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Editorial

Exploring the impact of reflective and work applied approaches

Welcome to Volume 9, Issue 2, of the Journal of Work Applied Management (JWAM), a Special Issue dedicated to exploring the impact of reflective and work applied approaches. The impact agenda is now a global phenomenon with great expectations for "transformational" impacts in the wider world (Gravem et al., 2017). Paradoxically, such demands can hinder discovery through the avoidance unpredictable outcomes (Gravem et al., 2017), and problematically, there is an over reliance on very narrow conceptualisations of impact, oftentimes adopting the metrics used by research councils or governments to allocate research monies. Such metrics are fiercely debated, partly because of a disconnect with practice, and their significance in creating and shaping industries whose primary purpose it is to administer and optimise the administration of research assessment activity (Wall, 2016a, b).

Pluralistic alternative measures have been proposed (see Aguinis et al., 2014), which have integrated metrics such as social media citations, but even these may be conceptualised as limited and potentially increase the complexity and overhead of making sense of impact in workplace contexts. Similarly, in the context of work applied learning and management, discussion of impact can be criticised for being too localised to generate wider societal benefit (Sun and Kang, 2015; Fleming and Haigh, 2017; Wall, 2017). Therefore, the aim of this Special Issue was to stimulate debate and practices in relation to impact in the context of work applied learning and management, in terms of:

- alternative conceptualisations of impact and research impact in the context of reflective practice and/or workplace or work-based learning;
- theoretically informed reformulations of impact in the context of reflective practice and/or workplace or work-based learning;
- research or commentaries into how impact might shape reflective practices or workplace or work-based learning approaches; and
- contradictions, dilemmas, tensions, or double binds in managing or realising impact in the context of reflective practices or workplace or work-based learning approaches (Wall and Perrin, 2015; Wall, 2016c).

As you will soon discover, the Special Issue attracted a wide range of perspectives, practices, and provocations in line with a more pluralistic notion of impact, and the areas of debate above. In the first paper, Wall, Bellamy, Evans and Hopkins (2017) provide a contemporary synthesis and review of the impact agenda in relation to work applied management and change approaches. In their paper entitled "Revisiting impact in the context of workplace research: a review and possible directions", they draw on a diverse range of data to provide a more nuanced commentary on three key dimensions of, and pathways to, impact: the potentiality of the interactive, discursive nature of all research activity in shaping impact, the potential role of presence (and perhaps non-action) in shaping and delivering...
impact, and the narrative nature of time means there is instability in making sense of impact over time. These insights highlight the omnipresence and omnipotent potential of research in organisational settings, especially in the context of work applied management and change approaches. In turn, such insights challenge us in such fundamental ways that we need to re-think how we position ourselves and our research in workplaces, in terms of responsibility, sustainability, and ethics (Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank, 2017). There are a variety of practical implications of such insights, including how we train practitioner researchers.

In the next paper, Scott (2017) responds to critiques about the limited impact of critical reflection in workplaces by offering the counter-metaphor of “the ignorant manager: conceptualising impact with Rancière”. Underpinned by the philosophical thought of French Philosopher Jacques Rancière, Scott raises the possibilities that can be afforded when managers take a stance of ignorance. Specifically, she argues that in taking such a stance, managers can operate outside of their own constraining repertoire of experience and expertise, and thereby generate unpredictable but deeper forms of learning and broader impacts. As such, this provides a space and platform for greater equality and agency for practitioner researchers in the workplace. Methodologically, Scott engages a “methodology of the heart” which aims to connect and resonate with the research audience to affect change (Sparkes, 2007; Wall, 2016a, b, c).

This stance of “ignorance”, or operating outside of pre-established and structuring repertoires of experience and expertise, is raised again in the next paper. Here, Robins (2017) explores “Impact through coaching: does the use of models limit connectedness in coaching?” Robins draws on the kind of practical wisdom generated through years of experience and reflection to become aware of the structuring (and possibly inhibiting) role of models in coaching, a professional practice that has gained immense momentum and popularity in work applied management and change settings. Specifically, she argues that models can be unhelpfully disruptive to the sorts of connectedness that is so centrally important in efficacious coaching and change practice. She refers to the role and appropriateness of “open space” methodological approaches, which resonate with the positive and productive states for change to which Scott referred, and which foreground equality in change efforts (Wall, Tran and Soejatminah, 2017).

In the fourth paper, Wall, Russell and Moore (2017) then bring us “Positive emotion in workplace impact: the case of a work-based learning project utilising appreciative inquiry”, and explicate the role of positive emotion in pathways to workplace impacts. They draw on an example of a work-based learning project utilising the highly efficacious (yet still controversial) methodological perspective of appreciative inquiry. Not only do they demonstrate that appreciative inquiry can be flexibly adapted to difficult organisational settings, but that it can also be effectively used in time-bound work-based learning projects. Their paper amplifies the necessity and possibility of attending to the well-being of the people involved in change or transformation projects in the workplace, an area that is increasingly important in workplaces and applied methodologies (Wall, 2017).

Poole (2017) then provides a radical re-think and re-visioning of the impact debate in his “re/searching for ‘Impact’”. Here, Poole prompts us to re-gain and re-vitalise our creative capacities as human beings, and in doing so, amplifies a way of connecting research as a form of searching – or curiosity – which is so necessary to live a life full of energetic curiosity. To explicate and articulate his argument, Poole draws on arts-based practices which aid the practitioner researcher in connecting to wider sensations or ways of knowing, where impacts are the things “which come out” rather than known and prescribed at the start of research. This responds to the concerns of Gravem et al. (2017), where being prescriptive to be “transformational” can have the opposite effects in practice. Poole exemplifies such exploratory processes through three creative and original practices which
speak to the ambition of re/searching: Phrönetic Vlogging, Ekphrasis, and Perambulography. In the spirit of offering additional pathways to further knowledge, and a first for the JWAM, Poole provides QR codes which embed links to (web) sites with additional media. We invite you to follow the links to find out more!

In the sixth paper, the theme of creative practices to engender impact in workplaces is further developed and elaborated. Drawing on innovation practices from Finland, Passilä et al. (2017) present the paper entitled “Beyond text: the co-creation of dramatised character and iStory”. The paper, drawing on a major international research and innovation dissemination project, focuses on the use of drama- and story-based practice to facilitate deep insight and “Eureka” moments. Here, operating in “as if” states of being or “as if” storylines seem to facilitate different trajectories of action, and therefore open up alternative pathways to influence and impact in the workplace (Wall and Perrin, 2015).

The significant potential of story and drama process is also referred to in Rossetti and Wall’s (2017) paper on “The impact of story: measuring the impact of story for organisational change”, the seventh paper of this Special Issue. In one sense, this paper provides additional contemporary evidence of how story and storytelling activates the positive and productive psychological states that are so conducive to organisational change and personal transition. In another sense, it also provides tools and techniques to be able to measure and monitor such impacts in real organisational settings, as part of work applied management and change contexts. The most significant change technique is a particularly practical approach which can be deployed as a foundational tool, flexed to the specific needs of multiple stakeholder groups. It also connects to the international work of Lapidus International, the words for well-being organisation (www.lapidus.org.uk), which recognises and promotes work of this nature. This paper stands as a landmark as it is one of the first to be published in the context of work-based learning or work applied management.

In the final paper, Rowe et al. (2017) present the paper “The challenges of managing degree apprentices in the workplace: a manager’s perspective”. This paper captures a time sensitive, early snapshot of attempts to increase the number of apprentices in the UK, and adopts the unique perspective of managers involved in this national initiative. As the apprenticeship model in the UK adopts work-based learning and work applied management approaches, it highlights some of the challenges of realising the impacts of such models when configured in such ways (Rowe et al., 2016). Interestingly, whereas the other papers predominantly examined the pedagogical strategies and structures to deliver impact, this paper amplifies the importance of other human resource factors including employer-led recruitment processes, the management of expectations of work-based learning and work applied methodologies, student retention strategies, and effective workplace mentoring and support strategies.

As 2017 comes to a close, we may utilise the ideas in this Special Issue to reflect on some of our own insights from 2017 (and before) to guide us into 2018 (and beyond). Although not explicitly a theme of the call for papers for Special Issue, an overarching theme which is present in each of the papers relates to creating spaces for new ideas and practices to emerge: the spaces in and through conversations (Wall, Bellamy, Evans and Hopkins, 2017); spaces for equality through ignorance (Scott, 2017); open spaces for people to connect through coaching and to travel to new destinations together (Robins, 2017); open and generative spaces through positive emotion (Wall, Russell and Moore, 2017); spaces for curiosity through (re)searching (Poole, 2017); opening spaces through drama and story (Passilä et al., 2017); opening spaces for improvement through story (Rossetti and Wall, 2017); and the spaces that need careful set up and management with and amongst stakeholders when engaging in work-based learning and work applied management methodologies (Rowe et al., 2017). To this end,
some questions prompted by this Special Issue, and which might stimulate our ongoing inquiry, might include:

- What research spaces are we curating to enable conversations and creativity?
- What models are we adopting? How are they constraining? How might they be opening up spaces?
- What research practices are we adopting to stimulate curiosity in research practices?
- Where might we inject a state of ignorance, to enable wider and deeper learning around us?
- What research practices might we adopt to stimulate positive emotion states to achieve even deeper and broader pathways to impact?
- What might we need to do to carefully set up and manage the expectations of those in the spaces we co-create?

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References


Revisiting impact in the context of workplace research: a review and possible directions

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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to revisit the scholarly impact agenda in the context of work-based and workplace research, and to propose new directions for research and practice.
Design/methodology/approach – This paper combines a contemporary literature review with case vignettes and reflections from practice to develop more nuanced understandings, and highlights future directions for making sense of impact in the context of work-based learning research approaches.
Findings – This paper argues that three dimensions to making sense of impact need to be more nuanced in relation to workplace research: interactional elements of workplace research processes have the potential for discursive pathways to impact, presence (and perhaps non-action) can act as a pathway to impact, and the narrative nature of time means that there is instability in making sense of impact over time.
Research limitations/implications – The paper proposes a number of implications for practitioner-researchers, universities/research organisations, and focusses on three key areas: the amplification of research ethics in workplace research, the need for axiological shifts towards sustainability and the need to explicate axiological orientation in research.
Originality/value – This paper offers a contemporary review of the international impact debate in the specific context of work-based and workplace research approaches.
Keywords Impact, Research method, Dialogic impact, Reflexive impact, Temporal impact, Workplace research
Paper type Research paper

Introduction
What impact is, how to measure it, and how it shapes the work of the higher education sector remain highly problematic despite decades of discussion (Banks et al., 2016). The move towards the measurement of research impact globally has created ongoing tensions, for example, in relation to the UK’s research measurement exercise. Here, impact “remains a major challenge despite the massive investment in research […] and […] often remain[s] problematic as a result of inadequate interpretations produced by mere numbers based on citation counts” (Chowdhury et al., 2016, p. 1). As such, the higher education research sector has largely accepted publication and citation data as a central proxy for impact, and in turn, such a proxy shapes research focus and careers, and insidiously suppresses inter-disciplinary and creative forms of research (Rafols et al., 2012; Martin, 2016).

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Indeed, evidence suggests that publication fits particular orthodoxies which do not challenge established methods or theories (Wilkins and Huisman, 2015; Siler and Strang, 2017), and evidence from the broad field of medicine suggests that impact is “severely underestimated” in “applied” fields which may not be cited but which directly shape practice (van Eck et al., 2013). There have even been claims that the use of citations and journal rankings to direct research practice is “bad scientific practice” and that journals should be abandoned altogether (Brembs et al., 2013). These concerns are important in the context of work-applied research approaches, given their applied, localised, and inter-disciplinary/trans-disciplinary nature (Costley et al., 2010).

These problems are echoed within the disciplines constituting business, management and organisation studies (Siedlok and Hibbert, 2014). In particular, Aguinis et al. (2014) provided a particularly scathing critique that impact is conceptualised “almost exclusively on a single stakeholder (i.e. other academics)” (p. 623). Rather, they call for impact to be conceptualised as a pluralistic concept, that is, impact can mean different things to different stakeholders. This, it seems, may be a way for Alvesson and Sandberg (2014, p. 967) have described as moving from a “boxed-in” way of thinking about impact, towards “box changing, box jumping and, more ambitiously, box transcendence” to indicate more imaginative and influential research results.

Entangled with the “relevance gap” debate (Pettigrew and Starkey, 2016), more recent discussions of impact in the broad sphere of business, management and organisation studies highlight the role of dialogue, reflexivity and temporality in describing and explaining pathways to impact between universities and their stakeholders (MacIntosh et al., 2017). Here, the insight and practical recommendations link to co-design and collaborative forms of research and inquiry over longer periods of time (Birkinshaw et al., 2016).

These insights and strategies are positioned as useful in relation to the broad and diverse communities which constitute business, management and organisation studies, but not necessarily so for those who are more familiar with the action-oriented and work-based research methodologies (or families of methodologies) which are more directly and explicitly focussed on workplace change as a desired process and or/outcome (Wall, 2015). These include, as examples, forms of work-based learning, inquiry and research (Wall, 2010, 2013), reflective and critically reflective practices (Helyer, 2015), action research (Gearty et al., 2015), action learning (Trehan and Rigg, 2015), action inquiry (Torbert, 2004), synergic inquiry (Tang and Joiner, 2006), and work-applied learning (Abraham, 2012).

Although dialogue, reflexivity and temporality are relevant to these sorts of research practices, there are particular issues which are missed in the literature and which need clarification in relation to work-based learning and change methodologies. The contribution of this paper is therefore to outline new insights into how impact is conceptualised in the context of workplace research. The three dimensions that constitute the focus of this paper are summarised in Figure 1.

The structure of this paper is as follows. This section has provided an overview of the paper and has outlined its contribution, that is, to provide and inculcate a more targeted discussion of impact within the context of workplace learning research methodologies. The next three sections then highlight and offer a more nuanced discussion in relation to three contemporary dimensions relevant to impact. These dimensions are: the discursive elements of research as pathways to impact, the role of presence and non-action as pathways to impact, and the role of time in making sense of impact. The final two sections then summarise and discuss the key insights, and identify a number of implications in relation to understanding impact in the context of work-based learning research methodologies.

Contemporary debates about impact
Discursive dimensions of research as pathways to impact
Recent evidence points to the role of the discursive and dialogic nature of interactions to highlight pathways to changes in ideas, practices and self-awareness (MacIntosh et al., 2017).
For example, Cunliffe and Scaratti (2017) propose “a form of engaged research that draws upon situated knowledge and encompasses dialogical sensemaking as a way of making experience sensible in collaborative researcher-practitioner conversations” (p. 29). This sort of relational engagement, which co-develops, has been recognised for some time in cooperative and participatory forms of research (Heron, 1996). To highlight this potential, Cunliffe and Scaratti (2017) identify “conversational resources” as discursive or dialogic routes to impact:

[…] being attuned to relationally responsive dialogue […] engaging in shared reflexivity within conversations to recognize and interrogate opacity and avoid overcommitment […] recognizing and building on arresting moments in which we are struck, oriented or moved to respond to each other or our surroundings in different ways […] surfacing the play of tensions, contradictions, binaries and boundaries within dialogue […] creating action guiding anticipatory understandings (p. 35).

However, such pathways to impact are not solely present in the “engaged” forms of research that Cunliffe and Scaratti (2017) refer to, and indeed, the same relational co-influence is increasingly emerging within education debates (Anderson et al., 2017; Wall and Tran, 2015, 2016). Such a relationship is partly why there can be potential ethical issues when managers become insider researchers and or leading change efforts in organisations and using these for research purposes (Stokes and Wall, 2014).

The discursive and dialogic influence is therefore beyond forms of “engaged research” which have an explicit axiological commitment to shift ideas, practice and awareness, and can apply to other forms of workplace research without this commitment, for example, interviews. Indeed, it could be argued that qualitative research, involving some form of interaction more generally, invariably impacts upon the thoughts and potential subsequent actions of the respondent through a discursive process, because of the inextricable link between the researcher and participant (Eden and Huxham, 1996).

For example, a longitudinal study by one of the authors (Bellamy) investigated the strategy formation process of nine small firm owner-managers over two years. The underpinning theory collectively considered strategy as a process of learning which informed decision making and incremental development (Crossan et al., 1999). Here, the owner-managers were interviewed up to four times over the two-year period, focussing on the performance of the company, future plans and the rationale for their decisions. The design of the interviews and the nature of the topic required the researcher to explore the respondents’ thoughts behind a number of possible options and to look back at their rationalisation of previous choices made.
Here, the researcher found that an open but gently challenging form of questioning over the two-year period took a form similar to a mentoring process, noticeably influencing the very phenomenon under investigation. This process necessitated the respondent to reflect and not simply report, with the researcher becoming a facilitator for this action, accumulating insight with each interaction. The cumulative impact of interactions appeared to increase trust and mutual understanding, and facilitated an open exchange between the respondent and researcher with a very strong rapport being established (Stokes and Wall, 2014).

Impacts were most tangibly noted around the specific area of the external environment and direction of the organisation. Exploratory areas around their awareness of macro-environmental impacts (e.g. political, economic, social and technological) brought about a recognition of a lack of environmental scanning for some respondents and the need to look outside of the organisation for potential impact factors. Examples of new respondent awareness and sensemaking are provided in Table I.

The researcher also found that with increasing contact, increasing familiarity, and increasing rapport between the researcher-respondent, it appeared that the ability of the researcher to influence the thoughts and therefore actions of the respondent might increase. Even subtle feedback, active listening and the gentlest indications of empathy towards the respondent appeared to shape influence. Other factors, which appeared to influence the pathways to impact, included the perceived status or expertise of the researcher, increasing the weighting and legitimacy of the comments. These reflections seem to reposition the researcher as an insider, an extension of the context and co-producer of thought. Working with respondents to unveil their thoughts can trigger a deeper recognition of self and relationships to their environment, helping to determine future outcomes. Their role can shape behaviour with discussion extending to nuance mentoring and coaching-like interactions occurring within the research process. The mirror of respondent reflection is facilitated by the research, even when the intention is not to influence in such ways.

The role of presence as a pathway to impact
Notions of impact, and research impact more specifically, can imply that the research or researchers have a generative role in learning and change in sites outside of academe.

| Owner-manager | Here, A was referring to insights about their agency and anxiety: 
|----------------| [... ] and you know if managers are standing on a rock just watching the sea go out half a mile just leaving bare rocks, wrecks and everything else [... ] you know that something terrible is coming |
| A              | Here, B was referring to insights about their role, ability and commitment in longer range planning
|                | It’s a lot; it’s a lot for me to carry both emotionally, personally and every other way. Particularly if you’re also doing the admin [...] lot of it’s hearts and minds but the mind part of it also requires thinking […] you’re the rock and the hard place. I think the difficulty is [...] quite personal [...] the lack of other people willing to take the issue by the horns and run with it [...] it’s like looking after your kids all the time, I don’t need to go on doing it. I personally don’t, don’t intend to go on doing beyond April next year |
| B              | Here, C was referring to insights about diversification and congruence with the core offering: 
|                | [...] you know I, I completely agree with you that I didn’t think that the cosmetic things, the thing we should be spending a lot of money on, we should be spending money on other parts of the eyes and not about the plastic surgery |
| C              | Here, D was referring to insights about perceived limitations of personal and management capacity: 
|                | I have learnt that, trying to do what I do and not delegate can have a catastrophic effect on your business |
| D              | Table I. Example of owner-manager insights through interviews |
This is particularly true when impact is conceptualised as a transfer of some sort, for example, research impacts the ideas, practices and awareness in practice (MacIntosh et al., 2017). In contrast, more contemporary notions of impact indicate the generative role of dialogue and reflexivity in co-developing shifts in the research process and outcomes (Anderson et al., 2017), and point towards recognising the co-evolutionary role of ideas, practices and awareness in collaborative settings (Cunliffe and Scaratti, 2017). Such processes are familiar in the context of methodologies for work-based learning and change (Wall, 2013).

However, long standing evidence from the Hawthorne studies (Mayo, 1933) is a constant reminder that the changes we make to workplaces may not be attributable to the causes the researchers believe, or want to believe, but might rather indicate the positive benefits of special treatment or positive attention generated during that process (Hansson and Wigblad, 2006). Similarly, developments in how the micro-dynamics of agency are conceptualised in business, management and organisation studies have developed in ways that indicate how influence can be generated through the material effects of presence which may in part involve “non-action” of those influencing (Fairhurst and Cooren, 2009; Wall, 2016c).

One form of this presence can be exemplified in relation to the micro-dynamics of coaching interactions, which function and are oriented towards facilitating development and change in practice settings (Wall, 2016a). In the following vignette, one of the authors reflects on a coaching session which she expected to focus on tackling a business development issue, but which turned into something else:

She [the coaching client] revealed that she had been the first to discover the aftermath of a murder. Suddenly and unexpectedly, our coaching session was about a situation which was so difficult and traumatic that it was too big to avoid and change the subject. I realised that all I could do was be there, with no expectation of being able to have any impact on the situation. I said very little and let her talk.

After perhaps half an hour, I noticed a change in her face – a brightening – as though darkness was lifting, a storm was passing. I commented on her strengths and the values I had noticed as she was speaking. She smiled and thanked me, saying the session had been “a gift”.

This vignette indicates how presence can emerge as a space that enables someone to deal with processing that needs to be done, perhaps with minimal intervention from another party, other than co-occupying the space and being attentive to a need, echoing the Hawthorne studies mentioned above. Evidence indicates that this sensation can be described as being “emotionally held by an encouraging presence” (Levine, 2010, p. 5) or “an unconditional positive regard” (Rogers, 1957).

In the field of business, management and organisation studies, this, and other forms of presence can be conceptualised as a form of power and influence over/in situations which are mobilised in and through collectives rather than individual agents (Raelin, 2016), or as when an individual “ventriloquises other entities” (Clifton, 2017, p. 301). This presence, it is argued, “is not necessarily a purely human physical presence, but can also be a hybrid presence of human and nonhuman actants, which are dislocated across time and space” (Clifton, 2017, p. 301). This is echoed in evidence about how influence can be imparted through physical appearance, and even more controversially, through “sentient and non-sentient actors […] [which] enact and circulate […] norms” (Ford et al., 2017, p. 1).

For example, in relation to collaborative research into facilitating cultural change, Wall (2016b) found that although his reflective interest and focus was centred on what it could meant to “act collectively” in an individualistic work culture, he found that others had reported that his presence within a research group seemed to initiate and sustain a stream of conversations, thoughts, and activity which led to additional projects, publications and social activity outside of the group. This was unexpected, unintended, and he was uncomfortable about becoming aware of such impacts through presence.
These insights mean that within workplace contexts, it is possible to exert influence through presence without an utterance (which is arguably an action in itself). Indeed, Panteli (2016) found that influence can be exerted through various styles of interaction, one of which was silence, as demonstrated in the coaching vignette above. The role of silence in generating pathways to impact are nascent within the context of business, management and organisation studies, but silence has been evidenced to support sensemaking, learning and personal transformation, support self-understanding, reflective learning, therapeutic outcomes, and even a state or way of being (Ronningstam, 2006; Zimmermann and Morgan, 2016). In this way, silence is still imbued by presence (Wall, 2016a), and can provide the kind of psychological safety that is often discussed as being necessary in collaborative research spaces (Sealy et al., 2017).

**Time and making sense of impact**

Time and temporality are emerging as a recognised but still under-explored aspect important to conceptualising and realising impact (Bartunek and Woodman, 2015). Impact has been linked to longitudinal immersion within particular contexts of practice, and the proposal is that “future opportunities for engagement and impact may be captured by a longer-term, value-driven and less episodic approach to the entire research process” (Wells and Nieuwenhuis, 2017, p. 45). Yet within the context of insider and other workplace learning and change methodologies, this prolonged or immersive feature is common, and indeed, the intimate contextual and historical knowledge of insider researchers can be a key reason that “access” is granted (Stokes and Wall, 2014).

However, recent evidence into assessing the impact of complex organisational interventions provides a more nuanced view of judging impact in organisations (Wall et al., 2016), Wall, Tran and Soejatminah (2017), Wall, Jamieson, Csigás and Kiss (2017), and Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank (2017) undertook a study across ten countries of practitioners involved in organisational learning, development and change work, and found time was a central aspect of making sense of impact, in two main areas: time and linearity.

In terms of time, Wall, Tran and Soejatminah (2017), Wall, Jamieson, Csigás and Kiss (2017), and Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank (2017) highlighted how narratives about the nature, extent and causality of impact can dramatically change in time, and give the example of impact evaluations made at two different points in time: \(t_1\) was an impact evaluation at end of an intervention, and \(t_2\) was an impact evaluation made six months after \(t_1\). They found that although at \(t_1\), the impact was rated as very limited and as not meeting the expectations of the individual or organisation, by \(t_2\), there was radically different sense-making apparent, and involved reportedly dramatic organisational and even life changing impacts. In other words, there was a slippery relationship between impacts at the two points in time.

In addition, however, such accounts were also problematized in relation to notions of linearity, or more specifically, accounts of cause and effect in relation to what appeared to “cause” those impacts (A led to B). Wall, Tran and Soejatminah’s (2017), Wall, Jamieson, Csigás and Kiss’s (2017), and Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank’s (2017) studies, for example, questioned whether the intervention (A) had generated the sorts of impacts in the narratives (B), or whether other factors (C, D, E, etc.) had been more influential in creating those impacts (B). For example, in terms of the dramatic changes in performance and culture (B), was it the organisational development coaching (A) that had been deployed, was it a change in management team which had enabled a change in culture (B), a mix of these (B, C), or none of these (E, etc.).

Such discussions about the slippery nature of impact accounts are important in the context of work-applied and change contexts, as organisations may need or want to demonstrate return on investments (Wall, Tran and Soejatminah, 2017; Wall, Jamieson, Csigás and Kiss, 2017; Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank, 2017), and/or evidence of a demonstrable account of impact may be needed as part of a work or practice-based academic
award or project (Costley et al., 2010). Yet these more nuanced and complex accounts of impact highlight how time can shape how we make sense of impact, and indeed, reflect the idea that time is produced through the narratives people tell rather than being a material reality as such (Wall and Perrin, 2015). Here, the idea is that as we participate in narrative, we are constructing how we see ourselves and the world around us, but are also slightly changing our narrative to fit the circumstances in which we see ourselves in (Ricoeur, 1984). Brown (2008, p. 405) explains how and why narrative changes over time:

I may wish to share my thoughts spoken or written. But as I say something, I may be more or less disappointed with how my thoughts sounds once converted into words. And through my attempts to reconcile what I thought with what I said, my understanding of the world might then be modified. So when I feel ready to speak again, there may be some shift in the way in which I express myself, as, in a sense, a different person is speaking. And so on […] where understandings and explanations continue to disturb each other perhaps for as long as I live.

The implication of this discussion is that it returns us to Aguinis et al.’s (2014) notion that impact is a pluralistic construct, where there are multiple accounts of impacts, but that, in addition, these accounts may change over different periods of time. This is particularly pertinent to work-applied settings, as it suggests that longitudinal immersion, alone, may not be enough to “capture” impact as such, and that there are other dimensions to consider when engaging in workplace research and development. Importantly, the idea that time is produced by narrative, thereby creating different and instable accounts of impact, challenges the assumption that there is a singular and static account of what impacts have been made. Time is active in mediating the narratives of impact over time, which is important if we are need to utilise the accounts of impact to inform new action (Wall and Rossetti, 2013).

Discussion and future directions
Recently, research in the field of business, management and organisation studies has been criticised for promoting “novelty rather than truth, and impact rather than coherence” (Davis, 2015, p. 179) and for “becom[ing] enamored by shiny objects and interesting puzzles” (Mathieu, 2016, p. 1132). Weick (2016, p. 333), in contrast, interprets this perspective as “ill-served”, because “constraints of comprehension may give the illusion that organizational research represents settled science” (emphasis added). This paper highlights that our understandings of impact in the context of work-based or work-applied research contexts are by no means “settled”, and the aim of the paper has been to offer nuanced perspectives about the pathways to impact in the context of methodologies for workplace research. Figure 2 summarises the analytical points raised in the previous section, each of which indicates the more nuanced issues pertaining to workplace research.

When taken together, the three additional dimensions emphasise the complex, unstable and problematic nature of the micro-dynamics or micro-foundations (Miron-Spektor et al., 2017) of impact. As such, there are a number of implications that give insights into future directions for methodological design, practitioner-researchers, practitioner-research training, and universities/research organisations (Wall, 2014). In a broad sense, a central theme of the analysis is that influence can work through all forms of research interactions and non-physical presence, and that accounts of impact can change over narrative and time. This means that there is a need to conceptualise and amplify the omnipresent aspects of research influence and therefore ethics in workplace research; that to deal with this omnipresent nature of ethics at a practical level, workplace researchers therefore need to understand their omnipresent responsibilities to their different stakeholders, over time, and across different communities; and that as such, this introduces sustainability into workplace research practice – a dimension largely silent in the context of workplace research impact – which requires axiological explication in order to navigate complex and contradictory agendas. Each of these implications is now discussed in more detail.
Amplification of research ethics in omnipresent influence

The preceding discussion outlined how researchers or those who identify as practitioner-researchers can influence not only through conversations or by asking probing questions, but also through presence. This presence, echoing the lessons and insights from the Hawthorne studies, amplifies the collective sensitivities to the micro-dynamics of workplace research, and the potential for unexpected risks or harm and possibilities for positive impacts (Stokes and Wall, 2014). Reconceptualising impact from a contained or limited interaction (e.g. an interview) to a more omnipresent state, where influence can ripple through conversations without the need for co-physical location, implicates the analysis of ethical considerations. This is particularly relevant in the context of work-based learning and change research approaches where the insider-researcher can be entangled in a network of relations beyond the research project. Therefore, there is the potential for multiple ripple effects in work areas as well as those participants in the research (who are themselves entangled in the same network), for example, an uncomfortable interaction with the researcher in one part of an organisation might lead to employment disputes in another part.

The shift in ethical research practice here might mean a shift towards researchers becoming beacons of ethical practice through the micro-moments of practice (Stokes and Harris, 2012). This is especially compelling given a call for more work to be done in relation to workplace ethics in the context of work-based and workplace learning methodologies (Wall, 2017b; Wall, Tran and Soejatminah, 2017; Wall, Jamieson, Csigás and Kiss, 2017; Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank, 2017). Future research and development work into impact might explore the micro-dynamics of ethics in more detail as “engaged” forms of research develop. Cunliffe and Scaratti’s (2017) conversational resources for impact (see earlier) provide one framework for doing this, especially in relation to “recognizing and building on arresting moments in which we are struck, oriented or moved to respond to each other or our surroundings in different ways” (p. 35, emphasis added). For example, this might include a key question: in what ways might conversations and presence play out in practice to generate other systemic ripples or risks, and how might this be narrated differently over time? This ethical dimension also prompts the review of ethical content and action in broader questions of responsibility within the context of workplace research. This is the next point for consideration.
Axiological shifts towards sustainability
The impact debate has largely focussed on the problems of the current system in prioritising publications and citations over other narratives of impact, and the preceding discussion has highlighted more nuanced understandings of impact in relation to methodologies for workplace research and change. However, this debate also seems to be dislocated from broader discussions of responsibility in a context where there are serious and strong calls for more to be done with respect to sustainability in organisations, higher education, and in the context of work-based and workplace learning methodologies (Wall, Tran and Soejatminah, 2017; Wall, Jamieson, Csigis and Kiss, 2017; Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank, 2017). This is especially pertinent in the workplace context given the complex and varied agendas of current and future stakeholders, including employees, customers, intermediaries, governmental and legislators and collaborators.

Such an omission from the current impact debate reflects the frustrations of families of action-oriented methodological approaches which explicitly embed such axiological commitments (Reason, 2007; Gearty et al., 2015). As Reason (1993) explained over two decades ago:

I believe that the process of democratic participative inquiry-inquiring together may be the primary gift that our Western culture has to offer to the wider processes of cultural and planetary development. We need to learn how to take the value and spirit of inquiry into economic, political, personal, and spiritual life as a counterweight to narrow-mindedness, authoritarianism, and chauvinism. We need participative action research as one way to re-invent our society and democracy in the face of political, economic, and maybe most importantly environmental crises (p. 1253).

Although research has begun to consider and question the economic costs of doing research (Buswell et al., 2017), a more contemporary and practical heuristic and framework which can aid practitioner-researchers and universities to prompt thinking, reflection and decision making in relation to responsibility is the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Such a framework can be used to facilitate discussions, choices and action amongst practitioners, practitioner-researchers, and their communities, and participatory settings.

The goals include commitments to (Wall, 2018, p. 4):

1. end poverty in all its forms, everywhere;
2. end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition;
3. ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages;
4. ensure equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;
5. achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
6. ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
7. ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;
8. promote sustained and inclusive employment, and decent work for all;
9. build resilient infrastructure and foster innovation;
10. reduce inequality within and among countries;
11. make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;
12. ensure responsible and sustainable production and consumption;
13. take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
14. conserve the oceans, seas and marine resources;
15. protect and promote sustainable uses of terrestrial ecosystems (including biodiversity);
promote peaceful and inclusive societies and accountable institutions; and

(17) strengthen the means of implementation through global partnerships.

For practitioner-researchers to simultaneously consider all or even some of these goals may require an axiological, or value-based, shift in what is considered to be legitimate for them to attend to (especially if they are conducting research in or with a profit making organisation) (Rowe et al., 2016). For example, if a practitioner researcher investigating the operational efficiency of an online banking platform becomes aware of the detrimental effects of the platform on “decent work” (goal 8), it may be very difficult (if not culturally inappropriate) to challenge the fundamental pay structures or process design of the platform. Future research and development work might consider the extent to which these commitments should feature in the work of practitioner-researchers, and how the tensions and contradictions amongst the commitments play out in practice. Importantly, evidence indicates that the way in which practitioner-researchers are trained and developed, and the pedagogical environments in which this development occurs are important to developing the sensitivities and complexities required to deal with these issues (Wall and Jarvis, 2015; Wall, 2017a).

**Explicating axiological orientation in research**

Amplifying the omnipresent nature of discursive and dialogic forms of impact alongside axiological shifts towards sustainability, creates a hyper-complex practice environment for researchers and those identifying as practitioner-researchers. Some forms of workplace inquiry may be sufficiently developed to generate impacts amidst the complexities of working to multiple agendas and polyphonic voices in practice (Reason, 1988). However, an alternative perspective is that explicit choices are made with regards to the type and form of impacts a practitioner researcher and university/research organisation aspire to make. This reflects Aguinis et al.’s (2014) position, whereby organisations supporting research into business, management and organisation studies make strategic decisions about the nature of impact they want to aspire to create in the world.

In the context of the discussion so far in this paper, for example, a university might be decide to focus on tackling workplace inequalities in global workplaces, or finding ways of organising to tackle global poverty. Such strategic re-orientation seems like a bold move to help generate cohesion and direction amongst research teams and in the research training environments (Akrivou and Bradbury-Huang, 2015). However, there are strong social, political, governmental and economic structures which keep publication and citations firmly in place as the “gold standard” of measuring impact. Indeed, as Wilkins and Huisman (2015, p. 1) recently found, there seems to be:

> [...] wide acceptance of the use of journal rankings, despite the downsides and problematic nature of these rankings being clearly recognised. It raises the question why the very diverse field of higher education does not show more resistance against the rather homogenising instrument of journal rankings.

Therefore, further research and development work might usefully be undertaken to disrupt the governance of research and research assessment at country level. Yet given the globally competitive market dynamics for research and its link to economic policy for higher education, this may be a problematic focus point. That said, possibilities for collective action to create new ways of conceptualising research impact are emerging which amplify both individual and collective agency – such as pledges and boycotts (Byington and Felps, 2017). Further research and development in this area would be not only be unashamedly “novel” (Davis, 2015) and solving an “interesting puzzle” (Mathieu, 2016) but would also be worthwhile in terms of “re-invent[ing] our society and democracy in the face of political, economic, and maybe most importantly environmental crises” (Reason, 1993, p. 1253).
Conclusion and implications

This paper extends the debate about impact by placing it within the context of work-based and work-applied research methodologies, and highlights the need to amplify the conceptualisation of research ethics in the context of omnipresent influence, deepen awareness of sustainability in the context of workplace research, and explicate axiological position in order to guide workplace practice and research and navigate complex and contradictory perspectives. Examples of specific implications for practitioner-researchers, universities/research organisations, and governments/governing bodies are outlined in Table II. This, however, is only a starting point and platform for further research and development, with an ambition to further broaden and build the impact of workplace research in practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner-researchers</th>
<th>Universities/research organisations</th>
<th>Government/governing bodies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflect on the ways in which own workplace practice is influenced, and specifically – what or who is present right now? What or who is influencing right now, but not present? How might these change under alternative future scenarios?</td>
<td>Reflect on the UN’s SDGs framework to highlight which goals are the most relevant to self and own workplace research – this can inform research focus and methodological perspective</td>
<td>Reflect on the type and forms of impact (including from the middle column) that are relevant to self, organisation, and any other networks that are personally relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the workplace research implementation stage, explore the conflicts, contradictions, and tensions in own research practice – notice which SDGs are evoked and how they relate/repel</td>
<td>Explore resonance and repellents between own stakeholder groups (as outlined above) and agree priority as well as complementary and supplementary areas</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>During all stages of the workplace research project, notice the “arresting moments” and explore the variety of influences at play – use this information to help guide action in relation to the other two columns</td>
<td>Discuss the tensions generated in own workplace research practice with supervisors and other trusted advisors to aid sensemaking and find practical action steps</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure ethics training in workplace research programmes highlight and demonstrate the subtleties and nuances of influence and the potential rewards and risks within such conceptualisations</td>
<td>Utilise the UN’s SDGs framework to explore the dimensions of workplace researcher responsibility in research training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-orient conceptualisations of research impact to include forms of workplace research, which may be inter-disciplinary/transdisciplinary</td>
<td>In addition to organisational agenda, frame workplace research projects in relation to the UN’s SDGs framework</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-orient proxy to include a greater weighting of narratives which have been validated by multiple stakeholder groups</td>
<td>Model practical ways to navigate and deal with the complexities of becoming aware of tensions and contradictions, such as tools for overcoming dilemmas and double bind problem situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-orient funding frameworks and mechanisms to prioritise the different dimensions of sustainability identified in the UN’s SDGs – in terms of topic areas, but also in terms of the the resources required to undertake the project and the plans in place to support responsible research practices</td>
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Table II: Example implications for practitioner-researchers, universities, and governments
References


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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” (Rancière, 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 Rancière’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-focused, 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 Rancière, 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 Rancière (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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Impact through coaching: does the use of models limit connectedness in coaching?

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Abstract
Purpose – Models are currently used extensively in the delivery of coaching. These models are used to give structure and form by coaches. The purpose of this paper is to present an alternative viewpoint of the impact of the use of models in the coaching relationship.

Design/methodology/approach – The approach taken has been to reflect on recent conversations across professional networks. The cooperative curiosity and questioning of some of our professional assumptions explores using models in coaching to enhance our practice, rather than limiting it. The paper acts as an exploratory prompt to question our practice and the role of the coach in the client/coach relationship.

Findings – The paper suggests that models are used, to a greater extent by the more inexperienced coaches to support their early practice. It is suggested that with greater experience, there is less reliance and use of format and recognised models. The paper proposes the more experienced coach provides “freedom without models” creating an alternative type of environment.

Practical implications – The implications of this paper are that if the authors are to grow and develop the practice and profession, there is a need to continue to research what current practice is delivering and offering the clients. The authors need to question if the early career coaches have the skills to meet the needs of the clients who engage them.

Originality/value – Researching our practice intends to will spark new ideas that may enhance the coaching practice and deliver the requirements of clients looking for development in a volatile and challenging corporate business world.

Keywords Reflective practice, Coaching models, Coaching research

This viewpoint paper explores the impact of reflective practice and work-based learning research from the coaching practitioner perspective. The term coach practitioner is applicable to many roles including, coach role model, expert coach, internal coach, performance coach, development/career coach and behavioural coach. Each of these different types of coach practitioner will fulfil the requirements of a different client group (Bachirova et al., 2014 in Cox et al., 2014). The importance for both coach and client is that there is an understanding and agreement on the type of coaching being provided. Not every client needs the same type of coaching, so it is important to establish requirements at an early stage. The experience and skill levels of these difference groups of practitioners may differ, but all need to be appropriate to the client group. Line managers, as a coach, are also practitioners; however, delivering coaching as a line manager also demands the highest qualities of managers and a willingness to adopt a fundamentally different approach to staff, as well as the skills in coaching (Whitmore, 2009). In the current periods of significant change and transition coaching as a tool or approach used by managers to help people learn and develop is growing in the workplace,
and this group has a significant contribution to make to research practice (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015).

The European Mentoring and Coaching Council defines coaching as supporting “clients in achieving greater self-awareness, improved self-management skills and increased self-efficacy, so they develop their own goals and solutions appropriate to their context”. If we then combine this with the International Coaching Federation’s coaching definition as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential”, we have a wider view. In this joint definition, the location of the coach has less importance than the impact of the relationship and the skill of the coach to support the client (European Mentoring and Coaching Council, 2015; International Coaching Federation, 2017).

This composite definition locates coaching in an individual developmental relationship where the coach’s domain is future oriented – what does the client want, and then coaching the client to get there. Although, at times not divided by clear lines and boundaries, it is generally understood that coaching sits in the space between informal supportive conversations at one end and formal counselling at the other end. Informal conversations that are unstructured can be conducted by unqualified and inexperienced individuals. Formal counselling sessions are, in general, delivered by trained counsellors to diagnose and help clients with emotional and personality problems of the past. The coach operating in the space between informal conversations and counselling sessions is required to be qualified, have experience of coaching and fully understand the boundaries in which they operate (Bluckert, 2014).

This paper shares a viewpoint that qualified coaches, experienced and inexperienced, use coaching models differently. The viewpoint is based on lived experiences, practice wisdom and research evidence. The understanding and insight that comes from a practitioner viewpoint is important and legitimate to ensure that the development of practice is tracked over a period of time to improve practice and the client experience overall (Bachmann et al., 2017).

Whilst it is recognised that there is an abundance of literature on the use of executive coaching, skills and models used, this does not often give a clear picture of the activity that happens inside the coaching environment. Much of the research into coaching to date has been practitioner led into exploring how coaching works in organisations or situations (Cox et al., 2014) and not into different sectors or content of actual sessions. What is required is a better understanding of what aspects of coaching are the critical factors (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011).

As a result of this lack of research, there have been a limited number of comprehensive studies of the component parts within the coaching process even though three elements of the coach-client relationship, duration of the process, and identification, of purpose and model of practice, are often identified from the literature (Fillery-Travis and Cox, 2014 in Cox et al., 2014). Fillery-Travis and Cox (2014 in Cox et al., 2014) suggest that the gaps are due to the multi-disciplinary nature of coaching and the lack of funding available for research. To increase research quantity and quality, it would require collaboration between researchers, sponsors, practitioners and professional bodies. This position is supported by Orenstein (2006) and Grant (2016) who, although writing seven years apart, arrive at the same conclusion that the lack of further rigorous research and academic debate are slowing the growth of the profession.

More recently, articles which discuss the nature of evidence-based practice and the virtue of practical wisdom have lately been enjoying a remarkable renaissance in management literature. These papers aim to help further develop a more nuanced view of evidence-based approaches and the value of the practitioner evidence into coaching practice (Grant, 2016).

If coaching as a profession is to continue to develop, then the practitioner has a role in this development. The practitioner should be concerned as to how effectiveness is improved.
The benefit of any improvement will be to the profession and the industry equally (Fillery-Travis and Cox, 2014 in Cox et al., 2014). There continues to be calls for more forms of research which is relevant and generated through and in practice (Wall et al., 2016, 2017).

Models as practice
Models are invaluable to us in developing understanding. A model allows us to ensure we have travelled in the right direction and included all stages of a process. Maybe we feel we have even carried out our trade in accordance with a valid model. Coaching models can even help us to understand the coaching intervention from a system perspective and to understand the need for “structure” in the interaction between coach and client. There are implicit models in practice that shape what we do, and therefore, the outcomes we achieve (Wall, 2016a, b, c; Wall and Perrin, 2015; Holland et al., 1998).

If models help us to develop flexibility as coach practitioners, and they offer structure and an outline for both the coaching conversation and the overall coaching journey, then they serve us well. However, although models create a system within which the coach and client work, it is important that models are not experienced as either “prescriptive or rigid” (Wall, 2017; Wall and Jarvis, 2015; Wall and Rossetti, 2013). Sadly, many practitioners embarking on their careers believe that a coaching model is representative of what happens, or will happen, in the coaching conversation. They therefore do not move outside of this structure. It could be that here lies the danger. It can give the client an experience of being manoeuvred through a process, as a sheep would be driven though a sheep dip.

There is an alternative view of what practice should offer to a client. It could be that there are times in the coaching relationship when the use of models limits the connectedness of coach and client and the effectiveness of outcomes of the session. Models offer structure and a framework, but do we want structure in the coaching environment or do we want an open and honest conversation? We need to ask ourselves: do coaching sessions follow the coach’s agenda or the clients’? For me, a true connection with the client is the key to delivering a quality coaching session. This connection requires the coach at all times to be conscious of the clients agenda and personal outcomes and not allow their own agenda to enter the space, either consciously or unconsciously.

If the role of the coach is “a conscious, intelligent use of both support and challenging skills where the coach can shift dynamically depending on the circumstances and the environment” (Blakey and Day, 2012), then there could be a view that following a model through the session may limit the ability of the coach to follow the client. The suggestion is not for one minute that coaching models do not have a place in coaching. For the newly qualified coach, the structure and process that the models offer provide a format to follow and the safety of recognised stages to ensure that agreed outcomes are met (Holland et al., 1998). It could even be the case that using a model could keep the inexperienced coach consciously on the client’s agenda.

If the desire is to arrive at an agreed point inside a set time, then sticking to a rigid model may do the job. Practitioner experience shows that it takes practice of a considerable number of hours to become an effective coach and have the ability to shift dynamically depending on circumstances (Passmore, 2010a, b).

It is understandable that in the early days of practice, a coach would follow models which they have just learned rigidly (Whitmore, 2009). However, a cook who always follows recipes rigidly has consistent results, but does not innovate. Free from the recipe book, they can become truly creative – adding, and setting aside ingredients. That same person moves from a cook to a professional chef. They do not forget that there are recipes in the world but they create their own new recipes and leave the original recipe in the background of their knowledge. So a coach must develop their practice to grow professionally (Stober, 2014 in Cox et al., 2014). It takes time and effort to become skilled enough to use the appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and
sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders through coaching (Bachkirova et al., 2014 in Cox et al., 2014).

The current workplace is a very challenging environment. Clients present with an issue that even if they are comfortable to share, they do not always have the language to explain. Clients can present one issue, which in time develops very quickly into something emotionally embedded and may, even at this stage, not be recognised by the client themselves. Clients often require space for thoughts to form into words they are comfortable to say. We know that the confidential space, challenge and environment that coaching provides are highly treasured by the executives and they protect the thinking time it gives them (Robins, 2014). So providing space should be one of our aims. It could be said that not allowing space for the client to unfold and unpack their thoughts, and by moving the pace to the beat of a drum roll of a coaching model, follows the coach’s path, not that of the client.

The coaching conversation needs to be about the client, not the coach. If coaching as described by Liz Merrick (Coach and Mentor – Twitter, 11 July 2017) “can be akin to an oxygen tank – a place where you can breathe, think and come out re-energised and re-focused”, then it is wrong to restrict it to be limited by the confines of a ridged model. If the model is too prescriptive, it means the coach has their own agenda to fulfil, rather than attempting to understand the client’s issues.

The best models can provide some useful structures for development if they are handled skilfully. At worst, they can be restricting and for more inexperienced individuals, a source of hiding place that can derail the coaching relationship. As we qualified, many of us learnt several models of coaching and these gave us the framework and context of the process of coaching (Wilson, 2011). However, as we grow in our experience, use our skills and develop our own practice, the models need to stay in the background and not be the cornerstone of our practice.

Unfortunately, all too often, evidence from across networks shows that the practice of a model is the start, the heart and the finish of a coaching session. This, for me, is the centre of the issue – newly qualified coaches and those who still require further development are developing their practice in the field for clients who have real issues. There is a danger that clients could be used as practice material for those developing their skills.

An open space coaching approach offer
The following is an example selected from recent practice which demonstrates the depth and breadth of issues from current working environments. These sessions were delivered without consciously applying existing models as it could be said that staying rigidly to a pre-defined format and set of set questions could have hindered the journey of the client. Rather, the coach unconsciously applies elements of models, drawn from experience, and used as appropriately during the sessions, just as the professional chef would pull together ingredients to form a new recipe. The approach was to give space for the client to speak freely unfolding their life in their current environment.

Case study
This client is an experienced Higher Education professional, with outstanding professional credibility, vast sector knowledge and national/international and regional reputation. However, they felt they were not coping with the working environment. They had sought coaching to assist in refocusing their energy to respond to their current stressful and highly demanding environment. Being in a senior role, this client felt that they were alone and unable to remove the blocks that were creating the stressful environment. The client felt that the relentless pressure was damaging their confidence and limiting their ability to respond to current issues.
The areas of development which they presented as their priorities for improvement were their personal resilience, increasing their own self-awareness and to regain their self-confidence in order to feel strong enough to change their current situation. At the first meeting, very little was shared about their current situation, and only brief details were given on current role and working practices.

These sessions did not follow a structured recognised model. They started in the early sessions with the client talking through what it had felt like being themselves in the workplace for the last month. This allowed the client to speak freely choosing what to include and what to leave out at this early stage. As the sessions progressed, it became clear that the real issue was a difficult relationship with a line manager and the workload allocation and distribution. Through an open space conversation, prompts and comments from the coach, the client heard herself voice the problem. She was, much to her surprise, being bullied by a line manager through the type of work she was being given.

By voicing incidents, meetings, corridor conversation and private one-to-one meetings, she realized she was the only member of the team who was voicing the opinion that current management behaviour was not appropriate. Over the early sessions, there was a great deal of personal questioning by the client as she did not think this could be bullying because of the roles of those concerned and the environment in with they worked. She also questioned her own position and challenged herself that as she was experienced in the workplace and was a strong individual, how could it be happening to her?

During the first three sessions, there was limited verbal intervention from the coach. However, there was a great deal of “connectedness” throughout every session. Asking questions of the client at this stage would run the risk of breaking the clients’ emotional connection back with the workplace and them hearing the language themselves that had been used to them.

Quite often, when coaches start working with one issue or enquiry, they will find that there is something else underneath or behind it that will pop up. Responding to the current moment means that they will deal with or just be with whatever comes up in each moment and know that whatever arises and wherever individuals are in this moment is the perfect place for them right now. Everything that is happening is an opportunity for learning and movement.

The clients’ development, gaining increased self-awareness, understanding blocking and procrastination behaviours, confidence building, visioning, action planning and defining future career developments and impacts were all areas which the client worked on with the coach over the following sessions.

Client feedback provided some six months after the last coaching session:

Thank you for the space you provided me to think. I feel you assisted me in removing the mental block that I had put in place as a self-protection mechanism. I now feel able to stand tall, think freely and enjoy life again! – Actually it is now more profound that this – the result has been that I am now able to reflect on the past experiences, acknowledge what I need, make good decisions and move forward with autonomy.

The clients’ use of the “I” in their feedback shows how they have taken full responsibility for their own development. Coaching helped this client to get the best version of themself and unlock their potential. The increase in confidence during this time was significant, with improved self-awareness and a greater understanding of how their changed behaviour could lead to changed behaviour in others. This significant improvement led to a wider option of choices to change their life and take it in a different direction. The sessions did not follow a recognised model but that did not mean they were unstructured. The “open space” environment gave the opportunity for the client to unfold their situation and hear as they verbalised their own situation some of the areas that they wanted to change. These were then the areas that the following sessions concentrated on.
The gift of connectedness

It seems rather obvious that a coach would have to listen to the client. However, there are many ways to listen to someone and on several different levels (Skiffington and Zeus, 2003). Sometimes listening to what people are avoiding saying or to what they are saying with their tone, body language or other non-verbal communications are every bit as important as what they do say (Passmore, 2010a, b). The greatest gift we can give to a client is to listen to them, completely and uninterrupted by thoughts of what is the next stage the coach needs the client to move to. For this to happen, there are two key elements – a connection between coach and client, and space for the client to think.

Therefore, there could be another interpretation of the coaching environment, one without models and set questions where it is as unstructured as possible. This open space environment gives space for the important and valuable elements of the relationship. It allows the coaching relationship to flow freely. It does not require the agreement of what outcome is required before it commences. In fact, this would not be possible as it is only the conversation itself that unfolds the desired outcome. Our intuition or sixth sense tells us things about our environment that the senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch cannot tell us. However, we need to develop it, strengthen and learn to listen to it. Quite often, we can get an “inner voice” and not listen to it because we do not trust our intuition or instincts. In giving the client space, people are taught that it is not so much about “being right” with their intuition, but the key is to have their senses sensitively tuned in to pick up signals, and then to speak directly from that place of intuition and then to respond to the current moment with whatever shows up.

When there is real connectedness between coach and client, they are linked at points in the conversation. They produce a close unit aiming for a single outcome – a better version of the client. At other points, only their touchpoints of understanding and the unfolding of events connect them. The approach to open space coaching practice comes very much from the belief that clients have the answers or they can find the answers if they are asked the right questions and given space. From the coach’s point of view, nothing is wrong or broken and there is no need to “fix” the client. The coach is simply discovering, uncovering or polishing the individual that people already are (Bluckert, 2014). This approach is in line with that of the “Gestalt Coach” who strives to develop a quality interaction and collaborative partnership (Bluckert, 2014). This means that the coach and client relationship is focussed on getting the results that the client wants, not what the coach or anyone else thinks is best for the client. It is the coach’s task to ensure that the clients are always steering towards fulfilment and balance, and are able to engage in the process of their lives.

We need to remain mindful of the evidence that it is the coaching relationship that matters more than any specific coaching tool, intervention or models used (Hall, 2013). Anything that enhances that relationship and the achievement of the coaching client’s objectives is to be welcomed – but if the model becomes a diversion from the real work and purpose of the coaching, we should think again before using them as the mainstay of our practice. The people we surround ourselves with either raise or lower our standards, and this includes the coaches we select to work with. We all need people in our lives who raise our standards, remind us of our essential purpose and challenge us to become the best version of ourselves; surely, it is reasonable for the client to expect that from their coach also.

Models can help us to develop flexibility as coach practitioners (Dembkowski et al., 2006). They can offer structure and an outline for both the coaching session. However, although models create a system within which coach and client work, it is imperative that models are not experienced as either prescriptive or rigid or more importantly that you are following someone else’s practice and not developing your own.
Towards new spaces and possibilities

We need to reflect and develop our practice to a level where we can create (or recreate) our own model of how we coach. This would allow us to examine our own practice and to understand what is important to us as individual coaches. Structuring our own practice to improve as a professional means, we develop as practitioners for the benefit of our clients (Bachkirova et al., 2014). As coaches, as we increase our own understanding of our own presence in the coaching space, we can develop more assurance and creativity of the interventions we use, including the “use of self” as defined in the Gestalt Coach approach (Bluckert, 2014).

A model represents a system with an implied process as part of it. It can be seen as a metaphor used to help us see and describe the journey through our coaching sessions. Models often contain stages, and these allow us to visualise the overall process. In other words, a model represents more than what you are looking at. If you can develop a personal approach that encompasses the coaching conversation and the entire coaching intervention, you will begin to work with considerably greater ease within your practice. As coaches, we need to have the confidence to build their own approach. This is your practice: shape it how you want it to develop. Include what is important. What is important is that you respond to the client in front of you not to a pre-prescribed model.

An “open space” approach builds on the work of Lane and Corrie (2006) and Bachkirova et al. (2014) in creating a personal model. It follows that what I feel are the important elements of coaching and follows my philosophy of space being the most important gift we can provide for clients. It encompasses my worldview of the value of listening to a client, allowing them to form in their own language what they need to understand to challenge their own thinking. In this alternative view, there are three key elements of a coaching relationship which are: increasing the clients awareness, increasing their trust in their own decision making and therefore increasing their future choices. These elements are delivered not through a model but through the connectedness of the coach in an open space environment. Space to think is a valuable commodity a coach can offer as the quality of everything we do depends on the quality of the thinking we do first. The quality of our thinking depends on the way we treat each other while we are thinking (Nancy Kline, 2015).

Moving forward

Reflection on coaching practice continues to be an important element for the personal development of the practitioner. It is also important that the profession understands the development of newly qualified practitioners and follows them as they gain experience in a safe and supportive environment.

The author will continue to develop a personal approach of open space coaching through reflecting on how this approach meets the clients’ agenda while increasing the professional ability of the practitioner. A further area for research will be to identify key skills that are required when coaching with an open space approach.

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Further reading


About the author

Dr Rachel Veronica Robins, the Director of RVR Consulting, is a practicing Leadership and Behavioural Coach, Mentor and Mediator with a background as a Director of HR, Organisational Development and Improvement in the public sector. Her doctoral research area was in executive coaching in Local Government, and she continues to research into the personal development of professionals. She is a Fellow of CIPD and lectures on CIPD undergraduate and post-graduate programmes on leadership, development, strategic HRM, OD and HR professional practice. Dr Rachel Veronica Robins can be contacted at: rachelrobins980@btinternet.com

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Positive emotion in workplace impact
The case of a work-based learning project utilising appreciative inquiry

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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to highlight the role of positive emotions in generating workplace impacts and examine it through the application of an adapted appreciative inquiry process in the context of a work-based project aimed at promoting integrated working under challenging organisational circumstances.
Design/methodology/approach – The paper adopts a case study methodology which highlights how an organisation facing difficult circumstances (such as austerity measures, siloed cultures, constant threats of reorganisation, and requirement to work across occupational boundaries) adapted an appreciative inquiry intervention/method.
Findings – This paper found, first, that the utilisation of appreciative inquiry in the context of an adapted work-based project in difficult organisational circumstances generated positive emotions manifest through a compelling vision and action plans, second, that the impacts (such as a vision) can become entangled and therefore part of the wider ecological context which promotes pathways to such impact, but that, third, there are various cultural and climate features which may limit the implementation of actions or the continuation of psychological states beyond the time-bound nature of the work-based project.
Practical implications – The paper illustrates how an organisation adapted a form of appreciative inquiry to facilitate organisational change and generated outcomes which were meaningful to the various occupational groupings involved.
Originality/value – This paper offers new evidence and insight into the adaptation of appreciative inquiry under challenging circumstances in the context of a work-based learning project. It also provides a richer picture of how positive emotion can manifest in ways which are meaningful to a localised context.
Keywords Work-based learning, Emotion, Positive psychology, Positive emotion, Appreciative inquiry

Introduction
There is now extensive evidence of the beneficial impacts of positive emotion at the personal, organisational, and societal levels (Quoidbach et al., 2015), and more specifically to the workplace, impacts including well-being and broader health, job satisfaction, and personal and organisational resilience (Quoidbach et al., 2015). In terms of pathways to such impacts, there is increasing evidence of its generative role with respect to learning and knowledge to create...
these impacts in the workplace (Gander et al., 2016). It seems that positive emotions create safe workplaces spaces to explore values, meaning, accomplishment, and vision where personal and organisational transformation can happen. However, rather than such an asset view which focusses on what is present and on vision (i.e. something to create) (Wall, 2015, 2016b), the families of approaches used to explore work-based learning and work place change tend to rely on a deficit model of the world, which focusses on problems, issues, and discomforts (Wall, 2014).

An exception to this that has emerged is appreciative inquiry, a positive, strengths-based methodology, and research echoes the broader findings into the pathways to impacts above. However, there are ongoing concerns of the extent to which focussing on the positive can deliver deeper transformations. This is important in the context of work-based change methodologies, as work-based students will invariably need to apply it in the context and constraints of a work-based learning project and adapt it within their own specific personal and organisational contexts. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine the role of positive emotions in generating workplace impacts, and then to examine a particular implementation of appreciative inquiry as part of a work-based learning and change project. The overall intention is to prompt further consideration, deployment, and examination of positive emotion broadly, and appreciative inquiry more specifically, in the context of work-based change methodologies.

This paper is structured as follows. The first section discusses the contemporary empirical evidence in relation to the role of positive emotion in relation to impacts in the workplace. This emphasises the important role of positive emotions in relation to change, learning, and knowledge generation at work, and the specific intervention/method of appreciative inquiry to exemplify such evidence. The second section then outlines the methodology of this paper, that is, a case-based approach to a manager designing a bespoke appreciative inquiry intervention. The paper adopts a case study methodology which highlights how a student (manager) in an organisation facing difficult circumstances adopted an appreciative inquiry process in a work-based learning project.

The case study is then presented in the following section, which outlines the details of the manager’s intervention and its impacts. The specific application of the appreciative inquiry was framed as a way of exploring the perceptions, enablers and barriers to integrated working across the different areas of practice within the organisation. The ultimate aim was to enhance integrated working practices. The paper then moves on to discuss links between the study and contemporary knowledge and concludes with key insights and implications. The paper found that the utilisation of work-based project involving appreciative inquiry in the context of difficult organisational change did generate positive emotions and action, in line with contemporary evidence of the relationship between positive emotion and impact generally (Mills et al., 2013), and appreciative inquiry more specifically (Ridley-Duff and Duncan, 2015). This paper therefore contributes new evidence into how appreciative inquiry processes can be adapted in the context of a work-based learning project, and under challenging organisational circumstances.

Pathways to impact in workplaces: positive emotion and appreciative inquiry

Positive emotion and workplace impacts

The role of positive emotion has been extensively explored across disciplines, settings and conceptual areas including positive orientations (Alessandri et al., 2012), psychological capital (Newman et al., 2014), and thriving at work (Paterson et al., 2014). Within the specific context of workplaces, there has been a growing trend to research positive constructs such as hope, happiness, psychological and organisational resilience, work engagement, and appreciative inquiry (Mills et al., 2013). Research has linked these constructs to outcomes such as job performance, organisational citizenship behaviours, and happiness (Szczygiela and Mikolajczak, 2017). As Quoidbach et al. (2015, p. 655) argue:

There is now strong evidence that positive emotions are worth cultivating, not only as ends in themselves but also as a means of achieving success and psychological growth, improved mental and physical health, more satisfying and lasting social and marital relationships, and even more societal changes.
In terms of learning and emotion in workplaces, evidence indicates that when people are more emotionally (and positively) engaged, workplace learning is more effective (Hazelton, 2014; Taylor and Statler, 2014). Gander et al. (2016, p. 1), for example, found that workplace activity which were designed to evoke positive experiences such as pleasure, meaning and accomplishment were effective in generating subjective and physical well-being at work. Here, it is suggested that positive emotion intensifies collaboration, help-seeking and help-giving behaviours, and even sensory-motor connectivity in knowledge creation (Arrastad et al., 2015).

Emotion and workplace learning have been conceptualised as being deeply intertwined factors that mutually and dynamically inform each other (Simpson and Marshall, 2010; Benozzo and Colley, 2012; Paterson et al., 2014; Hodgins and Dadich, 2017). Indeed, as Steigenberger (2015) argues, emotions are not just states which stimulate or dampen processes of knowledge, but they also shape sensemaking and the specific cognitive content of situations. For example, it is argued that emotions such as anger, fear, anxiety, or hope can shape the “content and motivational strength of sense-making accounts, influence the likelihood that a person will engage in sense-giving activities” (Steigenberger, 2015, p. 432).

However, this conception of emotion and learning goes beyond a simplistic positive/good-negative/bad dichotomy which masks the differential effects of discrete emotions. Indeed, even pride, interest, and gratitude have been found to have differential effects in terms of the outcomes identified above (Kuby, 2014; Bryant and Wolfram Cox, 2014; Hu and Kaplan, 2015; Methot et al., 2017). Similarly, research indicates that negative emotions during a task conflict can also generate positive emotions and outcomes (Tsai and Bendersky, 2015; O’Neill and McLarnon, 2017). This points to the more nuanced framework proposed by Todorova et al. (2014) who argue that positive-negative emotions are not a singular continuum, but rather two separate, orthogonal dimensions (i.e. more akin to an x and y axis). Here, they argue, negative emotion conflict can lead to additional information which can enable people to “feel more active, energized, interested, and excited, and these positive active emotions increase job satisfaction” (Todorova et al., 2014, p. 451).

In addition, the realised effects of emotion have also been found to differ amongst individuals, with different levels of susceptibility to positive emotion (Liang and Chi, 2013), or the cultural and political context in which emotion is expressed (Benozzo and Colley, 2012). For example, emotions can be interpreted and manifest in variable ways through social structures, such as class, gender and race, and have been found to have active roles in facilitating and indeed “blocking” workplace learning (Benozzo and Colley, 2012; and also see Wall and Tran, 2015, 2016; Wall, Tran and Soejatminah, 2017; Wall, Jamieson, Csígas and Kiss, 2017; Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank, 2017; Pradhan et al., 2017). This aligns with the idea that the contextual and time-bound nature of how emotional responses arise, are interpreted, and turned in to action across different contexts with different rules (Pink and Yolles, 2015; Thompson and Willmott, 2016).

**Positive emotion through work-based methodologies**

There are many different “families” of work-based learning and change working (Wall, 2013, 2014, 2016c). They can include work-based learning with various degrees of negotiation (Boud and Solomon, 2001; Raelin, 2008), reflective and critically reflective practices (Helyer, 2015; Wall, 2017a, 2018), action research (Gearty et al., 2015), action learning (Trehan and Rigg, 2015), and other approaches which combine aspects or processes of these such as action inquiry (Torbert, 2004), synergic inquiry (e.g. Tang and Joiner, 2006), and work applied learning (Abraham, 2012). Most, if not all, of these families are conceptualised as focussing on problems, problem solving, challenge, tension, dilemma, dichotomy, power struggles, or other uncomfortable feeling (Wall, 2014, 2016a, c).
There are consequences of conceptualising organisational change in this way (Wall and Perrin, 2015). As Lewis et al. (2011) assert, if organisational function is described as a well-oiled machine, when something is seen as not working, the method to fixing the problem lies with its identification of the issue and the method to resolve it. This approach can work well when there is a known outcome to the problem, with a skilled motivated team for its implementation. However, this logic is based on the assumption that the resolution of organisational issues is linear, a function of solving how to get from A to B, perhaps not taking into consideration the entangled nature of humans, values and beliefs in organisational life (Wall and Knights, 2013).

An alternative is conceptualising the world in more complex, dynamic, and humanistic ways (Wall and Rossetti, 2013; Wall, 2015; Wall and Jarvis, 2015; Wall et al., 2016; Wall, Tran and Soejatminah, 2017; Wall, Jamieson, Csigás and Kiss, 2017; Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank, 2017). A specific approach to work- or community-based learning which adopts such a perspective is appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Lewis et al., 2011; Ridley-Duff and Duncan, 2015). Appreciative inquiry assumes a stance which focusses on positive emotion to mobilise collective energy and action towards a more desired, future state. There are a variety of conceptualisations of appreciative inquiry, but one of the most popular is the 4D "cycle" (see Figure 1). Although the depiction of “Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny” as a cycle is common, appreciative inquiry was originally derived as a flexible conceptualisation of the positive core of organisations (Cooperrider et al. 2008).

Since the inception of appreciative inquiry in the 1980s, evidence continues to suggest that it is a more generative form of inquiry than problem solving (Calabrese et al., 2013; Harmon, 2013; Bushe and Puranjpey, 2015; Sharp et al., 2017). For example, Calabrese et al. (2013)

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**Figure 1.**
Aspects of appreciative inquiry

**Sources:** Adapted from Cooperrider et al. (2008), Trajkovski et al. (2013), Watkins et al. (2016)
found that through appreciative inquiry, participants developed a new and compelling vision, a stronger sense of empowerment, and clear action plans to achieve their goals. Similarly, Harmon (2013) found evidence of managers building and gaining trust within their organisations. For Sharp et al. (2017), the appreciative perspective invokes the motivational curiosity which encourages collaborative change efforts because it creates a safe space to reflect and explore values without judgement.

However, others criticise appreciative inquiry for its perceived inability to transform deeper structures and claim that practitioners have a preoccupation with “positivity” which inhibits appreciative inquiry’s ability to develop generative theory (Ridley-Duff and Duncan, 2015, p. 1579). These barriers censor certain content and emotions and are described by Fitzgerald et al. (2010) as the “shadow side” of appreciative inquiry. Such elements have the potential to suppress and stifle deeper appreciation and critical inquiry processes which enable people to “deconstruct experience and then engage critical appreciative processes during the remainder of the appreciative inquiry cycle to construct new experiences” (Ridley-Duff and Duncan, 2015, p. 1579).

Drawing this discussion together, there is now ample evidence about the role positive emotion has in creating a wide variety of impacts within the workplace. The pathways to these impacts include creating a safe space for people to express and explore values, meaning, accomplishments, vision, and the actions to be able to deliver them. These pathways to impact are echoed in the research into appreciative inquiry, one of the few work-based change methodological approaches which focus on a positive, or asset-/strengths-based approach. At the same time, questions remain as to the deeper critical processes of positive or appreciative frames to facilitate deeper levels of change and transformation. Therefore, it is unclear how impacts might unfold (if at all) in the context of work-based learning projects, where the student (manager) may be politically constrained in many and multiple ways to deliver the impacts. As the student (manager) may also need to adapt their application of appreciative inquiry to meet their specific study and organisational contexts and aims, it is also unclear how this might manifest pathways to organisational impact.

Methodology
This paper adopts a case approach to document and examine a work-based learning project utilising an adapted appreciative inquiry approach aimed at investigating and supporting integrated working within an organisation. Key features of the organisation’s context include the imposition of extensive austerity measures, siloed cultures, constant threats of reorganisation, and a requirement to work across occupational boundaries (more about this is detailed below). Although the organisational change described in this case involved 500 staff, the data for this paper were drawn from an initial pilot study. Methodologically, the study adopted a theoretical sampling frame (Stokes and Wall, 2014), focussing on the aspects deemed to be important to the overall theme of the study. Specifically, this was to explore the use of appreciative inquiry within the context of a work-based learning programme, and, on a more specific level, to explore the experiences of a diverse set of occupational managers engaged in and responsible for integrated working. This meant that the sampling frame was to include participants who had influence over different organisational units within the new structure, and represented all of organisational units from the central management team.

Managers across the organisation were invited to participate through the researcher’s internal networks, management team meetings, and through e-mail and informal conversations. Ten managers agreed to participate, and included a strategic manager, a manager from information and learning resources, a manager from the gym, an operational manager, a manager from the information technology operations, and a manager from the healthy lifestyles team. Together, these covered all sections on the site.
Each manager signed an informed consent before participating in the sessions. The organisation and managers are anonymised in this paper. More details about the case study context, appreciative inquiry intervention/method, and the findings, are now discussed in detail.

Case study: a work-based project using appreciative inquiry

Context

The context of this study was a manager (researcher) adopting the role of a practitioner researcher by undertaking a work-based learning project as part of a master’s programme. Her aim was to respond sensitively to the increasing demands and challenges placed on the organisation in which she worked. As a response to severe political austerity at central and local government levels, the organisation had recently moved from public ownership, where the organisation was organised in to clear functional areas and operational units, to a business model requiring the staff of 500 to work in a much more integrated way and for-profit. This shift was from the security and stability of a national health service delivering free services to a company charging for integrated leisure, lifestyles and information services in a hub style environment. This was acknowledged to be a major cultural shift, placing additional demands and pressures on staff to deliver in a more competitive environment.

The transition involved a period of staff consultation, redeployment, and recruitment followed by the implementation of new organisational strategies, structures and job roles. Despite these changes the researcher recognised from internal management and monitoring processes that integrated working was still problematic and conversations internally amongst the management team suggested that it would be useful to investigate how to improve this form of working through a pilot. The study was therefore framed as a way of exploring the perceptions, enablers and barriers to integrated working across the different areas of practice within the organisation. The ultimate aim was to enhance integrated working practices.

The researcher decided to utilise an appreciative inquiry informed intervention to undertake the study for two reasons: the organisational context of the study was a sensitive and emotionally charged situation of externally imposed transition and change, so needed an approach that would provide a positive frame and thereby be sensitive to the wellness and health of the participants, and the intervention would focus on forward-looking and actionable outcomes which could then inform other developmental work beyond the initial pilot. As appreciative inquiry was initially conceived as a body of principles to be utilised flexibly in the circumstances of practice (Cooperrider et al. 2008), the manager designed an intervention that would be feasible within the context of her organisation and her own management sphere of influence. The next section outlines details of the specific intervention.

An appreciative inquiry informed intervention/method

The researcher designed the intervention as two workshop sessions lasting two hours, over a two-week period. The first session was designed to provide an appreciative space and prompts to generate ideas into integrated working, in line with the broad aspirations of the study (to examine the perceptions, barriers and enablers to integrated working). Based on the aspects of appreciative inquiry framework shown in Figure 1, two sets of identical tables were set up utilising the three aspects of appreciative inquiry:

(1) Table I – “discovery”: When did we work well together?

(2) Table II – “dreaming”: What would be the ideal of us working well together look like?

(3) Table III – “designing”: What do we need to prioritise to make this happen?
The fourth element of the framework, the “destiny” stage, was not utilised in the pilot study for three reasons; any “design” phase outcomes generated through the process would need to be ratified and agreed by other management structures within the organisation, and could not be generated through the pilot study; the timescales of the (academic, work-based learning) project required a rapid turnaround before other changes happened in the organisation; and there was ambiguity over the potential outcomes and experiences of the pilot, so it was important to manage the expectations of the participants and management team. Although the omission of the destiny stage is an unfortunate necessity, it emphasises the adaptable and the flexible nature of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al. 2008).

An independent facilitator was utilised to facilitate the session, to create a greater sense of independence and to minimise compliance bias (Stokes and Wall, 2014). The facilitator utilised an ice breaker question at the start of the session to help frame the sessions and to “warm up”: participants were asked “what is the best thing that has happened to you today?”. Personal stories were then shared to encourage trust, collective working, and relaxation (Wall and Rossetti, 2013).

Each of the participants were then randomly divided into two sets of five, and then positioned at one of the “discovery” tables (see above). The tablecloth technique, where participants are asked to record their responses on a large paper tablecloth, was used (De Chesnay, 2015). This allows for the capture of more holistic and presentational ways of knowing and enables participants to tap in to unconscious insights and escape the linearity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Codes from pictures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Lights for direction, people groups, tasks doing things, movement, outdoor tasks, water, sea, houses homes, stick people, friends family, numbers people, Land, Team building, smiling faces, landmarks e.g. lighthouses, hobbies personal activities, important people to follow, e.g. rugby coaches, organised groups, home repair, motivational activities, identity of groups, construction renovation, e.g. houses garden, equipment for activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>Multiple skilled people, confidence, asking for guidance, water, animals, e.g. fish ducks dog, church, helpful people, relax and peace, agreement, obstacles to cross, feeling happy when bike works, water sports wind surfing, clouds sky, sense of personal well-being, definite outcome, e.g. cafe, supportive people, direct instructions, teamwork, things working well, sunshine, open spaces, few/no people, passion, actively offering help, work together, sea life fish crabs, smiling faces, helping things grow, knowledge of how environment affects function, e.g. marine tank, in depth knowledge of systems, trust, many people, talking to each other, tools to assist, e.g. free ropes, metaphor, e.g. bike functions, taking care of things, trees, personal interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Design | 1. Passion  
2. Sunshine and brightness  
3. Unison  
4. Supporting  
5. Relaxation, e.g. “flood the skate park”  
6. Free ropes  
7. Curiosity  
8. Harmonious  
9. Priority well-being |

Table I. An initial analysis of the data

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Rich findings from the adapted appreciative inquiry process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme (what needs to be prioritised?)</th>
<th>Example words, images, and metaphors</th>
<th>Participants' views in relation to integrated working</th>
<th>Example links to the pathways of impact through positive emotion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>Happy, confidence, passion, smiling faces</td>
<td>Enabler and barrier – e.g. linked to the motivational effects of job satisfaction, depending on “individual circumstances”</td>
<td>Positive vision (Calabrese et al., 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine</td>
<td>Land, nature plants, clouds sky, feeling happy when bike works, sunshine, trees, smiling faces, green blue yellow brown purple red, positive colours</td>
<td>Enabler – e.g. linked to job satisfaction, assuming the “working environment was taken into consideration”</td>
<td>Positive orientation (Alessandri et al., 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unison</td>
<td>Asking for guidance, multiple skilled people, direct instructions, supportive people, things working well, motivational activities, metaphor bike function</td>
<td>“Profound” enabler, but an active barrier if not present – e.g. linked to a positive working culture</td>
<td>Positive relationships (Szczypińska and Mikolajczak, 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting</td>
<td>Helpful people, teamwork, lights for direction, work together, organised groups, important people to follow, i.e. coach, obstacles to cross, many people</td>
<td>Enabler and barrier – e.g. linked to the motivational effects of working in a team with clear ways of working</td>
<td>Positive relationships and culture of reciprocity (Taylor and Statler, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>Outdoor tasks, personal interest, water, water sports, wind surfing</td>
<td>Enabler and barrier – e.g. linked to having “personal time” for “making sense”</td>
<td>Meaning-making, well-being (Szczypińska and Mikolajczak, 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free ropes</td>
<td>Tools to assist, e.g. free ropes, trust, agreement, equipment for activities</td>
<td>Enabler – e.g. linked to creating a space for people to manage themselves, and adapt to and cope with change</td>
<td>Freedom, trust (Harmon, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>In depth knowledge of systems, taking care of things, knowledge of how environment affects function, e.g. marine tank, tasks doing things</td>
<td>Enabler – e.g. linked to having a sense of own “competence” and “confidence”</td>
<td>Motivational curiosity (Sharp et al., 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonious</td>
<td>Actively offering help, talking to each other, animals: fish, ducks, dog, sea life: fish crabs, pink brown blue green orange black, activity based moving forward being productive</td>
<td>Enabler – e.g. linked to sensing a “connection” to other things particularly in the natural world</td>
<td>Positive relationships and culture of reciprocity (Taylor and Statler, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>Hobbies personal activities, water sea, relax and peace, sense of personal well-being, open spaces, physical activity, movement</td>
<td>Enabler and barrier – e.g. linked to having “personal time out” and managing own resilience</td>
<td>Well-being (Gander et al., 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Friends family, community, people groups, definite outcome, e.g. cafe, houses homes, construction renovation, e.g. house garden, few/no people, landmarks, e.g. lighthouses church, helping things grow, home repair, identity of group, numbers people</td>
<td>Enabler – e.g. through a sense of belonging and connectedness to others, perhaps outside of the organisation</td>
<td>Positive relationships and culture of reciprocity (Szczypińska and Mikolajczak, 2017)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. A summary of the collectively verified themes
Participants were then asked to:

(1) answer the table question by writing an individual response on the tablecloth; then
(2) as a group, discuss the question; then
(3) write and/or draw a group response on the tablecloth; and then
(4) move to the next table, and repeat the above, until all tables have been visited.

Once completed, the data generated were predominantly image based, with a diverse set of expressions through shapes, colour, detail, simplicity, landscape, metaphor, and character. The researcher then used Broussine’s (2008) “multifaceted” method to systematically explore and qualitatively analyse picture data utilising the research questions as sub headings. Two of the main qualities used in the analysis of drawings are in part from the metaphorical representation and multifaceted components which offer insights into unconscious thought and expression (Broussine, 2008; Page et al., 2014). Data analysis involved a prolonged and intimate period with the data, iteratively cross-referencing the data in relation to the research questions (Creswell, 2007). An example of a participant drawing is presented in Plate 1, and an initial analysis of the content by the researcher is represented in Table I.

Once analysis had been completed, the second session was then primarily a way to verify the findings from the first session, using a form of peer review and member checking (Creswell, 2007), to help prioritise which would then be taken through to the management structure and process for decision making. The data from the first session (Plate 2) were presented alongside the researcher’s analysis (Plate 3) on large walls and participants were given time to observe and compare. Participants were then invited to reflect on the analysis check whether they thought it represented the original data, e.g. whether everything had been captured, and whether there was anything missing. Next, the participants were invited to move the themes, and asked to collectively agree which items needed priority in terms of being moved forward in action (as part of the “design” phase). This process, and the dialogue that emerged, highlighted that a tenth theme “community” was missing and so this was added.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example responses to the question: “What will you take away from this session?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal expression and opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on the best thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation for the things happening that are good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing with crayons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open minded/Sharing and talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow to the process for future situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking space to take stock/Making space taking stock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calmness/Relaxation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III. Summary of responses from participating in the sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive emotion in workplace impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
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<th>Table III. Summary of responses from participating in the sessions</th>
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Findings and recommendations: insights into integrated working, appreciative inquiry and positive emotion

From the manager’s perspective, the appreciative inquiry primarily aimed to generate insight into the perceptions, enablers and barriers of integrated working in a particular localised context and to then inform and enhance working practices. The intention was that the work-based project would provide sufficient detail on these areas to target impact in the workplace through changed policies and practices. The final set of verified themes is outlined in Table II. At the same time, the intention was to be sensitive to the organisational circumstances in which the study was undertaken – or in other words, the pathway to workplace impact purposively took a positive frame, focus, and process. The feedback from
the sessions indicated that a positive, open, sharing, and reflective space was generated through the particular appreciative inquiry design adopted, as shown in Table III. The following section outlines the themes generated through and verified by the appreciative inquiry, and a selection of the resulting recommendations to the organisation.

Taken together, four aspects of working in an integrated manner appeared to emerge: space, task, equipment and people. This was expressed as a compelling and purposeful vision, which was a central workplace impact generated through the appreciative inquiry process. One way of making sense of this was the narrative: if the environment or space is right with sunshine, relaxation and is harmonious, tasks are done in unison with passion using “free rope” type equipment and people are curious about their work, supporting one another and their well-being. As part of the work-based project (and its assessment), this vision provided the foundation of a management report which encapsulated some aspects of the compelling and positively framed analysis, recommendations and an action plan. This was then presented to the organisation’s extended management meeting and various other team meetings. Due to the need to maintain anonymity, the precise workplace recommendations of the study cannot be presented and discussed in this paper. However, the researcher identified that four broad elements needed to be developed:

1. space: infused with sunshine, relaxation and is harmonious;
2. tasks: are done in unison with passion;
3. equipment: using “free rope” type equipment and styles, perhaps integrating the cultivation of the outdoors that surround the work environment as part of the change strategy; and
4. people: are curious about their work, supporting one another, and their well-being.

In order to develop these elements a key initial step is to replicate the appreciative inquiry intervention across the organisation to consolidate further learning and to explore and collate areas of effective practices already in place. In a broader sense, these findings also indicated the way in which the adapted appreciative inquiry process, which was deployed in the case setting as part of a work-based learning project, generated positive emotion as
Discussion
In a strict sense, whereas positive emotion may form a frame and focus for an intervention, appreciative inquiry may provide a specific intervention as a pathway to generating impact. However, in line with Steigenberger (2015), and as can be seen from the analysis of the work-based project using appreciative inquiry, it is difficult to disentangle or isolate the differential effects of positive emotion and appreciative inquiry processes. They are entangled and mutually reinforcing, for example, it is difficult to see how the portrait painted in Table II, of working together in unison and in the sunshine, can be attained without hope or curiosity. The themes and experiences of participants in this study therefore reflect both the outcomes and the pathways to impacts, and in this way, align closely with contemporary empirical evidence of how positive emotion and appreciative inquiry processes exemplify the pathways to impacts in workplace contexts (Watkins et al., 2016; Sharp et al., 2017). As such, this highlights the importance of the wider ecological system in the workplace which, as described by the participants of this study, as a particular manifestation of “space, task, equipment, and people”, is meaningful to the particular organisational setting.

As part of this wider ecological system, such outcomes and pathways to impact seem to reflect processes which attend to the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness – but also and more directly in terms of positive emotion – the psychological dimensions of self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope (see Tables II and III) (Verleysen et al., 2015). In this way, the wider positive frame and focus can direct the activity in the specific intervention (or pathway to impact) which pays attention to these basic psychological needs. For example, there is increasing recent research into the positive emotion generated through relaxation and mindfulness in organisations and the related impacts on job performance, team conflict, resilience, corporate social responsibility, and subjective well-being (Zeng et al., 2015; Wall, 2016b; Good et al., 2016; Yu and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2017; Fehr et al., 2017). Here, the broader positive frame and focus contains the specific activity in ways that the outcomes can be seen as both the impacts of such positive interventions, but also part of the ecological setting, or “space, task, equipment and people” which form the basis of a pathways to impact.

Despite the complex and challenging circumstances of the case organisation (e.g. under sever austerity measures, siloed cultures, constant threats of reorganisation, and requirement to work across occupational boundaries), this study indicates that a bespoke application of appreciative inquiry can have generative impacts in practice, for example, the compelling vision agreed and validated by a diverse group of occupational groupings in the organisation. However, the study also raises the question of the continued existence of such endeavours, where the manager who undertakes the work-based learning project might typically be located within wider management structures, or where the appreciative inquiry might be a temporary (project bound) intervention/method (for the duration of the academic project) (Wall, Tran and Soejatminah, 2017; Wall, Jamieson, Csigás and Kiss, 2017; Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank, 2017; Wall, 2017b). In other words, the positive frame and focus and the specific intervention in the workplace are time-bound.
Within the context of time-bound appreciative inquiry projects, the extent to which the impacts go beyond the project may link to the nature of the organisation and job design outside of the discrete project and project cycle. One of the important factors that appears to be the availability of resources for positive affect within the workplace setting, thereby limiting the pathways to impact and therefore the perpetuation of impacts. Xanthopoulou et al. (2012) found a positive association between perceived job resources (e.g. autonomy, supervisory coaching, cooperation, and warmth) and positive emotion as experienced on a daily basis, including experiences of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism. This means that should organisational structures and practices be designed in ways which support positive emotion, this is likely to promote the longevity of the impacts generated through appreciative inquiry as designed through a work-based learning project. In contrast, should the resources for positive emotion not be in place, the impacts and pathways to these impacts (such as appreciative inquiry) may be very limited in terms of time and organisational location.

Similarly, the extent to which impacts reach beyond specific work-based projects utilising appreciative inquiry project cycles may also be linked to the localised “affective climate”, or the particular types of affective experiences or expressions that are expected in practices, routines and leadership, of an organisation or its sub units (Parke and Seo, 2017). For example, affective climates such as positive display climates, negative display climates, and neutral display climates, differentially values, support, reward and manage particular emotions, thereby shaping how people relate to each other and therefore how performance is managed more broadly. These are important considerations in terms of the extent to which positive emotion frames and focusses pathways to impact in workplaces, and especially in relation to appreciative inquiry.

To embed workplace activities, or sustain particular ways of working, from a time-limited work-based project utilising appreciative inquiry may well be coherent in a positive display climate, but may well be problematic or disastrous within a neutral or negative display climate (Parke and Seo, 2017). Indeed, such insights have previously been identified in earlier research into organisational learning and emotion. In workplace contexts where learning meets or exceeds expectations, people can experience comfort or excitement. Conversely, where there is a mismatch between the expectations and experiences of learning people experience unproductive anxiety and frustration (Shipton and Sillince, 2013; Sillince and Shipton, 2013). However, recent evidence also suggests that such mismatches may also produce generative outcomes. For example, Rothman and Melwani (2017) document evidence of workplace situations where people experienced complexity in their emotions, or indeed indifference, and emphasised how this can lead to greater affective and cognitive flexibility and therefore enhanced adaptive capacities. Similarly, Miron-Spektor et al. (2017) have found that a “paradox mindset”, or the extent to which a person accepts and is energised by emotional tension, can help enhance performance and workplace innovation. Though the evidence currently suggests that such flexibility outcomes are variable, they do tend to enable more proactive action (Miron-Spektor et al., 2017). In the context of designing and implementing work-based projects, it is important that the work-based researcher is aware of these expectations and tensions in the localised workplace context. The extent to which bespoke forms of positive pathways to workplace impacts such as appreciative inquiry can generate impacts beyond the life of the academic work-based project is therefore a complex but developing landscape of understanding.

Conclusions and implications
This paper has highlighted the role of positive emotions in generating workplace impacts. Moreover, it has provided new evidence about how managers can generate positive emotion and change efforts by adapting appreciative inquiry interventions/methods as part of a work-based learning project. In addition, the study raises questions about the extent to
which such positive change efforts could be embedded or sustained beyond the work-based learning project. Key considerations here are the availability of broader resources for positive affect in organisations, the broader affective climate of organisations or organisational units, and the availability of “paradox mindset” capabilities to be able to deal with the emotional complexities should mismatches occur. Practically, there are a number of insights, which might have greater utility for managers:

- the evidence of the impact of asset- or strengths-based interventions/methods continue to expand and provide a useful option amongst difficulty organisational circumstances;
- appreciative inquiry is a flexible set of principles which can be adapted for the circumstances of work-based projects, and can generate positive emotions and action plans; and
- when implemented as a work-based learning project, appreciative inquiry might have limited effects, but this depends on the wider resources, climates and circumstances, and the capacities of people to deal with emotional complexity.

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Further reading

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Re/searching for “impact”

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Abstract
Purpose – As an exploration of how “impact” might be reconsidered, the purpose of this paper is to suggest that current contemporary understandings of “impact” fail practice and research by obscuring the space for reflexive criticality that is crucial for an individual or organisation to flourish. That it thus leads to an already predefined enculturated understanding of “impact”.

Design/methodology/approach – Offering some interrogation and folkloristic analogy of the meaning of “impact”, three brief expositions of differing arts-based práxes concerned mainly with reflection and connection, are then discussed through the lens of Ricœur’s et al. (1978) conflation of the hermeneutical process with phenomenology.

Findings – It is suggested that the implications of restoring, refreshing, or representing “impact” give license to a personal/professional revitalisation, and that reformulating an understanding of “impact” through re/search might offer a potential pedagogic tool, and alternative organising feature.

Originality/value – Through the introduction of inter-disciplinary thinking and práxes, the paper offers novel autoethnographic arts-based methods for personal, professional and organisational development and growth.

Keywords Impact, Autoethnography, Arts-based, Folklore, Perambulography, Práxes

Paper type Research paper

This paper is concerned with the exploration of how “impact” might be reconsidered, or indeed reimagined. The title is intended to be a bold incitement through the suggestion that simply searching for and recording impact, would invariably lead to propagating an already enculturated understanding of it. I propose instead by re/searching we might rediscover some practices that, while centrally concerned with reflection, are situated within an arts-based research paradigm that is not ordinarily associated with the contemporary, accepted understandings of what impact is and how it can be measured. Throughout this text, I will refer to reflective and reflexive practice by its etymological origin of práxes, to evoke its philosophical connections. Through brief expositions of three differing práxes and the discussion around them, this paper suggests that there are differing perspectives and understandings of impact and what it means.

The meaning of the word impact is more often than not defined as a marked effect or influence upon a process, situation or person (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017; Oxford Dictionary, 2017) and sometimes held to have negative connotations too (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2017). But it is nonetheless a word that has come to be used in multiple contemporary environments and spheres of work; in higher education institutions, schools, and health care organisations for example, it is a term used in the compilation of organisational rankings. On a more individual level it is used in a similar way to measure the performance of researchers, teachers, other professionals, and business people. These spheres of work and others beside them, currently imbue “impact” with a particular meaning, and consequently use it in conjunction with various mechanisms such as frameworks, metrics, and performativity or funding criteria. Thus, “impact” tends to represent the demonstrable...
outcome, measurement of achievement, or wider change produced (Hammersley, 2014). There are of course academics who subscribe and would wish for the impact agenda to be furthered (Smith and Stewart, 2017). There are also those who see how these representations can and have been easily linked to a neo-liberal agenda (Turner-Bisset, 2007), depersonalisation (Moutoussis, 2010) and managerialism (Klikauer, 2013).

It is not the intention of this paper to interrogate these discourses or their mechanisms but instead to offer a reformulated view of impact, with them as a background, and in the context of reflective practice (práxis). To do so, I would echo and extend Klikauer’s (2013) view beyond just managerialism to include the breadth of dominant discourses already mentioned, and how they are:

[... inauthentic ideology, damages the human Geist (Hegel), deprives individuals of self-actualisation, are unethical, converts human needs into commercial needs, and leads to global environmental destruction (Klikauer, 2013, p. 60).

In attempting to address such concerns, I will suggest that we might reconnect with práxes that are more compatible for a human society. Which in turn means reinterpreting and representing an understanding of “impact” as “what comes out” rather than as a prescribed outcome. The less prescriptive understanding of “impact” could be seen to permeate our entire culture but in less obvious ways. This often ignored understanding of impact is aligned with a definition that recognises that impact might “move the feelings”, or be suggestive of “the impression made by an idea, cultural movement, social group, etc.” (Collins Dictionary, 2017).

In realising this alternative perspective of what impact is, what it means, or how it is understood and represented, I will invoke three autoethnographic methods that operate as drifts or open explorations. Each of these will be offered as a case study and then discussed as a whole, before giving some concluding thoughts on the implications of these methods. The three methods I intend to discuss are Phrónetic Vlogging, Ekphrasis, and Perambulography. I will use a comprehensive literature review throughout as proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016). This will allow me to take account of these arts-based methods’ multi-modal and digitally dynamic qualities. Specifically, I will include QR codes within the text to direct the reader to non-textual examples or references.

While Heidegger’s (1962) thoughts were drawn upon, particularly in the exposition of the Phrónetic Vlogging case study, and Bausinger’s (1961) theoretical framework was used elsewhere, it was the hermeneutic phenomenology of Ricoeur that seemed most relevant and appropriate when I began to analyse these methods for discussion. In advance of introducing these case studies, I will give some specific attention to my provocation of “impact” as critical thinking in organisations, as an organisational tool, and of its pedagogic potential both formally and informally. In the hope that when the ideas are animated, it is clear how an alternative perspective addresses those issues highlighted by Klikauer (2013).

Primarily, the suggested práxes are centrally concerned with meaning making and how this in itself can be an organising feature. The centrality of this concept was inspired by Alvesson and Gabriel’s (2016) work upon “grandiosity”, that takes the perspective that practitioners, and organisation and management discourses, even within academia itself are today discussing unremarkable, commonplace organisational occurrences in grandiose, and remarkable terms. We see the everyday usage of words in the workplace such as mission, best-practice, vision, strategy; phrases like closing the loop, knowledge intensive, dynamic network; and of course – impact. This specious language has become the norm in many spheres of work to describe simple and ordinary organisational constructions and debates:

A perpetual noise of information and pseudo-symbols swallows meanings. As a result, authors like Baudrillard have argued that the world of contemporary consumption is full of signification and
empty of meaning, consumerism becoming a black hole into which meaning disappears (Baudrillard, 1988; Alvesson and Gabriel, 2016, p. 467).

While Alvesson and Gabriel’s (2016) article argues that contemporary societal flaws, such as narcissism, strengthened by consumerism have led to “grandiosity”; I would further this by suggesting that the “grandiosity” of “impact” creates significant limitations for the critical reflexivity of organisations, management, research and individuals (Hammersley, 2014). Such limitations lead to the creation of false expectations, which are solely geared towards an appreciation of “value if it makes a direct and demonstrable contribution to policy or practice” (Hammersley, 2014, p. 345). This in turn only destabilises organisational and individual performance and learning. The metaphoricity and narrative of this “ripple effect” perspective though, if challenged, might enable individuals and organisations to make sense of their world. One way of conceptualising “impact” then, is as an organising feature; as a way of making sense; a way of connecting; as metaphor and narrative of social reality itself.

I certainly would not be the first to suggest that story, poetry or art could be used to research social reality. Djerassi (1998) promoted the idea of co-composed prose, which might allow practitioners the opportunity of exploration nearly two decades ago. As a community, the practitioners worked with dilemmas and perspectives that would perhaps be taboo or unacceptable to discuss at other times. The important psychological aspects of this will be discussed later on. Djerassi’s (1998) “science in fiction” was by no means the only example of this either. Research into the benefits of collaborative storytelling have also been undertaken in more recent years (Gabriel and Connell, 2010) with experiments in something akin to “renge”; a Japanese style of poetry that comprises of multiple verses, of which, each is written by a different person. Furthermore, the field of fictionalised ethnography has long been a methodology of the discipline of organisational studies since Watson and Czarniawska first explored it at the end of the last century and onwards (Czarniawska, 1999, 2004; Watson, 2000a, b, 2004). These varying arts-based methods and methodologies allow participants to search for his or her own voice and jointly find, express, and own, an articulation of it within a text. We also see cultural organisations, like Storyhouse in Chester, UK, embracing these methods and asking fundamental social questions, such as: “Who are we?” And, “How do we want to live?” Such collaborative metaphor and narrative based standpoints could be recognised to contain pedagogic worth in terms of being transformative at an individual and organisational level, but also in terms of being a means of management learning.

Returning to the psychoanalytic aspect mentioned earlier, Bronner (2015) notes how Freud called for greater synthesis and collaboration between psychoanalysis and the knowledge, beliefs and values of everyday people: in short, between psychoanalysis and folklore. This synthesis has resonance with the suggested wider societal need to have expectations of impact that are more pragmatic and realistic, or down-to-earth; and appreciated in a more ethical way rather than merely fiscally: Djerassi’s (1998) publication mentioned earlier, was after all entitled: “Ethical Discourse by Science-in-Fiction”. The benefits of this synthesis though perhaps need more elaboration. In 2007, Bronner, invigorated Dundes critique of folklorists for only relating traditions’ outward, observable outcomes, or performances from a conscious level, rather than analysing the psychological reasons for producing them: asking why those creative practices and performances emerged from the unconscious (Bronner, 2015).

In the same way that Freud and Dundes suggested that whether something was a relic, or passed on orally was arbitrary in its being folkloric, “impact” defined solely through outward, observable outcomes could also be viewed as arbitrary, in all senses of the word. In both cases, I would also reject these arbitrary notions as the reasons for the manifestation of inhibitions. Instead, the “play-frames” (Bateson, 2000) that the manifestations occur inside of might be seen as reason enough: how they permit individuals “to do and say things that
Phrónetic vlogging

That I might more clearly define what I mean by phrónesis, the first case study offered as an example method will be Phrónetic Vlogging. Phrónetic Vlogging is an approach to develop práxis. Vlogging is simply recording thoughts, ideas, and reflections through video. In this case though, it is a performative, reflective approach, which is chiefly concerned with phrónesis. This has numerous definitions and understandings: often defined as the virtue of practical wisdom, or intelligence. More specifically it is the capacity for moral insight to recognise what moral decision or application would be most conducive to the good of oneself or others. It was considered in Greek philosophy to be different from other understandings of the virtues of wisdom; it is considered, perhaps more traditionally as “prudence”. Alternatively, McEvilley (2006) has proposed that the best translation is “mindfulness”. Regardless of the exact translation, an aspect of reflection can be seen to run throughout these definitions.

Heidegger (1997) proposed that the modes of understanding: póiesis (art), theoría (theory), and práxis (practice), were most readily appreciated through a set of matching modes of knowledge. Póiesis corresponding to tèchnē (craft), theoría with sophía (intellect), and práxis with phrónesis (practical wisdom). To Heidegger phrónesis was the principal mode of knowledge, anticipating sophía — theoretical knowledge — the mode of knowledge, which is arguably most associated with the impact agenda, being most readily called upon through evidence-based research to support it.

Working phrónetically allows individuals and organisations to be proactive in their engagement with understandings, concerning the functioning and structure of societies, imperious and specious overall language.
Through Phrónetic Vlogging, I have found a way of exploring práxis, through a personal professional lens. As an exercise, it allows me a space to critically question how “I” as teacher undertake my work, and manage to maintain the integrity of “I” as human being. It provides a space to challenge the ethics of a practice, not just competency or efficiency. To decide if I agree morally, ethically, and in relation to my own educational philosophy about what and how I am asked to work, whether by society, government, policy, colleagues or line manager. It provides the space all professionals need to enquire, reflect, and explore their thoughts and feelings about what the right and good thing to do is. Moreover, the space to understand the complex nature of one’s beliefs and values, culminating in one’s identity and what the impact of one’s identity might have on an organisation, and in this case how one consequently perceives impact too (see the QR code below for an example of Phrónetic Vlogging).

Ekphrasis
The second case study used Ekphrasis as a process of reflexive practice. It was originally inspired by Benjamin’s et al. (1999) work in two different ways: first, in the way in which he talks of the need for us as individuals to create a narrative to understand time and history. These narratives, and the choices we make in constructing them, like what we should include (exclude), seem to me are ways of metaphorising our being, and deal therefore crucially with our identity. Coming to understand our beliefs, values and expanding our appreciation of how we connect, as with Phrónetic Vlogging, is significant, and in this instance, the impact of our relationship with nature is too. It also raises questions regarding sustainability. The second way that Benjamin’s et al. (1999) work was an influence was through his interaction with Klee’s painting; his conception of history was in itself Ekphrastic:

A Klee (1920) painting named Angelus Novus shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.

This storm is what we call progress (Benjamin et al., 1999, p. 249).

I have recently been concerned with the writing of the folklorist Bausinger (1961) and his theory of folklore in a world of technology. Specifically, how he views folk culture as expanding as a result of technology and our resultant changing relationship with nature. I explored his ideas through creative practice. These explorations have resulted in ekphrastic poems containing metaphors that have helped me to understand the tensions of connectedness and again how identity might affect a community or organisation. Ekphrasis is writing produced as a rhetorical exercise, typically in response to a work of visual art;
in this case, it is a description of the feelings, ideas and experiences of viewing photographs of the natural world that I have taken throughout my life.

Being part of a research circle[2] unexpectedly gave me the licence to create poetry that was purposefully written quickly, and left unedited (see the QR code below, for an example poem and photograph of the exhibition and anthology of “Playing with Ekphrasis”). I was able to capture my initial raw thoughts. These poems analysed the same three “horizons” that Bausinger did in his theory of expansion: The spatial, temporal, and social. While the social horizon was the horizon I kept returning to most frequently in my thoughts, I found that the temporal and spatial were unavoidably and integrally intertwined with it. For example, metaphors of constellations came about to express an understanding of time, and archipelagos to appreciate the spatial aspect; both inexorably led to considerations of the social, “be-longing” and the tension between identity and community.

Perambulography
The third case study offered, looks at a práxis I have called Perambulography. It is important in the explanation of this practice to give some context: The rural county of Cheshire is the place where I grew up, and where my immediate family and ancestors are from. I was interested in drawing a connection between this landscape and my sense of belonging: to understand the impact of a landscape on a person’s sense of belonging and/or identity, quite literally by drawing. I wanted to capture an understanding of the landscape that avoided the romantic and sentimental, that instead allowed for an expression of psycho-geographical understanding; of the kind that would be reminiscent of a dérive (Debord, 1956), Benjamin’s (1997) flâneur[3] or perhaps even the Japanese practice of Hanami, or “flower viewing”, a traditional custom of relishing the short-lived beauty of flowers, but in a broader sense. The drawings that I would undertake though needed to represent my journey through the natural world with immediacy and thus I would try to avoid capturing and expressing a particular subject or singular moment with any emotional reaction. This would be crucial if Bausinger’s (1990) concern of the depreciation of nature to something that is merely appreciated was to be avoided. These drawings would be affected by each footstep, stile, gate, or passing tree. They would be a direct interpretation of the land, a felt, lived, and recorded experience. The ultimate goal was use these drawings as a graphic score for composition in order to present the experience in a way, which might resonate with listeners.

The first problem encountered was how to draw continuously so that the drawing was a record of uninterrupted reactions to the environment. To solve this I built a machine (see the QR code below for a video of me using the device) that would enable me to wind a spindle of paper over a drawing board whilst walking. The drawings that came out of this process were mainly expressed through the artistic element of line. This though served a useful function in terms of interpreting the drawn lines into music, as was my intention; they could be readily represented as a solo melody line. In turn, this led to a second dilemma, the drawings made were significant due to them being done on a walk from my own home, but they lacked the connection of belonging somewhere i.e. having walked a walk many times;
being familiar with a landscape; or the sense of connectedness one feels when treading the
ground one's forbears have trod. To tackle this issue I took the same walk multiple times, and
drew instead upon acetate. The films of acetate could then be layered on top of one another so
that each walk could be viewed simultaneously: linking again to the metaphor of a
constellation and our understanding of time. The original walk drawn on paper was placed
behind to give a background so that the acetate drawings could be more clearly seen.

This multi-layered approach (see the QR code below) offered a temporal polyvalence, in
keeping with Bausinger's (1961) temporal expansion and Benjamin's (1997) conception of
history as an individual's recollected and compiled experiences. What came out was also
reminiscent of Garner's (1997) explication of how time, memory and feelings are inextricably
linked, thus allowing a space for a sense of belonging to resound. It also functionally gave
the opportunity for this to be represented in harmonies, counter-melodies, and even
polyrhythmic elements during the interpretation of the graphic score for composition:
ultimately therefore providing the greater possibility for impact in the composition, which
would in turn allow the composition to resonate more deeply with the listener.

Discussion
Ricoeur contributed in numerous ways to philosophical thought, but there are three aspects
in particular that will help in the discussion of the three cases studies previously outlined:
they are his combining of the hermeneutical process with phenomenology and his
appreciations of time, and of language.

Ricoeur et al. (1978) conflation of the hermeneutical process with phenomenology means
that hermeneutic analysis considers more than just text. That it also critically considers the
relationship of self with everything else beyond that self. Hermeneutics then, for Ricoeur
(1978b) becomes a perspective that acknowledges the connection between the self and the
symbol. The relationship is one in perpetual tension and neither can be understood in
separation. Each one of the práxes can be seen to accentuate a particular interpretation of
"impact", which concurs with Ricoeur's hermeneutical understanding and what should come
out of it as a process. Put simply this accentuation is self-understanding:

In proposing to relate symbolic language to self-understanding, I think I fulfill the deepest wish of
hermeneutics. The purpose of all interpretation is to conquer a remoteness, a distance between the
past cultural epoch to which the text belongs and the interpreter himself. By overcoming this
distance, by making himself contemporary with the text, the exegete can appropriate its meaning to himself: foreign, he makes it familiar, that is, he makes it his own. It is thus the growth of his own understanding of himself that he pursues through his understanding of others. Every hermeneutics is thus, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others (Ricoeur et al., 1978, p. 101).

Each of the práxes prioritises the conflation of the self and “other”, through a meaning making exercise: whether it is through the moral and ethical dilemmas of Phrónetic Vlogging, and the tension between one’s personal beliefs and values with those that one’s profession presents as an obligation; the tension between community and identity that was explored through Ekphrasis; or the relationship one has with a place and the natural environment explored through Perambulography. These explorations of self-meaning and other-meaning are essentially intertwined projections of existence itself. Therefore Ricoeur et al. (1978) depiction of philosophy as a hermeneutical activity has resonance with my provocation of understanding “impact” as a meaning making exercise. Furthermore, how “impact” might then also be perceived to be an organising feature of an organisation in terms of how we can individually and collectively seek to expose the meaning of existence through phenomenological interpretations of culture (be that from either a folkloric or organisational perspective):

This is why philosophy remains a hermeneutics, that is, a reading of the hidden meaning inside the text of the apparent meaning. It is the task of this hermeneutics to show that existence arrives at expression, at meaning, and at reflection only through the continual exegesis of all the significations that come to light in the world of culture. Existence becomes a self – human and adult – only by appropriating this meaning, which first resides “outside,” in works, institutions, and cultural movements in which the life of the spirit is justified (Ricoeur et al., 1978, p. 106).

To expound these latter points a little more, it would help to recall how these meaning making exercises, these hermeneutical processes, are actually reflexive practices: práxes. The emphasis is not on the outwardly observable outcome here, but the meaning, perception or understanding of the self that is realised by engaging with the external other. The understanding of self is indirectly realised through the process of hermeneutics. The Cartesian cogito of course is in contradiction with this, as it is a position that “grasps itself directly in the experience of doubt”, and is “a truth as vain as it is invincible” (Ricoeur et al., 1978, p. 106). The point I would make here is that the práxes of these case studies (and others like them) discover the self through different means. As Ricoeur would likely echo, the means of discovering self is through the interpretation of the signified. For me, the goal of hermeneutics therefore, is to re/search, reinterpret, restore, refresh, reinvigorate and reflect upon one’s own meaning. This process, manifested in such práxes represents a reformulation of “impact”.

The process of reformulation itself also bears some significance in relation to Ricoeur’s thinking in that it has utilised metaphoricity in a generative way (Ricoeur, 1978b, 1984). The use of language in an imaginative or novel way, demonstrates how he recognised its creative power to regenerate meaning (Dauenhauer and Pellauer, 2002). As such, I hope to have reconceptualised the contemporary, standard understanding of “impact” from being merely the outcome-driven contribution, to a self-meaning or meaning making understanding of the term that is connected to organisation. The “grandiosity” (hubris) of the impact agenda steered an understanding of “impact” “from a state patronage to an investment model” to facilitate performance pay or research funding (Hammersley, 2014, p. 345). Perhaps by restoring and reintroducing the meaning of “impact” with an integral human facet; as something fluid rather than fixed; and as containing pedagogic potential for organisation, we might address some of Klikauer’s (2013), Hammersley’s (2104), and my own concerns of the distorted view and expectations that current
understandings of “impact” propagate. So that unobscured understandings of the relationships between re/search, policy-making and práxis might be seen. That, “instead of fuelling the narcissism of students and instructors with ever more grandiose claims and hyped-up intellectual gizmos, could rediscover the importance of unspectacular, craft and versatile learning, imbued with humility and a tolerance for imperfections and uncertainty” (Alvesson and Gabriel, 2016, p. 471). I am reminded again here of the humility, and personal psychological catharsis of a community’s folklore, and how it is similar to how one might appreciate an individual’s práxis using arts-based methods in relation to organisation. Collective engagement has individual benefits, which in turn shape the collective. Returning to Bausinger (1961) is also helpful in realising this expanded, versatile, alternative perspective of what “impact” is, what it means, or how it is understood and represented: we might view re/search processes at the very least as an elaboration of the complexity of the meaning of “impact”, that it can be reinterpreted as “the provisional, partial and contingent nature of solutions”, that “tend to be dismissed as unnecessarily complex and inaccessible” (Hayes and Doherty, 2017, p. 123).

Re/search champions versatility, inter-epistemological acceptance, and diversity of knowledge types, understandings, and thus ways of reinterpreting “impact”. Our metaphors of understanding are different and in accordance our expectations should also be.

Implications for research and práxes
Having reflected upon the methods and the implications of the proposed understanding of “impact”, there are some common implications that to my mind determine what re/search looks like regardless of the method employed. Phrônetic Vlogging for example, I would hope, offers more than a typical reflective journal because the product is dynamic, it is a sincere, intense, vibrant and convincing interpretation of my exploration as a researcher and practitioner, and as a performance it seeks to generate insights for the researcher, practitioner, and audience that are impossible for conventional qualitative methods to achieve (Ackroyd and O’Toole, 2010). The method can be more readily shared due to its digital nature too. All the methods search for validity through authenticity as much as plausibility. Each method attempts to determine generalisability by virtue of whether a (singular) individual is able to shed light upon (universal) cultural processes which one is otherwise unacquainted with (Ellingson, 1998; Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

As such, autoethnographic methods offer rich and powerful models for conceptualization and perception, models that not only ask for audience participation in a sensory and emotional way, but also cultivate deeper relationships between those engaged by demonstrably enriching the dynamic products and processes of qualitative research (Jenoure, 2002; Leavy, 2009).

As methods that allow for open exploration, research of the types detailed might take any direction and will yield infinitely different yet personal results. The purpose of such approaches has been discussed throughout the paper but if we were to reduce it to simple terms, it should be undertaken to create meaning, to connect, to challenge, to provoke, and to share, but chiefly to inject humanity into our research and práxes.

Each method can be used on an individual basis, but there may be ways of developing them in a more collaborative usage. I would suggest that using these autoethnographic arts-based methods might give the practitioner, researcher, employee or manager an “approach to address a range of complex questions concerning their lives and the lives of others” (Bartleet, 2015, p. 444). They could easily be used in a variety of research or workplace scenarios, for example, in change management, problem or conflict resolution, or simply coming to know ones ethical position as an individual or
organisation; and of course in terms of business or organisational structures that need to grow, diversify, streamline, unify or shrink, in a way that centralises humanity rather than prioritising outcomes.

The three case studies offer methods that exist as embodied modes of enquiry, and evocative ways that research findings might be represented (Bartleet and Hultgren, 2008), either in the workplace, pedagogically, or within academia itself.

Notes
1. A concept I am indebted for being introduced to by Prof. Allan Owens.
2. I am indebted to Prof. Tony Wall, for the valuable opportunity of being part of an “Ubuntu” research group.
3. Benjamin’s (1997) flâneur is particularly apposite, compared to other variants because he saw the flâneur as a symbol of the estrangement of capitalism and of the city. His archetype met its end through consumer capitalism. I would offer a resurgence through revolution, possibly by deriving through the natural landscape rather than undertaking the usual understanding of a dérive, which is to drift through an urban landscape.

References


**Further reading**


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Beyond Text: the co-creation of dramatised character and iStory

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Abstract
Purpose – In exploring the impact of reflective and work applied approaches, the authors are curious how vivid new insights and collective “Eureka” momentums occur. These momentums can be forces for work communities to gain competitive advantages. However, the authors know little of how learning is actively involved in the processing of creating new insights and how such a turning to learning mode (Pässilä and Owens, 2016) can be facilitated. In the light of cultural studies and art education, the purpose of this paper is to explore how the method of dramatising characters (DC) in a specific innovation culture can be facilitated. In this viewpoint, the authors are suggesting one approach for this type of turning to learning which the authors call Beyond Text, outlining its theoretical underpinnings, its co-creative development and its application.

Design/methodology/approach – In this Beyond Text context, the authors are introducing the method of DC and the method of iStory both of which are the authors’ own design based on the theory of the four existing categories of a research-based theatre.

Findings – The findings of this viewpoint paper are that both iStory as well as DC methods are useful and practical learning facilitation processes and platforms that can be adopted for use in organisations for promoting reflexivity. Especially they can act as a bridge between various forms of knowing and consummate the other knowledge types (experiential, practical and propositional) in a way that advances practice-based innovation.

Originality/value – The originality and value of iStory and DC is that they can be utilised as dialogical evaluation methods when traditional evaluation strategies and pre-determined indicators are unusable.

Keywords Arts-based research, Dramatizing characters, iStory, Research-based theatre

In this paper, we introduce two practical methods: iStory and dramatising character. Both of these have been developed for use in the practical innovation context of organisations in Finland.

© Anne Passila, Allan Owens, Paula Kuusipalo-Maatta, Tuija Oikarinen and Raquel Benmergui. Published in Journal of Work-Applied Management. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial & non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode
This is part of a larger exploration of impact within the work place, and in particular of reflective approaches. We are curious about how new insights and collective “Eureka” moments and momentums occur. These can be forces for work communities to gain competitive advantages. However, we know little of how learning is actively involved in the processing of creating new insights and how it can be facilitated (Passila and Owens, 2016). Both methods involve a type of learning which goes “Beyond Text”, and we outline the theoretical underpinnings, co-creative development and applications of each.

This paper will be useful to managers in the following ways:

- it provides a concrete way to see blocks on an organisational micro level when their employees are implementing change related to innovation, for example, issues in organisations are often so sensitive as a result of power relations or misunderstandings that iStory can provide a safe means to approach them;
- it increases the number of producers of knowledge in their organisation, for example, it values “ordinary” employees’ knowledge in innovation processes (not only the R&D employees); and
- it helps them to construct together with their employees a space where they can reflect together on each other’s experiences and to break down assumptions related to their own perspectives, for example, sometimes different units in organisations become isolated silos, iStory allows for an overlap for the benefit of the whole organisation.

**Dramatising characters (DC), iStory and research-based theatre (RBT)**

In this Beyond Text context, we are introducing the method of DC and the method of iStory, both of which are our own design based on the theory of the four existing categories of RBT.
We suggest, based on the work of Pässilä (2012) that the works of Denzin (1997), Mienczakowski (2001), Saldana (2003) and Rossiter et al. (2008, pp. 132-139) offer four categories of RBT:

1. non-theatrical performances, which includes performances that employ a minimum of traditional theatrical conventions;
2. theatrical RBT performances, which includes performances informed by the research process but do not strictly follow data and give primacy to artistic form;
3. interactive or non-interactive ethnodramas, which includes vignettes (stories, quotations, point of views) from data; and
4. fictional theatre performances, which includes works that are performed for the purposes of domain and are based on education rather than research.

We appreciate the approach of interactive and non-interactive ethnodrama (Rossiter et al., 2008, p. 138) which:

[...] entails the creation of “real-life” vignettes that emerge directly from data such as interviews, focus groups or ethnographic notes. Unlike non-theatrical performances, ethnodramas are theatrical; performances feature a variety of characters that engage the audience and each other through monologue and dialogue, and scenes contain elements of dramatic tension [...]. Ethnodramas aim to communicate research findings and to remain ardently faithful to the primary research subjects and the veracity of the data”.

We also turn to Saldana (2003, 2009) who suggested that arts-based approaches (ethnodrama and ethnotheatre) have a legitimate place in learning when they are part of a research-based encounter. In a turning to learning context, Beyond Text methods are practices in creation of space for inquiry, encountering and performative interview.

**The Senettian team**

Next, we break with academic convention to introduce the unique background of each member of our cooperation team. We do this in order to draw attention to the relational aspect which can be defined in a way as Sennet (2012, p. 5) does “as an exchange in which the participants benefit from the encounter”. We, as a “Senettian” team, are underlining here that cooperation is a unique and situated process which allows us to accomplish something we cannot do alone. To this end, we would like to introduce our pracademic team Anne Pässilä, Allan Owens, Paula Kuusipalo-Määttä, Raquel Benmergui and Tuija Oikarinen. We have co-operatively created a reflexive learning form by using sketching and playback narration in making sense of lived experiences of innovation in action as we interactively interview and re-present that which we have heard and shared.

We have enjoyed listening and sharing experiences related to perplexity and innovation in the midst of practice. These next quotations are from our discussions: “I feel we learned something unique and precious from each other while co-creating iStory as a way of inquiry” Allan points out, and Paula continues “Yes, I feel that we have managed to create trust between us in order to open perplexed situations and the complex relations we have faced in managing innovation”. Anne summarised that, “iStory draws on experience from prior runs of this method and the extensive experience of the authors in using arts based methodology in a wide range of workplace contexts to organise reflection”. Tuija underlines that the methods of iStory or DC are based on alternative representational forms of knowledge like storytelling, illustrations, narratives and visualising. Tuija points out that by DC of consumers, the participants might be able to create space for imagination and playfulness, presence and interaction. However, we all as a Senettian team are paying attention to our assumptions that Beyond Text as an arts-based approach can be fostered by bridging
different kinds of knowing and knowledge in various types of contexts, for example, in public and private organisations and networks. From this point, we are trying to understand how to build learning spaces and facilitate learning arising from interaction of different knowledge, participants and contexts.

Collaborative reflective practice: tracing the connections

We have been designing and implementing a learning programme into an innovation management approach through a novel form of collaborative reflexive practice that deliberately brings into play the untapped potential of imagined experience. We think that organisations can be seen as sites where practitioners and scholars co-create knowledge. People and groups in organisations create knowledge by participating in and contributing to negotiations of meanings of actions and situations. Knowledge is seen as something that people create in their ongoing interaction rather than something they store or own (Gherardi, 2006; Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006; Pässilä et al., 2012).

This made us think carefully about why we cherish the idea of small corner encountering(s) where various type of micro-pedagogical actions are happening in short-terms encounters (Sennet, 2012) in a workplace context. We were and still are asking the question: Are we losing the skills of cooperation needed to make a complex society? (Sennet, 2012, p. 9). The bodily kinaesthetic – visual learning element is very relevant here, but we are not focussing on this as a learning style, rather on the space it creates for knowledge co-creation; in other words we are interested in what kind of reflection it allows on a micro level in an innovation process when it is happening in the workplace.

Even in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world, there are some things we can control, measure, predict and answer correctly; however, there is also an unknowable future, with no indicators of impact to be set beforehand (Petrie, 2011). This is when we need discussion and to collectively make sense, to see, understand and influence and to act adaptively.

As such our work is linked with the three phases of adaptive action (Eoyang and Holladay, 2013) that can be applied to complex adaptive systems:

2. So what? (meaning making – analysis, discussion, interpretation): so what are the tensions? Is important? So what options do we have? What does success look like now?, etc.
3. Now what? (actions to be taken): will we do, will we communicate, will we measure, will we look for next, etc.

In the VUCA world, individual agents have the freedom to act in unpredictable ways, and their actions are interconnected in such ways that they produce system-wide patterns. System-wide patterns in turn influence the behaviours of the agents allowing for new system-wide patterns to emerge (Eoyang and Holladay, 2013). This complexity and adaptivity led us to connect our work with different natures of knowing.

The multiple models: natures of knowing

There are multiple models to present various knowledge types and learning processes (e.g. Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Park, 2001/2006). In this study, we base our research on the natures of knowing – experiential, presentational, propositional and practical – presented by Heron and Reason (2001/2006, Heron, 1992, 1996) (see Table I). Heron (1992) described an “extended epistemology” and suggested that good inquiry should crossepistemologies using different forms of knowledge. Each type of knowledge provides
incomplete understanding on its own and is linked to and builds on each of the other forms. Various forms of knowledge together can create new knowledge. It is about sharing experiences and feelings when encountering one another and knowing happens at a level of binding and bonding together (cf. Kemmis, 2001/2006, p. 86). Therefore, this kind of learning and knowledge creation becomes a part of those who are related together. Heron and Reason (2001/2006) suggested a co-operative inquiry method that integrates experiential knowing through meeting and encounter; presentational knowing through the use of aesthetic, expressive forms; propositional knowing through words and concepts; and practical know-how in the exercise of diverse skills. According to Heron and Reason (2001/2006), learning and knowledge creation cycle through co-operative inquiry of reflection and action. The inquiry can be informative and transformative. In the context of practice-based innovation, transformative inquiry involves action, where people change their way of being and doing and relating in their world is more valid.

However, the leveraging of divergent knowledge by wide participation across organisations in networks does not occur as a matter of course, it needs to be facilitated. Heron and Reason (2001/2006, p. 149) emphasised the use of the expressive forms of presentational knowing (symbols, metaphors) to facilitate reflection phases from action to descriptive and propositional knowing. Presentational knowing can provide access to felt experience and draw upon emotional connection not only to the experience and self, but also to others and thus advance social bonding and networking (Taylor and Ladkin, 2009, p. 56). From an innovation point of view, the knowing is often intuitive, imaginative or sensuous and of all the forms of knowing, it is most accessible through presentational ways (Taylor and Ladkin, 2009). So, the development of presentational knowledge is highlighted as an important, but often neglected bridge between experiential and propositional knowledge (Grisoni and Page, 2010). We propose DC and iStory as a new form of presentational knowing to facilitate the bridging of divergent knowledge and knowing in the learning processes of practice-based innovation in organisations.

In the context of DC and iStory the metaphor of a swing highlights the balance between the rationale and the intuitive. The swing emphasises two kinds of challenges in inviting the potential of different ways of knowing. The first is the political basis of the boundaries between different forms of knowledge and the role of power in the definition of “truth”. As Phillips (1995) as well as Adams and Owens (2016) noted, there is a whole array of alternative representational practices (such as short stories, dance, film, sculpture, poetry, computerised hypertext) that constitute legitimate approaches to study knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of knowing</th>
<th>Participation of knowing</th>
<th>Congruence of knowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Propositional</td>
<td>“About” something, is knowing through ideas and theories, expressed in informative statements</td>
<td>Knowing understood through theories which make sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>Is knowing “how to” do something and is expressed in a skill, knack or competence</td>
<td>Knowing expressed in worthwhile action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>Emerges through direct face-to-face encounter with a person, place or thing; it is knowing through the immediacy of perceiving, through empathy and resonance</td>
<td>Knowing grounded in experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentational</td>
<td>Emerges from experiential knowing, and provides the first form of expressing meaning and significance through drawing on expressive forms of imagery through movement, dance, sound, music; drawing, painting, sculpture, poetry, story, drama, and so on</td>
<td>Knowing expressed through stories and images</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table I. Type of participation in a process of knowing
in organisations. There are multiple models to present various knowledge types and learning processes (e.g. Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Park, 2001/2006).

Beyond Text challenges the traditional paradigm of science- and technology-driven innovation which often considers the production of new knowledge to be the responsibility of nominated experts, namely, scientists and researchers in the academia or R&D specialists in companies (Melkas and Harmaakorpi, 2012). Therefore, our Beyond Text vision is to hold the non-stupid hope that when employees, managers and customers of contemporary organisations face wicked problems, they will turn as naturally to Beyond Text methods as they do to rational, logic-oriented conventional learning and idea generation tools. Some of us might sense that we are still leaning on the old – the industrial age rational linearity even though the world around us is more or less in a continuous state of complexity and perplexity and for which we need novel modes of knowledge. Our assertion is that iStory, as well as DC, can be a useful way to make sense and meaning of hidden assumptions of our own thinking, acting and reacting.

**Practical examples: iStory and DC**

Next, we share one example of exploring the impact of a reflexive and work applied approach: in this iStory it means that the approach is a way to create understanding in perplexed situations.

Our pilot iStory centred on the use of micro-understanding in the relational aspects of innovation leadership. The following photos illustrate the reflexive process which took place in an atmosphere of sitting together around the kitchen table.

iStory aims to examine how the managers and leaders in an organisation create dialogue together by using Beyond Text methods with the help of skilled arts-based practitioners and researchers. iStory draws on a dramaturgical storytelling framework. The process starts as we listen to the story of a person or a group of people with much tacit knowledge and move through ten stages of a process designed to make this explicit. These sketches are examples of visualisations Anne made before this particular iStory-session. Sketching was a way to make Paula’s experiences as an innovation manager visual. Anne also drew on her 11 years of knowledge around innovation studies when listening to Paula and making links to theory.
In this case, Paula began to tell of critical incidents in her career through which she felt she learnt much. As she talked Anne drew images symbolically representing what she heard and Allan wrote verbatim quotes and key phrases. Both asked dramaturgical questions about where the incidents took place, who exactly was present, where they were stood and moved to, what had happened prior to the incident, how exactly it started and what happened afterwards. When Paula stopped talking then Anne talked her through the symbolic sketches after which Paula did the same, commenting, clarifying, and elaborating. Allan then privately read back through the script he had been creating while listening, composed from Paula’s words and the dialogue with Anne and himself, highlighting certain phrases, repeating them at points in the text, cut text and in so doing so created the meta story to be re-told. He selected music and started to tell the iStory whilst simultaneously Anne made a one-shot video on her phone of the symbolic sketches so that spoken words and images came together. The three of us watched the replay of the one-shot video. Paula suggested changes, we re-shot it twice listening to it each time afresh sharing the insights it was generating, seeing the implicit becoming explicit through this systematic, but relaxed informal reflexive process.

The relevant element of iStory is that it takes place in momentums; in a specific time, space and encountering. It is a collaborative form of creating knowledge in which the aim is to combine knowledge interests from lived experiences and theory alike.
Discussion
The knowing process facilitated by DC is illustrated in Figure 1. Through storytelling and narratives (written, told, drawn and improvised), the researchers, the artist, and the members of two organisations wanted to ideate and innovate new products to consumers.

The process had started prior to workshop with propositional knowledge of current situations, goals and requirements for the products and production. The aim of the workshop was to enable creativity and innovative learning, so we needed some kind of distancing elements to create an appropriate climate fostering co-operative inquiry. Thus, the session began with encounters so that each participant presented him/herself to the others one by one in pairs. They had brought symbols to illustrate themselves as innovators: how they usually work and what are their priorities and responsibilities. This prepared them for presentational knowing. First, they composed stories of imaginary consumers and drew ideas for new products (see Figure 2). This was done in pairs.

Then the dramatised consumer characters and product ideas were shared, and new ideas emerged in interaction. The next phase was to reflect on and analyse the product ideas in the groups by exploiting practical and experiential knowing: which were the most potential ideas estimated by nominated criteria (marketability, manufacturing ability and cost efficiency). For the most potential ideas, the participants reflected on what kinds of actions were needed to realise them. The session ended by propositional knowing and framing new co-operation practices. The main focus was on relationship-building between the members of two companies rather than on product design. It was more like an evocative process through storytelling and interpretation of stories. Behind the stories, new knowing emerged.
and this knowing became a part of those who were engaged in the interpretation. The dramatised characters became containers and messengers of that knowledge.

Workplace learning in this context is more like co-operative puzzle-making than a linear problem-solving process. Art and various techniques of drama were used as co-operative inquiry practices to facilitate learning as a social, practical, collaborative, emancipatory, reflexive and critical process. Knowing is embedded in the conversations and stories. In this kind of process, existing problems are articulated and learning possibilities are defined in co-operation, and formulation is a dialogical negotiation. The logic of the practices between two companies is revealed through presented narratives and these help organisations’ members to make sense of their own actions. The process does not by definition strive for unanimity. Instead, it is a polyphonic way to understand one’s own world. Co-operative inquiry via DC and iStory can be seen as polyvocal transformations in which knowing and understanding are constructed evocatively through reading the other person’s experience and ideas. In this kind of a process, learning and knowing are constructionist actions by all participants.

Considered from the workplace learning point of view, co-operative inquiry would naturally require multiple cycles of going through the phases of inquiry. In this study, we have only applied some principles and procedures of the method to advance participants’ innovative learning. Putting into practice the ideas and plans created during workshop demands more learning opportunities in the network. The participants pointed out various obstacles which they would be facing in changing their operation models. For example, power, inertia, motivations, their own professional roles and the complex network relationships hinder the capacity for developing ideas and implementing them into action.

Conclusions
We are confident that the presentational knowing which leads us through the use of aesthetic, expressive forms as suggested by Heron and Reason (2001/2006) can act as a bridge between various forms of knowing and consummate the other knowledge types (experiential, practical and propositional) in a way that advances practice-based innovation. In addition, presentational knowledge is noted to bond co-learners to co-creation and act as a container for the learning outcomes. In order to cooperate in the midst of perplexity and complexity, we see how these different knowledge types move through the phases of adaptive action when DC and iStory are applied. We propose that when looking for new ways of measuring impact in the midst of uncertainty, we can turn to Beyond Text methods. These can be utilised as dialogical evaluation methods if traditional evaluation strategies and pre-determined indicators are unusable. Finally, this study suggests that DC and iStory are useful and practical learning facilitation processes and platforms that can be adopted for use in organisations for promoting reflexivity.

References
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Purpose – The role of dialogue has recently been identified as being important in generating impact in organisations, but the purposeful use of narrative or story-based approaches to effect organisational change and service improvement is still relatively innovative. The purpose of this paper is to document and examine two projects in health and social care settings which aim to generate organisational development and service improvement.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper evaluates and compares two case studies of story-based organisational development and service improvement projects in the UK. This involved developing an appropriate evaluation framework and assessing the impacts in each case using semi-structured interviews and thematic content analysis.

Findings – This paper reports the diversity of impacts and outcomes that were generated by the projects. Specifically, it is argued that there is a strong indication that story-based projects best achieve their objectives when clearly linked to key organisational strategic drivers or pathways, as evidenced by robust evaluation.

Practical implications – This paper recommends that researchers and practitioners, working with story-based methods, design credible and robust evaluative practices, in order to evidence how their work supports organisations to meet current sector challenges. The paper recommends a flexible evaluation framework for evaluating story-based projects in the workplace.

Originality/value – This paper offers new evidence and insight into the impacts and outcomes of using story-based approaches, and a new evaluation framework for these sorts of projects.

Keywords Evaluation, Organizational change, Story, Service improvement, Evaluation framework, Story work

Abstract

Introduction

The impact agenda is a highly contested space and has been criticised for limiting creativity and indeed changes in practice beyond academe (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013; Johnston and Reeves, 2017). As such, rather than “in the box” thinking, there have been calls for “box changing, jumping or transcendence” for more imaginative approaches (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2014, p. 967) which engage stakeholders in collaborative forms of inquiry (Cunliffe and Scaratti, 2017; Ozanne et al., 2017; Pettigrew and Starkey, 2016; Wall, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016a, b, 2017a, b, 2018).

Within this context, MacIntosh et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of dialogue and reflexivity, and the role of the importance of narrative within the impact debate. Alongside...
this, story-based and narrative approaches are gradually becoming more respected as an effective tool for learning and development and for understanding organisational change (McCormack and Milne, 2003; Gabriel, 2008; Gabriel and Connell, 2010; Reissner, 2011; Passiä and Vince, 2016). Evidence of impact has included: service improvement in health care settings (IDEA, 2009; SCIE, 2010; Ellis et al., 2011); positive impacts on policy (in terms of client outcomes) (IDEA, 2009; Clark and Purdy, 2007; SROI Network, 2011); improvements in performance indicators (Schalock, 2001); improvements in staff engagement (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009); and improvements in well-being outcomes (Boorman, 2009; Rath and Harter, 2010; NEF, 2011).

However, although there is a diversity of potential methods and strategies to evaluate story-based interventions, there is no agreed standard or process. Therefore, a practice problem facing the practitioner researcher using story-based methods in the workplace is how to analyse, interpret and present the data in a systematic way that results in credible evidence. As Guest et al. (2012) propose “good data analysis (and research design, for that matter) combines appropriate elements and techniques from across traditions and epistemological perspectives”. In this way, evaluation can not only evidence the project outcomes but also create convincing links to personal learning as well as wider organisational development objectives, thus adding credibility to story-based methods.

This paper draws from a practitioner research project in the UK, as part of a work applied learning and organisational development project, to evaluate the impacts of two case studies. In order to achieve this, however, the practitioner researcher had to develop an appropriate evaluation framework and methodology which was ecologically appropriate for the well-being and narrative nature of the project, the practice setting of the practitioner researcher and generated valid results which could then be utilised in practice to support organisational development and service improvement.

This paper is structured as follows. The first section reviews some of the key evaluative methods and tools which are used in practice to measure impact and organisational learning in the context of health and social care organisations. The second section then outlines the methodology adopted as part of this study, exploring the suitability of various evaluative methods in the context of health and social care settings. The following sections then present and compare two case studies, highlighting the key impacts and broader findings from the case studies. Finally, the paper moves to a discussion of some of the challenges of evaluating story-based methods for organisational learning and change, and reflects on the stages of designing robust evaluative frameworks in the context of story and health.

Assessing impact in health care
Over a decade ago, a cross-government and social care sector working party produced the document “Putting People First: Transforming Adult Social Care” (IDEA, 2009) setting out the vision for adult social care and its direction over the next ten years. This paper was a keystone paper as it set forth a strategic direction which is generically known as “personalisation”, or highlighting the importance of the individual experience. Similarly, Shepherd et al. (2010), in their position paper for the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, identified peoples’ lived experience as the most potent driver of organisational change within a culture of recovery. This has positioned and framed the work of external providers ever since, with an emphasis on co-production, laying the ground for participatory methods of working and of evaluation.

In terms of approaches to evaluating work within this broader professional context, there are different varieties to how and why evaluation is done. For example, Trochim (2006) postulates that evaluation strategies fall broadly into four major groups: scientific/experimental, management-orientated systems, qualitative/anthropological and participant-orientated (the latter of which seem appropriately aligned to the context). In contrast, Mertens and Wilson (2012) propose four categories of evaluative purpose: to determine
inputs and need, to improve or change practices, to assess programme effectiveness and to address issues of social justice. Again, these seem relevant to helping decide the frame of practitioner oriented evaluation in the above professional context.

Within these broader approaches, there are specific methodologies which are used in contemporary health care settings. One of the most popular, and which continues to influence many other models, is Kirkpatrick’s (1998) model and toolkit, which was developed as an evaluation tool for assessing impact and outcomes of learning and development programmes. Bespoke methodological approaches utilising Kirkpatrick’s thinking have been developed by governments. For example, The Impact Evaluation Model uses principles of outcomes-based accountability, and has been recommended by the UK Government for localised impact evaluation of activities especially around service and workforce reform. Reio et al. (2017), however, critique Kirkpatrick’s work as being overly focussed on the achievement of outcomes of training rather than on the impact on the stakeholder and whether their needs have been met. Reio et al propose that stakeholders should be able to input to design, development and evaluation.

Return on investment (ROI) models have also been adopted to measure impact in a very specific and narrow sense (Wall et al., 2016, 2017). More recently, social return on investment (SROI) methodologies have also appeared which have also been participatory by nature, and emphasise those outcomes which are valued by people, including stakeholders and beneficiaries of social programmes, and provide a participatory mechanism for their voice or story to be heard. For example, The SROI Network (2011), which promotes the use of SROI methods internationally to address social injustice, claims:

SROI tells the story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes […] SROI is a framework to structure thinking and understanding. It’s a story not a number. The story should show how you understand the value created, manage it and can prove it (SROI Network 2011, p. 2).

Other forms of participatory evaluation methodologies typically assess progress, performance and impact of a project, but with a primary objective of creating a culture of learning for project staff, beneficiaries and partners. Hasenfeld et al. (2004), as an example, promote the participatory model of evaluation (PME) as a highly collaborative process, relying upon a feedback loop from partners and staff. In their work, Hasenfeld et al. (2004) explored how involving clients in the community in ongoing feedback makes them part of the evaluation process. The validity accorded to case studies by PME lends credence to personal narratives as a methodology in evaluation.

The practical issues of implementing such complex evaluation approaches can stifle widespread use (Wall et al., 2017). In contrast to complex methodologies, Davies and Dart (2005) claim that the most significant change (MSC) technique serves as a legitimate form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. MSC was first developed as a means of auditing changes in overseas development aid projects, but can support organisational learning and service improvement. It is participatory because of the multiple perspectives elicited. As Davies and Dart (2005) explain:

[…] it contributes to evaluation because it provides data on impact and outcomes that can be used to help assess the performance of the program as a whole […] MSC makes use of […] “thick, description”, closely textured accounts of events, placed in their local context, and where the role of the observer and their subjectivity, is visible. In the world of ordinary people these often take the form of stories or anecdotes (p. 67).

**Methodology**

This paper adopts a case study approach to document and examine the impact of story in the context of health care organisations, and was undertaken by a practitioner research
seeking the dual roles of contributing to the development of the organisations and generating new practitioner knowledge for the individual (Wall, 2014; Heikkinen et al., 2016).

The two case studies relate to two story-based intervention projects focussed on organisational development and service improvement as dual outcomes. The projects were delivered within two public sector organisations: one is an adult social services organisation (now referred to as “Social Care Co.”) and the other is a health care organisation (now referred to as “Recovery Co.”) in England.

The intention was a form of case study which was discovery led and inclined towards emphasising social processes and relationships within a natural phenomenon, rather than restricting the attention upon outcomes, and is also suitable for comparison case studies (e.g. of individuals or organisations). In this way, the descriptive case studies focus on contemporary events, explored in their real-life contexts rather than in controlled environment (Yin). The use of multiple cases also provides the opportunity to compare and contrast the findings across different real-life contexts, in terms of different real-life organisational cultures and story interventions (Yin, 2013). However, it is acknowledged that the case study approach is also vulnerable to criticism re-credibility of generalisations from findings (Denscombe, 2010).

Several options were considered when designing the project for suitable data collection methods. However, given the nature of the projects, it was argued that evaluation can be a “sense-making process” in organisations (Weick et al., 2005; Weick, 2016), as well as one that collects and interprets data, and sharing of personal stories could be a useful experience for participants in the evaluation. Furthermore, it was also argued that practitioner researchers in the context of providing services to health care organisations need to consider how the provider-client relationship might be affected by their choice of methods, for example, a rigorous “root and branch” investigative survey might jeopardise future relationships.

It was therefore decided that the project data would be collected through semi-structured interviews incorporating the MSC method (Davies and Dart, 2005). This was chosen as it was the most ecologically appropriate for the well-being and narrative nature of the project, the practice setting of the practitioner researcher and generated valid results which could then be utilised in practice to support organisational development and service improvement. The interview guide, which was the initial proposed evaluation framework to be used with story projects, is presented in Box 1. For both case studies, purposive sampling (or purposeful sampling) was used for data collection, with between 6 and 12 staff and service users. The evaluation framework (interview questions) was initially trialled outside of the two evaluations and questions which appeared to prompt repeated answered were adjusted.

**Case study 1: Recovery Co.**

*Background*

The story project was commissioned by a health care organisation which focuses on the recovery of adults who have or are currently experiencing mental health issues (also referred to as “service users”). The project began in October 2012, and explicitly aimed to support culture change, challenge attitudes and practices around “recovery”, improve organisational teamwork, increase the well-being of service users, develop a shared vision for the “recovery” team and improve the team’s profile within the wider organisation. The main intervention involved story-based team-building workshops and “Story Cafes”, which use stories and conversational circles as springboards to new empathetic awareness and learning.

*Evaluating the project*

The evaluation was conducted by semi-structured interviews using the evaluation framework (Box 1). Evaluation focussed on Learnings and Outcomes, and participants were asked to identify the MSC in the following areas: own practice; service delivery; and client benefits.
Six people participated, and included service users, organisational staff, “recovery” leaders and team members (RIPFA, 2011). The interviews were conducted face to face and recorded. The ethicality of this approach was discussed at length with the organisation and the “recovery” team, and agreed before any data were collected.

Organisational outcomes and impact
Outcomes from the project included: set the scene for creative team working; encouraged innovative working; created a sense of community in the team; changes in team experience of itself; changes in behaviour as a team leader and manager; legitimised new ways of reporting incidents; using narrative to support staff in an incident risk review process/handling difficult emotions/staff well-being; encouraged use of anecdotal evidence to inform higher level management; and significant changes in team practices.

Service delivery
In terms of service delivery, the evaluation identified a number of MSCs. The first area of change was that communications within the team have improved and that this is a cultural shift. An indicative statement from a participant said: “Because we’re using it (stories), it’s changing some of the culture already, and the language that we use and the way that we speak to each other”.

The second area of MSC from the story work in the organisation related to developing/finding a community of “recovery”, giving credence to more creative and innovative work, and supporting the promotion of “recovery” principles. One research participant reported a change in knowledge sharing within the “recovery” teams and to higher levels in the organisation (see also reference to the risk procedure above). Exploring the broader impact, the participant further felt that her experience of the Story Café project was helping guide
her through leading a piece of work around values across a number of organisational units and processes, for example, revising the annual appraisal and personal development review and supervision templates, to ensure culture change and workforce well-being.

Overall, it was also reported that understanding the importance of using story approaches and seeing the impact of story of the team was reported to have real significance in context of, for example, very high-profile health care incidents, and the importance of taking anecdotal evidence seriously and linking this to best practice. There was considerable importance given to ethics and process of delivery and evaluation, how to collect narrative, use it responsibly and have a process around its collection and use.

**Client benefits**

The evaluation found that engagement with clients was improved as was their relationship with the “recovery” teams, in additional to the level of trust in the team. It seemed that the joint participation in the Story Café by service users and staff prompted a change in attitudes towards service users, their capabilities and the respect shown towards them. Although no baseline evaluation of well-being was carried out, there has been positive feedback from service users in the Story Cafes (informal storytelling and conversation circles). It was reported that The Story Cafes enabled service users to be seen to have more capabilities and this was considered to be helpful in creating a culture shift towards more inclusive approaches to “recovery”.

A summary of the outcomes and impacts generated through use of the evaluation framework (Box 1) are outlined in Table I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal expectations</th>
<th>Personal learning</th>
<th>Organisational outcomes</th>
<th>Change and/or impact on own work</th>
<th>Change and/or impact on service delivery</th>
<th>Change and/or impact on clients and service users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check alignment with recovery principles (2)</td>
<td>Change in staff attitudes towards service users (4)</td>
<td>Creative team practices (2)</td>
<td>Improved therapeutic relationship (2)</td>
<td>Cultural shift (2)</td>
<td>Enhanced offer (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deepen understanding of own work</td>
<td>Team development (2)</td>
<td>More supportive management practices (2)</td>
<td>Stories as a powerful tool</td>
<td>Alignment</td>
<td>Change in staff attitudes towards service users (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team development (2)</td>
<td>Therapeutic/well-being benefit (2)</td>
<td>Impact on therapeutic</td>
<td>Working in a holistic and supportive way</td>
<td>Impact assessment (2)</td>
<td>Communication (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change management (2)</td>
<td>Potential of using Narrative and stories in RAG teams to work more creatively (2)</td>
<td>Setting scene for Team development (2)</td>
<td>Confidence to use narrative to support staff in risk review</td>
<td>RAG team development as a community (2)</td>
<td>Self-expression (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of story practice</td>
<td>Organisation to support other</td>
<td>Creative team change (2)</td>
<td>Networking with community partners</td>
<td>Renewed team purpose (2)</td>
<td>Therapeutic benefit (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get to know colleagues</td>
<td>Processes/staff development (2)</td>
<td>Links to other processes and projects (2)</td>
<td>Clarifying thinking</td>
<td>Using narrative and stories in organisation (2)</td>
<td>Socialising; being part of a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New group energy</td>
<td>Experiencing stories is powerful, connects people (2)</td>
<td>Galvanising</td>
<td>CLARITY</td>
<td>Model for future narrative projects (2)</td>
<td>Concentration – “being myself”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Numbered themes refer to order of frequency

**Table I.** Recovery Co.’s summary of project outcomes
Case study 2: Social Care Co.

Background
The second case is based in a public health care organisation, and specifically commissioned by the organisational lead for the “personalisation” agenda. Starting in April 2012, the project aimed to collate evidence of personalisation practices and generate a repository of this evidence. The project aimed to inform and educate staff, policy makers, other stakeholders and the public about personalisation practices; develop staff skills around gathering, and using customer stories for service improvement in training and teams; and improve internal and external communications and engagement.

Evaluation of the project
The evaluation was carried out by semi-structured interviews in person or by telephone using the evaluation framework designed for the project (Box 1). The evaluation was agreed through the organisational leaders who complied with the organisation’s own research governance framework. The project involved interviewing ten service users.

Organisational outcomes
The evaluation identified that all of the participants stressed the importance of the following MSCs: the achievement of better engagement with clients, and public education and awareness of personalisation practices. However, there was a sense from all participants that the story-gathering group now needed to be supported and developed for its potential outcomes to be realised fully. As one manager said: “We’ve got to do something strategic to create the space for this”.

In addition to the hard outcomes of a media-based repository of stories, the softer outcomes related to partnership working and engagement. Although organisational outcomes could not readily be evaluated nor costed out in terms of ROI, the project was also considered to have built a platform and a legacy for the future.

Service delivery
The evaluation identified that the story project had successfully supported the “transformation agenda”, enabling more creative support planning as well as challenging resistance to culture change. One participant expressed: “The stories are for me the most powerful thing we can offer in this climate in terms of the Change Agenda”. According to the participants, this has impacted upon service delivery where clients’ needs have been met more effectively through a shift in primary focus towards story listening rather than assessment of a “Category of Need” (a bureaucratic assessment of a specific need). Participants reported seeing the beginnings of meaningful change in service delivery of “personalisation”. For one social worker, the time spent in listening to stories was very significant:

What I'm hearing is different – I'm listening to the words that the person uses and how they describe their experiences and what they're describing because that could be the most important thing they need help with – rather than the Category of Need.

Client impact
For service users, a “SROI” was identified as a common theme: “Where the […] project has been able to influence the practice of staff, then people who use services are going to get a service that is much more tailored to their individual life histories and experiences”.

Similarly, well-being or a “therapeutic perspective” was a significant outcome for the clients, “feeling listened to is very important” and more consideration of what is important to them in their lives; as was raising awareness of use of personal budgets. Additionally, through
involvement of partnership organisations and by providing a framework for knowledge sharing, better services can be offered through better multi-disciplinary working.

A summary of the outcomes and impacts generated through use of the evaluation framework (Box 1) are outlined in Table II.

**Discussion**

A cross-case analysis of the findings of both projects indicated similarities around dimensions: how story work underpins radical organisational cultural change, its training application for staff to be better educated around new policies and approaches in health and social care, and its impact on professional relationships particularly partnership working and with service users. A strong indication from this study is that story work enhances team building and benefits new projects in the early stages, as strong organisational outcomes were demonstrated for both projects.

The benefits to Recovery Co. were significant enough for both strategic level and other staff to extrapolate ways of integrating story work into management practice, such as staff support, knowledge sharing and leadership development. In as much as story work evidences good practice and aligns with transformation of services, both projects stated that

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Change and/or impact on clients and service users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop story writing skills (7)</td>
<td>Developed listening skills (5)</td>
<td>Educating public (7)</td>
<td>Partnership involvement (7)</td>
<td>Supports personalisation (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client engagement (7)</td>
<td>Better listening; listening differently (5)</td>
<td>Educating social workers (7)</td>
<td>Listening skills (6)</td>
<td>Better personalisation (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence collecting for Personalisation (7)</td>
<td>Confidence to talk to people about their life experience and needs (5)</td>
<td>Partnership working (7)</td>
<td>Transformation of service delivery (5)</td>
<td>Improved awareness of personal budgets (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More sympathetic approach (3)</td>
<td>Confidence to write up stories (3)</td>
<td>Staff skills and knowledge development (5)</td>
<td>Different ways of working (5)</td>
<td>More person-centred approach (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A tool for collecting and analysing information</td>
<td>Changing ways of thinking about situation (4)</td>
<td>Improvements in efficiency (4)</td>
<td>More effective use of time (3)</td>
<td>Impact on resistance to culture change (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tap into practical experience</td>
<td>Making clients have more time to tell their story in their words (3)</td>
<td>Cultural shift (4)</td>
<td>Significant contribution to transformation agenda (2)</td>
<td>Engendering trust in the profession (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit organisational learning shared in public arena</td>
<td>Sharing experiences with other story gatherers</td>
<td>New ways of working (2)</td>
<td>Better recording (profile, care plan, journal)</td>
<td>Social return to culture/relationship shift</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of different media on presenting stories</td>
<td>Material (stories) for Training</td>
<td>Better understanding of service user’s perspective</td>
<td>Engages co-production</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact on personal life (listening to children)</td>
<td>First step in the right direction</td>
<td>Cost-effective Better understanding of service user’s perspective</td>
<td>Therapeutic perspective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A new way of learning about people (behaviours)</td>
<td>Cost-effective</td>
<td>Better understanding Knowledge-sharing skill</td>
<td>Feeling empowered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Numbered themes refer to order of frequency

**Table II.** Social Care Co.'s summary of project outcomes
the outcomes of the story projects potentially enhanced the reputation of the organisation as an “honest broker” (Social Care Co.) or as “innovative” organisation (Recovery Co.).

Yet both projects were different in their focus and ongoing issues. The Social Care Co. project had a skills development focus to support the evidencing of personalisation, whereas the Recovery Co. project focussed on team building, culture change (towards a “recovery culture”). In the Social Care Co. project, participants further reflected in broad terms on sustainability and developing systems to support their “story gatherers”, whereas in the Recovery Co. project, the reflection was towards further exploration of narrative approaches and how these could improve best practice at all levels.

Key themes and outcomes from the interviews were therefore mapped visually for each project using wordle software. Wordles are easily created from key words emerging from the data as visual images; words are “weighted” by occurrence, represented as the larger words in the wordle. These were shared with the clients as a thematic illustration of project outcomes to assist with personal and organisational learning. The Social Care Co. wordle highlights that improvement in skills was dominant (story writing skills, creative thinking, better listening) as well as improvement in service-related relationships (partnership working, engagement, personalisation) (see Figure 1), whereas the Recovery Co. project wordle reflects the current recovery team’s focus on change and on therapeutic relationships (change management, relationships, culture change, well-being) (see Figure 2).

There are also wider implications of such variability in project impacts and outcomes. Specifically, it was recognised that some of the evaluation framework prompts were not necessarily relevant in both contexts, and reflected the nature of the original scoping of the project (as discussed above). The initial evaluation framework that was developed for the purposes of evaluating story work in workplaces therefore needed to be adjusted to reflect the diversity of projects that would be developed. Reflections and decisions about this are reflected in Table III.

This reflects the responsive design of evaluation in workplace learning projects. For example, on consideration, questions 2 to 4 in the evaluation framework are most
relevant where the project involves skills training or/and mentoring, and less so where the project delivers service user interventions or team-building workshops. Questions 6 and 7 are difficult to answer if the participants are not responsible for or knowledgeable of strategic and organisational goals, or where projects involve participation by stakeholder and partnership organisations. Similarly question 9 presupposes that the project is delivered to those who have direct relationship with service users. As such the evaluation framework design needs addressing early into the project design, and purposively linked to organisational outcomes – and reflects Reio et al. (2017) critique of evaluation being overly focussed on the achievement of outcomes of training rather than on the impact on the stakeholder and whether their needs have been met.

Conclusion and implications
This paper concludes that narrative or story-based work is efficacious and credible in generating workplace impacts, especially in the context of service transformation and improvement, and that practitioners can examine such dimensions in participatory ways. The willingness of staff to be involved in the project that this paper has examined further demonstrated that evaluation is regarded as valuable and a way, in itself, of engaging staff. Significantly, the involvement of service users in the evaluation was also said to have “recovery potential”, which further emphasises the suitability of participatory methods of project design and evaluation as well as research more broadly (IDEA, 2009; MacIntosh et al., 2017).

The richness of the evaluation reflect two areas: the reported processes that story activates and shapes, including sense making, team working, re-framing and collective empathy towards workplace impacts (Gabriel and Connell, 2010; Reissner, 2011; Wall and Rossetti, 2013; Passila and Vince, 2016), but also the reported impacts of practical and participatory forms of MSC-informed evaluation processes which also facilitate similar processes of sense making, framing, re-framing and collective empathy, but also motivation to act, change and improve (Wall et al., 2017). In addition, the elicited experiential content generated through the evaluation was found to be persuasive when presenting to higher level managers, as it provided strong links between the story work and organisational strategic priorities and pathways. As a result, there are a number of specific implications for different stakeholder groups, and these are represented in Table IV.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What were your personal expectations of what the story project would deliver in terms of your own learning? (Prompts: In what way were these realised? In what way were they different?)</td>
<td>Leads and those involved with the design of the project responded easily; OTTs did not</td>
<td>Cohort participants including partnership organisations responded easily. Not asked of strategic lead</td>
<td>Keep in the generic evaluation framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What has been your experience of using what you learnt in your everyday environment? (Prompts: new skills, understanding, or behaviours)</td>
<td>Leads and those involved with the design of the project responded easily; OTTs did not</td>
<td>Cohort participants including partnership organisations responded easily. Not asked of strategic lead</td>
<td>Contextual: use in evaluation framework for projects with skills training element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What has particularly enabled you to use this learning in your workplace? (Prompts: Opportunities? Particular support?)</td>
<td>Leads and those involved with the design of the project responded easily; OTTs did not</td>
<td>Cohort participants including partnership organisations responded easily. Not asked of strategic lead</td>
<td>Contextual: use in evaluation framework for projects with skills training element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What has made it difficult to use this learning in your workplace? (Prompts: Obstacles? Lack of opportunities? Culture?)</td>
<td>Leads and those involved with the design of the project responded easily; OTTs did not</td>
<td>Cohort participants including partnership organisations responded easily. Not asked of strategic lead</td>
<td>Contextual: use in evaluation framework for projects with skills training element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Looking back at the last 6 months, i.e. the duration of the current story project, what has been the most significant change for you in your own work as a result of this project? (Prompts: Behaviours? Practices? Team work?)</td>
<td>Leads and those involved with the design of the project responded easily; OTTs made partial response</td>
<td>Cohort participants responded easily. Not asked of strategic lead</td>
<td>Keep in the generic evaluation framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What were your initial expectations of what the story project would deliver in terms of organisational benefits? (Prompts: In what way were these realised? In what way were they different?)</td>
<td>Leads and those involved with the design of the project responded easily; OTTs did not</td>
<td>Strategic lead responded easily; partnership organisation member did not</td>
<td>Contextual: use in evaluation framework for projects delivered at management or leadership level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What have been the actual outcomes and benefits to the organisation? (Prompts: Efficiency. Budgetary. Knowledge. Partnership working)</td>
<td>Leads and those involved with the design of the project responded easily; OTTs did not</td>
<td>Strategic lead responded easily; partnership organisation member did not. Project manager had difficulty responding.</td>
<td>Contextual: use in evaluation framework for projects delivered at management or leadership level; review sample selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Looking back at the last [XX] months, i.e. the duration of the current story project, what do you think has been the most significant change in the organisation’s service delivery, as a result of this project? (Prompts: Better delivery of Recovery services. Better teamwork. Better partnership working)</td>
<td>Leads and those involved with the design of the project responded easily; OTTs did not</td>
<td>Strategic lead responded easily; partnership organisation member did not. Some difficulty in responding from original project manager (see above)</td>
<td>Contextual: use in evaluation framework for projects delivered at management or leadership level; review sample selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Looking back at the last [XX] months, i.e. the duration of the current story project, what has been</td>
<td>Leads and those involved with the design of the project responded easily; partnership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Keep in generic evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III. Reflections on implementing the evaluative framework (EF) (continued)
Evaluation framework (EF) – interview question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Recovery Co.</th>
<th>Response Social Care Co.</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the most significant change for your clients (and/or stakeholders and partnership organisations)?</td>
<td>responded easily; OTTs made partial response</td>
<td>organisation member did not. Some difficulty in responding from original project manager (see above)</td>
<td>framework; review sample selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Looking ahead, what are your recommendations to your organisation regarding future story-based projects? (Prompts: More workshops? More training? Sustainability &amp; Improvements? Less/None?)</td>
<td>All interviewees responded easily</td>
<td>All interviewees responded easily</td>
<td>Keep in the generic evaluation framework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III.

Implications about story work in organisational change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story-practitioners</th>
<th>Implications about evaluation frameworks, strategies or techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access and utilise evidence to demonstrate the variety of impacts that can be generated through story work</td>
<td>Clearly define own evaluation “toolkit” as a flexible menu of options, which might include formal methodologies (as required by clients) as well as adapted techniques (such as MSC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilise cases examples to demonstrate the value, richness and possible application areas of story work</td>
<td>Negotiate the evaluation framework and techniques with the project owners – to fit their particular outcomes as well as their requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project evaluators

| Position story work as a way to inform the strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of strategic change programmes – notice the who, what, why, when elements of the story construction to identify issues or ideas | Involve different parts of the organisation at the evaluation stage to be able to make sense of alternative stories as data/evidence for (1) progression or change and (2) deliverables, impacts and outcomes |
| Collect and analyse a variety of stories (e.g. from different stakeholders) at the various stages of the project process (e.g. design, delivery, decision-gates, evaluation) – story listening and recording processes will be important | Incorporate partnership working and knowledge sharing around aspects of cultural change in an organisation |

Organisations (e.g. health or social care)

| Position story work as a way to inform and evaluate strategic commitments to service improvement – notice the who, what, why, when elements of the story construction to identify issues or ideas | Adopt MSC-informed questions to enable deeper levels of evidence to emerge |
| Engage stakeholders across the organisation by capturing their stories, and telling them in planning and feedback contexts rather than being confined to managers or PR | Utilise real client stories to enrich and “humanise” planning and strategy formulation processes – the story |
| Establish story generation mechanisms across the organisation and establish links to teams and managers – and develop skills in noticing story elements (e.g. storyline, characters, actors, transition stages and morals) (see Wall and Rossetti, 2013) | Establish story curation (collection and display) mechanisms across the organisation to make evaluation a part of a culture |
| Incorporate partnership working and knowledge sharing around aspects of cultural change in an organisation | |

Table IV. Summary of implications for story-practitioners, project evaluators and organisations
In this way, this paper argues that evaluative frameworks benefit from being designed in conjunction with the client organisation to align with their outcomes and be conducted through participatory forms. The decision to adapt the “MSC” method and integrate this into the evaluation framework enabled the strong links to the use of stories as data and evidence. Moreover, the MSC domains of change can be identified by a top-down or bottom-up process, through participatory consultation – in other words – the framework can be adapted to the specific aims and cultural context of the project, for example, more or less skills content, more or less service user involvement.

Findings showed that the MSC-informed questions can generate important stories as data in work-based projects, and can accommodate scaling up. In addition, participatory or co-production of evaluative design has exciting potential, and one which aligns readily with guiding ethos within health and social care organisational governance and culture. In this way, this paper documents contemporary evidence of the variety of organisational development and service improvement that story work can generate as part of workplace learning projects.

References


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Further reading

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The challenges of managing degree apprentices in the workplace
A manager’s perspective

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the issues and challenges facing employers as they manage degree apprentices in the workplace. It examines the relationship between managers and apprentices undertaking a work-based degree. This research is of particular relevance at this time because of the UK Government’s initiative to expand the number of apprenticeships in the workplace to three million new starts by 2020, inevitably bringing a range of pressures to bear on employers (BIS, 2015). The purpose is to share early experiences of employer management of degree apprenticeships, and provide a range of recommendations to develop and improve employer and higher education institution (HEI) practice.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper combines desk research with qualitative data drawn from interviews with a range of cross-sector organisations to investigate the employer’s experience of developing the new degree apprenticeships. Data are explored inductively using thematic analysis in order to surface dominant patterns and considers the implications of findings upon current and emerging HEI and employer practice and research.

Findings – There were a number of key themes which emerged from the data collected. These included the need for effective, employer-led recruitment processes, careful management of expectations, sound HEI retention strategies, employer involvement and board-level motivators to ensure organisational benefits are derived from effectively situated workplace learning and a focus upon effective, empowering mentoring and support strategies.

Research limitations/implications – As degree apprenticeship standards and programmes are currently at the early stages of implementation, and opportunities, funding and resourcing are rapidly changing in the context of government policy, so too will employer appetite and strategies for supporting degree apprentices, along with apprentice behaviour. This means that additional findings, beyond those highlighted within this paper, may emerge in the near future.

Practical implications – There are a number of practical implications supporting managerial development and support of degree apprentices in the workplace from this research. These are reflected in the findings, and include the development of flexible and collaborative processes, resources, mentor training and networks.

Originality/value – This paper is one of the first published accounts of the employers’ perspective of managing a degree apprenticeship within the new policy context in the UK. As a result, the work offers a
unique insight into the emerging challenges and issues encountered by managers working with degree apprentices in the twenty-first century business environment.

Keywords Management, Work-based learning, Millennials, Mentoring, Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship, Apprentice performance

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The introduction of degree apprenticeships is one of the biggest transformations in higher education for decades, hailed as “the greatest opportunity ever seen for anyone concerned with skills and employment” delivering a viable option to develop relevant talent through an attractive paid alternative to customary university programmes (Jeffrey, 2016; City and Guilds Group Industry Skills Board, 2015). By June 2017, less than 150 apprentices nationally were enrolled onto the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA), a critical growth area for many business schools. Whilst vocational apprenticeships have historically been delivered in many countries, non-technical routes have not previously attained degree level. Predictions suggest a rapid acceleration of degree apprenticeships increasing by 650 per cent in 2017/2018. CMDA enrolments are expected to exceed 3,000.

A desire to deepen the development of higher education institutions (HEIs) to meet the needs of employers and the wider UK economy is powering this reform (Lee, 2012; Wall and Jarvis, 2015). Despite soaring numbers of graduates, employer concerns about the perceived quality of graduates leaving university are intensifying. Increasing complaints of poor graduate work readiness and transferable skills are problematic (Yorke, 2006; Archer and Davison, 2008; Hughes et al., 2013; Chartered Association of Business Schools, 2014). Degree apprenticeships may serve to solve employability and professional issues through their collaborative design and delivery model in partnership with employers and professional bodies. An employer levy applies to large organisations with payrolls exceeding £3 million, whilst non-levied organisations can claim 90 to 100 per cent of the degree cost (BIS, 2016). Concerns have already been raised that internal training policies may merely transfer to apprenticeships, thus maximising the recovery of levy payments (Confederation of British Industries, 2016).

The opportunities presented by developing tacit professional knowledge and critical employability skills through genuine business environments are extensively documented (e.g. Ng and Feldman, 2009; Archer and Davison, 2008; Hughes et al., 2013; Billett, 2014). The fundamental concept is that HEIs working closely with employers and professional bodies to deliver degree apprenticeships promise to directly tackle these issues around employability and professional competence. However, whilst the introduction of degree apprenticeships presents HEIs and employers with an entirely unique opportunity to collaboratively design work-based degrees and embed employability strategies, there are clearly significant challenges for employers to deliver additional support and guidance to apprentices. The implicit expectation is that managers will need to develop and adopt new approaches in order to support and manage colleagues as they progress through degree programmes, combining higher level work-related study with full-time employment.

A rapid acceleration of degree apprentices is predicted with growth predicted to increase by 650 per cent in 2017/2018 taking the CMDA projections to 3,000. As this is a new UK development, there are extremely limited data available, largely driven by government and industry. Societies, governments, employers and institutions have shaped varying international apprenticeship development. Whereas vocational programmes in Germany, Switzerland, Australia and New Zealand are commonplace, apprenticeships in Sweden and Denmark are largely reliant upon student placements and non-technical apprenticeships have not previously attained degree status in the UK (Anderson et al., 2012; Billett, 2016). Furthermore, employability research largely focuses upon mid-careers skill development...
which leaves emergent professional journeys unexplored (Trede et al., 2012; Jackson, 2016). There are however claims that employers are unused to supporting graduates with just 28 per cent receiving any training at all, subsequently affecting their retention, engagement and performance (Accenture Strategy, 2015).

This paper therefore provides a new and unique insight by exploring the challenges faced by employers in managing apprentices through one of the earliest CMDA programmes. In doing so, this paper informs a potential gap in the literature concerning workplace management of degree apprentices, and generates significant impact by identifying the subsequent effects upon performance, engagement and retention.

**Challenges of managing degree apprenticeships in the workplace – literature review**

In order to investigate the emerging challenges of managing degree apprentices, the literature review explores the key areas of skill development, the employer-driven pedagogic approach and the mentoring role of managers.

**Skill development**

It has already been claimed that educators do not provide learning that is relevant or efficient in developing transferable skills for the workplace (Hager, 1998; Tynjala, 2008; Virtanen et al., 2012). Although academic work exploring work-based learning approaches and partnerships between employers and HEIs offer a range of valuable insights and perspectives (Major, 2005; Garnett, 2007; Major et al., 2011), it is important to recognise that contemporary degree apprenticeship programmes have a range of additional challenges. New degree apprentices are entering a continually changing workplace, classed as the fourth industrial revolution where jobs can quickly evolve or dissipate and mobility is vital. Workforce development often previously focussed upon short-term technical skills, limited by narrowly focussed and outdated curricula (Anderson et al., 2012; Pegg et al., 2012; Kossek and Perrigino, 2016; Schwab, 2017). Inevitably employers are frustrated with escalating costs resulting from poor performance, dwindling retention and engagement, whilst graduates blame employers for insufficient training and opportunities, often exacerbated by weak management (Butler and Felts, 2006; Association of Graduate Recruiters, 2015).

Employers are less interested in technically trained graduates, preferring to recruit employees who can reflect, analyse, critique and synthesise experiences, developing themselves accordingly (Harvey, 2003). The emphasis is upon empowering learners to demonstrate a range of qualities, particularly the ability to think and work “outside the box” through the promotion of lifelong learning and development of conceptual, helicopter and analytical thinking skills (Wisher, 1994, p. 37; Beardwell and Claydon, 2007).

With self-development of skills at the forefront of current HRM thinking, HEIs are having to adapt from the deep-rooted continuum of “process based” teaching towards experiential and reflective learning, hallmarks of work-based learning designed in collaboration with employers (Kolb, 1984; Raelin, 1997; Boud and Solomon, 2001; Smith and Paton, 2014). With Western economic performance linked to knowledge stock and human capital, work-based learning interventions have become more prolific, albeit usually limited to consultancy, internships and projects focussed upon critical thinking and problem solving (Foray and Lundvall, 1996; World Economic Forum, 2009).

**Employer-driven pedagogic approach**

The introduction of degree apprenticeships gives employers an exclusive chance to influence programmes, ensuring the inclusion of relevant skills enhancing pedagogic
strategies and measurement of their efficacy. Experienced and committed employers have already identified their desired skills for aspiring managers and leaders, informing the design of the CMDA Standard (Chartered Management Institute (CMI), 2015; Institute for Employment Studies, 2015, p. 6). The Standard focusses keenly upon performance with notable reference to underpinning psychological conditions, crucial to identifying the various concepts linking knowledge, skills and behaviours. As a result, a more holistic concept of employer requirements emerges, which can be embedded into the curriculum to cultivate employability (Jackson and Hancock, 2010), ensuring that both practical and theoretical competencies are tested. This provides opportunities for HEIs to explore and develop reciprocal work-related curricula and pedagogies that enable learners to develop advanced cognitive skills, such as critical reflection and problem solving (Rosenshine and Meister, 1994; Gregory, 2016). Similarly, by working closely with employers, academics will have the opportunity to experiment with “relevating” pedagogies that challenge established practitioner mindsets and offer counterintuitive perspectives and approaches (Paton et al., 2014). But whilst HEIs are proficient in producing graduates via more didactic pedagogies, they are limited in their ability to develop such broad workplace skill-driven curricula without appropriate employer support (Yorke, 2006). Increasingly, it is acknowledged that the responsibility for sustaining highly skilled workforces requires continued input from all stakeholders, placing a far greater onus upon employers than the arguably easier HEI driven didactic delivery and technical capability assessment (Ng and Feldman, 2009; Billett, 2014). However, early employer engagement is intermittent, compounded by concerns about commitment, costs and resource implications.

Inevitably, there are inherent risks for HEIs in adopting employer-led, individually negotiated curricula. As with employers, many have not yet engaged, recognising the risks associated with pedagogic inconsistencies resulting in “academy-aligned” programmes as opposed to “academy based” (Dalrymple et al., 2014, p. 78). Clearly, the context in which skills will be established and to some extent verified – through external end point assessment – is largely beyond the HEI’s control (United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills, 2016). Intangible cultures and norms, organisational type, size, sector and international location can all affect learner opportunities to put theory into practice in the workplace (Billett, 2014). With workplace commitment the priority, apprentices will have less regular opportunities than undergraduates to access university networks, student and academic support teams, peer and social networks which can holistically inform skill development (Rice et al., 2006; Dickinson and Dickinson, 2015). Recent employer-led programmes have attracted complaints about a lack of diverse cross-pollinated ideas and underexposure to intercultural interaction with other students (Bishop and Hordern, 2017).

Mentoring role
Degree apprenticeships have raised a further complexity for HEIs in their implicit requirement to identify and assign an employer mentor to ensure appropriate apprentice support in the workplace. Mentoring relationships can invoke an “exchange of wisdom, support, learning or guidance for the purpose of career growth”, supporting the achievement of organisational strategic goals through effective talent management (Parsloe and Wray, 2000, p. 12; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), 2012). Formally supported, employer-led mentoring has also been found to critically enhance the development of professional skills in the workplace (Metso and Kianto, 2014). Committed role model mentoring is also believed to improve resilience, engagement and performance (Grant et al., 2009; Kao et al., 2014). But the role of mentoring cannot be constrained to senior HR staff concerned with talent management. Many mentors are first-level managers, sometimes contested as inappropriate (Ensher and Murphy, 2011; CIPD, 2012). Regardless
of status, apprentices must have access to supportive enablers, a role which line managers are arguably better placed to fulfil in providing an opportunity to participate in different tasks and contribute towards and influence outcomes, thus seamlessly integrating curricula and workplace (Rajan-Rankin, 2013). Worryingly though, a recent survey suggests that 49 per cent of employees felt that they were not confident that they could mentor an apprentice with 97 per cent advocating training (Curtis, 2017).

The CMDA effectively compresses qualifications through a work-based learning framework, but this itself may unintentionally create further pressure for apprentices to simultaneously perform as aspiring leaders in a “high prestige occupation”, requiring particularly effective employer guidance and support (Kossek and Perrigino, 2016, p. 780). As such, these apprentices will be far more reliant than their graduate predecessors were upon high-quality workplace support crucial to their development. Personal academic tutors and other line managers may also interchangeably assume apprentice-mentoring roles whilst in smaller or less hierarchical structures, a variety of workplace staff may formally or informally mentor, remotely or in person, adding value through burgeoning relationships, which may take many guises (Jack and Donnellan, 2010). A divergence of the timing of efficacy measurement and disagreement over the definition of mentoring has led to low generalisability within the literature with insufficient attention given to status, generational perspectives and timing leading to bias (Ensher and Murphy, 2011; Kao et al., 2014).

Another issue is the extent to which public and private sector organisations alike have often been perceived by the HE sector and its quality systems as being insufficiently focussed on fostering learning and where nurturing learning and development of employees is patchy rather than systematic, with limited support structures in place (Reeve and Gallacher, 2005). Systematic attempts were made to address this previously in the UK through the development of explicitly work-based foundation degrees (Lucas et al., 2007) and through other HEI initiatives (e.g. Critten, 2009), and these approaches have led some to argue that WBL programmes themselves can sometimes be instrumental in fostering the internal structures and relationships within businesses that can potentially help turn them into “learning organisations” (Ions and Minton, 2012). However, others have argued that employer interest in work-based learning is often functionalist and their responsiveness to learning needs most often a product of the adaptability of their organisation more generally (Talbot, 2011). These perspectives remain to be tested in a rigorous way, and degree apprenticeships may offer a way to do this systematically.

Some reports suggest that graduates are taking a more commercial attitude to employment with raised expectations beyond previous generations (Bedingfield, 2005) but recent reports suggesting that only 28 per cent of graduates receive any training at all, subsequently affecting retention, engagement and performance (Accenture Strategy, 2015). Only a third of companies provide compulsory management training and less than half offer it at all leading to blame directed towards individual behaviour rather than organisational policy (ILM, 2011; Association of Graduate Recruiters, 2015). Graduate concern with support and development opportunities is at the forefront of early career dissatisfaction requiring talent management strategies that extend beyond graduate salaries (Robson and Rubin, 2009). The UK continues to suffer with 2.4 million untrained managers, leading to four in five currently classed as “accidental managers” (Chartered Management Institute (CMI), 2017). Recent data suggest that nearly a third of apprentices fail to complete their programmes with 57 per cent of apprentices citing insufficient employer support (Curtis, 2017).

Ironically, degree apprentices should receive more relevant and current high-level management training than their superiors upon whom their development relies. This coupled with a potential generational disconnect may not bode well for future mentoring relationships.
Methodology

Because of the comparatively recent introduction of degree apprenticeships in the UK, there has been relatively little time or opportunity for researchers to conduct any meaningful study into their impact and success. Moreover, as highlighted earlier with the more, well-established technical apprenticeship, researchers have tended to focus on their impact on skill development (e.g. Rice et al., 2006) and pedagogical issues rather than on employer experiences. Consequently, it was logical that a qualitative, essentially inductive approach was adopted for this early exploratory study, which has focussed on gathering insights into early “employer-adopters” experiences of the CMDA. Because of the focus on a relatively small number of organisations based within the researchers’ catchment area, it was felt that a qualitative approach would enable the gathering of richer insights into both the functional and social interactions that may occur in different organisational settings (Bryman, 1984; Morse, 1994) and the dynamic interpersonal processes that may bear on both the apprentices’ and employers’ perceptions of their respective experiences.

Data collection

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method of data collection because they provided the degree of flexibility necessary to uncover the various facets of the individual actors’ roles and interaction with the programme, enabling the researchers to probe more deeply into each interviewee’s feelings and beliefs and tease out the various factors affecting their experiences (Kinnear and Taylor, 1991). Given the exploratory nature of the research, the study chose to favour balance and variety over sample size. A greater emphasis was thus placed on the epistemological opportunity presented in a relatively small number of accessible cases (Stake, 1998). Indeed, cases were selected from amongst the first wave of organisations that had engaged with the new programme and represented both private and public sector employers based in the North West of England. In some cases, multiple participants who had, in various capacities, been engaged with the recruitment, induction and monitoring of the apprenticeship scheme within their organisation were interviewed in order to gain a variety of perspectives. Interview data were collected from four employer organisations spanning aerospace, higher education, electrical engineering and textile manufacturing. All interviews were conducted by telephone and the interviews were taped and transcribed for analysis with the interviewees’ permission.

The interview protocol was constructed around a small number of core areas of questioning, namely, each organisation’s experience of the programme to date; what the main challenges have been in working with the degree apprentices and what key lessons and advice would the interviewees offer to other organisations considering taking on a degree apprentice. Interviewees were also encouraged to raise any other issues that had arisen as a result of their experiences.

Four employers responded to the request to participate in this research comprising a total population sample in this pilot year, and together hosting eight apprentices on programme since September 2017. A profile of the sample confirms a range of apprenticeship management experience (Table I). Six of the eight apprentices are new employees but only one organisation required recruitment advertising and interview support. In all instances, recruitment decisions were made solely by the host organisation.

Data analysis

As the study involved a cross-case analysis of different professional roles and perceptions of the CMDA within their organisations, the researchers elected to adopt an essentially variable-oriented approach (Miles et al., 2013), inductively coding the data to help identify any recurring themes and patterns (Eisenhardt, 1989). The interview data from each
organisation (case) were also examined carefully to determine whether the patterns that emerged in one case were replicated in others (e.g. Yin, 2013). In this way, researchers were able to cycle back and forth through individual cases as well as examine themes across cases, which allowed a richer understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the participating employers across the sample as a whole. By adopting a systematic and objective analysis of the case transcripts, we sought to uncover key themes and any commonality among cases. This approach enabled the identification of core constructs and helped to clarify any relationships among them.

Limitations
Because of the exploratory small-scale nature of this study, it was not intended to provide a detailed analysis of all employer involvement and perceptions of degree apprenticeship programmes. Moreover, because these programmes have only recently been introduced, employer experiences and evaluations are still emerging and will inevitably change over time. Rather, this study presents a range of anecdotal evidence that reveals some useful insights into the pattern of employer experiences and initial perceptions gained through their own individual experiences. Care was taken concerning the danger of attempting to reconcile the uniqueness of an individual case’s experiences with the need to understand any generic processes at work across cases when analysing and interpreting the data gathered (Silverstein, 1988). Finally, the research team were conscious of the potential dangers of possible bias associated with the data collection method (e.g. Miles et al., 2013; Nisbett and Ross, 1980), all of which could lead to spurious interpretation of the findings. Here, measures were taken to cross-check analysis and sense-making interpretation of the interview data amongst the research team.

Findings

Recruitment
An important emerging issue with regard the management of degree apprentices was the need to recruit appropriate candidates. Employer data have been extremely positive, particularly where a new recruit has joined the organisation as an apprentice. A resounding theme was the need for effective recruitment strategies, and this is clearly of critical importance. As one MD said: “recruiting the right person is definitely a key aspect to this whole programme”, echoed by a HR Manager: “I do think it’s all down to recruiting the right candidate initially” (Organisations C and D). One employer experienced in the deployment of highly sophisticated recruitment cycles confirmed their rationale for intensive recruitment activity of apprentices in preference to graduates: “We’re able to bring in fresh talent for the business; the future lifeblood of the company. You’re getting a lot more time to weigh up the person before you buy them in effect” (A). No distinction was made between employee statuses in any induction processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Levy</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Mentor characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Yes 6,000 employees</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4 females, 1 male</td>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>New employees</td>
<td>Experienced apprenticeship team and unit managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Yes 1,600 employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 female</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Existing employee</td>
<td>Experienced HR manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>No 100 employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Previous apprenticeship New employee</td>
<td>Experienced HR manager and MD Managing director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>No 5 employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>New employee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I. Profile of respondents from CMDA cohort 1 – 2016/2019
Millennials – performance and retention

Three of the employers had no concerns when questioned about millennials and the possibility of a generational disconnect: “Young people bring a different skillset into what we do. The degree of enthusiasm that I think you get is of course part of being eighteen. It’s very, very motivating for the company” (D). However, a slightly different response came from a larger organisation who compared their experience of a mature degree apprentice to a younger, lower level apprentice: “It’s just a different focus when you are 18, 19. They were really reluctant to do the work” (B). A further potential issue was also raised with regard to the challenge of managing expectations within multiple cohorts with the comment: “They all want to be managers” (A), although this may result from other contributory factors rather than merely generational. Clearly, assumptions cannot be made concerning any amorphous group who, as individuals, will have different skills and traits. This is particularly evident where rigorous employer-led recruitment methods are deployed, resulting in overwhelmingly positive feedback regardless of age. It is unclear still how well the programme and employers will meet expectations, and whether there is a generational effect upon workplace retention as Bedingfield (2005) suggests.

The CMDA has attracted extremely high-quality applicants and host organisations to date, but retention rates are disappointing compared with traditional undergraduate programmes. Within module one, two apprentices (one mature) had withdrawn from the programme citing workload issues. Subsequently, two further apprentices (one mature) suspended their studies due to health and redundancy. Overall, this represents a disappointing retention rate of 75 per cent within year one. Compressing a degree and full-time employment into four years is financially advantageous but it is undoubtedly a challenging task. HEIs and employers can draw upon experience of lower level apprentices, which can similarly prove to be problematic, as one respondent said: “Our last apprentice walked away. She didn’t even bother completing the apprenticeship” (B). HEIs can support issues of engagement and retention on programme by engendering a sense of belonging through interventions such as regular workplace visits. Although these are resource intense, visits have given staff a valuable opportunity to collaborate with employers in project design and development, as well as surface and resolve issues of management and mentoring at the earliest stage.

The employers’ perspective at the degree level was somewhat different, although it must be recognised that an overall retention pattern for degree apprenticeships has yet to be established. Of particular interest was the response from an experienced apprenticeship host: “After 2 years the business can choose which apprentices they want to keep and normally it’s not just for their academic ability but it’s also the best fit for the business” (A). As a highly sought-after employer with focussed career pathways, they have been able to control recruitment and retention to some extent by deliberately maintaining a balanced intake, benchmarks and deadlines, informing decisions over apprentice retention, rather than the other way around.

Employer-driven pedagogic approach

Employer-led programme design and ongoing collaboration with providers to effectively situate learning into the workplace can be resource intensive. A particular concern for many businesses is the amount of time apprentices require to spend off the job, but effective provision of genuine work-based learning pedagogy is more efficient for providers, employers and apprentices alike. This has been very successful in generating additional benefits for smaller employers, particularly where MD support is evident: “The projects fit in with things that we actually want to achieve as a business and the benefits are significant. It gives us an opportunity to do things that we wouldn’t ordinarily have the time, or the skills to do” (D). Likewise, larger employers have been equally impressed: “The benefits
outweigh that. She was bringing all this theory into practice. The results have been amazing” (B).

However there was resounding acknowledgement that organisational culture must be one of support, echoing Billett’s (2014) warning of its effect upon learning opportunities. One medium-sized SME confirmed this by saying: “One of the biggest things is to have the buy-in from the board. Our MD has contributed to the projects that she has done” (C). The most experienced recruiter agreed that the payoff was worth resourcing: “Definitely when you look at the people who’ve come through and the positions that they’re in. 70% of the senior management team are ex-apprentices who’ve come through the apprentice programme and that speaks volumes. Some of them are very, very inspiring in the way they speak about the programmes and their experience as well, coming from the apprentice background” (A).

Embedding employability skills into the curriculum is challenging for HEIs, and the apprenticeship standard’s design risks this becoming a disjointed, sequential process. However, the work-based learning framework coupled with employer support has achieved the seamless interactive pedagogy proposed by Rajan-Rankin (2013). One example here was the incorporation of 360 degree feedback and smart action planning for skill development. The results from this have been superb: “I can see a change in her already, how she’s interacting with other people has changed. And it’s just simple things, the way she phrases a question. She’s just blossomed in confidence and I think that’s been absolutely huge for her” (B). Unsurprisingly, this has also impacted upon other employees as well, benefitting the wider organisation: “What she’s bringing back to the team is fantastic as well” (B). Inevitably, some comparisons were made with regard to apprentice vs graduate performance. Whilst only one organisation had extensive experience, they were clear in their endorsement: “Generally an apprentice is someone who is far more grounded and experienced than someone off the direct entry graduate programme” (A).

Mentoring role

Whilst there have been few issues of note with regard to mentoring and supervision, it is acknowledged that this is a small cohort which has the luxury of intensive HEI support. Interestingly, the role of the mentor was less focussed upon the programme content than expected with the most experienced apprenticeship managers confirming: “So what we do as managers is manage and mentor them through the actual process, rather than the actual skills they need to pass. I don’t think that we get down to the actual content of their academic programme” (A). A second employer agreed saying: “It’s more supporting them on how they are learning at work as opposed to learning through the academic side of things” (B). However, it is clear that the quality of managerial and supervisory support will be critical to apprentice development in mentoring and guiding project content and delivery, skill development and academic progress. In this study, the role of the mentor was apparent, although it was generally accepted to be a shared responsibility in all but the smallest company (Parshloe and Wray, 2000). In the largest organisation, an apprenticeship manager assumes direct line management, tracking and supporting development through appraisals. Reliance upon departmental managers is a distinct feature of a distributed mentor role, confirmed by the comment: “It’s probably a combination actually of the two” (A).

Due to the pilot nature of the programme and small cohort size, the extent to which HEIs will have to rely upon employer mentors remains unexplored to date. A further complication here is that HEIs can only advise employers of the need for a mentor, but they do not have the authority to enforce or monitor this role. Recognising this potential gap in apprentice support, some more experienced HEIs have incorporated academic mentor roles within programme resource structures, whilst others are developing employer-focussed short training programmes, workshops and handbooks, taking Jack and Donnellan’s (2010) approach of mentors in many guises. Indeed, this suggestion was welcomed by one
employer who advocated taking more of a coaching approach: “It’s not been time consuming, I’m not coaching her through the academic side at all. It’s more just like thinking about what the challenges are, giving them that kind of confidence that they are on the right track and that they are coming up with their own objectives, rather than adding more pressure to deadlines, giving them the power to come back” (B).

The data collected have been overwhelmingly positive, despite the inference in the literature that such extensive reliance upon employers and mentors to manage degree apprentice employees may ultimately prove to be problematic. The data gathered have given a rich insight into the employer’s experience and will be invaluable in developing strategies as increasing numbers of employers engage with degree apprentices and volume, hierarchy or culture may reduce the availability of appropriate workplace mentors. Despite the small sample size, the findings may be used to continue to develop and improve both employer and HEI practice as the number of apprenticeships in the workplace expands.

Conclusions

HEIs are developing degree apprenticeship programmes at an unprecedented speed, recognising the lucrative opportunity afforded by an attractive funding proposition combined with rapid growth projections. At the same time, employers are unhappy about graduate employability whilst graduate debt has soared. In adopting an employer-led, work-based delivery model, degree apprenticeships such as the CMDA, HEIs acknowledge the shift in the balance of time afforded to the workplace in lieu of the classroom, and the requirement to embed core employability skills. Here, it is critical that the employer interface is managed effectively so that HEIs can work closely with employers to design curricula and begin to design robust support mechanisms to ensure the effective management and mentoring of apprentices in the workplace.

All of the employers who participated in the first year of the CMDA expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the programme. In particular, their recruitment and selection processes have attracted outstanding candidates who have performed beyond expectations. It appears that genuine support at the board level has made a clear difference to managerial support for apprenticeships, and indeed this is replicated across all types and size of organisation. As a result of this buy-in and the opportunity for businesses to profit from negotiated project content, the mentoring role has proved to be mutually beneficial, as opposed to an onerous drain upon resources. Furthermore, the focus upon talent management processes and learning on the job has remained a distinct employer responsibility as opposed to academic programme, which was seen as the preserve of the provider. This strategy has worked well, whether through an individual or a distributed mentor role, and only one employer was able to make reference to a negative point regarding career expectation management.

However, there are a number of caveats to note, in particular because the programme is a pilot with easily managed numbers. Despite the total population sample, the employers in this study have contributed up to a third of the cost of the degree fees and have committed to doing so over the term of the programme, whereas, in future, funding will be drawn from the levy or will equate to a maximum of 10 per cent. Whilst all host organisations have to pay full-time salaries, the financial commitment from the employers in this study has been substantially more significant than that of future hosts.

The next generation of “novice” apprenticeship providers might have a very different set of requirements. They may be less inclined or able to resource such comprehensive mentoring and support, which, along with large cohort sizes, may subsequently colour the attitudes of apprentices going forward. Both apprentices and graduates are amorphous groups but they may develop positive and negative commonalities, which will become more evident in time. One particular concern may be their retention with disappointing early indications, but as yet unmeasured over the entire four-year programme.
The research presented here reveals an early insight into the issues and challenges facing employers as they manage degree apprentices, but more cases and longitudinal research are needed to examine relationships and emerging challenges between managers, HEIs and apprentices across different sectors, industries and disciplines. In particular, more data drawn from an international perspective would better inform and support HEI apprenticeship pedagogic design. This would create an international forum for the sharing of best practice, a relevant and timely development, given the potential for apprenticeship reforms in many countries including the USA and Australia (Billett, 2016; Presidential Executive Order, 2017; Parker, 2017).

References


Managing degree apprentices in the workplace


Further reading


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