seem, for the purposes of this study to relate to levels of personal preparedness and professionalism evidenced through STATUS. Interestingly, this leaves a

noticeable gap relating to ENERGY, CONFIDENCE and RESOURCES, which is not surprising if the FACETS have indeed been informed by Heron's more training and counselling approach to facilitation and his idea of the content, as much as the process, being the responsibility of the facilitator.

9.7 Analysis of Interviews

What follows is an analysis of the key findings from the interviews with professional facilitators who adopt various improvised practices in their work. As described in detail in the methodological approach, the interviewees, where necessary will be identified as FI (facilitator interview): FI1; FI2; FI3; FI4; FI5; FI6; FI7. The sequence relates to when they were interviewed: FI1 being the first to be interviewed in September 2013 and FI7 the final interview in August 2014.

Immediately following the completion of all the interviews, the initial interview codes were identified as they appear below:

Approach	Knowledge	Intuition/Judgement
Observing/Working with others	Outcomes/impact	Time
Personal attributes	Trust	Space
Client reassurances	Spontaneity / Improvisation	Review
	Skills/Experience	

Analysis of the interviews reveals for the most part what might reasonably have been expected from such a group. For example, in defining their approach to facilitation, one interviewee used the term '*Eclectic*' (F 12) and another that '*I tend to draw upon a whole range of different schools of facilitation rather than follow a particular pattern*' (FI 2). Very few processes or theories were referred to directly but where they were they included '*Open Space*' (FI 2) '*Forum Theatre*' (FI 2) '*Playback Theatre*' (FI 3) '*Kolb*' (FI 6) and

'learning'(FI 3) theory. An evocative phrase in relation to both approach and positioning was *'I look for things on the edge of facilitation'* (FI 2) which appeared to echo the earlier *'eclectic'* comment, at the same time as suggesting a willingness, or maybe a compulsion, to move beyond the standard provisions of the practice.

The interviewees found it easy to identify what they saw as the personal characteristics and attributes they brought to the role, defining these as 'confidence' (FI 1, FI 3, FI 7) 'listening, translating and synthesising' (FI 4) 'presence' (FI 1, FI 3, FI 6) 'clarity of exposition' (FI 7) 'energy'(FI 3, FI 7) 'clarity'(FI 6) 'intuition' (FI 1) 'articulacy'(FI 6) 'adaptability' (FI 5) and without a hint of irony 'charm and charisma' (FI 3) from one, and from another (FI 1), summing up their qualities as a facilitator as:

Presence, imagination, intelligence (a quick mind), gravitas, performance confidence, a loud voice, authority (being assertive and comfortable with appropriate power), creativity, resourcefulness, experience, self-confidence, a conceptual mind, the ability to sense what's going on (as well as work it out). (FI 1)

Self-confidence was clearly not in short supply and that is of course relevant here when considering the levels of confidence required to undertake such work. Experience was cited by (FI 1, FI 3, FI 6) Some imported more nebulous concepts in response to this question, such as 'upbringing' (FI 6) and 'a love of language' (FI 1) and some offered the focussed and confident *'I can'* assertions of *'I can engage a group'* (FI 3) and *'I can improvise'* (FI 6).

Their pre-facilitation careers were volunteered by three as 'a background in project management' (FI 4). 'Career in a business school as a design academic' (FI 5), and 'teaching people to sail' (FI 1), with their range of facilitation experience, more broadly suggesting an organic or incremental unfolding of their awareness of facilitation competence described as:

'I gradually realised I had a set of skills that I could use as a creative facilitator' (FI 1).

'I started facilitating in-house and was asked by others to do it more and more' (FI 2).

'I noticed I had an aptitude – stumbled into it – and then worked with people who liked to plan a lot and realized very quickly that I didn't need to' (FI 2).

'I didn't realize that facilitation was a skill I had until other people started saying it to me' (FI 4).

This idea of facilitation competence by stealth is interesting as it links to this abiding belief that facilitation skills are acquired by many different people in many different settings but also, to the challenge of professionalising the practice. From one of the interviewees, the delightfully understated *'I don't think facilitation is for everyone' (FI 2)* was followed, after a pause, by, *'although everyone can do small sets of facilitation'.*

Some of the interviewees identified generic training that they felt to be of significance to this work as: *'CITD course,'¹⁰⁸ (FI 1)* *'I started by learning facilitation approaches with ICA' (FI 2)* and *'... I occasionally train in new methods and techniques' (FI 5)*. What was quite unexpected in the interviews however, was the number of those interviewed who referred directly to theatre, to drama or to training in improvisation techniques. Of the seven people interviewed, five offered comments such as:

'being able to apply my theatrical knowledge to adult learning' (FI 6).

'I attended a theatre workshop from about the age of five years old' (FI 1).

'I went to one (a course) on improvisation about two years ago' (FI 6).

'... theatre workshop' (FI 1).

'Loads of theatre-based training' (FI 3).

'a year's course at drama school' (FI 6).

'I use a variety of theatrical processes and skills' (FI 3).

'I got involved in Improvisation and that's when things came together' (FI 2).

'National Youth Theatre' (FI 3).

108. *Certificate of the Institute of Training and Development.* Now CIPD's Certificate in Training Practice.

Curiously, it was the person who had attended the drama course at the age of five, and who had not undertaken anything similar since, who commented '*I think that's either essential preparation, or a short-cut to this kind of work*' (FI 1). And for one, there was a direct mention of jazz that they went on to describe as:

I have a bank of material which I know works and I pull out of my kitbag whatever I feel is necessary in the moment ... So it is not entirely free improvisation, any more than a jazz musician's is – it is based on knowledge and experience and emotional intelligence and the restrictions of timing etc.
(FI 6)

For some, it was clearly the case that the drama or theatre experience had equipped them with practice confidence and that this confidence might well have transferability to a range of settings. Improvisation was different in that the term was used and understood to embrace a number of different applications, from the importation of Improv skills through to notions of flexibility and spontaneity. In the case of one of those interviewed, there was a clear distinction in the way the terms 'improvisation' and 'improv' were used. It appeared that improv was used as a mechanism for sense-making related to statements such as '*the things I learned from Improv*' (FI 2) and '*... then explored improve more fully, going beyond following formulas and recipes*' (FI 2). Improvisation seemed to be much more related to the process of engaging with a group, for example '*doing improvisation*' (FI3) and '*using improvisation*' (FI 2). It was also this facilitator who emphatically made the statement '*I don't plan but I do prepare*' (FI 2) by way perhaps of asserting professionalism, and also of identifying the key distinction between preparation and judgement.

Respondents talked about the need for facilitated sessions to be '*fun*' (FI 5), '*lively*' (FI 6), '*emergent*' (FI 5) and '*flexible*' (FI 3) in addition to being '*challenging*' (FI 6) and for the sessions not to be prescriptive or structured:

'I think the question of creating facilitation comes down to relationships with the group and the aptitude and willingness not to fix, but to be comfortable with it being messy and not knowing what's going on' (FI 2).

'There is a difference between fixing something and providing a dance floor for them to do the dancing on' (FI 2).

Intuition was either explicitly refereed or alluded to through words and phrases such as:

'Emotional intelligence' (FI 6). 'Knowledge, experience and informed intuition' (FI 1). 'Informed intervention, but I can't point to where the information is' (FI 1). '... quick thinking around immediate situations'. (FI 5) 'I'm interested in what's going on and what might happen next' (FI 2).

And in describing what informs this need to intuit there were some pragmatic responses:

'I can tell that the team is stuck' (FI 4). 'I see there are danger signs. Sometimes it's reliable and sometimes it's not' (FI 2). 'Being sensitive to what is going on in the group, reading signals' (FI 6). 'I hope I am sensitive enough to recognise unspoken signals' (FI 6). 'Intuition' (FI 1). 'Noticing that delegates need more input or a different approach because they don't appear to be 'getting' whatever it is' (FI 6). 'Informed intervention, but I can't point to where the information is' (FI 1). 'Reading signals' (FI 4).

Some, more difficult to discern, for example:

'The feeling in the room' (FI 2), and 'The quality of people's responses' (FI 3).

Very particularly, a set of almost visceral responses were used to describe the connection between what was thought, felt and experienced by the facilitator at these moments:

'I'm drawing on what I'm noticing in my body. My brain is not a very good indicator' (FI 3).

'I will notice guts churning, heart racing, stepping back. I see there are danger signs. Sometimes it's reliable and sometimes it's not. One of the things I learned from Improv is that the body knows before the brain – I raise my arm before the brain gets the signal. Facilitators need to re-learn to

notice this experience in a group and ask 'what are you feeling?' People have eliminated noticing these bodily sensations' (FI 2).

'So much of what I do is about embodied learning so perhaps it is not surprising that my own body should give away my feelings or thoughts before I have realised what is going on' (FI 6).

'I believe that one must, in part, operate not as a professional but at a more fundamental level of human perception' (FI 5).

'I'm noticing how I'm feeling about that and thinking what can I do here to unlock creativity' (FI 3).

And, conversely perhaps:

'If the session is working well then I don't always know that' (FI 2).

The idea that some facilitators feel this prompt to intervene at such a level of connectedness is perhaps not surprising. Facilitation is profoundly exposing with facilitators inevitably operating with heightened sensibilities in order to be alert to everyone and everything that is happening in the room. This can take place through a mesh of varying degrees of risk, fear, threat, performance anxiety, fast-thinking, pulse-racing, listening to one's own critical voice, increased temperature, imitating past actions and behaviours and fearing past failures and embarrassments. For the facilitator there is nowhere to retreat to at these times, everything that happens is amplified under the public gaze. And further, all of these actions and responses play a necessary role in the establishment of trust within the participant group.

This idea of 'being there' in front of the group at all times was not the case with one of those interviewed. Interviewee FI4 - experienced, runs a successful company and describes themselves as a creative facilitator is increasingly moving away from the actual practice of facilitation: *'It's all about the workshop design' and '... it's a business decision to scale up. I have developed this way of working because my clients want me in the room when the facilitation is taking place and I know that I can't grow my business if I always have to be there' (FI 4).* This focus on outcomes, exemplified by this

interviewee, as they increasingly manage the commissioning and design processes for facilitated events and recruit people to deliver the process, is perhaps an inevitable consequence of success, that in turn identifies questions relating to quality and reputation management. This was a relatively new departure for this interviewee who had, at the time of interview, not yet defined a competence or evaluation framework through which this might be achieved.

In terms of scale, the only interviewee who made reference to group size, positions themselves, and their work, very firmly within a very small group and within a very restricted timeframe, stating:

'My experience is that comfortably, I can do this with 6 people, 10 is less successful and with 18 Chief Execs you're on a hiding to nothing. It's a plate-spinning exercise for an hour or ninety minutes and any longer and it's too exhausting for everyone. I would never go on more than ninety minutes' (FI 7).

This would ostensibly appear to be a luxury. But when considering such a small group and the opportunity for fewer interactions it must inevitably be the case that this form of facilitation is materially different. It is beyond the remit of this study to capture precisely what those differences might be but the impact of group size and temporal frames could present an intriguing research opportunity following this study.

In relation to structure (and with the exception of the process-outcome-focussed FI 4 interviewee's move towards scaling up a business by developing very detailed programme plans that can be delivered by others) the facilitators interviewed were unanimous in their assertions about the function of an event outline as both a means through which to reassure clients who require - and in some cases demand - a detailed plan in advance, as a platform from which to launch more responsive event processes:

'All a plan does is give me the shape of the event – when it starts and ends and when the breaks are. It's a framework. The first half an hour is a kind of

scaffolding because I usually know how I'll start. But after that there are dozens of things I could choose to do' (FI 2).

'The expectation for participants is sometimes for some more structure and control and I know that isn't going to work' (FI 2).

'It's never a train track or road, rather a dust track and a compass point' (FI 5).

'An aide-memoir for me and a comfort blanket for the client and/or participant' (FI 1).

'A reservoir of intervention elements and the imagination to re-invent them afresh each time' (FI 1).

'Sometimes I think I need a plan, I need a structure, and then I think I don't know why I bothered because there is no structure' (FI 2).

'I have a process but I have no idea how the participants will interact with the problem. I just know that I have complete confidence I can take them through the process' (FI 3).

'The expectation for participants is sometimes for some more structure and control and I know that isn't going to work' (FI 2).

'... define what you do with them as the session develops' (FI 1).

'Usually it is a rough guide and even sometimes hardly more than a broad outline of potential content and exercises' (FI 6).

'A comfort blanket for the client and/or participant' (FI 1).

'Abandon all plans' (FI 2).

One of those interviewed did however, despite cautioning against adherence to a prescribed plan, explicitly suggest the power of the plan to support commissioner relationship building:

'Offer a more structured plan to guide and give direction toward the client/group's objective and to prompt key questions.' And from the same person: 'I prepare key points as guides toward the objective/s; therefore I'm primed on the agenda [and have meta-agendas if necessary]' (FI 5).

When drawing these findings together and analysing what this might mean for the development of the framework, it can be seen that the themes emerging from the interviews are broadly consistent with what was revealed by the literature, which in turn informed the identification of the key determinants of improvised facilitation, with the notable exceptions already outlined above.

This reinforces the belief that the competence focus for this study, when laid alongside the earlier model, looks like:

KEY DETERMINANTS EMERGING FROM THE LITERATURE	KEY DETERMINANTS EMERGING FROM THE LITERATURE AS THEY ALIGN TO THE FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS WITH PROFESSIONAL FACILITATORS
FOCUS	CONTEXT: Clarity of objectives and purpose of both commissioners and participants before the event gets underway. That trust is key to this.
INTUITION	FEELINGS, EMOTIONS and PHYSICAL REACTIONS: Reactions and judgements are to be recognised and trusted. FLEXIBILITY: That adaptability and responsiveness need to operate alongside expertise developing confidence.
ENERGY	ANIMATING: Making things fun, keeping people engaged and motivated through accessing memory reserves of what is known and what can be imagined.
CONFIDENCE	BRAVERY: That nerve often needs consciously to be held and that this holding of nerve and creative bravery is fuelled by experience and confidence.
RESOURCES	OPPORTUNITIES: That resources that are drawn on include confidence, space and time alongside formats and tools to create possibilities from opportunities
STATUS	EXPERIENCE: That experience precedes this work or is developed in parallel.
TRUST	CLOSING THE CIRCLE: that this happens at many stages of the process. That success can emerge from the judgements that are made in-situ. That self evaluation and reflections on practice provides an iterative and virtuous planning circle.

Figure 25 Key determinants aligned to facilitator interviews.

In relation to an exclusively improvised facilitation process, these findings could now perhaps be categorised more logically within three zones; before a

session opens; during the session; and when the session comes to an end and closes:

OPEN – what takes place between both commissioners and participants before the session proper begins, the context of the event that embraces Focus and is built upon **Experience**.

DURING – what happens during the process largely as a combination of building trust, managing resources, status and energy, holding facilitator nerve and of relying for this on **Experience, Intuition** and making the best interventions possible through appropriate **Action**.

CLOSE – What happens at the close and beyond the session, staying focussed to deliver objectives.

Considering the interview responses explicitly in relation to the secondary coding of these three stages of OPEN, DURING and CLOSE captures the following:

OPEN: LINKED TO COMMISSIONING AND OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTATION SETTING.	DURING: LINKED TO THE PROCESS OF FACILITATING THE GROUP.	CLOSE: LINKED TO OUTCOMES, IMPACT AND REVIEW.
<i>'Reputation is paramount in this work, as it is pretty much impossible to put across intuitive, creative abilities on paper or online.'</i> (FI 1)	<i>'Not 'sticking to the plan' as long as it still feels on track.'</i> (FI 3)	<i>'I can also bring a session in dead on time.'</i> (FI 6) <i>'Lack of (or too much) time for the planned intervention.'</i> (FI 1) <i>'It can be hard to determine the time required when re-creating in the moment.'</i> (FI 1)

<p><i>'Trust as a component.'</i> (FI 3)</p>	<p><i>'No detailed scheme of knowing what and when your interventions might be.'</i> (FI 1)</p> <p><i>'To work with the skeletal components with which you will create in the moment.'</i> (FI 1)</p>	<p><i>'... to cover the ground and achieve the desired outcomes.'</i> (FI 1)</p>
<p><i>'It's founded on the privilege of trust; trust often from strangers.'</i> (FI 5)</p>	<p><i>'Freedom to explore when needed.'</i> (FI 5)</p> <p><i>'Accepting discomfort in the unconventional.'</i> (FI 5)</p> <p><i>'Methods of playful exploitation of pressure points.'</i> (FI 5)</p> <p><i>'Going in a different direction can be useful.'</i> (FI 4)</p> <p><i>'A continual search for opportunities in the unfamiliar.'</i> (FI 5)</p>	<p><i>'There's a sense that it's uncomfortable and messy but I know it is the only way and then I get an email months or years later saying 'that worked brilliantly but I only know that now'.</i> (FI 2)</p>
<p><i>'... to share and maintain ownership.'</i> (FI 5)</p>	<p><i>'Adaptability is vital and in the nature of creative facilitation.'</i> (FI 5)</p> <p><i>'Exploring the unknown.'</i> (FI 5)</p> <p><i>'Fun, engaging and genuinely refreshing.'</i> (FI 5)</p> <p><i>'The power in immediacy.'</i> (FI 5)</p>	<p><i>'By the end of Day Two, she walked out head held high, big smile, confident walk and voice – it was as though we had waved a magic wand. Those are the ones we treasure.'</i> (FI 6)</p>
<p><i>'... a comforting structure has been accepted.'</i> (FI 1)</p>	<p><i>'Approach the subject from a different angle to provide a more appropriate or effective learning experience.'</i> (FI 6)</p>	<p><i>'I'm a firm believer in meta-outcomes and these can't easily be measured and I don't think they should be. Some success will come much later and may not be recognized and as the facilitator this must be accepted.'</i> (FI 5)</p>
	<p><i>'Invent.'</i> (FI 1)</p>	<p><i>'The evaluator in me knows you can only measure actual events. I'm not a fan of happy sheets.'</i> (FI 2)</p>

	<i>'Creative emergence.'</i> (FI 5)	<i>'Often the actual impact can only be measured months or years later.'</i> (FI 2)
		<i>'... explore why, who and what happened within the original workshop plan, why, would we do the same again and how to improve the method, etc. I'm a scholar-practitioner so my life as an academic is a reflective practice and visa versa with industry.'</i> (FI 5)

Figure 26 Open, During and Close coding.

Analysis of the interview data was completed in August 2014. Despite the focus groups taking place earlier, in February 2014, because the focus groups produced valuable, but not as valuable data as the interviews, in order to aid clarity and coherence, the focus group findings appear in the following section. This builds upon and challenges what had been identified in the more in-depth facilitator interviews.

9.8 Analysis of Focus Groups

Four focus groups took place between November 2013 and February 2014 with a combined total of 31 participants. The focus group participants were recruited from participants who had previously attended at least one facilitated event. Each focus group lasted 50 minutes. Tables were covered with large sheets of paper upon which the answers to the questions were to be written. The researcher created small task groups of trios and pairs within the larger groups and briefed the task of capturing responses to each of the questions as they were produced on cards at timed intervals. Different members of the small groups captured individual responses on the table paper, before they discussed amongst themselves what had been written.

The answers from each pair, or trio, were shared with the rest of the group

and clarification sought where necessary, before the facilitator captured further responses to the questions from the other groups as they arose. The focus groups took place as follows:

Focus Group 1:

4 participants at Edinburgh Thistle Hotel, 4 November 2013

Focus Group 2:

11 participants at Cranfield University on 7 January 2014

Focus Group 3:

7 participants at Woodbrooke, Birmingham 14 January 2014

Focus Group 4:

9 participants at Manchester Museum on 5 February 2014

The researcher asked the following questions:

1. What is a **facilitator**?
2. What do you want to know **about a facilitator** before you attend an event or when you arrive?
3. What do you want to know **about an event** before it actually starts?
4. What **helpful facilitation skills** might you be aware of during such an event?
5. What facilitator approaches or behaviours make it **more difficult for you to engage** in facilitated events?

Appendix B shows all the responses to the questions alongside initial codes that were identified to cluster the responses. These codes are:

Information requirements	Behind the scenes
Personality	Reassuringly serious
Evidence of Confidence	Output focussed
Knowledge	Flexibility of response
Skills	Miscellaneous
Content Knowledge	

Analysis reveals that what the Focus Group respondents identified as desirable information requirements in advance of an event, was largely pragmatic information in relation to location, structure and timing. One comment '*I don't need to know about them – I trust if they've been chosen to do the job*' relating to the commissioning of an event they might attend, displayed an innate trust in the robustness of this process. In terms of what

were grouped as evidence of confidence, of the 14 responses, this notion of confidence appeared primarily, and perhaps not surprisingly, to be associated with experience. And in particular, experience of the very specific type of event they might find themselves facilitating. Elements of personality that were identified embraced demeanour, behaviour and action and conformed broadly to notions of a facilitator as warm and engaging revealed in the literature and competence frameworks that have previously been discussed.

The largest number of responses, 18, were coded as relating to skills, with most of them, similarly, falling firmly within baseline facilitator competences such as *'being impartial'*, *'listening'*, *'letting people speak'*, *'shutting people up'*, *'summing-up'* and *'sticking to time'*.

Only three responses were about the perceived need for specific content knowledge, which would suggest that people who have attended at least one facilitated workshop have some understanding of the difference between subject/topic and process knowledge.

Across all the groups there was a clear sense that potential participants wanted facilitated sessions to be reassuringly serious and output focussed, but also a desire, evidenced strongly in the discussions, that this needed to be combined with what was identified as including *'Variation in the programme'*; *'Doing things to keep us awake'*; *'Not lecture style'*; and requiring a *'Lightness of touch.'*

Within this context, *'Making it fun'* might be seen as a challenging requirement. Notwithstanding the clearly undesirable: *'Really obvious ice-breakers'*; and *'kids TV presenter style – game show host'*; the somewhat subjective definitions of *'No whacky stuff'* and *'Too much personality'* could present challenges for both the facilitator, successfully to navigate, and for participants of different learning preferences and inclinations to agree upon. This is further evidenced by the comment: *'So, coming up with things that help out which we might not expect or even like, but work'* which illustrates the different levels of ease and discomfort that might be experienced

simultaneously within the same group. This combination of process context and process gain can perhaps be summed up by the lightness of touch comment mentioned earlier that came up in Focus Group 4. When this was introduced, and clarification sought by the researcher, the group provided their clarification by stating '*You know, when it's work and a bit of fun and you're moving along and getting the job done but you're enjoying doing it and you didn't expect to?*'¹⁰⁹ And all of this can perhaps be considered within the context of what somebody else wrote at Focus Group 2: '*I get bored easily*'. Perhaps all facilitated group participants get bored easily, but get bored by the presence of, or the lack of, quite different elements and impacts, which the facilitator constantly has to divine.

9.9 Summary

Chapter 9 has converted the themes from the literature into the key determinants of improvised facilitation. It has compared and contrasted these determinants with the evidence from the audit of facilitator competences and from an analysis of the interviews with professional facilitators and the outputs of the focus groups. Checking and re-checking the key determinants in this way provides a robust basis on which to now assess the field of evaluation. This will establish the best possible evaluation context for the study before moving on to construct the framework in Chapter 11.

109. Notes of the Focus Group that took place at Manchester Museum on February 5th 2014

Chapter 10: The Evaluation Context

10.1 Introduction

This chapter opens with an overview of evaluation literature and an appreciation of the significance of evaluation context and values. This is followed by an examination of a 2012 Scottish Government supported review of an evaluation of Knowledge Exchange by the University of St Andrews. An exploration of evaluation models and tools from other domains develops the discussion, including those identified from within both learning and service environments, when the adaptability of these tools for purposes of evaluating improvised facilitation will be considered.

10.2 Defining Evaluation

Evaluation can be seen as a set of research methods and associated methodologies with a distinctive purpose through which to assess processes in terms of values, criteria and standards, in order to enhance effectiveness. Evaluations can also be either participatory or non-participatory. Participatory evaluations involve multiple stakeholders in setting questions, determining indicators and capturing and interpreting data (Zukoski and Luluquisen, 2002). Participatory approaches offer opportunities for sharing perspectives, challenging the influence of particular knowledge types or ways of knowing, and enabling more democratic processes that could otherwise inhibit knowledge production and learning, through designs targeted at breaking down status imbalances¹¹⁰ between knowledge ‘producers’ and ‘end users’ (Fetterman and Wandersman, 2005; Zukoski and Luluquisen, 2002).

110. Such evaluations, which are most usually formative, are referred to as ‘empowerment evaluations’ and involve close collaboration between stakeholders prior to the delivery of a knowledge exchange process (Fetterman and Wandersman, 2005). These participative approaches recognise that those in whom socially accepted knowledge is vested have significant power in determining the outcomes of research or practice.

Evaluations are differentiated by the stage in the process at which they are introduced. Formative evaluations strengthen or improve the object being evaluated with a view to identifying learning and best practice for future delivery and strategy. Methods for formulating and conceptualising evaluation might be used at the formative stage, typically to include brainstorming, focus groups, nominal group techniques, Delphi methods, stakeholder analysis, synectics, lateral thinking, input-output analysis, and concept mapping. Formative and participatory approaches that engage multiple-stakeholders in evaluations directly contribute to the process of knowledge exchange and can therefore be part of the knowledge exchange strategy itself, by increasing ownership, responsibility and the motivation for delivering knowledge exchange.

Summative evaluations, in contrast, examine the effects or outcomes of a process by describing what happens subsequent to delivery of the programme, project or technology, and most significantly for summative evaluations, assessing whether the programme can be said to have produced the outcome. Summative methods might include questionnaires, audits and interviews. When considering measures of effectiveness, observational and correlational methods can demonstrate whether the desired observed effects have occurred and *can* reasonably be attributed to the intervention being evaluated, and not to other unrelated factors.

Evaluation focuses on the calculation of value or worth. Essentially objectives are set, a strategy to meet them is planned, tasks are undertaken and then reviewed. This standard approach to evaluation is summarised in Francois Matarasso's (1996) five-stage model for the evaluation of project process as: Planning; Indicators; Execution; Assessment; Reporting.

The intended results of an intervention are closely linked to its objectives with results demonstrated and categorised by timescale:

Outputs = the direct results of project activities or the services produced or demonstrated in the immediate or in the shorter-term.

Outcomes = usually emerge in the medium to longer-term and represent the gains and changes brought about by these outputs.

10.3 Evaluation Context and Values

These timescale related processes are inextricable from notions of value and context and are necessarily relative in that they need to measure something against something in order to be of value. Evaluation is also, and inevitably, shaped by context; the questions asked, the design of methods and process and the way in which findings are reported. Theorists in the field of evaluation who recognise the significance of context include Patton (2008) who stressed the importance of evaluators conducting a situational analysis to understand the decision and actor context as they embark on their evaluations.

Weiss (1973) discussed the political context and how it affects how we think about the assimilation and dissemination of evaluation findings, and Alkin (2004), in drawing on what he calls his context-adapted approach, outlines the way in which evaluators employ a suite of evaluation processes and models as they respond flexibly to each project and situation. Rog (2004) further confirms the necessity to understand the ways in which the broader environment affects the ability of an intervention to achieve its outcomes, as exemplified by Greene (2005) for whom '*Context is the site, location, environment, or milieu for a given evaluand*'.

Rog joined with other evaluation practitioners (Fitzpatrick, Christie, & Mark, 2009) to construct a framework to identify the dimensions of context to be considered in this regard. These consist of:

- the context of the problem or phenomenon being addressed
- the context of the intervention being examined
- the broader environment or setting in which the intervention is being studied
- the parameters of the evaluation itself, and the broader decision-making context.

10.4 Evaluation Methods

Factors discussed above lead to the view that the complexity of evaluating processes, particularly those which involve the actions of a human agent, require a multi-faceted approach to evaluation for meaningful findings to be elicited.

Donna M Mertens (2012) declares that mixed methods approaches are often portrayed as synergistic, in that it is thought that by combining quantitative and qualitative methods, one might create a mutually beneficial evaluation project, whereby one method enables the other to be more effective; the combination of methods providing a fuller understanding of the problem as endorsed by Greene & Caracelli (1997).

Kurt Lewin's 1951 work on Field Theory cites behaviour as being affected by the physical and social elements that are in one's 'life space' at a given time. Greene (2005) notes that this range of perspectives on the impact of context ranges from the more experimental quantitative evaluators – considering context a source of influence to be controlled – through the more realist and theory-oriented advocates viewing it as a source of explanation, to qualitative theorists proposing that it is both inseparable and embedded as a component of programme experiences and outcomes.

Individual perception and bias is of note here, as is the need to mitigate the effect of the personality or presence of, in this case the facilitator, on what is being evaluated. Schön (1984) sees the professional practitioner as a problem solver and acknowledges that the requirement of problem setting is vital to their developing practice. But, according to Schön, this is frequently ignored. This echoes Matarasso's evaluation continuum of Planning; Indicators; Execution; Assessment; Reporting; as it relates to the need to focus upon the process that defines the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved and the means through which *they will* be achieved.

As discussed earlier, Heron's model of facilitation (1989) cites informal

evaluation as a means of determining a sense of the 'value' or 'worth' of a workshop and its components. Heron argues that evaluation is implicit in his 'meaning' dimension and is referred to later in his 1999 work, in what he defines as the planning dimension of facilitation. Despite this, Heron still does not offer a reference to the precise nature of any such evaluation process or mechanism. Richard G. Weaver and John D. Farrell (1997) challenge the assumption that facilitation resides in the practice of using tool kits to un-block group processes, describing instead the role of the facilitator in bringing knowledge to the challenge of involving people in the completion of 'real work'. Trevor Bentley (1994) further defines facilitation as non-action, silence and even, he suggests, the power and the potency of the *absence* of the facilitator within the group.

When considering the roles of both facilitator and participant in the context of this potent visibility within a group, a significant body of research exists relating to the impact of others on the way in which individuals perceive themselves. In addition to that discussed previously in the chapter, *Social Frames of Interaction*, of particular note here is Festinger's 1954 theory of social comparison processes. Festinger argued that people's understanding of themselves can never be entirely context-free. It is claimed, and is perhaps not surprising, that what is afforded by self-evaluation is an opportunity to enhance positive self-image, with individuals selectively importing and highlighting self-relevant information. According to the self-verification view, people are motivated to verify their pre-existing self-conceptions. For example, people will verify their positive self-conceptions by seeking out favourable feedback, and they will also confirm their negative self-views by enlisting conformational bad feedback about their abilities or personalities. Kunda (1990) and Taylor and Brown (1988) describe the way in which people can tolerate some 'inferential ambiguity' but only in exchange for 'positive implications'. These observations suggest that the mere presence of others leads people to evaluate themselves more favourably, directly and specifically in reference to those others.

10.5 Context Sensitive Evaluation

In *When Background Becomes Foreground: Toward Context-Sensitive Evaluation Practice*, Debra J. Rog discusses the need for context aware evaluation practice to drive the choice of an evaluation approach to produce the most useful and actionable evidence. This approach to evaluation demands answers to the precise what, when, where, and for whom? The challenge encapsulated by Mark (2001) in the question '*What evaluation approach provides the highest quality and most actionable evidence in which contexts?*'

Schön (1987), when considering the reflective practitioner, confirms this view. Describing problematic situations from which problems emerge, as inevitably puzzling, troubling and uncertain, he goes on to discuss the transition from problem-setting to problem-solving, being achieved only when the practitioner '*names the things to which we will attend and frames the context in which we will attend to them*'.

The Success Case Method approach to evaluation (Brinkerhoff, 2003) attempts to quantify successful outcomes and success cases and uses some of the processes from theory-driven evaluation to determine connections. This may take the form of a logic model, an impact model or a results map to gather success stories to populate a narrative of what is happening and what is being achieved.

The role of the learner as evaluator is commented upon by Ross (1993), who after a series of case studies with school pupils who discuss their own work in terms of exploring, explaining and evaluation, writes about assessment in the arts no longer being framed exclusively by the judgements of the teacher:

And so a new role emerges for the teacher; to equip the students with the reflective skills to monitor and assess their own work. Ross, M (1993)

This new paradigm introduces the idea of the evaluation being embedded in the process itself, a practice confirmed by Eisner (1979) when he says that the key requirement for successful evaluation is to make the embedded process readable to people through the use of accessible concepts, language and terms in order to ensure the integration of the perspectives of all those involved in a process. This leads inevitably to a consideration of the weighting of these differing perspectives when recognising that the legitimacy of certain viewpoints is fundamental to understanding, and that constructing clear and relevant measures to create a responsive framework must take account of the information needs of various audiences or stakeholders.

Expertise and Accreditation Approaches as recommended by Russ-Eft and Preskill (2001) rely on expert opinion and professional judgments to determine quality, thus providing opportunities to embed facilitator perspectives into the framework. But this is challenged, as discussed in greater detail in 10.8, when discussing the lack of absolute measures of quality in relation to models of service delivery.

10.6 Realistic Evaluation

Pawson and Tilley (1997) developed a theory driven evaluation model focussed upon outcomes produced from interventions. Referring to this as Realistic Evaluation, Pawson and Tilley examine the ways in which the interventions take place. Looking therefore at the context and circumstances that determine the effectiveness of interventions, Realistic Evaluation aims to acquire insight into how these interventions can produce outcomes that can in turn inform policy decisions. Pawson and Tilley identify three investigative areas for evaluating the impact of an intervention within any given context as:

Mechanism: the measure which could lead to a particular outcome in a given context

Context: the conditions needed for a measure to activate mechanisms to produce particular outcomes patterns

Outcomes pattern: the practical effects produced by causal mechanisms being activated in a given context

The Realistic evaluation approach and its emphasis on the importance of context to an understanding of why knowledge exchange interventions are effective, was used by Rycroft-Malone et al. (2011) to understand complex social interactions/interventions by assessing the outcomes of instrumental use, conceptual use, symbolic use and process use, defined as:

Instrumental use: the direct impact of knowledge on practice and policy in which specific research might directly influence a particular decision or problem;

Conceptual use: how knowledge may impact thinking, understanding, and attitudes;

Symbolic use: how knowledge may be used as a political tool to legitimatise particular practices;

Process use: changes that result to policy, practice, ways of thinking or behaviour resulting from the process of learning that occurs from being involved in research. (Rycroft-Malone et al. 2011)

The following model based on the work of Pawson and Tilley (1997) illustrates Realistic Evaluation based on an assessment of mechanisms, context and outcomes (M,C,O),

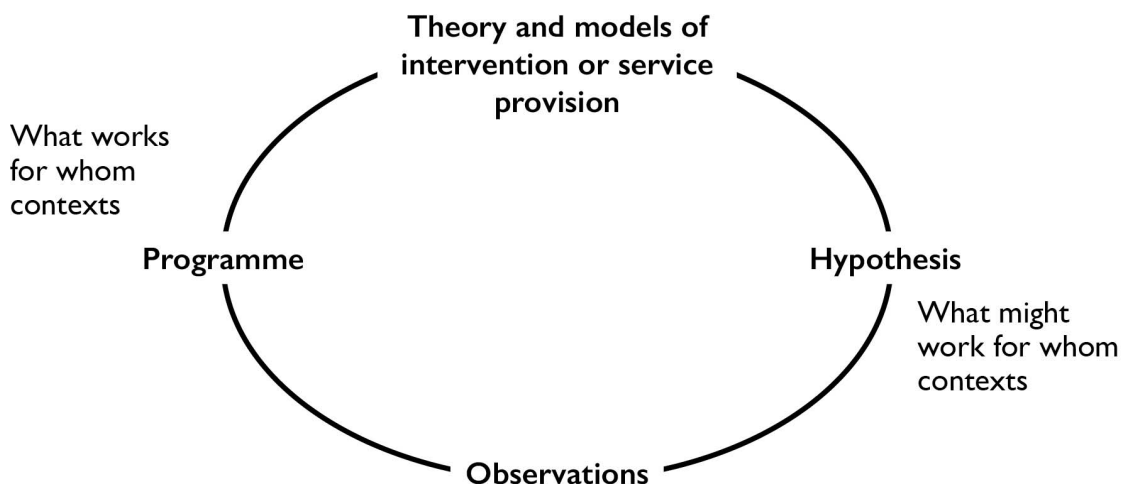


Figure 27 Pawson and Tilley's Realistic Evaluation Model. 1997.

The implications inherent in such an approach would suggest that any such evaluation of knowledge exchange should take into account the need to be responsive when considering methods, be concerned with meaningful change as a result of the evaluation, and create iterative loops to inform developing theory and practice.

10.7 Knowledge Exchange Evaluation

The emphasis of participatory and collaborative forms of evaluation is on engaging stakeholders in the evaluation process to increase their understanding of the programme being evaluated. It establishes the information needs of these stakeholders and ultimately uses the evaluation findings for decision-making purposes. The research topic of this thesis defines stakeholders as commissioners, participants and facilitators who, according to Patton, (1987), should have a high degree of involvement in many, if not all phases of an evaluation. Andrea Cornwall's early work in the 1990s offered different levels of participatory engagement, defining them as:

MODE OF PARTICIPATION	TYPE OF PARTICIPATION
CO-OPTED	Tokenism; manipulation; representatives are chosen but have no real input or power.
CO-OPERATING	Tasks are assigned, with incentives; but outsiders decide agenda and exact process.
CONSULTED	Local opinions are asked for; outsiders analyse and decide on a course of action.
COLLABORATING	Local people work with outsiders to determine priorities; responsibility, however, remains with outsiders for directing the process.
CO-LEARNING	Local people and outsiders share their knowledge to create new understanding and work together to form action plans, with outside facilitation.

COLLECTIVE ACTION	Local people set their own agenda and mobilise to carry it out, using outsiders not as initiators/facilitators but as required by the local people.
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Figure 28 Cornwall's levels of participatory engagement. 2007.

To which we could now add Co-design:

CO-DESIGN	The creativity of designers and people not trained in design working together in the design development process.
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Source: Co-creation and the new landscapes of design Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders & Pieter Jan Stappers, 2008.

Critically, co-design is a meaningfully participative, creative and democratic form of engagement that makes key the importance of involving people at the earliest possible stage in a process. This echoes Sanders notion of the underpinning participatory approach.

In Fazey, I. et al., *Evaluating Knowledge Exchange In Interdisciplinary And Multi-Stakeholder Research* (2014), the authors suggest that there are many definitions and uses of evaluation that can be conducted within individual projects and programme portfolios. Recognising that different methodologies are constructed upon different epistemological and ontological positions, they define relationships between three key aspects of knowledge exchange evaluation as:

- (i) the way knowledge exchange is conceptualised and conducted
- (xii) the methods used to undertake an evaluation
- (xiii) the outcomes of knowledge exchange being evaluated.

This breadth of knowledge exchange methods embraces simple information transfer of a formal and intentional kind, for example, presentations, teaching, and management of knowledge, through to the more informal encounters of peer-to-peer social learning and social media interactions.

Knowledge exchange is therefore determined by the ways in which it is

conceptualised, shared or transferred and is further determined by epistemological perspectives. Hofer (2000) writes about beliefs held by individuals and to what extent this knowledge emerges from personal, and inevitably subjective experience, or whether it can be 'known' through evidence. Understanding knowledge exchange evaluation methodologies therefore needs to take into account both how knowledge is understood, and how knowledge exchange is implemented.

Evaluation approaches also depend on what is to be evaluated, with Kirshbaum (2008) focussing on knowledge exchange that produces changes in understanding, attitude or behaviour and Warner et al (2011) mapping the ways in which policy changes can be identified.

10.8 Models and tools from other domains

Despite the extent of scholarly consideration addressing different aspects of evaluation, there is no single, overarching, comprehensive evaluation theory. To address the research opportunity this presents, the remainder of this chapter will explore some related models in order to highlight transferable evaluation theory for these purposes.

In deconstructing the component elements of facilitated knowledge exchange and how it can be evaluated, evaluation models and theories will be investigated from a range of related settings, including groupwork, learning environments, participation and service theory. Key lessons will be extracted from relevant evaluation principles and practices, to build the framework that answers the research question **How can a framework be designed to support its practice?**

10.8.i Facilitation as a learning environment

All facilitated encounters are learning environments and therefore lessons to inform the design of an evaluation framework can be extracted from the

considerable body of evaluation practice across the domains of education and learning. The need for clarity of objectives is hard-wired into all levels of education and learning with teaching-plans and learning-objectives now the currency of historical, contemporary and developing doctrines in this field. In the context of such learning environments, the *Four Level Approach* was defined in 1959 by Donald L. Kirkpatrick in a series of articles that appeared in the US Training and Development Journal. Kirkpatrick went on to redefine the evaluation model with his 1998 book *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*.

The basis of the approach is that each of the levels becomes more onerous, but that a proportionate degree of insight is acquired to compensate for this at each stage. The four levels of the model are defined by Kirkpatrick as:

- Level 1: Reaction
- Level 2: Learning
- Level 3: Behavior ¹¹¹
- Level 4: Results

Level 1: Reaction

Kirkpatrick refers to Level 1 as a measure of customer satisfaction offering guidelines to increase the effectiveness of end of class or workshop exit evaluation as:

111. In describing the model the researcher will use Kirkpatrick's U.S. spelling for the level descriptors e.g. behavior, and British spelling for the commentary e.g. behaviour.

- Determine what you want to find out
- Design a form that will quantify reactions
- Encourage written comments and suggestions
- Get a 100 percent immediate response
- Get honest responses
- Develop acceptable standards
- Measure reactions against standards and take the appropriate action
- Communicate reactions as appropriate.

Level 2: Learning

Kirkpatrick defines learning as the extent to which participants change their attitudes, and increase their knowledge or skills as a result of their attendance. Practical guidelines for the capture of these changes suggest using a control group if practical, evaluating knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes both before and after the class or workshop. Guidelines also propose using a paper and pencil test to measure knowledge and attitudes and a performance test to measure skills.

Level 3: Behavior

Kirkpatrick defines level three as the extent to which behaviour change can be directly linked to attendance. The specific guidelines for this level are to allow time for such a change to emerge.

Level 4: Results

This is the measuring level that can include increased production, improved work quality, reduced turnover, etc. Level four poses particular challenges when attempting directly to correlate this to attendance and participation, so Kirkpatrick suggests evaluating the conditions the person is operating in. Once again, guidelines suggest the importance of allowing time, measuring both before and after the intervention, and repeating the measurement at

appropriate intervals.

Further, in the organisational learning context, some evaluators see evaluation as the catalyst for learning in itself. Preskill & Torres (1999) outline their approach to evaluation as on-going and integrated into all practices, identifying and exploring the information and learning needs of individuals, teams, and the organisation in general.

10.8.ii Facilitation as groupwork

Groupwork is widely viewed as an informal learning environment, in that groups come together and groupwork takes place in the broadest possible range of settings across all societies. In 2004 Michael Preston-Shoot conducted a literature search around the theme of evaluation in groupwork, identifying only five articles focussed on research and evaluation published in the journal *Groupwork* in the preceding five years. Preston-Shoot recommends a '*shift of mind*' in relation to the place that evaluation occupies within groupwork practice, describing this as requiring:

participative openness with other travellers, debating what counts as evidence, as change, as approved practice, and as success. (Preston-Shoot, 2004)

In *What Works In Groupwork? Towards An Ethical Framework For Measuring Effectiveness*, Carol Lewis (2012) further expresses concern in relation to ensuring that the literature that informs and guides the evaluation of groupwork practice keeps pace with the evolving ethics and values of the practice itself. For Lewis, groupwork is framed by equity within groups, suggesting that without an understanding of ethics and values, groupworkers can find themselves reverting to models of groupwork that are predictable and easily replicable, rather than remaining responsive to the needs and expressed wishes of participants. This is of particular significance when balancing the very different approaches to explicitly designed, or intuitively

improvised, knowledge exchange; its key component being that of being creatively responsive to such needs.

10.8.iii Facilitation as participation and consultation

Facilitation of any sort is also a participative and consultative process. And while it can be said that any facilitated encounter involves a degree of flexibility on the part of the facilitator, improvised facilitation will achieve its objectives without the nature of the stages being apparent to either the commissioner or participant during the time the improvised processes are unfolding. Working in an explicitly improvised way requires a basis of trust and the taking of what can sometimes feel like unsupported risks. This can be seen in terms of importing a range of creative processes to build and maintain this trust through what is frequently an uncertain process for all parties, until possibly a very late stage in the process, when the means of meeting the objective transforms blur into focus.

The unconscious processes that are at work in facilitators and within groups has been described by Hunter (1995) who outlines a person-centered approach to the role of the facilitator that is also referenced by both Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006 and Ringer, 2002 when they describe facilitators managing their own internal reactions to their participants, especially in challenging situations. Hunter (1995) encouraged facilitators to maximise what she called '*free attention*,' which she defines as '*the part of your awareness not caught up with thoughts, feelings (emotions), and body sensations.*'

Clearly, a limiting factor of spontaneous responses within groups is, for the facilitator, the fear of failure. This is of particular interest when considering the intuitive importation of creative processes resulting in the wrong intervention at the wrong time. This necessity to embrace one's fallibility, to remain authentic, and to take risks has been described by (Ghais, 2005; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006), as a valuable starting point to facilitator effectiveness. In one of the interviews for this study, Interviewee FI 5 wrote

that their facilitation practice confidence was constructed upon:

Self-critique and reflective practice through peer observation and team/co-facilitation with a continual search for opportunities in the unfamiliar.

suggesting perhaps that this idea of uncertainty and bravery is a necessary practice driver.

10.8.iv Facilitation as a Service

Being commissioned for and delivered to consumers, facilitation can also be seen to conform to the definition of a service. Service theories can offer revealing insight into the development of an effective methodology, when the relationship between what is known, what can reasonably be expected, what is actually experienced and what needs to be understood is subject to evaluation. The original SERVQUAL, technology, (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry 1985) introduced ten distinct dimensions to service quality. However, three years later the somewhat onerous list of ten was reduced by the authors to five, the dimensions of which appear below with the authors' definitions:

- tangibles: physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel
- reliability: ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
- responsiveness: willingness to help customers and provide prompt service
- assurance: knowledge and courtesy of employees as well as their ability to convey trust and confidence
- empathy: individual care and attention that the company provides its customers.

(Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988)

Parasuraman *et al* (1988) assert that SERVQUAL provides the basic architecture through which a range of expectations and perceptions can be elicited for each of the five dimensions since:

The skeleton, when necessary, can be adapted or supplemented to fit the characteristics or specific research needs of a particular organization.

SERVQUAL hinges on the idea of a gap conceptualization, which relates to the what a customer feels the provider of a service *should* offer, rather than what they in practice offer. This framework provides the basis of satisfaction studies and encompasses four constructs: expectations, performance, disconfirmation, and satisfaction. Disconfirmation is defined by the discrepancy between prior expectations and perceived actual performance: zero disconfirmation when a product performs as expected; positive disconfirmation when the product performs better than expected; and negative disconfirmation when the product performs below expectations.

The SERVQUAL model further determines (i) whether respondents can distinguish between desired expectations and minimum expectations (ii) the impact of measuring expectations prior to the measurement of perceptions and (iii) the impact of these factors.

There have been criticisms of SERVQUAL's failure adequately to assess customer evaluations as a result of the lack of any absolute standards of service quality. The instrument invites respondents to report their expectations of excellent service, but these are inevitably relative, rather than absolute, indicating that customers will evaluate a service favourably as long as their expectations are met or exceeded, regardless of whether their prior expectations were high or low and regardless of whether the absolute service performance is high or low. Gronroos (1993) describes this further through what he calls the bad-service paradox whereby a customer has low expectations based on previous poor experience. If those expectations are met, there is no gap and therefore the quality of service is deemed satisfactory. Clearly, that has implications for the way in which expectations are informed by previous experience of facilitated knowledge exchange; the facilitators, the processes, other participants and indeed, even the spaces the processes take place within and the quality of the food served or the materials

or resourced used or distributed.

SERVQUAL offers a valuable insight into how facilitation service might be perceived and experienced and how prior expectation and disappointment can materially affect the way in which a participant approaches a facilitated process. The five SERVQUAL dimensions were further refined by Zeitham et al. in 1992 to produce the RATER model which, in its extended definitions, provides a more appropriate mechanism for the purpose of evaluating improvised facilitation. The RATER model focusses on the compatible sequence of:

- **Reliability** – the ability to provide the promised service consistently, accurately, and on time.
- **Assurance** – the knowledge, skills, and credibility of staff; and their ability to use this expertise to inspire trust and confidence.
- **Tangibles** – the physical evidence of the service provided.
- **Empathy** – the level of individualized attention, access, communication and understanding that the customer perceives.
- **Responsiveness** – the willingness displayed to help clients and provide prompt service; your ability to provide a quick, high quality service to your customers.

10.9 Applying the RATER model to facilitation

The RATER dimensions create a context in which to reflect upon the demonstration of competences and the extent to which these have met, not met, or have exceeded the perception or experience of participants. The precise nature of these competences and how they can directly be related to the RATER model will be discussed in the next chapter when the framework is proposed to identify the three states of: **A. Future state** – what exceptional facilitation would feel like; **B. Current situation** – how it feels at the moment; **C. Next Actions** – how to move from B to A.

An initial approach to applying the RATER model identified outline questions in relation to general facilitation as follows:

Reliability	How well does the facilitator provide the service promised? Are systems and processes clearly identified, written, robust and reliable? Could the quality of the facilitation service be improved in any other way?
Assurance	Does the facilitator have the skills and knowledge needed to deliver a good service? Do they need any further training or development? Do they inspire trust in participants?
Tangibles	Are the evidence and the tangible outputs of the facilitation service appropriate? Does the physical or virtual evidence fit with the facilitator's desired brand?
Empathy	Does the facilitator build appropriate relationships with clients/participants? Do they understand why empathy is essential for providing a great service? Is the facilitator able to see things from a client's/participant's point-of-view?
Responsiveness	Does the facilitator provide a prompt service, which is easy to access? Does the facilitator manage complaints, response times, format, and feedback appropriately?

Figure 29 RATER outline evaluation questions.

10.10 Summary

This chapter has considered evaluation from a number of distinct and separate perspectives in order to arrive at the best-fit for the evaluation framework.

Extracting lessons from all of these approaches it will now be possible to embark on the key driver of this study – the design of the framework for improvised facilitation. The facilitated encounters that have been the focus of this study are typically brief and intense, usually lasting between one and two days. Within that time the establishment of the expectations and learning preferences of individual participants is typically shoe-horned into an initial

trust building stage at the start of the process. This clearly delineates a facilitator in standard practice conditions from a more developmental service function however the application of the RATER dimensions is seen to be of value. The requirement to know and to understand what might be possible to achieve with participants, should always, irrespective of the duration of the encounter, remain a key consideration in ensuring inclusiveness of participant engagement and effectiveness of outcome.

The next chapter will attempt precisely that, as it builds upon the findings from the literature and a specific aspect of the researcher's own practice experience to proffer the component elements of this framework.

SECTION FOUR

Designing the Framework

Chapter 11: Designing a new framework for facilitation

11.1 Introduction

Although literature and theories of evaluation were identified within the previous chapter, it can be seen that no research or practice exists specifically in relation to the field of improvised facilitation. This knowledge gap offered an opportunity to design a bespoke framework to support a form of group facilitation with a strong improvised component. This chapter will outline the ways in which the framework design began with the synthesis of findings from both literature and practice, to produce a new set of generic facilitator competences. The chapter goes on to use the findings to identify a second, distinctive frame through which to address the particular challenge of supporting the dimensions of *improvised* facilitation. The third element, the evaluation of facilitated sessions, will provide the final part of the framework. The evolution of the model and its key elements will therefore be outlined in this chapter in the following sections:

- 11.3 The evolution of the C⁸ facilitation competences.
- 11.4 The design of the ORTO frame for improvised facilitation.
- 11.5 The design and testing of the ExEx evaluation.

The chapter will open at 11.2 by adding further context to the findings through reference for the first time to the involvement of the researcher in the design of a Department of Health facilitation competence initiative that pre dates this study.

11.2 The Department of Health initiative

In 2009 the researcher was invited by the Department of Health (DH) to design, and with colleagues to deliver a facilitation development programme (FDP). The FDP was to equip largely inexperienced people from a range of socio-economic and demographic groups to facilitate an innovative and challenging suite of sessions to carers across England. The *Caring with Confidence* (CwC) programme was a £15.2m funded project that during its eighteen-month life involved 400 people attending the FDP who then went on to deliver the 3-hour self-management programme in 40,292 face-to-face sessions.

In the spring of 2008, before the FDP was in place, the DH Policy Research Programme commissioned CIRCLE (*Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities*) at the University of Leeds to undertake a three-year evaluation of this programme in collaboration with SPRU (the *Social Policy Research Unit*) of the University of York.¹¹²

The CwC initiative was the largest such supported programme ever planned in the UK. The programme in its entirety – setting up, implementing and sustaining – operated for two-and-a-half years of its intended three-year lifespan and now exists on the NHS Choices website¹¹³ as a series of learning workbooks. Within this the facilitator competence framework remains in its entirety.

Responding to the DH timing imperative, with only days to deliver the FDP to the first cohort, and with echoes of that day in 2000¹¹⁴ when asked to do something interesting and useful with no idea what that might involve, materials were produced to support an intuitive and practice-informed framework constructed upon putative, linked competences. With no theoretical underpinning of these competences, they responded to the DH brief by

112. Until October 2010 when the study became the sole responsibility of CIRCLE.

113. www.nhschoices.leopink.com

114 Referenced in Motivation for the Study on page iv.

attempting to encapsulate the key elements of successful facilitation without overloading or intimidating the fledgling facilitators. The framework of self-explanatory prompts, supported by limited explanatory guidance, was used to support exercises and processes that brought key elements of the CwC programme to life during the 3-days of the FDP. These prompts began with the point at which the facilitator engaged with a group to establish and manage expectations, and concluded at the point when the session ended.

The prompts were as follows:

Agree the Contract	Consider Pace
Respect Everyone	Check In and Listen
Connect Emotionally	Think About and Use Space
Stay Independent	Manage Energy
Be Yourself	End Well

The evaluation design for the review carried out by CIRCLE and SPRU was both formative and summative citing evidence from the FDP case studies that:

... the FDP was well regarded by programme providers and had the potential to build sustainable networks of peer support. Facilitators themselves provided very positive feedback, rating the FDP programme '9.6' out of 10.¹¹⁵

And about the FDP the report further concluded that:

in the context of an innovative programme with a relatively short lead-in time, tight timescales and ambitious outputs, the programme was very successful in developing a high quality standardised programme of support to carers which was delivered through quality assured modules by well trained facilitators.

This project is identified at this stage since its competences have clearly, even at the subliminal level, informed the researcher's professional practice from that date, and will inevitably have informed the development of this study in the way that all of the preceding decades of facilitation practice also have.

115. Training and Supporting Carers The National Evaluation of the Programme (2011) CIRCLE, Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities. University of Leeds

It is the case however that an explicit awareness of this project had not been evident at any of the early stages of the study of the literature or collection of the data. The project was recalled by the researcher in January 2015 during the final stages of the data analysis. This occurred precisely because of the similarities between the early intuitive framework and the emerging findings of the research.

11.3 The C⁸ competences

The competence model for this study is the product of a rigorous process that began with a synthesis of the research findings. The following will illustrate the stages of abstraction from the Literature Review to the identification of the Key Determinants:

-
1. Capturing the **Themes** from the literature: Status; Trust; Space and Resources; Focus; Risk/Confidence; Knowledge, Wisdom and Insight.

 2. Cross referencing the **Themes** against Brolin's (1992) Characteristics of Creative People.

 3. Filtering the **Themes** through the lens of improvisation and improvised facilitation.

 4. Refining the **Themes** to identify the **Key Determinants** of improvised facilitation: Status; Trust; Resources; Focus; Confidence; Energy; Intuition.

 5. Cross-referencing the **Key Determinants** with leading facilitation practitioner competence models.

 6. Checking the **Key Determinants** against the findings from the interviews.

 7. Checking the **Key Determinants** against the findings from the focus groups.

The method of extracting and establishing the **Themes** from the literature is described in detail in Chapters 4 to 7.

7.6, on page 150 offers a robust cross-referenced profile of all the emerging **Themes**.

In Chapter 8, at 8.5 on page 157, the **Themes** are filtered through the lenses of improvisation, improvised facilitation and Brolin's (1992) characteristics of creative people. Further filtering and refining of the **Themes** within Chapter 8 converts them into what the study then refers to as **Key Determinants** of improvised facilitation.

Chapter 9: Synthesising Competence, begins with figure 18 on page 186 which demonstrates how the alignment of **Themes** to **Key Determinants** took place. The **Key Determinants** are then cross-referenced still further in relation to practitioner models of competence (9.3 – 9.6), and the interview and focus group data (9.7 and 9.8).

The conclusion is that these **Key Determinants** of Status; Trust; Resources; Focus; Confidence; Energy; and Intuition provide a robust basis for the further development of the framework.

The alignment of the **Key Determinants** and the interview findings further suggest the following interpretation of the requirements of successful generic facilitation:

LITERATURE FINDINGS	INTERVIEW FINDINGS	GENERIC FACILITATOR REQUIREMENTS
STATUS	EXPERIENCE	Signalling and rewarding risk Intervening Process pacing Tracking development
TRUST	CLOSING THE CIRCLE	Keeping to time Valuing each individual Closing successfully
RESOURCES	OPPORTUNITIES	Making use of space Animating and energising Inventing solutions

FOCUS	CONTEXT	Being clear about process Managing expectations Clarifying understanding Tracking development Checking outputs against expectations
CONFIDENCE	BRAVERY	Taking risks to achieve objectives
ENERGY	ANIMATING	Knowing the audience Managing energy
INTUITION	FEELINGS, EMOTIONS and PHYSICAL REACTIONS. FLEXIBILITY	Being inclusive Responding to individual learning preferences and mood Capturing different perspectives Embracing learning preferences

Figure 30 The emergence of the generic facilitator competences

And when ordering the group process stages that typically characterise a facilitated event, it is possible to construct these facilitator requirements chronologically. This chronological sequence of competences then appear within stages defined as:

- Contracting
- Context Managing
- Connecting People And Ideas
- Creatively Responding
- Changing Gear
- Clarifying Meaning
- Consensus Building
- Closing Successfully.

Responding to this process ordering it was then possible to construct the final, synthesised, eight-stage **C⁸** model as it relates to these chronological competences. The accompanying brief practice directions were developed from the facilitator requirements identified in Figure 30:

COMPETENCE	PRACTICE
Contracting Context	Being clear about the point of the session, the expectations of all parties and the evolving nature of the process
Context managing	Being inclusive Making use of space Managing energy
Connecting people and ideas	Understanding the audience Taking risks for process gains Signalling and rewarding risk
Creatively responding	Animating and energising Inventing solutions Intervening and changing direction when necessary
Changing Gear	Creating different ways for people to engage Responding to individual learning preferences and mood Process pacing
Clarifying Meaning	Playing back, translating and finding different ways to convey meaning
Consensus Building	Creating thresholds of understanding Capturing different perspectives
Closing successfully	Keeping to time Valuing all contributions Checking outputs against expectations Bringing everything into land

Figure 31 Synthesised C⁸ facilitator competence framework.

This competence framework has potential for application to all forms of facilitation, whether explicitly creative or otherwise, and whether tools and formats are imported into the processes or not. What it does not take account of however is the very particular requirements of the discrete form of

improvised facilitation practice that is key to answering the research question

What is improvised facilitation?

The next section of this chapter will attempt to identify precisely where these distinctions in practice exist before going on to suggest an innovative new model to enable it to take place.

11.4 Designing A New Confidence Frame For Improvised Facilitation

The findings so far suggest that there are key processes that inform and that are fundamental to the improvised approach. They also indicate that the circumstances for improvised facilitation to take place are more dependent upon *confidence* than *competence*; the direct ways in which confidence not just influences the ability to practise in this way but determines what is possible. And it is these **Influences** that will be considered next.

The three **Influences** that it is claimed best encompass what has been captured in the **Key Determinants** are those of Experience, Intuition and Action. These **Influences** will be described next and when the literature **Themes** that they embrace are referred to, they will appear in italics.

EXPERIENCE is identified as the sum of what the facilitator brings to the process of facilitation; everything that is known to them both explicitly and tacitly. Experience is used here to embrace the literature **Themes** of *Focus*, *Status* and *Trust*. These are outlined in greater detail in Figure 14 on page 150. Experience is first deployed at the commissioning stage of a facilitation process when the expectations of the commissioner are filtered by the facilitator through the lenses of what is realistic and realisable within the fixed timeframe and available resources. And during the event it is Experience that will respond appropriately to intuitive responses.

INTUITION is identified as the sum of *Knowledge*, *Wisdom* and *Insight* and will guide the creative interventions that will seek to maximise the use of space, group energy, formats and any tools that might be employed. Intuition

is also fuelled by calculations of *Risk* of and *Confidence* in what might be possible. It is precisely these intuitive hunches that facilitator Experience assesses in the moment to determine what should happen at any point in an improvised facilitation process. Experience and Intuition can therefore be seen to combine and to coalesce in ever changing combinations to create the responses and interventions referred to in the model as Action.

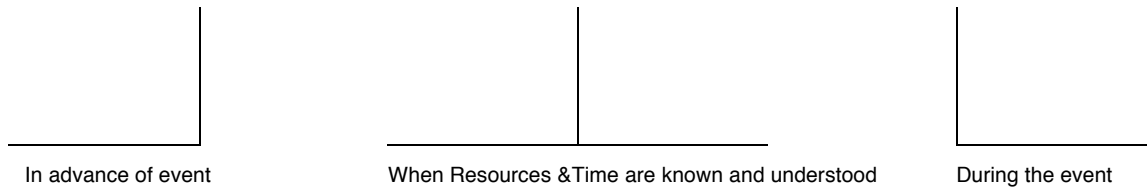
Action is the manifestation of all of these responses and includes *Spontaneity* and *Play*. Action is the sum of every creative response and every intervention in the group process that responds to the Experience and Intuition of the facilitator to achieve the Outputs necessary to realise the Objectives agreed at the commissioning stage.

For a model of improvised facilitation, this categorisation produced seven separate **Elements**:

	The 7 Elements
The fixed points of:	Time and Resources
The direction from:	Objectives to Outputs
The influences of:	Experience, Intuition and Action

Identifying these seven **Elements** enabled the design of the model for effective improvised facilitation to develop. The model, designed in three iterations took the letters from four of the **Elements**: Objectives, Resources, Time and Outputs to become the acronym for the model, ORTO.

ORTO1 used the representation of open axes to signify the timeframes in advance of a facilitated event and during it. And additionally used the combined axes, as shown below, to signify the point before the event, at which the implications of Time and Resources are known, understood and agreed by both facilitator and commissioner:



Within the open frames created through these axes, the interconnected influences of Experience, Intuition and Action are constantly in flux as they respond to Time and Resources to match Objectives and Output.

The first attempt to represent the constellations, collision and coalescing of these seven **Elements** within a static model, appeared within the first iteration of the ORTO Frame model that follows:

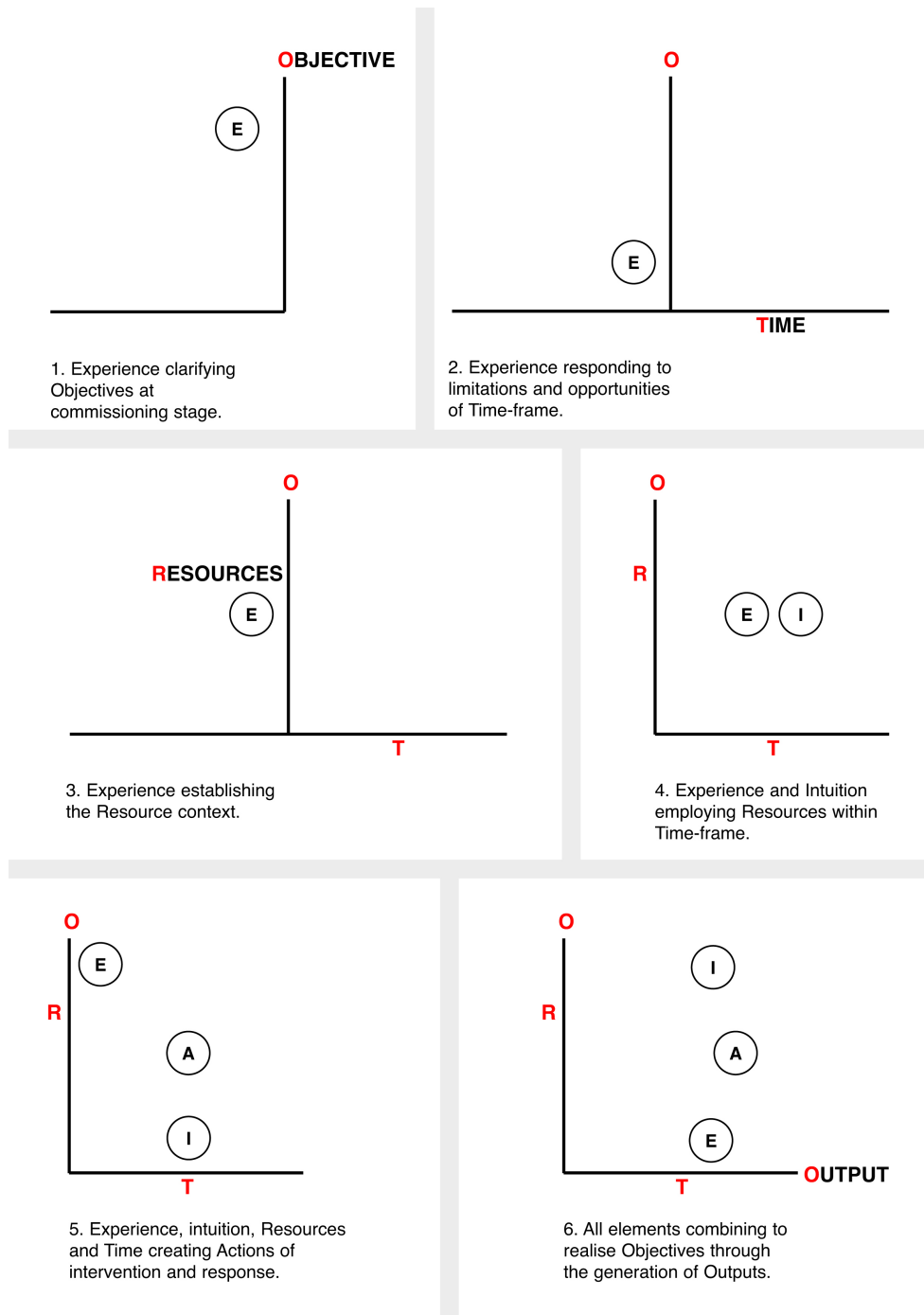


Figure 32 ORTO Confidence Frame version 1.

In a serendipitous occurrence, it was only after the letters ORTO had been confirmed for the model that the researcher discovered orto was the Italian word for vegetable garden. Tassoul (2009) writes about expertise in terms of remembering relevant knowledge to ‘*get your hands dirty, acquire experience and then through trial and error develop solutions.*’ This association of

Improvised facilitation with an organic, not a mechanical process, is one that has resonance within this context.

The ORTO 1 frame is not offered here as a sequence of processes or prompts to be mindful of, but rather as a recognition of the constant collision of **Influences** that affect a facilitator as they unconsciously make process design choices at each step and turn of an improvised facilitation process.

The ORTO frame will serve as a means of recognising those **Influences** in order to initiate the iterative cycle of building confidence in the practice of improvised facilitation. In so doing, the identification of the seven **Elements** within the ORTO frame, those of Time and Resources, Objectives and Outputs, and Experience, Intuition and Action therefore answers the research question **What is improvised facilitation?**

ORTO 1 was a starting point model, but in revising it to more effectively transmit meaning the second iteration of the confidence frame, ORTO 2, introduced a diagonal axis. This axis visually linked the Objectives and Outputs together to signify the temporal trajectory of a facilitated process as it moves through time from the setting of Objectives to the generation of Outputs. In ORTO 2 that time duration is further represented through the six indicative time phases of the horizontal axis that appear in the background of the model almost as a guide and a prompt to progress. The following model, ORTO 2, shows how that was realised in the second iteration of the ORTO frame:

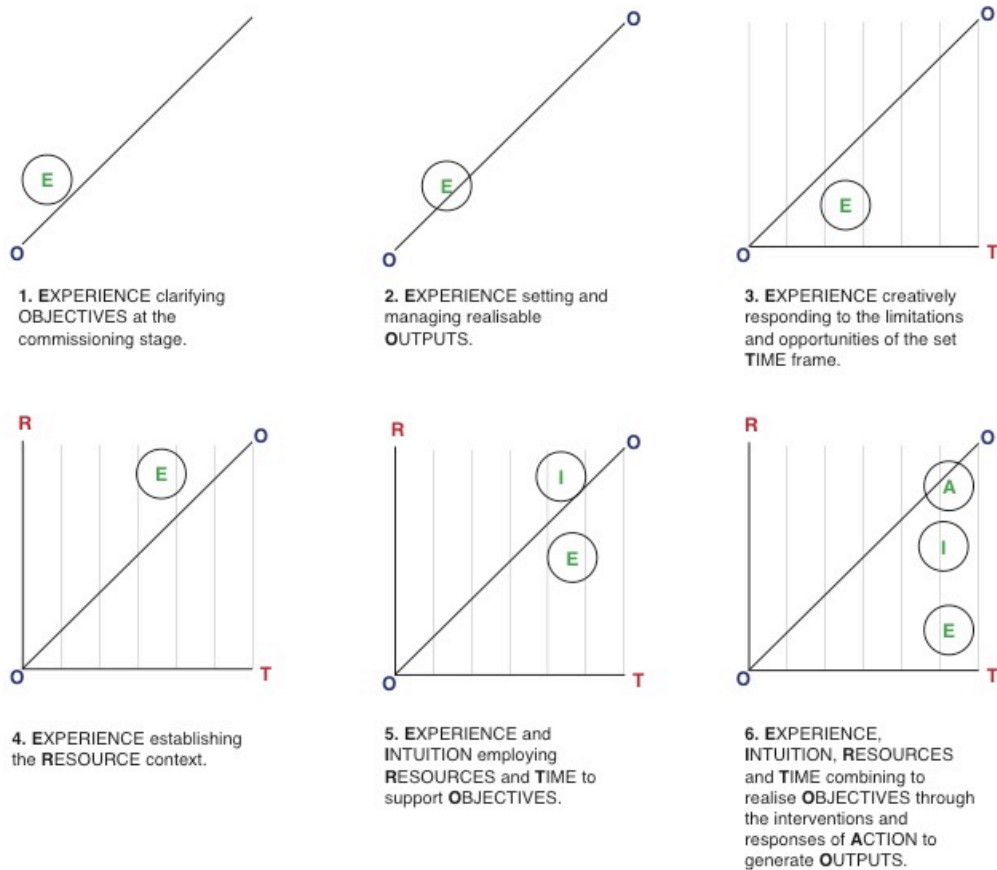


Figure 33 ORTO Confidence Frame version 2.

This revision however, still failed to capture the sense of dynamic decision-making that takes place during an actual facilitated event through the choreography of the **Influences** of Experience, Intuition and Action always moving in, out, towards and away from each other. What followed was the rethinking of the ORTO representation to more effectively transmit this process dynamism.

In the final version of the ORTO frame the open axes were closed to construct a bounded frame. The stages of the process were focussed further and reduced from six to four. And a row and a mesh of background dots were introduced to indicate, in frame 1 the direction of travel, and in frame 4, the many and varied possibilities of weaving in and through and around the mesh. This enabled the demonstration of how different Actions can create

dynamically different process responses.

Each frame of the final ORTO model is described in the following table and is followed by the final version of the ORTO frame:

<p>Frame 1</p>	<p>Shows how the dotted line provides clear guidance on the direction of travel to link the planned Objectives with the anticipated Outputs. Experience (e) determines how this will be achieved.</p>
<p>Frame 2</p>	<p>Shows the visual representation, through the linked dots, of the agreement at the commissioning stage, when projected Outputs are matched and linked directly to agreed Objectives. Experience (e) enables this matching to take place.</p>
<p>Frame 3</p>	<p>Shows how the bounded frame is constructed by the introduction of the fixed points of Time and Resources. Experience (e) ensures all four Influences work to support each other.</p>
<p>Frame 4</p>	<p>Shows <i>just one</i> example of how a flexible and responsive approach to achieving these Outputs might weave in, around, across, and through the mesh. Experience (e) and Intuition (i) generate the creative interventions of Action (a). This constantly changing process is indicated through both primary Influences and the combined Influences of Action supported Intuition, and Intuition supported Action, represented in the model as (ia) and (ai).</p>

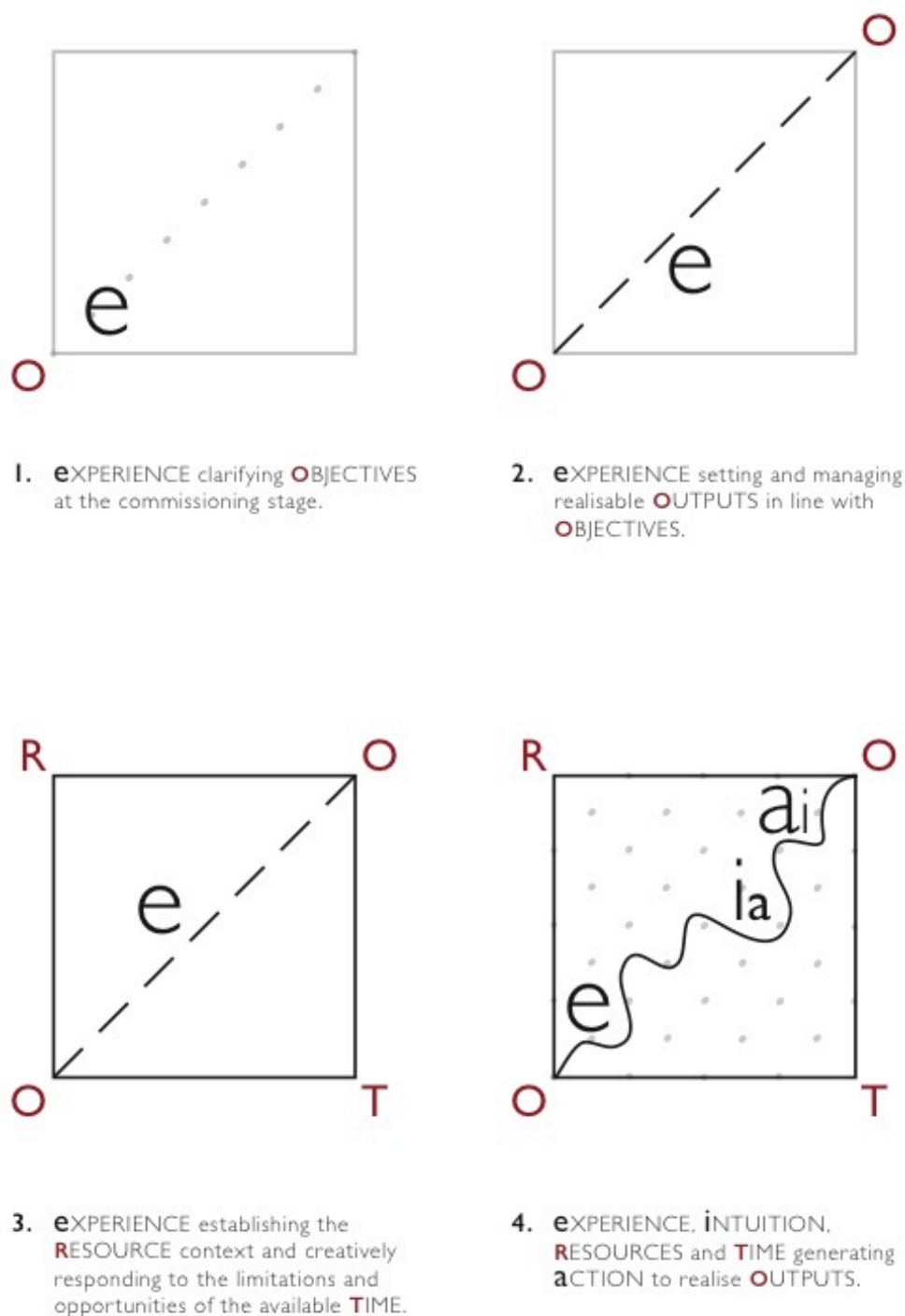


Figure 34 ORTO Confidence Frame final.

The final ORTO frame brings together all the different findings of the study to firmly anchor the practice of improvised facilitation within a scalable model. Additional research beyond the remit of this study could further interrogate this frame, deconstruct more comprehensively the elements within the dynamic model, and explore the potential for its transferability to other practitioners and to other domains.

This approach is applicable across the broad range of creative facilitation approaches, from the tool-supported to the purely improvised. It is further anticipated that the framework will be developed as an evaluation tool for commissioners and independent observers. Defining the confidence frame for improvised facilitation in this way, through the systematic interpretation of these seven **Elements** will now enable the evaluation design to proceed.

What follows is the design of a robust **Evaluation Framework** that can be tested by facilitators and participants. The research data produced through these methods will now contribute further to answering the research question: **How can frameworks be designed to support its practice?**

11.5 The SERVQUAL context for evaluation

Chapter 10 made the case for the transferability of SERVQUAL to the evaluation objectives of this research. The original SERVQUAL, technology, (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry 1985) introduced ten distinct dimensions to service quality that were subsequently reduced by the authors to the following five RATER dimensions: tangibles; reliability; responsiveness; assurance and empathy.

This study adopted and adapted this basic RATER architecture and applied it to the facilitator environment. In so doing the case was made for the RATER dimensions to provide the context for an evaluation in which the objective was to establish what elements had been met, not met, or had exceeded the perception or experience of participants.

Using RATER dimensions in this way enables the identification of:

- A. Future state** – what exceptional facilitation would feel like.
- B. Current situation** – how it feels at the moment.
- C. Next Actions** – how to move from B to A.

The RATER dimensions are further supported by their alignment to the previously discussed IIF *Facilitation Skills Research Survey* (2003) findings for outstanding facilitation. These highlight:

- **Presence** demonstrating compassion, authority, confidence, energy and self-awareness, warmth and caring.
- **Assessment** accurately assessing client need and creating processes to respond.
- **Communication** actively listening, playing back and confirming.
- **Control** creating and maintaining a productive and safe environment.
- **Consistency** consistently applying best practice to start the session, focus the group, record information, and close the session.
- **Engagement** engaging and raising energy.

These IIF findings align to the RATER dimension as follows:

Presence resonating with **Reliability** and **Empathy**

Assessment resonating with **Assurance** and **Responsiveness**

Communication resonating with **Responsiveness**

Control resonating with **Tangibles**

Consistency resonating with **Reliability** and **Empathy**

Engagement resonating with **Assurance**

With further layering of the **C⁸ Competences** for facilitation, and the **ORTO Confidence Frame** for improvised facilitation, the benefits of the RATER dimensions to the evolving **Evaluation Framework** can be appreciated in the

following table:

C8 FACILITATOR COMPETENCES	IMPROVED FACILITATION ORTO FRAME	RATER DIMENSIONS.
<p>Contracting appropriately Being clear about the point of the session, the expectations of all parties and the evolving nature of the process</p>	<p>OBJECTIVE: Establishing a clear and coherent commissioning agreement with specific and targeted objectives.</p>	<p>Reliability – the ability to provide the promised service consistently, accurately, and on time.</p>
<p>Context managing Being inclusive. Making use of space. Managing energy.</p>	<p>EXPERIENCE: Consolidating the sum of everything known and everything done until this point.</p>	<p>Assurance – the knowledge, skills, and credibility of staff; and their ability to use this expertise to inspire trust and confidence.</p>
<p>Connecting people and ideas Understanding the audience. Taking risks for process gains. Signalling and rewarding risk.</p>	<p>INTUITION: Bringing these experiences into sharp focus as they become relevant and required.</p>	<p>Empathy – the level of individualized attention, access, communication and understanding that the customer perceives.</p>
<p>Creatively responding Animating and energising. Inventing solutions. Intervening and changing. Direction when necessary.</p>	<p>RESOURCES: Accessing what is available to the facilitator, in the room or in hand.</p>	<p>Tangibles – the physical evidence of the service provided.</p>
<p>Changing Gear Creating different ways for people to engage. Responding to individual learning preferences and mood. Process pacing.</p>	<p>ACTION: Designing the interventions that enable imaginative responses by bringing all of the above into alignment.</p>	<p>Responsiveness – the willingness displayed to help clients and provide prompt service; your ability to provide a quick, high quality service to your customers.</p>

<p>Clarifying Meaning Playing back, translating and finding different ways to convey meaning. Tracking development.</p>	<p>TIME: working effectively within the available time-frame.</p>	
<p>Consensus Building Creating thresholds of understanding. Capturing different perspectives.</p>		
<p>Closing successfully Keeping to time. Valuing all contributions Checking outputs against expectations. Bringing everything into land.</p>	<p>OUTPUT: Bringing everything and everyone into land to meet expectation and to achieve objectives.</p>	

Figure 35 Competence, RATER and ORTO alignment.

11.6 Designing the evaluation pilot

Following the completion of these stages of data analysis, an **Evaluation Framework** was then constructed to combine the ORTO **Elements** of Objective and Outputs; Resources and Time; Experience, Intuition and Action, with the RATER dimensions of Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness. This was piloted with 22 participants at an event in February 2014.

The two-stage capture of the Expectations and Experience of participants attending an improvised event was designed using two linked and anonymously coded forms:

- form A completed at the start of the event to reflect **Expectations**.
- form B, completed and returned at the end of the event to capture **Experience**.

This linked anonymity was achieved by placing each of the form Bs in separate envelopes with the code on the outside. Form As were briefed as

anonymous, completed as people arrived and collected with a light touch as each participant form A code was matched to the form B code on the corresponding envelope, and the participant's name written on that envelope. At the end of the session, when the form Bs were about to be distributed, it was explained that for anyone who wanted to engage in the second part of the evaluation, an anonymously linked and coded form B could be found in the envelope, with the only direct link to a respondent their name on the envelope that *would not* be returned. This worked well for the participants and was not onerous at the initial form A collection/matching/name-writing stage. The purpose of this elaborate separation of the two stages of the process was to ensure that the participants did not focus on how *what mattered to them* was playing out in the session, which would, it was felt, have been inevitable in at least some cases if both forms had been distributed at the start. As a result, the responses captured at the end of the event were more instinctive, with no unhelpful distraction from the real purpose of the event.

Focussing on Expectations and Experience in this way prompted the classification of this process as **ExEx Evaluation**. Form A sought to elicit responses to statements in response to the sentence opener **What matters to me about events like this is that...**

Responses were recorded on a Likert scale as shown below:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Matters less to me						Matters enormously to me

Figure 36 Likert illustration.

The initial form A statements appear here as they relate to both the RATER dimensions from the refined SERVQUAL approach and the ORTO Elements:

Form A statements:

RATER DIMENSIONS	ORTO ELEMENTS	FORM A STATEMENTS
ASSURANCE	OBJECTIVE	The purpose of the event is clear
ASSURANCE	OBJECTIVE	The way it will unfold is clear
EMPATHY	EXPERIENCE INTUITION	It feels like a safe place to work with people
RELIABILITY	EXPERIENCE INTUITION ACTION	The exercises and processes are appropriate
RELIABILITY	EXPERIENCE INTUITION	The facilitator has authority and confidence
TANGIBLES	RESOURCES	The space is used well
RELIABILITY	TIME	The time is used effectively
RESPONSIVENESS	ACTION	We move forward
EMPATHY RESPONSIVENESS	RESOURCES INTUITION	It is engaging
EMPATHY	INTUITION	Everyone has a chance to have their say
RESPONSIVENESS	INTUITION ACTION	The facilitator responds creatively
TANGIBLES	OUTPUT	It is clear what is being achieved
TANGIBLES	OUTPUT	We achieve what we set out to
	TIME	We finish on time

Figure 37 RATER/ORTO Evaluation Form A statements.

The second stage of the framework, Form B, was collected from participants at the end of the event and used a similar Likert scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly agree						Strongly disagree

Form B comprised the following statements, which also conformed to the RATER and ORTO dimensions as they aligned to the statements on Form A:

FORM B STATEMENTS

The facilitator made the purpose of the event clear

The facilitator created a safe and productive environment for participants to work with each other

The facilitator framed the event in a way that made clear the way it might unfold

The facilitator began the session dynamically and provided appropriate exercises throughout to meet purpose and objectives

The facilitator demonstrated authority and the confidence to take considered risks

Space was used effectively by the facilitator to engage the participants in the processes

The facilitator changed pace and gear to use the time effectively

The facilitator used techniques to ensure process milestones were reached and understanding was achieved

The facilitator was skilled at making appropriate and timely interventions to challenge and move forward

The facilitator energised and animated the group

The facilitator was aware of different participant experiences at the event and used techniques to support, challenge and capture all perspectives

The facilitator was flexible and responsive in the way they achieved agreement within the group

The facilitator made what had been achieved in the session clear and visible

The facilitator achieved the objectives of the session

The facilitator brought the session to a meaningful close, on time and that recognised and valued different contributions and perspectives.

Figure 38 Form B statements.

The form ended with a final, open space headed, *Any other comments?*

The **ExEx Evaluation** was piloted at an event commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council on February 12, 2014 at which 22 participants were present.

At the close of the event, six of the participants remained in a focus group to discuss their experience of using the forms. When asked about how easy the evaluation forms had been to complete and how useful they felt they might be, the following responses were elicited:

Too complicated

Confusing layout

You're asking two things each time, eg, safe or productive. Which one do I answer?

How do I know if it is the format that is engaging me? I don't know what you mean by format.

Quite long and very wordy.

I always mark in the middle so I'll probably just put a tick on 4 for each question

How would I know if the facilitator had responded to the different needs of the group – sorry folks but honestly, I'm interested in me.

Confusing thank yous at both top and bottom of page – I kept thinking I'd finished.

Pace *and* gear? What's the difference?

I don't know much about facilitation. Should I? Or can I just come along and expect it to be right?

Clear and visible, recognized and valued, meaningful and on time, which one? – all of the questions seem to do this.

I was pretty tired at the end and this felt like a test.

I'm not sure.

Am I supposed to understand all this?

Shouldn't strongly agree be 7, not 1? For me, it would make more sense the other way round.

PTO would be better than thank you

11.7 Refining the framework for testing

A number of these comments were invaluable and in retrospect should have been obvious to the researcher at an earlier stage. A second iteration of the forms was designed to accommodate the particularly relevant observations of:

1. The need to disaggregate the elements that participants were finding it challenging to consider
2. Recognising the level of process awareness that it was reasonable to expect from participants.

The challenge of the heavy reliance on words within the forms was only partially addressed however, as it was felt that at this stage, it was more important to establish the tone of voice and the question sequence logic, than to locate the questions within a more compelling visual aesthetic. And pragmatically, the new forms also inverted the scale in what had been an oversight of researcher understanding, to represent the more coherent association of 1 with strongly disagree and 7, with strongly agree as shown here:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

Figure 39 Likert revision.

11.7.1 April – July 2014: Field Testing

These amendments contributed to a revised and more focussed series of statements being produced. The perspective and point of view of the forms were also reassigned to a first-person narrative to more effectively capture participant experience. The revised evaluation forms were distributed at events between April and July 2014 as follows:

8 April 2014, IAA at Lancaster University with **15** participants

9 April 2014 IAA at Lancaster University with **18** participants

2 June 2014 at Cranfield University with **66** participants

4 June 2014 Wellcome Trust event at Oxford University with **19** participants

9 July 2014 Cranfield University event with **51** participants

This provided an opportunity to test the **ExEx Evaluation** with a total of **169** participants. The new statements, still adhering both to the RATER dimensions and ORTO frame **Elements**, replaced the old statements as outlined in the following two illustrations:

Piloted at single ESRC event February 2014	Distributed between April and July 2014
The facilitator made the purpose of the process clear	I was clear about the purpose and the process and how the event might unfold
The facilitator created a safe and productive environment for participants to work with each other	I felt it was a safe and productive environment for working together
The facilitator framed the event in a way that made clear the way it might unfold	I felt the facilitator had the authority and confidence to take considered risks
The facilitator began the session dynamically and provided appropriate exercises throughout to meet purpose and objectives	I felt space was used effectively to engage participants in the processes
The facilitator demonstrated authority and the confidence to take considered risks	I felt the session was animated and I felt engaged

Space was used effectively by the facilitator to engage the participants in the processes	I found the exercises and techniques appropriate to meet the purpose and objectives
The facilitator changed pace and gear to use the time effectively	Changes of pace and shifts in gear used the time effectively
The facilitator used techniques to ensure process milestones were reached and understanding was achieved	
The facilitator was skilled at making appropriate and timely interventions to challenge and move forward	The facilitator intervened effectively to move the session forward
The facilitator energised and animated the group	The facilitator was successful in achieving agreement
The facilitator was aware of different participant experiences at the event and used techniques to support, challenge and capture all perspectives	The session objectives were achieved and were clear and visible
The facilitator was flexible and responsive in the way they achieved agreement within the group	I felt that <i>my</i> perspective was recognised and valued
The facilitator made what had been achieved in the session clear and visible	
The facilitator achieved the objectives of the session	Overall, today was useful
The facilitator brought the session to a meaningful close, on time and that recognised and valued different contributions and perspectives.	The session ended well and on time
Any other comments?	Anything else?

Figure 40 Pilot versus distributed forms text comparison.

On these occasions the forms proved much easier for participants to engage with, there was visibly improved understanding of what was being asked of them and there were no requests for clarity relating to any of the questions.

11.7.2 August 2014: Analysis of the Field Test Results

The results of the completion of the 169 ExEx Evaluations meant that it was possible, easily, to 'read across' from form A to form B to establish how the factors involved in a facilitated event had achieved, exceeded or had not met the expectations of the participants. It also demonstrated how the facilitator could focus, reflect upon and improve aspects of their improvised practice. It was clear that in some instances this would not support any meaningful learning, with respondents indicating a mid-point score for all statements on both forms A and B. What was interesting however were the occasions when the forms were clearly illustrative of what mattered to the participant, not being met; being met; or being exceeded by the facilitator.

An example of such an illustration was a form A on which '*It feels like a safe place to work with people*' and '*We finish on time*' were identified as what mattered most, and on the coded form B, the statements '*I felt it was a safe and productive environment for working together*' and '*the session ended well and on time*' were both ticked as Strongly Agree. Clearly a relief for the facilitator on this occasion, but responses were not all correspondingly positive. And where it was clear that a pattern was evident, further analysis encouraged reflection upon what might be improved in terms of, for example, clarity of purpose in briefing or in making the outputs of the event more visible. This clearly offers a facilitator a valuable learning and practice improvement prompt.

11.7.3 September 2014: The first focussed conversation

In September 2014 the researcher engaged in a focussed conversation with a leading evaluation professional to discuss the development of the ExEx Evaluation up to that date. This focussed conversation confirmed the need to position the evaluation of the facilitated event explicitly through the lens of the discrete perspective of either participant *or* commissioner, never both. Until that point, it had been hoped that the process might be dual purpose. As a

result it was decided that while the commissioner perspective might well provide useful material for further research, it was not pursued further within this study after that discussion took place.

The focussed conversation considered what it would be reasonable to expect participants to understand about what a facilitator actually does during an event. This was confirmed by the research data from the focus groups and the mini-focus group which indicated that, for the most part, a participant does not know, notice or care what goes on within a facilitated session as long as the objectives are met. This would suggest that asking participants about process will not offer any greater insight than asking them about the product or outcome of the event. The most significant aspect of evaluation discussed in this conversation, is the way it can inform the next experience for the participant, and how the output of the event can influence an outcome for them at the next stage.

The other key areas of the discussion focused upon the challenge of the form itself not being visually engaging or fun. And the implications of very significant factors scored as mattering very little, possibly as a result of the participant not appreciating the significance of these factors to the facilitated process overall. This chimes with the previously explored bad-paradox assertion described by Gronroos (1993) whereby a customer has low expectations based on previous poor experience, and if those expectations are met, there is no gap, and therefore the quality of service is deemed satisfactory.

The focussed discussion concluded with the suggestion of building into any future iteration of the form, the dynamic element of promoting or capturing a change in thinking, attitude, behaviour or indeed confidence.

11.7.4 November 2014: The KOALA experiment

In a timely response to the challenge of the evaluation forms being neither visually engaging, nor fun, an opportunity arose to populate a previously

designed capture tool. As part of a continuing project, the Ideas for Impact team at Lancaster had been collaborating with the Creativity Team in the Scottish Government to identify effective and engaging ways to evaluate workshop events. The result was the ‘KOALA Cutch’ (KnOwledge And Learning evAluation) evaluation tool. This tool combined the pre-event expectations and post-event experience elements of the evaluation in one single tool. This suggested to the researcher, as previously identified, that this could prompt cross-reference of expectation by the participant during the experience itself. Notwithstanding that consideration, the KOALA tool is visually engaging and provides a baseline evaluation that then wraps around the final evaluation – the cutch. The two stages of KOALA are now populated with statements and questions provided by the researcher that build on the research findings of this study, initially asking:

What matters to you about this event?

What gets in the way for you at events like this?

Before clearly identifying the two Expectation and Experience categories of:

Expectation: What do you think will happen at today’s event?

What would be the very best possible outcome for you today?

What could happen at today’s event that that might help you when you return to your workplace?

How would you want this event to challenge you?

How important to you is the flexibility and responsiveness of the event/format/facilitator?

Experience: To what extent did you get what you hoped for from today’s event?

How useful do you think this event has been to you?

How far has today’s event equipped you to take the necessary next steps?

To what extent has today provided surprises, insights or altered your perspective for the longer term?

This was particularly apposite timing as it enabled the incorporation of the challenge and change element as discussed in the focussed conversation.

The final tool can be downloaded¹¹⁶ and customised on the Ideas for Impact website. At the time of writing no evidence has emerged relating to the use or efficacy of the tool.

11.7.5 June 2015: Validation

To validate the usefulness of the research findings, responses were sought from two leading international figures in the world of creative facilitation who were asked about both the approach of the thesis, and the potential for the application of the products of this research to their own work.

Each separate validation dialogue took place within a seventy minute Skype call as both respondents are located outside of the UK. The five previously circulated questions asked were:

1. Does the approach broadly make sense?
2. Is such a synthesised framework for facilitation useful?
3. Is the ORTO frame for improvised facilitation clear?
4. Can you see a value in a two-stage evaluation approach that can inform the practice of facilitation with a largely improvised focus?
5. Could you imagine using any of this in your own work?

Responses to these questions were very encouraging, in particular those focused on the usefulness of the synthesised C⁸ Competences and the novel and accessible approach of the ORTO Confidence Frame. From these discussions, a number of future research possibilities emerged, including the construction of more rigorous links between the responses in forms A and B of the ExEx Evaluation, in order to compare the results with a more objective set of norms.

116 http://imagination.lancs.ac.uk/news/Koala_Evaluation_Tool_new_way_evaluating_facilitated_workshops

The need to consider - and indeed the validators interest in - the learning and development opportunities of bringing the entire three-stage framework to life, was also very encouraging. There was a clear sense that it will never be possible continuously to plan for every eventuality within a facilitated event, therefore a flexibility component would always be required. This suggested an ever wider application for the ORTO frame than had previously been anticipated. These discussions in support of the related suite of tools within the framework, also confirmed the results of the first focussed conversation, in which it was established that while the facilitator knows the motivation and purpose of the event, *the participant* neither does, nor necessarily should. This promoted the possibility of subsequent research asking questions at different levels of understanding to further add value to the answers on the evaluation forms by distinguishing more effectively between deep insight and end-of-day exhaustion.

11.7.6 July 2015: The second focussed conversation

The second focussed conversation took place in July 2015 and re-engaged one of the professional facilitators who had been interviewed in September 2013. Using the questions that had been sent to the validators, this discussion again confirmed the usefulness of the framework to professional practice. It also introduced to the researcher the challenge of the use or otherwise of the ExEx Evaluation within an improvised format, inevitably being determined by an in-situ response to whether the facilitator felt it would be helpful or feel too onerous to a group. Or indeed, not be viable because of the unreliability of the matched sample if, for example, participants arrived at a session late or left early.

This conversation confirmed the value of the three **Elements** of Experience, Intuition and Action coming together in ever-changing configurations as described in the ORTO Frame. And gratifyingly, the respondent was already referring to the C⁸ Competences as a Competence

Practice Chart.

The discussion concluded with a request for more guidance on training or support for less experienced facilitators in their use of all three tools within the overall framework. The respondent indicated additionally seeing a value in the framework's introduction into facilitator teams to signal a particular approach:

'...in a way that is effectively saying - don't go to the manual for this, reach for your response toolkit. Look at what's low or what's high and expand and contract to fill the space'.¹¹⁷

11.8 Summary

It can be seen that this chapter has built upon the diverse approaches to evaluation outlined in Chapter 11: The Evaluation Context which have enabled the study to propose innovative and effective ways in which it has been possible to:

1. Produce new, synthesised competences for facilitation.
2. Align the fixed points, directions and influences of improvised facilitation to identify the seven elements of improvised facilitation.
3. Design the innovative ORTO confidence frame.
4. Appropriate and adapt the SERVQUAL, RATER approach to disconfirmation.
5. Design a two-stage evaluation process that establishes both the expectations and the experience of participants of a facilitated event.
6. Test the two-stage ExEx evaluation process.
7. Validate all three parts of this novel framework.

It is now possible to draw the study to a close by summarising this research

¹¹⁷ Focussed conversation with IF 1.

journey to identify both the achievements and limitations of this study and the opportunities it presents for future research.

Chapter 12: Conclusions

12.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, the major contributions of the research are brought into focus. First (12.1) the thesis is positioned within a recognition of the complexity of the field under study. (12.2) returns to an examination of the initial aims and research questions of the study and describes how these have been achieved. Section 12.3 identifies the key contributions to knowledge afforded by this research. Section 12.4 explores opportunities for future work. Section 12.5 considers the limitations of the study, and the thesis ends at 12.6 with concluding remarks.

12.1 The field of study

Following the initial reflections on practice, and an extensive scan of what was, and was not, being written about both facilitation and improvisation, the ambit of this study was defined by the four parameters of:

- **Social psychology** and the impact that social environments and group interactions have on attitudes and behaviours such as the establishment of trust.
- **Facilitation** theories as they consider the performative considerations of preparedness and relationships to the authentic experience of both facilitator and participant.
- **Creative intelligence**, creative behaviours and creative action in group process roles.
- **Knowledge exchange** tools, formats and materials as they relate to visualizing, imagining and ideating within the group context.

This study set out to explore the nature of group facilitation and the nature, challenges and opportunities of improvised facilitation. It sought to interrogate

the assumption that facilitation is predicated upon the idea that groups work in predictable ways and that the job of a facilitator is to be poised to make strategic interventions to move participants through often meticulously detailed processes.

Facilitation practice that has become enshrined in set models and approaches, or that imports the use of tools that do not in themselves recognise the intrinsic unpredictability of their use, needed to be understood. Making a case for the introduction and value of a new form of facilitation required a robust theoretical underpinning to position it securely within the literature. The remainder of this final chapter confirms that that has been achieved.

Additionally, it was necessary to acquire a detailed understanding of this terrain of social psychology, facilitation, creative intelligence and knowledge exchange before considering the distinctions and relationships between facilitator competence and skill. In accepting that knowledge is socially constructed as the product of interaction between (i) the capacity, and (ii) the opportunity to learn, this can be seen to be dependent upon the ability to act. The term skill usually seen to relate to a level of performance in achieving tasks is therefore goal-directed, and acquired through practice. And, in relation to competence, it could be asserted, that if intellectual capabilities are required to develop knowledge, and if bringing knowledge to life is key to the development of skills, then all are inextricably entwined in this new and novel approach.

Miner et al (2001) describe improvisation as occurring at the point when the design and execution of novel actions converge. The convergence of novel actions is at the fulcrum of this study's understanding of improvised facilitation. It is hard-wired into the ORTO frame model and is now confidently positioned to square up to the expectations and pressures of orthodox facilitation.

12.2 Revisiting aims and research questions

This section will return to the initial aims and research questions of the study to establish that they have been addressed through the research methodology, the approach and the generation of the products of the research. The following table aligns the initial research aims with their associated research outputs:

The aims of this study	Research outputs
To understand the function and practice of facilitation and creativity in facilitation as it relates to groups and group process objectives.	Distinctions between various discourses on facilitation and improvisation have been explored.
To explore what is meant by improvisation generally, and specifically what is meant by the term when it is applied to the practice of facilitation.	Differences between facilitation and improvised facilitation have been established and have enabled the identification of the different competences, elements and influences key within each approach.
To construct competence frameworks for facilitation and for improvised facilitation.	The analysis and synthesis of peer reviewed competence frameworks to produce the C ⁸ competences.
	Knowledge gaps have been identified in an understanding of the nature and practice of improvised facilitation.
	This new understanding of what is meant by improvised facilitation has enabled the identification of the seven elements of the ORTO frame.
To construct and to test a framework for the evaluation of improvised facilitation.	The adoption and adaptation of the SERVQUAL, RATER methodology to produce the two – stage disconfirmation based ExEx Evaluation.

	The ExEx Evaluation has been tested in real group situations.
	An increased understanding of improvised facilitation now exists to support gaps in the literature.
	Proposals for future research will further add to this knowledge and are discussed later in this chapter.

Figure 4I Review of Research objectives and outputs

In relation to the two specific research questions, the first asked:

1. What is improvised facilitation?

The study identified seven Elements of Improvised Facilitation which when operating within the ORTO Confidence Frame, clearly quantify both what this form of practice is, and how it can be understood and reproduced. Further studies will be necessary to determine if the results of this study serve as the exclusive source of such attribution, but the assertion of the researcher that they have played a significant role, is supported by the responses of the focussed and validation interviews.

The second research question asked:

2. How can a framework be designed to support its practice?

This study proposes a clear framework for the support of the practice of improvised facilitation. It is underpinned by the C⁸ Competences, enhanced by the ORTO Frame and brought to life by the ExEx Evaluation process. At this time it is not clear precisely what further research would be needed to better understand how such competences might be acquired or demonstrated. A similar difficulty applies to investigating how the subtle forms of responsiveness identified through the ORTO frame are recognised, or what cues might be used in their signalling, in a continuous context such as

improvised facilitation. It is however held that the framework represents a significant contribution to knowledge. These contributions will be outlined in the following section.

12.3 Contributions to knowledge

The contributions of this research can be summarised in the following projected impacts:

Academic impact: Identifying a way forward for the further study of improvised facilitation by highlighting new opportunities for research and inspiring research in directions that are more likely to make a significant impact across a broad knowledge exchange area. Strauss et al (2011) draw attention to knowledge exchange increasingly being seen as a research field in its own right, with research around this topic directly linked to impact on both policy and practice. The requirement to engage both researchers *and* practitioners in this field was cited by Fazey et al. (2014) as dependent upon an improved understanding of the processes involved, in addition to a greater focus on conceptual and methodological frames for its evaluation. Knowing what to evaluate and how to go about it requires consciousness of the challenge, and, arguably, experience. This study has considered facilitation and improvisation from a wide range of perspectives, and as such it is hoped that the research will contribute significantly to this expanding knowledge exchange discourse.

Societal impact: Providing accessible tools that have the capacity to influence and increase the effectiveness of work done by facilitators who increasingly find themselves working on significant strategy, policy and ideation challenges.

Practice impact: Facilitation takes place in every conceivable setting and it is within this category that the real significance of the study lies. This study

has proved through its validation stages that it has the potential to be of relevance to practitioners and researchers from diverse backgrounds, and that it can materially impact on changing the practice climate of facilitation.

What has been generated is a clear set of usable tools for the practicing or aspiring facilitator or improvising facilitator. These tools form the basis of the framework and are novel and innovative in their approach to both encouraging and evaluating facilitation practice. The framework is composed of:

The C ⁸ Competences	A chronological sequence of practice prompts for facilitation.
The ORTO Confidence Frame	A confidence frame constructed upon seven dynamic elements for improvised facilitation practice.
The ExEx Evaluation	A two-stage evaluation process to capture both the expectations and experiences of participants of facilitated processes.

The practice-led nature of this research has clearly resulted in approaches to the study being innovative in themselves and therefore representing further contributions of this work. Examples of this include the appropriation and entirely novel adaptation of the SERQUAL methodology for the evaluation of facilitated sessions, the development of the Group Process Narrative (Appendix D) and the approach to the design of focus groups. It is in this way that established techniques have been successfully combined with others towards new purposes.

12.4 Opportunities for future work

Inevitably this research highlights just how much work is still to be done in this new and exciting area of study. A number of possibilities have been identified that are referenced in earlier chapters as they responded to research challenges or opportunities as they emerged during the research. In summary,

the following lists possibilities for future research:

- Further interrogation of the field to deconstruct more comprehensively the elements within the dynamic ORTO model.
- Exploration of the potential for the transferability of the ORTO frame to other practitioners and to other domains.
- Further exploration of what facilitation means to participants to establish how important each of the ORTO elements might be in order to differentiate the expectations of the facilitator from those of the participant or commissioner.
- To exploit unused data from this study to further develop the ExEx Evaluation to produce a complementary commissioning tool.
- The design of training or development proposals for facilitators of improvised practice using as its starting point the ORTO frame.
- The development of more fluid and responsive practice safety-nets for improvised facilitation through the design of new protocols and collaborative behaviours.
- The design of an optimum impact study into group size and duration of sessions.
- The further development of the two-stage ExEx Evaluation to embrace tiered questions to distinguish between deep insight and end-of-day exhaustion.

12.5 Limitations of the study

It must be acknowledged that this study evolved and expanded significantly during its course and has as a result identified important opportunities for further research through the exploration of this area in greater detail.

The research began with the hope and expectation that a support framework could be generated and that novel approaches could be imported into its design. This has now begun, but there is much to do to convert this framework into a practical set of support tools that are not just effective but are visually compelling to use, can be trained and coached, and that in both their context and their design, further incentivise participant engagement.

What *has* been thoroughly explored in this study however is the nature of

interaction within groups and, contrary to prevailing beliefs, what has been revealed is the very fact of its predictable unpredictability. Individuals within groups *are* unpredictable and demonstrate different degrees of engagement that have to be brought into alignment for a successful group experience. Expert facilitation, whether explicitly creative, improvised or otherwise, requires fleet-of-foot responsiveness; responsiveness to motivation, mood and energy and the continual flexing and changing of direction to guarantee success in meeting the objectives of a facilitated process. Such choreographic or interpretive choices are made by both the facilitator *and* the members of the group, with the critical choices being led by the facilitator in order to determine these necessary changes of direction, pace and rhythm.

It is the assertion of this study that the identification of the seven Elements within the ORTO frame has significantly enabled these steps and notations to be both better understood and more confidently determined by the facilitator.

12.6 Concluding remarks

One of the motivations for this work was a personal frustration with what was becoming an increasingly restricted palette from which facilitation was being commissioned. The practice appeared to be atrophying into an orthodoxy of safe and reproducible ways of reassuring commissioners. In turn this perpetuated the belief that anyone can *do* facilitation, thus generating a cycle of diminished experience and lowered expectations.

The purpose of facilitation supported by this framework therefore is:

- to maximise creative responses from participants by intensifying and increasing the collective physical, interpersonal and conceptual spaces available to explore issues.
- to identify shared challenges.
- to generate jointly agreed solutions and original ideas and ways forward.

Professional and objective facilitation, and particularly that which can be seen as the more 'risky' improvised facilitation, is under significant threat in the present economic climate. The function of facilitation can be seen by some to depend only upon tools and techniques that are felt to be easy to acquire or already available to individuals or teams. Deciding to '*facilitate ourselves*' is a phrase heard more frequently since austerity measures impacted on the public sector's ability to justify what might be seen as unnecessary expenditure.

But facilitation of any sort is a great deal more than tools and techniques. This framework for improvised facilitation is predicated upon the holding of nerve and holding fast to that nerve when:

- commissioners have unrealistic expectations or demonstrate a lack of trust that has the potential to force an unimaginative and static 'off-the-shelf' response which might not achieve all that could be possible.
- the facilitator is in danger of bowing to pressure to reproduce what is known and thus bringing about a unsatisfactory process outcome.
- facilitators are challenged by group members because they cannot clearly see or appreciate the direction of travel.

This is when holding nerve means divining the confidence to move forward with informed certainty; certainty, for facilitators, that that the sum of their experience and intuition and the actions they will take to move forward are all to be relied upon.

The ORTO frame supports this confidence - this holding of nerve - enabling such twists and turns, such diversions and micro designs to flex and flex again. This re-calibrating and re-routing of group process will ensure that the holding of facilitator nerve runs parallel to keeping the objectives and projected outputs - the starting point and the destination of any facilitated process - clearly in view.

As one of the professional facilitators asserted earlier in the study, '*facilitation isn't for everyone*'. This is certainly the case with improvised

facilitation, and until further research is completed, it will be unclear *who* precisely it is for. What is clear however, is that there is no longer a need for mystique to surround this emerging form. The design of the products of this research exist to signal a move away from elusive and mythical notions of charisma and sixth sense and instead urge facilitators to draw more reliably upon elements within their own understanding – their experience, their intuition and the actions they take.

It is hoped that the evidence presented through this study makes a compelling case for further research in this area.

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Appendix A: Characteristics of improvised facilitation from professional facilitator interviews

CODES	EXTRACTS FROM INTERVIEWS
<p>APPROACH</p>	<p>I don't think facilitation is for everyone.</p> <p>Creative facilitation</p> <p>Eclectic</p> <p>What I do is facilitate the application of creativity</p> <p>I tend to draw upon a whole range of different schools of facilitation rather than follow a particular pattern.</p> <p>I work with groups and with people who want to engage and improve their communication skills by learning through laughter.</p> <p>it's not about being the star of the show, but about being merely a player in the ensemble – everybody needs to look good and think that was brilliant, rather than he was brilliant.</p> <p>My aim as a facilitator is to provide opportunities for individuals to learn and to develop their skills, their understanding and their behaviour.</p> <p>To offer exercises, games and “experiences”, predominantly interactive or participative.</p> <p>I'm flexible</p> <p>The facilitator needs to make sure the energy keeps flowing and nothing is missed.</p> <p>I laugh with people and that way you can get them to do things you want.</p> <p>I think I come across as casual and by that I mean casual in a way that helps me build a rapport with participants in a group quite quickly, so that when I ask them later to do things, they are more likely to respond.</p> <p>I am also casual in the language I use and the way that I dress; I don't power dress. I dress smartly but my demeanor is definitely an intentionally casual one.</p> <p>Confidence, problem definition and bringing the novel idea back to useful.</p> <p>Creative interest with people at the core.</p> <p>The majority of the people in the session are the vehicle through which the problem owner will walk away with the solution. The participants are the engine of creativity.</p> <p>Creative facilitation.</p> <p>I have a process but I have no idea how the participants will interact with the problem. I just know that I have complete confidence I can take them through the process.</p> <p>And really importantly, that the facilitator doesn't feel the need to be in control all of the time – selflessness,</p> <p>To stretch themselves.</p>

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	<p>Creative Facilitation is being sensitive.</p> <p>I inject naivety and I can create naivety from experts by disadvantaging them and getting the very best out of them.</p> <p>Two points of focus allows for energy shift and balance of view.</p> <p>Fun and lively as well as challenging</p> <p>It's a never-ending journey of discovery.</p> <p>I got involved in Improvisation and that's when things came together.</p> <p>I think the question of creating facilitation comes down to relationships with the group and the aptitude and willingness not to fix, but to be comfortable with it being messy and not knowing what's going on.</p> <p>Co-creative, emergent and constructive.</p> <p>I'm curious and read from a variety sources and I believe in having no solid concept of discipline [such recognition of boundaries is not healthy].</p> <p>Destabilising discipline boundaries</p> <p>Know and practice the principle of making your partner look great.</p> <p>A goal/outcome orientation</p> <p>Having a solid understanding of psychodynamics</p> <p>There is a difference between fixing something and providing a dance floor for them to do the dancing on.</p> <p>Interpersonal interactiveness involving engagement with others.</p>
<p>KNOWLEDGE</p>	<p>Influenced by Open Space Technology</p> <p>I started doing Improvisation – mainly Playback Theatre and then explored Improv more fully, going beyond following formulas and recipes.</p> <p>I am continually learning.</p> <p>I do a lot of professional development.</p> <p>Conferences and talks.</p> <p>I have an understanding of how adults learn most effectively</p> <p>Knowing how people learn, (Honey and Mumford, Kolb, etc)</p> <p>Theoretical knowledge of alternatives</p> <p>Making these decisions?</p> <p>Knowledge, experience and informed intuition.</p> <p>Experience</p> <p>I read articles in journals and on the internet, I follow some online network postings, I read books, I go to occasional events (eg, lectures at the RSA)</p> <p>Very occasional courses (eg, I went to one on improvisation about two years ago).</p> <p>I used to go to facilitation conferences and that's when I started looking at Improv.</p> <p>Kolb.</p> <p>I do courses and I run courses.</p> <p>I work with lots of different kinds of people and professionals.</p>

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	<p>I look for things on the edge of facilitation.</p> <p>Knowledge of alternatives</p> <p>Providing learning in bite-sized chunks.</p> <p>Read, study, talk, meet, explore.</p> <p>Education.</p> <p>Experience.</p> <p>I started playing with problems I had in the manufacturing environment and really began to live the Divergent/Convergent model.</p> <p>CITD (Certificate of the Institute of Training and Development) course, now CIPD's Certificate in Training Practice.</p> <p>Being able to apply my theatrical knowledge to adult learning.</p> <p>I've always been passionate about collaboration.</p> <p>A background in project management helps.</p> <p>Career in a business school as a design academic.</p> <p>A learned collection of methods to give 'some' structure.</p> <p>Informed intervention, but I can't point to where the information is</p>
<p>SKILLS/ EXPERIENCE</p>	<p>I started by learning facilitation approaches with ICA.</p> <p>I started facilitating in-house and was asked by others to do it more and more.</p> <p>The ability to listen intently, to commit wholeheartedly, to say yes and to run with something like it's the best thing I've ever heard.</p> <p>Communication skills, confrontation of the uncomfortable and quick thinking around immediate situations.</p> <p>My talent is that if you give me any statement I will fold it into the process, reassure you and leave it on track.</p> <p>I gradually realised I had a set of skills that I could use as a creative facilitator.</p> <p>I occasionally train in new methods and techniques</p> <p>I can engage a group</p> <p>Confidence.</p> <p>Improvisation.</p> <p>I attended a theatre workshop from about the age of five years old.</p> <p>My skills are in listening, translating and synthesizing.</p> <p>Self-critique and reflective practice</p> <p>The ability to generate, and maintain energy – you lose the magic of the creative moment when the energy drains away.</p> <p>Empathy; there is a real intimacy required to maintain and maximize the flow.</p> <p>Stand-up</p> <p>A year's course at drama school</p> <p>I use a variety of theatrical processes and skills</p> <p>A mix of formal and informal training/education.</p> <p>I can improvise</p>

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	<p>I noticed I had an aptitude – stumbled into it – and then worked with people who liked to plan a lot and realized very quickly that I didn't need to.</p> <p>I didn't realize that facilitation was a skill I had until other people started saying it to me.</p> <p>An understanding of how to 'manage' creativity,</p> <p>The confidence and knowledge required to do something different.</p>
<p>OBSERVING OTHERS/ WORKING ALONGSIDE</p>	<p>Hang out with interesting and edgy people.</p> <p>Working alongside a skilled practitioner.</p> <p>A good deal of my skills were developed by trial and error and if I made an error, I was either self-aware enough to see it for myself or acted on feedback from delegates (occasionally) or from co-trainers (much more often)</p>
<p>PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES</p>	<p>Confidence.</p> <p>Presence.</p> <p>Clarity of exposition.</p> <p>Upbringing.</p> <p>A love of language.</p> <p>Emotional intelligence.</p> <p>Presence, imagination, intelligence (a quick mind), gravitas, performance confidence, a loud voice, authority (being assertive and comfortable with appropriate power), creativity, resourcefulness, experience, self-confidence, a conceptual mind, the ability to sense what's going on (as well as work it out)</p> <p>Energy.</p> <p>Clarity.</p> <p>Articulacy.</p> <p>Adaptability.</p> <p>Charm and charisma.</p>
<p>CLIENT Reassurance</p>	<p>The middle management [commissioning/organizing party] noticed that we was taking a different course and using different language than we had used in discussion with them prior to the workshop. This was purely to draw on the situation at that time. They attempted to take control. We dealt with this sharply, authoritatively but politely and constructively, through transparent and direct explanation of process.</p> <p>I like to know what the client expects and then I want to reassure them about what I'm going to do. Sometimes they want a lot of detail, sometimes they don't. It depends.</p>
<p>PLANNING</p>	<p>All a plan does is give me the shape of the event – when it starts and ends and when the breaks are. It's a framework.</p> <p>A comfort blanket for the client and/or participant.</p> <p>Sometimes I think I need a plan, I need a structure, and then I think I don't know why I bothered because there is no structure.</p> <p>Having a solid and well made plan allows for more room in exploration.</p> <p>An expectation that It's going to happen</p> <p>To guide and give direction toward the client/group's objective and prompt key</p>

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	<p>questions</p> <p>I prepare key points as guides toward the objective/s; therefore I'm primed on the agenda [and have meta-agendas if necessary].</p> <p>I thought I should (plan), and then planned lots and then didn't look at the plan.</p> <p>The first half an hour is a kind of scaffolding because I usually know how I'll start. But after that there are dozens of things I could choose to do.</p> <p>On the evening of Day One, after supper, we gathered to review the day and prepare for the next one and came to a group decision that we ought to change the morning of Day Two. But we couldn't decide on what to do, and we went on talking about it until midnight at which point I said "Let's all go to bed and we'll do it in the moment tomorrow, whatever it is." And everyone agreed. And we did – I can't remember exactly what we did but it grew organically and we all had a two minute huddle and that was it, and it all worked just fine. Isn't it lovely to work with people who can work with that sense of danger and confidence?!</p>
<p>OUTCOMES/ IMPACT</p>	<p>To guide and give direction toward the client/group's objective and prompt key questions.</p> <p>There's a sense that it's uncomfortable and messy but I know it is the only way and then I get an email months or years later saying 'that worked brilliantly but I only know that now.'</p> <p>By the end of Day Two, she walked out head held high, big smile, confident walk and voice – it was as though we had waved a magic wand. Those are the ones we treasure.</p> <p>Subtle learning experiences.</p> <p>The potential for powerful reflective effect.</p> <p>The sort of thing that is measured by a Happy Sheet, and it is not to be sniffed at.</p> <p>Improvisation is only ever in the interest of the group and is done in order to achieve the objective of the workshop.</p> <p>Facilitate constructive discussion without miscommunication and co-create new knowledge and tangible outcomes.</p> <p>Reputation is paramount in this work, as it is pretty much impossible to put across intuitive, creative abilities on paper or online.</p> <p>Very few of them are interested in investing in something beyond a happy sheet or simple questionnaire soon after a course (or have the time or money).</p> <p>I'm a firm believer in meta-outcomes and these can't easily be measured and I don't think they should be. Some success will come much later and may not be recognized and as the facilitator this must be accepted.</p> <p>To cover the ground and achieve the desired outcomes.</p> <p>My facilitation style is very outcome driven.</p> <p>We ask lots of questions and do follow-up calls and we want to keep people happy. We like to keep our relationships.</p> <p>My impact on the world, like a carpenter building a cabinet.</p> <p>Some relief when the session ends successfully.</p> <p>Often it is difficult to measure and find impact due to the temporary relationship.</p> <p>I work with the client to draw up the design of the event and design something that someone else can deliver putting my emphasis on the preparation, the</p>

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	<p>design and the analysis.</p> <p>The problem owner going away with a completely fresh perspective and the determination to do something different with it. And that the participants are energized by the process and recognise the merits of thinking differently.</p> <p>The evaluator in me knows you can only measure actual events. I'm not a fan of happy sheets.</p> <p>Repeat business</p> <p>Often the actual impact can only be measured months or years later.</p> <p>The response of the problem owner - that's the most important.</p> <p>Feedback</p> <p>To me a measure of impact is not being called back twelve months later to do the same workshop.</p>
<p>TRUST</p>	<p>If the session is working well then I don't always know.</p> <p>I'm there to reassure people.</p> <p>There is a trust aspect.</p> <p>To share and maintain ownership.</p> <p>I can draw this for them geometrically, mathematically and that generates trust and provides a frame of reference to go forward</p> <p>It's founded on the privilege of trust; trust often from strangers</p> <p>Also communicating a belief that there is a process behind this stuff and that is why it works.</p> <p>Operate not as a professional but at a more fundamental level of human perception.</p> <p>Energetically taking participants out of their conventional world to explore the joys of an unbounded world in which they feel safe.</p> <p>The trust participants have in the facilitator when they know they're in safe hands and that this stuff works. trust and a check-in are all that is required to make sure things are progressing rather than falling apart.</p> <p>Sensitivity of interactions and group dynamics.</p> <p>A reservoir of intervention elements the balance of curiosity with others learning and development over self-interest.</p> <p>The unspoken trust, and understanding between facilitators.</p> <p>It's never a train track or road, rather a dust track and a compass point.</p> <p>A comforting structure has been accepted.</p>
<p>SPONTANEITY/ IMPROVISATION</p>	<p>Invention.</p> <p>Curiosity.</p> <p>Comfort in allowing the emergence of 'substance.'</p> <p>I work with colleagues who are equally as prepared to improvise and as well briefed as I</p> <p>The expectation for participants is sometimes for some more structure and control and I know that isn't going to work.</p> <p>Define what you do with them as the session develops.</p>

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	<p>The imagination to re-invent them afresh each time</p> <p>To work with the skeletal components with which you will create in the moment.</p> <p>Not 'sticking to the plan' as long as it still feels on track</p> <p>Invent.</p> <p>No detailed scheme of knowing what and when your interventions might be.</p> <p>Freedom to explore when needed.</p> <p>Accepting discomfort in the unconventional.</p> <p>Methods of playful exploitation of pressure points</p> <p>Going in a different direction can be useful</p> <p>A continual search for opportunities in the unfamiliar.</p> <p>I don't plan but I am prepared.</p> <p>Adaptability is vital and in the nature of creative facilitation.</p> <p>Exploring the unknown.</p> <p>Not entirely free improvisation, any more than a jazz musician's is – it is based on knowledge and experience and emotional intelligence and the restrictions of timing etc.</p> <p>Fun, engaging and genuinely refreshing.</p> <p>The power in immediacy.</p> <p>As co-facilitators we had no opportunity to talk about this between ourselves first.</p> <p>Abandon all plans</p> <p>Approach the subject from a different angle to provide a more appropriate or effective learning experience.</p> <p>Like a jazz pianist, I have a bank of material which I know works and I pull out of my kitbag whatever exercise I feel is necessary in the moment.</p> <p>Creative emergence.</p> <p>If I pick the wrong process and I think 'this doesn't feel like it's working for them'. I am always willing to say this to the group.</p> <p>Because they are getting it quickly and we can stretch them further by doing other things/exercises that we hadn't planned.</p> <p>Because you can see that they are not behaving as they ideally should be. It is more difficult to spot when the subject at hand is more intellectual – do they get the concept?</p>
<p>INTUITION/ JUDGEMENT</p>	<p>I'm interested in what's going on and what might happen next.</p> <p>I'm drawing on what I'm noticing in my body. My brain is not a very good indicator.</p> <p>Technical or cultural opportunities or failures. (ie Unexpected availability or failure of some bit of technology (which can include anything from the laptop dying to an ice-cream van appearing outside!)</p> <p>Intuition.</p> <p>Maybe I'll ponder and worry and turn around and they're working so I get out of the way.</p>

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	<p>I see there are danger signs. Sometimes it's reliable and sometimes it's not.</p> <p>I had to sense the slight self-deprecation of the minority group and find a seamless way to address it.</p> <p>I had to go back a bit to recover the group and as a result had to make compromises on how the session would impact.</p> <p>Lack of (or too much) time for the planned intervention.</p> <p>I can tell that the team is stuck.</p> <p>Being sensitive to what is going on in the group,</p> <p>Reading signals.</p> <p>I hope I am sensitive enough to recognise unspoken signals.</p> <p>Intuition.</p> <p>The need to react positively to any input during the Divergent parts of the process – suspending judgment, and stretching the divergent process.</p> <p>Noticing that delegates need more input or a different approach because they don't appear to be “getting” whatever it is.</p> <p>Informed intervention, but I can't point to where the information is.</p> <p>Reading signals.</p> <p>Setting an effective tone.</p> <p>One of the things I learned from Improv is that the body knows before the brain – I raise my arm before the brain gets the signal.</p> <p>The feeling in the room.</p> <p>The quality of people's responses.</p>
<p>TIME</p>	<p>I can also bring a session in dead on time.</p> <p>Lack of (or too much) time for the planned intervention.</p> <p>It can be hard to determine the time required when re-creating in the moment.</p> <p>Time-keeping.</p> <p>Having proper lunch breaks etc.</p> <p>The restrictions of timing etc.</p>
<p>REVIEW</p>	<p>Explore why, who and what happened within the original workshop plan, why, would we do the same again and how to improve the method, etc.</p> <p>I write a single-page to document the problem as defined, the stepping-stones and the outcomes at each stage or set-point of the process.</p> <p>Talking about what we did. Learning from mistakes and successes.</p> <p>I'm a scholar-practitioner so my life as an academic is a reflective practice and visa versa with industry.</p>
<p>SPACE</p>	<p>It was also difficult because of the room set-up, a very tight meeting room with no space to stand, and we were all sat around a table.</p> <p>Using a space effectively.</p> <p>I once went to Barcelona ... and the host had given us a room with a huge table, all wired in with IT cables and absolutely no space round it. We had to do the course in the foyer! It is an ongoing problem – clients just don't get the need for space.</p>

Appendix B: Focus Group Responses

INITIAL CODE	WHAT WAS WRITTEN BY PARTICIPANTS	Captured at Focus group 1,2,3 or 4
INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS	What it's about	2
	Are there workshops or speakers or small groups?	3
	Where it is!	3
	I don't need to know an about them - I trust if they've been chosen to do the job	4
	When I can go home :)	3
EVIDENCE OF CONFIDENCE	That they know what they're doing	1
	That they won't embarrass me ++	1
	Nervous (as a negative feature)	3
	Flustered (as a negative feature)	2
	Not boring	1
	I don't like it when they take over – I don't like being facilitated	3
	Done it before	1
	Know their stuff	1
	Experienced	2,3
	That they've done it before	3
	Apologetic (as a negative feature)	4
	A bit of a chair person	4
	More like a teacher sometimes	1
PERSONALITY	Smiling :)	3
	Warm	2, 4
	Engaging	3
	Clear	2
	Too serious (as a negative feature)	1
	Interrupting all the time or always giving a running commentary when we're working	3
	Forcing us to agree	3
	Likes the sound of their own voice (as a negative feature)	1
	Boring (as a negative feature)	2,3,4
KNOWLEDGE	Qualifications. A degree or something.	1
	Knowing Open Space methods etc.	2
SKILLS	Helps get a job done	3
	Supports what's going on	2
	Someone who listens to what's going on around them	1
	Impartial	2
	Someone who doesn't get in the way of people sorting it out for themselves	3
	Listening to everyone and letting everyone have an opportunity to speak ++	3

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	Shutting people up	4
	Sticking to time! +	2
	Making connections between different contributions	4
	Keep the whole thing to time and to purpose	4
	Diffusing any arguments that are counter-productive	1
	Being able to sum up what people say	2
	Making it fun	3
	Stopping abruptly and interrupting useful conversations to go on to something else	1
	Being unclear and giving bad instructions	1
CONTENT KNOWLEDGE	That they know our business	1
	Understanding of the problem	1
	Clarity on the issues	4
BEHIND THE SCENES	How do I know what a facilitator does?	2
	Should I know?	2
	I don't want to see the back-office stuff	4
	Sticking up flipcharts	1
	Panicking!	
REASSURINGLY SERIOUS	Whacky stuff (as a negative feature)	4
	Too much personality – they should be more invisible	3
	That we stick to the agenda	2
	Having a clear plan	3
	Knowing what will happen – step-by-step	3
	That there won't be role-play	1
	Party games, kids TV presenter style – game show host	4
	Really obvious ice-breakers	4
	Too much information (about themselves)	3
OUTPUT FOCUSED	That we do what we said we would	2
	Getting the job done on time	1
	I don't want to waste the time	3
	Going around in circles all the time	4
	A talking shop	2
	A whinge fest	2
	I've been to lots of these things – some good, lots useless - I want to see the objectives	1
	No death by group hug	2
	What we're there for	1
	How long it lasts	4
	What time coffee is	4
	Getting more out of it than anticipated	3
FLEXIBILITY OF RESPONSE	Sometimes I think facilitators should go off message a bit more	3

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	Lightness of touch	4
	Doing things to keep us awake	3
	Variation in the programme	2
	I get bored easily	2
	Not lecture style	1
	Death by power point!	4
	So, coming up with things that help out which we might not expect or even like. But work.	3
MISCELLANEOUS	Post its!! (in response to what puts you off?)	1
	Too packed – not enough time	1
	Does this always have to be in groups?	2

Appendix C: Liz Sanders Make Tools

The tools and techniques of Participatory Design organized by form and by purpose.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES	PROBE	PRIME	UNDERSTANDING	GENERAL
MAKING TANGIBLE THINGS				
2-D collages using visual and verbal triggers on backgrounds with timelines, circles, etc.	X	X	X	X
2-D mappings using visual and verbal components on patterned backgrounds		X	X	X
3-D mock-ups using e.g. foam, clay, Legos or Velcro-modeling			X	X
TALKING, TELLING AND EXPLAINING				
Diaries and daily logs through writing, drawing, blogs, photos, video, etc.	X	X	X	
Cards to organize, categorize and prioritize ideas. The cards may contain video snippets, incidents, signs, traces, moments, photos, domains, technologies, templates and <i>what if</i> provocations.			X	X
ACTING, ENACTING AND PLAYING				
Game boards and game pieces and rules for playing		X	X	X
Props and black boxes			X	X
Participatory envisioning and enactment by setting users in future situations				X
Improvisation				X
Acting out, skits and play acting			X	X

Current applications of the tools and techniques of PD described by context.

CURRENT APPLICATIONS OF THE TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES	INDIVIDUAL	GROUP	FACE-TO-FACE	ON-LINE
MAKING TANGIBLE THINGS				
2-D collages using visual and verbal triggers on backgrounds with timelines, circles, etc.	X	X	X	X
2-D mappings using visual and verbal components on patterned backgrounds	X	X	X	
3-D mock-ups using foam, clay, Legos or Velcro-modeling	X	X	X	
TALKING, TELLING AND EXPLAINING				
Stories and storyboarding through writing, drawing, blogs, wikis, photos, video, etc.	X	X	X	X
Diaries and daily logs through writing, drawing, blogs, photos, video, etc.	X		X	X
Cards to organize, categorize and prioritize ideas. The cards may contain video snippets, incidents, signs, traces, moments, photos, domains, technologies, templates and <i>what if</i> provocations.	X	X	X	
ACTING, ENACTING AND PLAYING				
Game boards and game pieces and rules for playing	X	X	X	
Props and black boxes	X	X	X	
Participatory envisioning and enactment by setting users in future situations	X	X	X	
Improvisation	X	X	X	

APPENDIX D: Group Process Narrative Example

Using Scott Reeves' (2008) **Nine Observational Dimensions** to record facilitator observations immediately following a forty-minute facilitated student seminar held in the Imagination Lab of LICA, Lancaster University in March 2013.

ACTOR - Range of people involved

There were 12 participants when I began the session and not one of them had been on the High Wire Deep Dive.

EVENT - Activities that people carry out

This mattered immediately because I had imagined this session would work, by creating small groups that each had a DeepDiver in them. This had seemed to be an essential requirement, since what I had wanted the session to achieve, was to get a sense of how people might feel about the idea of a facilitator-equipping process later in the year. And I knew the DeepDivers would know precisely what I was talking about when I introduced the idea of improvised facilitation, simply because they had been subjected to it so recently. So their absence threw me, and I admit that I looked around the room and made all manner of cultural generalisations about the levels of participation I could reasonably expect from the people who *were* there.

SPACE - Physical layout of the place(s)

I had thought I might deliver my part of the seminar in the space with the blackboard wall, and so had set my props in there before people arrived – props I had identified twenty minutes earlier, neither set of which I had used before. It was only while listening to the previous seminar that I realised the blackboard space wouldn't work, because it felt to me that even if I got the students into that space, it was too confined for the task I wanted them to do – too cramped for the sort of creative abandon I hoped they might engage in at the very start. I was seated behind a large partition and couldn't see the space I now felt I had to work in, and hadn't noticed it earlier, because at that stage, I had no interest in using it. I didn't know how the furniture was arranged or whether there was equipment in the way so deliberated for some seconds about the balance of risk between the cramped space I was familiar with and had set up for the purpose, or the open space, the detailed suitability of which was unknown, and I settled on unknown. This felt enormously risky to me because understanding and feeling comfortable in space is a basic starting point for me. Before moving from the table I knew I needed to create small groups of three because I wanted 4 groups in total. So I choose to exact a social engineering action by moving S from one side of the room to the other. This made it possible for it to look as though what followed was my arranging the group into 4 random trios by slicing them at persons 3, 6 and 9 around the table. If S hadn't moved though, and he had remained person 12 instead of becoming person 1, the trios would not have contained what I felt to be a more reassuringly diverse cultural mix within them.

I invited the groups to move to the open space by first asking them if they felt like moving. This was deliberate and gave me a sense of how prepared they might be to engage in something more practical. At that point there were a number of laptops and notebooks being used, and it's no small task for people to prize themselves away from the security of the spaces defined by their territorial markers. They moved reasonably happily though on this occasion, and that was enormously encouraging and made me believe that I could ask them to do something riskily vague and

unstructured. They might not have done though, and then I would have made something happen at the table before edging them slowly towards another of the spaces - I quite literally had to take them with me at this stage otherwise nothing would have been possible - and their answers (both verbal and non-verbal) to the 'Do you feel like moving?' question had given me a moment to sweep around and look at each one of them to get a sense of how they were really feeling, and I was not surprised to see the places where the most caution resided – my cultural generalisations confirmed still further.

Activity - A set of related activities that occur

Until that moment I didn't know how I might use the props and the willingness of the participants to move made me feel like it was possible to give them just about the most unstructured task I could come up with: to ask them to tell the story of the props.

Object - The physical things that are present

There were two prop types – small, white, angular polystyrene three-dimensional shapes (picked up from Eindhoven) and the Chad Wys cards, a series of distorted images that I had put together for a project in Surrey and had never used. There were two sets of each. The props had been picked up en route to the seminar and I genuinely had no idea how they would work or indeed if I would use them at all.

I invited each group to choose either the cards or the shapes, and curiously the only groups who made a selection, both chose the cards - which were in gold envelopes so they had no idea what they were choosing - leaving two groups to be handed the shapes. I also gave out bead-timers to the groups at this stage to indicate both a colour by which to identify the trio later, and how long (the time it took the 'beans' to settle) they had to prepare for the task.

I hadn't briefed them what I believed was the purpose of the task but had hoped that they would demonstrate this through their ability "to be spontaneous without preparation" – the definition of improvisation. I simply asked them to tell the story of the props they had, and since they had no idea how long the beans took to settle, they had no idea that they had less than two minutes to prepare this, and curiously no-one asked. Each trio engaged in the task and came up with their stories although the first group I went to said they had nothing to share, and for a moment I panicked thinking I had misjudged it completely and this wouldn't fly as I hoped. I said 'Well, just tell us what you've been talking about anyway' and H slowly and deliberately moved each of the cards from a facing-them position to a facing-us position as her lovely exposition of meandering memories of bank managers unfolded itself. I was relieved and delighted and blurted 'Excellent, thank you' and knew that for equity of regard I would have to say the same to each of the other groups no matter what they came up with but that wasn't difficult with Y's team's journey from alphabet letters through to a disputed marriage ceremony in a religious building, M's crime scene explanation and presentation of criminal evidence and J's wonderful '*Tetrus for people without electricity*'.

Act - Single actions people undertake

Before hearing the stories I had asked the question 'Who thinks they are going first?' and nobody thought they were, so I picked out H's group simply because their beads had tumbled last so that had given them a little more time. This sense of being picked-on to start, feeling exposed and disadvantaged, may have contributed to why

they immediately said that they had nothing to contribute. It certainly contributed to my immediate sense that I had misjudged the exercise. After H's bank managers story, and my relief, I was rewarded further. As I swept around the four parts of the space they had pitched-up in, asking each group to share their story I 'discovered' as I swept, that the serendipity of the prop-choosing and the way the trios had positioned themselves in the space meant that the story visuals went from cards to shapes to cards to shapes in precisely the sort of balanced sequence that I wish I had planned. And as we finished, J's Tetris prompted some joyful laughs from the others.

Time - The sequencing of events that occur

From when I stood up to introduce myself, until they had all told their stories, took exactly nine minutes.

Goal - Things that people are trying to accomplish

From there I moved the trios into the blackboard space. I was conscious of the noise the Tetris story had generated and was aware that someone had looked over the balcony at one point. So, feeling like I was disturbing people working in the open-plan space above, we freed up the space and everyone sat in the easy chairs as I explained that I was interested in Facilitation; that that *was making it easy for people in groups* and Improvised Facilitation; *spontaneity without preparation*. I told them they had all done an excellent job of the latter and asked them if they would be prepared to do another task. They seemed to be.

I introduced the idea of the complex, self managed system and asked them to convert their existing trios into new groups of three where two of the original members would remain and one would move, in order to create 4 new groups of three. I thought I was clear about this, reinforcing the expectation that the new trios would contain two of the original members and *one* new one. I had expected there to be a few seconds of bustle and moving and negotiating but they didn't move from their seats, instead looked at and half-heartedly spoke to the people near them, asking questions like '*Are you in that group?*' or '*Are you with me?*' and, more puzzlingly to me '*Am I with you?*' I watched this in a kind of facilitator slo-mo thinking that not only was this not going to work, but that I would look stupid because it hadn't. I had introduced the idea of facilitation being about making things easy in a group and here I was making things unnecessarily complicated. I wanted to get them into the new trios but more than that I wanted them not to think I was stupid. So I intervened and said '*I told you this was a complex self managing system because it's complex and you have to self-manage it and what has been interesting is that you have been trying to do it in your head*'. I indicated that such a result was entirely to be expected and had indeed been part of my plan. Which it hadn't of course. I suggested that another way to do this might be... and then went on to demonstrate what I meant, by getting them up on their feet, back into the original threes they had been in to tell the stories, and then inviting one from each group to move in a clockwise direction to the nearest other group. So they saw the trios change visually and it made easy sense to them. Of course. I introduced and assigned four question tasks randomly to the new groups as:

- What engages or interests you about improvising?
- What is daunting or terrifying about improvisation?
- In what circumstances do you find yourself improvising?
- What aptitude, skills or experience do you think are needed to improvise?

These questions seemed to have the potential to build, from different perspectives, to my idea of establishing an awareness of, and possibly an interest in, participating in the facilitator development process I have in mind. I briefed each trio to spend five minutes responding to the question on the card and to come back at the end of the five minutes with a one-minute report back on how far they had got.

I checked-in and left the trios in equal measure during this time, and watched as one group finished what they believed to be the task very quickly, and started talking more generally to each other.

I had in advance of the session placed two sticky whiteboard sheets on top of the blackboard wall and below the sheet on the left of the wall I had put a container of coloured sharpie pens and below the sheet on the right a container of black sharpies. It had been my intention to try and collect, in the final moments of the session, responses both negative (on the left with coloured pens) and positive (on the right with black pens) to the idea of their engaging in a facilitator development process.

Just before the end of the 5 minutes I went to the group nearest the 'negative' white board and said *'Can I ask that when you are reporting back, one of you speaks and one of you captures any negative words or phrases you identify, on this sheet'* (the one they were leaning against) and pointed to the other sheet and asked the final member of the trio to capture the positive words or phrases on that sheet. I thought, in the moment, that would be a quick and engaging way of collecting these responses and also it would, satisfyingly (for me) give everyone a role in the feedback. I imagined (after I had briefed the other three groups in the same way) that each trio would use the white board sheets in the same way and then I, in a final flourish, would build-on what had been generated and tie the whole session together. But the group I approached said they didn't want to do that, feeling it was too complicated and so I thought OK, *it is* maybe too complicated, I'll leave it and instead I'll use the sheets in the way I had imagined originally. And then as I walked away the very same reluctant trio started writing on the sheet near them – the one I had seen as the negatives capture sheet – and created and populated two columns, one headed positive and one negative.

The others saw this and two groups asked if they needed to be writing something and I thought 'I should have put 4 sheets up on the wall just in case' but said *'no, they're doing something different to you'*.

At the same time as this - and we were seconds away from the end of their five-minute task time - I realised that I couldn't rely on the volunteered feedback sequence I had hoped for earlier, and didn't want to impose one (because of my earlier intervention to create the new groups and how I felt this had informed H's initial unwillingness to share). I wasn't sure they would remember their earlier feedback rotation which I felt might have been useful and easy to reprise in reverse - so I quickly generated slips of paper with concealed numbers from 1 to 4 on them which I invited them to choose to determine a random sequence.

The groups fed-back and I extracted one thing from each group as to confirm to them that they had indeed been on-task. I highlighted risk taking, speed of collaboration, context and playfulness and the idea of scales of improvisation context and improvising fear-factor. And then I felt like I really should do something about the list that the trio had generated on the whiteboard sheet and so invited the two members

who had done the writing to do so again, but this time as I retrospectively collected some negative and positive phrases from the questions task feedback contributions of the other trios.

Time - The sequencing of events that occur

Finally, after looking at the clock and seeing that I had now been doing the session for 38 minutes and had only two minutes remaining, I asked the participants how they would feel about the idea of what I referred to for the first time as a 'Facilitator Development Programme' and the first two responses were 'nice' and 'interesting'. These responses made me think that I might get some other single word responses from the others. So in the style of a sedated dive-bomber with my arms outstretched I edged through the narrow space between the chairs, eliciting responses from each and every person.

The next two responses were '*depends on who would do it*' and '*depends on the context*'. And then I realised that they had all imported their own assumptions into this discussion and those assumptions and how they had built upon them were now going off in so many different directions that I was losing sight of where they were. And there was no time to pull it back to where I wanted to be and the only hope I had was to end well.

Feeling - Emotions felt and expressed

That was what I was thinking. But what I *felt*, sharp-as-a knife, was 'have I made myself look like a person who doesn't do that sort of thing?!' And at the same time thinking how in the final 30 seconds I could position myself to look like a person who does and could do that.

I feared that the dive-bomber sweep wasn't going to build triumphantly upon 'nice' and 'interesting' but I'd started, so I had to finish, and there were still eight more people to ask. As I continued asking them, I was certain that it was a stupid question I was asking, but confirmed to myself that of course I knew that would be the case when I arrived and saw that the Deepdivers weren't there. And the only thing I felt I could do was to make J (with whom I had never exchanged a single word directly with until that moment, but had watched make people laugh earlier with his Tetris story) the last person I asked, because seeing my big finish evaporate, I thought if I could engineer it, maybe he could inject a bit of positive life into the end. And he sort of did, by combining '*interesting*' and '*depends on the context*'. And then it was over and I thanked them all, and although I was thanking them for the way in which they had thrown themselves into the tasks, I was still concerned that they didn't know why.

APPENDIX E: An example of the approach to the coding of interview data alongside the emerging competence categories:

CONTRACTING

- Clarifying the purpose of the process and the expectations of all stakeholders
- Managing/challenging commissioner expectations
- Framing the event clearly to stakeholders to create receptiveness to improvisation

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND IDEAS

- Understanding the audience
- Starting the session dynamically
- Taking considered risks for process gains
- Using designed processes to best effect

CONTEXT MANAGING

- Making the best use of space to support energy
- Maintaining a safe and productive group environment
- Demonstrating confidence and authority
- Using time constructively

CLARIFYING MEANING

- Playing back, translating and using different ways to convey meaning
- Creating thresholds of understanding
- Tracking development and progress towards desired goals

CREATIVELY RESPONDING

- Animating and energizing
- Intervening strategically and successfully
- Supporting/challenging discomfort

CHALLENGING INERTIA

- Challenging habitual patterns of response
- Changing gears and altering pace
- Creating different ways for participants to engage
- Responding to individual learning preferences and mood

CONSENSUS BUILDING

- Keeping participants engaged
- Capturing all perspectives
- Creating agreement on a way forward

CLOSING SUCCESSFULLY

- Bringing the session safely into land
- Valuing all contributions
- Demonstrating achievements against purpose
- Sticking to time and the promises made
- Appropriately de-briefing the process.