

The ignorant manager: conceptualising impact with Rancière

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to offer a response to expressions in the literature concerning the limitations of critical reflection, using Rancière's exposition of the role of values and reasonableness to examine how forms of negotiated work-based learning can support learners' pathways to impact in their organisation. The implications for work applied management in terms of enabling these employees to make an impact are considered.

Design/methodology/approach – Vignettes illuminate and articulate Rancière's (1991, 2010) ideas, the vignettes constructed through events experienced and narrated, perhaps imagined, tutorial conversations, assignments and work practices. Such construction of "multiple layers of fiction and narrative imaginings" draws on Sparkes (2007, p. 522). They consider individuals' negotiation of working practices using ideas developed during their studies, and personal and professional development prompted by unexpected insights into their capabilities, interests, and possible roles.

Findings – Negotiated work-based learning appears to offer the individual opportunity to take responsibility for action in his/her learning and in his/her workplace, but effect depends on several factors, and can be perceived in different ways. Students' encounter with autonomy in their studies resonates with Rancière's belief in equality. In the workplace (becoming "citizens" alongside "reasonable" individuals) their agency might, at best, lead to "reasonable moments", as they encounter both negative and positive challenges of work applied management.

Practical implications – Successful utilisation of agency in learning prompts expectations of responsibility and equality in the workplace. Such equality can lead to diverse, unpredicted insights and consequent opportunities for changes in practice.

Originality/value – This is the first paper to utilise Rancière's ideas to offer a critical consideration of both learning provision and workplace practice. Consideration of his profound stance on individuals' freedom and agency provides rich (but challenging) prompts for analysis of one's own practice, and the potential for impact when the manager is "ignorant".

Keywords Impact, Work-based learning, Teaching and learning, Autonomy, Ignorant manager, Negotiated

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In line with literature that considers the limitations of critical reflection within work-based learning programmes (Wall, 2016a, b), this paper introduces a perspective which might indicate a way of both deepening and widening one's understanding of critical reflection so that its impact might be stronger and more supportive of action than is sometimes the case, and more directly relevant to work applied management. It does this through focussing on and applying ideas expressed by Rancière (1991) in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. One's initial encounter with Rancière's views so articulated is startling. Although Rancière recognises the significance of the teacher, this is not due to the teacher carrying out the commonly assumed roles and responsibilities



associated with the role (such as explaining topics, and guiding learners), but to their duty to direct the learner's will to learn for themselves. Rancière continues to surprise through his questioning of what are possibly taken-for-granted concepts. For example, he critiques "progression" as "the new way of saying inequality" (p. 119): one will never progress sufficiently; there is always more to do, and someone already there to enable you to edge along to the next stage. Perseverance in pursuing Rancière's ideas might lead to perceiving the accuracy of the title of his work, and a deep awareness of equality.

Rancière (2010) continued to identify the diverse roles encountered in life, how they positioned people in the social order, and how harmonisation of these roles should be refused: if one mediated equality – through negotiation, adjustment of perspectives and perceptions – to arrive at apparently orderly relations, this could only be done according to the "dominant explanation" (p. 15); there would still be inequality, but it would be invisible, masked by the dominant understandings and perceptions. What then, for one's role as a tutor? Is it possible for work-based learning to support learners' autonomy? If it is, what impact might this have – on the learner, on their organisation, or more widely? What are the "everyday" implications for the workplace, in terms of employee relations, expectations, and responsibilities? What are the implications for work applied management?

In a work-based learning programme founded on negotiated learning, centred on each learner's work context, where critical reflection plays a significant part, it is possible for a tutor's stance to accord with Rancière's. In such circumstances, learners can experience profound personal and professional impact. However, the consequences for organisational impact are uncertain and might be dependent on certain conditions, such as the individual's formal position in the organisation, attitude and confidence, the culture and assumptions of the organisation and/or the staff. This can suggest limitations for Rancière's "ideal", which perhaps Rancière (1991) recognises, through, for example, the wish for "reasonable moments" (see below) rather than aiming for an end to social order. If the ignorant schoolmaster succeeds where others do not, could the ignorant manager effect organisational impact by doing little other than accepting autonomy of the workforce?

The paper begins with a consideration of Rancière's (1991) argument, challenging at the time, still revolutionary in its values, assumptions and consequent charge. Rancière's (2010) later review is also examined alongside critiques of his work, to arrive at a critical understanding of his stance on education, and its wider implications. Work-based learning is considered through a Rancière lens; its potential personal, professional and organisational impact identified through presentation of stories from the field. The implications for the workplace lead to evaluation of the use and relevance of Rancière's ideas to work applied management, for instigating organisational as well as personal and professional impact.

Literature review

Rancière (1991) articulates his view of equality through examination of the teaching of Jacotot, a late eighteenth century teacher whose Flemish-speaking pupils learned French not through his explication, but through their autonomous use of a bilingual edition of *Telemaque*. Jacotot could not speak Flemish, and so could not explain aspects of the French language to his students; they could not ask him for help, as they did not speak French. Despite these apparently unsupportive conditions, the students learned French. Rancière (1991) presents this as an example of emancipatory learning among equals. He uses it to consider the role of the teacher (or "master", as he calls the teacher in this work) which he suggests it to direct the will of his students, but not their intelligence. Rancière suggests Jacotot made the students aware of their own intelligence, and their equality with him.

Jacotot's story enables Rancière to expound his theory, not just in relation to education, but also more widely to the social order, where, he argues, there is complex material inequality. Part of this complexity is due to the way the hierarchy in the social order might conflict with

commonly held assumptions. Rancière talks of “superior inferiors” – each person subservient to the one he represents to himself as inferior (p. 86). Thus, the teacher (or “master”) might appear to be superior to his/her learners, possessing knowledge and understanding to impart. However, the tutor is actually dependent on his/her learners: their need provides him/her with activity, identity. This startling and apparent upturning of the common assumption, that those defined socially as inferior are subservient to those defined as superior, indicates Rancière’s critical stance: one is dependent on inferiors to confirm one’s superiority. This stance is relevant for work-based learning in terms of the learner/tutor relationship, individual roles and their equality. The wider relevance and consequences of this view for work applied management should also be considered in relation to work-based learners as employees, alongside their managers and/or colleagues.

Rancière (1991) indicates his understanding that we cannot always act equally (should we want to maintain social order), outlining two opposing roles we each possess: a “reasonable man” who recognises himself as equal to other men (whatever their position in the social order) and a citizen (“man fallen into the land of inequality”) (p. 91). The balance of roles is needed to support order, but the reasonable man will always recognise this and preserve his reasonable perspective on equality of intelligence, despite the irrationality and inequality of the social order. He will consider what can be done with reason’s power, how it can “remain active in the heart of extreme irrationality” (Rancière, 1991, p. 95). Rancière does not expect society to be completely, permanently, reasonable, but hopes for “reasonable moments”, which arise through individuals’ “reciprocal recognition of reasonable wills” (p. 96). He asserts that actual, immediate emancipation requires us to “learn how to be equal men in an unequal society” (p. 133). The emancipated person can obey superiors knowing they are his equals and can emancipate others. For Rancière, like Jacotot, equality is “not an end to attain, but a point of departure, and a supposition to maintain in every circumstance” (p. 138).

Equality does not depend on the quality or quantity of one’s knowledge. Emancipation is gained through teaching oneself, and others, what one does not know. While one might assume explanation will help the learner become equal (eventually) to the teacher, this equality is always some way off. Explication, asserts Rancière (1991), divides people into those with and without knowledge, and perpetuates inequality. He questions the use of explication: when the source is available, understanding might be harder if explanation is inserted to help access it, leading to an explanation of the explanation – “regression ad infinitum” (p. 4). Yet the system (and therefore the explicator) depends on assuming an explicator is needed to help the ignorant learn, no matter that the ignorant learned to speak when young without such help. Despite this dependency on his/her learners, the role of tutor/explicator, responsible for judging whether learning has taken place, positions the ignorant (i.e. the learner, the recipient of the explication) as forever inferior; there will always be something more that only the explicator knows. In accepting this, the learner submits to “the hierarchical world of intelligence” (p. 8). This “stultification” pervades learning from school days onwards: ownership of one’s learning, of independent intelligence, is not possible. Should one wish to promote equality, it is important to consider the degree to which it is possible for learners and tutors to be equal and how this is demonstrated, the degree to which explication hinders or helps this, and the implications for work applied management.

Considering Rancière’s stance in relation to education, a criticism might arise regarding apparent inequality in learning caused by individual, social or psychological circumstances. For example, May (2010) considers individual differences to be due to our being “nearly equally intelligent” (p. 77) although he minimises this apparent critique of Rancière with acceptance of the need for intelligence equality in order to challenge justification for hierarchical divisions.

Bourdieu’s work might help one understand material inequality. For example, the “structured and structuring structure” of one’s habitus (Maton, 2012, p. 50) might constrain the range of one’s experience. How and where one’s cultural capital is different from that of

peers might influence one's development (Moore, 2012). While a Rancière stance is founded on equality, Bourdieu could help a tutor recognise challenges students face today. Applying his consideration of capital and habitus (Maton, 2012) in conjunction with Rancière's perspective would support a relevant and individual exertion of will. Bourdieu (2000) has indicated how inequality might be configured and arise. While Rancière asserts equality, Bourdieu starts from the assumption of inequality. However, Bourdieu might enable a more realistic, individual application of "reasonableness".

Pelletier (2009) alludes to a fundamental difference between Bourdieu and Rancière: Bourdieu explains inequality as the poor not succeeding academically "because they cannot formulate scholarly discourse", whereas Rancière asserts that lack of academic success is the result of "their discourse not being treated or heard as scholarly" (p. 145). This prompts one to consider how, if Pelletier is right, one can allow all learners' voices to be heard.

While adoption of Rancière's stance might be combined with other concepts, as indicated, practical challenges remain when seeking to enact it as a tutor: Rancière's (1991) suggestion that assessment is irrelevant to emancipation seems legitimate: individuals vary in how they use (and so demonstrate) emancipation. However, this might lead one to question how to work to emancipation in higher education today, where it is assumed that quality can be measured and students' performance graded (with significant implications for their place in the social order) (Johnson, 2015). Teachers wishing to support this stance in these measured times might direct the students' will to emancipation, treating them as "reasonable men" do, with equal intelligence, while concurrently preparing students for institutionalised assessment, which cannot assess emancipation quality and quantity.

Methodology

Such an approach might seem idealistic and impractical. How, as a tutor, might one demonstrate one's belief that the learner can use his own intelligence to learn, and make the learner believe this also? How might one give the learner consciousness of "what an intelligence can do when it considers itself equal to any other and considers any other equal to itself" (Rancière, 1991, p. 39)? What are the effects of doing this? The extent to which programmes of negotiated work-based learning are emancipatory, and their consequent potential impact, are examined here, through consideration of different students' stories.

A narrative approach is taken. Vignettes illuminate and articulate Rancière's (1991, 2010) ideas. Clough's (2002) guidance is followed: "in setting out to write a story, the primary work is the interaction of ideas" (p. 8). Clough refers to the opportunity this approach offers to get to the "heart of social consciousness" (p. 8), maintaining significant elements of events and conversations, but preserving anonymity. He suggests fictionalised narrative fits with a move to moral accountability in methodological concerns. Brockmeier (2013) might concur, alluding to stories and storytelling practices as "forms of life", rather than ontological entities (p. 267). While the most effective reporting method for all research is not clear, it can bring conflicting perspectives and understandings to light, as Andrews *et al.* (2013) suggest, sometimes through collecting data that become available through the wide range of sources that storytellers identify. Wall and Rossetti (2013) suggest storytelling/listening draws on both sides of the brain in order to both make sense of one's experiences and to process our emotions; they refer to the recognition of the potential power of storytelling for motivation and transformation in organisations. Stories enable the "small things" to be included, paid attention to; it is sometimes these apparently inconsequential elements that are key to a particular understanding. The stories here consider individuals' negotiation of working practices using ideas developed during their studies, and personal and professional development prompted by unexpected insights into their capabilities, interests and possible roles.

In a negotiated programme of work-related study where each learner is in employment, studying with the overall intention of improving their practice, negotiation of what is

learned, when, how, and how it is assessed both supports the relevance of the programme for each individual, whatever their specific context, interest and aim, and (it would seem) positions the learner as autonomous. The tutor is inevitably “ignorant” (a requirement of emancipatory learning), asking questions of the learner who has specific practice knowledge and understanding the tutor does not. The ignorant teacher cannot verify that the student has learned the “right things” but he can verify “that the student has searched” (Rancièrè, 1991, p. 31). In programmes incorporating critical reflection, responsibility for demonstrating this search also resides with the learner.

The impact of such positioning is considered below, using vignettes of students undertaking a programme of negotiated work-related study, to illuminate and articulate Rancièrè’s (1991, 2010) ideas; the vignettes are constructed through events experienced and narrated, perhaps imagined, tutorial conversations, assignments and work practices. Such construction of “multiple layers of fiction and narrative imaginings” draws on Sparkes (2007, p. 522). The personal, professional and organisational impacts in each case are outlined, leading on to consideration of implications for the workplace and, in particular, the role of the manager.

James moves on

James e-mailed me to arrange a tutorial. I was pleased to see him, thinking he had given up on his studies when he had produced no draft work for a few months:

I’m sorry, it’s doing my head in. I’ve been on this module for ages, haven’t I?

Well, yes, it’s a while. In fact, I thought you’d decided not to carry on, but just didn’t want to let me know.

Yeh, I don’t want to carry on. You know I don’t like studying. Takes me ages to read anything. I was just doing it cos I won’t get any further without a degree.

Our conversation continued, leading us to arrange a schedule for James’s completion of the module. He completed, gaining a modest pass. He progressed, taking other modules, some of which took similarly lengthy periods. Tutorials did not indicate any change of heart. Well, that is a student’s choice. Getting the assignments in (eventually), working through the programme – that is what I need to keep tabs on. Disappointing if someone is not enjoying it, but that is not really recorded, is it? (Well, maybe through NSS results, etc.), whereas completions and marks are.

The penultimate module came: project-focussed, requiring James to identify an area of his work for development that could provide a practice goal. We met to discuss the project, allow learning outcomes to emerge, and agree assessment methods. This was a module in which he therefore had considerable autonomy:

So you’ll use those learning outcomes when you’re reading my work? How do we make sure it’s up to standard?

I’ll be looking to see if you show that you’ve learned the things you’ve set out to learn. For example, with that one about understanding new employees’ learning needs, I’ll be looking to see what you write about those needs, how you found out about them, how your reading about employability, maybe human resources, or about company policy and so on, helped you.

But what if it’s rubbish?

You might come up with ideas that surprise me – you’re working on something where you’ll become the expert and I’ll know very little. I might not agree with everything you say, but you’re the one that will have done the work. If you justify what you say – give examples, relate to your reading – then that’s what I’m interested in assessing – how well you do that.

Hmm. It could still be rubbish.

Why?

I might get the wrong end of the stick.

What makes you think that?

Just how hard I find the reading, and how long the writing takes me. I want to make points quickly but can't.

What about cutting down on the writing by doing a presentation for part of the assessment?

Oh no – who to?

I explained the options and he said he had given it a go. Draft work came in; preparations were made for final submission and presentation. James set a fast study pace, leading to a professional, informed presentation (apparently the first he had ever done outside of job interviews) complemented by a good written piece: thoughtful, relevant, up-to-date, creative. In the subsequent “Exit” module James showed similarly strong personal engagement, and indicated a developing, surprising self-image:

I never saw myself as teaching anyone anything. However, I enjoyed that last module, creating resources, asking staff to try them. That makes me want further opportunities.

What had led to this? Perhaps it was the greater autonomy in the penultimate module. Perhaps that was the first time he had felt in control of his learning, of identifying what he wanted to learn and achieve. Perhaps each previous module had seemed a challenge set by someone else (the tutor), and his job was to work out what they wanted and accomplish it, the object being to pass: “he wouldn't have followed the route he has just been led down” (Jacotot, cited in Rancièrè, 1991). This time, the object was to create something that addressed workplace problems he had perceived.

Successful completion of the assignment was matched with successful creation of workplace resources. James saw how he could use his course to achieve things beyond marks, and have an effect in the workplace. Synthesis of creativity and workplace impact seemed to trigger deeper intrinsic impact, as demonstrated in “Exit” when he talked about what gave him a sense of achievement, and outlined his interest in taking on responsibilities relating to staff development – something he had never considered previously.

While the impact of negotiated work-based learning appeared to happen quite late on in his programme, it was powerful when it did. Here was someone who had said he hated his studies, who found himself slowed down by dyslexia, who focussed on the minimum needed to get each assignment completed and once done that was it, on to the next one. The penultimate assignment, where I truly had to stand at the door as Rancièrè (1991) advises while James went on the journey, offered autonomy which led him to follow his own priorities. This seemed to inspire personal as well as professional exploration, continuing into the final module, from which emerged someone perceiving their potential for impact on the organisation, who had stronger self-efficacy and self-esteem, and who began to consider how further study might fit with his growing interest in developing his role at work:

What? Are you saying you'd like to carry on to do a Masters now? But you've been saying since you started how much you hate studying.

I know – it's just this last few months – I've actually enjoyed it. Those guides I created, it was good working out what to do, how to do it, asking people what they thought. I never thought I was creative.

They are really good. Even I can understand them.

Well, that was a help – you saying you didn't know how to use your own equipment.

Yeh, I guess I'm a great example of how things need to be written in as basic a way as possible. I give up quite quickly.

“I know” (laughs).

We talked more about implications. The guides are used in James's organisation. James maintains his interest in developing in this area, but opportunities allowing him to do this as a normal part of his job are limited, constrained by organisational policies and practices. While organisational effectiveness depends largely on employees having clear roles and responsibilities, boundary blurring might yield surprisingly constructive impact. This is challenging, taking staff into unfamiliar territory where the outcomes are unclear. Sometimes, a manager who can accept temporary ignorance, awaiting outcomes to emerge, can facilitate powerful impact from workers.

Carl's research to action

Carl, in contrast, was already a Manager when he enrolled for a negotiated work-related learning programme. Living abroad, engagement was online; poor connections in his country prevented aural contact via Skype or other such programmes. While unfamiliar with the academic conventions relating to his particular course, Carl was confident in his learning and had the capacity to implement many of the changes in practice his studies led him to identify. Carl's greater confidence led him to ask for more guidance than James did, and there was the possibility of my "explication" involving far more than "standing at the door". I explained critical reflection in detail, providing a list of questions he could adapt and apply to prompt his critical analysis.

Carl used this effectively, although I perceived that my programme's – in fact UK higher education's – emphasis on critical reflection might be a cultural characteristic. "You're referring to academic colonialism. Yes, it is just one way of thinking things through, analysing them. There's plenty of others", agreed an external examiner. So – implications for me? I was perplexed. What was the "right" thing to do? Providing a "recipe" of optional ingredients for critical reflection seemed to work: the assignments indicated Carl's developing skills of critical analysis, but was this the result of "moulding"? Was he, in effect, like James – learning the rules to follow, to achieve his award? As with James, I shrugged my shoulders mentally. I thought, "Well, he's on a UK course, part of that is getting to understand the expectations, the assessment criteria. If he learns this without deep 'engagement', does it matter?"

I wanted to find out more, to find out if there were other expectations or criteria that would resonate more strongly with Carl's culture, but other than an e-mailed question or two, I did not follow this up. Fair enough – Carl had chosen this course, it was my job to help him succeed, and that might include explaining elements more fully or differently than I did with students who had only ever known UK education.

Carl's manner, and preferred writing style was modest, possibly finding it difficult to focus on his own approach and performance, and the consequent impact in formative work. I sensed that he was reluctant to change this following my feedback. Therefore, one had to read his work with much thought to what might be unspoken, when considering impact. Even in his final assignment – an insider-researcher work-based dissertation – he appeared to wish to make little of the contribution his studies could make immediately to his company, and eventually to the sector as a whole. However, the impact did emerge: his research led to a set of recommendations for his company to implement to face effectively their competitive challenge. Despite my doubts for much of his studies about the amount of autonomy Carl was actually taking, I realised in his final project that his creativity – unprompted by me – established his independence firmly. Looking back, I saw that all my "explication" had not prevented similar creativity throughout his studies.

The final work included a section of critical reflection on his performance as a researcher and in his studies. I realised I was surprised by what I read because I had perceived little personal impact prior to this. However, completing both a UK masters programme, and carrying out research, led Carl to refer to the significant impact on his self-image.

Previously, he had seen himself as a manager in a big company, judged himself to be capable in his field. Engagement in the course had opened up a whole new world he could access in ways he felt were interesting and useful; as a researcher he was seeking to find things out. He had been unsure he could manage this role, but had enjoyed the “journey”.

My last contact with Carl indicated that studying had had significant impact on both personal and professional development, contributing to his promotion to a senior manager’s role with responsibility specifically in the topic he had been researching. This was a new area for his company, Carl’s line managers being comparatively ignorant in this field and, apparently, willing for Carl to lead. Despite my doubts, the work-based learning programme seems to have enabled personal, professional and organisational impact, possibly in a sustainable way.

Tracy’s communication impact

While Carl might demonstrate that it is possible to effect impact should one’s organisational position be sufficiently senior, a brief glimpse at Tracy’s situation indicates more modest roles might also allow this to happen. Attending a workshop for a communication skills module, Tracy was quiet in manner, while making constructive comments or asking questions. She hesitantly suggested an aspect of practice to focus on for her assignment which seemed reasonable and would require some collaboration with colleagues for operational impact.

Choosing to use a storyboard as part of her assessment, she also presented this visual image of her journey to the team and the manager. While the work problem she considered was not immediately resolved, Tracy’s presentation sufficiently impressed her manager to request action from the technical team. Perceiving how her work has influenced her manager, Tracy continues to contribute to organisational development, changing signage in the office and suggesting to colleagues that they share how they write to their clients, so an increasingly friendly tone of communication develops:

I was a bit nervous, asking people to share. Especially because one person’s been there for ages. She’s very experienced. But she was dead keen! And we made it a bit more fun as well, bringing in cake which we ate while we had a read and a chat.

What does your manager think? It sounds great, but sometimes [...].

Oh, she’s been fine. She’s not really there very much because she has to visit all the sites, so there’s usually only one day a week when she’s in. When she knew I was studying this sort of degree she said, “Tracy, it’d be great to use your studies in the office. It’s up to you what you do. Try to involve the others, but you’ll get loads of ideas so use them!” So that made me think it’d be OK to make suggestions.

Tracy seems to have a manager willing to be “ignorant”, perhaps recognising the beneficial impact Tracy might have if given free rein. The organisational impact is happening. As for Tracy, while perhaps she already possessed a quiet self-confidence, her engagement in negotiated work-based learning leads her to use this confidence, along with her growing knowledge, to develop her own, and her colleagues’, practice.

Discussion

Reviewing these case studies leads me to conclude that in a negotiated work-based learning programme, the tutor’s ignorance (of the learner’s specific context and interests in particular) can afford a stronger equality than might be possible in other programmes, where tutors possess knowledge learners seek to understand. Rancière (1991) decries explication: the need for explication implies inequality. I recognise his reference to “superior inferiors” in myself: I need students to need me to explain things, otherwise what is my role? Certainly, with all the students above, I did much explaining – of assignment requirements, of relevant concepts, of academic conventions, and so on. However, they also explained

much to me. In fact, my technical ignorance seemed to inspire James's creativity. Reciprocal explication abounded. In such programmes the tutor's ignorance both supports equality and promotes learner autonomy. Personal, professional and organisational impact is possible.

Rancière's appreciation of the ignorant schoolmaster could be challenged, however, from an operational perspective. For example, he offers little guidance on how to drive the learner's will (the duty he recognises as legitimate for the tutor). Yet motivation is perhaps easier when one's capital fits the field (Bourdieu, 2000). My strategy with James and Carl when there seemed to be a mismatch was to increase explication. While with Carl a possible motivation "dip" recovered quickly, for James it was only when he began the module where independence was essential that his motivation became strong. Both students brought their personal capital into play. Tracy is perhaps a good example of a "reasonable woman": low down the social order in the organisation, cautious (possibly as a consequence) in her attempts to apply her learning in practice, she nevertheless persisted, modest in manner but also holding an expectation that her approach would have an impact, that it was equal to that of others.

Implications

As a tutor on a negotiated work-based learning course, I can legitimately be seen as ignorant (of learners' specific contexts and priorities) and am able to practise my values of equality and learner autonomy (to some extent). I perceive learners' participation in such a programme that can affect personal and professional impacts. Additionally, in relation to work applied management, the case studies indicate that organisational impact might require the learner's manager to also effect ignorance. Carl, already a manager, recognised his ignorance in his desire to arrive at new insights and understandings through his research, and was supported to effect organisational impact through his managers' recognition of their own ignorance. Tracy's manager spelled out this comparison, making clear she expected/wished for Tracy to have an organisational impact through her studies. James, in a more hierarchical organisation, appeared constrained in his organisational impact. His managers, while appreciating his creation of staff guides, drew on their perception of the organisation and understanding of roles and responsibilities in explaining how certain developments of his role were impractical.

Thus, the potential impact of experiencing autonomy and equality might be thwarted if one's manager is not ignorant. Rancière (2010) recognises this, in talking about the reasonable man who perceives equality, but who, as a citizen, understands the circumstances which make this invisible. While work-related studies might evince equality, organisational impact might be supported if a tutor also prompts learners' consideration of equality in the workplace. A tutor might also take a critical look at critical reflection, by considering how it might support collaboration as well as autonomy, and by being open to other ways of thinking which may be more familiar to the learner and their context.

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